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**The paradox of employee psychological well-being practices: An integrative literature review and new directions for research**

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Manuscripts

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3 **The paradox of employee psychological well-being practices: An integrative literature**  
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5 **review and new directions for research**  
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10 **Abstract**

11 It is well established that many HR practices for employees' psychological wellbeing (PWB)  
12 and organisational performance conflict and even contradict one another. We address this  
13 long-standing issue by undertaking an innovative integrative literature review using the  
14 paradox metatheory as a lens. Unlike the contingency approach, a paradox perspective  
15 reflects real-world tensions as normal, which can be harnessed and be beneficial. We make  
16 three contributions; firstly, we identify contradictory employee PWB and organisational  
17 performance HR practices; secondly, we offer a solution in addressing the inherent tension  
18 between PWB and performance by developing a new sensemaking conceptual framework;  
19 and for our third contribution we offer a more nuanced perspective by distinguishing  
20 endogenous factors that organisations can influence to enhance the synergies between  
21 employee PWB and organisational performance HR practices. The intended impact of this  
22 paper is to instigate a paradigm shift and shape a new trajectory of thinking about how  
23 employee PWB and organisational performance practices can exist side-by-side.  
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43 Key words: psychological wellbeing, performance, HR practices, paradox, meta-theory  
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## Introduction

Employee-centred HR practices, in particular wellbeing, have gained much interest from scholars and practitioners, especially given their claimed benefits to both staff and the organisation (Guest, 1999). Traditionally, researchers have focused on three dimensions of wellbeing; physiological, psychological and social. Nonetheless, we argue that the psychological dimension of the construct is paramount given the important and central role of mental processes such as perception e.g. Chu, Thorne, and Guite (2004), and ultimately impacting on organisational outcomes (Danna & Griffin, 1999; Hardy, Woods, & Wall, 2003). For example, psychological distress can lead to physical exhaustion and social withdrawal from peers.

Research has also demonstrated that HRM practices lead to positive organisational outcomes (Jackson, Schuler, & Jiang, 2014). However, scholars have recognised the competing, and at times even conflicting, nature of HR practices in supporting both employee psychological wellbeing (PWB) and organisational performance. An emphasis on organisational performance through high-performance work systems (HWPS) (Aryee, Walumbwa, Seidu, & Otake, 2012) leads to work intensification (Combs, Liu, Hall, & Ketchen, 2006), while organisational change may result in the use of provisional practices (Brown, Ainsworth, & Grant, 2012) that create role ambiguity. For example, the introduction of HR practices such as pay-for-performance can lead to adverse effects on employee PWB (S. Park & Sturman, 2016) through increased feelings of rivalry and conflict among colleagues, and anxiety due to the lack of security in remuneration. Given the potential tensions between employee- vs organisational-centric HR practices, it is important to explore and identify employee PWB practices that complement and compete with practices that support organisational performance. This in turn requires a fresh approach in helping HR professionals through this potentially confounding area of practice.

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3 Therefore, the aim of this study is to synthesise existing literature on the paradoxical  
4 challenges posed by tensions that exist between employee PWB and organisational  
5 performance practices. In doing so, a paradox metatheory will be used to interrogate and  
6 integrate literature, and to differentiate between employee PWB practices that complement or  
7 compete with practices supporting organisational performance. The paradox metatheory is an  
8 appropriate lens as scholars such as Smith and Lewis (2011) argue that paradoxes render the  
9 dominant management model of the contingency approach inadequate because management  
10 are required to address opposites simultaneously, circumventing the need to choose one over  
11 the other or make trade-offs. Unlike the contingency approach, a paradox perspective views  
12 tensions as normal, which can be harnessed and be beneficial (Smith & Lewis, 2011).  
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25 This study makes three important contributions. The first contribution of our study is  
26 that we are the first to adopt a specific focus on paradoxes between PWB and performance  
27 HR practices. The paradox lens has enabled us to comprehensively identify from extant  
28 research and literature employee PWB and organisational-performance HR practices that are  
29 contradictory with one another. Our second contribution is in addressing the inherent tension  
30 between PWB and performance as we develop a new sensemaking conceptual framework  
31 that demonstrates how the PWB-performance paradox can be addressed. The intention of this  
32 contribution is to instigate a paradigm shift and shape a new trajectory of thinking about how  
33 employee PWB and organisational performance practices can exist side-by-side. Finally, for  
34 the third contribution, we build upon the work of Guest (2017) who adopted a symbiotic view  
35 of PWB practices with organisational performance. Specifically, he argued that the two  
36 should not pose a dilemma as the adoption of PWB practices ultimately contribute to  
37 organisational performance. Nonetheless, we adopt a more nuanced view as we contend that  
38 such opportunities for synergy are context-dependent. For example, new firms can build-in  
39 employee PWB into firm performance practices early on and thereby imprinting the firm's  
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3 practices that coalesces PWB with organisational performance and setting a strong  
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5 precedence for future reference (Marquis & Tilcsik, 2013).  
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7 The next section is a literature review on the paradox metatheory and extant research  
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9 on the psychological dimension of wellbeing. This is followed by a discussion on the  
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11 methodology employed in this integrated literature review. The findings of the review are  
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13 then presented. A discussion follows that includes the development of a conceptual  
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15 framework. Finally, emerging issues within this area are highlighted and directions for future  
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17 research are outlined.  
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## 23 **Underpinning Theory and Literature Review**

