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2015 Academy of Management Symposium Proposal

HRM IMPLEMENTATION EFFECTIVENESS IN THE INTERNATIONAL ARENA: A

MULTI-LEVEL AND MULTI-ACTOR PERSPECTIVE

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Divisions

HR, IM, OB

SYMPOSIUM ABSTRACT

HRM practices have fared well across national borders due to globalization. The field of international HRM has learnt us a great deal by exploring different effects on HRM implementation in different countries. Our symposium is rooted in two main streams of the literature, HRM effectiveness and HRM challenges of Multi-National Corporations (MNCs) in different regions of the world. Overall, it is acknowledged that HRM philosophy and practices are context specific and shaped by specific organizational dynamics as well as socio-cultural, economic and political contexts. Therefore, one must expect HRM policies and practices to differ in content and emphasis across national borders. Along with a long list of HRM-related issues, the literature does not pay attention yet enough to the involvement of line managers in HRM implementation in international context. In case of MNCs structures, HRM philosophies and policies are usually designed at the headquarters and communicated through towards subsidiaries, but it may be line subsidiaries-based managers who, in the end, take final responsibilities to implement centrally designed HRM systems. In case of indigenous organizations, the main logic remains: line managers stay responsible for the execution of HR practices.

In this proposal we focus on the implementation of HRM in the international context. Such a landscape is characterized by several features, some typical of developing nations and some unique to the region. We want to learn and inspire future studies about differences and similarities in the scope and degree of line managers involvement in the HRM implementations.

This symposium brings together four studies. The papers confront empirical work in different countries with theories and concepts from Western knowledge and focus on the

similarities and differences between contexts and their implications for Human Resource Management practices.

SYMPOSIUM OVERVIEW

We know from various studies that the implementation of Human Resource Management is an important factor for the performance, quality and effectiveness of HRM (Gratton & Truss, 2003; Guest & Bos-Nehles, 2013; Huselid, Jackson & Schuler, 1997). Some scholars even go a step further in stating that even well-designed HRM practices will eventually become ineffective when they are not properly implemented (e.g. Khilji & Wang, 2006).

This symposium is inspired by the need for more research on HRM implementation effectiveness (Becker & Huselid, 2006; Guest, 2011; Guest & Bos-Nehles, 2013). Although some fundamental scholarly work has been done to date (e.g., the special issue on "Human Resource Management and the Line" in *Human Resource Management,* 2013), we call for expanding this research stream to explore HRM implementation effectiveness further. The aim of this symposium is to explore HRM implementation effectiveness in the international arena from a multi-level and multi-actor perspective using qualitative and quantitative data. The implementation of HRM using multiple actors - such as first-line managers, middle managers, HR professionals, top management, consultants and translators – at multiple levels – organizational, team/interpersonal and individual level – is explored in multiple international arenas – Belgium, Slovakia and the Irish public and private sector.

Multi-level research (Lepak et al., 2006; Nishii & Wright, 2013; Ostroff & Bowen, 2000) integrates macro- and micro-level HRM research considering top-down effects of HRM systems at corporate levels on HRM systems at subsidiary levels in such a way that HRM practices designed at the organizational level determine how HRM practices are implemented at the team

level, further affecting how employees at the individual level perceive and interpret these HRM practices (Jiang, Takeuchi & Lepak, 2013: 1406).

Multi-actor research aims to collect data from multiple organizational actors taking into consideration dynamic interactions between key actors and their context, since it is these key actors who play an important role in shaping and influencing decisions about HRM (Rupidara & McGraw, 2011). Based on the ideas of stakeholder theory (De Winne, Delmotte, Gilbert & Sels, 2013; Tsui, Ashford, St.Clair, & Xin, 1995), different actors in the implementation of HRM practices "associate meanings and logics of the situation, establish conceptions about expectations placed upon them, and further shape their own intentions toward the situation" (Rupidara & McGraw, 2011: 180). In the situation of implementing HRM practices in subsidiaries of multinational organizations local actors (such as subsidiary line managers in the role of translators) mediate, adopt, and reinterpret HRM practices (Rupidara & McGraw, 2011) according to their own cognitive frames (Bondarouk et al., 2009) and idiosyncratic interpretations of HRM practices (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004).

Based on the ideas of the process model of SHRM (Wright & Nishii, 2013) and the model of HR implementation (Guest & Bos-Nehles, 2013), HRM implementation is a multi-level process involving various actors in the design of intended HR practices (HR managers, senior executives), deciding to introduce HR practices and their quality, the implementation of actual practices (line managers) and their quality, and the experience of perceived HR practices (employees). Whereas two of our four papers explicitly explore HRM implementation at multiple levels (paper 1 and paper 3), the other two papers focus on the individual level but from multiple perspectives: exploring actual HRM and how HRM practices are implemented (paper 2) and exploring perceived HRM and how HRM practices are experienced by employees (paper 4).

In this symposium, we systematically examine the predictions associated with implementing HR management practices in different countries. Although the presentations in this symposium will discuss this subject from different angles, they are united in their focus on the important role of line managers in implementing HRM in different contexts and the multi-level and multi-actor perspective taken on HRM implementation. For a summary of this 90 minute symposium and its time schedule, we refer to Table 1.

The co-chairs of this symposium, Anna Bos-Nehles and Tanya Bondarouk, both associated with the University of Twente, will introduce this session with a short presentation about the rationale and significance of this symposium to the field and will outline the importance of a multi-level and multi-actor approach in the implementation of HRM in different countries. After the introduction, four papers will be presented in the following order:

The first presentation is by **Stephen Keating, Na Fu** and **Marian Crowley-Henry** (Maynooth University) setting the stage by stressing the importance of a multi-actor role in the implementation of a high-performance model by integrating the conceptualization on HRM system strength (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004) with the multi-level HRM framework by Jiang et al. (2013). Qualitative data is collected from the organizational (top management and HR director), team (line managers) and individual level (front-line employees) in one or Ireland's leading communication companies to specify the role of top managers, line managers and employees in fostering HRM system strength.

