

**IMPRINTING ANTECEDENTS OF THE HUMAN
RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PROCESS:
TOWARDS A MULTI-LEVEL MODEL**

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Abstract

Since the publications of Bowen and Ostroff's (2004) *HRM system strength* and Nishii and colleagues' (2008) *HR attributions*, HRM process researchers have advanced a plethora of research that demonstrates the importance of well-communicated HRM systems for positive employee and organizational outcomes. However, researchers have contended that the antecedents of the HRM process (i.e., HRM system strength and HR attributions) are less understood.

To remedy this gap, a small but emerging body of research suggests that employees' personal histories affect their assumptions and expectations about work and management, which ultimately influences how they currently understand and interpret HRM in their organization. Past experiences and associated presuppositions of HRM - referred to as 'imprinting factors' - can manifest in early childhood and/or adolescence. Following an imprinting perspective, it is argued that individuals form career expectations during sensitive developmental periods (e.g., parent-child relationships, educational processes, and early social experiences) which shape their understanding and attributions of HRM in later life. Yet, this body of work is still in its nascency. Very little is known to what degree employees are influenced by their personal histories and upbringing. Even less is known about the organizational and cultural contextual factors that act as boundary conditions in these relationships. Given that imprinting factors can cause employees' to understand and interpret HRM differently from what is intended by management, it is important to understand to what degree past experiences affect the HRM process, and how these effects can be actively managed.

This thesis investigates the extent to which imprinting factors influence employees' perceived HR strength and HR attributions. To this end, a series of three studies are presented:

1) a systematic review of the existing body of work, 2) an empirical examination of parental behaviours on perceived HR strength, and 3) an empirical examination of family motivation on HR attributions. In addition, multi-level contextual factors (i.e., HRM content and national values) are included as important boundary conditions in these models.

The findings within this thesis contribute to the HRM process literature by the integration of an imprinting perspective with HRM process theories to offer a better understanding of the intrapersonal, non-work antecedents of perceived HR strength and HR attributions. Several avenues of research are presented which act as a platform for future scholarship. This thesis also has implications for HR professionals and managers who intend to design HRM systems for maximum effectiveness on positive employee outcomes.

List of Outputs from the Thesis

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List of Acronyms

CFA	-	Confirmatory factor analysis
GLOBE	-	Global leadership and organizational behaviour effectiveness
CFI	-	Comparative fit index
df	-	Degrees of freedom
FHRA	-	Functional human resource attributions
H#	-	Hypothesis number
HRA	-	Human resource attributions
HLM	-	Hierarchical linear modelling
HPWS	-	High-performance work systems
HR	-	Human resources
HRM	-	Human resource management
ICC	-	Intraclass correlations
JS	-	Job security
M	-	Mean
M#	-	Model number
MBA	-	Master of business administration
PD	-	Power distance
PO	-	Performance orientation
RMSEA	-	Root mean square error of approximation
R _{wg}	-	Interrater agreement
SD	-	Standard deviation
SHRM	-	Strategic human resource management
SRMR	-	Standardized Root Mean Square Residual
χ^2	-	Chi-squared

CHAPTER 1

Introduction and Overview

1.1 Human Resource Management Research

For many decades, human resource management (HRM) researchers have focused on explaining the effects of (bundles of) HRM practices (e.g., performance appraisal, selection, training, performance pay, etc.) on organizational performance (Boon, Den Hartog, & Lepak, 2019). This body of HRM research has predominantly adopted a macro-level, employer-focused perspective to identify the characteristics of (bundles of) HRM practices that are beneficial or harmful for organizational outcomes (Wright & Ulrich, 2017). This approach is known as the *content approach to HRM*. At present, HRM content researchers have firmly established the association between HRM practices and organizational performance (e.g., Boselie, Dietz, & Boon, 2005; Jiang, Lepak, Hu, & Baer, 2012) and the synergistic advantages of using multiple HRM practices – also known as bundles of HRM practices (Macduffie, 1995), high-performance work systems (Combs, Liu, Hall, & Ketchen, 2006), and high-commitment work systems (Whitener, 2001) – over individual HRM practices.

However, HRM scholars have argued that the exact mechanisms by which bundles of HRM practices exert their effects are less understood – this is often referred to as the ‘black box of HRM’ (Fey, Morgulis-Yakushev, Park, & Björkman, 2009; Jiang, Takeuchi, & Lepak, 2013; Savaneviciene & Stankeviciute, 2010). In an attempt to uncover the mechanisms within the black box, scholarly attention shifted from an employer’s to an employee’s perspective (Sanders, 2022). Instead of examining HRM through a management-focused lens, researchers began to consider that employees’ understanding and attributions of HRM matter for their behaviours, attitudes, and performance (Purcell & Kinnie, 2007). In line with this approach, a

substantial body of work has advanced the development of several theoretical frameworks which place employees at the centre of the HRM-performance relationship, including the development and retention of key talent (i.e., resource-based perspectives; Wright & McMahan, 2011), the enhancement of employees' abilities, motivations, and opportunities (Jiang et al., 2012), and the reciprocal nature of the employer-employee relationship (i.e., social exchange; (Blau, 1964; Gould-Williams & Davies, 2005; Jiang & Messersmith, 2018).

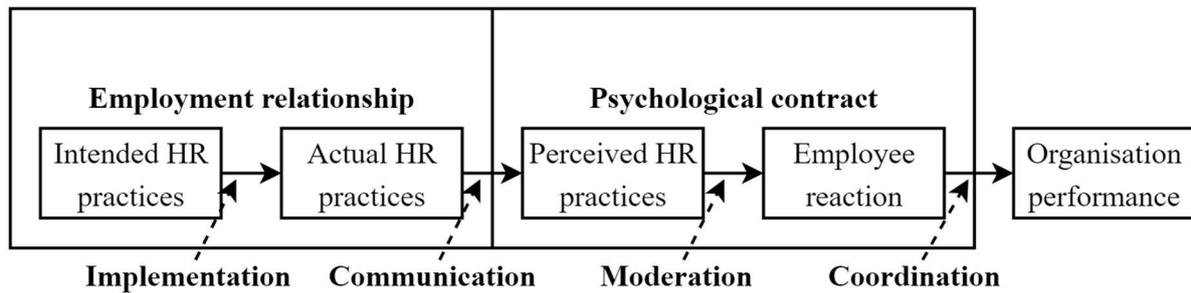
1.2 The HRM Process Approach

In the process model of strategic HRM (SHRM) (see Figure 1.1), Nishii and Wright (2008) argued that HRM practices as designed by management can become ineffective when there are discrepancies between intended and implemented HRM practices, or when HRM practices are poorly understood by employees. To draw out these discrepancies, they distinguished between intended, actual, and perceived HRM practices. *Intended* practices refer to HRM practices as designed by senior management, *actual* HRM practices refer to the practices that are actually implemented by (line) managers, and *perceived* HRM practices refer to the practices that are experienced and judged by employees.