### 24 ***Paradoxes***

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27 Schad, Lewis, Raisch, and Smith (2016) define paradox as, '*persistent contradiction between*  
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29 *interdependent elements*' (p. 10), and it is one of many related forms of organisational  
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31 tensions including dilemmas (McGrath, 1982), dualities (A. Smith & Graetz, 2006) and  
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33 dialectics (Seo & Creed, 2002). Paradoxes are both inherent and socially constructed  
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35 (Luscher & Lewis, 2008). Paradox is inherent due to the intrinsic nature of some systems;  
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37 e.g. equality vs equitability; and is also socially constructed due to institutional actors' choice  
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39 of cognitive frames, dialogical mixed messages (Argyris, 1988) and 'functional stupidity' as  
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41 a consequence of a lack of reflexivity (Alvesson and Spicer (2012)).  
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45 While organisational tensions are ubiquitous, many are latent (Luscher & Lewis, 2008).  
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47 However, as change intensifies, such as in today's environment, these dormant tensions start  
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49 to manifest and organisations begin to face many paradoxical challenges. The multiplicity of  
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51 goals inherently invites tension as organisations strive to address competing and even  
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53 opposing needs of stakeholders (Scherer, Palazzo, & Seidl, 2013). In addition, the need to 'do  
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55 more with less' becomes proverbial as scarcity is fueled by the need to satisfy multiple goals.  
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3 Change, plurality and scarcity are potent alchemy that promotes paradoxes such as to  
4 cooperate and compete (Chung & Beamish, 2010), explore and exploit (Smith, Binns, &  
5 Tushman, 2010), and learn and perform (Dobrow, Smith, & Posner, 2011).  
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10 If paradoxes are not attended to, ambivalence, conflict, chaos and collapse ensue  
11 (Schad et al., 2016). Finding a balanced approach is key, as Sundaramurthy and Lewis (2003)  
12 argue “*Stressing one polarity exacerbates the need for the other, often sparking defenses,*  
13 *impeding learning, and engendering counter-productive reinforcing cycles*” (p. 397).  
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18 Although the dominant contingency approach offers one response to tensions, it is inherently  
19 about choices, which may not be genuinely available when confronted with paradoxes and  
20 dualities (Smith & Lewis, 2011). The paradox perspective is about attending to all competing  
21 demands at the same time; it views tensions as normal, and they can be functionally exploited  
22 (Smith & Lewis, 2011).  
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### 30 31 ***Metatheory***

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33 Tsoukas (1994) proposed that a metatheory is a theory of theories, while Ritzer (1990) states  
34 that a metatheory is “*an overarching theoretical perspective*” (p. 3), which is similar to Lewis  
35 and Smith’s (2014) construal of metatheory as a ‘theoretical framework’. Qiu, Donaldson,  
36 and Luo (2012) suggest that a metatheory is a paradigm, with Hesketh and Fleetwood (2006)  
37 arguing that a metatheory is an overriding assumption and that all theory employs  
38 metatheory. Tsoukas (1994) contends that a metatheory is particularly useful when there are  
39 no acceptable theories of a phenomenon. He further contended that a metatheory can be used  
40 as an organising instrument that i) guides the identification of ontological and  
41 epistemological principles of a phenomenon, which then ii) bring together divergent  
42 perspectives of a phenomenon, which is premised upon various applications. He argues that  
43 undertaking the two steps should elucidate the nature of a phenomenon by revealing the  
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3 relationship between the various perspectives and the scope of the applications of the  
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5 perspectives.  
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7 The metatheory approach has been used in a number of fields within management and  
8 organisation studies. For example, Poole and Van de Ven (1989) attempted to develop a  
9 metatheory of innovation, while Hesketh and Fleetwood (2006) adopted critical realism as a  
10 metatheory in examining the link between HRM and performance. In addition, Jarvensivu  
11 and Moller (2009) applied a metatheory of inter-organisational network management, while  
12 Chao and Moon (2005) used chaos, complexity, and network theories in building a  
13 metatheory to understand the complexity of culture from the perspective of a cultural mosaic.  
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### 24 ***Paradox as a Metatheory***

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27 Metatheories are effective in helping move beyond an ‘either/ or’ polarisation (Tsoukas,  
28 1994). Schad et al. (2016) argue that the plurality and multiplicity in the application of  
29 paradox renders it as a metatheory. For example, paradox has been used as a tool for  
30 theorising e.g. Dameron and Torset (2014), while others have used paradox as a lens to study  
31 relationships in phenomena e.g. Hahn, Preuss, Pinkse, and Figge (2014), with some framing  
32 paradox as theory e.g. Smith and Lewis (2011).  
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40 Schad et al. (2016) claim that paradox as a metatheory offers a powerful lens as an  
41 *explanandum* of tensions, which are ubiquitous in organisations. Lewis and Smith (2014)  
42 support this view as a metatheory lens uses the principles of paradox in bridging multiple  
43 constructs, theories, context and methodologies as they argue that “...*metatheory is*  
44 *unconstrained by particular contexts, variables or methods, rather delineating core elements,*  
45 *such as underlying assumptions and central concepts, for a scholarly community”* (p. 129). A  
46 paradox metatheory is appropriate here given the complexities that are inherent in the  
47 relationship between employees’ PWB and organisational performance. Such a claim is  
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3 supported by scholars such as Tsoukas (2017) who argue that the ‘complexification’ of  
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5 theory is needed to reflect the complexities in reality.  
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### 8 9 ***HR Practices-Psychological Wellbeing***