Carole Tansley (Nottingham Trent University), **Susanne Tietze** (Keele University) and **Emil Helienek** (Nottinham Trent University) build further on the first presentation by shading light to the transfer of Western talent management knowledge into a Slovak manufacturing setting from a *translation* perspective. In this paper the translator is addressed as key agent in the

cross-national, cross-language knowledge transfer process, who not only provides linguistic translation, but also cultural and political interpretation of key vocabularies. The implementation of talent management practices is addressed by a 'discursive void' that characterizes local experiences with, and knowledge about, talent management as a distinct set of HR strategies, policies and practices. Transferring talent management knowledge necessitates 'translation', which is empirically investigated using a conceptual trajectory to frame the transfer process from different translation perspectives (mechanical, cultural, political).

The third contribution is from Belgium. **Sophie op de Beeck, Jan Wynen** and **Annie Hondeghem** (Leuven University) empirically explore the conditions under which HRM implementation by line managers is likely to be effective, focusing on the impact of various organizational, individual and interpersonal factors, as suggested by the theory of role dynamics (Kahn et al., 1964). The paper focuses on the comparison between first-line and middle management's experiences of their HR role and which factors explain effective HRM implementation at each managerial level. Drawing on survey data of two Belgium organizations, Op de Beeck et al. show that a distinction should be made between two line management roles: first-line managers and middle managers, as different factors explain the HRM implementation effectiveness at each managerial level.

Kerstin Alfes (Tilburg University), **Catherine Bailey** (University of Sussex), **Edel Conway** and **Kathy Monks** (Dublin City University) continue with investigating the role of line managers in the implementation of HRM by exploring the interactive effect of employees' perceptions of high involvement work practices and empowering leadership on levels of wellbeing. Based on data from a public sector organization in Ireland, they test a moderated mediation model which suggests that a) the positive effect of high involvement work practices on

employees' engagement is mediated by perceived organizational support, and b) the negative effect of high involvement work practices on emotional exhaustion is mediated by work intensity. They also posit that the effects of high involvement work practices on wellbeing are strengthened by empowering leadership behavior. The results of this study suggest that organizations can improve the effectiveness of their HRM system by aligning the HRM practices and the leadership culture in their organization.

After the four presentations, the discussant **David Guest** (King's College) will comment on the content of the papers and presentations and will facilitate a discussion among the symposium participants and the audience. This discussion serves to synthesize the results of this symposium and explore avenues of future research into the implementation of MNC HRM policies and practices in different international contexts.

Table 1: Summary and Time Schedule of the Symposium

Presentation	Presenter	Minutes
Overview. Introducing HRM implementation effectiveness in an international arena and the role of the multi-level and multi-actor approach	Anna Bos-Nehles and Tanya Bondarouk	5
Paper 1. How to implement a high performance model: A multi-level case study of an Irish knowledge intensive firm	Stephen Keating, Na Fu, and Marian Crowley-Henry	15
Paper 2. Filling the 'Discursive Void' in the construction of talent management policy knowledge: A Slovak case study	Carole Tansley, Susanne Tietze, and Emil Helienek	15
Paper 3. Explaining effective HRM implementation: A middle versus first-line management perspective	Sophie op de Beeck, Jan Wynen, and Annie Hondeghem	15
Paper 4. The joint effect of high-involvement work practices and empowering leadership behavior on employees' wellbeing. Testing a moderated mediation model	Kerstin Alfes, Catherine Bailey, Edel Conway, and Kathy Monks	15

Questions	Anna Bos-Nehles and Tanya Bondarouk	15
Discussion. The future of HRM implementation effectiveness in an international arena	David Guest	10
Total time		**90**

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RATIONALE FOR SUBMISSION

We are submitting this symposium proposal (HRM Implementation Effectiveness in the

International Arena: A Multi-Level and Multi-Actor Perspective) to the three Academy of

Management divisions: Human Resources (HR) , International Management (IM) and

Organizational Behaviour (OB), as we believe it will be of particular interest for these divisions

for the following reasons.

(1) The central topic of the symposium – multi-level and multi-actor approaches in the

implementation of HRM by line managers in international contexts - has the potential to

generate novel insights directly relevant to the interests of members of the three divisions.

(2) The symposium is likely to be of particular interest to members of the **HR division** where it

draws on the HRM perspective and shows how this can contribute to understanding the work

and organizational consequences of devolution of HRM to line managers for the

implementation effectiveness of HRM policies and practices. It fits to the aim of the **HR**

division to understand, identify and improve "the effectiveness of HR practices […] in the

various functions and activities carried out as part of HR".

(3) Given the significance of international management to a number of key debates concerning

the implementation of HRM policies and practices from MNC headquarters to foreign

subsidiaries in the light of the global integration vs. local responsiveness question and the

role and significance of the HR function, the symposium will appeal to members of the **IM**

Division, given the focus on "the cross-border management of operations, including multi-country, multi-unit, strategy formulation and implementation; […] and evolving forms and management practices in cross-border business".

(4) Finally, while this symposium focuses on the influences of processes at both the individual and team level on the implementation of HRM practices as perceived by employees, it would be of particular interest for members of the **OB Division** that is concerned with "understanding individuals and groups within an organizational context […]. Major topics include individual and interpersonal processes […] and contextual influences on individuals and groups" which can be seen in the light of HRM implementation by line managers in various international contexts.

HOW TO IMPLEMENT A HIGH PERFORMANCE MODEL: A MULTI-LEVEL CASE STUDY OF AN IRISH KNOWLEDGE INTENSIVE FIRM

Stephen Keating, Na Fu, and Marian Crowley-Henry

INTRODUCTION

During the past few decades, the process of designing high performance models at an organizational level, e.g. high performance work systems, has gained extensive research attention. Yet how to successfully implement such high performance models across different levels, including organizational and team levels, is not so clear. To address this issue, the present study integrates Jiang et al.'s (2013) multi-level HRM framework and Bowen and Ostroff's (2004) conceptualization of HRM system strength and conducts an in-depth multi-level case study of a large knowledge intensive firm. Qualitative data were collected at the organizational (top management team members and HR director), team (line managers) and individual (front-line employees) levels via semi-structured interviews and a focus group. Findings from the case study confirm the importance of the multi-level HRM framework and strength of the HRM system framework. The relevance of the line manager and employee levels in ensuring HRM systems are enacted and become embodied in the organization is acknowledged by the senior management level. However, the potential input at line manager and employee level into the *development* of the HR system through practices and policies appeared absent.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: INTEGRATING MULTI-LEVELS OF HRM

INTO A STRONG HRM SYSTEM

Multi-level HRM involves the HRM policies and practices designed by HR professionals and the senior management team at the organizational level, the HRM practices implemented by line managers at the team level, and the perceived HRM by employees at the individual level. Only when the three levels of HRM achieve high agreement and consistency, will employees share collective perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors to align their individual goals to the organizational goals, which in turn leads to a strong organizational climate at the aggregate level. This is the so-called strong HRM system (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004).

