

‘HIGH POTENTIAL’ PROGRAMS AND EMPLOYEE OUTCOMES: THE ROLES OF
ORGANIZATIONAL TRUST AND EMPLOYEE ATTRIBUTIONS

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ABSTRACT

Organizations implement ‘high potential’ (HiPo) programs to identify, develop and retain their most talented employees (also known as high potential employees). However, much is still unknown regarding how these programs affect employees, and the link through which employee participation in HiPo programs affects employee outcomes remains a ‘black box’. This research aims to open this ‘black box’ and examines the underlying mechanism through which HiPo program participation impacts employee outcomes.

Drawing on social exchange, psychological contract and attribution theories, I conduct two studies to examine the impacts of HiPo program participation on various employee outcomes. In the first study, I hypothesize that employees who are included in HiPo programs (i.e., HiPo employees) will have higher affective commitment, lower turnover intent, and higher levels of organizational trust. Moreover, I hypothesize that organizational trust will mediate the relationships between HiPo program participation and employee outcomes (i.e., affective commitment and turnover intent). A cross sectional survey was used to collect data from one division of a large multinational company (n= 65). The results provided support for all hypotheses.

The second study aims to replicate and extend the findings of Study 1. In this study, I examine the process through which HiPo program participation impacts employee outcomes by incorporating other important variables. I test four mediated models to understand whether HiPo attributions (commitment-focused and control-focused) mediate the relationships between HiPo program participation and employee outcomes (i.e., affective commitment, job satisfaction, turnover intent, and OCBs), and whether organizational trust moderates the relationships

between HiPo program participation and HiPo attributions. Using a cross sectional survey design, a sample of 242 employees provided support for the four mediated relationships for commitment-focused HiPo attributions, but not for control-focused HiPo attributions. The results showed significant interaction effects of HiPo program participation and organizational trust on commitment-focused attributions. However, no support was found for the interaction effects of HiPo program participation and organizational trust on control-focused HiPo attributions. Additionally, the results provided support for several mediated moderated models. This research highlights a key role of organizational trust in understanding the impact of HiPo program participation on employee outcomes.

Keywords: HiPo programs, talent, talent identification, HiPo program participation, organizational trust, attributions, affective commitment, job satisfaction, OCBs, turnover intent

DEDICATION

To the loving memory of my father.

To my mother, whose prayers and unconditional love have made this dissertation possible.

To my loving husband, who was always there for me whenever I needed him.

To my lovely, cute kids (Sheza and Haris) who gave a new meaning to my life, and bring endless joy and happiness into my life.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Since the term ‘war for talent’ was first introduced by McKinsey and Co. in 1997 (Michaels, Handfield-Jones, & Axelrod, 2001), talent management (TM) has become increasingly important for executives, human resource (HR) professionals and consultants (Höglund, 2012; Tarique & Schuler, 2010). TM can help organizations optimize organizational learning processes and sustain their competitive advantage by continuously acquiring, assessing and developing their human and intellectual capital (Ashton & Morton, 2005; Jardon & Martos, 2012; Kianto, Ritala, Spender, & Vanhala, 2014; Oltra & Vivas-López, 2013). More importantly, the recent economic recession and labour shortages have generated new ways of thinking about employees’ contributions, and subsequently new ways of managing employees at all organizational levels (Beechler & Woodward, 2009).

Despite this increased attention by practitioners, there has been a dearth of academic empirical research on TM (Cappelli, 2008; Lewis & Heckman, 2006). In her review article on TM, Dries (2013a, p. 272) mentioned, “despite over a decade of debate and hype about the war for talent as a pressing concern, there has been strikingly little theory development, however - not to mention the lack of robust empirical evidence”. Further, the link through which TM practices impact employee level outcomes remains a ‘black box’ (Gelens, Dries, Hofmans, & Pepermans, 2013). As such, we have little understanding on the processes through which TM programs impact employees’ attitudes and behaviours (Gelens, Dries, Hofmans, & Pepermans, 2015). Recently, Gallardo-Gallardo, Njis, Dries, and Gallo (2015), in their review paper on TM, lament that “the TM field is hardly on the verge of entering the stage of maturity at this point, as a much stronger theoretical basis is required—prescribing relevant variables, measures, and

causal relationships—to allow for a shift towards theory-driven research” (p. 275). Hence, research is needed to open the ‘black box’ by examining the processes through which TM shapes employee attitudes and behaviours (Gallardo-Gallardo, Dries, & González-Cruz, 2013; Gallardo-Gallardo & Thunissen, 2016).

Effective TM strategies that are aligned with corporate strategies positively impact employees and organizational performance (Bethke-Langenegger, Mahler, & Staffebach, 2011; Nagarajan, Sathyanarayana, & Ali, 2013). Many global companies have ‘high potential’ (HiPo) programs in place for the management of their most talented employees, i.e., HiPo employees (Pepermans, Vloeberghs, & Perkisas, 2003; Silzer & Church, 2010; Slan-Jerusalim & Hausdorf, 2007). These employees are perceived to possess skills and abilities necessary for advancement in the organization, and they are ranked at the top in terms of performance and competencies (Cappelli, 2008; Collings & Mellahi, 2009; Lewis & Heckman, 2006). The definition of HiPo varies among scholars (please see Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2013) and practitioners (please see Silzer & Church, 2009). Generally, HiPo employees are distinctively talented employees; that is, those employees who have skills that are valuable (i.e., the potential to contribute to an organization’s core competencies) and unique (i.e., the extent to which these employees are difficult to replace) (Gelens et al., 2013; Lepak & Snell, 2002). In practice, talent is considered a scarce individual characteristic as only a small percentage of the workforce is identified as high potentials (Ulrich & Smallwood, 2012). Hence, HiPo programs are designed and implemented by organizations due to the increased significance of these employees to the organization’s success (Silzer & Church, 2010).

HiPo programs aim to improve organizational performance through improved employee attitudes and behaviours (Collings & Mellahi, 2009). Among other factors, affective

commitment, job satisfaction, employee turnover intention, and organizational citizenship behaviours (OCBs) are considered important in the context of TM (Collings & Mellahi, 2009; Gelens et al., 2015; Marescaux, De Winne, & Sels, 2013). This is mainly because these attitudes and behaviours are linked to important individual and organizational outcomes (such as employee motivation, productivity, and performance) (Chun, Shin, Choi, & Kim, 2013; Gong, Law, Chang, & Xin, 2009; Klein, Becker, & Meyer, 2009). Furthermore, research also demonstrates that the meanings employees assign to HR programs play an important role in affecting employee outcomes (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004; Nishii, Lepak, & Schneider, 2008; Nishii & Wright, 2007; Sanders & Yang, 2016). Employees' attributions could be positive (labelled as commitment-focused attributions, i.e., employees' perceptions that the organization values their contributions and is concerned about their well-being) or negative (labelled as control-focused attributions, i.e., employees' perceptions that the organization does not value their effort and considers them as a cost). To date, however, we still have little insights on the processes through which HiPo programs impact employee outcomes, and also on how employees perceive the implementation of these programs (Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2013; Gelens et al., 2013; Gelens, Hofmans, Dries, & Pepermans, 2014; Marescaux et al., 2013).

Research Statement

The main objective of this multi-study investigation is to understand *how* and under *what* conditions employees' participation in HiPo programs lead to various employee outcomes. This research objective is crucial as there is a paucity of research on how TM programs affect employee level outcomes (Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2013). To achieve this objective, I conducted two studies.

In the first study, I investigate the differences in employee perceptions of organizational trust and attitudes (i.e., affective commitment and turnover intent) for employees who are included in HiPo programs and those who are excluded. This is an organizational based study in which data were collected from one division of a large multinational company in Canada. I use archival data for *HiPo program participation*, which is the main independent variable in this study. I consider affective commitment because it serves as a bridge between TM and organizational outcomes (Collings & Mellahi, 2009). Additionally, turnover intent is considered because recent research has shown that the turnover of talented employees negatively affects organizational performance (Kwon & Rupp, 2013).

Next, in this study, I examine the mediating role of organizational trust in the relationships between HiPo program participation and employee outcomes (affective commitment and turnover intent). Trust is an important factor to consider in the context of TM because organizations differentiate their employees and form different expectations for HiPo employees compared to other employees (Dries & De Gieter, 2014). To date, the role of employees' perceptions of organizational trust has been omitted in the TM literature. HiPo employees have different development needs compared to non-HiPo employees (Dries & De Geiter, 2014), and they expect their employers to invest in them differently by providing career development opportunities and advancement in the organization (King, 2016). Talent identification therefore entails implicit or explicit promises that the organization will invest differentially in these employees, which suggests 'organizational trust' is an important factor to consider in the context of TM.

Three past studies suggest employees who were designated as talent have higher affective commitment (Björkman, Ehrnrooth, Mäkelä, Smale, & Sumelius, 2013; Gelens et al., 2015;

Marescaux et al., 2013) and only one study demonstrates that employees identified as ‘talent’ have lower turnover intention (Björkman et al., 2013). Only one study (i.e., Gelens et al., 2015) examined whether perceived organizational support mediated the relationship between talent identification and affective commitment. To date, we still have little knowledge of the underlying mechanism as to why there are differences in employees’ attitudes and behaviours in the context of TM (Gelens et al., 2015).

In the first study, I extend this literature and draw on social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) and psychological contract theory (Rousseau, 1989, 1995) to examine the mediating role of organizational trust in the relationships between HiPo program participation and employee outcomes (i.e., affective commitment and turnover intent). Employees’ perceptions of organizational trust are important because over the past few years the nature of the employment relationship has changed dramatically with employers now specifically focusing on attracting and retaining talented employees (Al Ariss, Cascio, & Paauwe, 2014; Garavan, Carbery, & Rock, 2012). Such changes have also changed employees’ perceptions of their relationship to their employers (King, 2016). These perceptions in turn shape their attitudes and beliefs about their employers.

Study 2 builds on Study 1 in several ways. First, Study 2 aims to replicate the findings of Study 1. Additionally, this study extends Study 1 by including new employee outcomes (job satisfaction and OCBs). These outcomes are important for HiPo programs because they are linked to improved organizational effectiveness (Collings & Mellahi, 2009; Harter, Schmidt, & Hayes, 2002). More specifically, I examine the differences in affective commitment, job satisfaction, turnover intent, OCBs and perceptions of organizational trust for different groups of employees, i.e., employees who are included in HiPo programs and employees who are excluded

from these programs. The sample for this study is drawn from employees working for organizations with HiPo programs. The main independent variable in this study is *HiPo program participation* which was measured through a self-reported question.

The second advancement for Study 2 is that I examine new mediating relationships, i.e., HiPo attributions mediate the relationships between HiPo program participation and employee outcomes. In this study, I draw on attribution theory (Kelley, 1967; Kelley & Michela, 1980) and posit that HiPo program participation leads to various HiPo attributions among employees which then lead to varied employee outcomes. The central idea for Study 2 is that HiPo programs provide explicit and implicit information about employees' values and contributions which form the basis of their attributions, and in turn impact their attitudes and behaviours (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004; Guzzo & Noonan, 1994). This is an important advancement as recent Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) research suggests that it is not the HR practice per se that affects employee attitudes and behaviours, but employee interpretations of these practices that shape employees' subsequent attitudes and behaviours (Nishii et al., 2008; Wright & Nishii, 2008).

The third important advancement in Study 2 is that I examine the moderating role of organizational trust in the relationships between HiPo program participation and HiPo attributions. I argue that when employees have a higher level of trust, there will be a positive relationship between HiPo program participation and commitment-focused HiPo attributions (i.e., perceptions that the organization values employees' contributions and cares about their well-being) (Nishii et al., 2008). When employees' level of organizational trust is low, I suggest there will be a negative relationship between HiPo program participation and commitment-focused HiPo attributions. For non-HiPo employees, I argue that at higher levels of

organizational trust there will be a negative relationship between ‘no HiPo program participation’ and control-focused HiPo attributions (i.e., perceptions that the organization does not value employees’ contributions and considers them as a cost) (Nishii et al., 2008). At lower levels of organizational trust, I argue there will be a positive relationship between ‘no HiPo program participation’ and control-focused HiPo attributions.

Study 2 also makes an important advancement in the sense that it also finds that the *mediating* relationships for employees’ participation in HiPo programs and employee outcomes through HiPo attributions is further *moderated* by organizational trust. In short, Study 2 highlights the significance of employees’ perceptions of organizational trust in moderating the mediating relationships between HiPo program participation and employee outcomes via HiPo attributions. In doing so, I address the call in the literature (Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2015) to examine related factors in the context of TM. This study not only advances our understanding of the underlying mechanism of *how* HiPo program participation leads to desirable employee outcomes but also examines conditions *under* which HiPo program participation leads to favourable employee outcomes.

Research Contributions

This multi-study research makes several important research contributions to the TM literature. In their recent article on the meaning of talent, Gallardo-Gallardo et al. (2013) highlighted that the field of TM needs more interdisciplinary studies and research on how TM impacts employee level outcomes. In the current research, I integrate workforce differentiation (HiPo program participation), SHRM (attributions), and OB literatures (organizational trust), and examine linkages by elucidating how HiPo program participation influences employee attitudes

and behaviours. Scholars lament that the processes that link TM to employee outcomes still remain a ‘black box’ (Gelens et al., 2013). This multi-study research extends this literature and aims to open this ‘black box’ by examining the role of organizational trust and HiPo attributions in shaping employee attitudes and behaviours.

Recent research on TM has started to show that there are differences in employee attitudes for HiPo and non-HiPo employees with HiPo employees demonstrating more favourable attitudes. However, we have little knowledge of the underlying mechanism as to *why* there are differences in employees’ attitudes in the context of TM (Gelens et al., 2015). In this multi-study research, I attempt to fill this gap by examining the mediating roles of organizational trust in the relationships between HiPo program participation and employee outcomes (i.e., affective commitment and turnover intent) in Study 1, and examining the mediating roles of HiPo attributions in Study 2. In Study 2, I also examine under *what* conditions HiPo program participation leads to desirable employee attitudes and behaviours. In particular, I explore the role of organizational trust as a moderator in the relationships between HiPo program participation and employee outcomes.

This study appears to be the first to empirically examine the role of organizational trust in the context of TM. Past SHRM studies have examined the mediating and moderating roles of organizational trust and have shown that trust moderates the relationships between perceived HRM practices and employee outcomes (Alfes, Shantz, & Truss, 2012; Farndale, Hope-Hailey, & Kelliher, 2011; Innocenti, Pilati, & Peluso, 2011). This multi-study research complements the SHRM literature and demonstrates that organizational trust is an important antecedent to employee outcomes in the context of TM. Moreover, this research is the first empirical study to examine employees’ perceptions about why their organizations include/exclude employees

in/from HiPo programs. Many scholars are concerned that non-HiPo employees may perceive these programs negatively and these perceptions may adversely affect their attitudes and behaviours (Huselid & Becker, 2011; Malik & Singh, 2014). However, no previous study has empirically examined these perceptions. This research, specifically Study 2, examines these perceptions and how these perceptions impact employee attitudes and behaviours.

Finally, scholars lament that the field of TM needs more empirical work (Thunnissen, Boselie, & Fruytier, 2013a). I contribute to the TM literature by conducting two empirical studies using employees with formal HiPo programs in their current organizations.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Talent Management and HiPo Programs

TM research has been the focus of the HR practitioner literature; however, it has not yet reached the status of a ‘mature field’ in academia. As Dries (2013b, p. 267) stated in the introduction to the *Human Resource Management Review* Special Issue on TM, “the topic is still not taken as seriously as it should in the academic literature”. Although several definitions of ‘talent’ have been presented by scholars over the past few years (Cappelli & Keller, 2014; Collings & Mellahi, 2009; Delong & Vijayaraghavan, 2003; Dries, 2013a; Iles, Chuai, & Preece, 2010; Lewis & Heckman, 2006; Thunnissen et al., 2013a; Thunnissen, Boselie, & Fruytier, 2013b); still there is no consistent definition.

Generally speaking, TM is considered from two broad perspectives, using an ‘inclusive approach’ and an ‘exclusive approach’. In the inclusive approach to TM (also referred as the strength-based approach to TM), all employees are considered as ‘talent’ and opportunities are provided to all employees to build on their existing talent or to develop other competencies (Cappelli & Keller, 2014; Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2013; Iles et al., 2010; Nijs, Gallardo-Gallardo, Dries, & Sels, 2014). However, the majority of the research on TM focuses on the exclusive approach to TM, which is based on the assumption that there are only a few talented employees in the organization that contribute to the organization’s success. In this approach, employees receive differential investments based on their uniqueness and added value to the organization or the strategic importance of their positions (Iles et al., 2010). This approach argues that an organization incurs unnecessary huge costs if it invests equally in all employees, since employees differ in their value and uniqueness (Lepak & Snell, 1999, 2002). In fact, some scholars recently argued that the exclusive approach to TM is more common in organizations

(Thunnissen et al., 2013b) and relatively few organizations use the inclusive approach (Garavan et al., 2012; Sonnenberg et al., 2014). Thus, in line with this research, I focus on the exclusive approach to TM in terms of HiPo programs that organizations develop and implement to focus on their HiPo employees.

HiPo programs are implemented to systematically develop, socialize, and advance a small number of employees who demonstrate great potential to contribute to an organization's success (Silzer & Church, 2010). These employees are identified as HiPos by senior management through a nomination process (Karakowsky & Kotlyar, 2012; Silzer & Church, 2010) or through a formal performance appraisal system (Cappelli & Keller, 2014; Pepermans et al., 2003). Consequently, this small group of employees receives more resource investment from the organization in terms of mentoring, the provision of accelerated developmental programs and more career growth opportunities (Campbell & Smith, 2010). By providing HiPo employees with a clear career path in the organization, these programs are a way to retain these HiPo employees as their turnover could have severe negative consequences for organizations (Kwon & Rupp, 2013).

Identification of HiPo Employees and Challenges

Generally speaking, HiPo talent has been defined as “individuals who are seen as having the capability to develop further and be effective in a larger future role” (Silzer & Church, 2010, p. 214). The main idea of identifying potential has been to identify knowledge and skills that can presumably be learned through developmental programs (Fernandez-Araoz, Groysberg, & Nohria, 2011). However, how to identify HiPo employees remains an open challenge not only for practitioners, but also for academicians due to the lack of consistency in defining ‘potential’

(Cappelli & Keller, 2014; Church & Silzer, 2014; Fernandez-Araoz et al., 2011; Silzer & Church, 2010). Nonetheless, identifying potential is fundamental to effective TM systems (Silzer & Dowell, 2010).

Traditional measures of identifying potential includes personality and IQ tests. Recently, employers have started asking supervisors to make an assessment of employee potential. Identifying potential is also sometimes included in employee appraisals, as in the case of the ‘nine grid matrix’ where supervisors evaluate employee performance on one axis and employee potential on the other (Cappelli & Keller, 2014). Ratings and recommendations from the employee’s manager and the senior management are also crucial assessment tools for the HiPo identification (Silzer & Church, 2010).

Given the urgency on how to identify potential, scholars and practitioners have started paying attention to the importance of defining potential. Slan-Jerusalim and Hausdorf (2007) found that organizationally–defined leadership capabilities and competencies were important factors for HiPo identification. Based on both qualitative and quantitative research, Dries and Pepermans (2012) presented and tested a model of leadership potential consisting of four quadrants, (i) analytical skills (intellectual curiosity, strategic insight, decision making, and problem solving); (ii) learning agility (willingness to learn, emotional intelligence, and adaptability); (iii) drive (results orientation, perseverance, and dedication); and (iv) emergent leadership (motivation to lead, self-promotion, and stakeholder sensitivity). Later, Church and Silzer (2014) presented an integrated framework for identifying HiPo talent named as ‘The Leadership Potential BluePrint’ and followed a more prescriptive approach for understanding leadership potential. This framework included three dimensions (foundational dimension – personality characteristics and cognitive capabilities; growth dimension – learning skills and

motivational skills; and career dimension – leadership skills and functional/technical skills) that make up leadership potential in total. According to Silzer and Church (2014), foundational dimensions are usually stable across situations and difficult to change in individuals. Growth dimensions focus on an individual's willingness to learn, adapt, take risks and try new experiences; thus these can be changed and developed by providing employees with a supportive environment and placing them in situations that need these skills. Lastly, career dimensions are the most developable skills and can be built through extensive feedback, learning and development programs. (For comprehensive review on this framework, please see Church and Silzer (2014) and Silzer and Church (2009)).

Past empirical research suggests that management's ratings from the assessment center, along with the management evaluations of promotion potential, are important tools to predict employees' promotion and advancement in the organization (Hinrichs, 1969;1978). Recently, there has been an increasing trend for large corporations to dedicate efforts to the HiPo assessment and development (Church, Rotolo, Ginther, & Levine, 2015). Church et al.'s study (2015) found that performance is the most commonly cited contextual criteria for HiPo identification in 'top development' companies with 75 % relying on past performance and 73 % relying on current performance. In their study, 75 % of participating organizations also used leadership competencies for HiPo identification, and 50 % of them used formal data-based assessment (such as personality, motivation, self-awareness, learning, and cognitive skills). Thus top companies are using a multi-trait, multi-method in their definition of 'talent' (Church et al., 2015). These findings are consistent with previous studies that found that large corporations use various assessment tools, beyond managers' ratings and recommendations, to identify HiPo employees (Church & Rotolo, 2013; Silzer & Church, 2010).

Scholars believe that employees' current skills and abilities are different from their potential (Silzer & Church, 2010). Unfortunately, many organizations do not realize the difference between the current skills and abilities, and the ability to adapt, grow and develop to handle complex future work roles and responsibilities (Silzer & Church, 2010). Hence, they mostly rely on employees' current skills, abilities and present performance to identify future potential (Cappelli & Keller, 2014), knowing that it is extremely difficult to predict future performance in a new role based on the past performance of employees (Cascio & Aguinis, 2008). These practices are highlighted by Church and Silzer (2014) when they mentioned that many senior executives "continue to assess future potential based on either current performance or their own personal perspective and success story (the "like me" phenomena) which may or may not be grounded in what is needed for the future of the business" (Church & Silzer, 2014, p. 51).

Thus, this lack of consistent criteria on how to define and identify potential is believed to be the main reason that approximately 40% of HiPo assignments result in failure (i.e., under performance of the incumbent in the new role) (Martin & Schmidt, 2010). This implies that in many companies, the process of identifying potential may not be purely objective and relies on many subjective judgments by the supervisors and senior level management. However, top development companies may be an exception (please see Church et al., 2015).

Communication about Talent Status

Although many large organizations have sophisticated systems of identifying HiPo employees (Church & Rotolo, 2013) as mentioned above, managers are usually reluctant to communicate openly about the talent status of employees for a number of reasons (Silzer &

Church, 2010). For HiPo employees, the communication of HiPo status may lead to higher expectations for promotions and developmental opportunities, and increased pressure to perform. Employees may see HiPo status as a commitment to develop them for future roles or invest additional resource, when in fact the firm has no intention to do so (Campbell & Smith, 2010; Church et al., 2015; Silzer & Church, 2010). It may also result in reduced motivation and performance level as employees may believe that they have achieved the permanent status in the organization, and they may start looking for promotion outside the company (Dries, 2013a). For non-HiPo employees, it is demotivating because they may perceive that the organization does not value their contributions, and they may feel ignored (Church et al., 2015; Malik & Singh, 2014). Additionally, communicating openly that some employees are superior to others and deserve more organizational resources has the potential to create friction among employees and disrupt employee relationships (Church et al., 2015; Swailes, 2013).

Despite this lack of open communication, employee talent status is usually known to employees and scholars agree that information about these programs tend to ‘leak’ in 90 percent of cases (Dries & De Gieter, 2014). Church et al.’s (2015) study showed that 34 % of the responding companies formally shared HiPo status with employees, 18 % informally shared the information with their employees, and in 33 % of the cases, employees themselves figured out who was on the talent list (via an invitation to participate in special assignments, leadership programs, coaching and mentoring, and a greater exposure to senior management). This implies that a majority of the employees (i.e., 85 %) in the surveyed organizations were aware of their talent status. These findings are consistent with Campbell and Smith’s (2010) finding that 91 % of the study’s respondents were aware of their talent status (whether positive or negative).

Hence, the communication of talent status to employees is a highly contested area. To avoid communication problems about who is or is not identified as talent, recent research in this area advocates for formal transparency in communicating the TM outcomes (i.e., talent identification). As Church and colleagues (2015) stated, “organizations should move beyond the “black box” TM practices of the past and share information more openly” (p. 29). A recent study by Sonnenberg et al. (2014) of 2,660 respondents within 21 European organizations stressed the significance of actively attending to talent-perception incongruence, which occurs when senior management perceives an employee as ‘talent’, but the individual is unaware of his/her talent status and vice versa. This is because talent-perception incongruence has a detrimental effect on TM effectiveness due to low psychological fulfillment. In their study, 94 % of the talent group rightly perceived themselves as ‘talent’; however, 84 % of ‘others’ - not identified as talent - also considered themselves ‘talent’ to their employer. Nevertheless, the authors concluded that employees’ perceptions of talent need to be in line with the differentiation made by the organization in order to have the desired impact of TM on their attitudes and behaviours (Sonnenberg et al., 2014).

Talent Management and Workforce Differentiation

The basic premise of TM programs is the notion of ‘workforce segmentation’ (Dries & De Gieter, 2014; Dries, Van Acker, & Verbruggen, 2012) which refers to “the investment of disproportionate resources where one expects disproportionate returns, i.e., investing in those specific jobs and those specific people within jobs who help to create strategic success” (Gelens et al., 2013, p. 342). In fact, this is one of the main features of TM programs that differentiate TM from HRM in general (Becker, Huselid, & Beatty, 2009; Boudreau & Ramstad, 2005).

Consequently, differentiated HR practices need to be used for HiPo and high performing employees so that these employees remain committed to the organization and continue undertaking discretionary behaviours (Collings & Mellahi, 2009).

The most dominant theoretical framework in the TM literature is resource-based view (RBV) of the firm which suggests that organizations can gain a sustainable competitive advantage on the basis of how they use their resources (Barney, 1991; Barney, Wright, & Ketchen, 2001). According to this view, the TM literature equates talent with human capital, which is both valuable and unique. High-value human capital refers to those assets that have a potential to contribute to the organization's core competencies and success; whereas the high uniqueness of human capital refers to those assets that are difficult to replace and imitate (Lepak & Snell, 1999). In addition, Boudreau and Ramstad (2005) introduced the concept of 'pivotal positions' and stressed the significance of placing the right people in the right job. In other words, TM is effective only when the right people, possessing the required skills and competencies, are rightly placed in positions that are of strategic importance to the organization. In line with this view of TM, Collings and Mellahi (2009, p. 304) defined TM as those "activities and processes that involve the systematic identification of key positions which differentially contribute to the organization's sustainable competitive advantage, the development of a talent pool of high potential and high performing incumbents to fill these roles, and the development of a differentiated human resource architecture to facilitate filling these positions with competent incumbents and to ensure their continued commitment to the organization".