10 Psychological wellbeing is a multi-dimensional construct that has been conceptualised in  
11  
12 various ways by scholars. For example, Ryff (1995) defines it as a representation of wellness,  
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14 which is conceived as “*progressions of continued growth across the life course*” (pg. 99).  
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16 Schmutte and Ryff (1997) define it as “*a general feeling of happiness*” (pg. 551). Similarly,  
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18 Panaccio and Vandenberghe (2009) conceptualise PWB as being characterised by the  
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20 presence of positive affect, the absence of negative affect, job satisfaction and life  
21  
22 satisfaction. Warr (1990) on the other hand operationalised PWB along three dimensions  
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24 covering satisfaction-dissatisfaction, enthusiasm-depression and comfort –anxiety. According  
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26 to Diener and Suh (1997), PWB may be in the form of thoughts or in the form of affect. This  
27  
28 is consistent with Ryff and colleagues model of PWB which encompasses six dimensions;  
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30 involving self-acceptance, personal growth, purpose in life, positive relations with others,  
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32 environment mastery, and autonomy (Ryff, 1989a, 1989b; Ryff & Keyes, 1995). In  
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34 considering PWB, a distinction is often made between hedonic (positive emotions) and  
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36 eudemonic (positive functioning) well-being (Guest, 2017). Hedonic wellbeing is typically  
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38 represented by life/ job satisfaction and is seen as driven by the need for rewards/pleasure and  
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40 the avoidance of negative experiences e.g., Ryan and Deci (2001). On the other hand,  
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42 eudaimonic wellbeing provides opportunity for self-expression and is derived from the  
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44 assessment that one’s life situation is meaningful e.g. Ryff and Keyes (1995).  
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51 PWB has been found to relate with a number of outcomes by scholars. For example.  
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53 Cartwright and Cooper (2008) found that people with higher levels of PWB at work are  
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55 healthier, have happier lives and live longer. Wright and Cropanzano (2000) in their field  
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3 study, demonstrated that there was a positive relationship between PWB and job  
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5 performance. Similar findings were reported by Robertson, Birch, and Cooper (2012) where  
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7 PWB was found to have incremental value over and above that of positive job and work  
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9 attitudes in predicting self-reported levels of performance. Antecedents of PWB have also  
10  
11 been examined by scholars, some of which include: transformational leadership e.g. Arnold  
12  
13 (2017); authentic leadership and attachment insecurity e.g. Rahimnia and Sharifirad (2015);  
14  
15 perceived organisational support e.g. Panaccio and Vandenberghe (2009); meaningful work  
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17 and perspective taking e.g. Arnold and Walsh (2015); employee perception of HR practices  
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19 e.g. Baluch (2017); emotional intelligence e.g. Carmeli, Yitzhak-Halevy, and Weisberg  
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21 (2009); HPWS e.g. Heffernan and Dundon (2016).  
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25         These results reflect the increasing interest in PWB in scholarly research. Recent  
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27 arguments suggest that given the changes in work conditions such as the influx of  
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29 information technology, financial unsettlement, economic, political and global upheavals etc.,  
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31 in order for organisations to increase their performance, they first have to take into  
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33 consideration their employee wellbeing (c.f. Guest, 2017). Employers have therefore focused  
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35 on implementing practices that could foster employee PWB. These practices, mainly within  
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37 the remit of HR management, oftentimes pose paradoxical challenges to the organisation  
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39 because of the contradictions that exist between those that positively influence PWB and  
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41 those that focus on increasing organisational performance at the expense of PWB. Therefore,  
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43 building on the work of Guest (2017) and as noted above, we aim to interrogate and  
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45 synthesise literature to differentiate between HR employee PWB practices that complement  
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47 or compete with practices supporting organisational performance and change using the  
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49 paradox metatheory lens.  
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### *HR Practices-High Performance*

While there is a claimed link between HR practices promoting PWB and positive impact on organisation performance, there is a separate and distinct thread of research within what is referred to as Strategic HRM, which focuses on utilising HR practices to improve organisation performance (Combs et al., 2006). These performance focused HR practices have been coined under various terminologies such as high performance work systems (HPWS), high involvement management (HIM), and high commitment management, with scholars mostly examining relationships between what are referred to as HPWP and organisational outcomes (Kinnie, Swart, & Purcell, 2005). HPWP research pays little attention to potential effects of identified practices on individual employees, including their PWB (Guest, 2017).

Organisational outcomes associated with HPWP include increased job satisfaction, lower employee turnover, higher productivity, better decision-making, increased efficiency, and greater flexibility. These outcomes all help improve organisational performance (Combs et al., 2006). The main HR practices associated with HPWP include training and development; incentive compensation; selection; employee participation and flexible work arrangements (Combs et al., 2006). Each of these has some potential for impacting PWB, either positively, negatively, or both. For example, employee participation can have positive impact on PWB. However, the effects may vary across different occupational groups (Kinnie, et al., 2005), with members of some groups experiencing participation as empowering while others experience anxiety. It is reasonable to assume that there will also be individual differences within occupational groups. Similarly with incentive compensation, which may be experienced as positive and as negative by different groups and individuals. Negative experience of incentive compensation is likely to lead to anxiety and have a negative impact on PWB. It is therefore clear that HR practices associated with HPWP may be detrimental to

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3 employees' PWB and, through that effect, have negative consequences for organisation  
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5 performance.  
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### 8 9 **Methodology**

10 We used two of the most commonly used databases in management studies; Scopus and Web  
11 of Science (Klang, Wallnöfer, & Hacklin, 2014). The search process first involved the  
12 primary topic of the study, using the Boolean terms 'health' OR 'well-being'. Using the  
13 database's inbuilt filters, we then limited the articles to those in English in the field of  
14 psychology and business management. By selecting only journal articles we adopted the  
15 viewpoint of Podsakoff, Mackenzie, Bacharach, and Podsakoff (2005) who argued that such  
16 periodicals represent validated knowledge. We then progressively searched within each  
17 return set with the Boolean terms 'Employee' OR 'Workplace', followed by 'Organi\*ational  
18 Performance' and 'Human Resource \*', using wildcards to broaden the search. Scopus had  
19 106 returns, while Web of Science recorded 54. Sixty-eight articles were used for the study.  
20 Table 1 shows the steps taken in the literature search and selection process.  
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36 [Table 1 near here]  
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38 To ensure that the articles were relevant and contributed to the attainment of the study's  
39 aim, we screened the articles for relevance and suitability. For example, articles were  
40 excluded for five primary reasons; i) themes involved examining HR practices in improving  
41 organisational performance in health-care organisations, ii) focus on PWB with cursory or no  
42 mention of HR practices, iii) focus on HR practices with little or no relevance to PWB; or, in  
43 relation to performance iv) articles emphasised the constructs e.g. organisational  
44 commitment, with only cursory reference to PWB, and v) articles focused on detriments on  
45 employee PWB in the context of personality and personal factors e.g. ethnicities. Table 2  
46 shows that most of the papers reviewed were quantitative studies.  
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[Table 2 near here]

The articles were reviewed and evaluated using the paradox metatheory lens. While an analytical framework was developed prior to the analysis, we adopted a reflexive approach and adapted the framework to fit with the data as new perspectives emerged. The synthesis that then follows from the literature review offers a new conceptual framework (Torraco, 2016) and perspective of employee PWB and organisational performance practices.

