A Qualitative Analysis of How Training and Development Influences Employee Turnover Intentions in Irish Hotels

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Abstract

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Purpose: This study endeavours to investigate how the implementation of training and development policies, practices and procedures in Irish hotels can influence employee turnover intentions.

Design/Methodology/Approach: A qualitative paradigm was adopted for this research. Data collection consisted of 11 semi-structured interviews each of which lasted between 18 and 58 minutes. This data was then thematically analysed, producing three distinct, accurate and identifiable themes which were synthesised in respect to relevant hypotheses proposed by existing literature and within the confines of the study limitations.

Findings: There is an ardent demand for more comprehensive T&D among Irish hotel employees which is going entirely unmet and found to have ranging and adverse implications on turnover intentions, engagement, commitment and satisfaction. The findings illustrate several potential means through which training and development can affect hotel employee turnover intentions and identify the extent to which employee engagement, commitment and satisfaction levels can be impacted.

Research limitations/Implications: The study employed sampling and participants are isolated to two of the seven Fáilte Ireland designated tourism regions – West Ireland and Dublin. Health restrictions implemented by the government prevented in-person interviewing and online interviews were utilised as an alternative. A series of organisational recommendations are proposed and potential areas for further research are suggested.

Originality/Value: The organisational context for investigation and analysis was chosen due to a paucity of notable research into training and development in hospitality firms and the detrimental implications employee turnover can have in the industry which is highly dependent on its workforce for success and even survival. The paper contributes to a growing body of literature by identifying distinct aspects in which employee training and development can not only bolster retention in hotels but enhance the capabilities of the workforce which they are intrinsically reliant upon.

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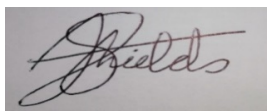
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List of Abbreviations

T&D – *Training and Development*

TI – *Turnover Intentions*

HR – *Human Resources*

HRM – *Human Resource Management*

POS – *Perceived Organisational Support*

VoIP – *Voice Over Internet Protocol*

(1) – *Participant 1*

(2) – *Participant 2*

(3) – *Participant 3*

(4) – *Participant 4*

(5) – *Participant 5*

(6) – *Participant 6*

(7) – *Participant 7*

(8) – *Participant 8*

(9) – *Participant 9*

(10) – *Participant 10*

(11) – *Participant 11*

INTRODUCTION

High employee turnover rates have become a "*distinguishing feature*" of the hotel and hospitality industry (Carbery, Garavan, O'Brien and McDonnell, 2015), a reputation which is widely acknowledged in conjunction with the subsequent haemorrhaging of high-performing and experienced talent (O'Leary and Deegan, 2005). The ubiquity of turnover in hotels has arguably generated a "*turnover culture*" to the extent where it is invariably problematic, topical and a significant determinant of turnover levels (Deery and Shaw, 1997). High turnover is a leading challenge in the hospitality industry (Yang, Wan, and Fu, 2012; Walsh and Taylor, 2007), resulting in heavier workloads and increased overtime for the remaining employees, negatively impacting their morale and in turn propagating higher levels of turnover (Mapelu and Jumah, 2013). These turnover rates consequently lead to losses in organisational profitability which reduces investment in the industry as a whole (Davidson, Timo and Wang, 2010), impairing the ability of hotels to institute sincere retention practices. This cyclical and pernicious nature of turnover in hotels underscores the significance of the challenge faced by the industry in effectively combatting it.

There is a common acceptance among many hotels that the chronically high turnover rates are merely the "*norm*" (Davidson *et al.*, 2010) or a "*necessary evil*" (Hinkin and Tracey, 2000), notwithstanding the potential detrimental burden imposed on service quality, financial costs, (Davidson *et* al., 2010; Farrell, 2001; Yang *et al.*, 2012), organisational performance, profitability, productivity (Johnson, Park and Bartlett, 2019; Kichuk, Brown and Ladkin, 2019; Walsh and Taylor, 2007), sales efficiency, error rates (Heavey, Holwerda and Hausknecht, 2013) and competitive advantage (Nolan, Garavan and Lynch, 2020; Hinkin and Tracey, 2000). Turnover intention (TI) is the most influential factor in an employee's decision to leave an organisation (Akgunduz and Sanli, 2017; Rehman and Mubashar, 2017; Tett and Meyer, 1993). Identifying then sufficiently addressing the factors which shape TI may therefore present the greatest opportunity to reduce turnover behaviour. The rate of TI in the UK hospitality industry in 2015 stood at 67.6% (Akgunduz and Sanli, 2017), exposing the magnitude of turnover in the industry while simultaneously representing the scale of opportunity presented by unearthing the root causes of these intentions, then acting to resolve them.

A multitude of recent Irish government and Industry-backed studies have shone a spotlight on the inadequacy of Training and Development (T&D) in Irish hospitality whilst establishing the need for improvement as an imperative for industry success. The People, Place and Policy

Growing Tourism to 2025 report illuminates the pivotal role hospitality workers fulfil in achieving high customer satisfaction levels and supporting the Irish tourism industry (DTTS, 2019). The national tourism slogan further delineates the distinctive importance of hospitality workers in promoting Ireland as a tourist destination: "*come for the scenery, stay for the people*" (Baum, Hearns and Devine, 2008). The Irish Tourism Industry Confederation contend the hospitality industry requires greater focus on career development to bolster employee retention (ITIC, 2018). This sentiment is supported by The Expert Group on Future Skills Needs who identified a positive correlation between the utilisation of good human resource management (HRM) practices in Irish hospitality and the ability to attract and retain motivated staff – reducing hiring costs while benefiting workforce morale, loyalty and productivity (EGFSN, 2015). Unfortunately, there is scarcity of existing development programmes that are fit for purpose in Irish hospitality, subsequently inducing retention issues (SOLAS, 2018). This paucity of adequate T&D has resulted in Irish hospitality having some of the highest rates of replacement and employee turnover across all Irish industries (SOLAS, 2017).

In a survey of 420 senior human resources (HR) leaders in Ireland, T&D was found to be the second most prevalent issue on their lists of "*Top Five Priorities*", second to employee engagement (IBEC, 2019). These separate concerns, however, may be two sides of the same coin as Memon, Salleh, and Baharom (2016) identified a direct correlation between the implementation of effective T&D in hotels and increased engagement which consequently lowered TI. There is a clear demand for more prevalent and effective T&D in Irish hotels to reinforce retention, engagement, commitment and satisfaction among the employees, who are so intrinsic to the vitality of an exceedingly crucial industry in Ireland. The reports, which call for greater T&D policies, practices and procedures to affect retention are not explicit in how this should be achieved. This study seeks to help bridge these gaps by identifying how T&D might lower TI and to what extent T&D impacts engagement, commitment and satisfaction.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Profile of the Irish Hospitality Industry

The immediate future of the tourism industry remains uncertain, however, it will likely grow and become of greater national economic importance in the long-term (OECD, 2020). Tourism-related enterprises in Ireland garnered €9.5 billion in revenue in 2019 (Fáilte Ireland, 2021). There are approximately 164,000 people directly employed in the Irish hospitality industry, representing 7% of the national workforce of which 87% work in the accommodation and food sector (SOLAS, 2020). This represents a higher proportion of the national labour market than most other European countries (EGFSN, 2015), illustrating the significant role hospitality occupies as an Irish industry. In addition to those directly employed by the sector, public transport, retail, pubs and restaurants, entertainment venues and the education sector all draw revenue from the Irish hospitality industry (DTTS, 2019), representing an additional 96,000 jobs (Department of Business and Enterprise, 2020).

2.2 Turnover Intentions

Acquiring talented employees in the hospitality industry is difficult, harder again is retaining them (Rehman and Mubashar, 2017). This lack of workforce stability has proved to be a significant and challenging factor for the implementation of effective T&D initiatives in the sector (Deery, 2008; Johnson *et al*., 2019; Mapelu and Jumah, 2013). There is little logic in investing time and financial resources into developing a high-performing workforce through effective employee development if they then leave the organisation, taking with them their newly honed skills, knowledge and abilities. These losses can then often be compounding as skilled and experienced staff leave for a rival hotel, who then reap the benefits of these enhanced abilities and the initial hotel must then continue to compete against them (Yang *et al*., 2012). Therefore, retention should be a central focus when designing T&D initiatives and their intended outcomes. Turnover, a causation of TI, is globally prevalent in the hospitality industry, creating significant issues for employers (Rehman and Mubashar, 2017). The concept of TI has been found to be advantageous in evaluating and predicting turnover behaviour among employees and managers in the Irish hotel sector (Carberry *et al*., 2015). Leading authors on turnover intentions, Tett and Meyer (1993), define turnover intention as a deliberate and conscious wilfulness to leave an organisation and they define turnover as being the

termination of an individual's employment with their organisation. There is limited data regarding TI among Irish hotel employees and the data which does exist paints a bleak picture. From a sample of 64 front office employees in Northern Ireland, Baum and Devine (2007) found 83% of respondents planned on leaving their employer within five years. In a study of 140 Irish hotel management course graduates, Farrell (2001) found one third had already left the industry, another third was working abroad and a sixth of those still in Irish hospitality planned on leaving. There is a need to address the factors influencing these intentions if chronic turnover rates are to be stemmed, however, accurately identifying them so they can be addressed presents a further issue. There are a range of factors that have been found to alter the TI of hospitality employees: workplace bullying (Bohle, Knox, Noone, Mc Namara, Rafalski and Quinlan, 2017), age, experience, job stress (Rehman and Mubashar, 2017), work-life balance (Farrell, 2015), poor pay, unsociable hours (Davidson *et* al., 2010; Farrell, 2001; O'Leary and Deegan, 2005), change in personal career goals and perceived violation of psychological contract (Carbery *et al*., 2015). The factors which influence TI are becoming increasingly complex (Lee, C., Huang, S. and Zhao, 2012) and despite an abundance of literature on voluntary turnover, there is still a lack of understanding in regard to the factors which affect it (Memon *et al*., 2016), particularly among those working in hotels (Carbery *et al*., 2015). Evidently, the issues which sustain the consistently high levels of TI in hospitality are considerable and ranging, however, this study will seek to illustrate that T&D can play a decidedly integral role in reducing these intentions and subsequently the inordinate rates of turnover.

2.3 Training and Development

The rate of employee turnover in hotels can vary dramatically between regions and even between hotels within the same region (Hinkin and Tracey, 2000). This would suggest there are factors that affect turnover levels and it is not the industry that is at fault but certain practices. High levels of staff turnover in hotels are indicative of poor HRM practices (Davidson *et al*., 2006). Research suggests that hotel employees stay with organisations when they are afforded growth and development opportunities (Sheehan, Grant and Garavan*,* 2018; Rahman and Nas, 2013; Poulston, 2008; Walsh and Taylor, 2007; Hinkin and Tracey, 2000). Investing in staff development can enable employees to perceive their employment conditions in a relational context (Lee and Bruvold, 2003). There is an intrinsic link between a hospitality

firm's success and its employees, therefore the creation and maintenance of long-term relationships as is fostered through effective T&D practices can aid in ensuring a desirable market share (Rahman and Nas, 2013). Marriott Hotels International represent 4% of the global hotel market (Marriott, 2019) while boasting some of the lowest voluntary turnover rates in the industry among full-time staff (Fortune, 2008). They are major proponents ensuring their competitive advantage by cultivating favourable employment conditions and retention through comprehensive employee T&D (McIlvaine, 2019), illustrating the potential benefit to the Irish hotel industry by adopting a similar strategy.

Due to the wide-ranging nature of work carried out in hotels, the definition of talent in the industry is broad and ill-defined (Johnson *et* al., 2019; Sheehan *et al*. 2018). In response to this, Garavan, Carbery and Rock (2012) proposed talent development as being a subsection of talent management that emphasises the planning, selection and implementation of development incentives, ensuring the current and future supply of talent which enables organisations to meet strategic objectives. Talent in the hospitality industry is likely to be pursued externally, a strategy that is unlikely to be successful in the long-term (Garavan *et al*., 2012), underpinning the importance of developing a competent internal labour market. Effective talent development plays a fundamental role in assisting the sector to achieve its full potential (Sheehan *et al*., 2018), however, organisations must be proactive in doing so (Johnson *et al*., 2019), in contradiction to current industry efforts.