A strong HRM system (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004) has three main features: distinctiveness, consistency and consensus. Table 1 presents and describes the main features and their respective meta-features for strong HRM systems based on Bowen and Ostroff (2004).

Table 1. HRM System Strength Features

HRM strength features		Meaning
Distinctiveness	**Visibility**	refers to the degree to which these practices are salient and readily observable.
	Understandability	refers to a lack of ambiguity and ease of comprehension of HRM practice content.
	Legitimacy of authority	leads individuals to consider submitting to performance expectations as formally sanctioned behaviors.
	Relevance	refers to whether the situation is defined in such a way that individuals see the situation as relevant to an important goal.

Consistency	**Instrumentality**	refers to establishing an unambiguous perceived cause-effect relationship in reference to the HRM system's desired content-focused behaviors and associated employee consequences.
	Validity	is important because message recipients attempt to determine the validity of a message in making attributions.
	Consistent HRM messages	These convey compatibility and stability in the signals sent by the HRM practices.
Consensus	**Fairness**	is a composite of employees' perceptions of whether HRM practices adhere to the principles of delivering three dimensions of justice: distributive, procedural, and interactional These convey compatibility and stability in the signals sent by the HRM practices.
	Agreement	Agreement among these message senders helps promote consensus among employees.

Source: adapted from Bowen and Ostroff (2004)

Although Bowen and Ostroff's (2004) framework offers researchers a strong theoretical background for integrating the HRM process, how to design such a HRM system at the organizational level and implement it at the team level is not very clear. In the present study, we explore the roles of HR professionals and line mangers. In addition, we identify the detailed actions taken by the HR professionals and senior managers at organizational level (see Table 2), and line managers at the team level (see Table 3) to foster a strong HRM system. Doing so advances Bowen and Ostroff's (2004) work on HRM system strength which focuses on the employees' perceptions and behaviors desired by management under such a HRM system. It also clearly shows researchers and practitioners the way forward in achieving an effective HRM system.

Table 2. Role of HR Professionals in Fostering HRM System Strength

HRM system strength		Role of HR professionals – Intended HRM
Distinctiveness	Visibility	Informing employees about the HR practices (content).
	Understandability	Making sure that employees understand the HR practices (content).
	Legitimacy of authority	Seeking support from top management team.
	Relevance	Designing HR practices that are relevant for employees
Consistency	Instrumentality	Presenting the clear link between employees' behaviors and consequences, e.g. bonus for top performers
	Validity	Designing HR practices that are good in theory and function well in practice.
	Consistent HRM messages	Designing stable HRM practices over time.
Consensus	Fairness	Monitoring the distributive justice in HRM, e.g. equality so that employees who work hard will get rewards. Making sure that the reward decision-making process is transparent. Communicating with employees about the HRM practices openly and taking employees' opinions into consideration.
	Agreement	Seeking agreement with top management team and line managers.

Table 3 Role of line managers in fostering HRM system strength

HRM system strength		Role of line managers – Actual HRM
Distinctiveness	Visibility	Informing employees about the HR practices.

	Understandability	Making sure that employees understand the HR practices.
	Legitimacy of authority	Following the instructions from the top management team and HR department
	Relevance	Enacting employee-focused HR practices, e.g. career development based training.
Consistency	Instrumentality	Showing the causal link between top performance and rewards.
	Validity	Communicating with the HR department about the feasibility of HR practices.
	Consistent HRM messages	Understanding the HRM message and sending it to the employees.
Consensus	Fairness	Making sure top performers are recognized. Taking employees' opinions into consideration.
	Agreement	Supporting the decisions made by the top management team and HR department.

METHODOLOGY

Sample organization context

The sample organization, Telecoms1 (pseudonym), is one of Ireland's leading telecommunications companies with over 1.5 million customers. It runs 2G and 3G networks in Ireland. It operates a Media mobile marketing division, supports a number MVNO's (Mobile Virtual Network Operators). Telecoms1 employs over 900 people and has a retail network in excess of 70 stores. The current CEO was appointed in October 2011 following previous senior positions within the group. Due to economic crisis and customer demands on new devices, Telecoms1 introduced its High Performance Model (HPO) after the appointment of the CEO.

This HPO includes six targets: 1.) building organizational resilience; 2.) delivering unreasonable ambition; 3.) clarity on what really matters; 4.) living high standards; 5.) having a feedback rich culture; and 6.) being decisive, and promoting better decisions. To achieve these goals, the first key step that the senior leadership team took was to launch a new employee performance management model. This new performance management model asked managers and employees to agree with objectives that focused not only on the traditional what- actions, but also on the how- behaviors.

Sample and data collection

A case study was conducted involving a large knowledge intensive firm, Telecoms1. Qualitative data was collected from three levels: from the organizational level (three Top Management Team Members and one HR Director), the team level (three line managers) and the individual level (four front-line employees) via semi-structured interviews and a focus group (with the employees only). Each interview lasted from 30 to 62 minutes.

Data Analysis

All interviews were recorded and the recordings were transcribed verbatim to retain the integrity of the data. QSR Nvivo (version 10) was used in coding and analyzing the data. During the analysis of the data, the interview transcripts were coded following the Bowen and Ostroff (2004) HR system strength framework, with the interviews separated out across the organizational levels of senior management, line management and employees.

KEY FINDINGS: MULTI-LEVEL ANALYSIS OF HRM SYSTEM STRENGTH

Tables 4 to 6 present example quotes from the different organizational levels representing each of the meta-features of HRM system strength. The number of times each respective meta-feature was coded per level is also provided. Due to the length limit, they are not provided in the paper but will be provided in the conference.