Nishii and Wright (2008) further suggested that existing (content-focused) HRM research has ignored the individual-level processes that are important for HRM practices to positively influence organizational outcomes. Specifically, they highlighted the critical role of employees' perceptions, interpretations, and reactions in the HRM-performance causal chain. Although actual HRM practices exist objectively, employees subjectively interpret and process HR-related information at the individual level (Fiske & Taylor, 1991, 2013). For example, even if flexible working practices are implemented by senior management to benefit employees, this might have a different effect if employees interpret this practice as intended to exploit them or cut costs (Nishii, Lepak, & Schneider, 2008). Hence, for HRM to be implemented successfully,

the gap between intended, actual, and perceived HRM practices needs to be minimised.

Figure 1.1: The process model of SHRM from Nishii & Wright (2008)



In this light, HRM researchers like Nishii and Wright (2008) have argued that HRM content approaches, either from a manager or employee perspective, have oversimplified the HRM-performance relationship (Kehoe & Wright, 2013; Sanders, Shipton, & Gomes, 2014) and that the black box of HRM can be further explained by focusing on the employee-related micro-foundations within the HRM-performance linkage (Nishii & Wright, 2008; Sanders, 2022). Even in the same organization, employees can perceive and react to HRM practices very differently which are, in part, explained by the way HRM is communicated in the organization and differences in the way employees understand and interpret HRM practices.

Building on these ideas, HRM scholars have responded to the body of content-oriented, macro-HRM research by (re-)framing the black box of HRM as a communication challenge. In turn, over the past two decades, scholars have paid increased attention to the HRM process (Sanders et al., 2014; Sanders, Yang, & Patel, 2021), suggesting that the way HRM is communicated, understood, and received by organizational members is paramount for positive employee outcomes (Bednall, Sanders, & Runhaar, 2014; Bednall, Sanders, & Yang, 2022; Bos-Nehles & Veenendaal, 2017; Hewett, Shantz, Mundy, & Alfes, 2018; Sanders & Yang, 2016; Sanders, Yang, & Patel, 2021; Wang, Kim, Rafferty, & Sanders, 2020). This theoretical approach argues that HRM practices serve as communication mechanisms that signal to employees which behaviours to engage in. Aspects of HRM practices and systems can either

facilitate or hinder this communication process (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004). Most HRM process scholars draw upon attribution theories (Heider, 1958; Kelley, 1967, 1973; Weiner, 1985) to understand *how* managers communicate their intentions through HRM systems, and *why* employees react and understand HRM in different ways in the same organization.

1.3 Attribution Theories in HRM Process Research

The process approach to HRM has been heavily influenced by social psychology research, specifically by attribution theories (e.g., Heider, 1958; Kelley, 1967, 1973). Attribution theories are concerned with how people develop explanations for behaviours and social encounters. Originally advanced by Heider (1958), it was proposed that people develop attributions (causal explanations) to gain a sense of control of their environment and to predict future events. Heider suggested that attributions can be classified as 1) *internal attributions*, where events and behaviours are explained by dispositional or personal factors (e.g., effort or skill) or 2) *external attributions*, where events and behaviours are explained by situational or environmental factors (e.g., chance or luck).

Since then, Heider's ideas have been subsequently advanced by social psychologists such as Kelley (1967, 1973) who elaborated on the types of information people use when forming attributions. Attribution theories have also been advanced by other researchers and now several overlapping streams of attributions exist within the literature (also see Jones & Davis, 1965). However, whilst there are subtle differences between the streams of attributions, they all fall under the umbrella of 'attribution theories' and share common ground by placing individual interpretations at the heart of cause-and-effect explanations for the behaviours of others and themselves.

1.4 HRM System Strength

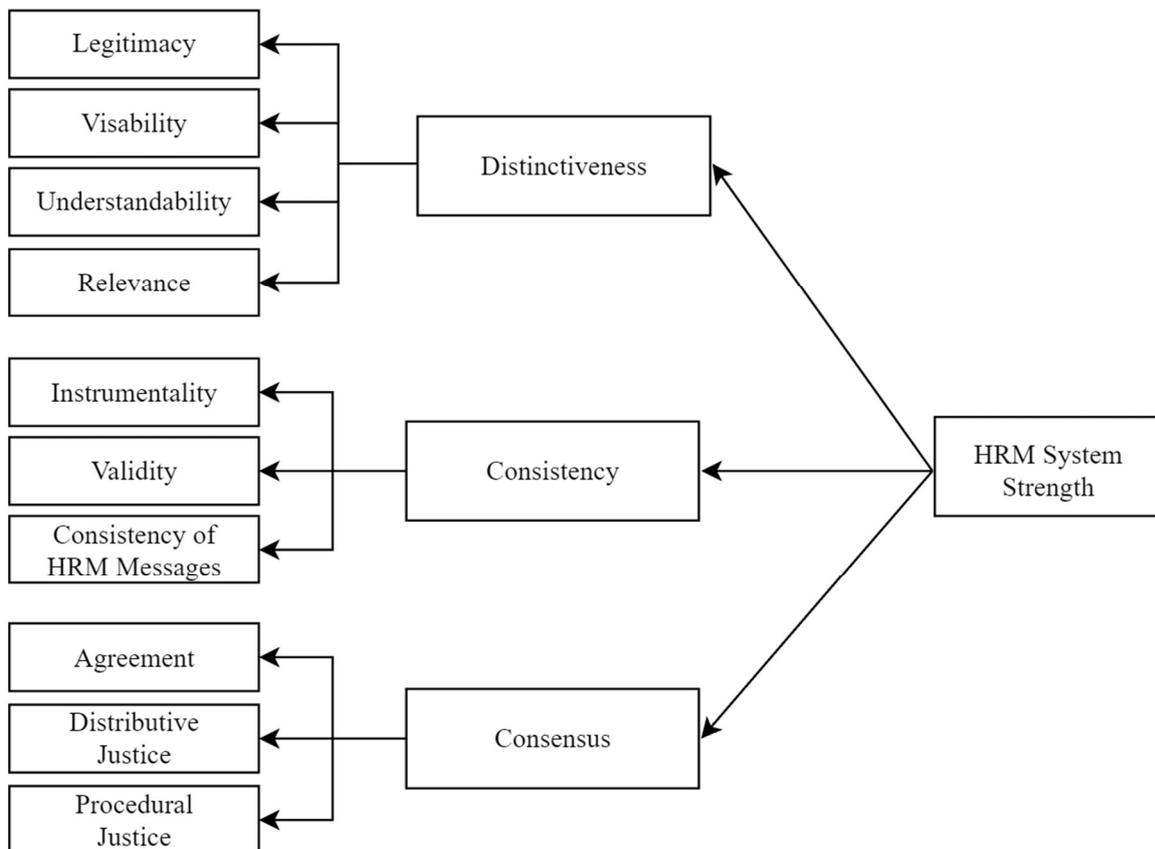
HRM researchers have since applied attribution theories to the HRM context which has