There is a growing recognition in hotels of the benefits that talent development can bring to the sector (Francis and Baum, 2018). Although this recognition must be industry-wide rather than isolated in individual organisations to maximise the potential sectoral benefits that employee talent development is capable of delivering (Maxwell and McClean, 2008). In Irish hotels there has been a growing focus to increase the quality of service, however, this has been met with the reality of a workforce that lacks the requisite skills to fulfil these demands (Baum and Devine, 2007). These skill shortages in Ireland have led to the poaching of talented employees, further exacerbating turnover rates in the industry (Carbery *et al*., 2015). There is a distinct lack of investment in staff upskilling and development opportunities in SME hotels (Johnson et al., 2019; Sheehan *et al*., 2018), the predominant size of hotel in Ireland (Nolan *et al.*, 2020). Irish hotels frequently offer little regarding career development opportunities, which negatively impacts organisational loyalty (Farrell, 2001). This absence of opportunities is argued by Johnson *et al*. (2019) to reflect a lack of formal education among SME hotel owners who are consequently unaware of their employees' developmental needs, thus provide minimal

opportunities. There is a necessity for greater research engagement and the dissemination of hotel worker developmentary needs to benefit the industry as a whole. In a meta-analysis of 82 studies that considered the antecedents and consequences of collective turnover, Heavey *et al*. (2013) found that investment in employees by means of development was generally related to lower levels of turnover and where training was firm-specific these rates were further reduced. This may be problematic in the Irish hotel landscape, as Baum and Devine (2007) and Farrell (2001) found training is frequently viewed as an expense rather than an investment, subsequently the funds allocated for T&D are often minimal. Ironically, this may increase overall expenditure as Tracey and Hinkin (2008) found a significant reduction in hotel turnover costs when there was investment in sound human resources practices in contrast to hotels that devoted less funding to such practices. Rawashdeh and Tamimi (2020) suggest this may occur as greater investment in T&D and subsequent retention overcomes the higher costs associated with turnover: recruitment, selection and induction.

Prominent management theorist, Pfeffer (1996), argued that an organisations' employees are critical to maintaining a competitive advantage. This is particularly relevant in the customer-facing hotel industry where competitive advantage in hotels is strongly correlated with sustainable employee development practices (Dhar, 2015; Lee and Bruvold, 2003). The sector is people-centric, where customer experience is dependent on an organisation's workforce (Farrell, 2015) who are tasked with ensuring quality of service and customer satisfaction – pivotal aspects for success in the sector. Effective hotel employee development can boost productivity by enriching employees' capabilities, collaboration and teamwork (Rahman and Nas, 2013), allowing the organisation to successfully compete and sustain a salient market position against competitors. Johnson *et al*. (2019) identify that the increasing competition on a global scale has reinforced the significance of development in hospitality organisations as being a critical factor for not only success, but survival. This is becoming increasingly relevant in the Irish context as internationally operating hospitality firms are gradually consolidating the domestic market (O'Conner, 2020). The capability of Irish hotels to compete effectively with these new multinational rivals will likely be correlated to high-performing workforces developed, sustained and retained through T&D initiatives.

2.4 Consolidation of Organisational and Employee Interests

Talent development processes in hospitality typically have an exclusive focus on organisational demands (Garavan *et al*., 2012) and despite being essential to ensuring these demands are met, talent development literature is ambiguous on how to cater for needs of individual employees (Johnson *et al*., 2019). This presents a challenge, as Rahman and Nas (2013) identify that effective employee development requires the satisfaction of the employee's needs and personal goals in conjunction with the needs and goals of the organisation. Incorporation of employee demands into the T&D process can elicit trust, as it demonstrates concern for their personal welfare and growth (Hemdi and Nasurdin, 2006). This incorporation and acknowledgement of employee expectations through T&D is crucial for reducing turnover rates (Cho, Johanson and Guchait, 2009; Yang *et al*., 2012) and may be achieved through bespoke development strategies which account for current work practices, learning style and individual needs (Garavan *et al*., 2012). A hospitality firm's strategic success is argued by Slåtten and Mehmetoglu (2011) to be most achievable when adopted by its workforce through collaboration on development initiatives that can facilitate employee engagement, commitment and innovative behaviour. It is likely crucial that when designing T&D processes there is an alignment of the organisation's development interests and the development interests of its workforce as the attainment of both sets of needs are dependent on one another.

The lack of external accreditation for T&D processes can leave employees at a serious disadvantage in the labour market (Garavan *et al*., 2018), potentially affecting how sincerely employees view these opportunities and negatively impacting participation rates which must be high in order to achieve any significant outcomes from T&D. Furthermore, Rahman and Nas (2013) identify that if external accreditation is provided, employers can then fear losing the now more qualified employees along with the time and financial resources invested in them as they are better positioned on the labour market. It was found by Carbery *et* al. (2015) that turnover intentions among Irish hotel managers were not influenced by perceived employability, however, Acikgoz, Sumer and Sumer (2016) identify that the literature is inconclusive on the relationship between perceived employability and TI. Nevertheless, if this remains a concern of employers, it poses a challenge in aligning the developmental needs of a hotel and those of its workers which is necessary for successful T&D initiatives.

Training satisfaction, the extent of appreciation or dislike employees have for planned skills, knowledge and attitude development programmes was found by Memon *et al*. (2016) to be

directly related to engagement levels which in turn affected TI. Therefore, in addition to fulfilling the developmentary interests of either party, the manner in which T&D is delivered may also impact the degree to which TI can be influenced. Garavan *et al.* (2018) and Poulston (2008) found there was deep dissatisfaction among hotel employees where T&D processes lacked formality as they were perceived to be haphazard. This may present an element of concern for the predominantly SME Irish hospitality landscape, as Johnson *et al.* (2019) identify that hospitality firms of this size typically conducted T&D on an ad hoc basis. A study by Connolly and McGing (2007) found only 2 of 71 managers at 3, 4 and 5-star Dublin based hotels were capable of disclosing the exact amount of training hours per annum per employee. This contrasts an ambitious survey of 235 respondents from different hotels with an initial target sample of 850 hotels across Ireland where 46% stated they have structured T&D programmes (Harrington and Keating, 2006). The predominant owner-manager status of the respondents may have an implication on these results – as identified earlier, there is a lack of understanding among SME hotel owners as to what sincere T&D initiatives entail and therefore their interpretation of "*structured T&D*" may fall short of the academic interpretation and demonstrates the ambiguity surrounding T&D delivery in the Irish context. A reduction in TI is potentially contingent on the manner in which T&D is delivered and it is therefore necessary to ensure T&D is being delivered in satisfaction with employee expectations.

2.5 Workforce Collaboration

Managers have direct control over the factors which influence employee turnover (Tracey and Hinkin, 2008) and are playing an increasingly prominent role in the T&D of hospitality employees by facilitating the implementation of practices and degree of positive outcomes (Chen and Wu, 2017; Garavan *et al.*, 2018; Sheehan *et al.*, 2018; Slåtten and Mehmetoglu, 2011; Solnet, Kralj and Baum, 2015). Employee development is fundamentally a collaborative process between the employee and employer (Rahman and Nas, 2013). This collaboration is necessary to consolidate the disparity between managerial and employee perspectives on T&D where it exists (Garavan *et al.*, 2018), as this disparity in attitudes can serve to exacerbate turnover levels (Heavey *et al.*, 2013). Facilitating the correct perception of development opportunities among employees is essential; if they are not perceived to be worthwhile, the desired potential outcomes of T&D processes can be adversely affected (Cho *et al.*, 2009). To accomplish this, Francis and Baum (2018) suggest innovating current practices with improved

managerial dialogue capabilities to accurately identify and incorporate employees' interests into decision-making processes surrounding T&D. This was further supported with suggested practices advanced by Yang *et al*. (2012) and Slåtten and Mehmetoglu (2011) of mentorship and coaching programmes led by hospitality managers which can lead to an accurate identification of employee developmentary needs. Despite often appearing practical and logical, the devolution of HR practices such as T&D to line managers can be an unwelcome change in job responsibility (Solnet *et al*., 2015). In a review of the Irish hotel industry, Keating and Harrington (2003) suggest the critical role managers fulfil in achieving successful outcomes from training processes may be contingent on their prior agreement to implement such initiatives. This may present an issue, as Connolly and McGing (2007) discovered in a study of 71 Dublin hotel managers that 90% stated there is no staff representation among senior management teams or boards and half of respondents cited a complete absence of mechanisms to incorporate employee voice while the other half stated this was done on an informal or ad hoc basis. The role of management in facilitating T&D in hotels is ostensibly a fundamental one as is their potential to orchestrate desirable outcomes from T&D, however, if there is no means to consult managers and identify their willing participation, which is requisite for successful T&D processes, the extent to which TI is affected may be lessened.

In a study of Irish hospitality management graduates, O'Leary and Deegan (2005) found those who had left the sector cited a lack of career prospects, insufficient T&D and the unchallenging nature of work to be critical factors for not returning to the industry, with the authors suggesting this be addressed through an overt commitment to T&D. The provision of T&D to management may therefore elicit not only lower management turnover but be utilised as a trade-off for their willing participation in T&D incentives for other employees. Johnson *et al*. (2019) claim there is a growing need for hospitality employees to assume greater responsibility for the management of their own career development, amounting to an "*obligation*". This is a prevalent attitude in the industry, however, it is unlikely to be successful without organisational support (Rehman and Mubashar, 2017). Hotels need to support the development of their workforce by providing them with opportunities. There is a broad acknowledgement in the literature of the connection between employee perceptions of T&D and intentions to leave as providing opportunities can signal care for the employee's personal career development (Rahman and Nas, 2013). To achieve a measurable impact on turnover behaviour, intentions must be significantly influenced which may be achieved to a greater extent when the personal T&D aspirations of employees are identified, incorporated and perceived to be fulfilled.

2.6 Perceived Organisational Support

Perceived organisational support (POS) is the extent to which employees believe their organisation values their contribution and cares about their well-being (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchinson, and Sowa, 1986). The results of a meta-analysis spanning 20 years and 167 studies by Riggle, Edmondson and Hansen (2009) found there to be a strong negative correlation between POS and an employee's intentions to leave. Supporting this is a study of 416 hospitality employees in the U.S. by Cho *et al*. (2012) which identified that heavily investing in growth and development, which facilitated skill and knowledge improvement, enhanced employee perceptions of organisational support and consequently lowered TI. The significant role of development opportunities in cultivating a perception of organisational support was identified by Foong-ming (2008) who found an explicit link among respondents between the provision of T&D opportunities and POS which lowered TI, increased job satisfaction and organisational commitment to an even greater extent than compensation and benefits.

In a study of 400 Turkish hotel workers, Akgunduz and Sanli (2017) operationalised employment advocacy as the perception of an employer representing and supporting employee interests and found it to be ineffective on TI. This may indicate other variables regarding employee perceptions can impact the creation of POS among a workforce. In an extensive study of 5,088 service industry employees, Kumar, Jauhari, Rastogi and Sivakumar (2018) found where there was managerial support for development programmes, it strongly correlated with employees perceiving the organisation as being supportive and when this was effectively utilised in conjunction with a perceived availability for development programmes, TI was found to decrease. Evidently, employee perceptions of T&D concerning management and availability may impact the degree to which POS is cultivated and consequently to what extent TI is affected. This is in part supported by the findings of Rawashdeh and Tamimi (2020) that indicated increased availability of training correlated with an increase in POS and when there was supervisorial support for training – organisational commitment increased, lowering TI. Even when T&D opportunities are perceived as accessible, TI may still increase, as Carbery *et al*. (2015) argue that if employees perceive the opportunity as inadequate, they may be encouraged to find an employer who offers more comprehensive T&D. It is then likely for T&D opportunities to have a measurable impact on TI that in conjunction with the support of the organisation as may be demonstrated through management, opportunities must be perceived as ample and accessible.

2.7 Employee Satisfaction and Commitment

In a ranging meta-analysis of 155 studies, Tett and Meyer (1993) found commitment and satisfaction to be an affective factor for TI, with satisfaction being more influential in the cognitive turnover process, however, Lee *et al*. (2012) found satisfaction to positively impact commitment in a study of 350 Taiwanese hotel employees. Conversely, Rehman and Mubashar (2017) found TI in return influenced employee wellbeing and consequently commitment and job satisfaction. This intricate relationship between commitment, satisfaction and TI demonstrates an important area of consideration when attempting to reduce turnover rates, as each appears to have implications for one another.

The provision of T&D can increase job satisfaction which lowers TI (Yang *et al*., 2012) and also foster a positive attitude among employees, eliciting organisational commitment, reducing TI (Rawashdeh and Tamimi, 2020). These views are supported by a cross-cultural study of 405 nurses from the U.S. and Singapore where Lee and Bruvold (2003) found that skill and competency development increased commitment and job satisfaction, lowering intentions to leave. Evidently, T&D has the potential to impact commitment and satisfaction levels which are effective at moderating TI, representing a potential means through which T&D can affect TI. Through research conducted in the Irish context, the particular importance of organisational commitment was identified by Carbery *et al*. (2015) to be the most significant variable to influence TI among a sample of 89 Irish hotel managers. Additionally, a study of 494 Indian hotel workers by Dhar (2015) found a strong positive correlation between perceived accessibility to development opportunities and organisational commitment in hotels. This suggests that facilitating organisational commitment which has been evidenced in the Irish context to be a significant predictor of TI that hotel employees must be aware of T&D processes and believe that they are accessible.