SCHOLARLY IMPLICATIONS

The present study contributes to the multi-level of HRM research in three ways. Firstly, we extend our understanding of HRM at the organizational level by answering not only the traditional question of what HR practices are in place at the organizational level, but also the questions of how HR practices are implemented by line mangers and how they are perceived by employees, i.e. multi-level HRM. Secondly, we integrate Bowen and Ostroff's (2004) conceptualization on HRM system strength with the multi-level HRM framework by Jiang et al. (2013) and analyse the actions that HR professionals and line managers can take to form a strong HRM system. In doing so it clearly shows researchers and practitioners the way forward in adopting and implementing an effective HRM system. In addition to Bowen and Ostroff's (2004) nine meta-features of HRM system strength, we find some other interesting and important features which advance our current knowledge about HRM system strength, such as consistency across line managers and employees' preparedness. Thirdly, we carry out a qualitative study to enrich multilevel HRM research by providing a more in-depth and context specific analysis of HR system adoption and implementation. In doing so, we move beyond the traditional paradigm of quantitative studies which have traditionally dominated multilevel HR research.

Implications for Managers

There are many lessons for practitioners which can be gleaned from our study. First, HR professionals understand further the implications of the three levels of HRM, where the HR policies and practices they design are only the "intended" HRM, but not the "actual HRM". When designing HRM systems, HR professionals need to consider the three key features of HRM system strength: distinctiveness, consistency and consensus. For line managers, they need to work closely with HR professionals to share their opinions on whether the intended HR practices are relevant to employees' needs. In communicating with employees, line managers need to take extra care with interactional justice and demonstrate that they are in agreement with the HR department and top management. At the individual level, more ongoing input from employees should be expected in order to feed continuously into the development/emergence of the high performance model in practice.

CONCLUSION

This study extends our understanding of the implementation process of strategic human resource management through investigating the different roles of top leaders, line managers and employees. Our research supports the integration of the three levels of HRM, and has moved HRM research forward by unpacking the what (the HR content and theorizing the process) and the how (actions) of HRM. The findings and recommendations in this study are important for organizations to achieve sustainable competitive advantage through a highly motivated and engaged workforce.

FILLING THE 'DISCURSIVE VOID' IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF TALENT MANAGEMENT POLICY KNOWLEDGE: A SLOVAK CASE STUDY

Carole Tansley, Susanne Tietze, and Emil Helienek

INTRODUCTION

In the design, development and enactment of HRM policies and practices there has been an implicit assumption of the primacy of the HR function, whilst the role of managers has tended to be ignored (Currie & Procter, 2001;Gollan, 2012). Brewster et al. provide a number of valuable research questions for this area of endeavor, including: 'who is involved in the design of HRM policies that are thought to be most effectively supportive of employee well-being and business success?'; what is ''the critical role that line managers play in HRM practices and, thus, the relationship between those practices and important outcomes for both employees and organizations?'; how are HRM policies are translated into practice by line managers and perceived by employees who are the targets of those policies (Nishii, Lepak, & Schneider, 2008; Wright & Nishii, 2013)?; 'once the "strategic design" has taken place, who actually develops those policies'? , and 'once the HRM policies have been developed, what are the responsibilities and the roles of the line managers who actually deliver them at the intersection between the practice and the individual employee?' (2013, p830). In this paper we add to the research about the processes of joint creation of HRM policies in international organizational practice by HR specialists, line management and others. We do this by focusing on the very genesis of a particular HR policy, in this case talent management, as managers and their HR director from a Slovak manufacturing company get together in a two day workshop to hear about talent

management practices in western companies, to discuss the feasibility of such an initiative and consider adoption and policy implications in their culture and company.

Our focal theoretical stance to analyzing this scenario is novel, because what we examine is the transfer of Western talent management knowledge into a Slovak manufacturing setting from a *translation* perspective. The translator is shown to be the key agent in this cross-national, cross-language knowledge transfer process, who not only provides *linguistic translation* for the HR specialist and managers, but also *cultural and political interpretation* of key vocabularies. By drawing on different models of translation we show that a) discourse and language cannot be separated in talent management knowledge transfer interventions and that b) the translator is a key agent in shaping the transfer process by addressing the 'discursive void' that characterizes local experiences with, and knowledge about, talent management as a distinct set of HR strategies, policies and practices.

We therefore add to the knowledge about the joint agency of HR specialists and senior managers as they work together in the design of HR policies. In so doing we add to the research of Wright and Nishii (2013) who consider the whole spectrum of the development of: intended HRM practices/policies, actual HRM practices and perceived HRM practices/employee perceptions of the way they are being treated and the rationale for that (Nishii et al., 2008; Takeuchi, Lepak, Wang, & Takeuchi, 2007) (Brewster et al., 2013, p830).

DATA GENERATION

Empirical data was generated by the second author interviewing both key agents in the talent management knowledge transfer process. The Consultant, an experienced talent management consultant and academic who contributes regularly to the emerging field, is a native speaker of

English and has had considerable experience of delivering management development programs in the Czech Republic. The Translator is a Slovak national with Slovak as his mother tongue, having excellent English, living and working in the UK as an academic with particular expertise in international strategy. He is not a professionally trained translator or interpreter, yet his involvement was central to the unfolding interactions. The second author is a bilingual (German/English) academic with particular training in linguistics and translation and personal and professional experience of the transition process from a German perspective, but no significant understanding of the Slovak language and history.

Information was gathered from the Consultant and the Translator together and separately in a round of interviews to work through the dynamics, experience and genesis of the Knowledge Transfer Project, a two day workshop held at the company site. The Translator described the difficulties of translating English language materials: a detailed pack comprising 100 pages had been compiled by the Consultant and was initially translated by a professional translation agency, using a software package. This was followed by amendments made by one of their professional translators before it was passed on to the Translator, who corrected yet again words, meanings and expression as he was troubled by the many mistakes he found in the materials. He became increasingly aware of the underlying complexities of this enormous task (Interview 2; Translator). The translator also acted as Interpreter during the workshop itself as the audience comprised senior managers and executives, of which the CEO and a Swiss executive had excellent English, the Human Resource and Marketing Directors had some English and the Directors of Operations and Production, for example, had little or no English. The workshop was also attended by other senior role holders, including the Finance Director and Accounts managers.

FILLING DISCURSIVE VOID THROUGH TRANSLATION

We define 'discursive void' as being a void of language (in this case study, void of English) as well as a void of associated meaning systems (discourse: here talent management) which has roots in experience and provides trajectories for action. Thus discursive void refers to two related phenomena: language and discourse, which form an inseparable whole. The small literature that exists on language aspects of knowledge transfer has concerned itself with 'semantic or lexical void', yet it does not consider the nexus of ties between language and discourse and how they inform the 'knowledge translation' process.