The basic tenet of the RBV of the firm is that an organization's human capital allows it to achieve a competitive edge and results in improved organizational performance (Barney, 1991). In the TM literature, organizational performance is considered as a key outcome for TM

practices (Gallardo et al., 2015). For example, Bethke-Langenegger et al. (2011) investigated the impact of different TM strategies on employee and organizational outcomes for 138 Swiss companies having formal TM programs. Their study found that TM strategies focusing on retaining and developing talent and succession planning had positive impacts on HR and employee outcomes, such as job satisfaction, motivation, work quality, commitment, and trust in leaders. In contrast, TM focusing on corporate strategies had a positive impact on organizational outcomes such as company attractiveness, the attainment of business goals, customer satisfaction and company profitability. De Vos and Dries (2013) found that the higher the human capital (more high-value, high-uniqueness of employees), the greater the emphasis on continuity or reducing turnover among employees by the organizations as part of their TM strategies. Groysberg, Sant, and Abrahams (2008) studied 32 NFL teams and found that when ‘star’ employees are hired by the organizations, it not only leads to reduced morale of the existing employees but also the high performance of the new recruited ‘star’ employees does not always transfer well from the old organization to the new one.

Similar to HRM-performance linkage, the TM and organizational performance linkage is based on the assumption that TM impacts organizational performance through employee attitudes and behaviours. Collings and Mellahi (2009) proposed that effective TM will have positive effects on firm performance mediated by employee motivation, commitment, and extra-role behaviours. Based on the data collected from 126 managers and professionals, Hoglund (2012) explored various direct and indirect linkages between skill-enhancing HRM practices and human capital within the TM framework. Drawing on psychological contract theory, they examined employees’ perceptions of the extent to which their organizations were committed to reward talent qualities, and also the impact of these talent inducements on employees’

obligations to develop skills and human capital. Their study found employees' perceptions of TM strategies and their reaction to these practices (in terms of felt obligations to develop skills) formed a crucial link between these TM practices and organizational performance (being operationalized as whether organization's human capital is considered the best in the industry). More recently, Luna-Arocas and Morley (2015) examined the relationships among talent mindset competency, job satisfaction and job performance. Their study found that talent mindset competency was positively related to job satisfaction, which in turn was positively related to employee job performance. The authors suggested that organizations need to institutionalize a 'comprehensive system of TM' to develop TM competencies among employees.

Hence, there is a general belief among scholars and practitioners that TM is imperative for improved organization performance. In line with this, Huselid and Becker (2011, p. 426) mentioned that "the workforce differentiation construct is clearly an employer focused-model, which is likely to have positive impacts on high performers in strategic roles", and can positively influence organizational outcomes. However, scholars still highlight the need to examine the value of TM at the individual level. For example, Luna-Arocas and Morley (2015) stated that "the impact of TM has mainly focused on outcomes at the macro level yet TM practices not only affect macro-level outcomes, but also more proximal ones, such as employee attitudes and behaviours" (p. 31). Hence scholars argue that this process has rarely been examined at the individual level (Thunnissen et al., 2013b), thus resulting in calls for more research on 'humanistic' element of workforce differentiation (Garavan et al., 2012; Huselid & Becker, 2011).

Perhaps as a result of these calls, since 2012, research has shown some progress on how workforce differentiation could affect employees' reactions, attitudes and behaviours. The

dominant frameworks in this stream of research include social exchange, psychological contract and justice theories. For example, Marescaux et al., (2013) collected survey data from 13,639 employees in Belgium and examined the impact of HR differentiation on employee outcomes. While drawing on social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), they argued that employees consider HR practices as a signal of appreciation; consequently, employees feel obligated to reciprocate with positive attitudes. Additionally, they argued that since HR practices result in goal attainment, the perceived favourability of HR practices results in positive emotions, thus enhancing their affective commitment. Their study found that positive perceived favourability of HR practices resulted in favourable employee outcomes (i.e., affective commitment); however, the relationship was curvilinear and attenuated at positive levels. Their study also showed that perceived unfavourability of HR practices resulted in negative employee outcomes. They argued that HR differentiation is a ‘double-edge sword’, such that the losses among employees feeling disadvantaged may even outweigh the benefits/gains among those feeling privileged.

Moreover, Björkman et al. (2013) collected self-reported data from 769 managers and professionals in nine Nordic multinational corporations and examined the direct effect of talent identification on employee attitudes. Using insights from social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) and psychological contract theory (Rousseau, 1989), their study found that employees who were formally identified as ‘talent’ were more likely to possess organizationally-beneficial attitudes (such as commitment to increasing performance demands, to building competencies that are valuable for their employers, and to actively support its strategic priorities; identification with the focal unit; and lower turnover intent) compared to those employees who either perceived they were not identified as ‘talent’ or did not know whether they were identified as ‘talent’.

Furthermore, in their conceptual paper, Gelens et al. (2013) used justice theory (Greenberg, 1990) to examine the role of perceived organizational justice in shaping the outcomes of TM for HiPo and non-HiPo employees. For non-HiPo employees, they proposed that the direct relationship between unequal resource allocation and perceptions of distributive justice would be moderated by individual differences such as equity sensitivity (i.e., employees who prefer equal contribution-outcome ratio). They also proposed that procedural, informational and interpersonal justice would moderate the relationships between distributive justice and employee outcomes. Further, they proposed that perceived organizational support and leader-member exchange would affect the relationships between distributive justice perceptions of TM and employee outcomes through their direct influence on procedural, informational and interpersonal justice perceptions. Overall they argued that procedural intervention and relationship building are instrumental in shaping employee reactions to TM.

Later, drawing on social exchange (Blau, 1964) and justice (Greenberg, 1990) theories, Gelens et al. (2014) collected data from 203 HiPo and non-HiPo employees in a large company in Belgium. Using archival data for HiPo identification, they found that HiPo employees had higher levels of job satisfaction and exerted more work effort as compared to non-HiPo employees. They also examined the role of justice perceptions and demonstrated that HiPo employees had higher perceptions of distributive justice, and that distributive justice mediated the relationships between HiPo identification and employee outcomes (job satisfaction and work effort). The mediating relationship between HiPo identification and work effort through distributive justice was further moderated by employees' perceptions of procedural justice such that the mediating effect appeared at higher and lower levels of procedural justice. The moderating effect of procedural justice on the mediating path for job satisfaction was non-

significant. In other words, their study found that employees exerted more work effort when they perceived that workforce differentiation procedures were fair, and less effort when they perceived the procedures to be unfair.

More recently, Gelens et al. (2015) conducted two different studies that examined the role of perceived organizational support in the relationship between talent identification and affective commitment. They drew on signalling theory (Spence, 1973) and argued that talent identification serves as a signal of organizational support which affects employees' affective commitment. For the first study, data were collected from 128 HiPo and 75 non-HiPo employees in a large company in the financial sector in Belgium, and for the second study, the data were gathered from 120 trainees and 100 non-trainees from another company in the financial sector in Belgium. Both studies found that employees who were designated as 'talent' had higher perceptions of organizational support and affective commitment, and also that perceived organizational support mediated the relationship between talent designation and affective commitment.

Sonnenberg and colleagues (2014) examined the effects of TM practices and incongruent talent perceptions on the fulfilment of psychological contract for 2,660 respondents within 21 organizations. Their study found that the greater use of TM practices resulted in higher perceptions of psychological contract fulfilment; however, this positive relationship was weakened by incongruent talent perceptions by the organizational representatives and also by the employees. They concluded that TM practices must be perceived and utilized by the targeted employees; otherwise it would lead to talent-perception incongruence, resulting in misperceptions and false expectations from employees. More recently, Swailes & Blackburn (2016) examined employees' reactions to talent pool membership in a public sector company and found that employees included in talent pools were more confident about their career progression

than employees not included in talent pools reporting feelings of less support from their line managers and reduced perceptions of organization's commitment towards their development.

Despite the fact that TM practices and workforce differentiation impact all employees, little attention has been paid to *unintended* consequences of TM. Since the underlying principle of HiPo programs is workforce differentiation, several scholars (e.g., Iles et al., 2010; Swailes, 2013) have contended that HiPo programs, which are a subset of exclusive TM, follow Pareto's 'law of the vital few'. This 'law' suggests that there are only few employees in the organization who contribute disproportionately to successful organizational performance. Consequently, this minority of employees, who are identified as HiPos, receive more-valued resources and career opportunities from the organization (Dries et al., 2012); however, little attention is paid to employees who are excluded from these programs. In their recent critical review, Lacey and Groves (2014) stated that although many companies have proudly developed and implemented TM systems and are undertaking various corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives towards customers, communities, shareholders, and other stakeholders, there may be an inherent incompatibility between these two approaches. Excluding the majority of employees from various developmental programs and privileges of HiPo programs contradicts with the true spirit of CSR. They suggested that organizations implementing TM programs as well as pursuing CSR initiatives must deal with several fundamental issues including "expanding access to HiPo programs, enhancing the HiPo employee selection processes via greater emphasis on lead indicators of HiPo, and improving rater reliability across assessment tools" (Lacey & Groves, 2014, p. 399). Consistent with this view, Swailes (2013) mentioned that many organizations justify singling out a few employees as HiPos; however, HR managers and professionals need to address several ethical issues (such as talent identification, feelings of exclusion, feelings of

inequity, and care and concern for all employees, to name a few) resulting from the implementation of TM programs. Addressing how some of the unintended consequences of TM could be improved for employees being excluded from HiPo programs, Malik and Singh (2014) theoretically argued that organizational trust and individual motivation profile (i.e., achievement motivation and power motivation) are important factors that could diminish the negative impact of TM on employees who are excluded from TM programs.

Summary

Overall, it can be argued that the TM literature has recently started to focus on how talent identification impacts employee level outcomes. Drawing on various theoretical frameworks such as social exchange, psychological contract, justice and signalling theories, research has started to demonstrate that employees who perceive themselves as ‘talent’ are more likely to demonstrate favourable attitudes and behaviours (e.g., affective commitment, turnover intent, job satisfaction, work effort etc.) compared to employees who are not or do not perceive themselves as ‘talent’. However, only a few studies examine as to why there are differences in employees’ attitudes and behaviours in the context of TM (Gelens et al., 2015).

It is important to note that the social exchange relationships with the organization entail uncertainty and risk, given that these exchange relationships are implied and non-negotiated between the parties (Molm, Takahashi, & Peterson, 2000). Blau's (1964) framework of social exchange highlighted the role of trust in social exchange relationships; however, none of the above mentioned studies have used social exchange theory as a framework to examine the role of trust for understanding the relationships between HiPo program participation and employee outcomes. In fact, there is a dearth of research examining the role of trust in explaining the social

exchange basis of employee work-related outcomes not only in the TM literature but also in the SHRM literature (Aryee, Budhwar, & Chen, 2002; Konovsky & Pugh, 1994).

Blau's (1964) framework implies that the social exchange relationships are characterized by long-term orientation (Blau, 1964). These exchange relationships are often defined by a psychological contract, i.e., an implied agreement between the employer and the employee involved regarding the terms and conditions of employment (Rousseau, 1989). In these social exchange relationships, both parties invest in each other knowing that some risk is involved that the investment will not return. As such, these exchange relationships require trusting others that the receiver will reciprocate, and mutual benefits will occur (Blau, 1964; Gouldner, 1960). Given this, employees' perceptions of organizational trust are important to consider in the context of TM since employers expect their HiPo employees to go above and beyond their job roles to contribute to company's success, and in turn, employees expect their employers to provide opportunities for career development and growth (Dries & De Gieter, 2014; King, 2016). Hence, the lack of attention given to the employees' perceptions of organizational trust is a significant omission in the TM literature. Past SHRM studies have examined the mediating and moderating roles of trust in employer on employee outcomes (e.g., Alfes et al., 2012; Aryee et al., 2002; Farndale et al., 2011; Hopkins & Weathington, 2006; Innocenti et al., 2011). However, these relationships have rarely been studied in the context of exclusive TM. Exploring the role of organizational trust while examining these relationships is important because, as mentioned above, TM has changed the way organizations manage their workforce; consequently, the employment relationships between employers and their employees have changed as well (Al Ariss et al., 2014; King, 2016; Sonnenberg et al., 2014).

It has also been widely recognized that it is not the actual HR practices that impact employee attitudes and behaviours, rather it is employees' perceptions of these practices (Nishii et al., 2008; Wright & Nishii, 2008). A plethora of studies in SHRM literature demonstrate that perceived HR practices impacts employee outcomes (Kehoe & Wright, 2013; Kuvaas, 2008; Nishii et al., 2008). In fact, employees can attribute HR practices favourably or unfavourably depending on their perceptions as to why specific HR practices are used. Research suggests that employees make external and internal attributions about the implementation of HR practices (Fontinha, Chambel, & De Cuyper, 2012; Koys, 1988; Nishii et al., 2008; Shantz, Arevshatian, Alfes, & Bailey, 2016). External attributions are when employees attribute the implementation of HR practices as a pressure from outside beyond the control of management (such as a union). Internal attributions are when employees attribute the implementation of HR practices within the control of the management. Empirical research demonstrates that when employees attribute the implementation of HR practice to external factors, there is little or no effect on employee attitudes and behaviours (Koys, 1988; Nishii et al., 2008). However, when employees attribute the implementation of such practices to internal factors, it is more likely to affect their attitudes and behaviours (Fontinha et al., 2012; Koys, 1988; Nishii et al., 2008). Internal attributions are also multidimensional. When employees perceive that the intended goals of HR practices are to enhance service quality and employee well-being, they are more likely to form commitment-focused HR attributions (i.e., service quality and employee well-being) (Nishii et al., 2008). On the contrary, when employees perceive that the underlying goals of HR practices are to reduce cost and exploit employees, they are more likely to form control-focused HR attributions (cost reduction and employee exploitation) (Nishii et al., 2008). To date, no study has examined employees' perceptions about why their organizations include employees in HiPo programs and

why they exclude certain employees from these programs. Understanding these perceptions are important as HiPo and non-HiPo employees may differently attribute their inclusion in and exclusion from the programs. In Study 2 of this dissertation, I introduce ‘*HiPo*’ attributions as an important mediator in the relationships between HiPo program participation and employee outcomes. I focus solely on the internal attributions of HiPo programs (referred as *commitment-focused HiPo attributions and control-focused HiPo attributions*) since it is usually management’s decision to implement such programs without having any external pressures from, for instance, the government or unions.

The field of TM needs more empirical work and there is a need to examine other mediating and moderating mechanism that explicates the effectiveness of TM on employee level outcomes (Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2015). As previously mentioned, this dearth of research highlights important research gaps in the TM literature. This dissertation explores the roles of a new mediator and a moderator in the context of TM. Specifically, this research extends the current literature on TM by exploring the roles of organizational trust and HiPo attributions in the context of TM.

This research also examines the impact of HiPo program participation on four different employee outcomes, i.e., affective commitment, job satisfaction, turnover intent, and OCBs. Although affective commitment has been examined in the past studies (Björkman et al., 2013; Gelens et al., 2015), there is a lack of research on how employee HiPo program participation impact other factors. There has been only one study that examined turnover intent (Marescaux et al., 2013) and one study that examined job satisfaction (Gelens et al., 2014). None of the past studies examine OCBs, although it has been highlighted as an important outcome for effective TM (Collings & Mellahi, 2009). Additionally, none of the above mentioned studies examine

these four employee outcomes in relation to employees' perceptions of organizational trust and HiPo attributions. This dissertation addresses this gap and contributes to the TM literature by studying all four employee outcomes.

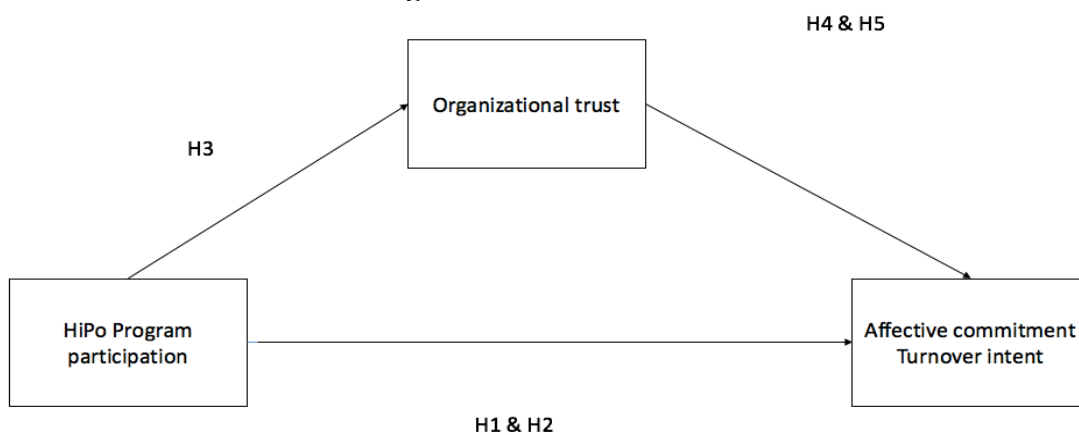
CHAPTER THREE: STUDY 1

The literature review in the previous section highlights that HiPo employees demonstrate more positive attitudes such as affective commitment, job satisfaction, justice perceptions, etc. However, we have a limited understanding of why these differences exist between HiPo and non-HiPo employees. Building on the current literature, the main purpose of this study is to examine *how* HiPo program participation leads to varied employee outcomes. In this study, I examine the role of organizational trust in the relationships between HiPo program participation and employee outcomes (i.e., affective commitment and turnover intent).

The major goal of any HiPo program is to impact targeted employees' attitudes and behaviours so that organizational performance can be enhanced. Collings and Mellahi (2009) contended that employee commitment is one of the important outcomes for HiPo program. Scholars agree that affective commitment is linked to important work outcomes (such as performance, citizenship behaviours, in-role performance, promotability, job involvement, job satisfaction and, more importantly, employee well-being) (e.g., Marescaux et al., 2013; Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, & Topolnytsky, 2002; Shore, Barksdale, & Shore, 1995; Takeuchi, Chen, & Lepak, 2009). Moreover, talented employees have been increasingly recognized as a source of competitive advantage for organizations (Collins & Smith, 2006; Pfeffer, 1995). Specifically, attracting and retaining employees with extremely high performance who possess valuable skills and competencies are crucial for firm effectiveness (Cappelli, 2000; Lepak & Snell, 1999). Scholars have argued that the voluntary turnover of high performing employees results not only in high replacement costs (Hausknecht & Trevor, 2011), but also reduced organizational morale (Hollenbeck & Williams, 1986; Staw, 1980). Although employee turnover may result in various organizational costs, the turnover of poor performing employees could be functional as it

provides firms with the opportunity to replace these positions with a talent pool (Dalton, Todor, & Krackhardt, 1982). The turnover of talented employees, however, is dysfunctional as it results in reduced firm performance (Kwon & Rupp, 2013). Research on turnover suggests that firms should target talent retention efforts more towards those employees whose turnover is more likely to be dysfunctional for the organization (Allen, Bryant, & Vardaman, 2010; Cappelli, 2000). Due to the significance of affective commitment and turnover of employees, this study aims to investigate how employees' participation in HiPo programs impact their affective commitment and turnover intent. I do so by exploring the mediating role of organizational trust. Drawing on social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) and psychological contract theory (Rousseau, 1989, 1995), I present theoretical arguments and develop various hypotheses. More specifically, I hypothesize employees who participate in HiPo programs will have higher affective commitment, lower turnover intent and higher levels of organizational trust compared to employees who do not participate in these programs. Additionally, I hypothesize that organizational trust mediates the relationships between HiPo program participation and employee outcomes (please see Figure 1).

Figure 1 Research Model



Theoretical Framework

Social Exchange Theory and Psychological Contract Theory

This study integrates social exchange and psychological contract theories to understand the relationships between HiPo program participation and employee outcomes. Social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) is regarded as one of the most influential frameworks for understanding workplace attitudes and behaviours (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). It deals with a series of interdependent interactions contingent on the actions of the other party that generate obligations (Emerson, 1976). The Employee-Organization Relationship (EOR) literature shows that employers and employees are involved in different types of exchange relationships (i.e., economic and social) (Shore, Coyle-Shapiro, Chen, & Tetrick, 2009). In economic exchange relationships, both parties are aware of their obligations and confident that the other party will fulfill its obligations, either based on a formal contract or a verbally negotiated arrangement between the parties involved, which also specify the duration of the exchange relationships (Blau, 1964). Economic exchanges include resources that tend to be tangible and address financial needs (e.g., money, pay, etc.). These resources are exchanged for a finite amount of time. For example, when an employee works, he/she expects a fair and mutually agreed amount of pay. These economic exchange relationships are similar to transactional contracts (Rousseau & McLean Parks, 1993), which are short-term agreements clearly stating the employment terms and conditions (Konovsky & Pugh, 1994).

Social exchange relationships, however, not only deal with the exchange of economic resources but also socio-emotional resources that are intangible and address one's social and emotional needs (Shore, Tetrick, Lynch, & Barksdale, 2006). These relationships have a long-term orientation and represent a broader resource investment compared to economic exchange

relationships (Shore et al., 2009). Blau (1964, p. 93) defined social exchange relationships as those that include unspecified obligations in which there are “favors that create diffuse future obligations, not precisely defined ones, and the nature of the return cannot be bargain about but must be left to the discretion of the one who makes it”. Hence, in these relationships, the rules, the obligations, the timing and the nature of the return are unspecified, and the receiver’s contributions to the exchange are non-negotiated (Molm et al., 2000). Blau’s (1964) framework of social exchange theory made a comparison between economic and social exchanges and asserted that the basic distinction between the two was that social exchanges include unspecified obligations. He stated that “only social exchange tends to engender feelings of personal obligations, gratitude, and trust; purely economic exchange as such does not” (Blau, 1964, p.94). Shore et al. (2009) differentiated economic exchange relationships from social exchange relationships on the following dimension: “resources exchanges, type and strength of obligations, reciprocity and the quality of the relationship that develop over time” (p. 290). Social exchange relationships entail risk and uncertainty as receiver’s contribution to the exchange are unspecified (Molm et al., 2000). These relationships are the basis for the emergence of trust as the individual initiates this exchange individually by providing beneficial acts to the other party, not knowing when, whether or to what extent these acts will be reciprocated by the receiver (Molm et al., 2000). Hence, the development of trust between the parties facilitates the exchange of resources (Blau, 1964). According to social exchange theory, for social exchange to develop, the actor must trust the receiver to fairly discharge his/her obligations and to reciprocate favourably. In this way, an ongoing cycle of mutual benefits and exchanges will occur. Hence, trust is the fundamental element in the emergence of social exchange relationships (Konovsky & Pugh, 1994).

According to social exchange theory, individuals engage in certain actions with a belief that the other party will reciprocate in a similar manner. This means when one party supplies benefits to another party, it expects the other party to reciprocate favourably. Reciprocity can be characterized as a manifestation of interdependent exchanges where the response of one party depends on the actions of the other. One of the basic tenets of social exchange theory is the *norms of reciprocity* (Gouldner, 1960), which implies that when an individual receives some sort of benefit from another entity, he/she feels obligated to offer something in return to the sender to maintain and develop a positive relationship with that party (Gouldner, 1960). This is also labelled as ‘repayment in kind’ (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005, p. 875). Consistent with this view, Settoon, Bennett, and Liden (1996) stated that “positive, beneficial actions directed at employees by the organization and/or its representatives contribute to the establishment of high quality exchange relationships that create obligations for employees to reciprocate in positive [and] beneficial ways” (p. 219). For example, an employee receiving individual training from the organization would experience a felt obligation to give something in return that creates a value for the organization and sustains a good relationship. This implies that social exchange relationships are bidirectional in nature, i.e., one party has to give something to the other and the other party must feel obligated to offer something in return.

Employees’ view of social exchange relationships with their employers are closely linked with their perceptions of psychological contract. Originally introduced by Argyris (1960), Levinson, Price, Munden, Mandl and Solley (1962) and Schein (1980), Rousseau (1989, 1995) presented a framework to understand the organization-employee relationship. Since then, the psychological contract is considered as an important framework for understanding employment relationships (Shore & Tetrick, 1994; Taylor & Tekleab, 2004). A psychological contract is

defined as the “individual beliefs, shaped by the organization, regarding terms of an exchange agreement between individuals and their organizations” (Rousseau, 1995, p.9). As opposed to a formal legal contract, a psychological contract is subjective in nature, i.e., it is employee’s *perceptions* of mutual obligations in the employment relationship (Rousseau, 1995; Suazo, Martínez, & Sandoval, 2009). In other words, it is an employee’s perception of what he/she owes to his/her employer and what his/her employer owes to him/her in exchange. These perceptions are developed based on an individual’s interaction with his/her employer through various organizational practices (Westwood, Sparrow, & Leung, 2001). Although each employee develops one’s own perceptions of the social exchange relationship with one’s employer, organizations through specific practices tend to form one contract over another through various signals and messages they send to employees (Sonnenberg et al., 2014).

Generally, the literature highlights three elements of psychological contract, (i) perceived employee obligations (commitment, dedication, acceptable performance, loyalty, and respect), (ii) perceived employer obligations (provision of training and development, career opportunities, conducive working environment, and respect), (iii) psychological contract evaluation (i.e., either psychological contract fulfillment or psychological contract violation) (Rousseau, 1995). Since psychological contract is purely subjective, the employee’s interpretations of the employer’s obligations could be different from the employer’s interpretation of its obligations. If these interpretations are consistent, it results in psychological contract fulfillment; however, if these interpretations diverge then conflict may occur, resulting in perceptions of psychological contract violations. Past research has shown that psychological contract fulfillment or violation leads to various employee outcomes (such as neglect, intention to leave, satisfaction, turnover,

organizational citizenship behaviours, loyalty etc.) (Lewis-McClea & Taylor, 1998; Robinson & Rousseau, 1994; Turnley & Feldman, 2000).

Social exchange and psychological contract theories have been extensively used in the management literature to understand employee attitudes and behaviours in the workplace (Collins, 2010; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Epitropaki, 2013; Shore et al., 2009). These frameworks provide a rationale as to why employees elicit positive attitudes and behaviours when they receive favourable treatment from their employers and/or when they feel that their organization is fulfilling its obligations. These frameworks are also important to understand why employees sometimes elicit unfavourable attitudes and behaviours. Scholars contend that the social exchange relationships evolve when employers take care of their employees and show concerns for their well-being (Shore & Mitchell, 2005). Organizations use various HR practices (i.e., training, job autonomy, career development etc.) to establish exchange relationships with their employees. These practices suggest that the employer values employee work and contributions, is concerned about employee development, and is fulfilling its obligations towards employees. Consequently, employees experience a great deal of felt obligation to return the benefits by fulfilling its own obligations towards the employer. More recently, employers have started to invest and implement specific programs such as TM programs or HiPo programs to establish these social exchange relationships with HiPo employees hoping that these investments will be reciprocated in positive ways by HiPo employees, creating mutual benefits for both parties involved (Bjorkman et al., 2013). Therefore, in this study, I integrate social exchange theory with psychological contract theory to investigate how HiPo program participation leads to varied employee outcomes.