Disseminating a positive perception of the industry internally and externally is contingent on emphasising development and increasing accessibility to training (EGFSN, 2015; Francis and Baum, 2018; McGinley *et al.,* 2017; Sheehan *et al*., 2018; Farrell, 2001). In a study of a UK hotel chain, Kichuk *et al*. (2019) found the mere implementation and take-up of career development strategies to positively affect organisational loyalty, consequently lowering TI. There are likely other criteria that need to be fulfilled to achieve these results by ensuring T&D participation to begin with. In a study of 380 Malaysian operational hotel employees, Hemdi and Nasurdin (2006) found the perception of availability could be fostered by having clear

training policies for formal T&D initiatives, increasing organisational trust and significantly reducing TI. They argue that the degree of availability for development programmes generates this trust as it can convey care, support and value of employees. This is of particular relevance as operational level employees frequently account for the greatest proportion of turnover in hotels (Walsh and Taylor, 2007). In addition to eliciting lower TI, Slåtten and Mehmetoglu (2011) argue that the provision of clear career development trajectories with explicit criteria, hospitality employees are then more likely to engage with these programmes. The uptake of such initiatives by employees is vital in achieving potential outcomes such as decreased TI, therefore having clearly defined T&D programmes which are perceived as accessible is imperative.

2.8 Conclusion

Hotels are plagued with perpetually high rates of employee turnover, incurring a range of detrimental implications for hospitality organisations. Evaluating the TI of hotel employees can likely provide an accurate forewarning of their exit from an organisation, presenting a significant opportunity to reduce the excessively high rates of turnover. It has been evidenced through the literature that there are a multitude of factors that influence TI – factors which have the potential to be manipulated through effectively implemented T&D. Achieving this effective implementation is likely contingent on a number of variables.

The sectoral workforce instability presents a challenge in and of itself to the implementation of T&D, therefore retention should be a primary of objective of any initiatives. Decision-making surrounding T&D will likely need to fulfil the personal interests of the individual employee and therefore a balance must be struck by compromising between the developmentary interests of the organisation and the interests of its workforce. There are potential challenges in the alignment of these often separate interests which may reduce engagement with T&D initiatives and therefore reduce potential outcomes such as lower TI.

Managers can play a direct role in reducing TI by facilitating the implementation of T&D processes, the extent to which this facilitation impacts desirable outcomes may be contingent on their willing participation and consequent engagement with initiatives which may be enhanced by providing management with similar opportunities. The cultivation of POS appears to be an influential means of reducing TI. It is also likely that investment in ample T&D

opportunities which are supported by management will increase POS, indicating the potential indirect correlation between T&D and TI. Commitment and satisfaction evidently play an elemental role in influencing TI and present a potentially substantial opportunity to reduce TI through the correct provision of T&D – identifying the extent to which this relationship exists will likely prove insightful. It is likely that the perceived availability of T&D is of fundamental importance in achieving significant outcomes. If opportunities are not perceived as accessible then participation rates will be negatively impacted, as will the degree of influence that T&D can have on TI, as the intentions of those who do not participate will remain entirely unaffected.

A series of likelihoods, possibilities and opportunities have been proposed and evaluated throughout this review of literature and have dictated the research questions of this study which will aim to assess the potential implications that T&D may have on the TI, engagement, commitment and satisfaction of Irish hotel employees.

Chapter 3: Research Questions

3.1 Research Objective

A research question is the overarching inquiry that drives the research forward, emanating from and justified by the literature review. The primary objective of this study is to perform a qualitative assessment of the factors which influence the TI of employees in Irish hotels and the potential manner in which these intentions may be manipulated through T&D.

The rationale for selecting hotels as the organisational context was due to the intrinsic link between employees and organisational performance. This reliance implies that turnover can dictate the hotels' ability to secure a salient market share in addition to potentially incurring exceptional detrimental ramifications.

There is a demand from a broad range of Irish hotel industry stakeholders to emphasise T&D as a means for retention, however, they are not explicit on how this may be achieved. Academic literature surrounding T&D in hotels is limited (Johnson *et al*., 2019; Memon *et al*., 2016; Sheehan *et al* 2018), particularly in the Irish context (DTTS, 2019; Nolan *et al*., 2020) and warrants further investigation to identify the potential sectoral benefits and how they can be attained.

3.2 Research Questions

➢ Research Question 1:
How does Training and Development affect the turnover intentions of employees in Irish hotels?

An elemental precursor and predictor of employee turnover is an individual's TI and evaluating the factors which influence these intentions presents a significant opportunity to reduce them and the associated rates of exit from hotels. As evidenced from the literature review, T&D offers a number of potential means through which this can be facilitated and will be investigated to identify the potential means that T&D can influence TI.

➢ Research Question 2:

To what extent does Training and Development influence employee engagement, commitment and satisfaction?

There is an evidential negative correlation as stipulated in the literature review between an individual's TI and their levels of engagement, commitment and satisfaction. It has also been established that these variables are likely manipulated through the provision of T&D, warranting further investigation to identify to what degree engagement, commitment and satisfaction play a mediating role between T&D and TI.

Chapter 4: Methodology

This chapter outlines the philosophical grounding for the study, methods used for collecting the research data, method of data analysis and establishes the rationale and justification for how and why these were chosen.

4.1 Research Philosophy

A research philosophy is a "*system of beliefs and assumptions about the development of knowledge*", reflecting the researchers' values (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, 2019). The importance of detailing one's research philosophy is identified by Attride-Stirling (2001) who attests that if a researcher's assumptions and consequently how they analyse data is unknown, it hampers the ability of others to use that research effectively when evaluating it and contrasting it with other studies.

The epistemological position of the study is dictated by the research which is being undertaken, the aim of that research and the data needed for that study to be fully and properly carried out (Quinlan, 2011). The approach adopted by this study was Interpretivist in nature as it elicited and analysed the subjective answers provided by individuals on a micro-scale, in relation to their personal employment experiences as shaped by their prior and current participation in T&D practices within the Irish hotel industry. The compatibility of Interpretivism to this study is endorsed by Quinlan (2011), who states that if research is to explore feelings, thoughts and beliefs surrounding the phenomenon which is being investigated, an Interpretivist approach should be adopted to adequately evaluate the subjective and unique experiences of the participants. The study attempted to uncover how the participants view T&D and how these perceptions may influence their intentions to terminate their employment as the emphasis was on understanding these reasons rather than attempting to incur change, aligning with the Interpretivist paradigm. Saunders *et al*. (2019) argue Interpretivism accentuates the difference between humans and physical phenomena, with the former only being capable of creating meanings. It is these meanings that are of relevance to this study, which participants create through their perceptions and experiences due to the prevalence, lack or means of T&D implementation during their employment in Irish hotels and how this may influence their desire to stay with or leave the organisation.

The different economic, cultural and social backgrounds of the participants are believed to create their own social realities, subsequently, experiences and narratives can offer rich insights. When defining the purpose of Interpretivist research, Saunders *et al*. (2019) state it is to generate new, more insightful interpretations and understandings of their contexts and social worlds. This is the basis for this study in attempting to uncover if and to what extent a correlation exists between T&D and employee TI. These complexities were accounted for by collecting information phenomenologically on what participants found meaningful through studying their recollections and interpretation of personal experiences. The influence of the researcher's philosophical positioning is highlighted by Saunders *et al*. (2019) who identify an axiological implication as a result of interpreting the research data and materials is that the researcher's personal values are incorporated into the research process.

4.2 Theory Development

Despite there being a substantial volume of literature on voluntary turnover, there is an absence of understanding concerning the factors which influence it (Memon *et al*., 2016) and the existing research on T&D in the hospitality sector is fragmented and limited (Johnson *et al*., 2019). Therefore, the research, largely developed by following an inductive approach – collecting data from participants to explore a phenomenon which was then analysed. The interviews were semi-structured to ensure that the information relevant to the study was acquired, while granting flexibility for potential further insight into unpredictable areas which may prove beneficial to the research and facilitate potential changes in the direction of the research. Such research may not be achievable within a deductive approach as Saunders *et al*. (2019) highlight that it is a rigid methodology and does not allow for alternate explanations of what is occurring. Inductive research is primarily concerned with the context where events are occurring and why they are occurring rather than describing what is happening (Saunders *et al.,* 2019), as is the instance in this study that exclusively examines Irish hotels and factors which influence their turnover rates.

4.3 Research Sample

The target population was individuals with experience in Irish hotels. Due to the immense labour requirements, cost and time needed to evaluate this extensive group, sampling was utilised. Two non-probability sampling procedures were employed: purposive convenience sampling and opportunistic snowball sampling. Initially, several individuals within the target population who were easily accessible to the researcher were invited to participate, they in turn were also invited to suggest other potentially suitable candidates that may participate in the study. This process has been chosen as it provides the greatest chance of acquiring the relevant data in the limited timeframe by granting fast access to a relevant sample.

The irony was not lost on the author that due to the high rates of turnover present in the organisation where the intended convenience sampling was to take place, it was more difficult than expected to acquire a suitable sample. Therefore, snowball sampling was relied upon to a greater extent than was initially believed to be necessary. Serendipitously, this facilitated a more diverse but still relevant sample of individuals who were in the target population but offered more varied insights from a greater range of job roles and hotels. This was in contrast to a critique by Adams, Khan, and Raeside (2014), who argue that utilising snowball sampling increases the likelihood of the secondary participants being similar to the purposive sample and consequently increasing bias in the data.

The lack of clarity regarding the justification and reporting of interview participants is highlighted by Saunders and Townsend (2016), who found in a meta-analysis of 248 qualitative organisational and workplace studies, almost a quarter of studies did not disclose interview participant numbers and over half had no justification for their participant numbers. Based on the degree of data saturation and degree of variability throughout the course of thematic analysis, Guest, Arwen, and Johnson (2006) recommend for non-probability samples that a minimum of 6 interviews are required to effectively extrapolate themes from the data, while data saturation begins to occur at 12 interviews. The qualitative measurements set out by these authors have encouraged rigorous literary discussion, having garnered 5,760 citations in academic journals and a further 100 books (Scopus, 2021) and are identified as "*common criteria*" for qualitative research (Nolan *et al*., 2020), inferring the majority of the article citations agree with the reliability and validity of the proposed measurements. Conversely, Fugard and Potts (2015) argue the concept of data saturation is problematic as new data will invariably allow more information to be collected and that the prevalence of the theme should indicate the suitable sample size – uncommon themes necessitating larger samples and

prevalent themes need not be as large because they are more frequently occurring and readily identified. It is then likely that for as long as data is collected, more information will be gathered, however, due to the time constraints of this study, it is necessary to factor in data saturation when determining the reliability of the sample. As discussed in the literature review, the theme of turnover is ubiquitous in the hotel industry, therefore the sample size needed to accurately support this theme did not need to be particularly large. Factoring in these considerations and without a conclusive ideal sample size being apparent within the literature, it is therefore likely that the concluding participant sample of 11 individuals is valid, reliable and ample enough to extrapolate legitimate themes.

4.4 Research Instrument

Academic literature surrounding T&D in hotels is limited (Johnson *et al*., 2019; Memon *et al*., 2016; Sheehan *et al* 2018), particularly in the Irish context (DTTS, 2019; Nolan *et al*., 2020) therefore, the research is exploratory in nature. For qualitative research there is no singular ideal method or theoretical framework, however, it is important that the methods and framework match what the study is seeking investigate (Braun and Clarke, 2006). To facilitate this study in bridging the literary gap, a qualitative approach was adopted in a similar manner to another study of Irish hotels by Nolan *et al*. (2020), who in part justified their qualitative approach due to the lack of related available information.

The purpose of qualitative research is to accurately encapsulate the insights and understandings of participants' ideas, thoughts and experiences – to achieve this requires a loosely designed research instrument to enable participants to shape and control the information acquired and consequently the information in the research project (Quinlan, 2011). To ensure this, semi-structured interviews were chosen, allowing participants to direct the discussion and illustrate their perspective with the aid of examples which led the interviews into unforeseen avenues of enquiry. Open questions were utilised which Quinlan (2011) argues often require the participants' reflection and thought, facilitating exploration of their feelings, understandings and beliefs – producing rich and complex data. This allowed for more thoughtful data to be garnered, on occasion producing answers which the participants themselves found to be surprising and insightful. The interviews were conducted one-on-one, facilitating good rapport with the participants and potentially overcoming some of the personability that may have been lost due to being conducted remotely. In a study of online interviews as a means for qualitative

data collection, Iacono, Symonds, and Brown (2016) identified that participants being interviewed in the comfortability of their own home and at their convenience and leisure facilitated greater rapport and a willingness to continue the conversation. This is exceedingly important as Adams *et al*. (2014) identify that rapport and trust with respondents are the most important elements for reducing interviewer bias.