led to the emergence of two dominant strands of HRM process research (see Sanders, Yang, & Patel, 2021). The first involves Bowen and Ostroff's (2004) *HRM system strength* (also referred to as *HR strength*; Sanders et al., 2021). Bowen and Ostroff (2004) suggested that HRM systems, referring to "the set of practices adopted and, ideally, should be largely driven by the strategic goals and values of the organization" (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004, p. 203), act as communication mechanisms that signal what behaviours are desired, expected, and valued from employers to employees. That is, when HRM systems are well-communicated and easily understood, employees at all levels of the organizational hierarchy collectively recognise the behaviours that are desired by management and the HRM-performance relationship is strengthened (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004; Ostroff & Bowen, 2016).

Bowen and Ostroff's HRM system strength theory heavily draws on Kelley's co-variation principle of the attribution theory (Kelley, 1967, 1973). Kelley proposed that "an effect is attributed to the one of its possible causes with which, over time, it covaries" (Kelley, 1973, p 108). To elaborate, Kelley argued that people draw upon a range of information – such as a combination of past behaviour, the environment, and circumstance – when developing explanations of behaviours. Specifically, Kelley's co-variation model of attributions (1967) outlines three types of information that people use to conclude whether behaviours are attributed to stable and dispositional traits (e.g., personality), or situational and external causes (e.g., chance; stress). These three types of covariation information include *distinctiveness* (whether a person behaves in the same way across different situations), *consistency* (whether a person behaves in the same way across time), and *consensus* (whether other people behave in the same way in similar situations). The various combinations of distinctiveness, consistency, and consensus result in different causal explanations for others' behaviours. For example, when consensus and distinctiveness are low, but consistency is high, people tend to attribute behaviours to dispositional factors rather than external events (Kelley, 1967).

Drawing upon Kelley’s co-variation model of attributions (Kelley, 1967, 1973), Bowen and Ostroff (2004) argued that employees apply the covariation principle when understanding the types of behaviours that management expects and rewards through HRM practices. They proposed that the degree to which employees have a shared understanding of HRM is dependent on nine meta-features of the HRM system, grouped into three core characteristics: *distinctiveness* (i.e., visibility, understandability, strategic relevance, and legitimacy of authority), *consistency* (i.e., instrumentality, the validity of HRM practices, and consistency of messages), and *consensus* (i.e., fairness and agreement between messages senders) (see Figure 1.2). *Distinctiveness* refers to the degree to which HRM stands out in the HRM environment and captures employees’ attention. *Consistency* refers to the degree to which HRM practices are internally reinforcing, and similar across time and modalities. *Consensus* refers to organizational members perceiving and understanding HRM in the same way.

Figure 1.2: The meta-features and characteristics of HRM system strength



When these nine meta-features are fulfilled, a ‘strong HRM system’ is created. A strong HRM system facilitates an organizational climate that encourages a shared understanding between organizational members about expected behaviours which ultimately helps the organization achieve its strategic goals (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004; Ostroff & Bowen, 2016). In contrast, when an HR strength is weak, individuals’ understanding of HRM become idiosyncratic and the HRM-performance relationship is weakened. Although HR strength was originally intended as a unit-level construct, the focus of this thesis builds on previous researchers by attending to employees’ perceptions of HR strength as a meaningful individual-level and most studied construct (see Alfes et al., 2019; Bednall, Sanders, & Yang, 2021; Chacko & Conway, 2019; Delmotte, De Winne, & Sels, 2012).

1.5 HR Attributions

The second stream of HRM process research includes *HR attributions*. In their seminal paper, Nishii and colleagues (2008) focused on psychological processes through which employees attach meaning to HRM practices adopted by their organization. HR attributions originate in Heider’s theory of causal attributions (Heider, 1958). Nishii and colleagues (2008) explained that - just as individuals make internal (dispositional) or external (situational) attributions to understand the cause of certain behaviours - employees develop internal or external attributions causal explanations about management’s motivations for using particular HRM practices. The various attributions that are developed are known as ‘HR attributions’.

Nishii and colleagues (2008) categorised five distinct HR attributions along three dimensions. First, they argued that employees develop attributions about whether HRM practices are within managerial control (i.e., *internal* attributions), such as to enhance service quality or enforce control. In contrast, *external* attributions refer to employee beliefs that are outside of managerial control, such as compliance with union and legal regulations. Internal

attributions are then split into two sub-dimensions: 1) the strategic orientation of HRM practices (e.g., to enhance service quality or reduce costs) and 2) the underlying philosophy of the HRM practices (e.g., to encourage well-being or to exploit employees). The combination of these two sub-dimensions results in four unique internal attributions: *commitment-focused* (employee and commitment focused), *service-delivery* (business and commitment focused), *exploitation* (employee and control focused), and *cost-saving* (business and control focused) (see Figure 1.3). They demonstrated that employees are more committed and engaged when they believe HRM practices are implemented to benefit and support their work, rather than control or exploit them, while compliance attributions were found to have little effect on employee outcomes (Nishii et al., 2008).

Figure 1.3: A typology of HR attributions from Nishii et al. (2008)

	Internal attributions		External attribution
	Business/strategic goal underlying HR	Employee-oriented philosophy	Union compliance
Commitment-focused	Service quality	Employee well-being	
Control-focused	Cost reduction	Exploiting employees	

It is important to note that, in addition to (perceived) HR strength and HR attributions, the implementation of HRM practices is sometimes seen as part of HRM process research (Guest, 2021; Sanders, 2022; Sanders, Yang, et al., 2021). However, the focus of this thesis is on perceived HR strength and HR attributions as these streams use attribution theories rather than sense-making approaches more commonly employed in this other body of research.

