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An Exploratory Study on how the Potential Talent of Social Care Workers is Nurtured and Developed within an Irish Social Care Setting.

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Abstract

Title of Dissertation: An exploratory study on how the potential talent of Social Care Worker's is nurtured and developed within an Irish Social Care Setting.

Talent Management (TM) has become an increasingly popular practice in the field of modern HR management. However, there is little research available to explore the implementation and effectiveness of TM practices in the Irish Social Care sector. This study explores how the potential talent of Social Care Worker's is nurtured and developed within an Irish Social Care setting. Semi-structured interviews are carried out with eight care workers working in an Irish Social Care setting. The research questions guide the research in identifying current practices being used to nurture, manage, and develop talent, staff's perceptions on how their continuous professional development (CPD) is promoted, the practical effectiveness of current TM practices and the efficiency of job advertisements in the Social Care sector.

The results of the semi-structured interviews showed that there is a predominantly inclusive approach to managing talent within the care setting researched. Initiatives used in the social care setting to nurture and manage talent are implemented from an all-encompassing approach which fosters the skills and talent of all workers, inclusively. The HSE's current and past education and development strategies are discussed throughout and evaluated in practice. The research finds that current initiatives being delivered by the HSE such as HSE land, are proving efficient and beneficial for staff working within the sector. Staff discuss the importance of management support and direction in guiding their CPD. The study suggests that attention is needed in devising accurate job advertisements which reflect a precise description of job duties in practice. Results of the study show that a lack of transparency in job advertisements can negatively impact TM practices such as staff recruitment, retention, and satisfaction in the workplace.

Keywords: Talent Management, Social Care Work, Ireland.

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List of Abbreviations

TM- Talent Management

TD- Talent Development

SCW- Social Care Worker

HSE- Health Service Executive

CIPD- Chartered Institute for Personnel and Development

HSCP- Health and Social care Professionals

CPD- Continuous Professional Development

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1.0 Introduction

Title

An exploration into how the potential talent of Social Care Workers is nurtured and developed within the Irish Social Care sector

1.1 Background to Social Care in Ireland

The initial requirement for Social Care professionals in Ireland can be linked back to insufficiencies identified in the provision of residential care services for children. It is from these recognised insufficiencies that the need for qualified and trained staff became necessary. (Kennedy and Gallagher, 1997). In Ireland throughout the nineteenth century and continuing into the latter half of the twentieth century, large scale institutionalised care was provided by the state to older people, individuals with intellectual disabilities and those with mental health conditions (McSweeney, Smith and Williams, 2016). The provision of care for was governed by the catholic church in Ireland and this was the institutional body responsible for directing affairs concerning the care for these vulnerable groups in society. In the 1960's and 70's, the publication of a series of reports consisting of, The Commission of Inquiry on Mental Handicap Report (1965), Care of the Aged Report (1968) and Reformatory and Industrial Schools Systems Report (1970), contributed significantly to the establishment and development of Social Care in Ireland (McSweeney et al, 2016). The Kennedy report (1970) was influential in shaping the structure of the current residential care system in Ireland today. The findings from the report resulted in the closing of reformatory and industrial schools across Ireland (Department of Health, 1970). This gave rise to the need for establishing smaller community-based childcare services, in comparison to large-scale institutionalised care homes (Cahill, Holt and Kirwan, 2016). The Kennedy report (1970) also recommended the professionalisation of care workers, providing essential care services to vulnerable people in residential care services.

Throughout the 1970's childcare courses were offered by various colleges in Ireland such as Dublin Institute of Technology and Waterford Regional college (McSweeney et al, 2016). As time proceeded, the provision of care services expanded to include additional at-risk groups in society such as the homeless, older people, individuals suffering from drug and alcohol addiction and many more. The launching of the National Disability Strategy in 2004 signalled a change in the approach to delivering care services, from a medical model of care to a social one. This redirected the provision of care services from large institutional settings to smaller

community-based centres. Social Care Work (SCW) remains a very much emerging profession in Ireland. As discussed, societal changes have influenced the shift in the delivery of care from large scale institutional settings to a more inclusive community-based approach. The next section will discuss the emergence of the Social Care profession towards professional regulation by the Health and Social Care regulator, CORU.

1.2 Profile of a Social Care Worker

As a result of changes in political, economic, and social demands across the world, the professional profile of Social Care Workers (SCWs) has had to adapt to meet these demands (Fingelton and McGarr, 2020). SCW has expanded into a profession which provides a broad variety of care services to various groups of vulnerable people in society. Such groups are inclusive of younger people attending detention schools, adults living in residential care, individuals with an intellectual or physical disability, the homeless community and those with a drug or alcohol dependency (Social Care Ireland, 2020). The Health and Social care regulator in Ireland, CORU, define professional Social Care Work as a relationship-based approach to providing care, protection, and support to the most vulnerable in society (CORU, 2020). Social Care Ireland (2020) offer their definition as a profession which is comprised of the professional duties that encompass the provision of specialised care to the vulnerable in our society experiencing marginalisation, disadvantage, and special needs. Share and Lalor (2013) highlight that several characteristics are fundamental to the professional profile of an SCW. Empathy, good communication skills, self-awareness and a non-judgemental attitude are all central to the profile of an SCW. Additionally, Biestek (1957) identifies seven key principles as paramount, for a care worker to possess, to establish a successful working partnership with a client. The proficiency to demonstrate a non-judgemental attitude, encourage client self-determination, show acceptance, acknowledge individualisation, maintain confidentiality, create a controlled emotional environment, and express sensitivity to clients' emotions, are all necessary for an SCW to establish and maintain within a professional working relationship.

1.3 Pursuing a career in Social Care.

In Ireland, women represent 79.9 percent of employees working in health and social care related employment (Central Statistics Office, 2020). Despite the increasing demand for care services, most care workers are over worked and underpaid (Pembroke, 2017). Given this fact, it is interesting to explore the motivating factors that influence people to pursue a career in SCW. Mulkeen (2020) identifies that for work, be it mental or physical, to be classified as care,

it must benefit the individual rather than cause harm. Therefore, when providing care as a profession, the care worker must obtain a sense of personal fulfilment, rather than an obligation of duty. This personal fulfilment stems from an intrinsic empathetic value to show responsibility for the wellbeing of other people (Lynch, Baker and Lyons, 2009). O'Connor (2019) strengthens this argument by stating that it is the emotional aspects of an individual's character that motivates them to work in the care sector. The casework relationship is very much a professional affiliation based on reciprocated emotional involvement between care giver and service user. Service users desire to be cared for by someone who genuinely cares about them. The foundation to a productive relationship between care worker and service users stems from the ability of a care worker to ensure a service user feels secure and confident within the casework relationship. Therefore, it is critical when pursuing a profession in SCW to possess a level of professional awareness towards the sensitivity of a client's emotions. Biestek (1957) relates to the principles of controlled emotional involvement and empowering client self-determination, as central to ensuring a successful casework relationship. A career in Social Care Work can be recognised as a professional devotion to caring for those who are most vulnerable and marginalised in society.

1.4 Rationale for the research

This study aims to explore Talent Management (TM) practices in an Irish Social Care sector and identify how continuous professional development (CPD) is encouraged and facilitated amongst SCWs within a Social Care setting. Whilst there is various international research available to examine the concept of TM practices, few studies examine how these practices are encouraged and applied in an Irish Social Care setting. As highlighted by Johnston and Kravarati (2019) most of the current research on TM is focused on private sector settings, with few studies exploring the role of TM in public healthcare environments. This study is worthy to develop an understanding of how TM practices are implemented within an Irish Social Care setting and the effectiveness of these practices in a practical workplace setting. In 2019, the Health Service Executive (HSE) launched 'The Health Service People Strategy 2019-2024'. The primary vision of the strategy is to establish a working experience for health and social care professionals (HSCP) that focuses on developing talent and nurturing leadership capabilities. Given that HSCPs provide direct support services to the most vulnerable in our society, it is necessary to understand how the talent and skills of care professionals are nurtured, encouraged, and developed. Cantwell and Power (2016) outline that with an emerging profession, like SCW, professional development often becomes overshadowed by policy

decision making. This research is worthy because developing an awareness on how workers are encouraged to learn, and grow is important to the positive sustainment of an emerging profession. The research is worthy also to explore current initiatives in place to influence the professional development of staff within the care sector.

1.5 Structure of thesis

The introductory chapter focuses on the background to SCW in Ireland and outlines what constitutes pursuing a career in Social Care. The introduction chapter highlights the profile of an SCW alongside the factors that motivate a person to pursuing a career in caring. In chapter two, the literature review, the focus shifts to reviewing current literature and research on Talent Management (TM). The review chapter discusses in detail the practice of TM and its relevance in current organisation's management strategies. Research on TM practices in various healthcare settings throughout the world will be reviewed and analysed. Chapter three will present the aims and objectives of the research question. Chapter four, the methodology section, will be comprised of a discussion of the research approach that was taken to conduct the study. In this chapter, implementing a qualitative approach will be justified and reasons why semi-structured interviews were the most appropriate data collection method, explained. Chapter five will present the finding and analysis of the data gathered from the semi-structured interviews. Chapter six will consist of a discussion of the findings and analysis from chapter five. Chapter six will conclude the research piece and discuss limitations and future recommendations associated with this research.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter explores both the concept of TM and current competency management practices being used within both Irish and international health care sectors. Academic literature on TM will be evaluated throughout this review and current practices in health care sectors will be explored. The aim of this section is to present current theoretical research and studies conducted to date on TM. The research will explore the influence of investing learning resources in employees CPD and its correlation with nurturing and managing talent within an Irish Social Care setting. The initial section of this review will focus on defining the concept of TM, taken into consideration various researcher's understandings of what constitutes TM. This will be followed by exploring the various approaches used to deliver TM practices within a service setting. The review will then progress to discuss the initial introduction of TM practices in organisational settings to identify employee potential and its influence on performance development. The subsequent piece will focus particularly on the use of such practices in healthcare organisations across European countries. The review will discuss current strategies being implemented by the HSE to foster a learning culture within the health care sector. The chapter will conclude by exploring current TM initiatives throughout Ireland and the United Kingdom, to manage talent pools within healthcare working environments.

2.2 Defining Talent Management

In recent years TM has received considerable attention throughout the evolving global marketplace. Lewis and Heckman (2006) states that given the lack of a clear definition for TM, the practice was still very much in its formative years up to 2000. Whilst there remains no exact definition for what constitutes TM, researchers focus considerably on the practices associated with the inclusiveness and exclusiveness of managing a talent pool (Nzonzo and Du Pleiss, 2020). Collings and Mellahi (2009) define their understanding of TM as a practice whereby an organisation utilises their internal and external management resources to build a competitive talent pool. In return, an organisation receives increased levels of organisational performance through substantial investment of resources in employees. Coulson-Thomas (2012) informs that the ability of an organisation to utilise key talent and onboard new innovative skills, is critical to sustaining competitive advantage within an organisation. Savaneviceine and colleagues (2017) add that the efficient management of talent allows for the retention of highly skilled employees, whilst also improving productivity within a working environment. Cheng

and Xing (2019) additionally offer their classification of TM, as a process, which encompasses the recruiting, identifying, developing, and managing of key talent within an organisation. The primary focus of any organisation's TM strategy should be on providing an employee talent pool with the necessary support, opportunities, and encouragement to advance their continuous professional development (CPD). It is important to note that whilst various research has suggested definitions for TM, the practice itself is still very much emerging in the management field. Ansar and Baloch (2018) concluded in their study on defining TM that the practice remains in the evolutionary stages and is yet be established as an individual construct within the business literature. The subsequent piece will explore literature on the "War for Talent" and its influence on modern day management practices.