Our findings show that translation work is *knowledge translation work*, starting with linguistic translation and including cultural and political aspects which need to be considered in order for concepts and ideas to take root in the new location. This is achieved through situated, agentic translation processes. While the use of loan words is a wide-spread mechanism to introduce words and concepts from discourses which are 'foreign' in the new setting, their use also points to discursive void as they are only used if no local or 'near equivalent' words or ideas exist.

CONCLUSION: TRANSLATED INTO BEING

Given the necessity for HRM policies to be designed in line with the direction and constraints of corporate strategy, such policies should be designed in consultation and collaboration with senior managers to ensure their buy-in and commitment for the effective use of those practices (Wright, Snell, & Jacobsen, 2004). In our paper we demonstrate how greater awareness of linguistic issues, including the use of loan words and the English language, may render some of the

problematic areas of the ongoing transition (Vaiman & Holden, 2011) more just and equitable. We make a number of contributions.

Firstly, for HR/managers we demonstrate why translation needs to be taken seriously in the design, development and implementation of HR strategies, policies and practices. Secondly, to studies of knowledge management in the HRM domain, we highlight how the translation process is concomitant with globalization and as such implies the flow of knowledge (packed in languages), the meetings of bodies of knowledge and consequent efforts to create (mutually beneficial) intelligibility. Thirdly, to management development, we establish that, as translation has to be done by someone, i.e. agents who are polylingual, culturally and politically situated actors, there is a need to appreciate that their acts are fundamental to the production of social realities which are 'translated into being'. Fourthly, to international HRM scholarship, by identifying that whilst scholars have responded to multicultural realities by developing tools to examine phenomena from cross-cultural perspectives, they also ignore that language and discourse are intrinsically interlinked and that discourse ('talent management') cannot be transferred easily and meaningfully, if the language aspect is ignored. These language aspects of discourse can be addressed through paying attention to 'translation', as an ongoing, invisible practice which multilingual agents engage in. Finally, we contribute to the increasing interest shown in talent management discourse in 'other' settings (Sidani & Al Ariss, 2014; Cooke, Saini & Wang, 2014; Skuza *et al*., 2012), we demonstrate how a micro-focus on the use of loan words and work of 'invisible' translators remains a fruitful trajectory to understand the travel of talent management knowledge. The potential implications of all of these contributions for conducting research, presenting and theorizing data and even for publication practices, we suggest, are immense.

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EXPLAINING EFFECTIVE HRM IMPLEMENTATION: A MIDDLE VERSUS FIRST-LINE MANAGEMENT PERSPECTIVE

Sophie Op de Beeck, Jan Wynen, and Annie Hondeghem

INTRODUCTION

Despite increased (research) attention for HR devolution, the quality or effectiveness of HRM implementation by line managers still remains to be seen (Guest & Bos-Nehles, 2013). Where the earlier studies mainly focused on delineating line management's HR role (e.g. Hall & Torrington, 1998; McGovern et al., 1997), some of the more recent work looks at the effectiveness of implementation and factors explaining successful HRM implementation by the line (e.g. Bos-Nehles, 2010; Gilbert, 2012). From these studies, it appears that a simple, seamless transfer of HR responsibilities from HR to the line is difficult to achieve. For that reason, several authors emphasize the need for more research on HRM implementation effectiveness (Becker & Huselid, 2006; Guest & Bos-Nehles, 2013). We therefore study the conditions under which HRM implementation by line managers is likely to be effective, focusing on the impact of various organizational, individual and interpersonal factors. In addition, we find that existing research on the HR role of line managers mainly focuses on first-line management (e.g. Hutchinson & Purcell, 2003; Lowe, 1992), and only in some occasions middle management (e.g. Currie & Procter, 2001). However, all line managers (first-line, middle, and to some extent also top managers) have an HR role (Hall & Torrington, 1998; Stanton et al., 2010), although distinctions can likely be made dependent on different considerations at different levels of management (Currie & Procter, 2001). In this paper, we therefore focus on the comparison

between first-line and middle management's experiences of their HR role and which factors explain effective HRM implementation at each managerial level.

By employing survey data of two organizations, we examine the effect of a number of organizational, individual and interpersonal factors on line managers' HRM implementation effectiveness. After that, we compare the different effect of these factors across both middle and first-line managers. This allows us to answer our main research question: How does the influence of several organizational, individual and interpersonal factors on HRM implementation effectiveness differ across middle and first-line management?

EXPLAINING EFFECTIVE HRM IMPLEMENTATION

Although there is a general trend towards the devolution of HR tasks to the line (Bond & Wise, 2003), the involvement of line managers in HRM doesn't necessarily mean that policies are implemented effectively and consistently. Many researchers even believe that line managers have failed in their HR role (McGovern et al., 1997). Given the importance of effective HRM implementation, several factors constraining line managers' execution of HR tasks are identified in the (devolution) literature. This is where the theory on role dynamics by Kahn et al. (1964; also adapted by Gilbert, 2012) provides an interesting framework. Their model distinguishes between three sets of factors that may influence an individual's role behavior (i.e. HR role performed by line managers): organizational, individual and

interpersonal factors.

We included three **organizational factors** in our empirical analysis: organizational support, (personnel) red tape, and HR instruments and information.

Organizational support. According to organizational support theory, an employee's behavior is contingent on the organizational context (Shadur et al., 1999). A key concept in this area of research is that of perceived organizational support (POS), which refers to employees' 'beliefs concerning the extent to which the organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being' (Eisenberger et al., 1986: 504). Although an organization may support their employees in a number of areas, this study focuses specifically on organizational support for line management's HR responsibilities. Based on the reciprocity in the social exchange relationship, greater perceived organizational support is assumed to increase an employees' affective commitment to the organization (Eisenberger et al., 1986) and to be positively related to different desirable individual and organizational outcomes, including performance, and job satisfaction (Eisenberger et al., 1990; Luthans et al., 2008;

Randall et al., 1999).