1.6 Limitations

1.6.1 Antecedents of the HRM Process

As the body of HRM process research has developed, perceived HR strength and HR attribution frameworks have inspired a plethora of studies that emphasise the importance of well-communicated and understandable HRM systems for positive performance, behavioural, and attitudinal outcomes (for reviews see Bednall, Sanders, & Yang, 2021; Hewett, 2021; Hewett et al., 2018; Sanders, Bednall, & Yang, 2021; Xiao & Cooke, 2020). Yet, despite the valuable knowledge on the outcomes of perceived HR strength and HR attributions, researchers have contended that the antecedents have been overlooked (Hewett, 2021; Hewett et al., 2018; Sanders, 2022). In a recent review of attributions theories in HRM research, Hewett and colleagues (2018; also see Hewett, 2021) concluded that very little is known about the intrapersonal factors (e.g., personal values, motivations, and beliefs), that antecede the HRM process although they can be assumed to play an important role in the way employees understand and attribute HRM in their organization (Heavey, 2012; Hewett, Shantz, & Mundy, 2019).

Early on, attribution theorists profoundly acknowledged the role of individual differences – for example, causal schemas, suppositions about success and failure, and the motivation to make attributions – for explaining how people differ in their attributions of behaviours and social events (see Kelley & Michela, 1980). Similarly, research in the field of psychology has noted that pre-employment experiences and demographic factors play a role in an individual's occupational expectations and ultimately the way they make sense of organizational events (Rousseau, 2001). However, researchers have scarcely brought these ideas forward into the HRM process field and have opted to more broadly focus on the characteristics of the work environment, such as leadership (Weller, Süß, Evanschitzky, & von Wangenheim, 2020), high-performance work systems (HPWS) (Farndale et al., 2020; Sanders

et al., 2019; Van De Voorde & Beijer, 2015), or aspects of singular HRM practices (Hewett et al., 2019). Yet, it has been noticed that employees can develop very different interpretations of HRM even when accounting for these work-related factors. This has led researchers to speculate that factors that explain the variations of the HRM process may exist outside the workplace (Hewett, 2021; Hewett, Shantz, Mundy, & Alfes, 2018; Sanders, 2022).

In turn, scholars have begun to remedy this gap in knowledge in HRM process research by focusing on intrapersonal antecedents, for example, the influence of faith in religion, paternalistic values, or personal relevance of HRM practices (e.g., Babar et al., 2020; Farndale et al., 2020; Hewett et al., 2019; Sanders et al., 2019). These studies suggest that employees do not enter the workplace as a blank slate; they bring with them their past experiences, values, and beliefs that are formed as a result of how they have grown up and currently live and work (Lupu, Spence, & Empson, 2018; Marquis & Tilcsik, 2013; Thornton, Ocasio, & Lounsbury, 2012).

However, even with the small but growing recognition of the intrapersonal antecedents of the HRM process, this body of research is still in its nascency. As a result, the scholarly call continues to grow for greater clarity about what extent personal factors inform perceived HR strength and HR attributions and for additional theory building in this area (e.g., Sanders, 2021; Sanders & De Cieri, 2021; Sanders, 2022; Xiao & Cooke, 2021; Hewett et al., 2021). This is especially the case for personal characteristics that exist in the family domain (e.g., family values, commitments, and structures). Indeed, although researchers in the field of psychology and work-life balance have long since recognised the spill-over effects of non-work (e.g., family life) on work and vice versa (Darcy, McCarthy, Hill, & Grady, 2012; Geurts & Demerouti, 2004), the application of these insights are greatly underrepresented in the HRM process literature (Piszczek & Berg, 2020).

1.6.2 Organizational Context in HRM Process Research

Beyond the lack of antecedents, there is an urgency to include multi-level, organizational and national contextual factors in conceptual models to combat the decontextualized nature of existing HRM process research (Cooke, 2017; Xiao & Cooke, 2020). Recent reviews in HRM process research have emphasised that prior work has favoured universalistic perspectives for operationalizing and examining the HRM process, which assumes that employees respond to HRM systems in similar ways across context or culture (Farndale & Sanders, 2017; Wang et al, 2020; Xiao & Cooke, 2020).

This predominant assumption overlooks the proponents of *contingency* or *best-fit* approaches which emphasise that HRM practices and context are not mutually independent: HRM practices should be fit with a given context to maximise their effectiveness (Schueler & Jackson, 1987; Purcell, 1999; Stavrou et al, 2010; also see Combs et al, 2006). Indeed, HRM systems are embedded in social and organizational contexts and are inherently multi-level in nature. In this way, different social and cultural environments can stimulate the development of different interpretations and attributions to the same set of HRM practices (Kim & Wright, 2011). In this way, context is important because it plays a role in understanding how employees understand and attribute HRM and advances academic understanding of the relationship between psychological and behavioural phenomena in organizations (Johns, 2017).

In turn, researchers have called for greater integration of context into HRM process conceptual models via the inclusion of HRM content (e.g., HRM practices) (e.g., Sanders, Shipton, & Gomes, 2014; Steffensen, 2019; Sanders, 2021; Sanders, 2022). Organizational context can come in many forms, such as culture, climate, sector, and line managers. In HRM process research, however, HRM content in the form of individual or collective (bundles of) HRM practices are seen as one of the most important organizational contextual variables and several studies have examined HRM content in relation to the HRM process (e.g., Guest &

Conway, 2011; Sikora & Ferris, 2011; Sanders & Yang, 2016; Sanders et al, 2018).

Yet, when HRM process researchers examine personal factors and HRM content, they often examine only one level of analysis: investigating either individual differences (e.g., age, gender, level of education) or HRM content (e.g., HPWS and HRM practices) separately. Given the lack of multi-level models that include HRM content at the organizational level into HRM process models, researchers have little knowledge about how the HRM process antecedents react with HRM content to affect their perceived HR strength and HR attributions. Answering the increasing call for considering context in HRM process research (Cooke, 2018; Johns, 2017; Wang et al, 2020; Xiao & Cooke, 2020; Farndale & Sanders, 2017) will provide a richer and deeper academic understanding of how employees interpret HRM systems and how managers can design HRM practices to fit their own organizational contexts.

1.6.3 National Values in HRM Process Research

Contextual perspectives are particularly valuable in HRM process research due to the subjective nature of employees' understanding and interpretations of HRM systems (Fiske & Taylor, 2013). In this way, HRM practices can have very different meanings across geographical contexts (Martin-Alcazar, Romero-Fernandes, & Sanchez-Gardey, 2005). However, the application of universalistic perspectives in the HRM process literature has not *only* overlooked the role of organizational context (e.g., HRM content), but has also neglected the examination of the cross-cultural differences which can be assumed to influence how employees understand and interpret HRM in their organization (Farndale & Sanders, 2017; Wang et al, 2020; Xiao & Cooke, 2020).

Indeed, the majority of HRM process research has been conducted via a Western perspective, leading some researchers to question the application of these findings to Eastern contexts (see Xiao & Cooke, 2020; Wang et al, 2020). In their review, Farndale and Sanders

(2017) emphasised the greater need for contingency (best fit) approaches in HRM process research, suggesting that the effect of perceived HR strength on employees' behaviours and attitudes is contingent on the cultural values of the country. Scholars have also highlighted that employee attributions of HRM can vary across social and cultural environments and that those national differences can stimulate conflicting outcomes in different countries (Chiang & Birtch, 2007; Kim & Wright, 2011).