2.3 The War for Talent

The Chartered Institute for Personnel and Development (CIPD) refers to talent, within an organisation, as people who can make a significant difference to corporate development and overall business performance (CIPD, 2020). This can either be through their immediate skills contribution or, in the longer-term, by consistently developing their professional competencies. Hinchliffe (2018) states that the term talent is expected to change in the future because the needs of an organisation change more swiftly than an employee's level of skills and experiences. As a result of these changes, what signifies talent will evolve and the war for talent will persist. At the end of the 1990's, new approaches to TM were presented by McKinsey and Company, in their report on the "War for Talent". Peny (2012) highlights that following the publication of this report, the market of employee talents proceeded to become one of the most competitive markets of the decade. In a current 21st century labour market, despite employees being highly educated, there is still a significant lack of specific skill sets. Cordant recruitment (2016) identifies that a lack of experience and technical skills constitute two of the primary reasons why employers cannot fill vacancies, resulting from a lack of key talent requirements. Acquiring and retaining employees with the necessary qualifications to carry out a job role, is a significant challenge associated with the war for talent (Stuss, 2020). The strategy an organisation implements to identify competencies and specifically develop these, is paramount to gaining a competitive advantage in the labour market. This strategy must be mindful of the principles associated with the war for talent, to achieve continuous organisational benefits in the long term. Fishman (1998) identified four principal characteristics of the war for talent. These are as follows,

- Difficulty in retaining key talent.

- Competition to recruit top talent from other companies.

- Participation of both big and small organisations on a similar playing field

- Surprising and unforeseen effects.

When referring to the War for Talent, what represents the war element of the phenomenon is the pervasiveness and competitiveness of the practice. Gardener (2005) highlights that the primary motive behind organisations competing amongst one another for top talent is to sabotage the human talent pipeline of each other's firm resulting in a gained competitive advantage in the labour market. To be successful in the war for talent, an organisation must implement the most suitable TM practices, to address talent concerns within their firm. The next section will explore the approaches taken within an organisation to implement a TM strategy. Several principles of the war for talent outlined above are discussed in each approach.

2.4 Inclusive TM practices

As stated by the CIPD, regardless of the approach taken to TM in any firm, it is critical to be fair and just when implementing a TM strategy within an organisation (CIPD, 2020). Failure to align TM strategic frameworks with other organisational policies, such as inclusion and diversity, can mean that an organisation does not gain access to a diverse talent pool. Therefore, regardless of the approach used to manage talent, management programmes must be consistent and interlinked with other organisational practices. This is critical to ensuring the retention of key staff within an organisation and is important to attracting external talent to an organisation (Fisherman, 1998). The two most common TM approaches used by organisations are inclusive and exclusive. Swailes and Orr (2014) highlight that an inclusive approach considers the investment of resources into developing and maintaining the talent pipeline already employed within a service. Meyers (2015) states that an inclusive TM strategy focuses on identifying the inner potential in all employees and utilising this potential to both personal and organisational gratification. Inclusive TM strategies are primarily directed at developing the competencies and knowledge of all employees, in contrast to singling out specific "high potential" employees. An important element of this strategy is that it considers an individual's potential skills and development capabilities from a complete and all-round point of view. This allows an organisation to identify employee competencies that may not be relevant to a particular role that a person is already working in. This can provide an organisation with the insight to efficiently utilise their talent pools by ensuring that people are most suitable and fitted to their

current job roles (Vilciauskaite et al, 2017). Inclusive TM allows employees the opportunity to acknowledge and develop their own potential through learning and development practices that stimulate employee wellbeing and self-empowerment (Meyers, 2015).

2.5 Exclusive TM

In contrast to Inclusive TM approaches, exclusive TM focuses on targeting specific "high potential" employees within an organisation and investing significant resources into upskilling and retaining these employees. Performance assessment reviews are used to identify the top 10% of high performing employees. These employees are categorised as most likely to contribute to positive organisational growth, in comparison to other employees (Silzer and Dowell, 2010). Exclusive TM consists of managers investing greater interest levels and organisational resources into upskilling and maintaining the employees classified as "high performers". Thunnissen and Buttiens (2017) state that the reasoning for this is because these employees are most likely to increase organisational profits and growth, in comparison to lower performing employees. Exclusive TM approaches are more commonly encountered within private sector organisations where factors such as cost and time are reduced through identifying, investing retention resources, and rewarding a high performing workforce. However, exclusive practices can also be beneficial for public sector organisations, as cost and time are significant determinant factors in efficient service delivery. The difference between both sectors is that public sector organisations tend to implement inclusive TM practices as it reflects a more democratic and equal approach to nurturing and managing talent (Thunnissen and Buttiens, 2017). Inclusive TM approaches allows for increased employee integration which can strengthen the common good goals of an organisation. The following section will explore how an organisation can adapt efficient practices to effectively manage their talent pool.

2.6 Practices of TM

In their research, Daniel and Ibrahim (2018) outlined several key processes associated with TM, as critical to effectively nurturing and managing talent. These practices combine to formulate an effective TM strategy, capable of providing an organisation with a sustained flow of competent and knowledgeable employees. These processes are inclusive of practices such as, Talent discovery, Talent Recruitment, Talent Development (TD) and Talent Retention. These will be further discussed in more detail in the following sections.

2.6.1 Talent Discovery and recruitment

The practices of discovering and recruiting talent stems from the analysing of results received from an organisation's talent needs and job analysis. These processes can provide an organisation with information on what skills are needed for completing specific tasks within an organisation. According to (Daniel and Ibrahim, 2018) talent discovery can also support an organisation in evaluating the strengths and weakness of current skill sets within a workforce. This can support an organisation in planning for future talent requirements. The practice of discovering talent may also be referred to as talent identification, a method which consists of recognising strong potential and ensuring that this potential is fostered in ways that increase both current and future organisational productivity. Identifying key talent from an external approach focuses on how prospective employees perceive the organisational culture of the business. CIPD (2020) highlight that creating both an attractive employer brand and employee value proposition can greatly enhance one's image of an organisation, as a future workplace. This is referred to as an organisation's employer brand image. When looking for external talent potential within the labour market, organisations should first reflect upon their own employer brand image and ensure that it is appealing and enticing to new potential candidates. An organisation's employee value proposition is often referred to as the "backbone" of the establishment's brand image. The social value of an organisations value proposition is concerned with how an organisation respects and treats their employees. If an organisation has strong social values, then the organisation will be more appealing to job seekers. Results from a study conducted by Bhagat, Kumari and Dutta (2020) found that the social and interest values of job seekers represented the psychological benefits of an organisation to job seekers. The research identified that the way in which a prospective employee perceives a brand image of an organisation is greatly influenced by the social and interest values one has for that organisation. This is significantly important for attracting, recruiting, and retaining talent within an organisation.

In combination with promoting a positively recognised employer brand, the practice of succession planning is also central to maintaining an upskilled workforce. Barton and Rouse-Jouns (2007) highlight that succession planning is a key practice associated with the new discovery of potential talent. Succession planning focuses on utilising current skills present within an organisation and ensuring that these skills are nurtured and developed to contribute sustainably over time. Selecting and recruiting the right talent is a core responsibility of an organisation's management team. Recruiting the required talent at the necessary time is critical

to ensuring organisational stability (Salehi et al, 2017). The onboarding process is the initial stage in building a talent pool capable of achieving sustained competitive advantage. Effectively managing the selection, recruitment and induction stages are critical initial steps in developing a successful TM strategy.

2.6.3 Developing and retaining Talent.

Talent development (TD) is a noticeably important practice associated with the efficient management of talent within an organisation. Garavan and colleagues (2012) inform that TD practices focus on providing employees with learning and developing opportunities to strengthen their knowledge and competencies. TD practices include, but are not limited to, coaching, mentoring, learning and development programmes, knowledge transfer initiatives, succession planning and career management (Salehi et al, 2017). Developing the competencies and knowledge of existing organisational talent is not only beneficial to improving current organisational performance, but also provides for creating a strong future workforce. An organisation's contribution to providing employees with training and development activities has also been linked in research to strengthening employee retention. Research conducted by Baskaran and Dalayga (2019) indicated that a company's retention strategy, which is inclusive of training and career development opportunities, can substantially increase an employee's intentions to remain working for an organisation. This strengthens the argument for the necessity of an organisation to implement effective TD practices as a means of efficiently managing their talent pool. However, research has also shown that many of today's business manager's lack the ability to engage in TD practices with their workforce. In their 2008 report on the state of global Talent Management, Hewitt's human capital consultancy found a significant lack of managerial education and awareness in delivering TD practices throughout the workplace. Longnecker and colleagues (2002) highlight that formal management education programmes are fundamental in ensuring that managers are equipped with the necessary skills needed to effectively manage and develop staff competencies. Senior management education programmes are critical to ensuring that employee development initiatives are implemented both beneficially and efficiently for an organisation.

Once an organisation has discovered, recruited, and developed a productive workforce, the next key process, associated with managing talent, is retaining the competencies and skills present within the organisation. Employee retention is a practice which consists of implementing policies and procedures that promote employee attachment and commitment to an organisation

(Francis, 2014). Research has been conducted to examine the importance of effective employee retention practices in organisations. Research conducted in the UAE by Abdallah, Jabeen and Mheiri (2021) found that giving employees responsibilities that promote empowerment and personal development, were central to employee retention within the health sector. These practices include delegation of tasks and professional development incentives focused on increasing employee engagement and empowerment (Abdallah et al, 2021). The professional development incentives consisted of; knowledge transfer learning, management training programmes and performance appraisal reviews. A study conducted in South Africa by Challenor and colleagues (2015) found it significantly important for an organisation to possess an employee retention strategy. This retention strategy should be implemented to acknowledge hard working efforts of high performing employees and rewards these employees for their strong work ethic. The function of such a strategy is to positively acknowledge professional competencies amongst employees in the workplace, resulting in increased employee engagement and performance (Challenor and Colleagues, 2015) The importance of talent retention practices is fundamental in preserving organisational skills, knowledge and competencies required to ensure continuous competitive advantage in an ever-changing marketplace (Bhatt, 2019) The next section will discuss the constraints associated with implementing a TM strategy.