### **Findings**

The findings are organised into four parts. The first highlights the variability in the conceptualisation of employee PWB. The second part identifies the PWB practices that are paradoxical to organisational performance, while the third highlights the ‘mutual-gains’ PWB practices with organisational performance i.e. ‘win-win’ scenario. Finally, the fourth part outlines the contexts for mutual-gains model of PWB practices on organisational performance.

### ***Conceptualising Employee PWB***

Our analysis of the literature revealed that authors conceptualised PWB broadly, including job satisfaction e.g. Boxall and Macky (2014); diversity management e.g., Guillaume, Dawson, Otaye-Ebede, Woods, and West (2017); happiness and job involvement e.g. Huang, Ahlstrom, Lee, Chen, and Hsieh (2016); as the inverse of emotional exhaustion e.g. Shantz, Arevshatian, Alfes, and Bailey (2016); as a degree of depressiveness e.g. Stengård, Bernhard-Oettel, Näswall, Ishäll, and Berntson (2015); as the inverse of burnout e.g. van Mierlo, Rutte, Vermunt, Kompier, and Doorewaard (2006); and as within the continuum anxiety-contentment e.g. Wood and de Menezes (2011). Given the broad conceptualisation of PWB, many HR practices can be construed as directly or indirectly supporting employee PWB. For example, although ‘challenging jobs’ is usually part of performance-enhancing initiative, it

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3 may be conceived as an employee PWB practice in enhancing job satisfaction, although  
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5 challenging job assignments in turn may also be perceived as stressful and cause self-doubt  
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7 (Šarotar Žižek, Treven, & Čančer, 2015). Some jobs are inherently stressful, for instance,  
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9 customer-facing staff performing emotional labour can experience distress as they feel  
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11 estranged from their true self (Sloan, 2008).  
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### 14 15 16 *Paradoxical PWB Practices* 17

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19 Some authors found that although HPWS may instigate employees' higher levels of  
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21 satisfaction and greater intrinsic rewards from their work, employees, at the same time, may  
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23 experience greater anxiety and more intense work rhythms, increased workloads and strains  
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25 that ultimately act as a barrier to high performance (Decramer et al., 2015; Van De Voorde &  
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27 Beijer, 2015). An unintended consequence of the introduction and on-going demands of high  
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29 involvement management (HIM), rather than create an increased sense of coherence or a  
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31 feeling of being valued by the organisation (therefore increasing PWB) (Wood & de  
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33 Menezes, 2011), lead workers to question the organisation's valuation of them and the  
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35 comprehensibility and meaningfulness of what surrounds them (Wood, Van Veldhoven,  
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37 Croon, & de Menezes, 2012). Research shows a nuanced picture in that performance-related  
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39 practices involving enriched jobs can be complementary with employee PWB but at the same  
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41 time their performance-related practices i.e. HIM, are counter-effective to employee PWB  
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43 (Fan et al., 2014). Such inconsistent results extend to the practice of performance appraisal,  
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45 as it can be either motivating or demotivating. Its effectiveness is highly contextual,  
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47 dependent on how it is designed and implemented e.g. de Koeijer, Paauwe, & Huijsman,  
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49 (2014). Additionally, participative management has been shown to be negatively associated  
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51 with employee social well-being (Boreham, Povey, & Tomaszewski, 2016), while,  
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3 remarkably, empowering leadership practices have no significant impact on PWB (J. G. Park,  
4 Kim, Yoon, & Joo, 2017) (see Appendix 1 for summary of findings).  
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7 Job resources e.g. autonomy and discretion are paradoxical with high efficiency  
8 practices and business models such as just-in-time (JIT) and total quality management (TQM)  
9 as they may impede productivity (Schabracq & Cooper, 1997). Other practices such as  
10 quantitative flexibility, which is generally advantageous for organisations, is detrimental to  
11 employees in terms of job security (Schabracq & Cooper, 1997). Although it is not surprising  
12 that practices that support work systems such as lean may enhance organisational  
13 performance but may be detrimental to employees' PWB e.g. Townsend & Wilkinson (2010),  
14 it is nonetheless counter intuitive that enhancing employees' job resources to enable them to  
15 better cope with such work systems can also be to employee psychological detriment. There  
16 are elements in job design to build-in autonomy to enhance PWB (R. Park & Searcy, 2012)  
17 such as flexible working arrangements (FWA). FWA not only increases job autonomy but it  
18 can also increase work life balance (WLB) (Rudolph & Baltes, 2017) and therefore PWB  
19 (Boreham et al., 2016). However, other research revealed that FWA could lead to insecurity  
20 (Lange, 2013) with some scholars identifying more nuanced relationship necessitating FWA/  
21 WLB practices to be coupled with effective team design to be effective (Liu & Wang, 2011).  
22 Figure 1 illustrates the paradoxical PWB practices with practices supporting organisational  
23 performance.  
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47 Other PWB practices that may have counter impact are employee communication  
48 practices enabling participation and involvement. The positive impact of such practices is  
49 limited as through the passage of time staff may feel the practices become invasive and  
50 stressful (Cañibano, 2013). The need to accommodate 'more' communication may also  
51 impede the speed of decision-making (Boxall & Macky, 2010). Further PWB practices aimed  
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3 at enhancing collegial relationships with co-workers can be undermined by competitive  
4 organisational climate supported by individual-based competitive reward schemes (Reio &  
5 Ghosh, 2009), which confuses staff at best and causes frustration and withdrawal of extra-  
6 role behaviours at worst. The impact of some PWB practices may need further research as  
7 some practices do not result in the envisaged impact e.g. health and wellness practices on  
8 mitigating turnover (Caillier, 2016) or enhancing work-life balance (Bui, Liu, & Footner,  
9 2016).

