

**Chapter 1: Introduction**

1. **Ireland as a Study Destination:**

In the past recent years, Ireland has encountered a great increase in International students and it is one of the hottest destination to study abroad. As a study destination, Ireland is one of the developing Nation for international students to come and study in different universities like Dublin Business School, Trinity College Dublin, University College Dublin, National University of Ireland Galway and University College Cork, Galway Business School, Dublin Institute of Technology, Dublin City University, Maynooth University, University of Limerick, Waterford Institute of Technology and many such universities. Also, there are a lot of big multinational companies in Ireland like Google, Facebook, Apple, IBM, HP, Paddy Power, Musgrave Group, DELL, General Motors Company, Kerry Group and many more companies. And hence eventually, there will be a lot of students who will be interested to come and study in Ireland. According to O'Brien (2018), due to the uncertainty over Brexit and as per the election of Donald Trump in United States of America, there is large number of international students applying to the Irish universities. Universities such as University College Cork, Trinity College Dublin and University College Dublin have encountered an increase in number of non-EU student application in which University College Cork had 40 percent increase, 26 percent increase in University College Dublin and many other university have significant increase of applications (O'Brien, 2018). Also, O’Brien (2018) states that the number of increase in the application among non-EU students are mostly from the countries like India, China, USA and Canada. Brexit and USA election are not the only reason for the increased number of non-EU students at Irish universities. There are lot more other reasons to consider Irish universities, and the reasons to choose Ireland are English as a local speaking language, similar lifestyle like UK, work visas after graduation for example 2 years work visa for Indian students, famous multinational companies based in Ireland and no tension about the Brexit (Istead, 2018). These are the major reasons international students are rushing for admission in Ireland and most of them are for post graduate courses. At present Ireland is facing housing crisis which is directly affected to the international students. After coming to Ireland students, the average time to find a proper accommodation is usually between one to two months and some may find it earlier.

1. **Ireland Housing Crisis:**

According to Lyons (2017), the rental market conditions showed by Daft.ie rental report in September 2017 is in a very bad state. The rent in other parts of the county has approximately risen by 45 percentage but at the same time there was approximately 70 percentage of the rents were risen in Dublin. Because of this, students are unable to afford accommodation in Dublin especially. The reason to increase the rent at a faster rate is because of the lack of property supply and will be a great profit for the landlords. In the month of August 2017, property available to rent throughout Ireland were less than 3000 and was 20 percent down as compared to the previous year which happened for the first time in Ireland history (Lyons, 2017). There were 4800 properties available to rent nationwide and almost half of the property was in Dublin at a time in early 2007. In 2017, there are roughly 1000 properties available to rent and that is because the renter has increased by 50 percent. As this rental crisis was never known before and this will directly have linkage to the homelessness crisis which will eventually affect the students. In this environment of crisis, many students are not willing to come and study in Dublin even if they get admission in Trinity College Dublin or University College Dublin. If they decide to come, then they choose to stay and travel from far places like Greystones or Bray which are in county Wicklow (Lyons, 2017). Lyons (2017) suggest that, Dublin needs to build 100,000 units specially for student accommodation by the year 2025 and same for rest of the country which will help to accommodate maximum students. But the Dublin City Council has rejected the proposal for raising the number of beds for students so, there are more housing crisis news about to happen every year (Lyons, 2017).

1. **Housing crisis effects on renters**

As Ireland is also one of the best tourist place, so many people from different nationalities between the month of March till October come to Ireland. But according to the new research done by Hennessy (2018), amongst the number of properties available out in the market, more than half of the properties are for the tourist to rent it for short term. Especially in the city like Dublin where lot of Universities are located, number of students will search for an apartment to rent in the month of September. Most of the universities in Ireland starts in the month of September and students start to arrive around August. As these students arrive, they will start searching for accommodation. But the landlords in Ireland are not ready to give the property for long term. Last year on May 25th, 53 percentage of the homes in Dublin was for the tourists and only 1258 properties were available on Daft for long term renting in Dublin (Hennessy, 2018). At the same time, an independent data analysis was conducted in which it was found that, 1419 of the homes were available only for short-term renting on Airbnb which focuses on tourist accommodation in Dublin (Hennessy, 2018). As there is a lack of the rental property supply for long term renters, the Co-founder of Daft.ie, Eamonn Fallon said, “action urgently needs to be taken” to increase supply, both in Dublin and nationwide (Hennessy, 2018). Where supply of accommodation being a problem, students residing in Shanowen Square accommodation complex located at Dublin City University (DCU) faced 27 percent of increase in the rental prices which resulted in a Student gathering at Garden of Remembrance and marching from O’Connell Street to Customs house (Grace, 2018). An estimation of 5000 people participated in the march and demanding for the end of Housing Crisis (Grace, 2018). If the increase in rents even at student accommodation increases then, within no time students will be homeless. According to Grace (2018), the research done in year 2016 found that, 8 percentage of people homeless are students. Also, the number of purpose-built student beds are 23,000 shorts in the year 2017 and is estimated to increase around 26,000 shorts by the year 2019 (Grace, 2018). As the government is taking some steps to decrease housing crisis which will be done by building some purpose-built student accommodation, which will resist students to go out and rent private property.