2.6 Constraints of TM

Research and evidence have proven that when implementing TM strategies, organisations can encounter many constraints in the process. In their work on building leadership capability, Wellins and colleagues (2016) identify three significant challenges encompassed by many organisations worldwide when implementing a TM strategy. The first challenge identified in the research highlights how organisations can fail to ensure that their strategic alignment process is considerate of all measures required to deliver an effective business strategy. Despite organisation's securing a stable positioning and capital in the market, failure to ensure a successful talent pool is present, can often be detrimental to the success of a strategy. It is important for organisations to consider their human capital pipeline, consisting of employee's skills and competencies, before developing or altering any strategic plans.

Consistency in implementing TM practices is another challenge organisations in today's working environment encompass. Constancy is fundamental in measuring the outcomes of an organisation's TM practices. As stated by Subjaki (2016), the continuous managing and

developing of talents is a corporate practice that organisations should immerse themselves in, to build a working culture rich in learning and development. Unfortunately, many organisations today fail to put in place adequate measuring techniques to consistently monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of their TM practices. Implementing practices such as training needs analysis (TNA) and key performance indicators (KPI) can support an organisation in monitoring and evaluating the skills development and performance of their employees. In applying techniques such as KPI and TNA, an organisation can better understand the effects of their TM strategy and whether it is benefiting the organisation. Applying metrics is another important way to measure and monitor TM initiatives. Metrics are used by organisations to link the investment of human capital with the financial performance of an organisation (Hejase and Colleagues, 2016). A key issue with modern day organisations is the failure to ensure that the right measures leading to a successful workforce are identified. Measures such as organisational culture, competencies, behaviours, and mindset are often overlooked when implementing a TM strategy (Beatty, Becker and Huselid 2005). This can subsequently affect the successful incorporation of a TM strategy with the goals and objectives of an organisation. Hejase and Colleagues (2016) state that many organisations throughout the world do not accurately assess the current talent pool present within the workplace. Resultingly, organisations can fail in identifying talented employees, already employed within an organisation, as suitable candidates for upcoming leadership positions. Failing to assess and manage talent pools can lead to reduced engagement of employees and have a negative impact on the working culture within an organisation (CIPD, 2020).

2.7 TM throughout global health care sectors

Several studies have been conducted internationally which highlight the influence of TM practices within the health care sector. Mitosis, Lamnisos and Talias (2021) state that the implementation of TM strategies in healthcare settings can positively impact on employee engagement, client confidence and the healthcare organisation as a whole. It is important to note that when referring to the healthcare sector, there is a significant number of professions encompassed within the sector. Doctors, nurses, care assistants, pharmacists and many more professionals are all respected professions employed within the health care sector. In this research piece, TM strategies will be discussed firstly from a broader healthcare perspective followed by focusing more specifically on the Social Care division.

A recent study carried out in Iran by (Nojedeh and Ardabili, 2015) found implementing effective TM practices amongst nurses resulted in improved competency skills, increased organisational efficiency and personal work satisfaction. Results of the study found that practices associated with TM, such as strong recruitment initiatives and maintaining a competent workforce were central to ensuring client satisfaction and efficient hospital performance. It was also identified in this research that the use of TM systems such as offering learning opportunities and positive reward systems can increase the clinical skills of nurses, strengthen the retainment of key skills, and improve employee performance (Nojedeh et al, 2015). An alternative study conducted in the Slovakian healthcare sector identified that TM practices, when implemented effectively, had a positive effect on the overall skills development of staff within the health care sector. However, several issues were identified from this study that were not mentioned in the previous research piece and are significantly relevant. Notably, (Gajdzik, Taha and Zaid, 2015) concluded that the size of an organisation has a substantial impact on the successful implementation of TM practices. The larger the organisation is the more difficult it can be to implement TM practices. The study also found that only 56% of Slovakian healthcare workers acknowledged been offered the opportunity to participate in training and development programmes. There is little control over the filling of new positions with many employees reporting that no opportunities were offered to them to apply for managerial positions when they became available (Gajdzik et al, 2015).

A review of TM in Cyprian healthcare organisations by (Mitosis et al, 2021) found that strong management support and leadership is paramount to developing the competencies of staff in healthcare. Powell and Colleagues (2013) reiterate this by emphasising the positive influence that good leadership skills can have on achieving high performance amongst healthcare staff. Leaders are the personnel in an organisation who stimulate and motivate the entire workforce (Mitosis et al, 2021). It is essential that strong leadership skills are present to regulate and promote the engagement of staff. Supervision is a leadership practice that can be used to increase engagement and empowerment amongst employees. This is reflected in a study conducted by Silong and Colleagues (2015) which identified the positive effects of supervision in increasing the learning and development of trainee doctors. Other research has also highlighted the importance of effective supervision as a critical management led practice. The Care Council for Wales refer to supervision as an effective two-way process between worker and manager which provides support, direction, and professional development for SCW's (CCW, 2012). The council further states that supervision is a fundamental part of an SCW's

performance management plan. Whilst research has proven that CPD is a critical element in manging the talent and professional development of staff in the social care sector, there remains a significant lack of feedback from the sector to determine the overall effectiveness of such practices.

In 2016, the NHS published a leadership development framework aimed at developing the professional skills and competencies of NHS and Social care staff. The Leadership academy emphasise that talent and career development opportunities, within a health and social care setting, should be prioritised and inclusive of all workers regardless of their seniority. The primary objective of the development framework is to deliver coherent talent management across the NHS and develop health and social care services that recognises the potential and talent of all employees (NHS Leadership Academy, 2017). The leadership academy has developed a toolkit in collaboration with the NHS which provides the health service with a range of resources, such as practical templates, which are used to guide organisations in implementing TM practices. Included in the development framework are three main priorities to managing talent within the NHS. These priorities consist of,

- Establish regional talent boards responsible for overseeing the identification, assessment, and distribution of talent throughout the NHS.
- Provide organisations with support on implementing a best practice approach to TM of all staff.
- Increase the scale of the NHS' graduate training programme and establish a high potential scheme for various professions.

(NHS Northwest Leadership Academy Board, 2017).

The three priorities are set out from a whole systems approach which is inclusive of action at organisational, local, regional, and national level. On a global scale, the United Kingdom is performing significantly well from an international perspective. In 2020, the Global Talent Competitiveness Index (GTCI) ranked the United Kingdom as 12th in the world in global competitiveness for talent.

2.9 Managing talent within the Irish Social care sector.

Whilst the Social Care profession has existed in Ireland for many decades now, it is only in 2023 that social care will be recognised as a regulated profession by the Irish Health & Social care regulator (CORU, 2020). Changes in political, economic, and social demands have

increased the responsibilities for SCWs, not just in Irish society but around the world. As a result, the skills of SCWs are required now more so than ever to support vulnerable groups in society such as older adults with intellectual disabilities, the homeless community, addiction services and much more.

Within an Irish context, The Health and Social Care Professionals act, 2005 allows for the establishment of registration boards to govern professional development and proficiency. In 2015, CORU established the Social Care Registration Board and published "The Standards of Proficiency for Social Care Workers" (SCWRB, 2017) A primary objective of the registration board is endorsed in section 27 (3) of the health and social care professionals act 2005. This section states that a primary purpose of a registration board is to issue guidance and support to registrants on engaging in practices of continuous professional development. The encouragement of talent investment and professional development for SCWs is outlined in Section 4 of the "Standards of proficiency for Social Care Workers" devised by CORU. Within this section the following are listed as key components to ensuring CPD in the sector,

- an individual must be entitled to the opportunity to engage in professional development,
- an individual must understand the importance of participation in performance management activities for professional development,
- an individual must be given the opportunity to seek professional development to continuously improve practice. (SCWRB, 2017)

To meet the demands of an emerging profession, in 2009 the HSE published its first framework focusing on developing the skills and competencies of health and social care professionals (HSCP) in Ireland. The framework was known as 'The Education and Development strategy for HSCP 2009-2014' (HSE, 2009). It was identified from this initial framework that greater investment of resources was needed in supporting and encouraging the development of the respected professions. Such recommendations were as follows,

- A need to promote an integrated learning environment and support inter disciplinary working.
- A need for adequate training programmes to strengthen and maintain key skills in the health service.
- A need to build a learning culture which supports continuous professional development. (HSE, 2019)

The purpose of this strategy was to support and strengthen the learning and development of Health and Social Care professionals (HSCP) within the Irish Care sector. Initial steps were taken by the HSE in their 2009-2014 framework in recognising the need to develop the skills and competencies of health and SCWS. However, it was evident from practice and research that further measures were required. A study carried out by Cantwell and Power, (2016) on "Social Care during austerity" identified that the value of SCW becomes underdeveloped and constrained when it lacks a worker's own input towards their development opportunities. Further strategic frameworks would be needed to build on the outcomes of the initial framework and create a more effective and efficient development strategy. Themes that emerged from the initial development strategy of 2009-2014, were integrated further strategies in 2016 and 2021. The following section will examine the contribution of the 2016 and 2021 HSCP development strategies on skills development within the healthcare sector.

2.10 HSCP development strategies 2016 & 2021

In compliance with the standards of proficiency established by CORU, in 2016, the Health Service Executive (HSE) published their education and development strategy framework for HSCP in Ireland. The 2016-2019 strategy further endorses the principal objective of the HSE's initial 2009 education and development strategy. This objective is focused on engaging, developing, and valuing the skills of HSCP (HSE, 2016). Priorities outlined within the 2016 strategy were focused on the following themes,

- Supporting staff to engage in safe practice through effective supervision.
- Identifying and meeting the leadership and management needs of care staff
- Providing practice education to care staff.
- Valuing CPD for care staff and providing appropriate supports to engage in CPD.

A primary focus of this strategy was to ensure that workforce planning, staff engagement and learning & development, were at the forefront of encouraging the nurturing and development of employee's talent (HSE, 2017). In 2021, the HSE published a new development strategy for HSCP in Ireland. The 2021-2026 strategic guidance framework encourages a greater level of organisational and team involvement in developing skills and competencies of staff. The introduction of HSE land, an online learning platform for HSCP, is now in operation throughout health and social care settings. The HSE online learning hub is central to the 2021 strategies' objective of encouraging HSCP to engage in co-learning and development programmes (HSE, 2020).

Continuous Professional Development in Social care

Continuous professional development (CPD) refers to a work-based activity that encourages a person to engage in the learning of new skills and knowledge associated with their professional role. CORU (2020) refer to CPD as vital in ensuring that the competencies and skills of SCW's remain updated and relevant to current practice. The SCW's registration board highlights that it is the responsibility of the SCW to ensure that they participate and engage in CPD. Whilst the registration board outlines the need self-involvement in professional development, the employer has a significant responsibility to ensure that provisions are met for the worker to engage in CPD within the workplace. This is reflected in section three of the HSE's 2021-2026 education and development strategy which places an obligation on the employee's organisation to support them in their CPD pathway. The introduction of HSE land, an online learning portal, has provided SCW's with a continuous learning platform to engage in CPD. Courses are provided to SCW's to support competency development in areas such as policy management, client personal care, HIQA (Health Information and Quality Authority) standards, and engaging in career progression (Social Care Ireland, 2020). The introduction of HSE land has certainly contributed towards the CPD of staff within the care sector. However it has also been identified that other management led practices, such as professional supervision, are also central to developing staff's knowledge and competencies.