### 20 21 *Mutual Gains PWB-Performance Practices*

22 Literature also shows practices that generally provide a win-win scenario for employee PWB  
23 and organisational performance. Learning and development (L&D) practices tend to have an  
24 overall positive impact (Reio & Ghosh, 2009) especially if they cater for employees'  
25 professional and personal development (Kira & Balkin, 2014). While most L&D practices are  
26 directed at maximising employees' abilities (e.g. talent management) to increase job  
27 involvement and ultimately performance (Spreitzer, Sutcliffe, Dutton, Sonenshein, & Grant,  
28 2005), such practices can also help improve performance by enabling employees to better  
29 cope with stress e.g. enhancing emotional intelligence e.g. Karimi, Cheng, Bartram, Leggat,  
30 & Sarkeshik, 2015. van Mierlo et al. (2006) found that practices that stimulate learning  
31 mitigate the effects of work intensification. L&D practices that stimulate individuals through  
32 task design can reduce emotional exhaustion and thereby increase PWB (Rudolph & Baltes,  
33 2017).

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49 Other 'functional' HR practices include recruitment and selection involving hiring staff  
50 with spiritual vitality and ethical character, tailoring compensation and benefits packages to  
51 provide equitable pay scales tends (Wright, 2010), and widening and improving employee  
52 engagement and voice practices to understand employees' PWB needs as well as to convey  
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3 organisational performance requirements that ultimately allows the discovery of mutual gains  
4 thresholds e.g. Conway, Fu, Monks, Alfes, & Bailey (2016). PWB schemes, including  
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6 occupational health and safety, such as counselling to improve PWB, can reduce absenteeism  
7  
8 and therefore improve performance and general wellbeing e.g. Ogunyomi & Bruning (2016).  
9  
10 Tsai and Wu (2010) argue that such interventions help create a climate that promotes  
11  
12 organisational citizenship behaviours as employees become more satisfied with their job. HR  
13  
14 practices that enrich jobs through the creative design of tasks stimulate employees and  
15  
16 thereby increase commitment and performance e.g. Mihail & Kloutsiniotis (2016). Other  
17  
18 PWB practices to enhance the work environment include investing in physical infrastructure  
19  
20 (ergonomics, safety) (Sadatsafavi & Walewski, 2013), and ‘situational engineering’ involving  
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22 techniques designed to alter physical work environments (Wright, 2010).  
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### 30 *Context for Mutual Gains*

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32 Clearly there are many contingent factors that enable PWB and organisational performance  
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34 practices to exist in harmony (Ogbonnaya, Daniels, Connolly, & van Veldhoven, 2017) such  
35  
36 as age of employees (Kooij et al., 2013) and national culture (Malek, Mearns, & Flin, 2010),  
37  
38 In addition to these exogenous factors that organisation’s may not be able to influence, there  
39  
40 are however endogenous factors that can be shaped such as focusing on innovation and  
41  
42 creating a positive organisational climate without using work intensification practices  
43  
44 (Heffernan & Dundon, 2016), and establishing selection practices aimed at recruiting  
45  
46 employees that have high organisation and/or job-person fit (Mostafa, 2016).  
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50 Employee perceptions are a strong antecedent of the impact of HR practices for PWB  
51  
52 and performance e.g. Shantz et al. (2016). For example, change in organisational logics e.g.  
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54 public service to for-profit enterprise, may cause employees to perceive changes in HR  
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56 practices with suspicion e.g. Townsend & Wilkinson (2010). Such a situation is typified in  
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3 many universities where financial performance is highly prized (including surrogates such as  
4 student recruitment and research funding) above other social goals. Employees' perception of  
5 organisational support is also crucial. For example, Zhang, Zhu, Dowling, & Bartram (2013)  
6 found that employees who perceive the relationship with their employers as an economic  
7 exchange will in turn view HR practices for high performance as exploitive. Whereas  
8 employees that perceive the relationship as a social exchange will in turn view HR practices  
9 for high performance as a win-win situation in favour of both employees' well-being and  
10 organisational performance. Employees' perception of organisational justice (distributive,  
11 procedural and interactional) also has a strong impact on the effects of PWB and  
12 organisational performance practices. Toh, Morgeson, and Campion (2008) showed that  
13 paradoxes may not emerge if HR practices are consistent with organisational values, in  
14 particular when organisational values view employees' PWB as synonymous with  
15 organisational performance e.g. Sadatsafavi & Walewski, (2013).  
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32 Many 'progressive' organisations will claim that a host of PWB practices are inscribed  
33 in policy. However, it is how the practices are introduced and implemented that counts e.g.  
34 Woodrow & Guest (2014). The implementation of practice can be improved with effective  
35 communication focusing on the manner in which HR policy and intended outcomes of HR  
36 practices shared (Sparks et al., 2001). Van De Voorde and Beijer (2015) suggest that line  
37 managers need to effectively convey the purpose of HPWS practices to improve employees'  
38 attribution of the practice. Wood and de Menezes (2011) propose that organisations  
39 communicate clear-cut outcomes, in particular related to enriching jobs, by enhancing  
40 consultation and improving information sharing. In addition, there are some practices that  
41 line managers can implement to buffer the impact of performance attributions such as  
42 implementing stress management programmes. Line managers therefore play an important  
43 role e.g. how well they adopt and balance HR-related roles i.e. 'Employee Champion' and  
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3 ‘Strategic Partner’ (Shipton, Sanders, Atkinson, & Frenkel, 2016). It is equally crucial that  
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5 managers are well trained to implement participative leadership e.g. Metz, Brown, Cregan, &  
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7 Kulik (2014).  
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## 11 **Discussion**