Hypotheses Development

HiPo Program Participation and Affective Commitment

Affective commitment is defined as an employee's emotional attachment towards the organization such that the committed employee identifies with and enjoys the relationship with the employing organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991). It is argued that HiPo program participation will be reciprocated with higher affective commitment by focal employees. Social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) and psychological contract theory (Rousseau, 1989, 1995) provide useful insights in studying the relationship between HiPo program participation and affective commitment. As mentioned above, these theories deal with social exchanges between employees and organizations, and how these exchanges lead to obligations. Such social exchanges can be initiated by an organization's treatment of its employees (Gould-Williams & Davies, 2005). As stated above, the basic tenet of the theory is the norm of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960), which is based on give and take, which ultimately leads to the mutual reinforcement by the parties involved. The theory suggests that employees perceive the implementation of various HR practices as a sign of appreciation, and commitment towards them. In return, employees reciprocate with favourable attitudes and behaviours (Gouldner, 1960). Similarly, psychological contract theory focuses on employees' perceptions of what their organization has offered them as a result of their employment relationship and what they owe in return to their employer (Conway & Briner, 2002; Guest, 2004). Thus, employees' perceptions that the employer has invested in them through various programs and practices result in felt obligation by the employees to reciprocate the investments (Kuvaas & Dysvik, 2010). However, employees' perceptions that their organization has failed to fulfill one or more of its obligation (e.g., fewer investment, less

concern for well-being etc.) result in psychological contract breach; hence employees tend to reciprocate accordingly (Morrison & Robinson, 1997).

Research has shown that organizations use different HR practices for different groups of employees (Lepak, Taylor, Tekleab, Marrone, & Cohen, 2007; Liao, Toya, Lepak, & Hong, 2009; Melian-Gonzalez & Verano-Tacoronte, 2006). Exposing employees to various HR practices such as extensive training, developmental performance management, competitive compensation, fair incentives and rewards, career development, flexible job designs and employee involvement signals to employees that the organization values and supports their contributions (Björkman et al., 2013). Social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) suggests that individuals tend to invest in rewarding relationships, after which they become bound to reciprocate or favour the other party in the exchange relationship. HiPo programs are likely to cause HiPo employees to perceive that their exchange relationship with the organization is characterized by a supportive environment as manifested in receiving positive treatment and resource investment from the organization. From a psychological contract perspective (Rousseau, 1989, 1995), these programs are an indication that the organization is fulfilling its obligations towards employees. In response, employees who are included in these HiPo programs are more likely to feel obligated to reciprocate and develop an emotional bond / attachment to the organization (cf. Gong et al., 2009; Kehoe & Wright, 2013). However, when employees who are excluded from these programs perceive that the organization wants to exploit them at a minimum cost as exemplified by fewer investments, they are more likely to form negative perceptions about HiPo programs (cf. Lacey & Groves, 2014) and reduce their attachment to the organization.

Collings and Mellahi (2009) suggested that for effective TM, HiPo employees need to be placed in pivotal or strategic positions. Thus when organizations invest differentially in these HiPo employees by exposing them to differential HR practices and also by placing them in pivotal positions, it will result in increased fit between the employee and the job/organization. Consequently, this increased person-job/organization fit fosters employee commitment to the organization (Kristof-Brown, 1996; Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, & Johnson, 2005). Previous research suggests that employees are more likely to give back to their employer in terms of increased commitment when their organizations provide them developmental opportunities and meet their needs (Fontinha et al., 2012; Marescaux et al., 2013; Nishii et al., 2008). In the context of exclusive TM, few studies have examined affective commitment of HiPo and non-HiPo employees. Overall, these studies show that affective commitment is higher for HiPo employees as compared to non-HiPo employees (Björkman et al., 2013; Gelens et al., 2015; Marescaux et al., 2013). Therefore, although we may expect positive outcomes from HiPo employees, it is possible that this unequal distribution of resources may result in less favourable attitudes from employees who are excluded from these programs due to the low social exchange relationship. As a result of this exclusion, non-HiPo employees will perceive these programs as an indication that the organization does not appreciate their efforts and recognize their contributions; consequently, they will be more likely to develop negative attitudes.

In line with the above theoretical arguments and empirical research, I hypothesize that:

Hypothesis 1: Employees who participate in HiPo programs will have higher affective commitment as compared to employees who do not participate in HiPo programs.

HiPo Program Participation and Turnover Intent

Empirical research suggests that the retention of top performers and HiPo employees is a key organizational initiative by many firms (Kwon & Rupp, 2013). However, the achievement of this goal is not without challenges. Research indicates that top performers tend to leave their organizations more frequently compared to average performing employees (Jackofsky, 1984; Trevor, Gerhart, & Boudreau, 1997). Additionally, scholars argue that in the event of reduced corporate spending due to tough economic times, HiPo employees are the first ones to be disappointed and become disengaged (Campbell & Smith, 2010). In their review paper on turnover process models, Steel and Lounsbury (2009) found that in addition to various attitudinal constructs (such as organizational commitment, job satisfaction), behavioural intention such as intention to quit (i.e., turnover intent) is one of the key mechanisms that could explain employee's voluntary decision to leave the organization. Turnover intent is defined as an individual's deliberate intention to leave the organization (Tett & Meyer, 1993). The main difference between turnover rate and turnover intent is that turnover rate is measured at the organizational level whereas turnover intent is measured at the individual level. Previous studies have shown that turnover intent is an important predictor of turnover rate (Griffeth, Hom, & Gaertner, 2000; Tett & Meyer, 1993).

In the context of TM, employers provide various cues to employees about their contributions and expected behaviours (Malik & Singh, 2014; Sonnenberg et al., 2014). The SHRM literature emphasizes the role of HR practices in communicating organizational objectives and motivating desired employee attitudes and behaviours (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004; Guzzo & Noonan, 1994). For example, HR practices such as pay for performance give indication to employees that individual performance is rewarded in the organization. Similarly,

performance appraisal emphasizing team outcomes signals employees that team work is important, and instead of focusing on individual performance, employees should be concerned more about team-level outcomes. This view of HRM stresses that HR practices can influence how employees perceive and react to organizational cues (Guest, 2004; Guest & Conway, 2002). Researchers agree that “psychological contracts develop at key moments in the employment relationships, such as when recruited, at performance reviews, during training, during compensation discussions and outcomes, and during other events where organizations express their plans for future” (Sonnerberg et al., 2014, p. 273). As such, the way in which these practices are used to manage organizational talent can help employees to make sense of their employment relationships.

As a result of HiPo program participation, when HiPo employees receive more resource investment and advancement opportunities from the organization, they perceive that the organization is fulfilling its psychological contract (Rousseau, 1995; King, 2016), and consequently they feel obligated to exchange their own resources (such as time, effort, performance, and commitment etc.) (Blau, 1964; Sonnerberg et al., 2014). Since the psychological contract includes employees’ perceptions of the rules of the exchange relationships as well as the resources being exchanged (Rousseau, 1995), these resource investments from the organization provide cues that the organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being. This talent identification and resource investments also provide cues and signals to HiPo employees that their organizations have higher expectations from them in terms of commitment, performance and achieving excellence (Campbell & Smith, 2010; Dries & De Gieter, 2014). As a result of their own psychological contract obligations and the organization’s psychological contract fulfilment, HiPo employees will be less likely to think

about quitting and more likely to remain with their organizations. This is because psychological contract fulfilment is perceived to be a strong negative predictor of turnover intent (Collins, 2010). However, the reverse is also true. When employees feel that they get less resource investment or unfavourable treatment from their employer, this results in the breach of psychological contract, and consequently employees will invest less in these social exchange relationships. Hence, when employees feel that the organization is not fulfilling its promise in terms of fulfilling the psychological contract, they will modify their behaviours and behave accordingly. As such employees' exclusion from these programs provides cues to employees about the expected attitudes and behaviours, i.e., less is expected from these employees given fewer resources and less investments (Bothner, Podolny, & Smith, 2011). Hence, through these TM practices, HiPo and non-HiPo employees make sense of their employment and exchange relationships, and this interpretation depends on their own work experiences in the organization.

Research shows that the breach of psychological contract is positively associated with turnover intentions (Zhao, Wayne, Glibkowski, & Bravo, 2007). In the context of TM, only one study, to date, has examined turnover intent of employees in relation to talent identification (Björkman et al., 2013). The findings of the study showed that employees who perceived themselves as 'talent' had lower voluntary turnover intent compared to employees who did not know whether they were classified as talented and employees who did not perceive themselves as talent. Another SHRM study demonstrated that advancement opportunities, constituent attachment, and organizational prestige are important factors for the retention of top performers (Hausknecht, Rodda, & Howard, 2009). Based on psychological contract (Rousseau, 1995; Rousseau & McLean-Parks, 1993) and social exchange theories (Blau, 1964) and limited previous research, I argue that when employee who are included in HiPo programs receive

favourable treatment from their organizations, they tend to reciprocate with positive attitudes (Blau, 1964). When employees know that their organization is investing more in them as compared to other employees and providing them more opportunities to develop themselves, it would be psychologically more difficult for them to leave the organization (Olckers & Plessis, 2015). Hence it is hypothesized that:

Hypothesis 2: Employees who participate in HiPo programs will have lower turnover intent as compared to employees who do not participate in HiPo programs.

HiPo Program Participation and Organizational Trust

As mentioned previously, the TM literature is built on a broad range of academic disciplines such as SHRM and OB (Thunnissen et al., 2013b); in this study I use ‘organizational trust’ from these related literatures. Trust is defined as an individual’s “expectations, assumptions, or beliefs about the likelihood that another’s future actions will be beneficial, favorable, or at least not detrimental to one’s interests” (Robinson, 1996, p. 576). Trust is regarded as an important outcome of favourable social exchange relationships (Blau, 1964; Holmes, 1981), and hence is an important factor to consider in the context of TM. This is because TM requires organizations to differentiate their workforce on the basis of employees’ competencies and contributions with HiPo employees receiving more resources and non-HiPo employees receiving comparably fewer resource investments from the organizations (Collings & Mellahi, 2009; Swailes, 2013).

It has been argued that HiPo employees have different development needs compared to average performers or non-HiPo employees (Dries & De Gieter, 2014); hence their psychological contract perceptions differ (Sonnenberg et al., 2014). They expect their employers

to invest in them by providing them various career development opportunities and advancement in the organization (King, 2016). That is the main purpose of identifying HiPo employees. This identification entails implicit or explicit promises that the organization will invest differentially in these employees. Thus by not providing these opportunities, HiPo employees may not be able to stretch themselves and reach their full potential. Hence, an element of relational risk is there for these talented employees. On the other hand, HiPo programs also include a condition of relational risk for non-HiPo employees (i.e., a situation of workforce differentiation where more resources are allocated to HiPo employees), thus making employees' perceptions of organizational trust an important factor to consider in the context of HiPo programs where employees receive differential resource investments from their organization.

Trust can be considered both at the micro level (i.e., trust in supervisor/line manager) and the macro level (i.e., trust in senior management/employer) (Aryee et al., 2002). In this study, I focused on 'organizational trust' as the implementation of HiPo programs hinges on decisions by senior people who are organizational representatives, rather than any single individual. Generally, trust in the employer/organization refers to an employee's belief that the employer will act upon its words, and its future actions will be beneficial or favourable for employees. Simply put, it is a belief that the organization is fair, reliable, competent, and non-threatening (Carnevale, 1995, p. xi). Whitley (1987) argued that organizational trust cannot be reducible to any specific individual, and it depends on the collective features of the organization that ensures the continuity of activities in a reliable and predictable manner.

Social exchange and psychological contract theories provide insights to study the relationship between employee HiPo program participation and organizational trust. In the context of TM, when organizations identify HiPo or talented employees, they make implicit or

explicit promises to provide them more resources for their development (Dries & De Gieter, 2014; Gelens et al., 2013). These expectations and resource investments are a signal of organizational support (Gelens et al., 2015) and trust that the employees will meet these expectations. HiPo employees can expect more challenging assignments, better compensation packages, more coaching, and mentoring, more visibility to the senior management, and more career development opportunities in the long run (Dries & De Gieter, 2014). These expectations could be implicit or explicit and it is not guaranteed that the organization will meet these expectations. Hence, these social exchange relationships entail risk and uncertainty for the employees. Empirical research demonstrates that this risk and uncertainty form the basis of trust in the social exchange relationships as these elements provide the parties with the opportunity to prove that they are trustworthy (Molm et al., 2000). In the TM context, the resource investment by the organization is positively perceived by employees (Sonnenberg et al., 2014); hence, these positive perceptions about the fulfillment of psychological contract may lead to higher perceptions of organizational trust among HiPo employees (King, 2016). On the other hand, non-HiPo employees may perceive that they have contributed enough as well and deserve more resources from the organization. However, when they do not receive equal amount of resource investment as manifested by the exclusion from the HiPo programs, they may perceive this inequality as a manifestation of poor social exchange relationship and a breach of their psychological contract. Consequently, they will reduce their level of trust in their employer. These arguments are also consistent with social exchange theory's norms of reciprocity as pointed out by Lewis and Weigert (1985, p. 971) when they stated that "when we see others acting in ways that imply that they trust us, we become more disposed to reciprocate by trusting in them more. Conversely, we come to distrust those whose actions appear to violate our trust or

to distrust us”. Thus, when employees perceive that their organization does not value their contributions and trust their abilities to contribute to its success, they feel more vulnerable and reduce their level of trust in their organization. Hence I hypothesize that:

Hypothesis 3: Employees who participate in HiPo programs will have higher organizational trust as compared to employees who do not participate in HiPo programs.

When employees experience any positive or negative events, it results in various affective reactions (happiness, anger, etc.) that contribute to the formation of work attitudes (Mignonac & Herrbach, 2004; Rupp & Spencer, 2006; Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). Trust has an affective component (McAllister, 1995), and individuals tend to emotionally invest in trust-based relationships. Such relationships are characterized by the genuine care for each other and concerns for the welfare of both parties involved. When employees trust their employer, they genuinely believe that their employer is concerned about their well-being (Robinson, 1996). These positive emotions and experiences will result in eliciting positive attitudes towards the organization. They would feel greater emotional attachment to the organization and less likely to think about leaving the organization due to established trust and an emotional bond with the organization. Past SHRM empirical studies have shown that trust is positively correlated with affective commitment and negatively related to turnover intent (Alfes et al., 2012; Aryee et al., 2002; Farndale et al., 2011). Thus, when HiPo employees have higher levels of trust in their employer due to the fulfillment of the psychological contract and quality social exchange relationships, they are more likely to reciprocate with favourable attitudes. Similarly, past research has shown that when employers fail to fulfill their commitment, employees reduce their level of trust and their obligations towards the organizations, experience less commitment, and

have higher turnover intent (Robinson, 1996; Robinson, Kraatz, & Rousseau, 1994; Zhao et al., 2007). Hence, I hypothesize that:

Hypothesis 4: Organizational trust mediates the positive relationship between HiPo program participation and affective commitment such that employees who participate in HiPo programs perceive higher levels of organizational trust which then lead to higher affective commitment as compared to employees who do not participate in HiPo programs.

Hypothesis 5: Organizational trust mediates the negative relationship between HiPo program participation and turnover intent such that employees who participate in HiPo programs perceive higher levels of organizational trust which then lead to lower turnover intent as compared to employees who do not participate in HiPo programs.

Methods

Pilot study

A pilot study with twenty-eight individuals was conducted using an online survey prior to actually distributing the survey to the target population¹. The main purpose of the pilot study is to pre-test the research instrument (Baker, 1994). It aims to improve clarity of statements by avoiding misleading or redundant questions and to assess if respondents had any difficulty in responding (De Vaus, 1993). The sample for the pilot study included five PhD students and 23 friends/former colleagues who were working full time at the time of conducting the pilot study. The reason for choosing this sample is two-fold. First, the use of PhD students is helpful as PhD

¹ I pretested a survey instrument that included measures not only for study 1 but also for study 2. The original intention was to use the same survey for the data collection. However, the company participating in study 1 asked me to delete some of the measures included in the survey to reduce the length of the questionnaire. Hence, a short version of the survey was used for Study 1.

students receive rigorous training on survey design, and they can provide important insights by critically analyzing the content and the structure of the survey. Second, the use of a general working population is helpful for the pilot study as they closely resemble the target population and may raise important concerns similar to the target population that should be addressed before sending out the survey to the actual participants. The respondents were instructed to provide comments, note any ambiguities and also report completion time. The survey was revised based on the feedback provided by the participants. Once the data were collected, psychometric properties (i.e., Cronbach's alphas) of all the selected scale were assessed. The analysis showed that all measures had Cronbach's alphas of greater than .70 (Cortina, 1993).

Procedures

Data were collected from one division of a large multinational company with corporate office in Greater Toronto Area, Canada. The company was contacted through Human Resource Professional Association who, upon request, included the invitation to participate in the research in one of its newsletters. The company was promised that the final results of the study will be shared and presented to its senior management.

The company offered career development programs to all employees; however, it offered exclusive HiPo leadership development programs for its talented employees (labelled as HiPo employees). Through these exclusive programs, the company provided talent development opportunities and capabilities to the selected employees. The organization adopted this exclusive approach to TM because of the belief that there are a few employees in the organization who contribute to the majority of the organizational success. The organization was transparent in communicating the talent status to its employees. The employees who were identified as HiPo were aware of their talent status and their progress in the participating programs. Employees who

were not identified as HiPo knew that HiPo programs exist and they were not the part of these programs.

The company had different HiPo leadership development programs for the different levels of employees. The data for this study were collected from employees participating in a HiPo leadership development program for mid-level managers. The company usually identified HiPo employees through people planning processes where talent was systematically reviewed and calibrated at successive levels in the organization. In preparation to the people planning meeting, a template and a tool kit (highlighting various critical factors that need to be considered) were provided to all managers to assist them through the people planning process. During the meeting, all managers, along with their peers, reviewed their direct reports. They performed initial talent assessment (performance ratings, talent call, time in role), discussed the strengths and development opportunities of each individual, discussed future roles of each individual and highlighted any issues that need to be addressed. During these meetings, HiPo employees were also identified. For HiPo identification, factors that were considered included leadership capability, functional excellence (job knowledge), knowledge about the business, and critical experiences.

Once employees were identified as HiPos, they were developed to take on more senior roles by placing them in the leadership development programs where they were provided with formal training and 360-degree feedback. Results from assessment centres were also used for their development. Following the programs, the selected employees were provided with extensive coaching assignments (often over six to nine months) with the company's certified external coaches. In the participating division of the company, there were about 62 employees identified as HiPos who were participating in this HiPo program.

An invitation to participate in the study was sent by the HR department with a link to an online survey. Two different links were sent by the HR department; one for HiPo employees, the other for non-HiPo employees. Equal number of non-HiPo employees received the email invitation. Non-HiPo employees were matched based on their job level – i.e., all participants held managerial level positions. In total, 124 employees received the email and 68 employees (35 HiPo employees and 33 non-HiPo employees) responded. Three employees did not complete the survey; hence their responses were not included, resulting in a final sample of 65 respondents. The overall response rate was 52.4% (32 HiPo employees and 33 non-HiPo employees).

Measures

HiPo Program participation – Organizational assigned categories were used to classify employees as HiPo and non-HiPo. I coded ‘0’ for employees who were not included in the HiPo program (in other words, non-HiPo employees) and ‘1’ for employees who were included in the HiPo program (i.e., HiPo employees). Among all employees, 49% were HiPo employees and the remaining 51% were non-HiPo employees.

Organizational Trust: Organizational trust was measured with 7 items adapted from Robinson and Rousseau (1994). Sample items included ‘I trust my employer’ and ‘My employer is always honest and truthful’. Items were measured on a 5-point scale ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5). The Cronbach’s alpha for this scale was .84.

Affective commitment: Affective commitment was measured with 8 items adapted from Allen and Meyer (1990). Sample items included ‘I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization’ and ‘I feel emotionally attached to this organization’. Items were measured on a 7-point scale ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (7). The Cronbach’s alpha was .89.

Turnover intent: This variable was measured with three items from Konovsky and Cropanzano (1991). Sample items included ‘I never think about quitting my job’ and ‘I intend to remain with my company in the long term’. Items were measured on a 7-point scale ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (7). The items were reverse coded for the purpose of the analyses. The Cronbach’s alpha was .82.

Control variables

The following variables were used as control variables as past research shows that they are related to affective commitment and turnover intent (Alfes et al., 2012; Björkman et al., 2013; Fontinha et al., 2012; Gelens et al., 2014; Marescaux et al., 2013; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Meyer et al., 2002).

Age: I used different categories to measure age, i.e., ‘up to 20 years’ = 1, ‘21-25 years’ = 2, ‘26-30 years’ = 3, ‘31-35 years’ = 4, ‘36-40 years’ = 5, ‘41-45 years’ = 6, ‘46-50 years’ = 7, ‘51-55 years’ = 8, ‘56-60 years’ = 9 and ‘61 years and over’ = 10. The mean age score was 3.7 with S.D. of 1.78.

Gender: Males were coded as 1 and females were coded as 0. Mean score was .57 (S.D. = .50). Among respondents, 37 of them (57%) were male and 28 (43%) were female.

Tenure: Tenure was measured in terms of number of years with the following question: how many years in total have you been working in this organization? Mean score was = 5.91 years (S.D. = 3.71).

Education: Education was coded as follow: 1 = less than high school, 2 = high school, 3 = college/trade diploma or certification, 4 = undergraduate degree, and 5 = post-graduate degree. The mean score was 3.86 (S.D. = .75).

Consistent with past studies (e.g., Haar & Spell, 2009)), I included age and education as continuous variables because both variables have interval properties and at least 5 categories (Rhemtulla, Brosseau-Liard, & Savalei, 2012).

Outliers

I used outlier labeling rule (Hoaglin & Iglewicz, 1987; Hoaglin, Iglewicz, & Tukey, 1986) to assess whether the data has any outlier. Using this method, there was no evidence of any outlier. Hence the final sample size for the study was 65.

Missing values

Missing value analysis of the items demonstrated that there were three missing values for three different cases. One respondent was missing a value for one item of organizational trust, 'My employer treats me fairly', another was missing a value for another item of organizational trust, 'I can expect my employer to treat me in a consistent and predictable fashion', and the third respondent was missing a value on one of the items for affective commitment, i.e., 'I feel a strong sense of belonging to my organization'. I replaced these missing values with the series means of these items in SPSS. Although this approach is likely to suppress the true standard deviation and the standard error; however, since I just had three missing values from three different cases, this is not a serious consideration (Field, 2009).

Common Method Bias

Before conducting the analyses, I checked whether the data suffered from common method variance (CMV). CMV is a variance that is attributable to the method of collecting data rather than attributable to the construct of interest (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). CMV is problematic because it can inflate, deflate or have no effect on the observed relationship between two constructs, thus increasing the likelihood of committing Type I or Type II errors. It

can also lead to incorrect perceptions about how much variance in the dependent variable is accounted for due to independent variables, and also increase or decrease the nomological and discriminant validity of a scale (Podsakoff et al., 2003; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, & Podsakoff, 2012). In order to control for this variance, I used various procedural and statistical remedies as suggested by Podsakoff et al. (2003; 2012)

Procedural Remedies

As suggested by Podsakoff et al. (2003), the measures of the predictor and criterion variables were collected from different sources. The organization provided information regarding employees' participation in the HiPo program; hence I used organizational assigned categories for HiPo program participation. The data for other variables (trust, affective commitment and turnover intent) were collected from employees through self-reported measures. Since I was interested in employees' perceptions about their organizations and their attitudes, by not asking employees' about their participation in the program helped eliminating the effects of consistency motifs and implicit theories.

Moreover, I used different scales to measure the study's variables. Affective commitment was measured using a 7-point Likert scale whereas organizational trust and turnover intent were measured using 5-point Likert scales. This approach of eliminating common scale properties also helps to reduce CMV (Podsakoff et al., 2012). I also attempted to reduce method bias by assuring respondents of their anonymity and also by stating clearly in the cover letter that there are no right and wrong answers. This approach reduces individual's evaluation apprehension and reduces the chances of social desirability bias. I also used 'balancing' strategy by reversed scoring some of the items to control for acquiescence (yea-saying) and disacquiescence (nay-saying) biases.

Statistical remedies

Confirmatory factor analyses were performed to assess the common method variance and discriminant validity of the constructs. I used Amos 23 to conduct Harman's single factor test to assess CMV (Podsakoff et al., 2003). To gauge the model fit, I used Comparative Fit Index (CFI) (Bentler, 1990), Tucker, Lewis Index (TLI), Incremental Goodness of Fit Index (IFI) and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) (Steiger, 1990). The CFI, IFI and TLI have been considered the best approximations of the population value for a single model, with values greater than or equal to .90 considered indicative of good fit (Browne & Cudeck, 1993; Hoyle, 1995; Medsker, Williams, & Holahan, 1994). For RMSEA, a value of less than or equal to .08 is considered favourable (Kline, 2011) and have been reported in previous studies (Aksoy & Bayazit, 2014; Beenen & Pichler, 2014; Shen, Benson, & Huang, 2014).

Various measurement models were tested in which the indicators for all variables were allowed to load onto their respective factors. All factors were allowed to correlate. The measurement model results for organizational trust, turnover intent, and affective commitment indicated a good fit to the data ($\chi^2[132] = 1.26$, $\chi^2 = 166.03$, CFI = .94, IFI = .95, TLI = .94, RMSEA = .06). To check for the discriminant validity, different models were compared against the three factor model. The χ^2 difference test showed that the chi-square differences between model 1 and all other models were highly significant. Hence, all these constructs were discriminant from each other (please see Table 1). The three factor model was compared with one factor model. Results of fit indices showed poor fit ($\chi^2[135] = 1.72$, $\chi^2 = 232.15$, CFI = .84, IFI = .85, TLI = .82, RMSEA = .11).

Table 1 Model Fit

	χ^2	df	χ^2 / df	CFI	TLI	IFI	RMSEA	χ^2 change	change in df
Model 1: Three factor model (trust, affective commitment and turnover intent)	166.03	132	1.26	0.94	0.94	0.95	0.06		
Model 2: Two factor model (trust and affective commitment combined together)	220.21	134	1.64	0.86	0.84	0.86	0.10	54.18	2***
Model 3: Two factor model (trust and turnover intent combined together)	197.09	134	1.47	0.90	0.88	0.90	0.09	31.06	2***
Model 4: Two factor model (affective commitment and turnover intent combined together)	181.13	134	1.35	0.92	0.91	0.93	0.07	15.10	2***
Model 5: Single factor model (Harman's single-factor test)	232.15	135	1.72	0.84	0.82	0.85	0.11	66.12	3***

Notes: n = 65

*** p < .001

Results

The descriptive statistics and correlations are presented in Table 2. The control variables were not related to organizational trust, affective commitment and turnover intent. There was a positive correlation between organizational trust and affective commitment ($r = .65, p < .01$) and a negative correlation between organizational trust and turnover intent ($r = -.63, p < .01$).

Moreover, HiPo program participation was positively related to organizational trust ($r = .36, p < .01$) and affective commitment ($r = .36, p < .01$) and negatively related to turnover intent ($r = -.26, p < .05$).