(Personnel) red tape. Red tape is defined as 'rules, regulations, and procedures that remain in force and entail a compliance burden for the organization but have no efficacy for the rules' functional object' (Bozeman, 1993: 283). In the context of HRM, Rainey et al. (1995) find that rules and laws concerning public personnel administration are the more important sources of red tape. Line managers' perceptions of (personnel) red tape are believed to decline their motivation since it diminishes flexibility and autonomy (Baldwin, 1990), and hence will affect their HRM implementation effectiveness.

HR instruments and information. Line managers also require a clear HR policy that is accompanied by procedures guiding them in the implementation of HR practices (Bos-Nehles, 2010; Gennard & Kelly, 1997). Clear guidelines and communication from HR are useful because they define line managers' HR role, reduce individual interpretation, and minimize uncertainties

among line managers about their HR tasks (Bos-Nehles, 2010; Den Hartog et al., 2012). Overall, clear and understandable HR instruments and information will facilitate line managers in effectively performing their HR role.

Hypotheses:

Organizational support and HR instruments and information are expected to be positively related to line managers' HRM implementation effectiveness.

(Personnel) red tape is expected to be negatively related to line managers' HRM implementation effectiveness.

Individual factors included in our study are the line manager's HR-related competency, motivation and HR role overload.

HR-related competency. All too often, line managers lack the expertise necessary to tackle increasingly complex HR issues. A successful HRM implementation therefore requires

the necessary HR-related competencies (Bos-Nehles, 2010).

Motivation: willingness and regulation. The (successful) enactment of HR practices by line managers also depends on the extent to which line managers feel adequately interested and motivated. Line managers should be willing to take on their HR tasks (Bos-Nehles, 2010). Also, an important determinant relates to the type of motivation or regulation, in which line managers' motivation can be graded from controlled, originating from external sources (extrinsic), to autonomous, stemming from the person itself (intrinsic) (cf. self-determination theory; Deci & Ryan, 2004). The controlled type of regulation has been negatively related to organizational

outcomes and personal well-being, whereas the autonomous types of regulations have been negatively related to these outcomes (Vallerand & Ratelle, 2004).

HR role overload. Notable among the drawbacks of HR devolution is that line managers often experience a lack of time to perform HR tasks and an increase in their workload (Bach, 2001). This is because additional HR responsibilities are not always accompanied by a reduction in other daily duties, thereby increasing an often already full workload. Also, short-term operational tasks are frequently given priority over HR tasks (Bos-Nehles, 2010; Renwick, 2000). In other words, line managers that are 'overloaded' in their HR role will not be as successful in performing that role.

> Hypotheses:
>
> *HR-related competency and willingness are expected to be positively related to line managers' HRM implementation effectiveness.*
>
> *HR role overload is hypothesized to be negatively related to line managers' HRM implementation effectiveness.*
>
> *Line managers will achieve higher HRM implementation effectiveness if they are more autonomously motivated.*

Regarding the **interpersonal factors**, we examined the influence of line managers' appreciation of interactions with HR professionals, their supervisor, and co-workers.

HR support. As line managers are not HR specialists, they will rely on support, encouragement and advice from HR professionals in order to effectively implement their HR responsibilities (Perry & Kulik, 2008). The HR devolution literature itself has identified support from HR specialists to be crucial in order for line managers to perform their HR role effectively

(Bond & Wise, 2003; Whittaker & Marchington, 2003). Recent studies confirm this assumption and find that HR support is positively related to effective HRM implementation (Bos-Nehles, 2010) and negatively related to HR role stressors (Gilbert et al., 2011).

Supervisor support. Leader-member exchange theory suggests that an interpersonal relationship evolves between employees and their supervisors (Wayne et al., 1997). As such, line managers can rely on their own supervisor for support in executing their HR tasks. In addition, line managers can get information from their supervisor on the expectations regarding their (HR) role, resulting in positive outcomes. For example, Wayne et al. (1997) concluded that supportive treatment by supervisors was in earlier research found to be positively related to affective commitment, job attitudes, and performance.

Co-worker support. Finally, the literature suggests that co-workers can be a vital source of support. As such, interacting with co-workers, e.g. when faced with a difficult or novel task, may be helpful as they are exposed to the same work environment and often execute quite similar tasks as the focal person (cf. social comparison theory; Cohen & McKay, 1984; Joiner, 2007; Zhou & George, 2001). Through sharing their personal experiences and providing overall support, co-workers at the same hierarchical level may contribute to an individual's job performance (Perry & Porter, 1982).

Hypothesis:

HR, supervisor and co-worker support are expected to be positively related to line managers' HRM implementation effectiveness.

MIDDLE VERSUS FIRST-LINE MANAGEMENT

Several levels of line management typically exist within an organization. Generally, three managerial levels can be distinguished: top, middle and first-line management. Each of these is considered to have an HR role (Hall & Torrington, 1998). With a few exceptions (e.g. Currie & Procter, 2001), however, research on HR devolution has mainly been focused on first-line management (e.g. Hutchinson & Purcell, 2003; Lowe, 1992). We believe, though, that distinctions are likely to exist dependent on different considerations at different levels of management (Currie & Procter, 2001). The line managers we want to concentrate on in this article are middle and first-line managers. Each managerial level has its own peculiarities regarding the HRM implementation issue, some of which are referred to below.

Compared to first-line managers, middle managers are…

…involved in the development as well as the implementation of HRM (Currie & Procter, 2001).

…role models for the first-line managers, demonstrating their commitment to HRM (Jackson & Humble, 1994; Purcell & Hutchinson, 2007).

…closer to the top, and hence, closer to individual HR professionals/managers (Currie & Procter, 2001).

…facing conflicting objectives and demands from above and below (Hallier & James, 1997).

Then again, first-line managers…

…feel more constrained overall (Brewer & Walker, 2013).

…are the most important leadership asset in sheer numbers and direct impact (National Academy of Public Administration 2003; 2004 in Brewer, 2005).

…mediate between higher-level managers and front-line employees (Brewer, 2005).

…directly influence employees' attitudes and motivations toward their work (Brewer, 2005).

For these reasons, amongst others, we believe that a difference exists between middle and first-line managers on how they experience and execute their HR role.