However, there has been a small but emerging body of the use of cultural variables in HRM process research over the past few years (Aktas, Farndale, & Gelfand, 2017; Jorgensen & Van Rossenberg, 2019; Sanders, Yang, Li, & Wang, 2016). This has mainly been examined through the application of the Global Leadership and Organizational Behaviour Effectiveness (GLOBE) secondary database which offers one of the most comprehensive pictures of the differences between national cultures for HRM research (House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, & Gupta, 2004). However, despite recent advances, only a few studies have empirically examined country-level cultural differences on perceived HR strength or HR attributions. Hence, the application of HRM process findings across multiple country contexts remains mainly theoretical in nature. The integration of contingency approaches and national-level variables into conceptual HRM process models serves to be a fruitful avenue to uncover novel insights into the multi-level cultural variations that exist in HRM process research and for a more complete picture of the HRM process.

1.7 Research Aim

Concerning the aforementioned limitations in the HRM process literature, several important questions remain unanswered regarding the relationship between intrapersonal, non-work-related antecedents that are associated with one's upbringing (what are referred to in this thesis as 'imprinting factors'; see Chapter Two) and the HRM process, and the multi-level

boundary conditions (i.e., HRM content and national values) within these relationships. The goal of this thesis is to develop a better understanding of the effect of imprinting factors on perceived HR strength and HR attributions and to what degree to multi-level contextual factors (i.e., HRM practices and national culture) influence this dynamic. Hence, the overarching research question for this thesis is as follows:

How can we explain the influences of imprinting factors on perceived HR strength and HR attributions and how can we explain the effects of the multi-level contextual boundary conditions (organizational and national context) in these relationships?

For the remainder of this chapter, the theoretical framework which is used as a foundation for the three studies in this thesis is detailed. After, an overview of each study and a series of research objectives for this thesis are presented. This is followed by a description of the methodology and data sources used within each study. Finally, the theoretical relevance and practical implications of the thesis concludes this chapter.

1.8 An Imprinting Framework

A promising avenue to bridge different levels of analysis and to examine the non-work antecedents of the HRM process is through an imprinting perspective. Imprinting is defined as a process where, during sensitive periods of one's life, a person "develops characteristics that reflect prominent features of the environment, and these characteristics persist despite significant environmental changes in subsequent periods" (Marquis & Tilcsik, 2013, p. 199). The imprinting literature was first advanced to organizational research by Stinchcombe (1965) who used imprinting to theorise how and why organizational structures are influenced by market conditions that persist across time and contextual changes. Since then, imprinting has been used to explain a variety of multi-level behavioural and organizational phenomena within

a wide body of literature such as organizational ecology, institutional theory, career research, and management at the macro, meso, and micro levels of analysis (for reviews see Marquis & Tilcsik, 2013; Simsek, Fox, & Heavey, 2015). In particular, imprinting has also been applied to individual-level phenomena, for example, how past experiences matter for the way employees identify, behave, and relate to their work and organization (e.g., Andrew, 2013; Leung, Foo, & Chaturvedi, 2013; also see Rousseau, 2001).

Imprinting theories not only recognise that personal histories matter for employees' work-related behaviours and attitudes in organizations, but they provide a useful tool to understand how these effects occur. During sensitive developmental periods (e.g., childhood), individuals seek environmental information that becomes internalised in the way they think and behave in similar situations. In this way, pre-employment events, upbringing and childhood, and national culture act as proxies for employees work-related cognitions, values, and behaviours (Marquis & Tilcsik, 2013; Simsek, Fox, & Heavey, 2015). For instance, researchers interested in the effect of imprinting have suggested and demonstrated that early parent-child, educational, and mentoring experiences influence employees decisions and behaviours that last long into their career (Andrew, 2013; Azoulay, Liu, & Stuart, 2017; Mcevely, Jaffee, & Tortoriello, 2012) and even the way HRM is designed by founding organizational members (Hedberg & Luchak, 2018; Leung et al., 2013).

Along these lines, imprinting theory can be applied to understand how and why employees diverge in their understanding and attributions of HRM in the same organization. Specifically, imprinting researchers have drawn attention to the importance of one's family as significant imprinters on adolescents' future behaviour and attitudes (Bandura, 1971; Y. Kim & Gao, 2013; Lupu, Spence, & Empson, 2018). Indeed, parents have consistently been found to be a primary influencer of their children's work-related values and expectations (Dekas & Baker, 2014; Johnson & Mortimer, 2015). In particular, imprinting theories describe that

adolescents learn a lot about work through conversations and observations of their parents at an early age (Lupu et al., 2018). These experiences can lead to the internalisation of cognitive frameworks that help set one's expectations regarding what it will be like as an employee in an organization. Furthermore, these cognitive frameworks act as an interpretive lens for organizational information which influences how individuals understand and attribute causal relationships, organizational events, and managerial intentions (Kelley, 1967, 1973; Kelley & Michela, 1980; Marquis & Tilcsik, 2013). For example, an employee who grew up in a household with parents who are enthusiastic union members may have another understanding and attribution of HRM compared with parents who hold senior management roles.

However, despite this proposition, there has been very little application of imprinting frameworks in the HRM literature (Hedberg & Luchak, 2018; Leung et al., 2013), especially in individual-level HRM process research. Nevertheless, imprinting provides several advantages to examining the antecedents of the HRM process and the underlying mechanisms within these relationships. Hence, this thesis integrates an imprinting framework with HRM process theories to investigate to what extent these early developmental experiences and resulting individual differences influence perceived HR strength and HR attributions during employment.

1.9 Overview of the Chapters: Contributions and Research Objectives

The core focus of this thesis is to offer a better understanding of the effect of imprinting factors on perceived HR strength and HR attributions through a series of three studies. In the following section, the three studies in this thesis are outlined and a set of research objectives in line with the aim of this thesis are presented.

1.9.1 Chapter Two: Imprinting Antecedents of the HRM Process

In Chapter Two (study one), the existing literature of HRM process research is evaluated

through a systematic review of 20 studies that examine the imprinting antecedents on perceived HR strength and HR attributions. In this review, the conceptualisation of imprinting factors is presented by detailing what is and what is not an imprinting factor, and how imprinting factors diverge non-work factors in the existing literature. Here, imprinting factors are defined as “the hereditary and familial/parental influences, individual differences, non-work contextual factors, and cultural beliefs that can affect the way individuals understand and attribute HRM in their organization” (see Chapter Two). Then, this review provides a methodological and theoretical critique of the existing literature along with a summary of the key insights and empirical findings of the 20 studies. As perceived HR strength and HR attribution streams have so far developed in silos, each stream is reviewed and evaluated separately and compared with one another.