4.5 Quantitative Versus Qualitative

A quantitative approach was considered; however, it was deemed to be less applicable for this study than qualitative. Quantitative research resulting from a Positivist assumption is unlikely to be capable of illustrating the complex and rich realities that exist in organisations and account for the differences between individual experiences (Saunders *et al*., 2019). As this study seeks to explore the individual employment experiences of Irish hotel workers and thoroughly account for them, quantitative research is likely to be inadequate for accurately capturing and portraying participant insights extensively.

Research in business and management is predominantly concerned with knowing how things are, why things occur and the intentions people hold – demonstrating the importance of talking to people when studying the field (Adams *et al*., 2014). This is in contrast to a quantitative approach which Quinlan (2011) identifies as numerical research, conducted by creating numerical data or data which can be conveniently coded numerically to convey information about what is being measured. Quantitative analysis also adheres to strict research design standards, developed prior to the study being conducted (Adams *et al*., 2014). Due to the exploratory nature of this study, it was necessary to have a more flexible means of research than is permitted by quantitative methods.

Concluding their extensive review of studies on T&D in the hospitality sector, Johnson *et al*. (2019) found they typically excluded existing theoretical frameworks, were predominantly qualitative in approach and they recommend that future studies would benefit existing research by shifting the focus from management and leadership to frontline and entry-level employees due to the strong influence that their performance has on organisational success. This study was based on the research which has preceded it, in that it is qualitative in nature and excluded existing theoretical frameworks, however, attempts to fill the research gap by studying low to mid-level hotel employees, rather than focusing on management and leadership.

4.6 Interview Process

Data gathering in conjunction with a qualitative paradigm is an interactive process that is co-constructed with participants, and engaging in fieldwork is often in-depth and prolonged (Quinlan, 2011). In order to facilitate this, the co-dependent process of semi-structured interviews was selected as an appropriate means of data collection. The 11 interviews lasted between 18 and 58 minutes each, yielding in excess of 55,000 transcribed words containing rich and insightful data.

Due to public health restrictions, VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol) technologies were utilised as an alternative to traditional face-to-face interviews. In a review of VoIPs as a means for gathering qualitative data, Iacono *et al*. (2016) found VoIP technologies that allow research participants to be interviewed using video and voice in real-time across the internet to be a viable alternative to face-to-face interviews and state they are becoming increasingly important among qualitative researchers. The VoIP selected for this study was Zoom due to its accessibility and familiarity with participants which had the ambition of eliciting greater participant engagement, resulting from their ease of access and comfortability. Zoom is an innovative videoconferencing platform and a highly suitable means of collecting qualitative data due to cost-effectiveness, ease of use, security options, data management features and ability to generate a personal connection between users (Archibald, Ambagtsheer, Casey, and Lawless, 2019).

The utilisation of Zoom facilitated the transcription process as they were automatically generated, however, these were revised to rectify some errors made by the transcription software – allowing for greater immersion in the data and for emerging codes and themes to be more readily identified. Additionally, punctuation that potentially altered the context and intended meaning of the data was incorrect or omitted on occasion and rectified when needed. This allowed for content that was of significance to the participants to be identified as demonstrated through their pattern of speech.

It is argued by Saunders *et al*. (2019) that in addition to demonstrating sensitivity and building rapport, a qualitative researcher's success is dependent on gaining physical access to participants. In contrast to this and despite physical access to participants being prohibited, it is likely the utilisation of VoIPs may have benefited the process in several aspects. The online interviewing process helped overcome the geographically dispersed sample and allowed for greater access to a more experienced sample than was likely accessible if in-person interviews

were exclusively relied upon. Quinlan (2011) contests that online interviews with video can potentially intimidate the participants and consequently affect their engagement with the process and where there is audio only, interviewer bias can be reduced as there is less chance of the interviewer influencing responses. For these reasons participants were offered a video functionality as optional, contingent on their level of comfort to encourage engagement and during responses there was a focus on taking notes while interaction was limited to probing of important issues where there was a need for greater exploration of relevant topics. Additionally, the convenience of access through online interviews for all parties reduced the time, cost and labour resources necessary when compared to face-to-face interviews, all of which were relevant concerns in the planning of this study.

It was determined after the initial several interviews were conducted that some participants were apprehensive about the formality of the process, the phrase "*interview*" was naturally associated with other similar but higher-stakes processes such as job interviews. To encourage engagement and free expression of accurate and truthful experiences, the sample was informed that more than mere respondents, they were participants in the research. The participants were then briefed prior to the interview that there is no right, wrong, good or bad answers and that the research is solely concerned with their experiences, beliefs, ideas, opinions and insights. This appeared to facilitate the interview process and allowed for greater exploration of their experiences in Irish hotels and was incorporated into the participant information sheet (See Appendix B for Participant Information Sheet).

4.7 Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted to ensure the interview questions were coherent, easily comprehensible and to potentially highlight any other unforeseen issues. Four brief pilot interviews were conducted, among a sample of purposively selected participants and several minor issues were identified and corrected. None of the sample had experience in Irish hotels, however, did have experience within the Irish service industry and had some valuable insights. The changes included rectifying a minor overlap in the subject matter of the questions and removal of language which was specific to the field of HR, the meanings of which were not immediately evident to the participants. To facilitate the fluidity of future interviews, the phrases of employee commitment, engagement and satisfaction were synthesised into a sentence that encompassed what they meant and created a more accessible understanding of

the interview questions. The participants were also asked to identify if they found any questions to be leading and following the pilot study the wording of some questions were altered to help minimise Interviewer bias.

4.8 Interview schedule

An interview schedule is the list of questions which will be asked or issues to be explored during interviews which are systematically ordered to ensure thorough exploration of the issues discussed, beginning with background demographic questions, moving to general questions then onto questions specific to the phenomenon being investigated (Quinlan, 2011). The schedule was informed by topics explored within the literature review and grouped in a manner that encouraged participants to explore their thoughts, feelings and beliefs regarding these topics (See Appendix A for Interview Questions).

Background Information: Collected to identify potential demographic-based or organisational characteristic links during the data analysis.

Questions 1 – 3: Gain some initial insight into participants experience of T&D and potential areas of grievance resulting from these experiences.

Questions 4 – 5: Explore the relationship between T&D and the participant's job role.

Questions 6 – 9: Sought to evaluate the role of management in T&D outcomes.

Questions 10 – 11: Sought to evaluate the role of the organisation in T&D outcomes.

Questions 12 – 14: Investigate the mediating role employee engagement, commitment and satisfaction may play between T&D and turnover intentions.

Questions 17 – 19: Sought more broadly to identify influences of turnover intentions and if T&D may be an indirect factor of these influences.

Question 20: Encouraged participants to evaluate and reflect on the topics explored during the interview process then offer up any further insights they may have.

4.9 Data Analysis Method

Thematic analysis is a qualitative based method for identifying and analysing data patterns (Braun and Clark, 2013) which is a highly sensitive but robust tool, allowing data to be systematically organised and presented (Attride-Stirling, 2001). It is foundational, accessible and theoretically flexible, capable of producing detailed, rich and complex information by identifying, analysing then reporting themes within the data (Braun and Clark, 2006).

In an extensive review of literature on T&D in the hospitality industry, Johnson *et al.* (2019) found the majority of studies have been conceptual, qualitative and do not include underlying theoretical frameworks. This presents a potential issue as Braun and Clark (2006) state thematic analysis does not need to be used in conjunction with theoretical frameworks, however, without a framework to anchor the claims that are made, it has little interpretive ability beyond description. The literature review embeds the researcher and the research project itself in the relevant body of knowledge, becoming the theoretical framework for the research question (Quinlan, 2011). Therefore, the literature review of this study will be adopted as the framework in which the data analysis method will be embedded, ensuring claims made are effectively grounded and supported.

The compatibility of thematic analysis and an inductive approach is identified by Braun and Clarke (2006) who clarify Inductive analysis as the process of coding data without attempting to fit the data into a pre-existing coding frame which facilitates the evolution of the research question through the process of coding. A critique regarding this active use of data and subjectivity is identified by Saunders *et al.* (2019) who argue a variety of meanings can often be derived from words that are unclear and need to be clarified and explored with participants and those conducting the research may be unable to detach from the personal meanings they attribute to words, obscuring intended meanings. This is a common critique of qualitative research, that the subjectivity of the approach can create bias and undermine the study, however, it is this subjectivity that is essential to carry out good qualitative research (Braun and Clarks, 2013).

The analysis followed a semantic approach, themes were identified and constructed based on the explicit surface meanings of the data. The questions asked of participants were themselves explicit, it is then unlikely that delving into a deeper latent level beyond what the participant has stated would be of benefit to this study.

The data analysis of this study followed the six-stage process of thematic analysis as stipulated by Braun and Clark (2006) which is argued to be the most influential approach within the social sciences (McGuire and Delahunt, 2017).

➢ **Phase 1** – Familiarisation with the data

As a result of formulating the questions, there was a pre-existing familiarity with the potential data insights, however, it was necessary to repeatedly read and actively search for patterns and meanings within the data set and the interview notes for potential coding ideas. This was facilitated by the transcription process, which was time-consuming but insightful and enabled a good base level interpretation of the data.

➢ **Phase 2** – Initial code generation

Having become familiar with the data, initial ideas for patterns were extrapolated into more meaningful and robust codes to identify features of the data. Systematically working through the data set, paying equal attention to data items allowed for the identification of many potential themes. Some data surrounding the extracts was retained to ensure context and therefore the intended meanings were accurately represented, particularly where the data contravened the dominant theme and allowed for greater perspective.

➢ **Phase 3** – Theme Exploration

Having identified numerous codes across the data set, these codes were then matched and combined into overarching themes. This was achieved through the visual aid of creating a thematic mind map, allowing candidate central and sub-themes which included all relevant data extracts to be proposed.

➢ **Phase 4** – Thematic Review

The candidate themes during this stage were further refined as some were found not to have enough supporting data or the data was too diverse. Other candidate themes which initially appeared separate were combined into a single more coherent theme and other overly broad themes were divided into more accurate, identifiable and distinctive themes. Once valid themes had been identified, the entire data set was re-read to ensure the themes correlated well with the data set and any additional information missed at the initial coding stage had been accounted for. Braun and Clarke (2006) advise this process of re-coding and thematic creation could be an indefinite process and in the absence of any strict guidelines, they advise stopping when substantial contributions are no longer being made. This advice was adhered to.

> **Phase 5** - Thematic Identification and Definition

The themes were then identified based on the aspects of what captured the data within the themes most accurately, this was then followed by a detailed analysis of each theme: identifying the narrative of the themes and how it is connected to the research question. The theme titles were selected to encapsulate their content fully, accurately and to easily convey this to the reader.

> **Phase 6** – Report Production

The process concluded by producing a report which features sufficient evidence of the themes that emerged from the data. This was achieved by supporting themes with relevant data extracts and the analytic narrative which demonstrated the prevalence of the theme in the data set. This phase aimed to contextualise the data within the literature review and present a persuasive and coherent narrative about the data.

4.10 Limitations

Face-to-face interviewing was not possible due to health restrictions. VoIP communication was not a notable limitation for the purposive sample, however, presented a minor issue for participants gathered by the snowball method who were unfamiliar with the researcher. The potential lack of personability that resulted from utilising VoIP in contrast to in-person face-to-face interviews may have hampered participant willingness to be more open and consequently the amount of data collected. Additionally, the potential interpretation of non-verbal cues such as body language was also limited as a result of the online interview method.

The sample was isolated to two of the seven tourism regions as designated by Fáilte Ireland – *Dublin* and *West Ireland* (Fáilte, 2021), therefore the data may not be representative of the nationwide population. These regions do represent the first and third highest regions respectively in terms of revenue generated, employment levels and number of visitors (PWC, 2020), potentially offering more experience than a similar sized sample from other regions. This study was also limited to the Irish hotel industry, similar to the research of Nolan *et al*. (2020), however, they highlighted how vital the sector is to the broader tourism sector and may have further-reaching implications than initially apparent.

The Inductive approach when compared to Deductive or Abductive approaches can be much more protracted as ideas emerge gradually through a longer period of data collection and

analysis (Saunders *et al.,* 2019). This was challenging due to time constraints, however, the dearth of research surrounding the area of investigation necessitated an Inductive approach to produce quality research. Overall, time was a limiting factor and may have consequently limited the scope of the research.

4.11 Ethical Considerations

Prior to the interviews being conducted, each participant was sent a Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form (See Appendix C for Participant Consent Form). If there was any ambiguity regarding the content of these documents, participants were invited to query them for clarification. The information sheet informed the participants as to why the research was being undertaken, what was going to be asked of them, their responsibilities and the responsibilities of the researcher. The consent form outlined the rights participants have, including their access to the information they provide, ability to refuse to answer any questions and to withdraw their participation at any stage. Due to the public health restrictions and time constraints, it was not feasible to have the documents signed in-person or posted, signed, then returned. Therefore, when interview recording began, the participants were asked to confirm that they had received, read and agreed to the terms and conditions of both documents and were invited again to make additional enquiries they may have regarding the content.