Conclusion to review:

Previous research has identified that TM is still very much an emerging practice in the management field. As identified in the review, inclusive and exclusive approaches are significant in how an organisation manages the potential talent of their workforce (CIPD, 2020). Whilst research has been conducted to examine practices of TM in various global healthcare sectors, little information is available to explore the concept with pertinence to the Irish care sector. Several HSCP education and development strategies have been implemented by the HSE since 2009 to date, directed towards addressing the CPD of HSCP. There has been minimal research conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of such education and development strategies on the professional development of healthcare staff within the sector. It is the primary objective of this research to explore, through direct engagement with SCW's working in the field, the effectiveness of the HSE's strategies in nurturing and manging the talent of professionals within a Social Care setting. It is hoped that this research can create an accurate representation of how the talent within the Social Care sector is currently being managed and,

just as importantly, retained for the future growth of the caring profession. The following chapter will discuss the primary research question and sub questions in greater detail.

3.0 Research Question

3.1 Introduction

Research to date on TM highlight how the practice is still very much evolving within the field of management. There is a lack of information available to identify how the talent of care workers within the Irish Social Care sector is nurtured and developed. Whilst studies have been conducted throughout various European healthcare sectors, little research reflects the effectiveness of TM in care sectors throughout Ireland. As mentioned by Hinchliffe (2018) many organisations face significant challenges retaining key talent, as the competition in the war for talent continues. With the current global pandemic, retaining essential health and social care staff has never been more important for the Irish healthcare sector. As identified by Garavan et al (2012), key TM practices such as TD, are crucial to sustaining employee's levels of motivation and empowerment within their job role. As well as TD initiatives, the use of TM systems like positive reward recognition through supervision and maintaining a knowledgeable workforce has proved effective from research by Nojedeh and Ardabili (2015). This piece wishes to examine whether such systems and practices are proving effective and beneficial for staff within an Irish Social Care setting.

It is certain that frameworks have been introduced by CORU and the HSE, to encourage investment in the learning and development of SCWs. Section 4 of CORU's standard of proficiency for SCWs encourage the investment of resources in developing and maintaining talent within the care sector. However, there is still a significant gap in literature to evaluate the effectiveness that these frameworks have on the nurturing and development of talent within the sector. Mayers et al (2013) refers to talent as something which may be either "acquired" or "innate." Certain people possess talent naturally whilst others, if encouraged, can develop talent along their career pathway. Are SCWs employed within the Social Care sector receiving enough encouragement to develop their talents along the way or is talent selected from specific "talent pools"? This research aims to explore and determine this important question.

There is a gap in literature to explore SCW's own perception on the opportunities afforded to them to engage in CPD. Whilst various strategies have been introduced to promote CPD by the HSE, there is limited understanding of how effective these strategies are in practice. Through this research, constructive feedback can be obtained from first-hand experience on whether such strategies are proving beneficial in practice.

3.2 Research Aims and Purpose of the Study.

This research aims to identify how priorities established in past and current HSE strategies are ensuring the retention of key talent alongside the development of knowledge and competencies. Given the lack of previous research in this area, a qualitative approach will provide a greater insight into the direct experiences of SCW's within the sector. The research aims to gain a deeper understanding of care worker's own practical experiences of how TM practices are implemented. The research aims to examine whether current education and development strategies being implemented by the HSE are effective in practice. HCSP constitute 25% of the clinical workforce in Ireland and 14% of the overall workforce (HSE, 2021) With the current global pandemic and with increasing staff shortages in the health care sector, this research is important to determine whether practices in place to nurture, develop and retain key talent are effective. In respect of this information, the following research question and objectives have been formulated.

3.3 Research Questions/objectives

The research will be guided by the following research questions.

Overall research objective

An exploratory study on how the potential talent of Social Care Workers is nurtured and developed within an Irish Social Care setting.

Research question 1- What are the current Talent Management practices being used in the Irish Social Care Sector?

The research aims to develop a greater understanding of the practices being used to manage talent within the Social Care sector. Whilst strategies have been introduced by the HSE to develop skills and competencies of SCW's, this research aims to explore the link between theoretical recommendations and application of these recommendations to practice within the sector. As stated by the CIPD (2020), the approach taken to manage talent within any sector should be a fair and just exercise. The approach taken by an organisation to manage and develop talent, such as inclusive or exclusive, can greatly influence an organisations stride in the "war for talent" (Fisherman, 1998). This research aims to establish a clearer insight into the current TM practices that are being implemented amongst the social care profession. Are these TM practices adapting an inclusive or an exclusive approach? Are practices of TM currently in place for SCW's effective enough to ensure critical knowledge retention in the sector?

Research question 2- What are Social Care Worker's perceptions on how their continuous professional development is nurtured and managed?

The research aims to gain a deeper insight into SCW's own personal experiences within the Social Care sector. Little research has been conducted to consider SCW's own perceptions and opinions regarding their opportunities to engage with CPD. Outlined in the HSE's development and education strategy for HSCP (2021-2026), is the importance of organisations ensuring staff receive opportunities to engage in CPD. The information required to address this research question can best be obtained through direct engagement with SCW's, who possess the fundamental experience to support this research. Semi-structured interviews conducted with staff working in the care setting will allow an opportunity to develop a greater knowledge base on CPD opportunities afforded to SCW's. This research will explore workers own perceptions on the effectiveness of CPD initiatives being offered to them such as online training via HSE land and professional supervision. Given that research conducted on developing employees' talents proved fundamental to effective TM strategies (Baskaran and Dalayga, 2019) it is important to gain direct feedback from staff within the Social Care sector, on CPD incentives being used. A qualitative approach using semi-structured interviews will provide the research with key information from primary informants with real life experience working in a Social Care setting.

Research question 3- How effective are the current Talent Management practices being used in the Social Care sector for staff?

Daniel and Ibrahim (2018) outline several practices associated with TM, as key to managing and nurturing an organisation's talent. These practices consist of good development incentives such as training and learning opportunities, strong organisational retention strategies and good recruitment/selection processes. Combined, these practices can greatly influence the effectiveness of an organisation's TM strategy (Daniel and Ibrhaim, 2018). This research aims to explore, from the shared experience of SCW's, whether development opportunities, the recruitment and selection process and how staff are encouraged to remain in an organisation, are proving effective. This will provide greater clarity on whether TM practices being used in the Irish social care sector are effective for developing, managing, and retaining talent within the sector. There is a significant gap in literature to evaluate the effectiveness of these learning and development frameworks on TM within a Social Care setting. The interview schedule will

be adapted to provide questions which will help gain an insight into the effectiveness of current TM strategies for SCWs.

Research question 4- Are the skills and competencies outlined within the job role reflected in the day-to-day tasks of a Social Care Worker?

The research wants to explore the link between whether staff working within a Social Care work setting are aware, prior to commencing their job role, of their tasks and duties. Job advertisements constitute a central part of the recruitment and selection process involved with attaining the right talent for an organisation. Barton and Rouse Jones (2007) highlight that the process of succession planning is often incorporated into an organisation's corporate strategy when advertising job roles and vacancies. This research aims to identify, through directly speaking with SCW's within the care sector, if the competencies and skills of SCW's actively reflect the initial job description that staff applied for. This is important for this piece of research as it will allow the researcher to explore whether practices of TM, such as recruitment and onboarding key talent, are incorporated into job advertisements for SCW's. This will help strengthen the overall objective of exploring how the social care sector in Ireland encourages the nurturing and development of talent. Semi-structured interviews with staff working within an organisation will support the research in acquiring this information. Open ended questions will provide a flexible protocol and allow for variation away from the primary question asked. This will allow for the collection of additional subjective information that may support the research.

3.4 Conclusion

The richness of data that can be obtained from interviewing SCW's working directly in the care sector is very important to this study. Prior to conducting these interviews, all SCW's being selected for interview will be issued with a pre interview information sheet and consent form. The pre-interview information sheet will define key terms being used within the interview and further explain the purpose of this research. Further details to conducting this research will be discussed in detail in the subsequent methodology section.

4.0 Research Methodology

4.1 Introduction to methodology

This chapter will discuss the methodological framework used to conduct this piece of research. The method and design to implementing the research will be discussed within. The population of interest will be discussed, inclusive of the sample size and techniques to conducting the study. Methods of data collection, ethical considerations and other relevant information will also be referred to within this piece. Throughout this piece, the researcher will refer to the "research onion" tool developed by Saunders and colleagues in 2007 (See figure 1). This model consists of six different layers which represent the different stages in the research methodology process. Using this systematic approach, one will start at the outermost layer and work progressively inwards towards the centre, justifying each stage in the process. The subsequent section of this chapter will explore the research design rationale.

Figure 1 "The Research Onion"
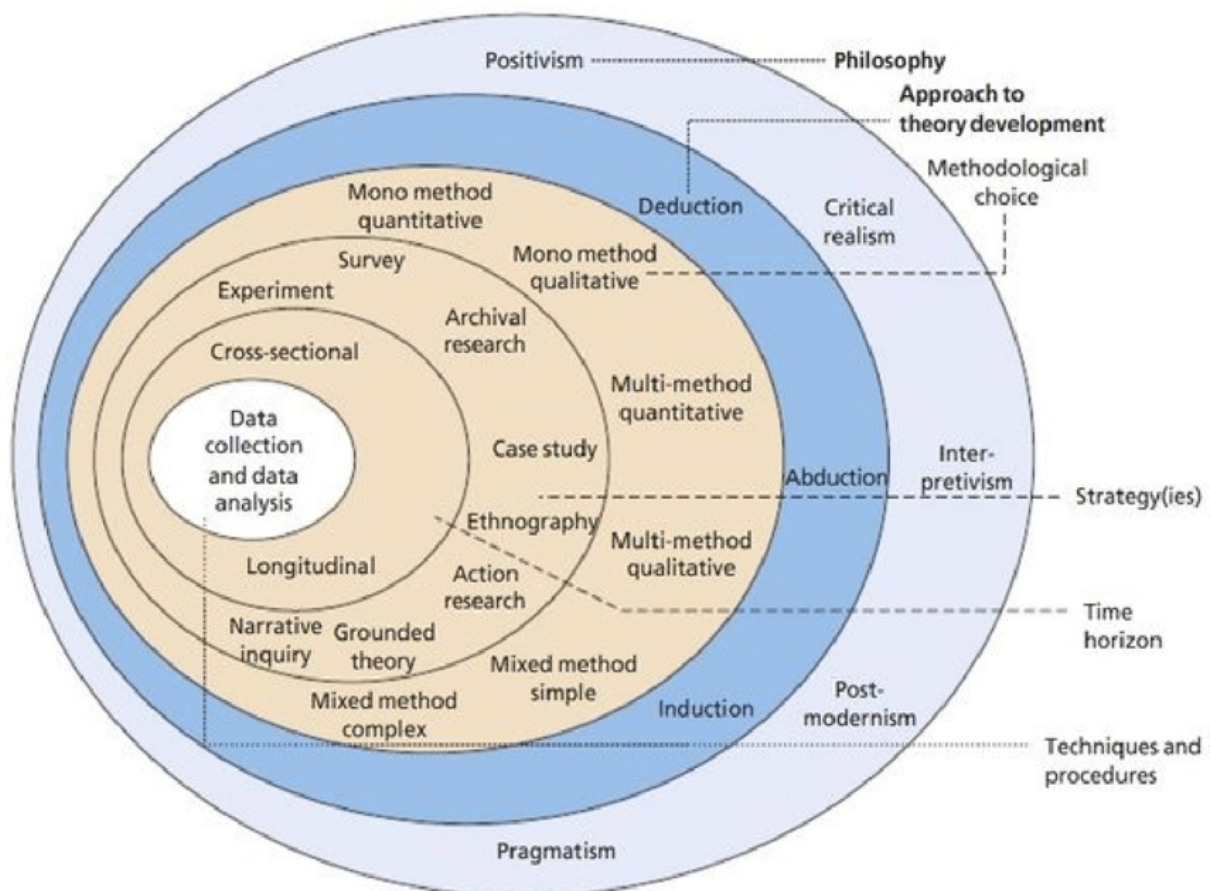
(Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2007).