Using the insights gleaned from this review, an imprinting perspective is applied to develop a multi-level conceptual model of imprinting antecedents of the HRM process. The aim of this model is to be used as a general framework for future scholarship in the two empirical studies (Chapters Three & Four) in this thesis. Hence, this review contributes to the literature by exploring 1) *how* imprinting factors and experiences influence the development of cognitive frameworks, 2) *why* does this matter for perceived HR strength and HR attributions, and 3) through *what* mechanisms imprinting factors exert their effects on the HRM process.

In addition, this chapter elaborates on the role of HRM content (i.e., HPWS; Combs et al., 2006) and national values from the GLOBE dataset (i.e., power distance, performance orientation, and in-group collectivism; Rabl, Jayasinghe, Gerhart, & Kühlmann, 2014) as organizational- and cultural-level boundary conditions that exist within this framework. Following previous literature, HPWS and national values are viewed as the most important aspects of organizational and national context in HRM process research that affect how employees perceive and attribute HRM in their organizations (Aktas et al., 2017; Guest &

Conway, 2011; Sanders et al., 2014; Sikora & Ferris, 2011; Steffensen, 2019; Wang et al., 2020; Xiao & Cooke, 2020). Thus, this chapter answers the scholarly call for greater application of multi-level contextual factors in HRM process research by theorising how internal imprinting factors and external HRM and national values interact within imprinting factors to influence the HRM process. This is followed by a set of four propositions and several future directions that can be used to empirically test the model and theoretically advance this body of literature. Finally, this chapter also presents several important practical applications for managers and HR professionals aiming to maximise the effectiveness of HRM for positive employee outcomes.

1.9.2 Chapter Three: Parental Behaviours and Perceived HR Strength

In Chapter Three (study two), a study is presented that empirically examines the propositions and conceptual model developed in Chapter Two. Specifically, the relationship between career-specific parental behaviours (i.e., parental support, parental interference, and parental engagement; Dietrich & Kracke, 2009) and perceived HR strength is examined. Parental behaviours are considered an important imprinting experience due to the long-lasting influence they have on individuals' behaviour in later life (Cohen-Scali, 2003; Dietrich & Kracke, 2009; Lupu et al., 2018). In this way, adolescents reflect the work-related characteristics and values of their parents through the behaviours they demonstrate during sensitive developmental periods where adolescents are forming their understanding about their careers. Indeed, parental behaviours have been recognised to be reliable predictors of one's educational achievement, adolescents' career development, and occupational identity in later life (Dietrich & Kracke, 2009; Sawitri, Creed, & Zimmer-Gembeck, 2014; Šimunović, Šverko, & Babarović, 2020).

Following this body of work, parental behaviours may extend to influence the degree to which employees perceive *distinctiveness*, *consistency*, and *consensus* in their organization

(i.e., perceived HR strength). Building on the model developed within Chapter Two, it is hypothesized that employees whose parents supported and engaged with their occupational development are more attentive to HRM signals during employment and understand HRM systems differently to employees whose parents were unsupportive, interfering, or absent during these key developmental experiences. In such a way, parental experiences may aid a cognitive schema that directs employees' attention to HRM signals in their organization. Through the examination of this proposition, this study takes the first empirical step to investigate how imprinting factors affect how employees understand HRM in later life.

Furthermore, this chapter includes job security at the organizational level and performance orientation at the country level as boundary conditions in this relationship. Job security refers to the degree to which institutions offer stable positions for their employees (Herzberg, 1968). It is included as an important HRM content-related contextual factor because it communicates to employees' their role in the organization, and the consequences of employees' behaviours and actions (Lu, Du, Xu, & Zhang, 2017). Job security provides a strong motivational force that influences the extent that employees attend to HRM in their organizations (Bristow, Amyx, Castleberry, & Cochran, 2011; Dello Russo, Mascia, & Morandi, 2018; Imran, 2015) and is argued to buffer the imprinting factor – perceived HR strength relationship (Mischel, 1977). Furthermore, performance orientation at the country level refers to the degree to which societies rewards innovation, high standards, and performance improvement (House et al., 2004). Performance orientation has been theoretically highlighted as an important cultural factor that influences employees reactions and the overall effectiveness of job security practices across national contexts (Sender, Arnold, & Staffelbach, 2017). Hence, this chapter argues that both HRM content and national values are considered important factors of the HRM process which provides a more elaborate picture of the multi-level nature of the antecedents of perceived HR strength. In this way, this empirical chapter

sheds light on the specific cross-cultural considerations and external conditions that should be considered by HR professionals and managers when designing HRM for maximum positive organizational outcomes in local and multinational organizations.

1.9.3 Chapter Four: Family Motivation and HR Attributions

Chapter Four (study four) departs from a focus on perceived HR strength to examine the effect of HR attributions, specifically commitment (i.e., enhance service quality and well-being), control (i.e., exploit and control employees), and compliance (i.e., compliance to union and government regulations) attributions (Nishii et al., 2008). This chapter focuses on the role of family motivation as an imprinting antecedent, referring to one's "desire to expend effort to benefit one's family" (Menges et al., 2017, p. 697). Researchers have drawn attention to the hereditary role of early family experiences in the production of family values such as family motivation (Greenhaus & Powell, 2012; Lupu et al., 2018). Family motivation is considered an important imprinting factor due to its hereditary nature and how family motivation can persist across organizational boundaries to have a long-lasting impact on one's career (Fuligni, 2001). Indeed, family motivation can be detected as early as ten years old (Verkuyten, Thijs, & Canatan, 2001) and has strong influences on one's motivation to work and work-related attitudes (Erum, Abid, & Ahmed, 2020; Erum, Abid, Anwar, Ijaz, & Kee, 2021; Menges, Tussing, Wihler, & Grant, 2017; Tariq & Ding, 2018).

This chapter extends HR attribution theory by adding family motivation to the growing number of antecedents that exist outside of the workplace. Specifically, it is proposed that employees who are more motivated to support their families are more attentive to HRM practices to provide for their families and further interpret HRM systems through a family-oriented lens. Furthermore, high-performance work systems (HPWS) at the organizational level and power distance at the country level are included as boundary conditions. HPWS is

included as an important HRM-content related contextual factor as it plays an important role in the way employees' make sense of the HRM environment and is argued to constrain the expression of individual differences like imprinting factors in organizations by drawing ones' attention more readily to the HRM environment (Mischel, 1977; Sanders, Yang, & Li, 2021; Van De Voorde & Beijer, 2015). Power distance refers to the nature of the employee-employer relationship; it is one of the most studied cultural variables and researchers have argued that the effectiveness of HPWS is dependent on national expectations such as power distance (Rabl et al., 2014). Therefore, power distance is taken into account in this study.