Table 2 Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations

	Mean	S.D	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. HiPo Program participation	.49	.50							
2. Organizational trust	4.23	.50	.36**						
3. Affective commitment	5.47	.86	.36**	.65**					
4. Turnover intent	2.54	1.24	-.26*	-.63**	-.73**				
5. Tenure (years)	5.91	3.71	-.57**	-.22	-.08	.02			
6. Gender ^a	.57	.50	-.26*	.04	-.12	-.02	.29*		
7. Age ^b	3.71	1.78	-.43**	-.20	-.15	-.07	.76**	.42**	
8. Education ^c	3.86	.75	.31*	.05	-.01	.16	-.60**	.12	-.55**

** p < 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* p < 0.05 level (2-tailed).

^a male=1, female=0

^b 'up to 20 years' = 1, '21-25 years' = 2, '26-30 years' = 3, '31-35 years' = 4, '36-40' years =5, '41-45 years' = 6, '45-50 years' = 7, '51-55 years' = 8, '56-60 years' = 9 and '60 years and over' = 10

^c 1 = less than high school, 2 = high school, 3 = college/trade diploma or certification, 4 = undergraduate degree, 5 = post-graduate degree

S.D. = Standard Deviation

n = 65

Multivariate Analysis of Covariance

Hypotheses 1, 2, and 3 state that employees who participate in HiPo programs will have higher affective commitment, lower turnover intent, and higher organizational trust. To test these hypotheses, I ran Multivariate Analysis of Covariance (MANCOVA) to see the differences in attitudes between employees who participated in the HiPo program and those who did not. MANCOVA is a useful technique that allows us to see differences between different groups while also taking interdependencies between the different variables into account (Hair Jr., Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 1998). Control variables (i.e., age, gender, education, and tenure) were added as covariates. Using Pillai's trace test, there were significant differences between the two groups in relation to employee outcomes [$V = .15$, $F(3,57) = 3.23$, $p < .05$]. Subsequent separate univariate ANOVAs on the outcomes variables (i.e., Tests of Between Subjects-Effects) revealed significant differences between the two groups for affective commitment, $F(1,63) = 9.45$, $p < .01$, turnover intent, $F(1,63) = 6.02$, $p < .05$, and organizational trust, $F(1,63) = 6.23$, $p < .05$.

Hence, results showed that employees who participated in the HiPo program had significantly higher affective commitment (mean = 5.78, S.D. = .66, $n = 32$) as compared to employees who were excluded from the program (mean = 5.17, S.D. = .92, $n = 33$), thus providing support to hypothesis 1. The mean score of turnover intent for employees included in the HiPo program (mean = 2.22, S.D. = .96, $n = 32$) was significantly lower than employees who were excluded (mean = 2.85, S.D. = 1.4, $n = 33$); hence, hypothesis 2 was supported. These results also showed that the mean score of organizational trust was significantly higher for employees included in the HiPo program (mean = 4.41, S.D. = .44, $n = 32$) as compared to non-HiPo employees (mean = 4.05, S.D. = .50, $n = 33$), lending support to hypothesis 3.

Mediation Analyses

Hypothesis 4 proposes that the positive relationship between HiPo program participation and affective commitment will be mediated through organizational trust, and hypothesis 5 proposes that the negative relationship between HiPo program participation and turnover intent will be mediated through organizational trust. These hypotheses were tested using SPSS Process Macro (model 4) by Andrew F. Hayes (2013) that uses bootstrapping indirect effects technique to test for the indirect effects (Hayes, 2009). More specifically, I used 5,000 bootstrap samples at 95% confidence interval to conduct a test of indirect effect (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). Bootstrapping technique is widely recognized as one of the most valid and powerful methods to test for the intervening effects because it imposes no distributional assumption (Hayes, 2009). Additionally, it generates an empirical representation of the sampling distribution of the indirect effect by drawing a large number of samples through continuous replacement from the original research samples (Hayes, 2009). Using this technique, I tested two different mediation models. In the first model, I used affective commitment as the dependent variable, whereas for the second model I included turnover intent as the dependent variable. I also included age, gender, tenure and education as control variables in both models.

For hypothesis 4, the results showed that there was a significant positive indirect effects of HiPo program participation on affective commitment as a bootstrapped 95% CI around the indirect effect did not contain zero for the relationship between HiPo program participation and affective commitment (.3785, LLCI = .1375, ULCI = .7478) (please see Table 3). This shows that HiPo program participation affects affective commitment through organizational trust. Hence, hypothesis 4 was supported.

Table 3 The Mediating Effect of Organizational Trust in the relationship between HiPo Program Participation and Affective Commitment

Variables	Outcome		
	Unstandardized Coef.	SE	t
Model 1 (Organizational Trust)			
Constant	4.56	.52	8.74***
HiPo Program participation	.36	.14	2.5*
Tenure	-.004	.03	-.16
Gender	.20	.13	1.52
Age	-.05	.06	-.91
Education	-.11	.10	-1.05
R sq. (Adj. Rsq)		.17(.10)	
F-value		2.49*	
Model 2 (Affective commitment)			
Constant	.71	1.08	.66
Organizational trust	1.06	.18	5.95***
HiPo Program participation	.38	.21	1.84
Tenure	.06	.04	1.59
Gender	-.23	.18	-1.24
Age	-.03	.08	-.41
Education	-.002	.14	-.01
R sq. (Adj. Rsq)		0.48(.43)	
F-value		9.07***	
Model 3 (Total effect model – Affective commitment)			
Constant	5.53	.90	6.17***
HiPo Program participation	.76	.25	3.07**
Tenure	.06	.05	1.17
Gender	-.02	.23	-.07
Age	-.08	.09	-.89
Education	-.11	.17	-.66
R sq. (Adj. Rsq)		.17 (.10)	
F-value		2.40 *	

Total, Direct, and Indirect effects		
	Unstandardized Coef.	SE
Direct and total effects		
HiPo Program participation on Organizational trust (path a)	.36*	.14
Trust on Affective commitment (path b)	1.06***	.18
Total effect of HiPo Program participation on Affective commitment (path c)	.76**	.25
Direct effect of HiPo Program participation on Affective commitment (Path c')	.38	.21
Bootstrapping results for the indirect effect		
Indirect effect of HiPo Program participation on Affective commitment via Organizational trust	.3785	.15
CI (95%)	[.1357, .7478]	

Notes:

Values are unstandardized regression coefficients

CI = confidence interval

Bootstrapped samples = 5,000

*p<.05, ** p<.01, ***p<.001

n = 65

Path a represents the link between the independent variable and the mediating variable after adding control variables. Path b shows the link between the mediating variable and the outcome variable after adding control variables. Path c reflects the link between the independent and dependent variables after adding the control variables, and path c' reflects the link between the independent and dependent variables after adding controls and mediating variable into the analysis.

I tested hypothesis 5 using the similar bootstrapping approach. The results showed that there was a significant negative indirect effect of HiPo program participation on turnover intent via organizational trust. Analysis showed that a bootstrapped 95% CI around the indirect effect did not contain zero for the relationship between HiPo program participation and turnover intent

(-.5569, LLCI = -1.0383, ULCI = -.2160) (please see Table 4). Therefore, hypothesis 5 was also supported.

Table 4 The Mediating Effect of Organizational Trust in the relationship between HiPo Program Participation and Turnover Intent

Variables	Outcome		
	Unstandardized Coef.	SE	t
Model 1 (Organizational trust)			
Constant	4.56	.52	8.74***
HiPo Program participation	.36	.14	2.50*
Tenure	-.004	.03	-.16
Gender	.20	.13	1.52
Age	-.05	.06	-.91
Education	-.11	.10	-1.05
R sq. (Adj. Rsq)		.17(.10)	
F-value		2.49*	
Model 2 (Turnover Intent)			
Constant	8.92	1.59	5.62***
Organizational trust	-1.55	.26	-5.95***
HiPo Program participation	-.33	.30	-1.1
Tenure	.02	.06	.38
Gender	.21	.27	.79
Age	-.19	.11	-1.69
Education	.21	.21	1.01
R sq. (Adj. Rsq)		.46(.41)	
F-value		8.45***	
Model 3 (Total effect model – Turnover intent)			
Constant	1.82	1.31	1.39
HiPo Program participation	-.89	.36	-2.45*
Tenure	.03	.07	.402
Gender	-.10	.34	-.298
Age	-.11	.14	-.79
Education	.37	.26	1.46
R sq. (Adj. Rsq)		.14 (.07)	
F-value		1.93	

Total, Direct, and Indirect effects		
	Unstandardized Coef.	SE
Direct and total effects		
HiPo Program participation on Organizational trust (path a)	.36*	.14
Organizational trust on Turnover Intent (path b)	-1.55***	.26
Total effect of HiPo Program participation on Turnover Intent (path c)	-.89*	.36
Direct effect of HiPo Program participation on Turnover Intent (Path c')	-.33	.30
Bootstrapping results for the indirect effect		
Indirect effect of HiPo Program participation on Turnover Intent via Organizational trust	-.5569	.21
CI (95%)	[-1.0383, -.2160]	

Notes:

Values are unstandardized regression coefficients

CI = confidence interval

Bootstrapped samples = 5,000

*p<.05, ** p<.01, ***p<.001

n = 65

Path a represents the link between the independent variable and the mediating variable after adding control variables. Path b shows the link between the mediating variable and the outcome variable after adding control variables. Path c reflects the link between the independent and dependent variables after adding the control variables, and path c' reflects the link between the independent and dependent variables after adding controls and mediating variable into the analysis.

Discussion

In response to recent calls by scholars on the impact of workforce differentiation and TM programs on employees (Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2013; Huselid & Becker, 2011; Thunnissen et al., 2013a,b), this study explored a process of mediation linking HiPo program participation and employee outcomes. More specifically, I hypothesized that employees who were identified as talent and included in the HiPo programs would demonstrate more positive attitudes (i.e., higher

affective commitment and lower turnover intent) and would have higher levels of organizational trust. Moreover, I hypothesized that employees' perceptions of organizational trust would mediate the relationships between HiPo program participation and employee outcomes (i.e., affective commitment and turnover intent). Data from 65 HiPo and non-HiPo employees from one division of a large multinational company supported these assertions. The results of this study confirm the importance of investigating an intermediating mechanism that contributes to explaining 'how' and 'why' of the links between HiPo program participation and employee outcomes (Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2013). This study reinforces the optimistic view of the main purpose of HiPo programs that affirms the positive impact of these programs on employees included in these programs (Collings & Mellahi, 2009).

Theoretically, this study contributes to the growing literature on TM on how TM practices and HiPo program participation impact employee level outcomes. Particularly, the findings explain some of the processes in the 'black box'; HiPo program participation results in favourable employee outcomes through employees' perceptions of organizational trust. Consistent with the arguments of social exchange (Blau, 1964) and psychological contract (Rousseau, 1995) theories, the study confirms an important role of organizational trust in explicating the social exchanges between the employer and the employees. The ongoing exchanges of socioeconomic resources between the employer and the employees result in the perceptions of psychological contract fulfilment and, subsequently the higher levels of organizational trust in the employer. This is an important theoretical contribution as it advances our knowledge and adds to the existing literature on TM by examining the role of organizational trust. Specifically, the study demonstrates that employees who are identified as 'talent'/HiPo employees and included in the HiPo program have higher organizational trust compared to

employees who are not included in the program. These findings are in line with the arguments of social exchange (Blau, 1964) theory that employer's investments in employees are reciprocated by positive attitudes on the part of employees. The results showed that HiPo program participation affects affective commitment and turnover intent through employee's trust in their organization. Hence, the favours of the organization engender an obligation in employees to reciprocate the good deeds of the organization through the adoption of favourable attitudes. Since the study did not measure these attitudes before employees' participation in HiPo programs, some of these differences might have been present before the HiPo program; hence results should be interpreted with caution. Nevertheless, this study is the first, that I know of, to test the mediating role of organizational trust in the context of exclusive TM. The results showed that although HiPo program participation or HiPo and non-HiPo label impacts employee attitudes, organizational trust is the better predictor of employees' affective commitment and intentions to turnover. Consistent with the TM literature, this study reveals that the attitudes of HiPo and non-HiPo employees differ; however, to date we have a little understanding as to why this happens (Gelens et al., 2015). This study contributes to our understanding of the underlying mechanism of how employees' participation in the program impacts their affective commitment and intentions to turnover. By introducing a new mediator (i.e., employees' perceptions of organizational trust) in the relationships between HiPo program participation and employee attitudes, I extend previous research, which so far has just identified perceived organizational support and justice perceptions as intervening variables (Gelens et al., 2015; Gelens et al., 2014).

Consistent with past studies (Gelens et al., 2013; Marescaux et al., 2013), this study also shows that employees who are identified as 'talent'/HiPo employees and included in the HiPo program have higher levels of affective commitment. Similar to Bjorkman's study, this study

also found that employees who were identified as ‘talent’ and included in the HiPo program have lower turnover intentions. Bjorkman’s (2013) study used self-reported data for talent identification. This study differs from Bjorkman’s (2013) study in that it utilized archival data for talent identification. Additionally, they examined the direct relationships between self-reported talent identification and employee outcomes, paying little or no attention to the intermediating mechanism. Hence, this study addressed these limitations of the previous studies.

Limitations

The study is not without limitations. The sample size is small; hence the generalizability could be an issue. However, the small sample size should not cast doubts on the findings of the study as I used bootstrapping technique, along with MANCOVA, which is considered a very useful analysis technique for small sample sizes and is not based on large-sample theory (Preacher & Hayes, 2004). This study tested the simple, albeit important, mediation model. I recognize that I should build on this study by including other mediating and moderating variables as the field of TM is still in infancy, as well as in need of additional theoretical frameworks (Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2013; Gelens et al., 2013). This is the focus of Study 2.

CHAPTER FOUR: STUDY 2

The goals of this study are: (i) to replicate the findings of the first study (i.e., employees' participation in HiPo programs is associated with more positive attitudes, i.e., affective commitment and turnover intent) with a larger sample, (ii) to extend the findings of the first study by examining two more employee outcomes (i.e., job satisfaction and organizational citizenship behaviours (OCBs), and (iii) to extend the findings of the first study by incorporating mediating (HiPo attributions) and moderating (organizational trust) variables in the tested model.

Job satisfaction and OCBs are important outcome variables in the context of TM (Collings & Mellahi, 2009; Gelens et al., 2014). Job satisfaction refers to one's overall satisfaction with one's job (Judge, Thoresen, Bono, & Patton, 2001). It deals with an employee's feelings about his/her job and different aspects of the job (Spector, 1997). It is linked to employee well-being (Weiss, 2002), affective commitment (Nishii et al., 2008; Tett & Meyer, 1993), employee retention (Hom & Griffeth, 1991; Lambert, Hogan, & Barton, 2001; Tett & Meyer, 1993) and work performance (Judge et al., 2001; Peccei & Rosenthal, 2001). Additionally, OCBs are voluntary employee behaviours that contribute to the efficient functioning of the organization by creating a social environment that is conducive to the accomplishment of work, and include behaviours such as helping others, and doing tasks not formally required by the organization (Borman & Motowidlo, 1997; Organ, 1988). These behaviours differ from employee's task performance as they are not formally required by the job, and are not motivated to obtain rewards or avoid punishment (Shore & Wayne, 1993); although some scholars believe that these behaviours influence managers' decisions about employee promotion, training, and reward allocation (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Paine, & Bachrach, 2000). OCBs are important to consider as they are linked to important individual (i.e., affective

commitment, job satisfaction, well-being, and engagement) (Alfes et al., 2012; Nishii et al., 2008; Organ, Podsakoff, & MacKenzie, 2006) and organizational outcomes (such as operational efficiency, customer satisfaction, quality of performance, and reduced waste) (Podsakoff et al., 2000; Walz & Niehoff, 1996).

In order to understand how HR practices and programs affect employee outcomes, there has been a growing interest among scholars on how employees attribute meanings to the implementation of these programs that are adopted by their organizations to improve their competitive position (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004; Nishii et al., 2008; Van De Voorde & Beijer, 2015). The core idea for this research is that HR practices send signals to employees about the organization's intentions and the expected norms and behaviours required by the employees (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004). These signals and cues become the basis for employees' perceptions about the implementation of these programs, which then shape their attitudes and behaviours (Lepak, Jiang, Han, Castellano, & Hu, 2012; Nishii et al., 2008).

The limited empirical research in the TM literature demonstrates that there are differences in the attitudes and behaviours of HiPo and non-HiPo employees with HiPo employees eliciting more positive outcomes as compared to non-HiPo employees (Björkman et al., 2013; Gelens et al., 2015; Gelens et al., 2014; Marescaux et al., 2013). Scholars contend that these programs are perceived favourably by HiPo employees due to more resource investments from their organizations (Huselid & Becker, 2011). However, concerns have also been raised by scholars that these programs and workforce differentiation will impact other employees unfavourably due to negative feelings and emotions (Lacey & Groves, 2014; Swailes, 2013; Walker & LaRocco, 2002). Hence they may attribute the implementation of these programs as well as their exclusion from these programs negatively. However, to date, we have little

understanding on how these programs are perceived and attributed by employees (Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2013). This study attempts to address this important gap in the TM literature. While drawing on attribution theory (Kelley, 1967), I argue that employees who perceive that they are identified as talent by their organization and are included in HiPo programs will make more positive attributions about the HiPo programs and their identification. However, those employees who are excluded from these programs may form negative attributions about these programs. Hence this study makes an important contribution to the literature on TM by exploring employees' perceptions about HiPo programs. Later, I argue that these attributions and perceptions will impact their attitudes and behaviours differently.

This study also extends Study 1 as it explores a moderating role of organizational trust in the relationships between employee HiPo program participation and HiPo attributions. Study 1 examined and confirmed the mediating role of organizational trust in the relationships between HiPo program participation and employee outcomes. This study contributes to the limited TM literature and argues that organizational trust is an important factor that affects employees' attributions about the implementation of HiPo programs.

Theoretical Framework

Attribution Theory

This study relies on the central idea that HR programs and practices serve as a communication tool from an employer to an employee (Guzzo & Noonan, 1994). Scholars contend that HR practices constantly communicate intended and unintended messages to employees (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004; Guzzo & Noonan, 1994). Further, these messages are idiosyncratic, i.e., the same HR practice could be interpreted by two employees differently depending on a range of factors such as experience and expectations etc. (Den Hartog, Boselie,

& Paauwe, 2004). Based on these views, this study argues that HiPo programs (like all other HR practices) serve as a communication tool from the employer to the employees that could be interpreted differently by different groups of employees (HiPo employees and non-HiPo employees). The way employees attribute and interpret the implementation of these programs is of great importance as these attributions impact how employees feel and behave at work (Nishii et al., 2008). Scholars contend that the attribution theory may offer a useful lens to understand how employees interpret the implementation of various HR practices (Nishii et al., 2008). This study argues that how employees interpret and make sense of the implementation of HiPo programs affect their psychological contract with their employers, and subsequently their attitudes and behaviors toward their employers.

Attribution theory has been applied by psychologists and others in their respective fields of inquiry (Nishii et al., 2008). The term ‘attribution’ refers to “the perception and inference of cause” (Kelley & Michela, 1980, p. 458). Kelley and Michela (1980) stressed that attribution theory is the study of perceived causation of an event or situation or behaviour. The basic premise of the theory is that people interpret behaviour in terms of its causes and these interpretations play a crucial role in determining subsequent attitudes and behaviours. As noted by several scholars (e.g., Kelley & Michela, 1980; Thibaut & Riecken, 1955), there are *antecedents* and *consequences* for causal attributions. Antecedents of causal attributions focus on the information about the behaviour and the conditions of its occurrence, and are used by the individual to infer the cause of the behaviour. Thibaut and Riecken (1955) also contend that there are internal and external causes of the behaviour. Internal causes (i.e., dispositional factors) are those which are under the control of the individual and are more informative and are perceived as more reliable predictors of individual future performance (Jones & Davis, 1965); whereas

external causes (i.e., environmental factors) are those which are beyond the control of the individual and reveal less about the underlying motivation of the individual behaviour (Kelley & Michela, 1980). For example, if a person does not receive a pay raise as a result of performance appraisal, then the employee can ascribe this to internal attributions (e.g., “I did not perform well” or “I lack skills and competencies”) or to external attributions (i.e., “my boss does not like me” or “my boss is unfair”). Consistent with this theory, Nishii et al. (2008) introduced employees’ *HR attributions* by asking employees why certain HR practices exist in their organizations. Employees’ attributions that HR practices are implemented to enhance service quality and employee well-being result in positive attitudinal and behavioral reactions. Whereas, employees’ attributions that HR practices are designed to control cost and exploit employees lead to negative employee outcomes. Empirical research lends support that employees tend to make various attributions about the implementation of HR practices which then impact their attitudes and behaviours (Fontinha et al., 2012; Koys, 1988; Nishii et al., 2008; Van De Voorde & Beijer, 2015).

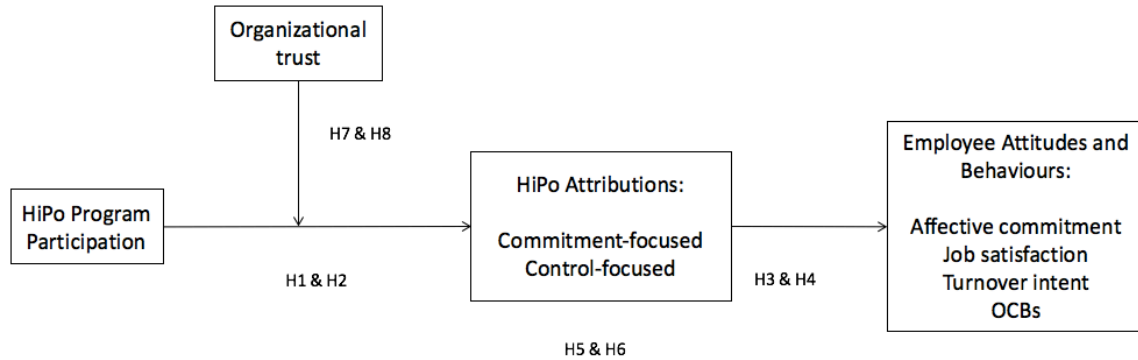
Drawing on Nishii et al.’s (2008) idea of HR attributions (i.e., the idea that the employees’ perceptions of the reasons of the implementation of HR practices affect their attitudes and behaviours), I argue that different groups of employees attach different meanings to the implementation of HiPo programs; consequently, these attributions affect their attitudes and behaviours differently. Drawing on the work of Nishii et al. (2008), I define *commitment-focused HiPo attributions* as employees’ perceptions that their organizations value HiPo employees’ contributions and are concerned about their well-being, and that is why they are included in the HiPo programs; and *control-focused HiPo attributions* as perceptions of employees that their organizations do not value non-HiPo employees’ contributions, they consider them as a cost, and

they are not concerned about their well-being, and that is why non-HiPo employees are excluded from these programs.

Development of Hypotheses

The theoretical model for this study is presented in Figure 2. In this model, drawing on attribution theory, I first hypothesize direct relationships between HiPo program participation and HiPo attributions. Specifically, I argue that employees who are included in HiPo programs are more likely to make commitment-focused HiPo attributions (i.e., organizations value their contributions and are concerned about their well-being). Additionally, I propose that employees who are not included in HiPo programs may make more control-focused attributions (i.e., organizations consider them as a cost and want to exploit them). Then I argue that commitment-focused HiPo attributions would lead to favourable employee outcomes, i.e., affective commitment, job satisfaction, OCBs, and lower turnover intent which are key outcomes of HiPo programs (Collings & Mellahi, 2009). I also propose that control-focused HiPo attributions will lead to unfavourable employee outcomes. Later, I hypothesize that organizational trust creates an important condition which affects the relationships between HiPo program participation and employees' attributions about such programs. The SHRM literature shows that trust affects the relationships between employees' experiences of HRM practices and employee attitudes (Innocenti et al., 2011) and employee behaviours (Alfes et al., 2012). This study suggests that employees' perceptions of organizational trust play an important moderating role which may affect the relationships between HiPo program participation and their attributions about these programs.

Figure 2 Research Model



HiPo Program Participation and HiPo Attributions

In this section, I argue that HiPo program participation communicates messages to employees regarding their value and contributions. Organizations implementing HiPo programs give consistent messages to all employees that HiPo employees matter, and also that their performance and contributions are crucial for firm performance (Malik & Singh, 2014). These employees are given more prestige than others in the organization (Pfeffer, 2001; Swailes, 2013), implying there is a general consensus among senior level management and others that top talent is important. HiPo programs also include different HR practices such as training, mentoring, and career opportunities for different groups of employees (Thunnissen et al., 2013a). For example, a Centre for Creative Leadership survey of 199 HiPo employees indicated that HiPo employees are treated differently in terms of visibility and access to senior management, availability of special assignments, training, promotability and rewards, greater responsibility, more general career opportunities and flexibility (Campbell & Smith, 2010). On the other hand, scholars suggest that non-HiPo employees are subjected to low investment HR practices (Becker et al., 2009). Thus all

employees in the organization are affected in one way or the other. This not only increases the visibility of HiPo programs but also the relevance of these programs to all employees. Although the focus of these programs is on HiPo employees, non-HiPo employees would also consider these programs as relevant to them because of the relatively low investment level from the organization compared to HiPo employees. Hence, HiPo program participation will likely affect excluded employees negatively as Larsen, London, Weinstein, and Raghuram (1998, p. 74) stated, “the greater the top management attention, organizational resources, and ceremonies, the more prone others are to be jealous”. Therefore, as a result of this exclusion, non-HiPo employees may attribute these programs differently, and these perceptions may be opposite to the perceptions of HiPo employees.

Top management support would send signals to all employees that the HiPo program is legitimate and credible, and intended and unintended messages will be communicated to all employees that top talent is crucial for firm’s success (Malik & Singh, 2014). Thus when employees are implicitly and explicitly told that the organization focuses on HiPo employees who are managed through differentiated HR practices (Collings & Mellahi, 2009), a consistent HR message would be delivered to all employees regarding HiPo employees’ significance and contributions (Guzzo & Noonan, 1994). However, it is also likely that it gives an implicit message to other employees (i.e., non-HiPo employees), who receive *comparatively* less investment from the organization and are not the part of program, that their contributions are downplayed and not valued (Björkman et al., 2013). They may think that the organization lacks interest in them (Swales & Blackburn, 2016) and considers them as a cost to be controlled; that is why they are not considered to be included in these special programs where employees get an exclusive focus from the organization (Swales, 2013). Therefore, as a result of this exclusion,

non-HiPo employees will perceive these programs as an indication that the organization does not appreciate their efforts and recognize their contributions; consequently, they will be more likely to develop negative attributions about such programs.

As mentioned previously, attribution theory focuses on an individual's use of information in the social environment to make causal explanation for events (Kelley & Michela, 1980); in the context of HiPo programs, employees would use this contextual information to make attributions. Instead of treating all employees equally, HiPo programs provide more opportunities to selected employees (Swales, 2013). These employees get more resources because they are expected to perform higher, and with finite resources, non-HiPo employees would get fewer resources (Pfeffer, 2001). Hence, HiPo programs do not comply with principle of equal opportunity (Schumann, 2001) and may raise perceptions of injustice among employees due to unequal resource allocation (Gelens et al., 2013). Pfeffer (2001, p. 254) argues, "people who receive less coaching, mentoring, training, and fewer challenging job assignments will – other things being equal – learn less and be less able to perform at a higher level". These circumstances would not give non-HiPo employees an equal opportunity to learn, grow and strive to fulfill their potential (Walker & LaRocco, 2002). Employees will likely interpret these implicit and explicit communications from their employer in terms of the assessment of their psychological contract (Guzzo & Noonan, 1994), i.e., HiPo employees interpreting that the organization is delivering on its promises and fulfilling the psychological contract, and non-HiPo employees perceiving that the organization is breaching its psychological contract as manifested by their exclusion from these programs (Guzzo & Noonan, 1994).