Chapter 5: Analysis and Findings

5.1 Chapter Introduction

This chapter details an analysis of the findings derived from exploratory primary data collected through 11 semi-structured interviews. The data is synthesised in respect to relevant hypotheses proposed by existing literature and within the confines of the study limitations. Through thematic analysis, there resulted a keen familiarity with the data which facilitated the coding process and allowed themes to emerge organically, developing an accurate representation of the data set. Initially, 16 themes were conceptualised which were then consolidated where they were excessively broad, overlapped with other themes or not sufficiently supported then distilled into 3 distinctive and comprehensive themes.

5.2 Participant Data

Participant Number	Years of Experience in Irish Hotels	Star Rating of Current/Last Hotel	Job Title	Number of Hotels Worked For	Average Years Per Hotel
1	30	4	Night Manager	9	3.33
2	2	4	Night Porter	1	2.00
3	6	4	Night Porter	2	3.00
4	5.5	5	Meetings & Events Associate	3	1.83
5	3	5	Receptionist/Events Coordinator	3	1.00
6	5	4	Restaurant Supervisor	3	1.67
7	3	4	Bar staff/Barista	4	0.75
8	4	4	Bar staff/Porter	4	1.00
9	5	4	Duty Manager	2	2.50
10	0.5	4	Waitress/Barista	1	0.50
11	6	4	Guest Service Associate	3	2.00
Total	**70**			**35**	

Figure 1 - *Participant Information*

Figure 2 – *Sample Turnover Graph*

5.3 Theme 1: Care

The flexibility of the semi-structured interviews facilitated an insightful exploration of perceived organisational support as it became apparent the theme was ubiquitous among participants. Organisational support was frequently denoted as "*care*" among the sample and the data set represented a strong indication for a negative correlation between POS and TI – the more *care* that participants believed their organisation had for them, the lower their intentions to leave were.

"People that don't have a good relationship with their employer or employment, it's a short-term job prospect, it's never going to be long term" (10)

"When you have an employer that you think doesn't really care about you, overall, it doesn't make you want to stay there that much." (6)

With the exception of two participants, T&D was found to be closely linked to POS and all but one of these participants stated that experiencing this sense of *care* would lower their TI.
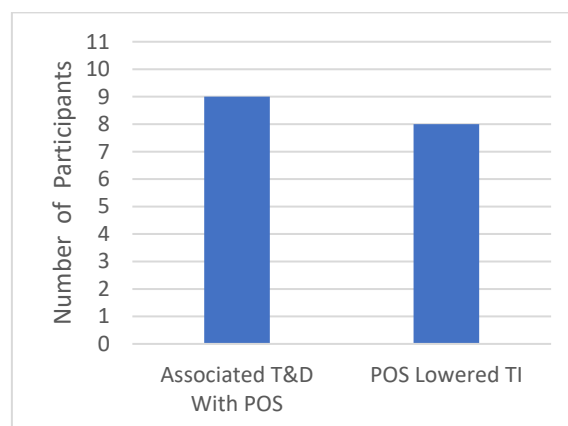
Figure *3 - Perceptions and Implications of POS*

These inclinations were found to be particularly strong among participants who had little or no experience of sincere T&D processes and felt bereft as a result, increasing TI. Only two participants had experienced strong T&D programmes and were able to illustrate the subsequent variation in POS and TI when contrasting employers that offered T&D and those who did not:

"The hotel that I'm working with now, they really do care and they want you to stay, they want you to actually progress in the company. You do feel they care, I think it definitely changes your perspective on where you want to work." (11)

"I feel at my last job they did care because they put the effort in, they trained me for a year. I'm looking for a new job now, I think if they (my current employer) did put in more effort, I'd put in more effort" (5)

The typically poor state of the participants' relationships with their employers is highlighted by participants 3 and 8 who likened their role in the company to being a "*cog in a wheel*" and participant 7 stated they felt *"like a pawn"*.

"They did not care, and you could tell, they just wanted to exploit as many people as they could to benefit the business, no chances of development or any training was offered." (10)

Throughout the interviews, a more robust association between T&D opportunities and POS was drawn by participants and the subsequent effects on their TI.

"Training would definitely lead me to want to stay in the company" (7)

"When a company prides themselves on training and development, it's a good trait to have for a company. I think it shows that they care about staff, and they're not just looking for people that will fill the position." (11)

The provision of T&D denoted care for the individual and that they were not a mere *cog* or *pawn*. Where participants had not experienced any sincere T&D, they interpreted the absence of opportunity as a demonstrative lack of care by the hotel.

"There was something in them not taking the initiative to be like, 'they (staff) *need to be trained in.' That definitely had an effect on my relationship with them and my feelings towards them."* (8)

Participants interpreted T&D as being symbolic of the organisation investing in them and therefore their future with the organisation which further cultivated POS and lowered TI.

"You respect the company a bit more for putting in the effort and investing in their staff, and that they actually care about you." (5)

"I feel if the company was investing time and even money into me, I would want to stay there because I would feel appreciated, whereas if they don't then I'll need a way out." (10)

"If they're putting in the time to properly train and develop your skills, you feel a sort of loyalty towards the company." (11)

"If you were trained properly, you'd feel a bit more obligated to stay because they've put the time into you and by staying you give the time back to them and maybe even learn some more." (9)

5.4 Theme 2: Accessibility

The results of the previous theme indicate that the prevalence of T&D is negatively correlated with TI, however, this relationship was found to potentially be mediated by accessibility which can also have a direct influence on levels of TI. Accessibility here is operationalised as the effort required to avail of or participate in T&D processes. Participation in T&D was found to be strongly desirable among all participants, however, such opportunities were typically perceived as either difficult to access or altogether inaccessible. The uptake of T&D programmes and therefore the potential outcome of lower TI may be contingent on accessibility – if employees do not participate in these initiatives there will be no outcomes.

"If you wanted to move up, if you wanted to learn new skills to help to improve your job role, you'd probably have to go looking for it." (4)

"I really had to put myself out there and ask around, I had to put in the work, they didn't give me the opportunity to go up in the ranks." (7)

The difficulty experienced in accessing T&D was found to create frustration and was evidenced throughout the career cycle from initial entry-level jobs:

"For those first few years you're not getting anywhere, they're not telling you 'You can apply for this.' You just feel like, why am I here?" (11)

This frustration was then identified further on in the career cycle where skills had already been cultivated and there was demand for greater development among higher-performing employees to further improve their skill sets:

"For the people who are actually serious, doing their job well and are talented and have the capabilities of being a good barman, they suffer, what's the point to trying to do your job if they don't give you the opportunity to do it well." (8)

Where T&D opportunities were not perceived as readily accessible, it was found among the participants that they did not believe these opportunities were worth the requisite effort to access them. The desire to seize such opportunities was still present, however, if the effort required to access them was perceived as excessive or they were seen as altogether unattainable, similar opportunities would be sought at another hotel as TI increased.

"One of the reasons why I left my last job was because I didn't see myself going forward, I wasn't given enough opportunities, so I looked for opportunities elsewhere." (6)

"I want to grow where I am, but they don't give me the chance to improve my abilities and grow. I want to move to another, better place even though I like working at this hotel I want to leave and search for new opportunities." (2)

"I didn't want to move up because it felt like there's no point because it's just too much effort." (7)

"If they weren't being given opportunities or they weren't being fully supported by the company with things like training and development, then they would just leave." (11)

"My thinking back then was that I wanted to be a manager, so I was really fighting for it. If I had to fight for it now, I don't think I don't think I'd be staying. I think I'd be going." (9)

"If you're not giving me any opportunities, if you're in fact actually holding me back from potential opportunities, it's really demoralising because I see it as: you want me to stay at this level for the rest of my life if I stayed with this company. What good is that to me?" (10)

Despite the lack of T&D experience among the participants, there was a clear and very strong demand to be afforded more opportunities. The vast majority of the participants had a desire to not only remain in the industry as a whole but within their respective hotels, however, this was found to be contingent on having access to career prospects. Where these opportunities were not accessible, participants found it difficult to envisage a future with their respective employers, increasing TI and on occasion actual turnover.

"If there was strong training and development throughout your time there, the retention would be better, people would stay longer when you know you can move up in the hotel." (5)

"If they could say one day you can be here (job promotion) then I probably would have stayed because they knew that I was good at the job and they could see the potential but there was just no path for me to get there." (6)

"If they started using training to improve me and use me more and let me grow within the company it would make me want to stay." (2)

"The turnover would be so much lower, people would stay in the company because you can feel helpless and lost in the same role, thinking there's no end in sight." (8)

This feeling of being stuck, lost and unchallenged as a result of not being able to envision a future within their hotels which may be afforded through accessible T&D was broached on a number of occasions. Participant 1 indicated that career prospects provided through T&D would lower their TI *"because you know you haven't just gone as high as you can."* The impact of having no perceived career path on an employee's ability to feel they have a future with the company was articulated well by participant 10 *"You don't have anything to work towards, you just feel stuck at the same level"* and participant 2 *"I feel like they need me at the moment, but I don't know for how long they will need me and I sometimes feel, completely replaceable."* The perceived inaccessibility of T&D evidentially created negative feelings and emotions regarding the participants' relationship with their employers and clouded a visible future with the company which both increased TI. This was contrasted with participants who had experienced easily accessible T&D programmes and were able to encapsulate the beneficial impact on their relationships with their employers.

"You feel like you're progressing all the time. You're doing something good; you're challenging yourself and you don't feel like you're just doing the same thing every day." (5)

"It definitely makes you think about your future with a company, I think it's a very attractive thing for a company to have a plan for you, you feel valued and that they do want you to stay, and they want you to be a part of the company." (11)

5.5 Theme 3: Confidence

Confidence was identified to have an important role in moderating the engagement and satisfaction levels of participants and has been divided into two sections to ensure they are adequately addressed.

5.5.1 Theme 3: Confidence and Engagement

REPORTED EFFECTS OF T&D ON ENGAGEMENT

■ Would Increase Engagement
■ Would Not Affect Engagement

27%

73%
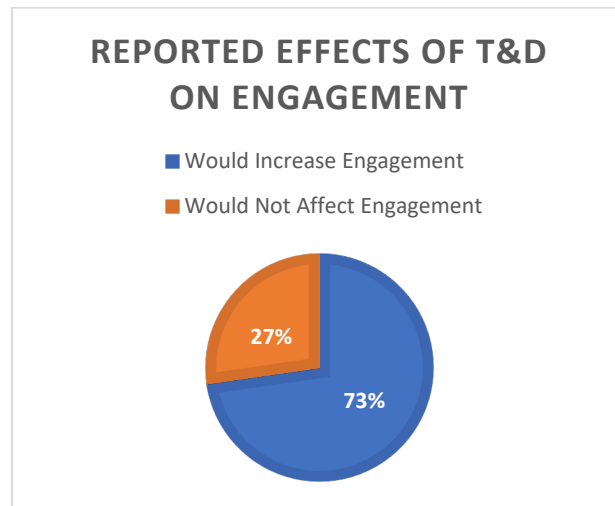
Figure 4 - *Impact of T&D on Engagement*

With the exception of three participants, the sample had experienced or believed they would experience a direct increase in discretionary effort, motivation to improve their performance and overall engagement as a result of more prevalent or extensive T&D processes being provided by their employer. This was initially found to stem from the somewhat obvious notion that if you do not know how to do something you would be less likely to attempt doing it, let alone increase effort expended in the role beyond basic expectations.

"If you haven't been told what to do and how to do things, you're not going to even try to do things or work independently." (6)

"It definitely affects motivation if you're not properly trained … you don't want to continue on if you can't do the job correctly it's difficult to get motivated if you're just left to your own devices – you don't want to do the job and you don't even want to try." (10)

"If you're trained properly, you would do the job and a little bit more." (9)

A prominent correlation between T&D and engagement was identified as a resulting from the increased confidence in the participants' own abilities, brought about through the application

of effective T&D. If participants were familiar with the job requirements and how to fulfil them, they were more likely to do their jobs, if they felt very capable in their role, having received T&D they expressed a greater likelihood of exceeding these basic requirements.

"If you're stuck in a situation where you're not trained for something, you're not even going to try and go above and beyond what your role requires because you don't know how to do it and you don't know how to do it confidently." (6)

"Because they've trained you and they've gone through everything, you feel confident, and you feel that you're very capable in your in your role." (11)

"Every time I received new training, it made me more confident and made me want to know more about the job I was doing and improve at it." (2)

Participant 5 was able to illustrate the change that occurred in their engagement levels when contrasting their previous role, where there was a complete absence of T&D, to their current role where opportunities are perceived as accessible:

"There was a lack of care, you didn't really care about what you did, we did the functions, we did the basics but there was no extra mile in my last job but you do go the extra mile now."