Indeed, little is known about the role of HPWS and power distance in the relationship between imprinting factors and HR attributions. By examining these factors as contextual boundary conditions, this chapter emphasises the importance of context in HR attribution research (Cooke, 2018; Johns, 2017) and integrates both HRM content (i.e., HPWS) and HRM process (i.e., HR attributions) in one conceptual model. In doing so, it is argued that imprinting factors matter most when HPWS are weak and power distance is low. Finally, this chapter elaborates on the practical implications of these findings for managers and HR professionals.

1.10 Research Objectives

This thesis aims to uncover what, how, and why imprinting factors influence employees' perceived HR strength and HR attributions. The existing literature in this area is explored and evaluated in Chapter Two, and a multi-level conceptual model is developed from these insights. Chapter Three and Four empirically test this model: first on perceived HR strength (Chapter Three) and second on HR attributions (Chapter Four). The collection of these three chapters acts as a foundation for future research and offer HRM process researchers a novel avenue to understanding the variations of the HRM process that can occur beyond

organizational characteristics. The objectives in which this thesis aims to address are summarized below:

1. To advance theory by developing a multi-level, integrative, imprinting framework that details the three-way interaction between imprinting factors, HRM content, and national culture on perceived HR strength and HR attributions.
2. To examine the effect of parental behaviours on perceived HR strength, and to what degree organizational-level HRM content (i.e., job security) and country-level national values (i.e., performance orientation) act as boundary conditions in this relationship.
3. To examine the effect of family motivation on HR attributions, and to what degree organizational-level HRM content (i.e., HPWS) and country-level national values (i.e., power distance) act as boundary conditions in this relationship.
4. To provide practical advice to managers and HR practitioners about the effects of imprinting factors on the HRM process and how imprinting factors can be managed to ensure that HRM systems are being interpreted by employees as intended by management.

1.11 Research Methods and Data Sources Used in the Thesis

1.11.1 Chapter Two (Systematic Review)

To address these research objectives, two data collection processes were employed for this thesis. Chapter Two examines the role of imprinting factors in the existing HRM process literature through a systematic literature review using a multi-method approach. This involved firstly collecting published and unpublished empirical quantitative studies via five online major databases. Then, a manual search of nine major peer-reviewed HRM and management journals

was conducted. Third, a cited reference search of the two seminal papers of HRM process research (i.e., Bowen & Ostroff, 2004; Nishii et al., 2008) along with all previously published reviewed articles in the field. Finally, the authors who published papers in the research area were contacted directly. Twenty-six studies (24 papers) made it into the review at this stage. These studies were then sifted for quality and relevance to the review. Overall, 20 studies make it into the final matrix which formed the basis of this review chapter. A full procedure of this process is described in Chapter Two.

1.11.2 Chapter Three and Four (Empirical Studies)

The two remaining empirical chapters (Chapter Three & Four) examine the conceptual framework developed in Chapter Two via the application of a quantitative, international, multi-actor dataset of 855 employees and 61 line managers across 39 organizations in three countries (China, Pakistan, and South Korea), which consists of a variety of industries, sizes, and sectors. The data for these studies was gathered as part of an international collaborative project involving a team of six academics. This project was developed and coordinated by one of the supervisors of this PhD project (Sanders). I was responsible for the data analysis and paper writing found within the Chapters (Chapters Three & Four). Hence, I am the lead and corresponding any publications that arise from this thesis. However, this dataset would not have been possible without the valuable data collection efforts of the international team and their helpful feedback on later versions of the papers presented in Chapters Three and Four. This feedback primarily focused on clarity, readability, and insight into the findings of the studies in an Eastern context. Though, Sanders played a closer role as a supervisor to the project and thesis throughout its development. Hence, the members of this project will be included as co-authors on the intended publications outputs of these chapters who can be found in Table 1.1.

1.11.3 My Role in Data Collection, Analysis, and Report Writing

This project titled the '(Cross-Cultural) Imprinting Project' was first conceived by Sanders in mid-2019 and ethical approval was gained for the project in August 2019 from the University of Reading (see Appendix H). At that time, Sanders had contacted several researchers in the HRM process field to engage their interest in the project and designed the different questionnaires (employees, line managers, and HR professionals). Shortly after, in December 2019, Sanders had invited me to visit the Business School of the University of Renmin of China, Beijing, where she was working as a visiting Professor and leading a Masters of Business Administration (MBA) cohort. It was decided that this cohort would be a good opportunity to begin collecting the data for the project in China to match the employee-level data that was being collected in Pakistan as organized by another member of the research team at the same time.

During the three weeks at the University of Renmin of China, my role was to meet the cohort of students, organize the data, and analyse the preliminary dataset collected at this time under the supervision of Sanders. The MBA students had collected data as part of an assignment related to their course which included 87 employees, five line managers, and seven HR professionals from four organizations in China. In addition, data had been collected in Pakistan from 286 employees from 12 organizations from a collaborator of this project. During my time at the University of Renmin of China, I developed a conference paper using an early analysis of this dataset which was subsequently awarded 'highly commended by the HRM track' by the British Academy of Management in 2020 (see Appendix E).

From this point onwards (December 2019-), Sanders and I worked together to expand the project to other members and coordinate the project. In my role, I aided in the development, organization, and management of the surveys across the international team. More specifically, I took the lead on the following activities, supervised by Sanders: identifying variables to be

included in the survey during the expansion, developing the surveys onto an online platform (Qualtrics), revising the existing paper survey versions, onboarding project members, providing instructions for the proper distribution of the surveys, and distributing and coordinating the surveys to the members of the international team. During this time, I was also conceptualising and developing the two empirical studies found within Chapters Three and Four.

Members of the international team were instructed to collect data from over 200 employees in their home country using their networks, which included responses of 20-30 employees and at least one line manager and one HR professional per organization. After four to eight weeks, a second survey was distributed to the employees. Following the guidance of Brislin, (1980), the surveys were translated and back-translated by bi-lingual research scholars into Chinese and Korean languages to ensure equivalence to the original English version. The surveys were then piloted in the respective countries to ensure the readability of the items by the respective project members. All the English surveys for employees, line managers, and HR professionals can be found in Appendix A-D.

In total, data from 855 employees and 60 line managers from 39 organizations across 16 industries were collected and form the sample for Chapter Three and Chapter Four. Eight-eight of the 265 responses in China were collected among four groups of MBA students. The remaining 177 responses were collected directly by the respective member of the research team in China.