Based on this information, non-HiPo employees may attribute these programs and their exclusion negatively because less availability of resources would allow these employees to

perform at a lower level. Nevertheless, reduced resource allocation might give unintended messages to non-HiPo employees, who think even though they have worked just as hard as others, their efforts are not recognized by the organization (Swales, 2013). Generally, when employees perceive that the organization is concerned about their well-being and makes investments in them, they are more likely to form commitment-focused HR attributions (Fontinha et al., 2012; Nishii et al., 2008). Exposing employees to various HR practices such as extensive training, developmental performance management, competitive compensation, fair incentives and rewards, career development, flexible job designs and employee involvement send signals to employees that the organization values and supports their contributions (Björkman et al., 2013). However, when employees perceive that the organization wants to exploit them at a minimum cost as exemplified by fewer investments, they are more likely to form control-focused HiPo attributions (cf. Lacey & Groves, 2014).

Based on the foregoing, I hypothesize that:

Hypothesis 1: Employees who participate in HiPo programs will have higher commitment-focused HiPo attributions as compared to employees who do not participate in HiPo programs.

Hypothesis 2: Employees who do not participate in HiPo programs will have higher control-focused HiPo attributions as compared to employees who participate in HiPo programs.

HiPo Attributions and Employee Outcomes

The major goal of any HiPo program is to impact targeted employees' attitudes and behaviours so that organizational performance can be enhanced. The evidence suggests when

employees form positive HR attributions, they are more likely to exhibit positive attitudes and behaviours (e.g., commitment, job satisfaction, and OCBs) (Fontinha et al., 2012; Nishii et al., 2008). Although no past study, to the best of my knowledge, examines the relationships between HR attributions and turnover intent, it can be expected that when employees form positive attributions about these programs and their inclusion in these programs, they will be contented and less likely to leave the organization. This assertion can be supported by the arguments of the psychological contract (Robinson et al., 1994) and social exchange (Blau, 1964) theories such that employees' participation in such programs implies that the organization is delivering on its promises and investing in employee development (King, 2016). Hence, these perceptions of psychological contract fulfilment create obligations for employees to reciprocate favourably.

Further, I expect that commitment-focused HiPo attributions would lead employees to perform discretionary behaviours (i.e., OCBs) for the success and well-being of the organization and co-workers. OCB is defined as an "individual behaviour that is discretionary, not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal reward system, and in the aggregate promotes the efficient and effective functioning of the organization" (Organ, 1988, p. 4). Since committed employees are emotionally attached and identify with the organization (Allen & Meyer, 1990), they will have a strong desire to contribute behaviorally towards it. These behaviours are also prerequisite for their own growth and success as these behaviours may also influence manager's decisions about employee promotion, training, and reward allocation (Podsakoff et al., 2000).

One of the dominant frameworks of why employees engage in OCB is social exchange theory (Blau, 1964). This framework suggests that employees engage in extra role behaviours to reciprocate good treatment from their employers. Consistent with this view, *norms of reciprocity* (Gouldner, 1960) suggest that positive and favourable actions directed at employees from the

organization create an important motivational drive for employees to reciprocate with positive attitudes and behaviours. Hence, when employees perceive that the organization is fulfilling its obligations as manifested by putting greater emphasis on employee development and making higher resource investments, they will be more likely to engage in discretionary efforts beyond their required task performance. This is because scholars suggest that OCB is one way for employees to reciprocate the positive experiences they have with their organizations (Organ, 1988; Robinson & Morrison, 1995). For these reasons, as a result of these social exchanges and perceptions of psychological contract fulfilment, HiPo employees are likely to undertake more discretionary behaviours as compared to non-HiPo employees.

Overall, it is suggested that when employees form positive attributions about the HiPo programs, and believe that the organization also provides them opportunities to fulfill their needs through participation in various activities, challenging assignments and other development programs, they would be more likely to give back to their employer in terms of positive employee attitudes and behaviours (i.e., affective commitment, job satisfaction, reduced turnover intent, and OCBs) (cf. Fontinha et al., 2012; Marescaux et al., 2013; Nishii et al., 2008). Thus I hypothesize that employee commitment-focused HiPo attributions would lead to favourable attitudes and behaviours. However, it is important to note that the norm of reciprocity has a *negative* side as well (Blau, 1964). When employees perceive that the organization is differentiating among its employees and they are provided with limited opportunities to develop themselves, they would reciprocate in the same manner. These arguments are consistent with the psychological contract theory that the perception of the breach or violation of psychological contract results in negative attitudinal and behavioral reactions (Robinson & Morrison, 1995; Rousseau, 1989). Consequently, employees will attribute these programs and their exclusion

from these programs negatively, and these negative attributions will make them to adopt negative attitudes and behaviours. Hence I hypothesize that:

Hypothesis 3: Commitment-focused HiPo attributions will be (a) positively related to affective commitment, (b) positively related to job satisfaction, (c) negatively related to turnover intent, and (d) positively related to organizational citizenship behaviours.

Hypothesis 4: Control-focused HiPo attributions will be (a) negatively related to affective commitment, (b) negatively related to job satisfaction, (c) positively related to turnover intent, and (d) negatively related to organizational citizenship behaviours.

The preceding discussion argued that employee participation in the HiPo programs communicates intended and unintended messages to employees about their value and contributions which are differently interpreted by employees (Guzzo & Noonan, 1994). These interpretations form the basis of employees' perceptions of *why* their organizations include employees in the HiPo programs, and also why they exclude employees from these programs. (Nishii et al., 2008). Consistent with attribution and social exchange theories, when employees receive positive messages from the organization regarding their value and contributions, they are more likely to attribute the implementation of HiPo programs favourably, and form commitment-focused attributions which are favourably reciprocated by employees (Fontinha et al., 2012; Nishii et al., 2008). On the other hand, when employees receive negative signals from the organization regarding their contributions, they are more likely to form control-focused attributions which then affect their attitudes and behaviours negatively. Hence I hypothesize the following mediating relationships:

Hypothesis 5: Commitment-focused HiPo attributions mediate (a) the positive relationship between HiPo program participation and affective commitment, (b) the positive relationship between HiPo program participation and job satisfaction, (c) the negative relationship between HiPo program participation and turnover intent, and (d) the positive relationship between HiPo program participation and OCBs.

Hypothesis 6: Control-focused HiPo attributions mediate (a) the negative relationship between no HiPo program participation and affective commitment, (b) the negative relationship between no HiPo program participation and job satisfaction, (c) the positive relationship between no HiPo program participation and turnover intent, and (d) the negative relationship between no HiPo program participation and OCBs.

Moderating Role of Organizational Trust

In Study 1, I investigated the mediating role of organizational trust in the relationships between HiPo program participation and employee outcomes. In this study, I explore the moderating role of organizational trust in the relationships between HiPo program participation and HiPo attributions. Employees' use of social cues and information in the environment not only depends on the employer's actions or inactions but also employees' perceptions of those actions or inactions. Hence, the experience of the social relationships between the employer and the employees depends on both social and psychological elements (Robinson, 1996). This study argues that one of such factors is trust in one's employer. Trust is defined as "one's expectations, assumptions, and beliefs about the likelihood that another's future action will be beneficial, favorable, or at least not detrimental to one's interest" (Robinson, 1996, p.576). As a social construct, trust lies at the heart of the social exchanges and relationships between the two parties,

influencing each party's attitude and behaviour towards the other (Blau, 1964; Robinson, 1996; Zand, 1972). Considering trust as a psychological construct, it entails general positive feelings and attitudes towards the other party, serves as a guideline, and influences one's interpretations of social behaviours within a social relationship (Robinson, 1996). Trust in one's employer may influence an employee's interpretation of the social relationships with the employer, enabling the employee to focus on different social cues. While studying trust in organizations, Dirks and Ferrin (2001) acknowledged that empirical evidence exists for the main effects of trust on employee outcomes; however, they also theoretically argued that trust also "moderates the relationship between an interaction partner's action and the trustee's response by influencing one's interpretation of the action" (p. 451). Hence I argue that employees' perceptions of organizational trust play a key moderating role, and can impact the link between employees' participation in HiPo program and their interpretation of these programs.

Although there is no published empirical study using employees' perceptions of organizational trust in the context of TM, a few SHRM studies have considered trust as a moderator between perceived HRM practices and employee attitudes and behaviours (Alfes et al., 2012, Farndale et al., 2011, Innocenti et al., 2011). Innocenti et al.'s (2011) study showed that there were strong associations between HRM practices and employee attitudes when the level of trust was higher. Alfes et al.'s (2012) study demonstrated that trust moderated the relationships between perceived HRM practices and employee behaviours (task performance, turnover intentions and individual well-being). Farndale et al. (2011) examined the moderating roles of trust in the relationships between high commitment performance management practices and perceptions of organizational justice and employee commitment; that is, the higher the level

of trust, the higher the chance employees would consider these practices as favourable, and would have higher commitment levels.

Based on the SHRM literature, I argue that when employees who are included in HiPo programs have higher levels of organizational trust, they will be more likely to attribute these programs favourably. However, when employees have lower levels of organizational trust, they will be less likely to form positive attributions about these programs. This is because even though HiPo programs are directed towards HiPo employees, these employees may still think that the organization is more interested in improving its competitive position by enhancing and improving their performance (cf. Van De Voorde & Beijer, 2015), and is truly not concerned about their development. Therefore, when HiPo employees have lower levels of organizational trust, they will be less likely to form commitment-focused HiPo attributions. However, when they trust their employer and believe that the organization is concerned about their well-being and development, they are more likely to form positive attributions.

Similarly, I argue that non-HiPo employees who have higher levels of trust will be less likely to make control-focused attributions. When employees trust their employer, they would accept negative feedback and attempt to improve their performance as compared to a situation when they distrust their organization (Dirks & Ferrin, 2001). This is because of the belief that their employer would not adopt any practice that negatively affects their well-being and only takes those actions that are beneficial for them. Even under the condition of relational risk (i.e., a situation of workforce differentiation), they would still rely on their organization with the expectation of at least neutral, if not positive outcomes (Nooteboom, Berger, & Noorderhaven, 1997). Therefore, when they receive implicit and explicit information about HiPo employees' significance and added value to the organization, and also about HiPo employees receiving more

investments from the employer, they would conclude that the implementation of these programs is imperative for the organization's survival. Therefore, they would not feel offended and thus would be less likely to respond with negative attitudes. Hence, when their level of organizational trust is higher, they would hardly think that their organization wants to exploit them and considers them as a cost. Consequently, they would be less likely to attribute these programs unfavorably. Thus I hypothesize that:

Hypothesis 7: Organizational trust interacts with HiPo program participation such that the relationship between HiPo program participation and commitment-focused HiPo attributions will be positive for higher levels of organizational trust and negative for lower levels of organizational trust.

Hypothesis 8: Organizational trust interacts with no HiPo program participation such that the relationship between no HiPo program participation and control-focused HiPo attributions will be negative for higher levels of organizational trust and positive for lower levels of organizational trust.

Methods

Pilot study

As mentioned before in the method section of study 1, the pilot study was conducted to pretest the survey instrument. For this study, the same but complete survey instrument was used. Since the study is on employees' perceptions about HiPo programs, working participants who did not have any HiPo program in their organization found the survey questions related to HiPo program difficult to answer. As a result, a screening question was added at the beginning of the survey that asked respondents whether they have any HiPo program in their current organization.

Sample and Procedures

Data were collected through an online survey from a working population who had HiPo programs in their current organizations. These participants were recruited from Qualtrics' panel data. Qualtrics is an online management service that works with industry partners to build panel participants ranging from general, diverse individuals to targeted individuals. Participants recruitment services such as Qualtrics provide extremely focused and externally valid samples, and have been cited as a useful source for data collection (Brandon, Long, Loraas, Mueller-Phillips, & Vansant, 2014). Data collected through Qualtrics panels have been used in recent studies to examine employee attitudes and behaviours in well-reputed journals such as *Academy of Management Journal*, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *Human Resource Management*, and *International Journal of Selection and Assessment*, among others (Bowling & Lyons, 2015; DeCelles, DeRue, Margolis, & Ceranic, 2012; Kaplan, Berkley, & Fisher, 2016; Long, Bendersky, & Morrill, 2011; Ragsdale & Hoover, 2016; Strauss, Griffin, & Parker, 2012). For the purpose of this study, 2,140 invitations were sent, and 1,176 people responded to the survey. In the beginning of the survey, a general definition of the HiPo programs was provided, and then a screening question was used to select respondents. The definition and screening question were *'Many companies have high potential programs in place for the development of their talented employees. These programs are developmental programs that are implemented by organizations to focus on a few talented employees (i.e., high potential employees). In these programs, selected employees are provided with fast track developmental programs such as developmental/stretch assignments, career advancement, formal training, coaching, and internal mentoring, among others. Companies use different names for these programs such as leadership development programs, accelerated development programs, fast track developmental programs etc.; however,*

the main purpose of these programs is the same, i.e., developing high potential employees. Keeping in mind the definition of a high potential program just mentioned above, please tell us if your current organization has such a program?'. From 1,176 individuals, 544 (46%) responded 'Yes' and 632 (54%) responded 'No' to this screening question. Consequently, respondents answering 'No' were screened out and did not proceed the survey. Additionally, 287 respondents did not complete the survey. This process of screening out respondents resulted in a final sample of 257.

Measures

HiPo Program Participation: HiPo Program participation was measured with a self-reported question: 'Have you participated or are you currently participating in any 'high potential' program in your current organization? The variable was dummy coded with 'yes' = 1 and 'no' = 0. Among the respondents, 53 % (n=129) had participated or were participating in the HiPo programs, and 47% (n=113) had never participated in any HiPo program in their current organization.

HiPo Attributions:

Commitment-focused HiPo attributions: This variable was measured with four items adapted from Nishii et al. (2008). Items were measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 'Strongly Disagree' (1) to 'Strongly Agree' (5). Sample items included 'My company includes employees in the high potential programs because their contributions are valued' and 'My company includes employees in the high potential programs in order to deliver quality services to customers'. The Cronbach's alpha for the scale was .84.

Control-focused HiPo attributions: This variable was measured with four items adapted from Nishii et al. (2008). Items were measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 'Strongly

Disagree' (1) to 'Strongly Agree' (5). Sample items included 'My company excludes employees from the high potential programs because their contributions are not valued as much as the high potential employees', and 'My company excludes employees from the high potential programs because their efforts are not recognized as much as the high potential employees'. The Cronbach's alpha for the scale was .88.

Organizational Trust: Organizational trust was measured with seven items adapted from Robinson and Rousseau (1994). Items were measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 'Strongly Disagree' (1) to 'Strongly Agree' (5). Sample items included 'I fully trust my employer', and 'My employer is open and upfront with me'. The Cronbach's alpha for the scale was .93.

Affective commitment: Affective commitment was measured with eight items adapted from Allen and Meyer (1990). Items were measured on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 'Strongly Disagree' (1) to 'Strongly Agree' (7). Sample items included 'I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization', and 'I feel like 'part of the family' at my current organization'. The Cronbach's alpha for the scale was .93.

Organizational Citizenship Behaviours: This variable was measured through eight items adapted from Lee and Allen (2002). A 7-point Likert scale ranging from 'Never' (1) to 'Always' (7) was used. Sample items included 'I help others who have been absent' and 'I willingly give my time to help others who have work-related problems.' The Cronbach's alpha for the scale was .92.

Job satisfaction: This variable was measured with three items adapted from Cammann, Fichman, Henkins, and Klesh (1979). Items were measured on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 'Strongly Disagree' (1) to 'Strongly Agree' (7). Sample items included 'In general, I like working here', and 'Overall, I like my job'. The Cronbach's alpha was .88.

Turnover intent: This variable was measured with 3 reverse-coded items from Konovsky and Cropanzano (1991). Items were measured on a 7 point Likert scale ranging from ‘Strongly Disagree’ (1) to ‘Strongly Agree’ (7). Sample items included ‘I do not often think about quitting my job’, and ‘I intend to remain with my current organization for the near future’. The Cronbach’s alpha for the scale was .87.

Control variables:

To control for individual and firm characteristics that may influence employee attitudes and behaviours, I included age, gender, tenure, education, occupational category, sector, and company size as control variables. These variables have been included as controls in past studies on talent and SHRM studies as these were shown to influence studied employee outcomes (Alfes et al., 2012; Björkman et al., 2013; Fontinha et al., 2012; Gelens et al., 2014; Höglund, 2012; Lok & Crawford, 2004; Luna–Arocas & Morley, 2015; Marescaux et al., 2013; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Meyer et al., 2002).

Age: Different categories were used to measure age, i.e., ‘25 years old or under’ = 1, ‘26-35 years old’ = 2, ‘36-45 years old’ = 3, ‘46-55 years old’ = 5, ‘56 – 65 years old’ = 5, ‘66 years old and older’ = 6. The mean age score was 3.11 (S.D. = 1.41).

Gender: Males were coded as ‘1’ and females were coded as ‘0’. Mean score was .52 (S.D. = .50). Among all respondents, 126 (52%) were male and 116 (48%) were female.

Tenure: Tenure was measured with the question “how many years in total have you been working in the current organization?”. The mean score was 7.45 years (S.D. = 3.68).

Education: Education was coded as follow: ‘1’ = less than high school, ‘2’ = high school, ‘3’ = college/trade diploma or certification, ‘4’ = undergraduate degree, ‘5’ = post-graduate degree. The mean score was 3.83 (S.D.= .98).

Occupational category: This variable was dummy coded as follow: '1' = Executive/managerial, and '0' = non-managerial. The mean was .50 (S.D. = .50).

Sector: A dummy variable ('1' = private, '0' = public) was used to measure sector. The mean score was 1.3 (S.D. = .46).

Company size: Company size was coded as follow: '<50 employees' = '1', '51-100 employees' = '2', '101-500 employees' = '3', '501-1000 employees' = '4', and '>1000 employees' = '5'. The mean score was 3.45 (S.D. = 1.42).

Outliers

I used the outlier labeling rule to identify outliers (Hoaglin & Iglewicz, 1987; Hoaglin et al., 1986). As a result, a few cases were deleted, i.e., 8 cases had outliers on commitment-focused HiPo attributions, 4 cases had outliers on organizational trust and 4 had outliers on job satisfaction. Some of these cases had more than one outliers; therefore, in total 15 cases were removed from the analysis resulting in a final sample of 242. Hence, the overall response rate was 20.58%.

In a final sample, a total of 48% were female and the remaining 52% were male. A total of 70% worked in a private sector and 30% in the public sector; 15.7% were executives, 33.9 % held managerial roles, 16.5% had administrative roles, 9.5 % held technical roles, and 24.4 % belong to 'other'. The average age group was 36-45 years, and average employment tenure was 7.5 years.

Analyses

To gauge the model fit, similar to Study 1, I used Comparative Fit Index (CFI) (Bentler, 1990), Tucker Lewis Index (TLI), Incremental Fit Index (IFI) and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) (Steiger, 1990). The CFI, IFI and TLI have been considered the best

approximations of the population value for a single model, with values greater than or equal to .90 considered indicative of good fit (Browne & Cudeck, 1993; Hoyle, 1995; Medsker et al., 1994). For RMSEA, a value of less than or equal to .08 is considered favourable (Kline, 2011).

Since the attributions scale is a relatively new scale, an Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was conducted to make sure that items loaded onto two different attribution scales. I ran EFA Principal component method using Promax rotation. As a result, two factors were extracted. Results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5 Pattern Matrix

	Component 1	Component 2
Quality service		0.783
Contributions valued		0.802
Feel respected		0.85
Feel valued		0.856
Contributions not valued	0.882	
Efforts not recognized	0.887	
Employees as cost	0.796	
Not concerned about well-being	0.853	

Notes:

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Promax with Kaiser Normalization.

A Rotation converged in 3 iterations.

KMO = .74 p = .000

Suppress small coefficients absolute value of .30

After the EFA, I also ran CFA with these two different attribution factors. The fit indices showed an acceptable fit ($\chi^2[17] = 4.79$, $\chi^2 = 91.09$, CFI = .97, IFI = .93, TLI = .89, RMSEA = .13). Based on modification indices, the error terms of two items for commitment-focused attributions (i.e., ‘My company includes employees in the high potential programs in order to improve quality service to customers’ and ‘My company includes employees in the high

potential programs because their contributions are valued') were correlated, and the error terms of the two items for control-focused attributions (i.e., 'My company excludes employees from the high potential programs because employees are considered as a cost' and 'My company excludes employees from the high potential programs because my organization is not concerned about their well-being') were correlated. Resultantly, the model improved significantly. The fit indices for the two factor model were $\chi^2[17] = 1.22$, $\chi^2 = 20.72$, CFI = .99, IFI = .99, TLI = .99, and RMSEA = .03.

A confirmatory factor analysis was also performed to assess the discriminant validity of the constructs. The fit indices for the full model were $\chi^2[606] = 2.29$, $\chi^2 = 1387.91$, CFI = .89, IFI = .89, TLI = .88, and RMSEA = .07. Based on the modification indices, OCB item 'I help other who have been absent for work' was correlated with the other two OCB items 'I willingly give my time to help others who have work related problems' and 'I adjust my work schedules to accommodate other employees' requests for time off'; other OCB items 'I go out of the way to make newer employees feel welcome in the group' and 'I show genuine concern and courtesy toward coworkers, even under tough business and personal situations' were also correlated. Various items for affective commitment were correlated, i.e., 'I feel emotionally attached to this organization' was correlated with two items i.e., 'I would be very happy to spend the rest of my life with this organization' and 'I enjoy discussing my organization with people outside it'. Other item 'I do not think that I could easily become as attached to another organization as I am to this one' was correlated with "I feel a strong sense of belonging to my organization". Lastly, an item of organizational trust 'My employer is open and upfront with me' was correlated with "My employer treats me fairly", and 'I believe my employer has higher integrity' was correlated with 'I can expect my employer to treat me in a consistent and predictable fashion'. The measurement

model results for the 7 factors indicated an acceptable fit to the data ($\chi^2[566] = 2.1$, $\chi^2 = 1197.89$, CFI = .91, IFI = .91, TLI = .90, RMSEA = .07).

Common Method Variance and Discriminant Validity

To check for the common method variance, all indicators of the latent variables were loaded onto a single factor as suggested by Podsakoff et al., (2003). This method to check for common method bias has been used in previous studies (e.g., Alfes et al., 2012; Conger, Kanungo, & Menon, 2000). Results showed a poor model fit ($\chi^2[619] = 4.76$, $\chi^2 = 2944.95$, CFI = .67, IFI = .67, TLI = .65, and RMSEA = .13). Hence, common method bias was not a concern. Compared to the seven factor model, a χ^2 difference test showed that the difference in χ^2 (df = 53) was 1747 which was highly significant, confirming the presence of seven different factors. Further, various procedural remedies as suggested by Podaskoff et al. (2003) were also used to mitigate the likelihood of common method bias. These remedies included (i) eliminating common scale properties, (ii) protecting respondents' anonymity and confidentiality, and (iii) reversed scoring for some of the survey items.

The descriptive statistics and correlations are presented in Table 6. The table further reveals that organizational trust was highly correlated with affective commitment ($r = .76$, $p < .01$), job satisfaction ($r = .77$, $p < .01$), and turnover intent ($r = -.64$, $p < .01$). Additionally, affective commitment was highly correlated with job satisfaction ($r = .75$, $p < .01$) and turnover intent ($r = -.68$, $p < .01$), and turnover intent and job satisfaction were highly correlated ($r = -.71$, $p < .01$), raising the likelihood that these measures may not be distinct. To test this, the CFA model with the seven factor model was modified by having the indicators of the highly correlated variables load onto a single factor. First, I combined trust and affective commitment

into one factor. The results for the six factor model (trust and affective commitment combined into one factor) had a χ^2 (df = 604) = 1599.69, CFI of .86, TLI of .84, IFI of .86, and RMSEA of .08. Compared to the seven factor model, the χ^2 difference (df = 38) was 402, which was highly significant. Next, I combined trust and job satisfaction together. The results for this six factor model had a χ^2 (df = 604) = 1398.31, CFI of .89, TLI of .88, IFI of .89, and RMSEA of .08. Compared to the seven factor model, the χ^2 difference (df = 38) was 200.43, which was highly significant. Then, I combined trust and turnover intent together. The results for the six factor model (trust and turnover intent combined into one factor) had a χ^2 (df = 604) = 1486, CFI of .88, TLI of .86, IFI of .88, and RMSEA of .08. Compared to the seven factor model, the χ^2 difference (df = 38) was 288.1, which was highly significant. Later, affective commitment and job satisfaction were combined together. The results for the six factor model (affective commitment and job satisfaction combined into one factor) had a χ^2 (df = 604) = 1423.38, CFI of .89, TLI of .88, IFI of .89, and RMSEA of .08. Compared to the seven factor model, the χ^2 difference (df = 38) was 225.49, which was highly significant. Next, affective commitment and turnover intent were combined together, and this six factor model had a χ^2 (df = 604) = 1454, CFI of .88, TLI of .87, IFI of .88, and RMSEA of .08. Compared to the seven factor model, the χ^2 difference (df = 38) was 256.11, which was highly significant. Lastly, turnover intent and job satisfaction were combined together. The results for this six factor model had a χ^2 (df = 604) = 1354.1, CFI of .89, TLI of .88, IFI of .89, and RMSEA of .08. Compared to the seven factor model, the χ^2 difference (df = 38) was 156.21, which was highly significant. Thus based on the analyses, it was concluded the seven measures were sufficiently distinct from each other.

Table 6 shows that HiPo program participation was positively related to commitment-focused HiPo attributions ($r = .27, p < .01$), organizational trust ($r = .30, p < .01$), affective commitment ($r = .28, p < .01$), job satisfaction ($r = .21, p < .01$), turnover intent ($r = -.16, p < .05$), and OCBs ($r = .18, p < .01$). However, HiPo program participation is not significantly related to control-focused HiPo attributions. In multiple regression analysis, the significance of the relationships between different predictors can be a concern. To test for multicollinearity among and between significantly related independent variables (i.e., HiPo program participation, commitment-focused HiPo attributions, and organizational trust), I conducted two tests (i.e., variance inflation factor and tolerance test) as suggested by Hair et al. (1999) and Field (2009). Variance inflation factor (VIF) measures the inflation of variances of the regression coefficients when independent variables are related to each other. For this study, the values of VIF ranged from 1.003 to 1.39 which are highly satisfactory given that the maximum value of VIF should not exceed a threshold of 10 (i.e., higher values indicate a higher degree of multicollinearity among variables) (Hair et al., 1998). Next, I used tolerance test that measures the proportion of a variable's variance not accounted for by other independent variables in the model (Hair et al., 1998). Tolerance values for the variables ranged from .717 to .980 which are highly satisfactory as smaller values closer to zero mean a greater likelihood of multicollinearity (Hair et al., 1998). Hence, multicollinearity was not a concern for the present study.