In addition to potentially not increasing employee engagement, the absence of T&D may decrease existing levels of engagement. Not providing development opportunities may lead talented and otherwise highly engaged employees to see their role as limiting to their potential ability and consequently lose their motivation to engage with the role.

"What's the point to trying to do your job if they don't give you the opportunity to do it well?" (8)

"If there's no opportunities and no training, there's just nothing for you to work towards."

(11)

5.5.2 Theme 3: Confidence and Satisfaction

REPORTED EFFECTS OF T&D ON SATISFACTION

- Would Increase Satisfaction
- Would Not Affect Satisfaction
- Increase Contingent On Other Employment Conditions

18%
18%
64%
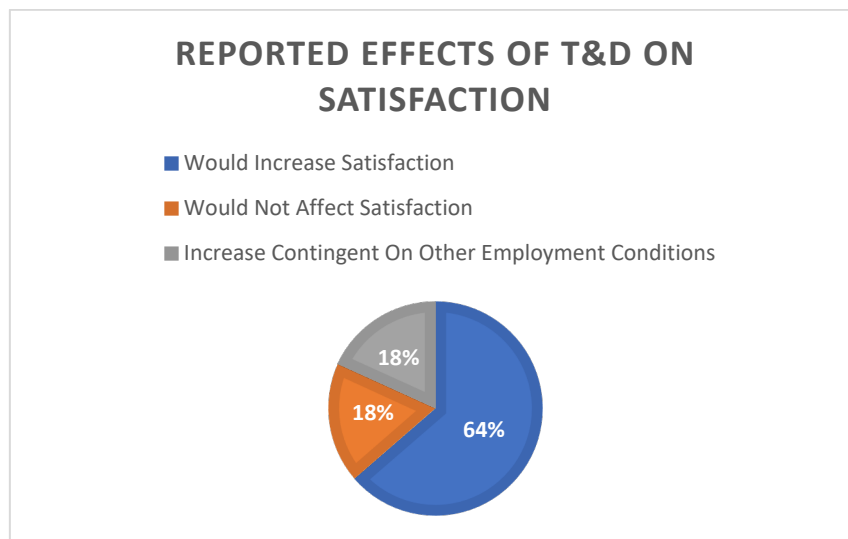
Figure 5 - *Impact of T&D on Satisfaction*

The results highlighted a positive correlation between the prevalence of T&D and job satisfaction as 9 participants stated T&D would increase their satisfaction levels, however, 2 of these stated this would be contingent on other employment conditions. This link appears similar to that of the engagement results whereby if you know how to do your job and feel capable in the role, it was reported to then be more enjoyable, easier and overall more satisfying than without T&D and the subsequent unfamiliarity of what to do or how to do it.

"The better I got at my job, the more I enjoyed it because the more confident I felt in it." (8)

"When you have that confidence, knowing that you're doing it the right way, that would automatically make it more enjoyable because you can be more relaxed knowing that you're doing it the right way." (7)

"Training makes things easier, it makes the flow of work easier, it leads to less arguments about how things should be done or could be done, it makes you feel more confident … just a happier work environment overall." (4)

"If you can confidently carry out a task that you've been well trained for, it makes you just a happier employee." (6)

"It (T&D) definitely does make things easier, you enjoy it more." (5)

This may appear overtly evidential, however, when you consider the alternative consequences of not being trained, which was experienced by all participants at some stage during their employment in hotels, the negative implications on satisfaction levels become evident.

"There was definite periods where I was coming into work, being anxious or worried because I felt like I don't know what I'm doing and I'm going to mess it up." (8)

"You get frustrated by not being shown or having to improvise based on your personal skills, having to improvise because of poor training." (1)

"It definitely would have helped to have some sort of training on the standards that they wanted, whereas I had to guess what they wanted." (11)

"Less time training led to frustration, and then you'd be gone if you weren't given the time to be trained properly, I personally wouldn't stick around anyway. I could see staff leaving as well, even now." (9)

"When you don't know what you're doing and they (colleagues) do, you feel in their way and a hindrance on the job that they do so well." (8)

The paucity of T&D experience was found to have compounding negative implications for participants' satisfaction as it disseminated through colleagues. Where participants' colleagues were perceived to be poorly performing due to a lack of T&D, it was found to then have a deleterious effect on the participant's own levels of satisfaction. Participant 11 discussed how on entering a new job that their customarily high levels of self-confidence were adversely impacted by the inability of their new colleagues:

"I didn't have confidence in my team because they weren't trained, it was a domino effect."

"Different employees would have different ways of doing things which would create issues amongst the employees who are working at the time because it led to a backup and slowing down of service and tensions between employees." (7)

"Seeing inferior people being brought in without the proper training, it's just so disheartening and it doesn't make you want to do the job at all." (6)

Chapter 6: Discussion

6.1 Chapter Introduction

The findings appear to have fallen staunchly in line with various likely predictions emanating from the literature review, however, not all results were expected. The average amount of time participants spent working in each of their current or previous hotels was found to be a notably meagre 2 years, a figure which the results indicated would be significantly higher if their employers had instituted effective T&D policies. The sample of 11 participants had experience across 35 Irish hotels and somewhat surprisingly only two hotels were reported to have engaged in practices, procedures or processes which could be identified as legitimate T&D. The predominant interpretation of T&D among participants was that it is legally mandated training, required by law, for health and safety reasons such as food hygiene, fire safety and manual handling (training on the avoidance of physical injury when lifting items). This limited perception served to highlight the substandard landscape of T&D across these Irish hotels. This data represented a collective 70 years' experience at almost exclusively 4 and 5-star Irish hotels, contrasting the literature which suggested that a higher star rating is likely indicative of higher calibre T&D opportunities being provided (Davidson, 2010).

6.2 Theme 1: The Influence of Care on Turnover Intentions

The predominant view among the sample correlated with the findings of Foong-ming (2008) that POS or *care* can be strongly associated with an employer who provides T&D opportunities to an even greater extent than compensation and benefits as identified by participant 10 "*The appreciation can be of course monetary but a lot of the time it's really not, it's about actually showing that you care for the employees.*" This is consistent with the views of Walsh and Taylor (2007) who argue financial remuneration is not enough in itself to affect retention and there must be career development opportunities to reduce TI. This served to underscore the importance of T&D and consequential POS as a means of retention due to its comparability to pay which is commonly a fundamental aspect of retention policies. The reported experiences of T&D ranged from often quite limited, such as shadowing a colleague for several hours to an extensive three-week-long induction course that spanned all departments in the hotel. Those who had experienced strong T&D in hotels which they formerly worked at and have since gained employment at a hotel that does not offer similar opportunities reported an increase in

TI as their employer is comparatively less caring. This data reiterated the argument espoused by Maxwell and McClean (2008), that an industry-wide effort is required on resolving the dearth of T&D to affect any significant change in turnover rates. If effective T&D is only adopted by some organisations, job mobility may remain high as individuals flock to hotels that offer such opportunities, leaving other hotels which do not offer T&D and are comparatively less caring with stagnantly high turnover rates.

All participants enthusiastically endorsed that having a defined career path would lower their TI. The only stipulations to this were proposed by participant 9 who stated their decreased TI would likely be contingent on "*a career trajectory that suited me*" and participant 3 who said it "*depends on the job requirements and wages of course.*" This reiterated the prerequisite for employee interests to be incorporated into decision-making processes surrounding T&D if TI is to be reduced. This presents a significant challenge as the findings were similar to that of Connolly and McGing (2007) and their evaluation of individuals working in Dublin hotels where employee voice was found to be almost entirely unacknowledged. None of the participants believed their employer cared about their individual needs regarding their T&D or overall long-term career prospects. This disregard for the thoughts, feelings and ideas of employees may not only exacerbate the perceived lack of care but consequently increase TI. As the literature identified, there is need to align the developmental interests of the organisation with the developmental interests of their employees, however, if communication in this regard is non-existent this will likely be unattainable and hotel employees who feel their needs are inadequately acknowledged or cared for will subsequently maintain their high levels of TI. This accords with the earlier observations of Cho *et al*. (2009), Hemdi and Nasurdin (2006) and Yang *et al*. (2012) who argued that the potential impact of T&D on employee TI will be greatly diminished without the acknowledgement and incorporation of employee voice into T&D processes.

The findings support previous studies which identified that T&D practices in the Irish hospitality industry are inadequate and that there is a need for increased focus on career path development as a means of retaining employees in the sector (Farrell, 2001; ITIC, 2018; SOLAS 2018). There was a consensus among all participants that their overall experience of T&D has been minimal. Participant 8 surmised a common opinion among the participants that there is a concurrent awareness that more comprehensive T&D is needed, but not knowing what this would entail: "*It's always a thing that I've said, that we just were never trained properly and I don't even know what being properly trained is.*" This prevalent sentiment was

underpinned at the beginning of each interview as participants were invited to clarify their interpretation of T&D. The responses were mostly broad and generic, emulating their experiences of T&D and their suggested improvements to current T&D regimes did not expand much further than advocating greater time allocation rather than more detailed or practicable recommendations. As a result, this study was unsuccessful in explicitly identifying how current practices could be innovated to meet employee demands, however, reinforced the need for greater employee-employer collaboration on T&D to ensure that the correct demands are identified and effectively fulfilled. If they are not, it is then unlikely that a sense of care will be cultivated amongst the workforce as they do not believe the hotel to be acting in their interests.

The results corroborate views of Cho *et al*. (2009) who attest that investment in employee growth and development enhances the perception of organisational support, consequently lowering TI. There is extensive support for the argument advanced by Lee and Bruvold (2003) who contest that through investment in staff development, employees perceive their employment conditions in a relational context. The participants discussed that by investing in their professional future through T&D it was also perceived as an investment in the individual's personal future, helping form a relational bond brought about through POS which correlated with a decrease in TI. The negative correlation between POS and TI had been demonstrated in the Irish context by McCarthy et al. (2013) through employee work/life balance programmes, this study demonstrates a similar reduction in TI can be attained through T&D programmes. There is undoubtedly a need to account for the interests of both the employer and employees when designing T&D programmes, however, participant 1 stated that "*Even though in many cases you realise it's more for legal reasons that you've been trained, it definitely makes you believe that the company is counting on you in the long term while they train you.*" This view was not commonly expressed although may be due to the interview questions not directly addressing it. A considerable amount of the T&D experience among the sample was cited legally mandated training and it presents a potential area of further research to identify if when T&D is of a mandatory nature can this affect the degree to which POS is cultivated and TI is influenced as the employee is potentially an unwilling participant.

6.3 Theme 2: The Influence of Accessibility on Turnover Intentions

There is little sense in having T&D opportunities if they are perceived as inaccessible by those for whom they are intended. The data indicated that in this instance the negative results are compounding, as not only are staff not availing of T&D and incurring the potential outcome of lower TI but there is a further increase in TI as employees seek accessible opportunities at other organisations. To a large extent, the findings supported Walsh and Taylor (2007), Davidson *et al*. (2006), Farrell (2001) who argued a lack of clarity surrounding T&D opportunities facilitates sectoral labour market mobility.

The argument expounded by Johnson *et al*. (2019) that hospitality employees need to assume greater responsibility for the management of their career development was only found to be expressed by participant 9 *"What development meant for me was that I started off as a bartender and ended up as a duty manager, I suppose it's taking the opportunities that are given to you.*" The prevailing opinion among the remaining participants indicated responsibility for employee T&D clearly lay at the feet of the organisation they worked for. In the absence of opportunities or where the outcome of opportunities was perceived to be inequitable to the effort required to access them, TI was increased as participants developed a focus on finding an employer who would offer better or more accessible opportunities. Employees assuming greater responsibility for their career management would likely incur greater turnover in the industry as individuals hop between organisations in an attempt to find a hotel that offers accessible T&D. This runs concurrently with the view of Rahman and Nas (2013) who dismissed shifting the obligation of career management onto hotel employees as it would likely be unsuccessful in the long term without organisational support.

Among participants who perceived T&D to be more accessible, intentions to leave were found to be lower. This data replicated similar findings to Dhar (2015) who found a strong positive correlation between perceived accessibility to development opportunities and organisational commitment in hotels. Additionally, the findings were similar to Rawashdeh and Tamimi (2020) who found the availability of training influences an employee's perception of organisational support. This was a common sentiment among the sample and illustrated well by participant 9 who stated *"I feel like where I am now does care about my future because … I feel if I asked for it* (T&D), it *would be given to me."* This was stated as the participant has a colleague who is currently engaged in a management course, paid for by the hotel and highlights the perception that accessibility may be increased without needing to directly offer

T&D opportunities to all staff. The potential limits of accessibility were illustrated in a situation detailed by participant 4 who was offered fire marshal training, an upgraded post from basic fire training, but stated there was no impact on their POS as "*An email was sent out to everyone, I don't think they cared about me.*" Despite the mass accessibility of this opportunity, POS remained unaffected, potentially due to the lack of personability behind this invitation. A medium will likely need to be found between the exclusive approach in the situation of participant 9 and the mass email received by participant 4 in order to foster the perception of accessibility among employees.