1. **Purpose of the research**

After a lot of difficulties like viewing of unaffordable and unacceptable apartments due to the housing crisis, the renter has found one apartment to finally move in. Even after finding the correct apartment, there are lot of issues in that apartment that you won’t be able to see through your naked eyes. To get those issues solved, the tenants should first contact his/her house agent and explain the problems, and then the agent will contact the owner of the house to seek permission whether to make any changes or repairs in the house. So basically, there is a communication gap between house tenants, agent and landlord. To overcome this communication gap between the tenants, agent and landlord, this application can be used to report any house related issues and convey the message to the correct person. This will save a lot of time and get the work done much quicker.

**Chapter 2: Literature Review**

1. **Aspects of Lease Agreement:**

Once you finalize to move into an apartment after a lot of struggle, landlord of the apartment will make sure that you sign all the required documents like rent agreement which is very important for both landlord and tenant. A tenant staying in an apartment without signing the lease contract is dangerous, as it means the tenant is residing illegally in that apartment. So, if some issues arise in future, then the illegal tenant is by default in danger and is found guilty. According to Whetsell & Airoldi (2018), a tenant should never rush through the process of signing all the documents unless and until you read the lease contract very carefully and understand it and take an advice from any professional lawyer or any of the family member to be on a safer side. Because, the lease contract is often structured to protect the landlord and agent more than the tenant. Mark Hakim, an attorney in the real estate practice of Schwartz Sladkus Reich Greenberg Atlas says, *“In a market which favors the landlord, the renter will be stuck with what the landlord has to offer. In a softening market with high vacancies, renters will control negotiations ever so slightly.”* (Whetsell & Airoldi, 2018). Now, Ireland is a nation where the market is in the favor of the landlord and the renter must agree what landlord will specify in the lease agreement. But before signing the lease agreement, all the renter should know what they are signing for.

1. **Inclusions in the Lease Agreement:**

In the lease agreement, total rent of the house and rent due date as decided with the landlord, should be mentioned clearly (Whetsell & Airoldi, 2018). Also check the address and apartment number to prevent scam. Some of the landlords in Ireland include utilities such as electricity, Wi-Fi and gas bills in monthly rent itself which should be clearly stated in the lease agreement. If utilities are not included in the monthly rent then, the renter should know who is responsible for what (Whetsell & Airoldi, 2018). If the house of the landlord is insured then, it will be mentioned in the agreement. Jeff Schneider, an apartment insurance broker says, *“The landlord’s insurance does not, despite what many people believe, cover the tenant*.” (Whetsell & Airoldi, 2018). The renter should know what is included in the insurance like theft, fire, furniture and appliance like electric stove etc. As insuring a house in Ireland is not mandatory, it is completely on landlord whether to insure or not. The security deposit for an apartment is always the same amount of a monthly rent which should be given while signing the apartment. According to Whetsell & Airoldi (2018), the tenants will get their deposit back once their lease is finished but, the landlord or the agent have the rights to hold the security amount unless an inspection of the house is done. Both agent and landlord will inspect the house, checking for any damage done to any electronic appliances, infrastructure or carpet etc. If any damage is found then, the money from the security deposit will be deducted regardless who did the damage. According to Whetsell & Airoldi (2018), renovation in the apartment is not allowed to the tenants unless landlord has agreed in advance to let you make any changes in the apartment. If the landlord has agreed upon renovation to the apartment, renter should make sure to get this in the lease as well. As there are many more things a renter should keep in mind before signing the lease agreement such as subletting new roommates, renewal policies, noise mitigation, pet allowance etc. (Whetsell & Airoldi, 2018).

1. **Invisible problems in the apartment**

According to Rogers (2018), before signing the lease agreement of the apartment, there may be serious issues in that apartment which are not visible to your eyes directly, unless and until you stay in that apartment. The issues might be a drainage problem, electrical wiring, roofs, plumbing, heating problems, insulation and ventilation, foundation and pests (Rogers, 2018). Especially if you are renting an apartment which is 30 - 40 years old then, there might be serious issues related to electrical wiring and plumbing. As the wires used before were aluminum which are prone to catch fire easily, drainage system leakage which can lead to cracks in the apartment foundation, clogged toilets which could arise serious plumbing problems (Rogers, 2018). If any such problems arise, make sure you contact your agent and landlord both to report such issues or it might result in deduction from your security deposit.

1. **Dispute Resolution:**

After a lot of struggle for accommodation, these international students will find a house that will fit in their budget but there might be certain issues with landlord and agent. Following are certain ways to resolve the disputes between landlord and tenants.