Table 6 Mean, Standard Deviations and Correlations

	Mean	S.D.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1. HiPo Program Participation (Yes = 1, No = 0)	.53	.50														
2. Organizational trust	4.02	.78	.30**													
3. Commitment-focused attributions	4.16	.71	.27**	.50**												
4. Control-focused attributions	3.45	1.05	.05	-.11	.04											
5. Affective commitment	5.35	1.24	.28**	.76**	.53**	-.001										
6. Job satisfaction	5.96	.99	.21**	.77**	.46**	-.07	.75**									
7. Turnover intent	2.46	1.36	-.16*	-.64**	-.31**	.06	-.68**	-.71**								
8. OCBs	5.21	.91	.18**	.55**	.54**	.07	.57**	.52**	-.37**							
9. Age ^a	3.11	1.41	-.13	-.03	-.18**	-.15*	-.08	.09	-.05	.06						
10. Education ^b	3.83	.98	-.01	.02	.02	-.06	.09	.07	-.06	.05	-.02					
11. Gender ^c	.52	.50	.11	.07	.04	.16*	.12	.06	-.11	-.03	-.17*	-.02				
12. Tenure	7.45	3.68	.01	.02	-.07	-.04	.04	.12	-.18**	.06	.54**	.03	.04			
13. Occupational category ^d	.50	.50	.33**	.28**	.26**	.13*	.29**	.25**	-.22**	.25**	.02	.14*	.09	.20**		
14. Sector ^e	1.30	.46	-.09	-.05	-.06	-.11	-.05	.03	-.10	.02	.08	-.12	-.14*	.05	-.17**	
15. Company size ^f	3.45	1.42	.06	-.13*	-.10	.00	-.10	-.05	-.02	-.03	.07	.14*	.02	.20**	-.04	.10

Notes

** p < 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* p < 0.05 level (2-tailed).

^a '25 years old or under' = 1, '26-35 years old' = 2, '36-45 years old' = 3, '46-55 years old' = 4, '56 – 65 years old' = 5, '66 years old and older' = 6

^b 1 = less than high school, 2 = high school, 3 = college/trade diploma or certification, 4 = undergraduate degree, 5 = post-graduate degree

^c male = 1, female = 0

^d executive/managerial = 1, non-managerial = 0

^e private = 1, public = 0

^f '<50 employees' = 1, '51-100 employees' = 2, '101-500 employees' = 3, '501-1000 employees' = 4, '>1000 employees' = 5

n = 242

Multivariate Analysis of Covariance

Hypothesis 1 states that employees who participate in HiPo programs will have higher commitment-focused attributions as compared to other employees, and hypothesis 2 states that employees who do not participate in HiPo programs will have higher control-focused attributions. To see whether there are differences between employees who participated in the HiPo programs and those who did not, I used Multivariate Analysis of Covariance (MANCOVA). MANCOVA is a useful technique that allows to examine group differences while also considering interdependencies between the different variables into account (Hair et al., 1999). Control variables were added as covariates. Using Pillai's trace test, there were significant differences between the two groups in relation to employee outcomes [$V = .07$, $F(7,227) = 2.48$, $p < .05$]. Subsequent separate univariate ANOVAs (Tests of Between-Subjects Effects) revealed significant differences between the two groups for commitment-focused attributions, but not for control-focused attributions (please see Table 7). Hence hypothesis 1 was supported, whereas hypothesis 2 was not supported.

Overall, MANCOVA results (please see Table 7) showed that there were significant differences between these two groups in regards to variety of measured attitudes and behaviors with employees who participated in the HiPo programs reporting favourable attitudes and behaviours. These results replicated and extended the majority of the findings of Study 1. The findings showed that employees who participated in the HiPo programs reported higher levels of affective commitment (mean = 5.67) and organizational trust (mean = 4.24). Additionally, the findings also showed that employees who participated in the HiPo programs also reported higher levels of job satisfaction (mean = 6.16) and commitment-focused HiPo attributions (mean = 4.33) as compared to employees who were not included in the programs. Contrary to study's 1

findings, the results showed that there were no significant differences in turnover intent. Additionally, there were no significant differences in OCBs for employees who were included in the HiPo programs and those who were not included. The mean scores for employees who participated in the HiPo programs were higher on all factors (except for turnover intent whose mean score was lower); however, given the small sample sizes, only large mean differences were significant.

Table 7 Results for Tests of Between-Subjects

Variables	Mean	S.D	N
Affective commitment			
HiPo Program participation (Yes)	5.67	1.07	129
HiPo Program participation (No)	4.99	1.33	113
F-value	9.72**	P-value <.01	
Turnover Intent			
HiPo Program participation (Yes)	2.26	1.28	129
HiPo Program participation (No)	2.69	1.42	113
F-value	2.43	P-value = .12	
Organizational Trust			
HiPo Program participation (Yes)	4.24	.64	129
HiPo Program participation (No)	3.78	.86	113
F-value	13.83***	P-value < .001	
OCBs			
HiPo Program participation (Yes)	5.37	.87	129
HiPo Program participation (No)	5.04	.93	113
F-value	3.78	P-value = .05	
Job satisfaction			
HiPo Program participation (Yes)	6.16	.86	129
HiPo Program participation (No)	5.73	1.08	113
F-value	6.75*	P-value = .01	
Commitment-Focused Attributions			
HiPo Program participation (Yes)	4.33	.64	129
HiPo Program participation (No)	3.96	.73	113
F-value	8.12**	P-value < .01	

Control-Focused Attributions			
HiPo Program participation (Yes)	3.50	1.13	129
HiPo Program participation (No)	3.40	.95	113
F-value	.24	P-value = .63	

Notes

S.D. = Standard Deviation

n = 242

Mediation Analyses

Hypothesis 3 (a, b, c, & d) proposes positive relationships between commitment-focused attribution and employee outcomes, and hypothesis 4 (a, b, c, & d) proposes negative relationships between control-focused attributions and employee outcomes. Further, hypothesis 5 (a, b, c, & d) states that the relationships between HiPo program participation and employee outcomes will be mediated through commitment-focused attributions, and hypothesis 6 (a, b, c, & d) states that the relationships between no HiPo program participation and employee outcomes will be mediated through control-focused attributions. These hypotheses were tested using SPSS Process (Model 4) by Andrew F. Hayes (2013).

First, I tested Hypotheses 3 and 5 since these hypotheses deal with commitment-focused HiPo attributions. To test these hypotheses, I conducted four tests with different dependent variable in each model (i.e., affective commitment, job satisfaction, turnover intent, and OCBs) and commitment-focused HiPo attributions as a mediator. I also included age, gender, tenure, education, occupational category, company size, and sector as control variables in all four models. I used 5,000 bootstrap samples at 95% confidence interval to conduct a test of indirect effect (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). These results provided support to hypothesis 3 such that commitment-focused HiPo attributions are positively associated with affective commitment ($b =$

.82, $p < .001$, please see model 2 in Table 8), job satisfaction ($b = .61, p < .001$, please see model 2 in Table 9) and OCBs ($b = .69, p < .001$, please see model 2 in Table 11), and negatively related to turnover intent ($b = -.56, p < .001$, please see model 2 in Table 10). Hence hypothesis 3 (a, b, c, and d) was supported.

The results also showed that all mediation hypotheses for commitment-focused HiPo attributions were supported. The results demonstrated that there was a significant positive indirect effect of HiPo program participation on affective commitment as a bootstrapped 95% CI around the indirect effect did not contain zero for the relationship between HiPo program participation and affective commitment (.22, LLCI = .0733, ULCI = .3942) (please see Table 8). Hence hypothesis 5a was supported.

The results demonstrated that there was a significant positive indirect effect of HiPo program participation on job satisfaction through commitment-focused HiPo attributions as a bootstrapped 95% CI around the indirect effect did not contain zero for the relationship between HiPo program participation and job satisfaction (.16, LLCI = .0613, ULCI = .2876) (please see Table 9). Hence hypothesis 5b was supported.

The results also demonstrated that there was a significant negative indirect effect of HiPo program participation on turnover intent through commitment-focused HiPo attributions as a bootstrapped 95% CI around the indirect effect did not contain zero for the relationship between HiPo program participation and turnover intent (-.15, LLCI = -.2986, ULCI = -.0538) (please see Table 10). Hence hypothesis 5c was supported.

The results also showed that there was a significant positive indirect effect of HiPo program participation on OCBs through commitment-focused HiPo attributions as a bootstrapped 95% CI around the indirect effect did not contain zero for the relationship between

HiPo program participation and OCBs (.18, LLCI = .0556, ULCI = .3217) (please see Table 11).

Hence hypothesis 5d was supported.

Table 8 The Mediating Effect of Commitment-focused Attributions in the relationship between HiPo Program Participation and Affective Commitment

Variables	Outcome		
	Unstandardized Coef.	SE	t
Model 1 (Commitment-focused attributions)			
Constant	4.26	.27	15.88***
HiPo Program participation	.26	.09	2.85**
Gender	-.03	.09	-.28
Education	.00	.04	.02
Age	-.07	.04	-1.97
Tenure	-.004	.01	-.24
Occupational category	.29	.10	3.08**
Sector	.02	.10	.25
Company size	-.04	.03	-1.41
R sq. (Adj. Rsq)		.14 (.11)	
F-value		4.73***	
Model 2 (Affective Commitment)			
Constant	1.15	.60	1.91
Commitment-focused attributions	.82	.10	8.08***
HiPo Program participation	.29	.15	1.98*
Gender	.20	.14	1.46
Education	.11	.07	1.52
Age	.00	.06	.00
Tenure	.02	.02	.90
Occupational category	.25	.15	1.63
Sector	.04	.15	.48
Company size	-.07	.05	-1.47
R sq. (Adj. Rsq)		0.34 (.31)	
F-value		12.99***	
Model 3 (Total effect model – Affective commitment)			
Constant	4.64	.47	9.88***
HiPo Program participation	.51	.16	3.12**
Gender	.18	.16	1.16
Education	.11	.08	1.35
Age	-.06	.07	-.92

Tenure	.02	.03	.68
Occupational category	.49	.17	2.92**
Sector	.09	.17	.54
Company size	-.11	.06	-1.97
R sq. (Adj. Rsq)		.15(.12)	
F-value		5.05***	

Total, Direct, and Indirect effects

	Unstandardized Coef.	SE
Direct and total effects		
HiPo Program participation on Commitment-focused attributions (path a)	.26**	.09
Commitment-focused attributions on Affective commitment (path b)	.82***	.10
Total effect of HiPo Program participation on Affective commitment (path c)	.51**	.16
Direct effect of HiPo Program participation on Affective commitment (Path c')	.29*	.15
Bootstrapping results for the indirect effect		
Indirect effect of HiPo Program participation on Affective commitment via commitment-focused attributions	.22	.08
CI (95%)	[.0733, .3942]	

Notes:

Values are unstandardized regression coefficients

CI = confidence interval

Bootstrapped samples = 5,000

*p<.05, ** p<.01, ***p<.001

n = 242

Path a represents the link between the independent variable and the mediating variable after adding control variables. Path b shows the link between the mediating variable and the outcome variable after adding control variables. Path c reflects the link between the independent and dependent variables after adding the control variables, and path c' reflects the link between the independent and dependent variables after adding controls and mediating variable into the analysis.

Table 9 The Mediating Effect of Commitment-focused Attributions in the relationship between HiPo Program Participation and Job Satisfaction

Variables	Outcome		
	Unstandardized Coef.	SE	t
Model 1 (Commitment-focused attributions)			
Constant	4.26	.27	15.88***
HiPo Program participation	.26	.09	2.85**
Gender	-.03	.09	-.28
Education	.00	.04	.02
Age	-.07	.04	-1.97
Tenure	-.004	.01	-.24
Occupational category	.29	.10	3.08**
Sector	.02	.10	.25
Company size	-.04	.03	-1.41
R sq. (Adj. Rsq)		.14 (.11)	
F-value		4.73***	
Model 2 (Job satisfaction)			
Constant	2.35	.50	4.72***
Commitment-focused attributions	.61	.08	7.30***
HiPo Program Participation	.18	.12	1.49
Gender	.13	.11	1.09
Education	.06	.06	1.11
Age	.11	.05	2.28*
Tenure	.01	.02	.66
Occupational category	.18	.13	1.40
Sector	.18	.12	1.48
Company size	-.03	.04	-.84
R sq. (Adj. Rsq)		.28 (.25)	
F-value		9.84***	
Model 3 (Total effect model – Job Satisfaction)			
Constant	4.97	.38	13.02***
HiPo Program participation	.34	.13	2.60**
Gender	.11	.13	.87
Education	.07	.06	1.02
Age	.07	.05	1.23
Tenure	.01	.02	.49
Occupational category	.36	.14	2.62**
Sector	.20	.14	1.44

Company size	-0.06	.05	-1.37
R sq. (Adj. Rsq)		.11 (.08)	
F-value		3.60**	
Total, Direct, and Indirect effects			
	Unstandardized Coef.	SE	
Direct and total effects			
HiPo Program participation on commitment-focused attributions (path a)	.26**	.09	
Commitment-focused attributions on Job satisfaction (path b)	.61***	.08	
Total effect of HiPo Program participation on Job satisfaction (path c)	.34**	.13	
Direct effect of HiPo Program participation on Job satisfaction (Path c')	.18	.12	
Bootstrapping results for the indirect effect			
Indirect effect of HiPo Program participation on Job Satisfaction via commitment-focused attributions	.16	.06	
CI (95%)	[.0613, .2876]		

Notes:

Values are unstandardized regression coefficients

CI = confidence interval

Bootstrapped samples = 5,000

*p<.05, ** p<.01, ***p<.001

n = 242

Path a represents the link between the independent variable and the mediating variable after adding control variables. Path b shows the link between the mediating variable and the outcome variable after adding control variables. Path c reflects the link between the independent and dependent variables after adding the control variables, and path c' reflects the link between the independent and dependent variables after adding controls and mediating variable into the analysis.

Table 10 The Mediating Effect of Commitment-focused Attributions in the relationship between HiPo Program Participation and Turnover Intent

Variables	Outcome		
	Unstandardized Coef.	SE	t
Model 1 (Commitment-focused attributions)			
Constant	4.26	.27	15.88***
HiPo Program participation	.26	.09	2.85**
Gender	-.03	.09	-.28
Education	.00	.04	.02
Age	-.07	.04	-1.97
Tenure	-.004	.01	-.24
Occupational category	.29	.10	3.08**
Sector	.02	.10	.25
Company size	-.04	.03	-1.41
R sq. (Adj. Rsq)		.14 (.11)	
F-value		4.73***	
Model 2 (Turnover Intent)			
Constant	6.50	.73	8.88***
Commitment-focused attributions	-.56	.12	-4.51***
HiPo Program participation	-.14	.18	-.77
Gender	-.28	.17	-1.63
Education	-.07	.09	-.86
Age	-.04	.07	-.53
Tenure	-.05	.03	-1.90
Occupational category	-.29	.18	-1.59
Sector	-.43	.18	-2.35*
Company size	0.00	.06	.02
R sq. (Adj. Rsq)		.18 (.15)	
F-value		5.56***	
Model 3 (Total effect model – Turnover Intent)			
Constant	4.12	.53	7.80**
HiPo Program participation	-.28	.18	-1.56
Gender	-.26	.18	-1.49
Education	-.07	.09	-.84
Age	.00	.07	.05
Tenure	-.05	.03	-1.76
Occupational category	-.46	.19	-2.43*

Sector	-0.45	.19	-2.33*
Company size	.03	.06	.42
R sq. (Adj. Rsq)		.11(.07)	
F-value		3.42**	

Total, Direct, and Indirect effects

	Unstandardized Coef.	SE
Direct and total effects		
HiPo Program participation on commitment-focused attributions (path a)	.26**	.09
Commitment-focused attributions on Turnover Intent (path b)	-.56***	.12
Total effect of HiPo Program participation on Turnover Intent (path c)	-.28	.18
Direct effect of HiPo Program participation on Turnover Intent (Path c')	-.14	.18
Bootstrapping results for the indirect effect		
Indirect effect of HiPo Program participation on Turnover Intent via commitment-focused attributions	-.15	.06
CI (95%)	[-.2986, -.0538]	

Notes:

Values are unstandardized regression coefficients

CI = confidence interval

Bootstrapped samples = 5,000

*p<.05, ** p<.01, ***p<.001

n = 242

Path a represents the link between the independent variable and the mediating variable after adding control variables. Path b shows the link between the mediating variable and the outcome variable after adding control variables. Path c reflects the link between the independent and dependent variables after adding the control variables, and path c' reflects the link between the independent and dependent variables after adding controls and mediating variable into the analysis.

Table 11 The Mediating Effect of Commitment-focused Attributions in the relationship between HiPo Program Participation and Organizational Citizenship Behaviours

Variables	Outcome		
	Unstandardized Coef.	SE	t
Model 1 (Commitment-focused attributions)			
Constant	4.26	.27	15.88***
HiPo Program Participation	.26	.09	2.85**
Gender	-.03	.09	-.28
Education	.00	.04	.02
Age	-.07	.04	-1.97
Tenure	-.004	.01	-.24
Occupational category	.29	.10	3.08**
Sector	.02	.10	.25
Company size	-.04	.03	-1.41
R sq. (Adj. Rsq)		.14 (.11)	
F-value		4.73***	
Model 2 (Organizational Citizenship Behaviours)			
Constant	1.68	.44	3.80***
Commitment-focused attributions	.69	.07	9.20***
HiPo Program participation	.06	.11	.54
Gender	-.06	.10	-.64
Education	.03	.05	.67
Age	.10	.04	2.26*
Tenure	-.002	.02	-.12
Occupational category	.19	.11	1.72
Sector	.11	.11	1.01
Company size	.00	.04	.07
R sq. (Adj. Rsq)		.33 (.31)	
F-value		12.76***	
Model 3 (Total Effect model – Organizational Citizenship Behaviours)			
Constant	4.61	.36	12.91***
HiPo Program participation	.24	.12	1.94
Gender	-.08	.11	-.69
Education	.04	.06	.59
Age	.05	.05	.94
Tenure	-.004	.02	-.22
Occupational category	.39	.13	3.10**

Sector	.13	.13	1.00
Company size	-.03	.04	-.67
R sq. (Adj. Rsq)		.09(.06)	
F-value		2.78**	

Total, Direct, and Indirect effects

	Unstandardized Coef.	SE
Direct and total effects		
HiPo Program participation on commitment-focused attributions (path a)	.26**	.09
Commitment-focused attributions on OCBs (path b)	.69***	.07
Total effect of HiPo Program participation on OCBs (path c)	.24	.12
Direct effect of HiPo Program participation on OCBs (Path c')	.06	.11
Bootstrapping results for the indirect effect		
Indirect effect of HiPo Program participation on OCBs via commitment-focused attributions CI (95%)	.18 [.0556, .3217]	.07

Notes:

Values are unstandardized regression coefficients

CI = confidence interval

Bootstrapped samples = 5,000

*p<.05, ** p<.01, ***p<.001

n = 242

Path a represents the link between the independent variable and the mediating variable after adding control variables. Path b shows the link between the mediating variable and the outcome variable after adding control variables. Path c reflects the link between the independent and dependent variables after adding the control variables, and path c' reflects the link between the independent and dependent variables after adding controls and mediating variable into the analysis.

To test for hypotheses 4 and 6, I reversed the coding for 'HiPo program participation' variable, i.e., respondents who did not participate in the HiPo programs were coded as '1' and respondents who participated in the HiPo programs were coded as '0'. This was done because

these two hypotheses deal with employees who did not participate in the HiPo programs. Again, I used SPSS Process Macro (Model 4) by Hayes (2013) to test these hypotheses. Results showed that control-focused HiPo attributions were not significantly related to either of the employee outcomes (i.e., affective commitment, $b = -.06, p = .42$; job satisfaction, $b = -.08, p = .18$; turnover intent, $b = .10, p = .22$; OCBs, $b = .06, p = .32$) (please refer to Table 12, Table 13, Table 14, and Table 15 respectively). Although the relationships between control-focused HiPo attributions and affective commitment and job satisfaction were negative, and the relationship between control-focused attributions and turnover intent was positive, they failed to reach statistically significant levels. Control-focused HiPo attributions also failed to predict OCBs. Therefore, hypothesis 4 (a, b, c, & d) was not supported. Further, the results also showed that control-focused attributions did not mediate any of the relationship between ‘no program participation’ and employee outcomes. Hence, hypothesis 6 (a, b, c, & d) was also not supported.

Table 12 The Mediating Effect of Control-focused Attributions in the relationship between HiPo Program Participation and Affective Commitment

Variables	Outcome		
	Unstandardized Coef.	SE	t
Model 1 (Control-focused attributions)			
Constant	3.99	.41	9.68***
HiPo Program participation (No=1, Yes = 0)	.07	.14	.49
Gender	.25	.14	1.78
Education	-.10	.07	-1.41
Age	-.10	.06	-1.75
Tenure	.00	.02	.07
Occupational category	.27	.15	1.84
Sector	-.19	.15	-1.24
Company size	.03	.05	.57
R sq.		.07	
F-value		2.14*	

Model 2 (Affective commitment)

Constant	5.39	.55	9.74**
Control-focused attributions	-.06	.07	-.81
HiPo Program participation (No=1, Yes = 0)	-.50	.16	-3.09**
Gender	.20	.16	1.24
Education	.10	.08	1.27
Age	-.07	.06	-1.01
Tenure	.02	.03	.68
Occupational category	.51	.17	2.99**
Sector	.08	.17	.47
Company size	-.11	.06	-1.94
R sq.		0.15	
F-value		4.56***	

Model 3 (Total Effect model - Affective commitment)

Constant	5.15	.47	11.03***
HiPo Program participation (No=1, Yes = 0)	-.51	.16	-3.12***
Gender	.18	.16	1.16
Education	.11	.08	1.35
Age	-.06	.07	-.92
Tenure	.02	.03	.68
Occupational category	.49	.17	2.92**
Sector	.09	.17	.54
Company size	-.11	.06	-1.97
R sq.		.15	
F-value		5.05***	

Total, Direct, and Indirect effects

	Unstandardized	
	Coef.	SE
Direct and total effects		
HiPo Program participation on Control-focused HiPo attributions (path a)	.07	.14
Control-focused attributions on Affective commitment (path b)	-.06	.07
Total effect of HiPo Program participation on Affective commitment (path c)	-.51**	.16

Direct effect of HiPo Program participation on Affective commitment (Path c') -0.50** .16

Bootstrapping results for the indirect effect

Indirect effect of HiPo Program participation on Affective commitment via Control-focused attributions -0.0042 .0156
 CI (95%) [-.0646, .0115]

Notes:

Values are unstandardized regression coefficients

CI = confidence interval

Bootstrapped samples = 5,000

*p<.05, ** p<.01, ***p<.001

n = 242

Path a represents the link between the independent variable and the mediating variable after adding control variables. Path b shows the link between the mediating variable and the outcome variable after adding control variables. Path c reflects the link between the independent and dependent variables after adding the control variables, and path c' reflects the link between the independent and dependent variables after adding controls and mediating variable into the analysis.

Table 13 The Mediating Effect of Control-focused Attributions in the relationship between HiPo Program Participation and Job satisfaction

Variables	Outcome		
	Unstandardized Coef.	SE	t
Model 1 (Control-focused attributions)			
Constant	3.99	.41	9.68***
HiPo Program participation (No=1, Yes = 0)	.07	.14	.49
Gender	.25	.14	1.78
Education	-.10	.07	-1.41
Age	-.10	.06	-1.75
Tenure	.00	.02	.07
Occupational category	.27	.15	1.84
Sector	-.19	.15	-1.24
Company size	.03	.05	.57
R sq.		.07	
F-value		2.14*	
Model 2 (Job satisfaction)			
Constant	5.63	.49	12.57***
Control-focused attributions	-.08	.06	-1.34

HiPo Program participation (No=1, Yes = 0)	-.34	.13	-2.56*
Gender	.13	.13	1.02
Education	.06	.06	.89
Age	.06	.05	1.07
Tenure	.01	.02	.50
Occupational category	.38	.14	2.77**
Sector	.18	.14	1.33
Company size	-.06	.05	-1.32
R sq.		.12	
F-value		3.41***	

Model 3 (Total effect model - Job Satisfaction)

Constant	5.31	.38	14.00**
HiPo Program participation (No=1, Yes = 0)	-.34	.14	-2.60*
Gender	.11	.13	.87
Education	.07	.06	1.02
Age	.07	.05	1.23
Tenure	.01	.02	.49
Occupational category	.36	.14	2.62**
Sector	.20	.14	1.44
Company size	-.06	.05	-1.37
R sq.		.11	
F-value		3.60***	

Total, Direct, and Indirect effects

	Unstandardized Coef.	SE
Direct and total effects		
HiPo Program participation on Control-focused attributions (path a)	.07	.14
Control-focused attributions on Job Satisfaction (path b)	-.08	.06
Total effect of HiPo Program participation on Job satisfaction (path c)	-.34*	.14
Direct effect of HiPo Program participation on Job Satisfaction (Path c')	-.34*	.13

Bootstrapping results for the indirect effect

Indirect effect of HiPo Program participation on Job Satisfaction via Control-focused attributions	-.01	.02
CI (95%)	[-.0552, .0122]	

Notes:

Values are unstandardized regression coefficients

CI = confidence interval

Bootstrapped samples = 5,000

*p<.05, ** p<.01, ***p<.001

N=242

Path a represents the link between the independent variable and the mediating variable after adding control variables. Path b shows the link between the mediating variable and the outcome variable after adding control variables. Path c reflects the link between the independent and dependent variables after adding the control variables, and path c' reflects the link between the independent and dependent variables after adding controls and mediating variable into the analysis.

Table 14 The Mediating Effect of Control-focused Attributions in the relationship between HiPo Program Participation and Turnover Intent

Variables	Outcome Unstandardized Coef.	SE	t
Model 1 (Control-focused attributions)			
Constant	3.99	.41	9.68***
HiPo Program participation (No=1, Yes = 0)	.07	.14	.49
Gender	.25	.14	1.78
Education	-.10	.07	-1.41
Age	-.10	.06	-1.75
Tenure	.00	.02	.07
Occupational category	.27	.15	1.84
Sector	-.19	.15	-1.24
Company size	.03	.05	.57
R sq.		.07	
F-value		2.14*	
Model 2 (Turnover Intent)			
Constant	3.43	.62	5.52***
Control-focused attributions	.10	.08	1.22
HiPo Program participation (No=1, Yes = 0)	.28	.18	1.52
Gender	-.29	.18	-1.62
Education	-.06	.09	-.72

Age	.01	.07	.19
Tenure	-.05	.03	-1.77
Occupational category	-.49	.19	-2.56*
Sector	-.43	.19	-2.22*
Company size	.02	.06	.38
R sq.		.11	
F-value		3.02**	
Model 3 (Total effect model - Turnover Intent)			
Constant	3.84	.53	7.30***
HiPo Program participation (No=1, Yes = 0)	.28	.18	1.56
Gender	-.26	.18	-1.49
Education	-.07	.09	-.84
Age	.00	.07	.05
Tenure	-.05	.03	-1.76
Occupational category	-.46	.19	-2.43*
Sector	-.42	.19	-2.19*
Company size	.03	.06	.42
R sq.		.10	
F-value		3.42**	

Total, Direct, and Indirect effects

	Unstandardized Coef.	SE
Direct and total effects		
HiPo Program participation on Control-focused attributions (path a)	.07	.14
Control-focused attributions on Turnover Intent (path b)	.10	.08
Total effect of HiPo Program participation on Turnover Intent (path c)	.28	.18
Direct effect of HiPo Program participation on Turnover Intent (Path c')	.28	.18
Bootstrapping results for the indirect effect		
Indirect effect of HiPo Program participation on Turnover Intent via Control-focused attributions	.01	.02
CI (95%)	[-.0154, .0773]	

Notes:

Values are unstandardized regression coefficients

CI = confidence interval

Bootstrapped samples = 5,000

*p<.05, ** p<.01, ***p<.001

n = 242

Table 15 The Mediating Effect of Control-focused Attributions in the relationship between HiPo Program Participation and Organizational Citizenship Behaviours

Variables	Outcome		
	Unstandardized Coef.	SE	t
Model 1 (Control-focused attributions)			
Constant	3.99	.41	9.68***
HiPo Program participation (No=1, Yes = 0)	.07	.14	.49
Gender	.25	.14	1.78
Education	-.10	.07	-1.41
Age	-.10	.06	-1.75
Tenure	.00	.03	.07
Occupational category	.27	.15	1.84
Sector	-.19	.15	-1.24
Company size	.03	.05	.57
R sq.		.07	
F-value		2.14*	
Model 2 (Organizational Citizenship Behaviours)			
Constant	4.63	.42	11.00***
Control-focused attributions	.06	.06	1.00
HiPo Program participation (No=1, Yes = 0)	-.24	.12	-1.98*
Gender	-.10	.12	-1.80
Education	.04	.06	.66
Age	.05	.05	1.05
Tenure	-.005	.02	-.23
Occupational category	.38	.13	2.95**
Sector	.14	.13	1.08
Company size	-.03	.04	-.70
R sq.		.09	
F-value		2.58***	
Model 3 (Total effect model - Organizational Citizenship Behaviours)			
Constant	4.85	.35	13.67***

HiPo Program participation (No=1, Yes = 0)	-.24	.12	-1.94
Gender	-.08	.12	-.69
Education	.04	.06	.59
Age	.05	.05	.94
Tenure	-.004	.02	-.24
Occupational category	.39	.13	3.10**
Sector	.13	.13	1.00
Company size	.03	.04	-.67
R sq. (Adj. Rsq)		.08	
F-value		2.78**	

Total, Direct, and Indirect effects

	Unstandardized Coef.	SE
Direct and total effects		
HiPo Program participation on Control-focused attributions (path a)	.07	.14
Control-focused attributions on OCBs (path b)	.06	.06
Total effect of HiPo Program participation on OCBs (path c)	-.24	.12
Direct effect of HiPo Program participation on OCBs (Path c')	-.24*	.12
Bootstrapping results for the indirect effect		
Indirect effect of HiPo Program participation on OCBs via Control-focused attributions	.004	.01
CI (95%)	[-.0103, .0496]	

Notes:

Values are unstandardized regression coefficients

CI = confidence interval

Bootstrapped samples = 5,000

*p<.05, ** p<.01, ***p<.001

n = 242

Path a represents the link between the independent variable and the mediating variable after adding control variables. Path b shows the link between the mediating variable and the outcome variable after adding control variables. Path c reflects the link between the independent and dependent variables after adding the control variables, and path c' reflects the link between the independent and dependent variables after adding controls and mediating variable into the analysis.