4.2 Research Design Rationale

With the exploratory nature of the research topic, this research used a qualitative approach to collect valuable research data. A qualitative approach was chosen instead of a quantitative one, as a qualitative approach, using semi-structured interviews, provided the research with an interactive platform to gain a better understanding of both the research topic and participants. A qualitative approach using semi structured interviews was the most efficient way to gain an understanding of valuable perceptions from the interviewee's perspective. In the context of this research, it was critical to engage in meaningful and valuable face to face interactions with SCW's working within a Social Care setting. The meaningfulness and richness of the information that was gained from one-to-one interviews could not have been gained from adapting a quantitative approach, such as conducting a survey or questionnaire. It was critical to develop a directly interactive relationship with the research participants to attain the valuable and sensitive data needed for this research. A qualitative approach facilitated the development of this research relationship.

4.3 Research philosophy

Research philosophy refers to the way in which the process of knowledge acquisition occurs. According to Žukauskas, Vveinhardt and Andriukaitienė (2018), research philosophy constitutes the basis of the research consisting of the choice of strategy used, formulating the research problem which eventually leads to the collection, processing, and analysing of research data. The three primary research philosophies are interpretivism, positivism and pragmatism. The philosophies of positivism and pragmatism were considered prior to conducting this research. This study has adopted the research philosophy of interpretivism as it focuses on the meaningful contribution of people's character and participation in the social world (Chowdhury, 2014). The primary focus of this research was to explore, through direct interaction with SCW's, the professionals' perceptions on the nurturing and management of talent within the social care sector. An interpretivism approach to this research allowed the researcher to focus on the underlying motives and meanings behind a person's actions, such as their behaviour and interaction with other people **(**Whitley, 1984). This facilitated the collection of valuable data from SCW's, in a natural environment, focusing primarily on the participants, as valuable sources of research data. To strengthen the reason for adapting an interpretivism approach to this research, Lin (1998) highlights that this approach allows a

researcher to reaffirm information already known and further develop the knowledge and understanding to form additional, newly discovered information.

4.4 Research approach

The research approach constitutes the second layer in the research onion model. Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2016) state that they're two primary approaches used when carrying out research. These are inductive and deductive. A deductive approach, associated more typically with quantitative analysis, focuses on developing and testing a hypothesis from previous theories (Dew, 2007). A deductive approach is required when measuring relationship between variables that requires the use of statistics and numbers to analyse information. A deductive approach was considered when conducting this research. However, given the exploratory nature of the research an inductive approach was chosen as the most suitable approach to collecting a rich platform of qualitative findings.

This research was specifically interested in the perceptions of SCW's working within an Irish Social Care setting. To develop an understanding of the opinions and viewpoints of the research participants, an inductive approach was chosen to allow for the acquisition of new insights and understandings on TM practices within the Social Care setting. An inductive approach facilitated the presentation of new knowledge through direct engagement with research participants working in the study site. This approach was fundamental in providing the research with the learning and development of additional knowledge on TM practices. In developing a deeper insight into TM practices direct engagement with human participants working within the respected area, was necessary. An inductive approach allowed the research to focus on a smaller number of participants within the specific sector. This was critical to answering the research questions proposed in this study.

4.5 Research Design

The research design concerns the type of analysis that will be used to receive the desired research results (Asenahabi, 2019). The research design conveys the data required for the research and the most appropriate method to attain the data. Layer three of the "research onion" refer to the types of methodological approaches used to conduct research (Saunders et al, 2016). Whilst there are six types of methodologies included in the "research onion" the most prominent ones used in research are quantitative, qualitative, and mixed method. (Saunders et al, 2016). Figure 2 below shows a descriptive form of each research design.

Figure 2. Research Designs
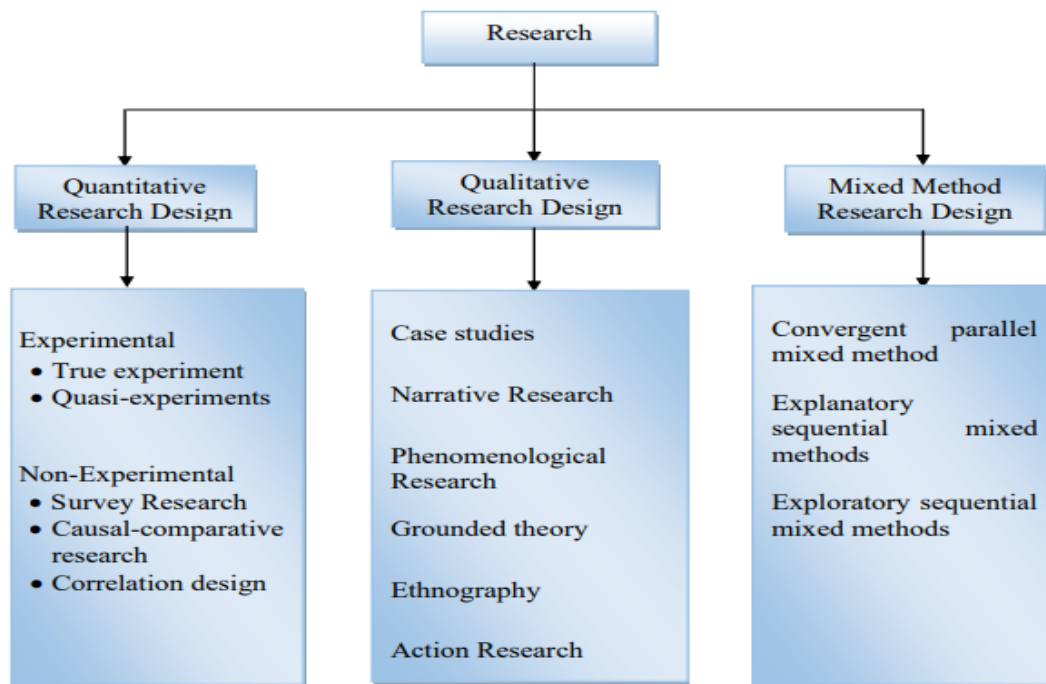
(Asenahabi, 2019).

Quantitative research focuses significantly on analytical methods to collect research information. (Asenahabi, 2019). Examples of quantitative research methods include surveys, questionnaires and other forms of numerically designed information gathering techniques. Qualitative research is concerned with exploring the social contribution of a person, or group of people, about a specific human issue (Creswell, 2014). Qualitative research can produce person rich data that is not possible to retrieve through quantitative research methods i.e., open ended surveys and questionnaires (Asenahabi, 2019). Saunders et al (2016) mentions that a mixed method approach may also be beneficial when conducting certain pieces of research. A mixed method approach considers the use of both quantitative and qualitative methods to collect valuable information relevant to the study. The researcher did consider, prior to conducting the research, the most appropriate design to implement. For this research study, a qualitative approach was selected as the most suitable research design to answer the proposed

research questions. This research adopted a qualitative approach as it allowed the researcher to investigate a certain issue or phenomenon in its natural environment, through one-to-one interaction with other people. The research questions proposed in this research rely significantly on the perception and knowledge of SCW's working within the Social Care sector. Qualitative semi-structured interviews provided the research with a fundamental opportunity to engage in one-to-one interaction with the target audience. This facilitated a more logical understanding of the research topic which supported the research in answering the proposed research questions.

4.6 Time Horizon

Layer five of the "research onion" consists of timeframes for the piece of research. There are two alternative options available here, cross sectional and longitudinal. Longitudinal research is concerned with analysing specific data samples over a long period of time. Cross-sectional data research, in contrast, is confined to collecting data over a particular time frame (Saunders et al, 2019). However, due to the time limitations associated with completing an academic study this research adopted a cross-sectional approach.

4.7 Data collection methods

Data collection refers to the process involved in gathering information from research participants (Jameel and Majid, 2018). This is the sixth and innermost layer of "the research onion". When referring to data collection, there are two types of data that can be gathered. These consist of primary data and secondary data. Primary data refers to information retrieved directly from the research participants by the investigator (Jameel et al, 2018). Secondary data refers to information that is already available or has already been published from previous research. The methods used to collect data vary according to the methodological approach being used to conduct the piece of research. Quantitative research focusses primarily on using systematic methods to collect primary data such as questionnaires and surveys. These methods of data collection can be beneficial for research aimed at collecting information about relationships between exposures and outcomes (Boynton and Greenhalgh, 2004).

Collecting primary data in qualitative research can be conducted in several ways such as focus groups, observations, and interviews. For the purpose of this research, semi-structured interviews were the most suitable data collection method for attaining rich qualitative information. The research questions focused greatly on SCW's perceptions of TM practices within their work environment. The primary data required to answer these questions was most

efficiently collected from engaging in interactive dialogue with SCWs. The research incorporated the collection of primary data retrieved from these interviews with existing knowledge and information on the research topic. Pre-existing frameworks and theory on TM represented the secondary data used in this research. This data has been discussed in the literature review section. The primary data collected from these interviews formed a fundamental part of this research and were collaborated with pre-existing secondary data to explore this research topic.

4.8 Research Instrument

As this was an exploratory piece of research, semi-structured interviews allowed for an exploration into the perceptions of SCW's on how their talent is nurtured and encouraged to grow. The primary focus of the research was to develop a greater understanding of SCW's own viewpoints and opinions on TM practices within a Social Care setting. Dejonckheere and Vaughn (2019**)** note that the primary purpose of using semi-structured interviews for collecting data is to gather information from a specific target audience who can share personal experiences and beliefs on the research topic. Semi-structured interviews provided the research with the necessary scope to explore the research topic. This was achieved through direct interaction with a sample audience with the appropriate knowledge to benefit this research. To familiarise research participants with the concept of TM, a pre-interview information sheet was sent to each participant three days before the interview was due to take place. (Appendix A) This allowed the interviewee an opportunity to familiarise themselves with the concept of TM and the purpose of the research piece prior to partaking in the interview. A pre interview information sheet contributed towards strengthening the quality of information gathered in the interview process, as it provided familiarisation and awareness to participants beforehand on the research topic. With the current Covid-19 pandemic, interviews were conducted using MS teams. Interviewees were informed, prior to interviews taking place, that the interviews were being recorded for sole purposes of the research. The researcher will have access to transcriptions from interviews to support the analysis stage of the research process.