CONCEPTUAL MODEL AND HYPOTHESES

Figure 1: Conceptual model
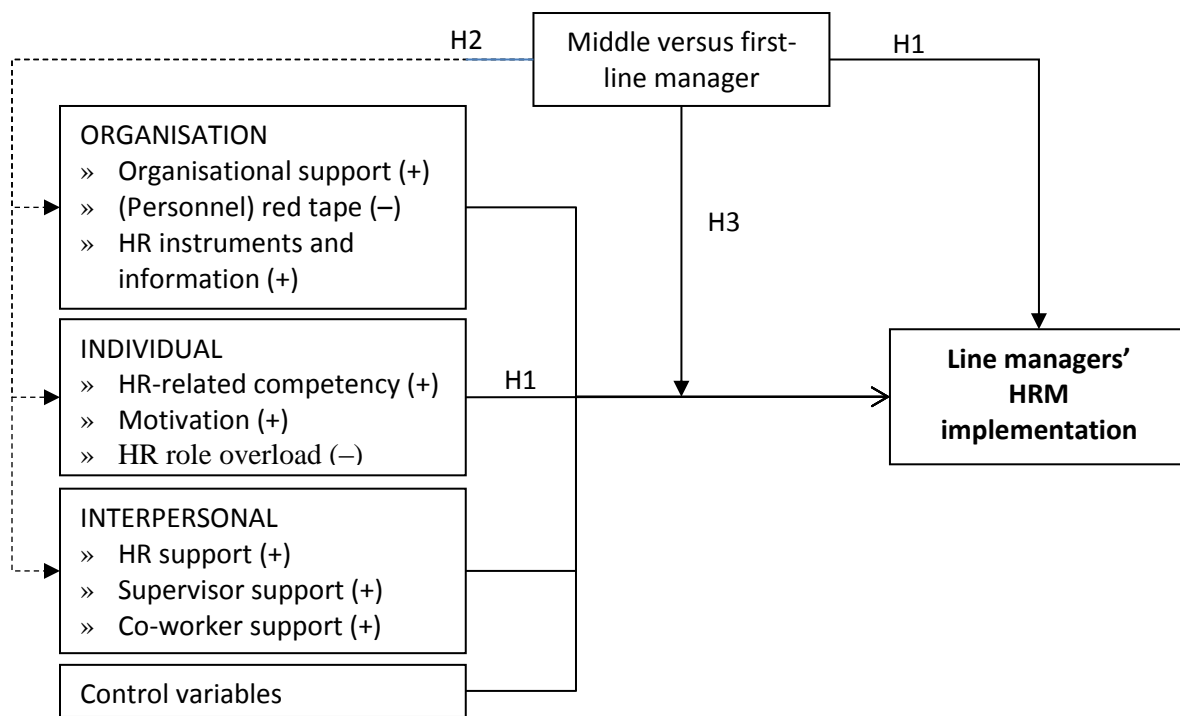
H1: Line managers' HRM implementation effectiveness is dependent on several organizational, individual, and interpersonal factors (cf.supra).

H2: Middle and first-line managers are expected to have different perceptions of (some of) the explanatory factors.

H3: The relationship between the explanatory factors and line managers' HRM implementation effectiveness is mediated by the middle versus first-line manager position.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Using survey data among middle managers (hereafter MM) and first-line managers (hereafter FLM) in two organizations (1,222 observations in total, of which 850 FLM and 372 MM; response rate of 34%), we currently employ a linear regression model (OLS) to analyze their HRM implementation effectiveness and how it can be explained by several organizational, individual and interpersonal factors. The variables included in our analyses were mainly based on existing measurement instruments as well as adapted

operationalizations.

PRELIMINARY RESULTS

In general, the preliminary results confirm our three main hypotheses (detailed results available in Appendix).

Overall, line managers' HRM implementation effectiveness is positively related to HR instruments and information, HR-related competency, willingness, HR role overload, and coworker support. A negative relationship exists between line managers' HRM implementation effectiveness and HR support. Also, middle managers seem to indicate a higher HRM implementation effectiveness than first-line managers. (H1)

The difference between middle and first-line managers is also apparent from the descriptive statistics. On 14 out of 20 variables, a significant perceptual difference is found

between middle and first-line managers. Middle managers generally have a more positive perception than first-line managers. (H2)

In addition, different explanatory effects are found for middle versus first-line managers (H3). FLM's HRM implementation effectiveness is positively impacted by HR instruments and information, HR-related competency, willingness, HR role overload, co-worker support, and age. A negative effect is found for HR support and age squared. MM's HRM implementation effectiveness differs between men and women. Also, a positive relationship is found between MM's HRM implementation effectiveness and organizational support, HR-related competency, willingness, regulation, HR role overload, gender, and years of supervisory experience.

Analyses will be further refined for the purpose of the full paper.

CONCLUSION

For now, it is clear that middle and first-line managers have different experiences regarding their HR role. Both managerial groups clearly have a role in implementing HRM, but may differ in the way they execute their HR tasks. Also, the conditions fostering effective HRM implementation are different between middle and first-line managers. All of this suggests that a distinction should be made between middle and first-line managers regarding the HR devolution issue. In practice, this implies that HR's approach towards facilitating HR devolution should be adapted according to the different managerial levels.

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THE JOINT EFFECT OF HIGH INVOLVEMENT WORK PRACTICES AND EMPLOWERING LEADERSHIP BEHAVIOR ON EMPLOYEES' WELLBEING. TESTING A MODERATED MEDIATION MODEL

Kerstin Alfes, Catherine Bailey, Edel Conway, and Kathy Monks

INTRODUCTION

A substantial body of research has demonstrated the capability of so-called High Involvement Work Practices (HIWPs) for generating positive results for organizations (e.g., Guthrie, 2001; O'Neill, Feldman, Vandenberg, DeJoy, & Wilson, 2011). While recent studies have focused on untangling the mechanisms through which HIWPs influence performance outcomes, there are at least two areas where more research is needed. First, the role of line managers as agents in implementing human resource management (HRM) practices has largely been ignored in previous research (cf. Guest & Bos-Nehles, 2013; Khilji & Wang, 2006). This is surprising as line managers are taking on increasing responsibility for HRM in their day-to-day interactions with employees (Holt Larsen & Brewster, 2003). Second, the majority of studies have taken a managerial perspective by examining the outcomes of HRM practices that have direct relevance for organizational performance (Paauwe, 2009). However, scholars have highlighted the need to investigate outcomes of HIWPs that are relevant for employees, such as their levels of wellbeing (Guest, 2011).