Moderation Analyses

Hypotheses 7 and 8 propose the interaction effects of HiPo program participation and organizational trust on commitment-focused attributions and control-focused attributions. These hypotheses were tested using SPSS Process Macro (Model 1) by Hayes (2013). First, I tested hypothesis 7. The predictors were HiPo program participation, organizational trust, and their two-way interaction; and commitment-focused attributions was the outcome variable. This model showed that HiPo program participation and organizational trust interaction had a significant effect on commitment-focused attributions ($b = .31, p = .01$) (please refer to Table 16). These findings provided support to hypothesis 7. The interaction graph is shown in Figure 3.

Table 16 The Moderating Effect of Organizational Trust in the relationship between HiPo Program Participation and Commitment-focused Attributions

Variables	Outcome		
	Unstandardized Coef.	SE	t
Model (Commitment-focused attributions)			
Constant	4.36	.29	15.26***
HiPo Program participation	.10	.09	1.11
Organizational trust	.27	.09	3.17**
HiPo Program participation * organizational trust	.31	.12	2.60**
Gender	-.03	.08	-.34
Education	-.01	.05	-.24
Age	-.08	.04	-2.31*
Tenure	-.003	.01	-.24
Occupational category	.17	.09	2.02*
Sector	.03	.09	.31
Company size	-.02	.03	-.67
R sq. (Adj. Rsq)	.33 (.30)		

F-value 10.54***

Conditional effect of HiPo Program Participation on Commitment-focused Attributions at values of Organizational Trust:

Trust	Effect	SE	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
Low	-.1454	.1333	-1.09	.28	-.4080	.1172
Average	.1006	.0904	1.11	.27	-.0776	.2788
High	.3466	.1285	2.70	.01	.0934	.5998

Notes

Values of organization trust for the conditional effect are the mean and plus/minus one SD from mean

Values are unstandardized regression coefficients

LLCI = Lower limit confidence interval

ULCI = Upper limit confidence interval

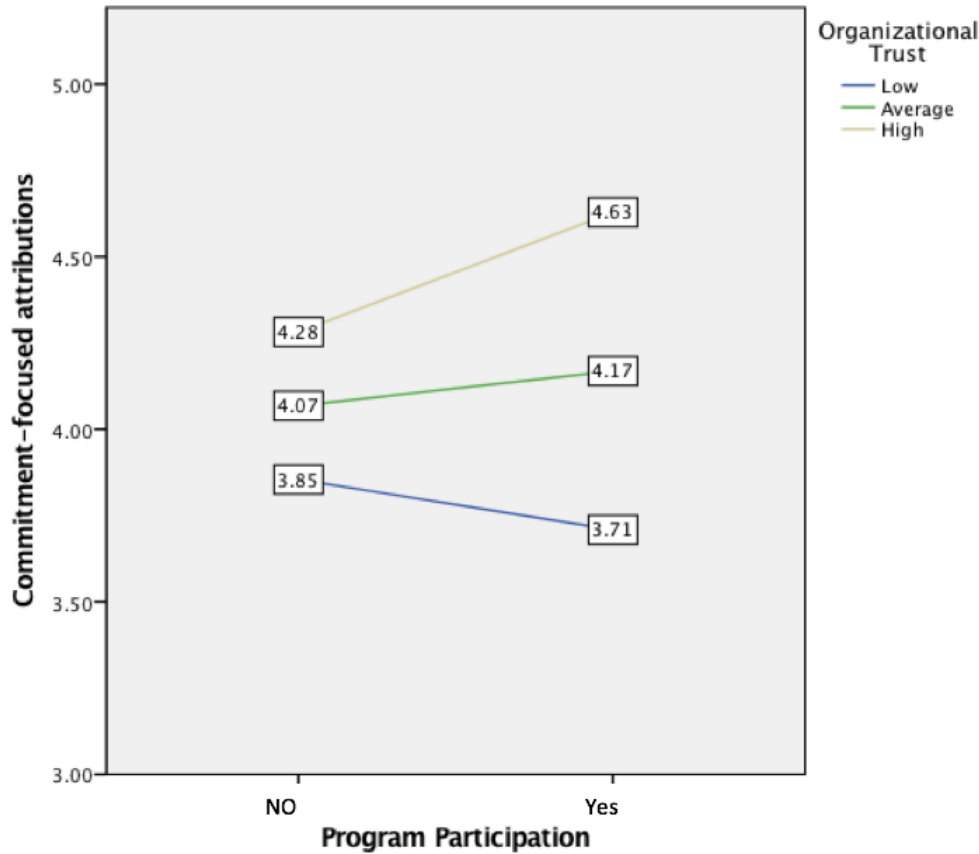
Bootstrapped samples = 5,000

*p<.05, ** p<.01, ***p<.001

N=242

Organizational trust was mean centered prior to analysis

Figure 3 The Interaction effect of Organizational Trust in the relationship between HiPo Program Participation and Commitment-focused Attributions



The conditional direct effect of HiPo program participation on commitment-focused HiPo attributions at various levels of organizational trust showed that the relationship was significant at higher levels [$.3466$, LLCI = $.0934$, ULCI = $.5998$] (i.e., zero was not included in the bootstrapped 95% CI) (please see Table 16). The relationship was non-significant at lower and average levels of organizational trust.

Next, I tested hypothesis 8; the predictors were HiPo program participation (No = 1, Yes = 0), organizational trust, and their two-way interaction; and control-focused HiPo attributions was the outcome variable. This model showed that HiPo program participation and organizational trust interaction did not have a significant effect on control-focused attributions ($b = .06$, $p = .76$) (please see Table 17). Hence hypothesis 8 was not supported.

Table 17 The Moderating Effect of Organizational Trust in the relationship between HiPo Program Participation and Control-focused Attributions

Variables	Outcome Unstandardized Coef.	SE	t
Model (Control-focused attributions)			
Constant	4.02	.40	10.09***
HiPo Program participation (No=1, Yes = 0)	-.02	.14	-1.73
Organizational trust	-.26	.16	-2.06*
HiPo Program participation * Organizational trust	.06	.20	.31
Gender	.25	.14	1.76
Education	-.09	.08	-1.20
Age	-.10	.06	-1.56
Tenure	.00	.02	.06
Occupational category	.34	.15	2.31*
Sector	-.18	.15	-1.23
Company size	.01	.06	.20
R sq. (Adj. Sq.)		.09 (.055)	
F-value		2.67**	

Conditional effect of HiPo Program Participation on Control-focused Attributions at values of Organizational Trust

Trust	Effect	SE	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
Low	-.0678	.16	-.43	.67	-.3816	.2459
Average	-.0201	.14	-.14	.88	-.2990	.2588
High	.0277	.25	.11	.91	-.4638	.5192

Notes

Values of organization trust for the conditional effect are the mean and plus/minus one SD from mean

Values are unstandardized regression coefficients

LLCI = Lower limit confidence interval

ULCI = Upper limit confidence interval

Bootstrapped samples = 5,000

*p<.05, ** p<.01, ***p<.001

N=242

Organizational trust was mean centered prior to analysis.

Mediated Moderated Analyses

The conceptual model presented in Figure 2 on page 71 proposed both mediation and moderation relationships. To test for mediated moderation, I tested four models with different dependent variables in each model (i.e., affective commitment, job satisfaction, turnover intent, and OCBs). As in the above analyses, I included age, gender, tenure, education, occupational category, company size, and sector as control variables in all four models. SPSS Hayes's (2013) Process Macro (Model 7) was used which tests for mediated moderation using regression models followed by bootstrapping techniques. The results are presented in Table 18, Table 19, Table 20 and Table 21. The first part of all four tests were the same as a moderation test as seen in the upper parts of Table 18, Table 19, Table 20 and Table 21 (Model 1). In Table 18, in the second model, the predictors were commitment-focused HiPo attributions, HiPo program participation and control variables. Affective commitment was the outcome variable. The model revealed that commitment-focused HiPo attributions had a significant effect on affective commitment ($b = .82$, $p < .001$). As seen in the lower part of Table 18, bootstrapping analysis revealed that the indirect effect of HiPo program participation and organizational trust on affective commitment through commitment-focused HiPo attributions was significant (i.e., zero was not included in the 95%; LLCI = .0858, ULCI = .4495). Specifically, the indirect effects of HiPo program participation on affective commitment through commitment-focused HiPo attributions was significant for employees who had higher levels of organizational trust [effect = .2849, LLCI = .1093, ULCI = .4880], but not for employees who had lower and average levels of organizational trust. These results suggested that when the level of organizational trust was higher, the relationship between HiPo program participation and affective commitment via commitment-focused attributions was

stronger. Hence, HiPo program participation interacted with organizational trust to form commitment-focused HiPo attributions which then lead to affective commitment.

Table 18 Commitment-focused Attributions as a Conditional Mediator of the Interaction Effect of HiPo Program Participation and Organizational Trust on Affective Commitment

Variables	Outcome			
	Unstandardized Coef.	SE	t	
Model 1 (Commitment-focused attributions)				
Constant	4.36	.29	15.26** *	
HiPo Program participation	.10	.09	1.11	
Trust	.27	.09	3.17**	
HiPo Program participation * Organizational trust	.31	.12	2.60**	
Gender	-.03	.08	-.34	
Education	-.01	.05	-.24	
Age	-.08	.04	-2.31*	
Tenure	-.003	.01	-.24	
Occupational category	.17	.09	2.02*	
Sector	.03	.09	.31	
Company size	-.02	.03	-.67	
R sq. (Adj. Rsq)		.33 (.30)		
F-value		10.54***		
Model 2 (Affective commitment)				
Constant	1.15	.67	1.70	
Commitment-focused attributions	.82	.11	7.63***	
HiPo Program participation	.29	.14	2.05*	
Gender	.20	.15	1.38	
Education	.11	.07	1.60	
Age	.00	.06	.00	
Tenure	.02	.02	.88	
Occupational category	.25	.16	1.56	
Sector	.07	.16	.44	
Company size	-.07	.05	-1.46	
R sq. (Adj. Rsq)		.34 (.31)		
F-value		14.32***		
Direct Effects of Program Participation on Affective commitment				
	Effect	SE	t	p

Conditional Direct Effects of HiPo Program participation on Affective commitment	.29	.14	2.05	.04
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Conditional Indirect effect(s) of HiPo Program participation on Affective Commitment through Commitment-focused attributions at values of Organizational trust

Moderator (Organizational trust)	Effect	Boot SE	Boot LLCI	Boot ULCI
Lower	-.1195	.11	-.3435	.0773
Middle	.0827	.07	-.0521	.2286
Upper	.2849	.10	.1093	.4880

Values for organizational trust are the mean and plus/minus one SD from mean.

Index of moderated Mediation/Indirect Effect of HiPo Program Participation X Organizational Trust

Mediator	Index	SE (Boot)	Boot LLCI	Boot ULCI
Commitment-focused attributions	.2584	.09	.0858	.4495

Organizational trust was mean centered prior to analysis.

Next, I tested the mediated moderated model with *job satisfaction* as a dependent variable (Table 19). There was no difference in the first regression model as can be seen in the upper part of the table. The predictors were HiPo program participation, organizational trust, and their two-way interaction, and commitment-focused HiPo attributions was the outcome variable. This model showed that HiPo program participation and organizational trust interaction had a significant effect on commitment-focused HiPo attributions ($b = .31, p < .01$). In the second model (Table 19), the predictors were commitment-focused HiPo attributions and HiPo program participation, and other factors were controlled for. Job satisfaction was the outcome variable. The model revealed that commitment-focused HiPo attributions had a significant effect on job satisfaction ($b = .61, p < .001$). As seen in the lower part of Table 19, bootstrapping analysis revealed that the indirect effect of HiPo program participation and organizational trust on job satisfaction through commitment-focused attributions was significant (i.e., zero was not included in the 95%; LLCI = .0611, ULCI = .3695). Specifically, the indirect effects of HiPo program

participation on job satisfaction through commitment-focused attributions were significant for employees who had higher levels of organizational trust [effect = .2130, LLCI = .0802, ULCI = .3855], but not for employees who had lower and average levels of organizational trust.

As seen in the middle part of Table 19, the direct effect of HiPo program participation on job satisfaction failed to reach statistical significance. These results suggested that when the level of organizational trust was higher, the relationship between HiPo program participation and job satisfaction via commitment-focused attributions was stronger. Hence, HiPo program participation interacted with organizational trust to form commitment-focused HiPo attributions which then lead to job satisfaction.

Table 19 Commitment-focused Attributions as a Conditional Mediator of the Interaction Effect of HiPo Program Participation and Organizational Trust on Job Satisfaction

Variables	Outcome		
	Unstandardized Coef.	SE	t
Model 1 (Commitment-focused HiPo attributions)			
Constant	4.36	.29	15.26***
HiPo Program Participation	.10	.09	1.11
Trust	.27	.09	3.17**
HiPo Program Participation * Organizational trust	.31	.12	2.60**
Gender	-.03	.08	-.34
Education	-.01	.05	-.24
Age	-.08	.04	-2.31*
Tenure	-.003	.01	-.24
Occupational category	.17	.09	2.02*
Sector	.03	.09	.31
Company size	-.02	.03	-.67

R sq. (Adj. Rsq)	.33 (.30)
F-value	10.54***

Model 2 (Job satisfaction)

Constant	2.35	.55	4.23***
Commitment-focused attributions	.61	.10	6.28***
HiPo Program Participation	.18	.12	1.47
Gender	.13	.12	1.03
Education	.06	.06	1.07
Age	.11	.05	2.16*
Tenure	.01	.02	.58
Occupational category	.18	.13	1.32
Sector	.18	.14	1.35
Company size	-.03	.04	-.79

R sq. (Adj. Rsq)	.28(.25)
F-value	9.31***

Direct Effects of HiPo Program Participation on Job Satisfaction

	Effect	SE	t	p
Conditional Direct Effects of HiPo Program Participation on Job satisfaction	.1803	.12	1.47	.14

Conditional Indirect effect(s) of HiPo Program Participation on Job Satisfaction through Commitment focused Attributions at values of Organizational Trust

Moderator (Organizational trust)	Effect	Boot SE	Boot LLCI	Boot ULCI
Lower	-.0893	.08	-.2805	.0539
Middle	.0618	.05	-.0394	.1661
Upper	.2130	.08	.0802	.3855

Values for organizational trust are the mean and plus/minus one SD from mean.

Index of Moderated Mediation/Indirect effect of HiPo Program Participation X Organizational Trust

Mediator	Index	SE (Boot)	Boot LLCI	Boot ULCI
Commitment-Focused attributions	.1931	.08	.0611	.3695

Organizational trust was mean centered prior to analysis.

The same procedure was also followed for *turnover intent* and *OCBs* (please see Table 20 and Table 21). The first model for both turnover intent and OCBs remained the same, i.e., HiPo

program participation and organizational trust interaction had a significant effect on commitment-focused attributions ($b = .31, p < .01$). Table 20 showed that, in model 2, commitment-focused HiPo attributions significantly negatively predicted turnover intent ($b = -.56, p < .001$). As seen in the lower part of Table 20, bootstrapping analysis revealed that the indirect effect of HiPo program participation and organizational trust on turnover intent through commitment-focused HiPo attributions was significant (i.e., zero was not included in the 95%; LLCI = $-.3573$, ULCI = $-.0551$). Specifically, the indirect effects of HiPo program participation on turnover intent through commitment-focused HiPo attributions were significant for employees who had higher levels of organizational trust [effect = $-.1940$, LLCI = $-.3908$, ULCI = $-.0729$], but not for employees who had lower and average levels of organizational trust. As seen in the middle part of Table 20, the direct effect of HiPo program participation on turnover intent failed to reach statistical significance. These results suggested that when the level of organizational trust was higher, the relationship between HiPo program participation and turnover intent via commitment-focused attributions was stronger. Hence, HiPo program participation interacted with organizational trust to form commitment-focused HiPo attributions which then lead to reduced turnover intent.

Table 20 Commitment-focused Attributions as a Conditional Mediator of the Interaction Effect of HiPo Program Participation and Organizational Trust on Turnover Intent

Variables	Outcome		
	Unstandardized Coef.	SE	t
Model 1 (Commitment-focused HiPo attributions)			
Constant	4.36	.29	15.26***
HiPo Program Participation	.10	.09	1.11
Trust	.27	.09	3.17**
HiPo Program Participation * Organizational trust	.31	.12	2.60**

Gender	-0.03	.08	-.34
Education	-.01	.05	-.24
Age	-.08	.04	-2.31*
Tenure	-.003	.01	-.24
Occupational category	.17	.09	2.02*
Sector	.03	.09	.31
Company size	-.02	.03	-.67
R sq. (Adj. Rsq)		.33 (.30)	
F-value		10.54***	

Model 2 (Turnover Intent)

Constant	6.50	.78	8.31***
Commitment-focused HiPo attributions	-.56	.13	-4.27***
HiPo Program participation	-.28	.18	-1.56
Gender	-.28	.18	-1.56
Education	-.07	.09	-.87
Age	-.04	.08	-.50
Tenure	-.05	.03	-1.79
Occupational category	-.29	.19	-1.55
Sector	-.43	.19	-2.29*
Company size	.00	.06	.02
R sq. (Adj. Rsq)		.18 (.15)	
F-value		5.65***	

Direct Effects of HiPo Program Participation on Turnover Intent

	Effect	SE	t	p
Conditional Direct Effects of HiPo Program participation on Turnover Intent	-.1370	.18	-.76	.45

Conditional Indirect effect(s) of HiPo Program Participation on Turnover Intent through commitment-focused attributions at values of Organizational Trust

Moderator (Organizational trust)	Effect	Boot SE	Boot LLCI	Boot ULCI
Lower	.0814	.08	-.0456	.2584
Middle	-.0563	.05	-.1667	.0303
Upper	-.1940	.08	-.3908	-.0729

Values for organizational trust are the mean and plus/minus one SD from mean.

Index of Moderated Mediation/Indirect effect of HiPo Program Participation X Organizational Trust

Mediator	Index	SE (Boot)	Boot LLCI	Boot ULCI
Commitment-focused HiPo attributions	-.1759	.08	-.3573	-.0551

Organizational trust was mean centered prior to analysis.

The results for *OCBs* were also similar. Table 21 showed that commitment-focused HiPo attributions significantly predicted *OCBs* ($b = .69, p < .001$) after controlling for program participation and other control variables. The indirect effect of program participation and organizational trust interaction on *OCBs* through commitment-focused HiPo attributions was also significant (i.e., zero was not included in the 95%; LLCI = .0638, ULCI = .3799). Specifically, the indirect effects of program participation on *OCBs* through commitment-focused HiPo attributions were significant for employees who had higher levels of organizational trust [effect = .2387, LLCI = .0847, ULCI = .4264], but not for employees who had lower and average levels of organizational trust. Additionally, the direct effects of program participation on *OCBs* failed to reach significance. These results suggested that when the level of organizational trust was higher, the relationship between HiPo program participation and *OCBs* via commitment-focused attributions was stronger. Hence, the mediating relationship between program participation and *OCBs* through commitment-focused attributions was moderated by organizational trust.

Table 21 Commitment-focused Attributions as a Conditional Mediator of the Interaction Effect of HiPo Program Participation and Organizational Trust on OCBs

Variables	Outcome Unstandardized Coef.	SE	t
Model 1 (Commitment-focused HiPo attributions)			
Constant	4.36	.29	15.26***
HiPo Program participation	.10	.09	1.11
Trust	.27	.09	3.17**
HiPo Program participation * Organizational trust	.31	.12	2.60**
Gender	-.03	.08	-.34
Education	-.01	.05	-.24
Age	-.08	.04	-2.31*

Tenure	-0.003	.01	-.24
Occupational category	.17	.09	2.02*
Sector	.03	.09	.31
Company size	-.02	.03	-.67
R sq. (Adj. Rsq)		.33 (.30)	
F-value		10.54***	

Model 2 (OCBs)

Constant	1.68	.45	3.74***
Commitment-focused attributions	.69	.07	9.73***
HiPo Program participation	.06	.12	.50
Gender	-.06	.11	-.60
Education	.03	.05	.69
Age	.10	.04	2.32*
Tenure	-.002	.02	-.12
Occupational category	.19	.13	1.51
Sector	.11	.13	.85
Company size	.01	.04	.07
R sq. (Adj. Rsq)		.33(.31)	
F-value		17.08***	

Direct Effects of HiPo Program Participation on OCBs

	Effect	SE	t	p
Conditional Direct Effects of Program participation on OCBs	.0584	.12	.50	.62

Conditional Indirect effect(s) of HiPo Program Participation on OCBs through Commitment-focused attributions at values of Organizational Trust

Moderator (Organizational trust)	Effect	Boot SE	Boot LLCI	Boot ULCI
Lower	-.1001	.09	-.2852	.0673
Middle	.0693	.06	-.0454	.1942
Upper	.2387	.09	.0847	.4264

Values for organizational trust are the mean and plus/minus one SD from mean.

Index of Moderated Mediation/Indirect Effect of HiPo Program Participation X Organizational Trust

Mediator	Index	SE (Boot)	Boot LLCI	Boot ULCI
Commitment-focused attributions	.2165	.0811	.0638	.3799

Organizational trust was mean centered prior to analysis.

Discussion

This study makes several important contributions. First, the study presented a theoretical framework and elaborated on the process through which HiPo programs impact employees. Scholars usually hold optimistic views that HiPo programs positively affect employee attitudes and behaviours (Collings & Mellahi, 2009). This study examined a range of employee attitudes and behaviours and demonstrated that HiPo programs indeed positively affect those employees who are considered as ‘talent’ and included in these programs. These findings are consistent with empirical studies (Björkman et al., 2013; Gelens et al., 2015; Gelens et al., 2014; Swailes & Blackburn, 2016) that found HiPo employees demonstrated more favourable outcomes. In line with social exchange (Blau, 1964) and psychological contract (Rousseau, 1989, 1995) theories, the findings of the current study shows when employees feel their organizations invest in them and care about their well-being, they reciprocate with positive attitudes and behaviours. Similarly, employees who are excluded from the HiPo programs and interpret this as being overlooked by their organizations tend to reciprocate with lower levels of affective commitment and job satisfaction.

The findings of the study (MANCOVA results) showed that there were no significant differences between OCBs and turnover intent for employees who participated in the HiPo programs and those who did not participate in such program. Had the study not examined the mediating mechanisms, the results may have contributed to employers’ understanding that HiPo programs are not effective in motivating employees to perform discretionary behaviours and reducing their intentions to turnover. However, the mediation analyses showed that the relationships between HiPo program participation and employee outcomes (i.e., turnover intent and OCBs) are not direct. In fact, HiPo program participation impacts OCBs and turnover intent

through commitment-focused HiPo attributions. Empirical studies demonstrate that HiPo employees have lower turnover intent as compared to non-HiPo employees (Bjorkman et al., 2013). This study contributes to the existing literature by showing the relationship between HiPo program participation and turnover intent is not necessarily direct but is mediated through commitment-focused attributions. Additionally, although employee participation affects affective commitment and job satisfaction, commitment-focused attributions are the better predictor of these two outcomes as well. These findings highlight the significance of examining intermediating mechanism between employees' participation in the HiPo programs and their attitudes and behaviours.

Second, this study is the first to examine OCBs of HiPo and non-HiPo employees. The results demonstrated that employees who are included in HiPo programs make more commitment-focused attributions which in turn predict discretionary behaviours. The findings provide support to the main idea of strategic TM which suggests that TM systems are used to elicit desired role behaviours among talent pools that contribute to the strategic success of the organizations (Collings & Mellahi, 2009). Discretionary behaviours are important for HiPo employees as they are expected to take proactive initiatives and be flexible to cope with ever-changing business environments (Collings & Mellahi, 2009). It has been suggested that discretionary behaviours of employees increase the effectiveness of the organization through improved organizational performance (Podsakoff & MacKenzie, 1997; Sun, Aryee, & Law, 2007; Yen & Niehoff, 2004). The results of this study are promising and suggest that differentiation among employees leads to desired employee outcomes, not only in terms of improving their attitudes but also their voluntary and extra role behaviours.

Third, this study also examines employees' perceptions about HiPo programs. Several scholars contend that it is not the HR systems or HR practices *per se* that affect firm performance, but employees' perceptions about these HR practices that affect their attitudes and behaviours, which then affect firm performance (Nishii et al., 2008; Wright & Nishii, 2008). Others (e.g., Guest, 2011; Nishii et al., 2008) suggest that the path through which HR practices or systems affect organizational performance crosses different levels of analysis and, therefore, employee perceptions of these practices need to be considered. This study contributes to the TM literature by examining employees' perceptions about *why* they are selected or excluded from HiPo programs. Drawing on attribution theory (Kelley & Michela, 1980), this study argued that employees use various cues in the social environment and use this information to form attributions about HiPo programs. As expected, the findings showed that compared to employees who are not in the program, those who are in the program form more commitment-focused attributions – perceptions that employees feel valuable and respected when they are included in these programs. Hence, it is crucial for organizations to understand what messages they communicate about HR programs (such as HiPo programs) to elicit desired attitudes and behaviours among employees (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004).