14 The notion that some PWB practices may conflict with organisational performance may not  
15  
16 be new as the fabric of modern organisations themselves are counter to employee PWB  
17  
18 (O’Donohue & Nelson, 2014). Nonetheless, it is important that organisations are equipped to  
19  
20 deal with paradoxes as they occur as no one organisations will have ‘perfect’ circumstances  
21  
22 befitting both PWB and organisational performance. Smith and Lewis (2011) argue that a  
23  
24 paradoxical perspective requires management to address opposites simultaneously,  
25  
26 circumventing the need to choose one over the other or make trade-offs. Ultimately they  
27  
28 suggest that the solution to paradoxes demands “...*creative sensemaking*...” (p. 395). This  
29  
30 section discusses how management are able to address paradoxical issues due to PWB and  
31  
32 organisational performance practices through sensemaking.  
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36 Sensemaking is homologous to ‘organising’ in that it aims at restoring cognitive order  
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38 (Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2015). Sensemaking occurs in both immanent conditions and times of  
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40 crisis. The genesis of sensemaking varies: it occurs when reality simply does not match  
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42 ‘theory-in-use’ (Schwandt, 2005); when an individual ‘feels’ something is not right (Weick,  
43  
44 2006); there is a presence of disruptive ambiguities, crisis and disasters (Weick, Sutcliffe, &  
45  
46 Obstfeld, 2005); threats to identity, epiphanies and even planned changes (Maitlis &  
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48 Lawrence, 2007). Our conceptual framework (Figure 2) uses sensemaking as an approach in  
49  
50 addressing the PWB-performance paradox, specifically building upon Luscher and Lewis’  
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52 (2008) work, that demonstrates how effective managerial sensemaking helped firms to  
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54 address paradoxical challenges in times of change. The framework has five stages; mess,  
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3 problem, dilemma, paradox, and achieving. Organisations move through the stages via four  
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5 activities; evidence-based enquiry, multiple perspective taking, double loop learning, and  
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7 reframing.  
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10 [Figure 2 near here]

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12 A mess is a complicated situation and may occur when organisations attempt to balance  
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14 a firm-wide performance-orientated approach by employing PWB policies, without  
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16 consideration of existing policies; for example when work-life balance policies contradict  
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18 performance management indicators (Ackoff, 1993). A difficult situation may deteriorate into  
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20 a ‘mess’ as HR are unable to reconcile policies to reflect senior managements’ intentions,  
21  
22 resulting in line managers implementing the policies inconsistently. Confusion therefore sets  
23  
24 in. To gain clarity, evidence-based enquiry is used as it encourages the specification of  
25  
26 outcomes (symptoms) and potential root causes that contribute to the problematic situation  
27  
28 (Rousseau & McCarthy, 2007). This approach helps to verify that the issues are genuine and  
29  
30 not mere misunderstandings. For example, line managers may point out where the  
31  
32 inconsistencies lie in written policies in providing opportunities for employee autonomy but  
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34 at the same time having to adhere to strict standard operating procedures.  
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39 As the situation becomes clearer, people are able to identify the discrete problems.  
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41 Problems are difficulties that a person or one party faces (D'Zurilla, Nezu, & Maydeu-  
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43 Olivares, 2004). However, when aggregated and viewed collectively, the problematic  
44  
45 situation appears severe. A technical approach to problem solving is inadequate as solving  
46  
47 one problem may exacerbate another e.g. ‘shifting the burden’. For example, line managers  
48  
49 may adopt a contingent ‘if-then’ approach, but this may in fact undermine the reason for the  
50  
51 PWB policies as employees feel there is a lack of procedural justice. To address this  
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53 situation, multiple perspective taking must be adopted, involving eliciting and understanding  
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55 the view point of others (Grant & Berry, 2011). This approach helps in gaining a more  
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3 complete picture of the situation; i.e. ‘connecting the dots’; which identifies that there are  
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5 competing and even contradictory views. For example, while employees acknowledge that  
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7 some wellbeing policies such as FWA may not always be for altruistic reasons, they believe  
8  
9 that the policy in itself has benefits even though its ‘returns’ are long term orientated, which  
10  
11 is in contrast to management’s view who may believe that wellbeing is important but for  
12  
13 short-term, instrumental reasons.  
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16 Dilemma sets in as people in an organisation feel ‘stuck’ as the options available are  
17  
18 polarities that have both advantages and disadvantages (Aguinis, Gottfredson, & Joo, 2013).  
19  
20 When one polarity is favoured, adverse outcomes transpire. For example, with a conviction  
21  
22 that challenging jobs lead to learning for performance, management are intent in  
23  
24 ‘challenging’ employees to learn but this stresses employees as they may not be able to cope  
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26 with the challenges and feel that they have to constantly show that they have ‘learned’, which  
27  
28 is not always demonstrable. Double loop learning is a helpful aid in this situation as it  
29  
30 involves questioning one’s own beliefs and way of thinking (Argyris, 2002). Questions that  
31  
32 arise from a double loop learning process may include ‘why is there a dilemma in the first  
33  
34 place?’, ‘is this dilemma self-imposed as we take things for granted?’ For example, through  
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36 double loop learning management may appreciate that psychological safety is crucial as  
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38 people tend to be vulnerable when they learn, especially when stretched doing challenging  
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40 jobs, and that management must learning is not always a predictable process (Abubakar &  
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Arasli, 2016).

Ultimately, organisations then find themselves in a paradoxical situation. A paradox  
occurs when there are persistent contradictory interdependent elements (Schad et al., 2016).  
For example, performance-orientated practices such as performance-based compensation  
packages create competitive environments that strain relationships between colleagues and  
invites conflict, which undermines efforts to enhance employee communication and

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3 collaboration. In addition, managers may view that an emphasis on wellbeing practices such  
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5 as work-life balance undermine performance-related initiatives as it gives employees excuses  
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7 for not 'seeing out the work' even after completing their mandatory working hours for that  
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9 day. Reframing allows organisations to address paradoxes as it helps to change one's  
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11 interpretive framework (Maitlis, 2005), which provides a coherent configuration of  
12  
13 assumptions, rules, and boundaries (Bartunek, 1984). For example, the reframing of a  
14  
15 paradoxical situation allows managers to view such a situation not as one that is debilitating  
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17 but as a catalyst for creativity in new ways of doing things. Reframing enables managers and  
18  
19 employees to accept that paradoxes do not go away but workarounds nevertheless can be  
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21 identified and developed (e.g. such as adopting this sensemaking framework).  
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### 27 **Conclusion and Future Research**