The present paper addresses these gaps by exploring the joint effect of employees' perceptions of HIWPs and empowering leadership on employees' work engagement and their levels of emotional exhaustion, as mediated by perceived organizational support and work intensity (see Figure 1). In doing so, we contribute to the literature in at least two ways. First, we

integrate the role of line managers into the HRM-outcomes chain. Specifically, we argue that line managers with an empowering leadership behavior strengthen the positive effect of HIWPs on employee wellbeing. HIWPs encompass HRM practices associated with greater involvement of employees at work, and research has demonstrated the positive outcomes of HIWPs for employees' health and wellbeing (Macky & Boxall, 2008). We suggest that this effect is further enhanced by empowering leaders as they regularly highlight the significance of their employees' work for the overall organizational objectives, provide opportunities for them to participate in decision-making, express confidence that their employees will perform well, and give them autonomy in the way that they carry out their job (Ahearne, Mathieu, & Rapp, 2005). Hence, while HIWPs are a structural means for employees to get involved, empowering line managers encourage this involvement on a day-to-day basis. Together this creates a positive synergistic effect on employees' wellbeing.

Second, we explore two processes through which HIWPs and empowering leadership behavior influence employee wellbeing. First, we posit that HIWPs and empowering leadership will enhance employees' perceptions that they are supported by their organization, and that the organization takes care of them (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986). Perceived organizational support, in turn, increases employees' engagement in their work (Rich, LePine, & Crawford, 2010). Second, we argue that HIWPs and empowering leadership behavior jointly decrease feelings of work overload, which in turn reduces levels of emotional exhaustion.

DATA COLLECTION

We tested our model in a public sector organization in Ireland. The Irish Public Sector has been subject to radical reforms and ongoing changes in the past decade. These reforms included

significant pay cuts and a moratorium on recruitment and promotion, in addition to the introduction of private sector practices such as devolved decision-making, performance-based management and a customer orientation, which was driven by governments' demands for high performance, greater efficiency and better service delivery. At the time of the data collection the organization was aware of the need for employees to take on additional responsibilities and the need for managers to facilitate this empowerment, even without the prospect of future rewards such as pay increases or promotions. The organization therefore provided an ideal setting for testing our hypothesized model. An email with a link to an online survey was sent to all 6992 employees between November 2011 and January 2012. A total of 2734 questionnaires were returned, a response rate of 39%. Deletion of missing values resulted in a usable sample of 2273 employees (33%). Our sample was 64 per cent female. The majority of employees were between 41-54 years old and the average tenure in the public sector was 20.63 years (s.d. = 11.14).

RESULTS

We tested our model using hierarchical moderated regression and followed the steps outlined by Preacher, Rucker and Hayes (2007). Gender and tenure were included as control variables in all analyses. Results revealed that HIWPs (ß=.64, p<.01) and empowering leadership behavior (ß=.10, p<.01) were positively and significantly related to perceived organizational support. Moreover, the results showed that the interactive effect of HIWPs and empowering leadership behavior on perceived organizational support was significant (B=.03, p<.05). Furthermore, perceived organizational support was positively and significantly related to work engagement (ß=.33, p<.01). We examined the full moderated mediation model by testing the effect of HIWPs via perceived organizational support on work engagement, as moderated by

empowering leadership behavior, controlling for gender and tenure, in accordance with Preacher et al. (2007). The results of the full model showed that perceived organizational support mediated the relationship between HIWPs and work engagement, and that this relationship was moderated by empowering leadership behavior. The interaction is plotted in Figure 2.

With regards to the second pathway our data showed that HIWPs (ß=-.16, p<.05) but not empowering leadership behavior (ß=-.05, n.s.) were significantly related to work intensity. In addition, the results showed that the interactive effect of HIWPs and empowering leadership behavior on work intensity was significant (B=.03, p<.05). Moreover, work intensity was positively and significantly related to emotional exhaustion (ß=.33, p<.01). We followed the same procedure as outlined above to test for moderated mediation. However, results did not support the moderating effect of empowering leadership behavior on the relationship between HIWPs and emotional exhaustion as mediated by work intensity.

CONCLUSION

Our study has contributed to debates around the role of line managers in the implementation of HRM by demonstrating that empowering leadership strengthens the positive effects of HIWPs on employee wellbeing. These findings suggest that organizations can improve the effectiveness of their HRM system by aligning the HRM practices and the leadership culture in their organization.

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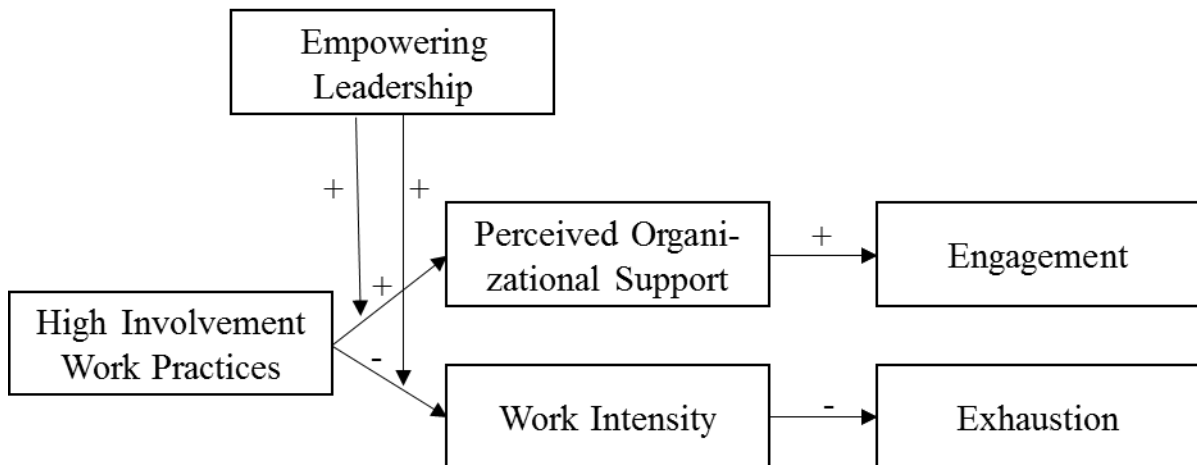Figure 1: Hypothesized Model

Figure 2: Interaction between HIWPs and empowering leadership behavior on work engagement