4.9 Sample participants and size

The sample participants for this research consisted of eight SCW's employed within a healthcare organisation funded by the HSE. The sample participants, selected, were chosen due to their appropriate relationship with the research topic. A small sample size of eight participants was chosen to provide a general reflection of the necessary information needed

and increase saturation levels in the information gathered. The sample participants provided a recollection of their personal working knowledge and experiences. Whilst the sample size is not representative of the entire social care sector in Ireland, it could be regarded as feasible due to the time frame of this academic research. The participation of eight SCW's, as the participants for this research, contributed significantly to the valuable saturation of rich information. Purposeful sampling was used to select the research participants for this study. When conducting an exploratory study, it is important to have a variation in age ranges and genders to get a more all-encompassing result. Therefore, purposeful sampling was used to select the interviewees for this research as this allowed for greater levels of saturation in the information gathered amongst the mixture of participants. The interviewees were comprised of four males and four females, all within the same age range. The age range of the interviewees has been specifically selected. This was purposely done to meet the required years of experience and knowledge needed to accurately benefit the overall research. The researcher has direct working associations with the sample audiences which made access to research participants easier, convenient, and more affordable.

4.10 Data analysis

Once the collection of data has been completed, the next step in the research process involves analysing the data gathered. Given the inductive nature of this research, a thematic approach was chosen as the method for interpretating the data gathered. Braun and Clarke (2018) highlight that a thematic approach is a flexible, yet systematic one to analysing qualitative data from semi structured interviews. The researcher constitutes a central role in analysing the information received from the interviews and devising themes to appropriately reflect observations and patterns gathered from research participants (Desantis and Ugarriza, 2000). A concept analysis framework was used in this research consisting of a thematic analysis to analyse the data gathered from the interviews. The next section will outline how the analysis was conducted.

4.11 Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis was used in this research because of the flexibility and accessibility of this method in analysing the qualitative data gathered. A thematic analysis facilitated the linking of previous frameworks and concepts with the new information gathered, using the process of coding, and systematically organising the new data collected. Braun and Clarke (2006) six phases of thematic analysis were used to transcribe, code, and review each interview.

Following the six phases, the researcher was able to thematically analyse the information gathered from the semi-structured interviews. Keeping each interview separate and coded was significant to the success of this approach. Whilst this approach to analysing the data collected was effective, the researcher did encounter difficulties at times when implementing the approach. At times, the researcher found it difficult to recognise sub themes and sub patterns in the information. However, the researcher was able to separate out and code the information gathered more efficiently to overcome this difficulty.

4.12 Ethical considerations

Prior to commencing the research, the researcher sought approval from the National College of Ireland's ethics committee. Following the selection of interview participants, each participant was provided with a pre interview information sheet outlining the full nature of the research being undertaken. (Appendix A) A consent form was issued to each participant outlining their right to withdraw at any time throughout the research process. (Appendix C) Permission was sought from the person in charge of the residential unit from which interviews with staff were being conducted with. Pseudo names were used to protect the identity of the participants. All interview information were stored in a password protected laptop and folder. All participants were made aware that they can cease participation in the research at any time prior, during and after the interview process.

4.13 Limitations to research

As with any piece of research conducted this research too had its own limitations. Given the time constraint resulting from completing an academic piece of study, only a cross sectional sample audience could be interviewed. If the researcher had more time, a longitudinal approach would have been used to evaluate changes, over an extended timeframe, in TM practices within multiple Social Care settings. The study was also limited due to difficulties accessing research participants with the current ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. The research is limited to SCW's working in one specific HSE organisation within the social care sector. If social restrictions were not in place, the research could have been broadened to encompass the participation of SCW's working in other organisations and settings. This would have allowed the research to gain insights and perceptions from staff working across various organisations in comparison to one specific work setting.

5.0 Results and findings

5.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to explore, analyse and present the findings that were discovered through conducting semi-structured interviews with eight SCW's working within a Social Care setting. The chapter will explore the findings from these interviews and using a thematic analysis, identify and present the themes that emerged. The analysis will be performed on the data collected from the interviews with the eight research participants.

5.2 Aim of Research

The primary aim of this research was to explore how the potential talent of SCW's working within an Irish Social Care setting is nurtured and developed. The research questions that follow were constructed to gain a deeper insight into the research topic and provide a more accurate reflection of the overall research objective. The questions asked within the interview process were constructed to support the finding of answers to the following research questions.

- What are the current Talent Management practices being used in the Irish Social Care Sector?
- What are Social Care Worker's perceptions on how their continuous professional development is nurtured and managed?
- How effective are the current Talent Management practices being used in the Social Care Sector for staff?
- Are the skills and competencies outlined within the job role reflected in the day-to-day tasks of a Social Care Worker?

5.3 Data Analysis

The semi-structured interviews carried out to explore this research piece were conducted with eight SCW's working within an Irish Social Care setting. The interviews were guided by an interview schedule which can be seen in Appendix B. Information regarding the research participants will remain anonymous to maintain confidentiality and comply with ethical standards. The table below represents the eight SCW's who took part in these semi-structured interviews.

Table 1: Demographic of Research Participants.

Research Participant No:	Role	Sex	Age	No of Years working
P1	Social Care Worker	M	42	17
P2	Social Care Worker	F	32	11
P3	Social Care Worker	F	55	26
P4	Social Care Worker	M	35	12
P5	Social Care Worker	M	51	22
P6	Social Care Worker	F	29	9
P7	Social Care Worker	F	61	39
P8	Social Care Worker	M	28	6

5.4 Research findings

This section presents the findings to the overall research objective of exploring how the potential talent of SCW's is nurtured and developed within an Irish Social Care setting. Braun and Clarke (2006) six step framework of thematic analysis has been used to identify and present emerging themes and patterns in the data set. Maguire and Delahunt (2017) state that this framework for identifying and presenting emerging themes is significantly popular in qualitative research as it provides a clear and practical approach to analysing data. Through conducting a thematic analysis of the data gathered, four main themes were identified. These themes will be presented and discussed below.

5.5 Theme A: Inclusiveness of TM practices

It became apparent following the interview process that all eight participants believed the environment in which they worked was one of inclusiveness and impartiality. The prevalence of an inclusive approach to TM in the Social Care setting became apparent from the responses to the interview participants. The investment of resources to develop the talent pipeline of staff within the setting appears to be widespread and inclusive of all workers, rather than specifically targeting certain employees with high potential.

What I like most about how our organisation manages the talent of their staff is the equal approach taken to offer each person the same opportunity to progress in their career. I have been working as an SCW within my organisation for 11 years and I have always been treated equally when it comes to receiving opportunities to develop my professional skills and talent.
Female, aged 32, SCW, 11 years' experience in organisation

When asked about whether current practices were effective for nurturing and managing talent within the social care sector, all participants responded affirmatively. It became evident from the respondents that an inclusive system was in place within the social care setting that afforded all SCW's an opportunity to access and engage in competency development initiatives. It was noted from several participants that each staff member received the same investment of resources in the competency development process.

In our organisation, scheduled monthly supervision meetings with our line manager, allow staff the opportunity to enrol in additional courses on offer within the organisation. At the supervision sessions our manager will record any interests that staff may have in pursuing additional training and development. All social care staff that I work with are given the same chance to enrol in upcoming learning programmes that are being made available.

Male, age 34, SCW, 11 years' experience in organisation

When asked "What opportunities were afforded to progress one's career status"? Each participant responded with a similar answer. It was apparent from the responses to this question that job advertisements, for promotional opportunities are made available to all staff to apply for. It was evident that an inclusive approach, considerate of all staff's competency development, was in place within this social care setting. Unlike an exclusive approach to TM,

an inclusive approach, which is evident from this Social Care setting, is accommodating to the skills development of all employees. All participants shared mutual agreement that the investment of resources and programmes to develop staff's competencies and skills was done from an all-rounded approach rather than a selective one.

If an opportunity for promotion becomes available, each unit within the service is sent a job advertisement and all staff can apply for the promotion. Everybody receives the same opportunity to apply for the position. It is up to the staff member themselves whether they apply or not. There has not been a time since I started working in the organisation that I was not aware a promotional opportunity was available. I have always known about it and, personally, I never applied because I am happy in my current role.

Female, age 61, SCW, 39 years' experience in organisation

5.6 Theme B: Enhanced engagement through self-managing career progression

Emerging from the interviews with the eight participants was a consensus on the positive influence that online training portals, such as HSE land, have on an individual's professional skills development. The SCW's interviewed spoke significantly about experiencing an increase in engagement and empowerment through being able to participate in online training courses via HSE land. Staff expressed contentment at being able to partake in courses at their own time preference, as well as being able to register for training programmes that best support their skill sets.

I find being allowed the opportunity to access courses on HSE land, at my own leisure, has greatly supported my journey of continuous professional development. It has given me more confidence in myself as I feel like I am given the personal choice to participate in training programmes that I believe will best support me.

Female, age 29, SCW, 9 years' experience in organisation

It was apparent that current training incentives aimed at nurturing and developing the skills of SCW's was proving to be effective for TD and retaining talent within the sector. Allowing SCW's the opportunity to personally chose which courses they feel could benefit their own professional growth had a significant positive impact on their career motivation. The participants indicated that allowing employees a degree of freedom in selecting and enrolling in courses of their choice, increased levels of staff empowerment.

We are always offered additional training and having access to HSE land keeps staff happy within their roles by supporting them to further develop in work related or personal goals. Being given the autonomy to enrol in whatever courses we feel can benefit our career progression is very self-empowering and motivating in our line of work.

Male, age 28, SCW, 6 years' experience in organisation

5.7 Theme C: Strengthened retention and development through increased motivation.

The third theme that emerged from conducting the interviews was the positive influence that increased workplace motivation had on retaining and developing staff within the setting. A significant number of participants agreed that motivation is a key factor that keeps them working in their job role, and eager to constantly develop their professional skills. Interestingly, practices such as professional supervision, performance management reviews and receiving job compliments were all significant factors in what motivated the staff to remain in their job roles.

Our organisation is very proactive in offering ongoing training and development opportunities, both mandatory and non-mandatory. When staff express an interest in a particular course at supervision, then the organisation's training department is very good at following up and ensuring staff are facilitated with their expression of interest. It is motivating to know that your interest to learn is taken seriously.

Male, age 51, SCW, 22 years' experience in organisation

Reward management systems such as employee of the month and staff appraisals are motivating as they make you feel like you are doing a good job overall. If we receive a compliment from a staff member, a client or a client's family then our local manager will contact us to inform us of the positive news. It is reassuring to know that the hard work we do is noticed and appreciated.