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29 By adopting a specific focus on paradoxes between PWB and performance HR practices, we  
30  
31 make our first contribution by comprehensively identifying employee PWB and  
32  
33 organisational-performance HR practices that are contradictory with one another. Recent  
34  
35 research has established that HR practices have varying effects on different occupational  
36  
37 groups, and also unpredictable impact through inconsistent implementation by line managers  
38  
39 (Kinnie, et al., 2005). There is also the potential for confusion, and contradiction, across HR  
40  
41 practices. While it is well established that HR practices in relation to organisational  
42  
43 performance are more likely to have positive impact when 'bundled', there is still a tendency  
44  
45 to introduce a single practice for a single purpose. One example is FWA to support PWB.  
46  
47 This can ignore the impact in other areas, especially organisation performance. This is in part  
48  
49 a cause of confusion through contradictory objectives; e.g. is FWA primarily to promote  
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51 PWB at the expense of performance? Or, if FWA is introduced to promote organisation  
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53 performance by reducing employment costs, is this at the expense of PWB? These questions  
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3 lead to our first contention here. This is that such questions will be at the heart of future  
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5 research and concern in professional practice (Guest, 2017). The focus will be on how to  
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7 reconcile the apparent contradictions.  
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10 In addressing this issue, we offer our second contribution by developing a new  
11  
12 sensemaking conceptual framework that demonstrates how the PWB-performance paradox  
13  
14 can be addressed. The underlying contention is that there is a need to reframe the apparent  
15  
16 contradiction as a paradox. Contradictions are conceived as problems. In contrast, paradoxes  
17  
18 are conceived as natural occurrences in social systems, and as opportunities for positive  
19  
20 learning and change. Our central argument is that future research needs to adopt the concept  
21  
22 of paradox as a metatheory to analyse and understand how HR practices can complement  
23  
24 rather than contradict each other. The conceptual framework in Figure 2 is our contribution to  
25  
26 enabling and supporting future research into HR practice, which promote both PWB and high  
27  
28 performance.  
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32 Finally, we offer our third contribution by identifying contexts for mutual gains as we  
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34 build upon the work of Guest (2017) who adopted a symbiotic view of PWB practices with  
35  
36 organisational performance. Specifically, we complement his work by adopting a more  
37  
38 nuanced perspective in identifying endogenous factors that organisations can influence to  
39  
40 enhance the synergies put forth by Guest (2017). Our contribution chimes with the work of  
41  
42 some authors; e.g. Torre (2012); who have suggested that empirical studies on the effects of  
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44 HPWS on psychological PWB is mixed, and therefore a ‘sceptical view’ is appropriate given  
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46 the paradoxical nature of the relationship and the near-impossibility in categorically  
47  
48 attributing the impact of HWPS on PWB. For example, workers involved in HPWS may  
49  
50 register higher levels of satisfaction and greater intrinsic rewards from their work, but at the  
51  
52 same time they may experience greater anxiety and more intense work rhythms. Authors  
53  
54 suggest a causal chain approach be adopted as an analytical approach as the impact of HR  
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3 practices is complex with many latent and mediating factors e.g. Ang et al. (2017). Torre  
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5 (2012) argues that a more tailored approach is required as the context in which the practices  
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7 are introduced and the needs of the individual must be considered. The conclusion of the  
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9 study is also consistent with other findings related to communication and perceptions of  
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11 employees on HR practices e.g. Shuck and Reio (2014).  
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## Tables and Figures

**Table 1: Literature search and screening steps**

Steps	Database	
	Scopus	Web of Science
Terms used: Health OR Well-Being	3,858,734	1,557,881
Limit to fields: Psychology and Business Management, and English and Articles only	217,234	34,744
Terms used: Employee OR Workplace	18,507	30,092
Term used to search within previous search result set 'Organi*ational Performance'	778	139
Term used to search within previous search result set: 'Human Resource *'	106	54
Merged set	160	
Duplicates removed	140	
Review of abstracts to determine relevance of articles:	93	
Final number of articles used in analysis	68	

**Table 2: Type of paper reviewed**

Field of study		% of 68 articles
Empirical	Quantitative	67.6
	Qualitative	2.9
	Multi-method	4.4
Conceptual/ Review		17
<b>Total</b>		<b>100%</b>

Figure 1: Illustration of the paradox between HR PWB and HR performance-orientated practices