An implication of existing research relevant to the findings of this study is highlighted in the work of McCarty *et al*. (2013) and Rawashdeh and Tamimi (2020) who found the correlation between availability and TI may be moderated by a supportive organisational culture. Therefore, perceived organisational support may need to be present in tandem with the perceived availability of T&D to ensure the outcome of lower TI, a sentiment identified by participant 6, where their inability to access T&D and experience of unsupportive management encouraged the participant to "*find a job at a company that does provide them with more opportunities and more support.*" As identified in the literature review, management play an integral role in facilitating T&D processes, and therefore the potential outcomes through the implementation of practices and fostering the correct perceptions of T&D among employees. The view that T&D is a considerable aspect of the role of management was identified by participant 1 who has three decades of experience in the industry "*If they are not interested in training staff then they are not much of a manager.*" Questions 10 and 11 of the interview schedule sought to evaluate the role of the organisation in T&D outcomes, questions 6 – 9 attempted to uncover the role of management. It was discovered the sample generally did not view a separation between management and the organisation, managers were typically viewed as an extension of the organisation itself, underpinning the importance of managers in facilitating T&D outcomes on the behalf of hotels. Discussion between managers and staff regarding the utilisation of T&D as a means for skill enhancement or to improve organisational success were rare among the sample, serving to further cloud employee perceptions of accessibility despite the ubiquitous demand T&D. This common experience was articulated by participant 8 "*It's a shame as well, I don't think I ever came into contact with a manager who wanted me to do a training course or wanted me to improve on something to have a better experience of doing the job or how well I could do the job*" and Participant 2 "*Managers in hospitality are just concerned with getting the job done and don't really care about helping*

you or improving you." The predominantly informal nature of T&D would suggest that the managers who did conduct T&D did so of their own volition and the resulting accessibility issues are a challenge which must be addressed by more senior management with structured T&D programmes.

6.4 Theme 3: The Impact of Training and Development on Engagement

Engagement and T&D have been identified as the first and second highest priorities of senior HR leaders in Ireland respectively (IBEC, 2019). The findings suggest that T&D will likely incur greater levels of employee engagement, effectively fulfilling these top two priorities by addressing one of them.

The results found that 8 of the 11 participants claimed they had experienced or believed they would experience higher levels of engagement as a result of being in receipt of T&D. This was largely attributed to an increased level of confidence in their abilities that resulted from a greater level of familiarity with their role, facilitated through T&D. Without this confidence, participants stated they would not capably complete basic task expectations, let alone exceed them. Where participants had existing levels of confidence in their abilities, they expressed a desire to further hone and cultivate these skills and perform to a higher standard in the role. Regrettably, this desire was often met with the reality of organisational attitudes towards T&D as being commonly viewed as an expense rather than an investment as surmised by participant 2 *"They see the time spent training staff as time missed out on other things that need to be done."* These results match those observed in earlier studies of Irish hotels by Baum and Devine (2007) and Farrell (2001) where resources allocated for T&D are often minimal due to the perception of T&D as an expense. Participant 1 stated that without T&D *"You don't do your job with confidence, and it ultimately costs more time."* If this logical notion is to be believed, there is a detriment placed on engagement levels through the lack of resource allocation which in turn results in higher costs through the excessive time needed to complete tasks by employees who are poorly trained. It is likely that this is a perception in the sector which must be renewed to enhance engagement levels through T&D and potentially save more money in the longer term.

It was also found where there was an absence of T&D that engagement levels decreased, illustrating the significant role T&D may play in moderating engagement, as it not only positively affects engagement but prevents existing engagement levels from deteriorating. The

participants were more familiar with the latter consequences due to a paucity of T&D in their respective hotels. The common attitude among participants regarding their disengagement was that it resulted from a perceived lack of care for their role as demonstrated through an absence of legitimate T&D practices and was surmised by participant 8 *"If you don't think that I deserve the time to be trained in, in the job that you're paying me to do, then like what's the point? What's the point in working for you? 'Cause you clearly don't care enough."* As identified under the first theme, the provision of T&D may demonstrate an appreciation and care for the employees on a personal level, eliciting lower TI. The impact of T&D on employee engagement may derive from a similar sense of care, however, not care directly for the employee but the role they are fulfilling. Providing T&D initiatives appears to demonstrate to employees the importance of the role itself and employer expectations that employees perform strongly in that role. There already exists the fundamental expectation and obligation that participants fulfil the role they have been hired to do, however, participants identified there is often a lack of perceived care for this same role by their employer. When participants do not view their role as cared for or of importance to their employer, there is a stark decline in engagement levels, with only basic role expectations being fulfilled. The general sentiment among the sample was that the provision of T&D would increase the perception that their employer believed the role they were fulfilling to be of elevated importance and were consequently more motivated to engage with the role.

6.5 The Impact of Training and Development on Commitment

One of the objectives of this study is to investigate the impact of T&D on commitment. Commitment to the organisation has been addressed to a large extent under Theme 1 as participants highlighted their increased desire to remain with the company where T&D is more prevalent and extensive. Commitment to the role itself was addressed under Theme 3 as engagement, the tendency for participants to dedicate themselves more passionately to their job as a result of T&D. Evidently, the extent to which T&D can affect employee commitment is considerable and dedicating more of this paper to further exploration of this area was deemed to be repetitive, excessive and unnecessary. This demonstrates the potentially crucial role of T&D in reducing Irish hotel employee TI as Carbery *et al*. (2015) found commitment to be the most significant variable that influences TI in a sample 89 individuals working in Irish hotels.

6.6 Theme 3: The Impact of Training and Development on Satisfaction

The results demonstrated that T&D increased participants' confidence in their ability to do their job which enabled them to derive greater satisfaction from being able to perform in their role to a degree which they believed was needed. In the absence of T&D, participants indicated a consequential decrease of their confidence in their abilities and expressed experiencing adverse feelings and emotions from not being able to do their job in the manner they believed was expected or that they wished to do it. This frustration correlated with decreased levels of satisfaction. This lack of confidence in the sample's abilities was also found to emanate from colleagues who performed poorly due to not having been trained properly. Participant 11 identified a "*domino effect*" where this lack of confidence in their colleagues' abilities created self-doubt in their own abilities and subsequently had negative implications for their satisfaction. Participant 9 identified a similar experience, where due to the high rates of turnover and lack of T&D, they felt surrounded by poorly performing employees and described the experience as "*disheartening.*" Evidently, T&D can have a significant impact on hotel employees' satisfaction levels as it can enhance these levels when delivered correctly and generate dissatisfaction where T&D is delivered poorly or absent altogether.

T&D can be crucial in facilitating employee satisfaction, however, a more intrinsic source of satisfaction identified by participants was their colleague work relationships. Although this is far from limited to the hospitality industry, participant 6 highlights why this may be more relevant in the hotel sector *"when you're basically living in the hotel, when you're there so often, on such long shifts you do develop relationships with people ... I stayed in the job for so long because of the people that I was working with."* Satisfaction was stated by 7 of the participants to be either largely or in part derived from those they work with. This indirectly illuminates the vital importance of T&D in moderating satisfaction levels. As highlighted in the results section, a lack of T&D can fracture these relationships and cause frustration with other colleagues when there is a lack of clarity in what needs to be done, how to do it and to what standard. These findings correlated with those of Lee *et al*. (2012) who found among hotel workers that the existence of harmonious co-worker relationships affected satisfaction levels positively and significantly. As the participants' satisfaction levels are already influenced by their relationships with colleagues, T&D may enhance this as they are enabled to work more cohesively as a team and prevent dissatisfaction by reducing high error rates which can damage these relationships. The further significance of this workforce harmony is identified by Slåtten and Mehmetoglu (2011) who argued engagement and commitment are

further bolstered when a hospitality firm disseminates a culture of collaboration through development initiatives. This may be expanded to include increased satisfaction as illustrated by this extract from the interview of participant 6 *"If we're all clued in and kept updated and know how to improve ourselves as employees, then it makes you an overall better employee and happier employee."* This too aligns similarly with Rahman and Nas (2013) who argued hotel employee development can enrich employees' capabilities, collaboration and teamwork. These are fundamental aspects that underpin the work done in hotels and if they are cultivated through T&D, the subsequent easier and efficient flow of work will likely increase workforce satisfaction.

The degree to which T&D impacts satisfaction may also be contingent on the role requirements which can vary greatly throughout the hotel depending on what department or potentially different departments an employee works in. It has been established that T&D can be equated to increased satisfaction, however, the amount of training required for different roles can vary and so too may the impact that T&D has on satisfaction levels. Participant 11 highlights that the varying degree to which T&D is required to meet basic role expectations and therefore basic role fulfilment and subsequent satisfaction: *"For front desk, if you can't work the computer, if you can't check someone in, it's not enjoyable because you don't feel like you can do your job, whereas food and beverage you can kind of get away with, doing it your own way."* As highlighted in the results, an adverse consequence of poor training on satisfaction levels is associated with the frustration of not being able to do your job and relying on your pre-existing skills which if done incorrectly or ineffectively can lower employee satisfaction. If the role requires less specific and more general skills that the employee already has prior to T&D, levels of frustration and subsequent dissatisfaction may be less prevalent as they are capable of performing in the role by relying on existing generic skills.

Chapter 7: Conclusion and Recommendations

7.1 Conclusion

The primary objective of this study is to investigate how the implementation of training and development policies, practices and procedures can influence the turnover intentions of employees in Irish hotels.

An examination of the literature illustrated the integral role of TI as an elemental precursor and predictor for an individual's exit from an organisation. Research indicated that T&D can serve a fundamental role in manipulating these intentions through a number of potential ways. Discovering how this may be achieved presents a significant opportunity to alleviate the chronically high levels of turnover which plague an industry of national economic importance that is highly dependent on its workforce for success and even survival.

To achieve the objectives for this study in respect to the contextual paucity of academic research, it was necessary to implement an exploratory qualitative approach to investigate the relevant phenomenon. Data was collected through 11 semi-structured interviews with people who have employment experience in Irish hotels. The interview questions were synthesised in correspondence to existing literature which indicated potential means that T&D might influence the target populations TI, engagement, commitment and satisfaction. Through thematic analysis, three distinct themes emerged from the data set in respect to relevant hypotheses proposed by existing literature and within the confines of the study limitations.

7.2 Research Question 1

How does Training and Development affect the turnover intentions of employees in Irish hotels?

It was found that the institution of T&D policies, practices and procedures would likely decrease the TI of hotel employees through several means. The provision of T&D was found to cultivate the belief among the participants that their employer valued their contribution and cared about their well-being, the concept of POS which increased their intentions to remain with the company. Decision-making processes surrounding T&D likely need to incorporate the developmental needs of employees to ensure these needs are adequately acknowledged and catered for to facilitate the cultivation of POS. There was found to be a lack of acknowledgement for hotel employee needs by those who are responsible for the

implementation of T&D processes, consequently, the sample's TI was substantial. Investment in T&D practices was interpreted as investment in the employees themselves and consequently decreased their TI as they could perceive a more beneficial future with a more caring employer. There is a need for hotels to assume greater responsibility in managing the careers of their employees rather than shifting the obligation onto them as there is a strong demand for greater T&D and if this is not satisfied due to opportunities being perceived as difficult to access, employees will likely seek growth and development opportunities elsewhere. Management should be utilised to foster the correct perceptions of T&D among the employees they are tasked with directing to promote perceived accessibility and POS if any notable decrease in TI is to be achieved.

7.3 Research Question 2

To what extent does Training and Development influence employee engagement, commitment, and satisfaction?

7.3.1 Engagement

The extent to which T&D influences engagement was found to be significant. Where T&D is provided, engagement levels increase and in the absence of T&D, there is a consequential and notable disengagement. T&D was found to increase an individual's confidence in their ability to perform in their role and were consequently more willing to expend greater effort. The lack of confidence due to poor training was found to have a detrimental impact on engagement as there was a hesitancy to meet basic role expectations due to the unfamiliarity in how to do this, let alone exceed these expectations. Among those with existing high levels of engagement, a lack of T&D may lead them to perceive their role as limiting and subsequently disengage from the role. The provision of T&D was also found to denote the importance of the role by the organisation to the employee which cultivated an increased desire to engage due to an enhanced perceived importance of their role.

7.3.2 Commitment

There was found to be stark increase in intentions to remain with an employer who offered T&D opportunities, demonstrating an increase in organisational commitment. The degree of influence that T&D has on commitment to the role is illustrated through the subsequent increase in employee engagement. Evidently, the extent to which T&D influences commitment was found to be significant.