The results showed that there were no significant differences in control-focused attributions between the two groups of employees. Additionally, control-focused attributions were not related to employee outcomes. Moreover, these relationships were not moderated by employees' perceptions of organizational trust. These findings are surprising since it was expected that non-HiPo employees would form more control-focused attributions. A possible explanation for these non-significant results could be that non-HiPo employees may perceive that they are rightly identified as non-HiPo employees and they do not deserve to be HiPo employees

given their inputs into their jobs. Hence perceptions of fairness might play a role in ameliorating the negative attributions of employees' exclusion from these programs (Gelens et al., 2014). Resultantly, they might be contended with their non-HiPo status and do not form any negative attributions about their exclusion from these programs. Additionally, a possibility also exists that some of these non-HiPo employees might be satisfied with their status as not everyone is willing to take on challenging and leadership roles and perceive him/herself as an effective leader (Delong & Vijayaraghavan, 2002).

Scholars are concerned that employees who are excluded from these programs may perceive these programs and their exclusion negatively (Swales, 2013; Malik & Singh, 2014). Consistent with this view, the results showed that non-participation in HiPo programs was negatively related to affective commitment ($b = -.50, p < .01$), job satisfaction ($b = -.34, p < .05$), and OCBs ($b = -.24, p < .05$), but these negative relationships exist not because of control-focused attributions. Rather, the differences in attitudes and behaviours exist due to the differences in the perceptions regarding the contributions of HiPo employees who are included in these programs. Hence, employees are more likely to give attention as to why employees are included in these programs as opposed to why employees are excluded, and these attributions matter in developing their attitudes and behaviours. Since employees use contextual cues and signals to form attributions (Kelly & Michella, 1980), cues and information about the contributions and significance of HiPo employees in the context of TM may be more salient than the indirect cues about the non-significance of non-HiPo employees. The MANCOVA results regarding commitment-focused attributions show that compared to employees who are included in HiPo programs, employees who are excluded from these programs have low opinions of the significance of employees included in the program. These perceptions among non-HiPo

employees may exist due to the feelings of jealousy that their colleagues are given preferential treatment over them (Larson et al., 1998). Non-HiPo employees may think that they are equally capable and have all the required skills; however, since they are not included in the HiPo programs, they may reduce this dissonance by forming less positive perceptions about the significance of HiPo employees. These initial empirical findings are important because as long as non-HiPo employees perceive HiPo employees' inclusion in these programs as negative, they would not be motivated to increase and improve their performance (Nettesine & Yakubovich, 2012).

Fourth, this study advances the literature on TM by examining the role of organizational trust in the context of exclusive TM. Nishii et al. (2006) stated, "people's attributions for the same HR practices differ and ... these differential attributions have implications for valued outcomes, and thus future research that examines the *antecedents* of people's attributions in necessary" (p. 529). This study shows that organizational trust is an important antecedent to employees' attributions about HiPo programs. As shown earlier, *organizational trust* creates a condition under which HiPo program participation results in different attributions of HiPo programs. Interestingly, the findings showed that at lower and average levels of organizational trust, there were no relationships between HiPo program participation and commitment-focused HiPo attributions. Scholars raise concerns that identifying 'talent' or HiPo employees overtly would lead to unfavourable outcomes for these employees. For example, the labeling of talent would create self-fulfilling prophecy through the Pygmalion effect, i.e., the positive affirmation of being a talent would lead to higher self-confidence and increased role commitment (Dries, 2013a; Eden, 1984; Larsen et al., 1998; Swailes & Blackburn, 2016). Additionally, scholars believe that the increased availability of resources will allow these employees to perform better

and develop positive attitudes (Pfeffer, 2001). Contrary to the Pygmalion effect, a ‘crown prince’ syndrome also exists, which suggests that once employees are being told of their HiPo status and are included in HiPo programs, they become arrogant and complacent and lose their motivation to perform higher (Dries & Pepermans, 2008). The current research suggests that this is not always the case, and the relationships between program participation and employee outcomes are contingent on other factors. This research shows that one such factor is organizational trust. Specifically, the study’s findings provide support to the conditional effect of organizational trust, and demonstrate that employees form positive attributions about these programs only when they have a higher level of trust in their employer (effect = .3466, LLCI = .0934, ULCI = .5998), and not when they have average and lower levels of trust. This implies that HiPo program participation does not automatically lead to positive attributions about the programs; rather employees’ level of perceived organizational trust plays an important role in forming these perceptions. The findings highlight the significance of employees’ perceptions of organizational trust in attaining HiPo programs objectives. Even though employees’ inclusion in HiPo programs signifies their value added contributions, this participation does not necessarily lead to positive attributions unless they have a higher level of trust in their employer. The findings also complement the findings of a recent SHRM study (e.g., Van De Voorde & Beijer, 2015) showing that when employees believe that their employer implements certain HR programs and practices to improve company’s position and increase employees’ performance, they attribute these programs negatively, and when they believe that their employer is genuinely interested in employee development and well-being, they attribute these programs more favourably. Recently, Gallardo-Gallardo and Thunnissen (2016) mentioned that we “need to increase our knowledge of the exclusive TM approach, ... how effective is the exclusive approach and under what

conditions?” (p. 49). The current study contributes to the literature and examines an important condition (i.e., organizational trust) under which employees may attribute HiPo programs differently.

Thunnissen et al. (2013a,b) highlighted that the TM literature has a managerialist orientation, and a more pluralist view of TM is required that should pay attention, among other things, to the employee well-being. Thus, this study specifically focuses on employees’ level of trust in their organization which plays a crucial role in changing employees’ attributions and perceptions of these programs. Overall, the study suggests that employees, depending on their perceptions of organizational trust, make attributions about HiPo programs and these attributions are differently associated with their attitudes and behaviours.

Limitations

First, data for the present study were collected from employees working in different organizations having HiPo programs. Ideally, the data should have been collected from employees working in the same organization to assess the differences between groups. However, various challenges² during the data collection stage precluded me from collecting data from employees working in the same organization. Future studies should attempt to replicate the findings of this study by collecting data from a single organization so a broader assessment of differences can be made between employees who participate in these programs and those who do not.

² Various organizations having HiPo programs were contacted and invited to participate in this study. However, none of them was willing to ask non-HiPo employees their perceptions about HiPo programs due to the fear of enticing negative feelings among this group. A few organizations were also reluctant to participate because they did not openly communicate the talent status to employees. They were concerned that introducing the topic of TM by administering the survey and asking employees about HiPo programs might increase curiosity among the employees and raise questions to management about who is on the HiPo list.

Second, all data were collected through self-reported measures, thus increasing the likelihood of common method bias. However, statistical test (i.e., Harman's single factor technique) showed that common method bias was not a concern for this study. This study is mainly concerned with employees' perceptions about HiPo programs, and this information can only be obtained through employees. Additionally, employees are the appropriate source of data collection to measure their own perceptions of organizational trust, affective commitment, job satisfaction, and turnover intent. The only measures that could have been collected from other sources are 'HiPo program participation' and OCBs. Hence, I recommend future research to use archival data to measure HiPo program participation and to collect data for OCBs through multiple sources to investigate the study's findings further.

Additionally, this study took a cross sectional approach; therefore, I cannot draw any conclusions regarding causality. It is equally possible that highly satisfied and committed employees trust their employers more and attribute HiPo programs and their inclusion in these programs favourably. A limitation also arises due to the general nature of 'organizational trust' measure. A possibility exists that HiPo employees' work experiences, resulting from the talent identification and HiPo program participation, resulted in more trust-worthy relationships. Being included in the program and the provision of more organizational resource investment may change HiPo employees' perceptions of their social exchange relationships with their employer and also their perceptions of psychological contract (King, 2016). A time lag research design would have been more appropriate where employees' perceptions of organizational trust was collected at Time 1 and subsequent attitudes and behaviours were measured at Time 2. Hence, future studies should use time-lag studies that may overcome this limitation and yield important insights (Boxall, Purcell, & Wright, 2007).

CHAPTER FIVE: GENERAL DISCUSSION

Overall, this dissertation supports the optimistic view of TM, i.e., managing employees through workforce differentiation such as HiPo programs leads to favourable employee outcomes. In mainstream research, TM has been conceptualized in unitarist terms where the TM agenda is dictated by management about how to improve shareholders' returns while the interest of other stakeholders is ignored (Thunnissen et al., 2013a). The need to consider TM from a pluralist perspective has recently been reiterated by Collings (2014) where he argued that TM should not only focus on shareholders' returns but the perspectives of other stakeholders need to be recognized as well. In this paper, I take the pluralist view of TM and consider employees as one of the important stakeholders in the TM process (Collings, 2014; Thunnissen et al., 2013a). More specifically, I argue that when TM programs are managed effectively by paying attention to employees' feelings, expectations and experiences of TM programs, it leads to more desirable employee outcomes. Examining employee outcomes is important as research has shown that these individual outcomes are significantly associated with organizational outcomes (Ferguson & Reio Jr, 2010; Messersmith, Patel, Lepak, & Gould-Williams, 2011; Ramsay, Scholarios, & Harley, 2000). However, when managed ineffectively, TM could lead to varied undesirable employee outcomes. To date, the effects of different approaches to TM on employee outcomes is an underexplored area within TM research (Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2013; Meyers, van Woerkom, & Dries, 2013). This research contributes to the literature and identifies employees as an important stakeholder group in the context of TM. This research joins a handful of studies and examines the impact of employees' participation in HiPo programs on employee outcomes (i.e., affective commitment, job satisfaction, turnover intent, and OCBs) by considering other important variables (such as employee's perception of organizational trust and HiPo attributions)

which, so far, are omitted in the TM literature.

Recently, Gallardo-Gallardo and colleagues (2015) highlighted the need to examine the reactions of employees to specific TM policies and practices. Specifically, they stated, “this line of research be further expanded in order to come to a better understanding of the (differential) effects of TM initiatives informed by different talent philosophies (i.e., inclusive versus exclusive). Only then can we more clearly unravel the outcomes of inclusive versus exclusive TM and how they, presumably through behavioral and attitudinal employee reactions, affect organizational health as a whole” (Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2015, p. 277). To address this research gap, I drew on various theories (psychological contract theory, social exchange theory and attribution theory) and presented and tested two theoretical models and examined the processes, the paths and the underlying mechanisms through which HiPo program participation and talent identification affect employee level outcomes. The first study explored the role of organizational trust as an important intervening variable between HiPo program participation and outcomes (i.e., affective commitment and turnover intent). The second study built on the first study and not only explored the mediating roles of HiPo attributions between HiPo program participation and employee outcomes (i.e., affective commitment, job satisfaction, turnover intent, and organizational citizenship behaviours), but also examined the moderating role of organizational trust in the relationships between HiPo program participation and HiPo attributions. The TM literature pays relatively little attention to moderating and mediating variables as compared to SHRM literature. This research makes a meaningful contribution to the existing literature by exploring the roles of organizational trust and HiPo attributions in the context of exclusive TM. In doing so, I address the call of Meyers et al. (2013) who contend that much more theoretical and empirical work is needed on how talent approaches impact employee

level outcomes.

Limitations and Implications for Future Research

The current research uses a cross-sectional survey research design; thus caution is required while interpreting the results. Due to the cross-sectional nature of research, it is not possible to identify causal relationships between HiPo program participation and employee outcomes. Although the findings are consistent with the proposed theoretical models in both studies, the cross-sectional nature of the data does not permit any tests to ascertain the causal relationships between HiPo program participation and employee outcomes. Additionally, some of the attitudinal and behavioural differences might have existed before employees' participation in the HiPo programs. The cross-sectional nature of the data did not allow to assess the differences in attitudes and behaviours before and after talent identification/HiPo program participation. Scholars (e.g., Liao et al., 2009) agree that it takes some time for the impact of HR programs on employees to materialize. Therefore, future research should consider using longitudinal research design which increases rigor in the analysis (Boxall et al., 2007). Employees experience the employment relationship over a period of time and their psychological contract may change with the passage of time. Hence, longitudinal research is needed to understand employees' responses to talent identification, and how these attitudes and behaviors change during the talent journey (Swales & Blackburn, 2016; King, 2016).

For this research, I was especially interested in the individual-level analysis because scholars agree that one should study the lowest level first to understand the phenomenon itself and its consequences before examining potential moderators at the higher levels (Marescaux, et al., 2012; Thunnissen et al., 2013b). Other scholars (e.g., Gelens et al., 2013; Lewis & Heckman, 2006) have called for more research on TM that develops complete strategic models, including

individual- and organizational-level of analyses. Moreover, team-level studies should be conducted to assess differences in employee attitudes and behaviours in different organizational contexts, such as when organizations follow team-based approach to TM versus exclusive approach to TM. Additionally, research should also pay attention to the feelings and perceptions of HiPo employees when they are excluded from certain high profile projects and how this exclusion impacts their psychological contact. Future research should also extend the findings of this study and examine shared employee perceptions regarding the exclusive focus of HiPo programs and how these shared perceptions affect the unit/organizational level outcomes. While relying on the idea of ‘double interact’ (Morgeson & Hofmann, 1999) – which is reciprocal interactions and communication among employees about sharing their sentiments and feelings - Nishii et al. (2008) mentioned that unit members are likely to share their attitudes and views of the organization with each other. Therefore, when employees share their feelings and individual perceptions with each other, it is possible that perceptions and attitudes will develop collectively among employees which then affect unit level performance.

Future research should also examine the impact of HiPo program participation on other outcome variables, i.e., employee well-being (Swales, 2013). Huselid and Becker (2011, p. 426) raised concerns that the differentiated workforce, as in the case of exclusive TM programs, is likely to affect the engagement levels and performance of employees, both in the positive and negative directions. It is possible HiPo employees who feel privileged due to more availability of resources are more likely to invest their resources (i.e., time, skills and competencies) which may result in increased work effort and engagement (Campbell & Smith, 2010). However, it is also possible that if they feel they do not deserve to be a HiPo, then they may increase their work effort to reduce this feeling of guilt; however, this increased effort may lead to more burnout (cf.

Deci & Ryan, 1985). Thus exploring these factors (i.e., perceived equity, work effort, and feelings of engagement and burnout) is an interesting avenue to pursue.

As previously mentioned, the TM literature pays little attention to moderating variables. Future studies should explore other factors that may create important boundary conditions for the effectiveness of TM programs (Swales & Blackburn, 2016). Future studies may include other variables such as the strength of ethical climate as a moderator. Ethical climate offers a perceptual lens through which employees can assess the situation (Cullen, Parboteeah, & Victor, 2003), and it is possible that the proposed relationships between HiPo program participation and related attributions might be strong when the organizational climate is strong (Sanders, Dorenbosch, & de Reuver, 2008). A possibility exists that organizations having a benevolent climate might help employees in reducing non-HiPo employees' negative perceptions about HiPo programs due to the belief that the organization has a sincere interest in their well-being, compared to organizations having an egoistic climate where self-interest prevails. Moreover, scholars (e.g., Gelens et al., 2013; Liao et al., 2009; Nishii & Wright, 2007) contend that employees with high leader-member exchange (LMX) with their immediate supervisor or manager are in a better position to create desirable organizational experiences (Gelens et al., 2015; King, 2016). Thus, employees may form positive attributions when they get emotional support, job autonomy and other resources from their supervisors due to a high quality LMX (Gelens et al., 2013). Further, a possibility also exists that the non-HiPo employees may attribute these programs favourably when they perceive that their organizations provide them support through other learning opportunities to develop themselves and to achieve work life balance. Furthermore, future research should also pay attention to individual characteristics. For example, highly conscientious HiPo employees may see the need to fulfill their end of the bargains in

terms of psychological contract fulfilment. However, less conscientious HiPo employees, who may form positive perceptions about their inclusion in the HiPo program, might not perceive that there is a problem in leaving. Similarly, non-HiPo employees who have high need for achievement may form positive perceptions about employees' inclusion into these programs; hence, the existence of these programs might motivate them to perform better and improve their attitudes. Therefore, exploring these individual factors is an interesting avenue for future research.

Practical Implications

The management of talented employees poses a key challenge for many firms (Scullion & Collings, 2011, Tarique & Schuler, 2010). This has been highlighted by recent research from a practitioner oriented institution (such as The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development) which found that only a small percentage of organizations (i.e., only 6%) consider their TM programs to be really effective (CIPD, 2012). Meyers and colleagues (2013, p. 305) stated that one of the reasons for this failure is the lack of 'empirically based recommendations' for use in practice. Hence, based on the findings of this empirical research, I offer various practical suggestions.

Understanding how organizations can develop trust with their employees is important for both employees and organizations themselves (Searle et al., 2011). This empirical research suggests that employee attitudes and behaviours (i.e., affective commitment, job satisfaction, turnover intent and organizational citizenship behaviours) can be improved based on their attributions about the HiPo programs, and, more importantly, their perceptions of organizational trust, specifically for employees being included in the programs. It is important for HR

consultants, and senior level managers to consider the processes related to the talent identification and what messages this identification communicates to employees about their contributions (Guzzo & Noonan, 1994). This identification and employee participation in HiPo programs might give HiPo employees signals/cues that the company expects superior performance and increased commitment and loyalty from them. However, these expectations need to be managed carefully through building trust worthy relationship with employees. Current economic pressures have also led companies to reduce spending on HiPo employees (Martin & Schmidt, 2010). Instead of doing good for the organizations, this practice may do more harm as reduced investment may lead to the feelings of psychological contract violation. Hence, for instance, when it is not feasible to offer lucrative pay packages, organizations should consider allowing HiPo employees to work on important strategic issues, and/or giving them privileged access to online discussion boards where they can participate and share their ideas with senior management. These practices may help to improve their perceptions of psychological contract fulfillment and maintain their level of trust in their employers.

Organizational culture which emphasizes open communication and values individuality also help to develop and build organizational trust (Whitener, Brodt, Korsgaard, & Werner, 1998). In the context of exclusive TM, managers should be transparent in their communication about the HiPo status to employees (Sonnenberg et al., 2014). In most cases, employees already know their talent status either formally or informally; and formally communicating employees about their talent status will do no harm (Church et al., 2015; Gelens et al., 2014). However, the prerequisite to do so is to have a clear definition of talent and an understanding of the talent identification process (Church, 2015). HR and TM professionals need to be more vigilant and should use advanced approaches to identify talent (such as talent identification, sharing of talent

status, and talent development) right from the launch of the TM programs (Church et al., 2015). Hence, organizations need to invest in their TM professionals and provide them training so they can identify talent without any bias.

Additionally, fair procedures in resource allocations need to be implemented to enhance employees' perceptions of equity as it is an important antecedent to building trustworthy relationship with the employer (Konovsky & Pugh, 1994; Searle et al., 2011). To increase employees' equity perceptions, organizations may benefit from using competency modeling to evaluate employees' current performance and to highlight areas where improvement is needed (Campion et al., 2011). Competencies have been broadly defined as "any individual characteristic that can be measured or counted reliably and that can be shown to differentiate significantly between superior and average performers" (Spencer, McClelland, & Spencer, 1994, p. 4). Competency modeling also helps managers to differentiate between average and top performance because of the consideration of more specific attributes (Campion et al., 2011). Although empirical research has yet to show the effectiveness of competency modeling over other performance appraisal systems such as the nine-box grid, scholars (e.g., Cappelli & Keller, 2014) contend that this process may improve predictive success since it considers future job requirements (Campion et al., 2011). Thus, it is suggested that the use of competency modeling, along with open communication and formal program evaluation, would improve transparency that would subsequently help employees form positive justice perceptions and build trustworthy relationships with their employees (Slan-Jerusalim & Hausdorf, 2007).

Additionally, organizations should also consider making an investment in various CSR initiatives and use them as an important management tool to increase employees' perception of trust (Aguilera, Rupp, Williams, & Ganapathi, 2007; Bhattacharya, Sen, & Korschun, 2008).

Alfes and colleagues (2012) stated that these CSR activities “can form an external frame of reference against which employees decide the extent to which they trust their employer, because these signal that the organization acts with moral concerns for the well-being of its employees” (p. 423). When employees believe their organizations are socially responsible, reputable and well-regarded, they tend to identify and stay with their organizations (Bhattacharya et al., 2008; Hausknecht et al., 2009). CSR activities help achieve psychological outcomes for employees (such as employees feel good about their jobs, and develop a sense of pride and a feeling of well-being), which then translate into behavioral outcomes (i.e., improved productivity and quality, reduced employee absenteeism, and improved employee retention) (Bhattacharya et al., 2008). Hence, building a reputation of a socially responsible citizen, by communicating employees about various CSR initiatives and the rationale behind these programs as well as encouraging employees’ participation in these activities, can be an important lever for organizations to manage and retain talent (Vaiman, Scullion, & Collings, 2012).

Overall, the findings suggest that recognizing the significance of employees included in the HiPo programs help achieve TM objectives (i.e., favourable attitudes and behaviours of HiPo employees). Does this mean that the organizations should only communicate the significance of HiPo employees? Doing so is dangerous as it may affect the majority of the organization’s workforce negatively. The findings that employees who did not participate in HiPo programs had unfavourable attitudes represents the potential ‘dark side’ of TM. The exclusion of employees from HiPo programs may give non-HiPo employees a message that less is required from them, given fewer resources, and less training, mentoring and developmental opportunities (Pfeffer, 2001; Lacey & Groves, 2014). While it may not be practical for organizations to invest equally among employees given all resource constraint, organizations should follow ethical guidelines in

relation to the overall workforce development (Swales, 2013). Given the findings that organizational trust does not make a difference for non-HiPo employees, it might be a good idea for organizations to focus on the development of leaders who can identify the 'hidden' talent among those employees who are not formally identified as talent and do not participate in any HiPo programs (Oltra & Vivas-Lopez, 2013). Organizations should focus on creating a supportive environment where all employees feel valued and supported. When it is not possible for organizations to invest equally in employees, other practices such as offering employees flexible work options or telecommuting, increased participation in decision making, work-life balance, and providing them opportunities to voice their concerns may help improve their attitudes. It is important that managers value the contributions of non-HiPo employees, irrespective of their motivation to become HiPo employees as some employees deliberately choose not to be high performers depending on their needs and preferences (DeLong & Vijayaraghavan, 2003). Helping employees see the big picture and how their roles add value (or ensure against decreasing value) can improve their attitudes and behaviours.

Conclusion

The field of TM has grown tremendously and our understanding of the topic/practice has increased significantly; however, much more needs to be done in terms of theoretical development and empirical work, and going beyond shareholder values by specifying how TM can create value for other stakeholders as well. It is my hope that this research guides practitioners and TM consultants on how they can effectively manage their TM programs and get the desired employee outcomes. Additionally, I hope that this research stimulates further interest among scholars to assess how different approaches to TM could lead to (un)desirable outcomes for different groups of employees.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A Ethics Approval



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Approval Period: 11/12/14-11/12/15

Memo

To: Amina Malik, Human Resources Management - Graduate Program,
amina14@yorku.ca

From: Alison M. Collins-Mrakas, Sr. Manager and Policy Advisor, Research Ethics
(on behalf of Denise Henriques, Chair, Human Participants Review Committee)

Date: **Wednesday, November 12, 2014**

Re: Ethics Approval

High Potential Programs: Let's hear it for 'B' players

I am writing to inform you that the Human Participants Review Sub-Committee has reviewed and approved the above project.

Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at: 416-736-5914 or via email at: acollins@yorku.ca.

Yours sincerely,

Alison M. Collins-Mrakas M.Sc., LL.M.
Sr. Manager and Policy Advisor,
Office of Research Ethics

Appendix B
Measures used in Study 1

Perceptions of Organizational Trust

Listed below are statements that represent your views about your company. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I trust my employer.					
My employer is open and upfront with me with policies and practices.					
I believe my employer has high integrity.					
In general, I believe my employer's motives and intentions are good.					
My employer is not always honest and truthful. (R)					
I don't think my employer treats me fairly. (R)					
I can expect my employer to treat me in a consistent and predictable fashion.					

Affective Commitment

Listed below are statements that represent views about working in this organization. Please indicate to what extent you agree with these statements.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree somewhat	Undecided	Agree somewhat	Agree	Strongly agree
I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization.							
I enjoy discussing my organization with people outside it.							
I really feel as if this organization's problems are my own.							

I think that I could easily become as attached to another organization as I am to this one.							
I feel like 'part of the family' at my organization.							
I feel 'emotionally attached' to this organization.							
This organization has a great deal of personal meaning for me.							
I feel a strong sense of belonging to my organization.							

Turnover Intent

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following three statements?

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree somewhat	Undecided	Agree somewhat	Agree	Strongly agree
I do not intend to look for a job outside of my company within the next year. (R)							
I never think about quitting my job. (R)							
I intend to remain with my company for the near future.							

*Note: (R) denotes a reverse-scored item.

Appendix C
Measures used in Study 2

HiPo Attributions

I would like to know your opinion about why your company includes employees in the high potential programs. Please tell us the extent to which you agree with each of the statements below.

My Company includes employees in the high potential programs:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
in order to help employees deliver quality services to customers.					
because their contributions are valued.					
so that employees feel respected.					
so that employees feel valued.					

I would like to know your opinion about why your company excludes employees (i.e., average performers / non-high potentials / ‘B’ players) from the high potential programs.

My company excludes employees from the high potential programs:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
because employees are considered as a cost.					
because their contributions are not valued as much as the high potential employees.					
because their efforts are not recognized as much as the high potential employees.					
because my organization is not concerned about their well-being.					

Perceptions of Organizational Trust

Listed below are statements that represent your views about your organization. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I fully trust my employer.					
My employer is open and upfront with me.					
I believe my employer has high integrity.					
In general, I believe my employer's motives and intentions are good.					
My employer is always honest and truthful.					
My employer treats me fairly.					
I can expect my employer to treat me in a consistent and predictable fashion.					

Affective Commitment

Listed below are statements that represent views about working in your current organization. Please indicate to what extent you agree with these statements.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree somewhat	Undecided	Agree somewhat	Agree	Strongly agree
I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization.							
I enjoy discussing my organization with people outside it.							
I really feel as if this organization's problems are my own.							
I do not think that I could easily become as attached to another organization as I am to this one.							
I feel like 'part of the family' at my organization.							

I feel 'emotionally attached' to this organization.							
This organization has a great deal of personal meaning for me.							
I feel a strong sense of belonging to my organization.							

Job Satisfaction

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree somewhat	Undecided	Agree somewhat	Agree	Strongly agree
In general, I like working here.							
Overall, I like my job.							
All things considered, I am satisfied with my current job.							

Turnover Intent

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree somewhat	Undecided	Agree somewhat	Agree	Strongly agree
I do not intend to look for a job outside my organization within the next year. (R)							
I do not often think about quitting my job. (R)							
I do not intend to remain with my organization for the near future. (R)							

Organizational Citizenship Behaviours:

Listed below are statements that reflect your actual behaviours towards others (e.g., coworkers, peers, colleagues etc.) in the organization. Please indicate how often do you engage in the following behaviors.

	Never	Almost never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very often	Always
I help others who have been absent.							
I willingly give my time to help others who have work-related problems.							
I adjust my work schedule to accommodate other employees' requests for time off.							
I go out of the way to make newer employees feel welcome in the work group.							
I show genuine concern and courtesy toward coworkers, even under the most tough business or personal situations.							
I give up time to help others who have work or non-work problems.							
I assist others with their duties.							
I share personal property with others to help their work.							

*Note: (R) denotes a reverse-scored item.