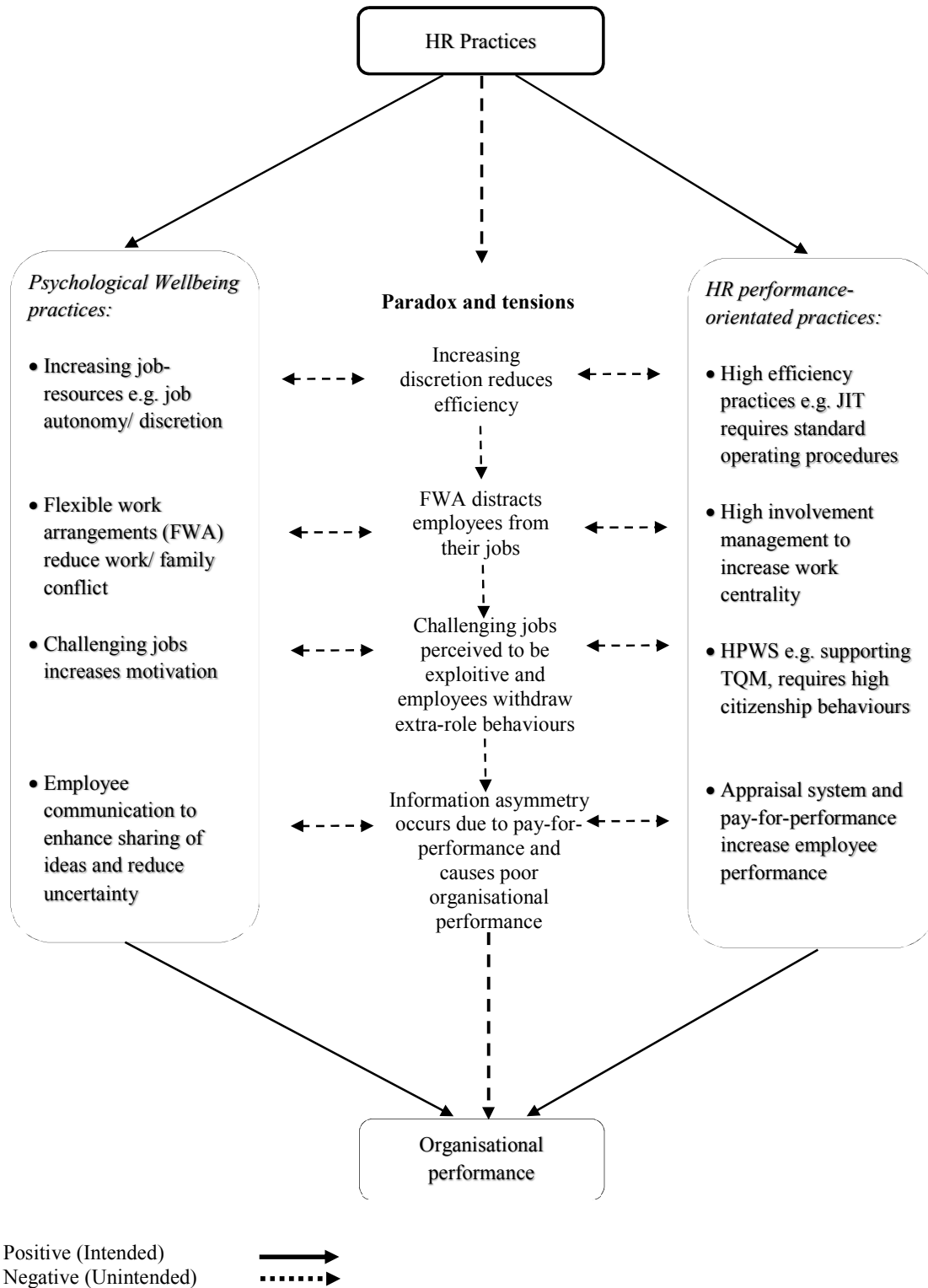
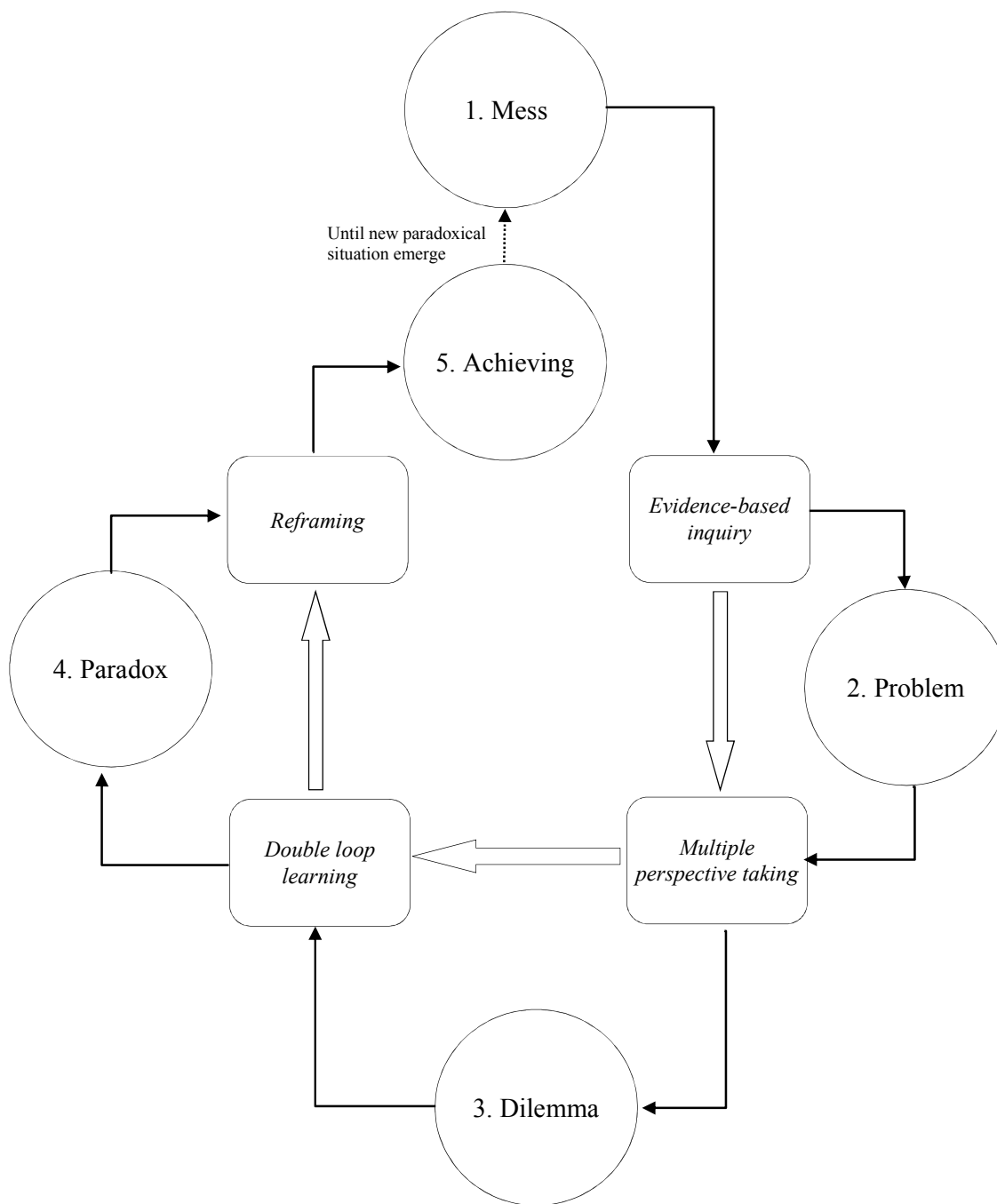


Figure 2: Conceptual framework: Sensemaking approach in addressing PWB-performance HR practices paradoxes



\*Adapted from Luscher and Lewis (2008)

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