1. **Citizens Information**

According to Citizens (2018), there are certain disputes between the landlord, agent and tenants during their tenancy period which will cause problems in long run. These disputes can be resolved between both the parties mutually, but if the issue is not able to solve mutually then a third party must get involved in the issue to solve it (Citizens, 2018). But before involving third party to solve the dispute, landlord and tenants both should be aware of the Rights and Obligations and must keep a record of facts that supports your complaint. If the dispute cannot be resolved mutually then a tenant can contact to:

* Threshold, the National Housing Charity, which provides information and advice to the people staying in rented apartments for any problems related to their tenancy period
* If the rented apartment does not meet minimum standard requirements then, tenants can complain to Environment Health Service, which is responsible for houses in the private rented sector to meet minimum standard regulations for an apartment.
* You can complain to the Housing Department of local authority if the landlord fails to provide you the rent receipts.
* But if still dispute is not resolved then, you can take the case to the Residential Tenancies Board (RTB) (Citizens, 2018).

1. **Residential Tenancies Board (RTB)**

The Residential Tenancies Board (RTB) is a public body established to serve, develop and support the operation of the rental housing sector in Ireland which was formed under the Residential Tenancies Act 2004 (Citizens, 2017). The main duties of the Residential Tenancies Board are:

* All the private residential tenancies and tenancies of approved house bodies are maintained in a register
* Provides a dispute resolution service for landlord and tenants if there are any issues between them
* Uses the data collected by registered tenancies to carry out research in the private rental sector
* On the private rented sector, RTB also provides policy advice to the Government (Citizens, 2017).

The Residential Tenancies Board is maintaining a national register of tenancies in which all the residential properties in the private sector must be registered by the landlord. If the landlord has not registered the property to the RTB then, the landlord will be incurred with penalties. All the Approved Housing Bodies (AHB) are also required to register existing and new tenancies with RTB (Citizens, 2017). Approved Housing Bodies also known as Housing Associations are independent and not for profit organization which help people and provide them affordable rented house who are not able to afford to pay rents in the private sectors and homeless people (Department of Housing, 2016). The RTB also provides support and information to landlord and tenants by publishing research reports related to the rent index (Citizens, 2017). Residential Tenancies Board will only provide dispute resolution service to the landlord if his/her property is registered. A tenant can lodge a complaint or opt for dispute resolution service even if their landlord is not registered the property with RTB (Citizens, 2017). According to the Residential Tenancies Act 2004 to 2016, there are certain types of properties where the Act does not apply to Business lettings, holiday lettings, room that you rent at your landlord’s home and student accommodations. So basically, tenants who stay in those properties won’t be able to lodge any complaint or opt for dispute resolution service with RTB against landlord. There are three ways to resolve a dispute between landlord and tenant:

1. Resolve the dispute mutually
2. Resolving by mediation
3. Resolving by adjudication (Citizens, 2017).

The rates to apply for adjudication is 15€ if you apply online and it will cost you 25€ if you want to appeal on paper. RTB will not charge you if you have applied for dispute resolution by mediation (Citizens, 2017).

1. **Complaints lodged to RTB**

According to Ryan (2016), the number of complaints that has been lodged by the tenants against landlord for rent hike dispute has increased a lot in the middle of the worst housing crisis. According to the reports of the Residential Tenancies Board, there was an increase in the number of complaints logged by tenants for unfair rent hike by almost 70 percent as compared to previous year 2015 (Ryan, 2016). During the same period, there was also increase in the cases of illegal eviction by landlords on tenants. In 2014, Residential Tenancies Board dealt with 185 dispute cases that were only charging for rent higher than the current market rate, which in the year 2016 went to 313 cases. And in year 2017, during the first quarter of the year, number of cases already logged were 66 to Residential Tenancies Board (Ryan, 2016). But, there are number of tenants that does not lodge any complaint against landlord because they think, there will be time and money wastage. Threshold, a housing charity says, “this is just the tip of the iceberg as most tenants do not lodge disputes with RTB” (Ryan, 2016). In contrast, there are also many cases registered by the landlords against tenants who are denying to leave the house even if the lease agreement is over. In 2016, Residential Tenancies Board has registered 553 cases of disputes where tenants were defying eviction notices and, to the end of November 2017, the cases registered were 688 disputes which was 24.4 % increase in year 2017 as compared to previous year (Halpin, 2018). As landlords lodge complaint against tenant, RTB issues an eviction notice for the tenants which has to be followed. Halpin (2018) mentions that, many member of parliament has told the constituents to not issue an eviction notice to the tenants as, there is no place for them to shift unless and untill they find another house to stay (Halpin, 2018). As these disputes are unpredictable, information regarding disputes and weblinks will be provided in the mobile application under Help section.

1. **Rights and Obligations:**