7.3.3 Satisfaction

The potential means through which T&D can influence satisfaction levels is similar to the results of engagement, however, the extent to which satisfaction is influenced was found to be less significant. The same confidence which was derived through T&D and moderated engagement levels also affected satisfaction levels with moderate increases reported where T&D is provided and strong decreases in satisfaction resulting from poor T&D. The reported inadequacy of T&D practices were found to have pervasive implications for decreasing employee satisfaction. It was identified that dissatisfaction had the potential to disseminate among employees and decrease the confidence and subsequently the satisfaction levels of otherwise confident and satisfied employees. The extent to which T&D can affect satisfaction levels may also be contingent on the role requirements, as some roles can be fulfilled with a greater reliance on pre-existing generic skills. There are varying levels of T&D necessary to meet different role requirements and therefore role fulfilment, which has been found to equate to satisfaction.

7.5 Recommendations

7.5.1 Recommendations for Operational Employees

There is a need for the industry to stop viewing T&D as an expense rather than an investment, a perception that may ultimately cost more money. The implementation of extensive and comprehensive T&D practices can be a costly endeavour, however, there are some cost-effective processes that may have strong beneficial implications. A key finding of this study was the ardent demand for more comprehensive T&D in Irish hotels which is going entirely unmet. Instituting a talent pipeline that outlines performance metrics which correlate to promotion opportunities may aid in illustrating a future with the hotel to promote retention,

increase engagement through perusing these goals and satisfaction by attaining them. These initiatives will need to incorporate employee developmental aspirations to elicit their participation and commitment which can be facilitated through management who can identify these development interests, ensure they are acknowledged in the pipeline framework and promote the correct attitudes among staff of the beneficial implications T&D can have for the individual employee and the organisation as a whole. Management as facilitators can utilise feedback on a continual basis through their day-to-day encounters with operational staff to ensure the framework is updated and sustains the commitment of employees. Adoption of an inclusive approach where the framework is transparent and accessible to all employees, contingent on their ability to meet the stipulated criteria is likely the most beneficial approach to promote perceived accessibility and subsequent retention as outlined in the study. This will also prevent disengagement among those who may feel bereft as a result of having been omitted from the talent pool and have a greater likelihood of incorporating potential high-performers as it considers all staff rather than a select few. The time implications for setting up such an initiative are dependent on the number of employees and managers involved in the process as 5-minute surveys are conducted with each staff member to identify key employee demands, ensuring they are reflected in the framework and several hours as identified in the literature to analyse these results and design suitable performance metrics which collate to promotions which will be attained when the position is vacant. The financial costs are dependent on the wages of those involved in the survey in addition to losses in productivity incurred as the research is conducted.

7.5.2 Recommendations for Management

For those in higher-skilled roles, an external approach to development is likely the most beneficial option as was discussed during the interviews and avail of hospitality training courses with education providers. The associated costs of these programmes can be considerable, ranging from €3,500 to €12,000 per annum, depending on the course. On the less costly end of the scale, the course offerings are part-time and facilitate the continuity of work as managers can keep working while learning with two classes per week spread across several years and reduce incurring additional costs through loss of productivity. Such an investment is likely most conducive to an exclusive approach by selecting those who have been with the organisation for several years, have low TI and are highly capable. This is to lessen the risk of

further loss of resources through turnover if the individual is more likely to remain with the company on completion of the course. It may also facilitate a greater return on investment as the chosen employee who is known to be high performing will likely reap the greatest benefit from the course than a less skilled manager. Retention can be further bolstered by the hotel paying half or all of the fees contingent on the managers continued employment with the company for a period of time after the completion of the course and if they fail to do so the employee must reimburse the hotel. Attending the course in and of itself might aid in fostering the correct workforce perceptions of T&D as operational level employees observe that it is a continual process and that regardless of ability an individual's skills, knowledge and attitude can always be improved – encouraging greater engagement with T&D among the workforce.

7.5.3 Recommendations for further research

Investigation into the potential implications of role requirements on the degree to which T&D can elicit increased engagement and satisfaction. If the role requires greater technical ability, then more T&D will likely be required to bolster confidence levels and subsequently engagement and satisfaction. The results may prove beneficial for decision-making processes surrounding T&D when allocating the amount of T&D required for different roles.

A prominent finding of this research was the perceived managerial disconnect with the operational needs of hotels and their staff. An investigation into the potential implications of this perceived disconnect may illuminate issues that need to be addressed to enhance operational employee abilities and organisational performance.

7.6 Personal Learning Statement

The completion of this dissertation has been in equal parts challenging and fulfilling. I have thoroughly enjoyed engaging with the research and in particular, the literature review where many hours were consumed with zealously exploring the field of Human Resources.

I began the MA in HRM course as an avenue for a much-desired career change and have been invigorated by the material I have covered over the last year and have little intention of stopping my exploration of what organisational benefits HR is capable of offering. The skills I have garnered through conducting research have already served to benefit my life outside the

academic arena, skills which I thoroughly plan on further honing over what will hopefully be a long and accomplished career in the sector. Prior to starting the course, I perceived human resources to be a separate entity to the management of an organisation and have since come to the realisation that HR plays an intrinsic role in an organisation's success through effectively engaging with and utilising its workforce. I have also discovered the various streams of HR and look forward to identifying which one(s) suit me, then vigorously pursuing that career path.

As a direct result of this study, I have found my abilities as an interviewer to have improved, albeit moderately but have discovered fruitful means of garnering relevant information by engaging effectively with those who participated in the study. The time constraints of the research process allowed me to improve my ability to plan and organise goals, ensuring I had adequate time to successfully complete the study within the time frame and to a standard I desired. These constraints also encouraged me to act innovatively as different challenges and issues arose and needed to be surmounted within the set time frame. The plethora of academic literature which I have studied throughout this dissertation and course modules has enabled me to apply a critical eye to large volumes of information and extract the relevant data.

7.7 Concluding Remarks

In conclusion, the findings served to illustrate the deficient landscape of T&D in Irish hotels and the subsequent negative implications for employee TI, engagement, commitment and satisfaction. Conversely, this also serves to identify the potential opportunity which exists through the implementation of effective T&D policies, practices and procedures to reduce turnover rates and enhance workforce performance. I believe the findings of my research add to the existing literature and hope they may benefit it by bridging existing gaps. A substantial portion of the Irish economy is reliant on hotels which are in turn dependent on their employees who deserve to be provided opportunities where the demand and ambition exists, enabling them to have fulfilling careers which can often be essential to a fulfilling life.

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<u>Appendix A: Interview Questions</u>

Categorical Information

Number of Years of Service in Irish Hotel(s):

Hotel(s) Star rating:

Current or last Job Title:

Total number of Irish hotels worked at:

Location:

Interview Questions

1. Tell me about your experience of T&D during your first few weeks of working in hotels?

2. What changes to your experience of T&D do you believe would allow you to do your job more confidently?

3. How do you feel about the amount of time spent on T&D, is it sufficient?

    – *What effects do you think this has?*

4. Has the T&D you have received been specific to your role or was it broader, covering other roles also?

5. To what extent does T&D affect your ability to perform in current or future roles?

6. *How often do managers or supervisors discuss T&D with you as a means for improving <u>your ability to perform in your current or future roles</u>?*

7. How often do managers or supervisors discuss T&D with you as a means for *improving the company's success* (performance, productivity, profitability, compete well against other hotels)?

8. Do you think T&D is delivered better by experienced staff who are at a similar level in the company to you or by higher level supervisors and managers?

    – *Why do think this?*

9. Have you been disciplined for not completing a task correctly or to a certain standard that was the result of insufficient training?

    – *If so, how did this affect you?*

        - *Did this affect your desire to stay with or leave the company?*

10. Do you feel the company cares about what you need in terms of training for your current job or long-term career development prospects?

    – *How does this lack/prevalence of care affect your relationship with your job and company as a whole?*

        - *Does this influence your desire to stay with or leave the company?*

11. How would being given a clear career path in the company influence your desire to stay with or leave the company?

12. To what extent does T&D influence your motivation to work, achieve high levels of performance and put in extra effort when not asked to? (Employee Engagement)

13. To what extent does T&D influence how attached to the company you feel and how much you see yourself as a member of the company? (Commitment)

14. To what extent does T&D influence how much you enjoy doing your job and find it meaningful? (Job Satisfaction)

15. To what extent does T&D influence your desire to stay with or leave the company?

16. Do you think the T&D you have received has made it easier to get a job in another hotel?

    – If you think it is easier, has this influenced your desire to move to another hotel?

17. How does other employees leaving the company affect you?

    – (If not referenced in Q.16) Do you think it increases your workload?

    – (If not referenced in Q.16) Does it influence your intention to leave the company?

18. What factors make you want to leave the hotel?

19. What factors make you want to stay in the hotel?

20. Before we conclude, is there anything you would like to add?

Appendix B: Participant Information Sheet

I would like to invite you to take part in a research study. Before you decide you need to understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for you. Please take time to read the following information carefully. Ask questions if anything you read is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not to take part.

WHO I AM AND WHAT STUDY IS THIS STUDY ABOUT?

My name is Andrew Shields, the research I am conducting is for a dissertation as part of attaining a Master of Arts in Human Resource Management degree at the National College of Ireland. The dissertation is a study of how training and development in Irish Hotels may affect the desire of the employees working in them to stay with or leave the company.

WHAT WILL TAKING PART INVOLVE?

Taking part in the research will involve being invited to answer 20 questions that are related to your experience of training and development while working in Irish hotels and how this may have affected your desire to continue working at that hotel(s). This will be in the form of an online audio-visual interview which will be recorded with your prior permission. Zoom will be the suggested means for conducting the interview, however, if you find another form more accessible this will be considered and possibly accommodated. There is no right, wrong, good, or bad answers and that the research is solely concerned with their experiences, beliefs, ideas, opinions, and insights which will all likely benefit the research.

WHY HAVE YOU BEEN INVITED TO TAKE PART?

You have been invited to participate in the research due to your experience working in the Irish hotel industry and the valuable contribution you can make to this study through your thoughts and insights.

DO YOU HAVE TO TAKE PART?

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you can refuse to take part, decline to answer any question, and withdraw at any point without any consequence whatsoever.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THE RESULTS OF THE STUDY?

The results of this study will be used exclusively for the submission of my dissertation.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS AND BENEFITS OF TAKING PART?

In addition to making a valuable contribution to my own research, your participation will hopefully add to the wider body of research into investigating the reasons for employee turnover in the Irish hotel industry and how this may be altered. There is little risk in taking part as the information I am asking for is not of a sensitive nature. There will be no request for personal information, only information relevant to your role – Number of Years of Service in Hotel(s), Current or last Job Title and Total number of hotels worked at.

WILL TAKING PART BE CONFIDENTIAL?

A breach in confidentiality will only occur if the researcher has a strong belief that there is a serious risk of harm or danger to either the participant or another individual (e.g. physical, emotional or sexual abuse, concerns for child protection, rape, self-harm, suicidal intent or criminal activity) or if a serious crime has been committed. Non-anonymised data in the form of signed consent forms and audio recordings are collected and retained as part of the research process.

HOW WILL INFORMATION YOU PROVIDE BE RECORDED, STORED AND PROTECTED?

Signed consent forms and original audio recordings will be retained in password-protected digital file locations, only accessible to the researcher until after my degree has been conferred. A transcript of interviews in which all identifying information has been removed will be retained for a further two years after this. Under freedom of information legalisation, you are entitled to access the information you have provided at any time.

WHO SHOULD YOU CONTACT FOR FURTHER INFORMATION?

Researcher Information:

Name: Andrew Shields, Student at National College of Ireland

Degree: Master of Arts in Human Resource Management

Contact Email: X20137753@student.ncirl.ie

Supervisor Information:

Name: Rachel Doherty, Lecturer and Programme Developer at National College of Ireland

Email: rachel.doherty@ncirl.ie

Thank you for your participation.

Appendix C: Consent Form

Consent to take part in research

- 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 identifying how training and development opportunities may influence my intentions leaving an organisation.

- 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.

- I understand that disguised extracts from my interview may be quoted in the dissertation.

- I understand that signed consent forms and original audio recordings will be retained in password-protected digital format and accessible only by the researcher until the researcher's degree has been conferred.

- I understand that a transcript of my interview in which all identifying information has been removed will be retained for a further two years after the researcher's degree has been conferred.

- 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.

Researcher Information:

Name: Andrew Shields

Degree: Master of Arts in Human Resource Management

Contact Email: X20137753@student.ncirl.ie

Supervisor Information:

Name: Rachel Doherty

Email: rachel.doherty@ncirl.ie

Signature of research participant

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Signature of participant   *Date*

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

Andrew Shields   *02/06/2021*

Signature of researcher   *Date*