Male, age 42, SCW, 17 years' experience in organisation

It was observed from the findings in the interviews that all participants felt a close association and strong degree of loyalty towards the organisation that they were working for. Workplace motivation was strengthened by the reassurance of job flexibility and organisational commitment to staff's needs.

My organisation allows me the flexibility to work, study and care for my children. It offers me the support I need in all areas of my life. "Personally, the accommodation of all three factors is why I will never leave.

Male, 28, SCW, 6 years' experience in organisation

Several participants also noted that they would be hesitant to look for another job in another organisation, or sector, due to the personal commitment and dedication they had to their clients. Motivation amongst the interview participants is greatly influenced by the professional attachment with their clients with whom they care for.

I find social care work is a very fulfilling and rewarding job. It is certainly a vocation. I have a strong personal attachment with my clients, all on a professional level. I am committed to caring for my clients' needs. It would be very hard for me to walk away from my job knowing that I am walking away from caring for them too.

Female, age 55, SCW, 26 years' experience in organisation

It was also apparent that the opportunities to progress one's career are significant to people when pursuing a career in SCW. Information received from the participants informed the research that the current roles of the participants allowed them significant opportunities to advance and develop their professional status.

I feel that the supports to progress and develop one's career are also a very motivating factor to working in social care. The Opportunity to progress in your career and apply for promotional opportunities are constant in our organisation.

Male, age 51, SCW, 22 years' experience in organisation

Participants identified that it was a combination of both opportunities to progress, career wise, and a devotion to their clients, that motivated them to pursuing a career in SCW.

5.8 Theme D: Lack of precision in job advertisements

The fourth and final theme that emerged from the interview process was that job advertisements did not accurately depict the expected roles and duties of the SCW's. It was evident from the interview respondents that additional duties were expected of staff, from what was initially advertised. All eight respondents agreed that there was a considerable variation in the job duties expected of them compared to what was advertised in the initial job advertisement. This caused dissatisfaction amongst the interviewees as they believed that their professional qualifications as SCW's were not being utilised efficiently in their job setting.

I was not told before I started in my job that I was going to have to be a cleaner, a cook and a general housewife. When I applied for my job as an SCW the advertisement specifically stated I would be directly supporting the social needs of people in my care. There was nothing mentioned about spending most of the day cleaning and cooking.

Female, age 29, SCW, 9 years' experience in organisation

Discontentment amongst respondents was expressed regarding the length of time spent completing an undergraduate degree in Professional SCW and the irrelevance of course material to practical job duties. It was noted by participants that the responsibilities listed in job advertisements for Social Care job roles do not reflect the level of academic work required to initially attain a qualification in SCW. A lack of satisfaction was expressed about the inaccurate reflection of actual job roles on job advertisements.

I feel sometimes in my job like I went to college for 4 years to clean, cook, and do laundry. I do feel as if a considerable amount of SCW job roles are not correctly advertised. Social care organisations do not inform potential employees of the additional duties of the job that go beyond the social model of care thought in course work material at college.

Male, age 34, SCW, 11 years' experience in organisation

A lack of accurate job descriptions was also linked to reasons why employees left the Social Care role that they were employed in. It was noted by two interviewees that previous roles held by the participants, did not reflect the job advertisement they initially applied to. Participants expressed that the primary reason for leaving their job role was due to an inconstancy between actual job duties and initial job advertisement.

There is a very specific reason why I left my first job role. I applied for a position as a project coordinator and was assured that I would be working on the floor alongside the clients I was supporting". "This was also stated in the job advertisement. "However, I ended up being placed in an office location away from the clients and provided limited opportunities to interact with them. This was not the job that I applied for. I left it two months later and found my current role which I am very content in.

Female, age 29, SCW, 9 years' experience in organisation

It was advised by P3, who has 26 years' experience working within the sector, that job advertisements should be more accurately devised to portray a more realistic expectation of the job role.

Summary

The interview participants were all SCW's working within the same organisation. The gender, ages of employees and years of experience were purposely selected to allow for greater variation in the results received. The findings, amongst the participants, were similar in nature given that all employees were working within the same organisation. The emergent themes that were identified were: inclusiveness of TM practices, enhanced engagement through self-managing career progression, strengthened retention and development through increased motivation and lack of precision in job advertisements. All four of the emerging themes contribute to understanding how the potential talent of SCWs is nurtured and developed within an Irish Social Care setting. The following discussion chapter will explore and discuss the findings in greater detail.

6.0 Discussion and Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

The primary aim of this research was to explore how the potential talent of SCW's working in a Social Care setting is nurtured and developed. The research piece was guided by four research questions. The necessary data needed to explore this research question was collected from eight research participants, through conducting semi-structured interviews. It was evident from the data collected that there is a positive staff perception on the inclusiveness of approaches taken to nurture and develop talent in Social Care settings. It was observed from the findings that the autonomy given to manage ones' career progression in social care had a positive influence on engagement levels amongst staff. Current TM practices in place were observed to have a positive impact on the motivation and interest of SCW's towards their job role. Finally, results from the interviews indicated that a lack of accurate job descriptions on job advertisements were negatively impacting the job satisfaction and retention of staff in the Social Care sector. The subsequent sections will discuss the findings of this research.

6.2 Discussion of Research Question One

Q) What are the current TM practices being used in the Irish Social Care Sector?

 The findings suggested that current TM practices in the care setting, where the research was conducted, are implemented from an inclusive and all-round approach. The information collected from SCW's working in the Social Care setting suggested that a widespread investment of learning resources was in place to develop the talent potential of all staff, rather than a selected pool of talent. As discussed in the review, Downs, Swailes and Orr (2014) highlight that an inclusive approach reflects an organisation's investment of learning resources into developing and maintaining the talent pipeline already employed within a service. This was particularly evident from the data gathered in this research. Participants emphasised that there was an equal approach taken to offer all staff the same opportunity to develop their professional potential. This approach to TM produces a more united workplace where all employees feel equally valued and appreciated. Meyers (2015) states that an inclusive TM strategy focuses on identifying the inner potential in all employees and utilising these capabilities to the benefit of both the employee and organisation. The research found that scheduled monthly supervisions with line managers facilitate an opportunity for all staff to

express their interests in any new training programmes available. This reflects an employee centred approach to nurturing and managing the staff's skills development process.

Reinforcing an inclusive approach to TM practices was visible in the manner which promotional opportunities were advertised to staff. Instead of specifically targeting a selected high potential pool of employees, each staff member was afforded the same opportunity by receiving the job advert by email. This would indicate that the Social Care sector in Ireland focuses on nurturing and developing talent through acknowledging the capabilities and potential of all staff, inclusively. Results from a study conducted by Baskaran and Dalayga (2019) showed that a company's retention strategy, which provides inclusive training and career development opportunities, can substantially increase an employee's intentions to remain working for an organisation. The results of this study are consistent with findings from this study. Employee retention is strengthened when employees feel equally appreciated and valued in their workplace. This study found that implementing inclusive TM practices can strengthen employee retention which in turn leads to increased levels of organisational efficiency. Inclusive TM practices is a core element of the leadership and development framework published by the NHS leadership academy in 2016.

6.3 Discussion of Research Question Two

Q) What are SCW's perceptions on how their CPD is nurtured and managed?

Results from the study found that current and past education and development strategies introduced by the HSE are proving effective for nurturing and managing talent within Social Care Work settings. The co-creation process, central to the HSE's 2021 development strategy, provides staff with a 24-hour online learning platform that is accessible to them at any time or place. Participants expressed an increase in their own self-confidence through been given the autonomy to develop their professional skills at their own leisure on learning platforms such as HSE land. It was evident that the participants of the study found incentives from the development strategies beneficial to the nurturing and managing of their CPD. It was identified that the opportunities given to staff to self-manage their own career progression had a positive influence on engagement levels of staff with their job roles. The participants of the study found it very motivating to be given the responsibility of enrolling and partaking in courses on a flexible basis. TM practices such as TD and talent retention were linked significantly to the multiple opportunities to engage in CPD within their place of work.

The findings identified professional supervision as a central element in nurturing the CPD of staff within the care setting. As mentioned in the review, the Care Council for Wales refer to supervision as an effective two-way process between worker and manager which provides support, direction, and professional development for SCW's. The monthly supervision meetings provided staff with a valuable opportunity to express their interest in new learning and development programmes that may benefit their professional skills development. The participants expressed the importance of this interaction with their manager monthly and the positive influence it brought to their professional development process. As found in a study conducted on Cyprian healthcare organisations by (Mitosis and colleagues, (2021), strong management support is critical to developing the skills and competencies of staff within the healthcare sector. A combination of self-managing career progression through online learning data bases and professional supervision sessions were key influencers in how the research participants perceived their experience of CPD.

6.4 Discussion of Research Question Three

Q) How effective are the current TM practices being used in the social care sector for staff?

Findings from research question one highlighted a substantial presence of inclusive TM practices within the care setting studied. Participants emphasised how talent retention and development were strengthened by an all-inclusive organisational approach to staff's skills' management. It was apparent from the findings to this study that the current approach to investing resources was widespread in nature across Social Care settings. This is proving to be effective for increasing staff engagement and empowerment in the working environment. Findings showed that an increase in staff motivation had a positive effect on retaining the workforce within the sector. Management led practices such as professional supervision, performance management reviews and reward management systems were central influencers in motivating staff to remain working within their job roles. As mentioned in the review, research conducted by Nojedeh and Ardabili (2015) found that key practices associated with an effective TM strategy, such as strong recruitment initiatives, reward management systems and maintaining a competent workforce, were central to ensuring employee satisfaction and efficient hospital performance in Iran. The results of this study are consistent with the findings of Nojedh and Ardabali (2015) research. The research participants, all employed as SCW's, reported significant increase in workplace motivation and job satisfaction when their competencies were positively recognised and acknowledged.

Findings from the research showed that employee's commitment to their organisation was strengthened by the reassurance of job flexibility and organisational commitment to staff's professional development. It was identified that being supported with maintaining a flexible lifestyle was significant to motivating and satisfying employees in the workplace. Retention was strengthened by the personal commitment felt by employees to the clients they supported. All participants of the research highlighted that the professional rapport they held with the clients they supported were central to nurturing and managing their own workplace satisfaction. Participants noted the strong presence of organisational involvement in their personal skills development as a key factor in promoting workplace satisfaction. The research identified that opportunities to professionally progress in SCW are strong. Participants expressed a favourable attitude towards the opportunities afforded to them to strengthen and develop their professional skills. It was apparent that initial priorities established by the HSE's first education and development framework in 2009 were proving effective in nurturing and managing talent within the Social Care sector. Primary objectives of the initial development framework were aimed at promoting an integrated learning environment for staff, providing adequate training incentives to support staffs CPD and building a strong learning culture within the health service. Results from the study indicated that current TM practices in the scare setting are proving beneficial to retaining, developing, and motivating staff within the workplace.

6.5 Discussion of Research Question Four

Q) Are the skills and competencies outlined within the job role reflected in the day-to-day tasks of an SCW?

Results from the research found that job advertisements within the organisation studied did not accurately reflect the expected duties assigned to staff within the job role. Whilst participants did acknowledge similarity from duties listed in the advertisement, to practical experience, there was still a significant level of dissatisfaction amongst participants about the lack of precision in the job advertisement they applied to. Several participants noted that they felt the skills and competencies learned in their academic studies in Social Care were not reflected in the duties they completed daily in their job role. This caused dissatisfaction amongst the participants as they believed the qualifications attained in their academic careers were not being fully utilised in their professional roles. A lack of accurate job descriptions was also associated with reasons why people left their job role. Results from the study found that employees left their job role because of the inconsistency between the job advertisement and the practical roles

associated with their job. One participant noted how their job advertisement assured them that they would be working directly with the clients they were supporting. Yet once they commenced employment, there work location was office based with minimal interaction with the clients they were working with. Subsequently, this employee left their job role out of sheer dissatisfaction and upset.

A lack of precision in job advertisements could be detrimental for an employer's brand image. As discussed in the literature, research conducted by Bhagat, Kumari and Dutta (2020) identified how future employees perceives a brand image of an organisation is greatly influenced by the social and interest values one has for that organisation. Social and interest values are fundamental to an organisation's employee value proposition, which is the reputation an organisation hold within the job seeker's market. Failure to be recognised as having a reputable employee value proposition can be detrimental to the brand image of an organisation, or in the case of this research, a Social Care setting. TM practices such as recruitment and retention could be negatively affected if an employer fails to provide accurate job advertisements of respected roles. In the context of this study, findings suggested that job advertisements associated with SCW are not precise enough in nature to reflect the total sum of duties expected of an SCW in practice.

6.6 Conclusion

To conclude, the research has presented findings from a small qualitative piece of research exploring TM practices within an Irish Social Care setting. The researcher is aware that the findings from this research are only representative of one care setting across the Irish Social Care sector and further longitudinal research is required to gain a deeper awareness of the research topic. The study presented an insight into current practices being used and the effectiveness of these practices in nurturing and developing staff within the sector. Findings suggest that current TM practices being used within the care setting are proving effective for nurturing staff's skills and supporting individual's CPD. The presence of an inclusive based approach to TM indicates that employees within the setting receive equally consistent support in developing their professional competencies. Retention and development within the setting is strengthened by management led practices which positively influence staff engagement, motivation, and empowerment. Research participants highlighted the importance of monthly supervision sessions with their line manager for promoting and developing their CPD. The autonomy given to employees to enrol and partake in learning and development programmes, via portals like HSE land, are proving significantly effective in developing the self-confidence and professional esteem of workers in the workplace. The study identified that employee's levels of self-empowerment and commitment to their work greatly increased when they were afforded the autonomy to enrol in courses of their own choice. It was evident from conducting this research that SCW's had a significantly negative perception of an employer and or their job role when additional job duties were expected of them, compared to those initially advertised. It is apparent that job advertisements need to be more accurately devised to ensure staff satisfaction within their job roles, which in turn will support and strengthen retention within the sector.

6.7 Limitations

There were several limitations identified from the study that could be considered for future research. The first limitation identified was the influence that the current Covid-19 pandemic had on the methods used to gather data for this research. In normal circumstances, face to face interviews with participants, in their natural working environment, would have been the most appropriate choice for gathering rich qualitative information. However, given the current public health situation, semi structured interviews were conducted via MS teams instead of in a face-to-face environment to protect the wellbeing of all involved. Additionally, the added pressure of Covid-19 has placed the healthcare workers who took part in this research under additional stress and pressure in recent months. Resultingly, this limited the number of research participants willing to take part in the research.

A second limitation identified was the time constraint placed on the researcher to complete this academic piece of work. With time restrictions, a cross sectional approach to conducting this research was the best choice to gathering rich qualitative data needed for this study within the time duration given. However, if more time had of been available a more extensive and longitudinal piece of research could have been conducted across several care settings, instead of one selected setting. This would have provided the study with a wider variety of experiences from different settings as well as a longer time frame to explore the research question.

6.8 Recommendations

Several recommendations were identified following the completion of this research piece. As previously identified, SCW is still a very much emerging and developing profession. There is currently a new education and development strategy being implemented from 2021-2026 by the HSE to develop the skills and competencies of HSCP. Further research is fundamental to monitoring the effectiveness of both current and past initiatives to manage talent within the sector. Future research in the next few years could be carried out to review and evaluate the effectiveness of this strategy on TM practices within the Social Care sector. TM practices such as, recruitment retention and TD are fundamental to ensuring a successful and efficient operation of organisational services. Findings from this study show that staff within the Social Care setting identified a significant lack of transparency in advertised job advertisements and expected job duties. This is an issue that needs to be rectified within the sector to protect and maintain the professional rapport of the Social Care profession. Organisations need to ensure that employees duties listed in job advertisements are more accurately reflected in practice, to avoid staff being dissatisfied and leaving their newly employed roles. This is fundamental to strengthening the recruitment process and ensuring the successful development of a recognised profession.

Implication of Recommendations

The financial implications of not ensuring transparency in job advertisements could provide significant costs for Social Care organisations in the future. If employees are not content in their job roles, they may leave the post and search for employment elsewhere. Organisations need to ensure that they address any lack of transparency between advertised job duties and duties expected of employees in practice. If this is addressed, it can significantly lower costs associated with discovering, recruiting, developing, and retaining future talent. The organisational costs associated with not addressing this issue will increase substantially if left without action.

Personal learning statement

This research piece was carried out in partial fulfilment for the Master of Arts degree in Human Resource Management. The researcher admits that, at times, it was challenging to maintain working full time as a Social Care Worker throughout the pandemic and fulfil my academic ambitions of completing a master's degree in HR management. However, the researcher was determined to succeed and found great satisfaction in rising to the challenge.

The research topic was specifically chosen by the researcher due to the close association between working as a Social Care Worker and the knowledge acquired on the practice of Talent Management, from academic studies. Social care is still very much an emerging profession in the current recognised skills market. The researcher was eager to evaluate how organisations are effectively utilising their talent pool to retain and develop staff within this emerging occupation. With an evolving profession, like Social Care, the organisational strategies used to recruit, develop, and retain key skills are fundamental to the development of a proficiently recognised workforce. The researcher was eager to utilise current experiences and contacts from working in social care and explore the effectiveness of current talent management practices in an Irish social care setting. The researcher was supported throughout the dissertation process by an encouraging and guiding supervisory figure.

If this research was to be conducted again the researcher would focus on a wider target audience to broaden the variety and depth of retrievable information. A variety of Social Care settings would have been chosen as study sites instead of constraining the research to one specific setting, due to time and accessibility options. Time management is an important structural competency, both when completing academic research and in daily working life. The researcher developed strong time management skills in completing this dissertation and learned the importance of devising a daily structure to ensure the efficient completion of tasks. The ability to organise and designate assignments is an important skill developed by the researcher in completing this piece of research. Working full time, as a Social Care Worker, and completing a dissertation simultaneously, requires a strong degree of organisation and commitment. The researcher is very proud of their achievements in sustaining a full-time professional job role and succeeding in their academic journey of completing an MA in Human Resource Management.

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Appendix A- Pre interview information for participant

Dear interviewee,

I would firstly like to thank you for agreeing to partake in this interview. The purpose of this information sheet is to inform you, the interviewee, of certain terms that will be referred to throughout the interview process.

This interview is being conducted via MS teams, as part of a post graduate dissertation being carried out for the award classification of MA in Human Resource Management. The focus of this research is on exploring the nurturing and managing of Social Care Worker's talent, within an Irish Social care setting.

What is Talent?

Talent refers to people who can make a significant difference to organisational performance. This can be either through their immediate contribution or, in the longer-term, by reaching their highest levels of potential (CIPD, 2020).

What is Talent Management?

Talent management is defined by Cheng and colleagues (2019) as a process which involves the recruiting, identifying, developing, and managing of talented personnel within an organisation.

The purpose of this research is to develop a greater understanding of Talent Management practices that contribute to continuous professional development, within the Irish care sector. The primary objectives of the research are to

- Identify current talent management practice being used in the Irish Social Care Sector
- Explore Social Care Worker's perceptions of Talent Management practices
- Examine if current management practices are effective for both organisation and workers.
- Identify if the skills and competencies outlined within the job role are reflected in the day-to-day tasks of an SCW?

If you have any queries, please contact me on x171565288@student.ncirl.ie

I look forward to speaking with you.

William Roche

Appendix B- Interview Schedule

1. Could you briefly outline your professional background in Social Care and your working experiences within the sector to date?

2. Could you provide a brief account of your current job responsibilities as a Social Care Worker working in residential care?

3. What do you think motivates people to pursuing a career in Social Care?

4. What is your understanding of the term's talent management and continuous professional development?

5. Can you tell me more about your knowledge and awareness of talent management practices in your organisation? What opportunities are offered to you to progress?

6. Do you believe that these practices are effective for nurturing existing talent and encouraging further skills development? If not, can you please state why so.

7. Do you feel there is a lot of talent in the social care sector, or do you think it is scarce? Can you elaborate and give reasons why you feel this is the case.

8. Do you believe that you are offered opportunities for training and development? If so, what opportunities have you been offered?

9. Are you actively encouraged in your organisation to further progress your career goals, or do you feel career progression opportunities are only offered if one express's self-interest?

10. Do you believe that your duties as an employee are the same as the duties listed in the job advertisement for your current role? If not, can you state why?

Appendix C- **Consent to take part in research.**

An exploratory study on the nurturing and managing of talent within an Irish Social Care Setting.

- I…………………………………… voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

- I understand that even if I agree to participate now, I can withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any question without any consequences of any kind.

- I understand that I can withdraw permission to use data from my interview within two weeks after the interview, in which case the material will be deleted.

- I have had the purpose and nature of the study explained to me in writing and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.

- I understand that participation involves being asked several questions relating to the research topic.

- I understand that I will not benefit directly from participating in this research.

- I agree to my interview being audio recorded.

- I understand that all information I provide for this study will be treated confidentially.

- I understand that in any report on the results of this research my identity will remain anonymous. This will be done by changing my name and disguising any details of my interview which may reveal my identity or the identity of people I speak about.

- I understand that disguised extracts from my interview may be quoted in the findings and analysis section of the dissertation.

- I understand that if I inform the researcher that myself or someone else is at risk of harm, they may have to report this to the relevant authorities - they will discuss this with me first but may be required to report with or without my permission.

- I understand that signed consent forms and original audio recordings will be retained in password encrypted folders on the researcher's personal computer, until the examination board confirms the results of this dissertation.

- I understand that a transcript of my interview in which all identifying information has been removed will be retained for 2 years from the date of the exam board.

- I understand that under freedom of information legalisation I am entitled to access the information I have provided at any time while it is in storage as specified above.

- I understand that I am free to contact any of the people involved in the research to seek further clarification and information.

Name of Researcher: William Roche

Degree: MA in Human Resource Management

Email: x17156288@student.ncirl.ie

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Signature of participant   Date

I believe the participant is giving informed consent to participate in this study.

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Signature of researcher   Date