Table 1.1: Summary of the research process

Step	Purpose and Process	Collaborators
Problem identification and survey development	Identifying the gap in the literature and survey development.	KS

Ethical approval and collaboration	Gaining ethical approval from the University of Reading. The ethics form was revised to include AK and AK was subsequently included in the project. The ethics form was then filed and retained by Nottingham Trent University for use on AK's thesis.	AK, AO, CP, DW, FH, HV, HY, KS, PB, RR, SQ, TB, YvR, XL
Data gathering (round 1)	Distributing surveys and gathering data from MBA students and in Pakistan.	KS, SQ
Data analysis	Early analysis of preliminary data and writing the conference paper.	AK, KS
Paper and thesis development	Developing and outlining the two empirical studies in this thesis.	AK
Revision of surveys	Ensuring quality of the surveys, revising the surveys, and formatting the surveys to an online format (Qualtrics).	AK, KS
Project expansion and onboarding	Contacting researchers, pursuing interested parties, and organizing dates and avenues for data collection.	AK, KS
Data coordination and management	Coordination and management of the surveys across the international team of researchers.	AK, KS
Data gathering (round 2)	Distributing surveys and gathering data in China and South Korea.	AO, DW, SQ, XL
Data analysis	Cleaning the dataset and analysing the data.	AK
Paper writing	Writing the two empirical papers.	AK
Feedback and reflection	Providing feedback on the papers.	AO, DW, HS, KS, SQ, XL, ZW
Thesis writing	Writing the thesis.	AK

List of collaborators: Adam Kitt (AK), Asfia Obaid (AO), Charmi Patel (CP), David Wu (DW), Frances Jorgensen (FJ), Helen Shipton (HS), Hertta Vuorenmaa (HV), Huadong Yang (HY), Karin Sanders (KS), Pawan Budhwar (PB), Ricardo Rodrigues (RR), Saifullah Qureshi (SQ), Timothy Bednall (TB), Yvonne van Rossenberg (YvR), and Xiaobei Li (XL).

Members of the supervisory team of this thesis: Helen Shipton (HS), Karin Sanders (KS), and Zara Whysall (ZW).

1.11.4 The Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on this Thesis

It is important to note that data collection for this project occurred during the Covid-19 pandemic. This thesis was originally designed to be founded on a dataset from more than the

three countries that comprise the final dataset used for Chapters Three and Four (i.e., China, Pakistan, and South Korea). Specifically, the thesis was initially designed to include both Western and Eastern countries via a collaboration of 14 academic researchers who demonstrated interest in collecting data in mid-2019 (see Table 1.1). However, due to the rise of the pandemic, collecting data became difficult for several collaborators to continue with data collection as many universities and organizations had shut down or lost contact with members of the research team. Hence, the findings of this study are restricted to an Eastern context (i.e., China, Pakistan, and South Korea). However, the existing literature that examines imprinting factors as antecedents of the HRM process has predominantly been conducted in Western contexts (see Chapter Two). Consequently, this thesis provides a novel contextual perspective for the examination of imprinting factors within an Eastern context.

In a similar vein, it will also be noted that the data gathered from employees in the second wave and HR professional data was not used for this thesis. Hence, the findings in Chapters Three and Four are cross-sectional and include employees and line managers data only. This decision was partially made to deal with some of the missing responses from HR professionals and employees during the second wave of the survey. However, it is argued that the absence of HR professional responses does not detract from the findings or models within Chapter Three and Four, and that line manager rated HRM practices are sufficient and effective for testing the propositions and hypotheses outlined in this thesis.

1.12 The Practical Relevance of the Thesis

In terms of practical relevance, the findings within this thesis can be of interest primarily to HR professionals, practitioners, and managers within local and international organizations. Firstly, this thesis emphasises that upbringing and cultural norms can have a significant impact on the degree to which they perceive and interpret HRM practices in their organization, and

line managers and HR professionals should be aware of these factors. In this way, HRM systems can be designed in a way to buffer the effects of imprinting factors to ensure they are effective for the values, demographics, and family situation of the workforce.

Second, this thesis intends to highlight the role and importance of clear and consistent HRM-related communication within organizations. Indeed, it is proposed that strong imprinting factors can distort these signals especially if bundles of HRM practices are weak, internally inconsistent, and/or mutually exclusive (Van De Voorde & Beijer, 2015). Hence, the findings within this thesis emphasise the necessity for HR practitioners to be clear on their reasoning behind the implementation of HRM practices and ensure that this information is relayed across all layers of the organizational hierarchy.

Finally, this thesis also draws attention to the role of organizational context and national values in the design of effective HRM systems. In particular, this thesis is designed to examine the degree to which HRM systems are congruent with organizational context and national expectations. In this way, HR practitioners can use this thesis to decide which HRM practices to implement for their organizational and cultural contexts. Otherwise, it is expected that a lack of congruence between internal characteristics (e.g., HRM practices) and external conditions (e.g., national values) may undermine the effectiveness of HRM practices and become more harmful than helpful for positive employee and organizational outcomes.

1.13 Structure of the Thesis

The remainder of this thesis is divided into four chapters. The next chapter, Chapter Two, contains study one of this thesis which explores the extant literature through a systematic literature review of 20 studies and outlines the theoretical framework and conceptual model for the remaining chapters. Chapter Three applies the international dataset to examine the effect of parental behaviours and perceived HR strength, using job security and performance orientation

are as boundary conditions. Using the same dataset, Chapter Four shifts attention to HR attributions to examine the role of family motivation and includes HPWS and power distance as boundary conditions. In the final chapter, Chapter Five, the main results of the three studies are summarized and discussed, followed by a synopsis of the practical implications and suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER 2

Imprinting Antecedents of the HRM Process: Towards a Multi-level Model

Abstract

Human resource management (HRM) process research refers to the way HRM policies and practices are communicated to employees, including the way HRM is understood (i.e., perceived HR strength) and attributed (i.e., HR attributions) by employees. Previous research has mainly focused on the outcomes of the HRM process. However, research that examines the antecedents of the HRM process is rare. This is especially the case for the so-called ‘imprinting factors’, defined as the hereditary and familial/parental influences, individual differences, non-work contextual factors, and cultural beliefs that can affect the way understand and attribute HRM in their organization. To further explore this relatively new area of research, this paper provides a systematic review of 20 empirical studies that investigate imprinting antecedents of perceived HR strength and HR attributions. Through the application of an imprinting framework with HRM process theories, this review is orientated around the development of a multi-level conceptual framework that elaborates on why, how, and to what degree imprinting factors influence the HRM process. In this model, the role of high-performance work systems (HPWS) (i.e., HRM content) and national values (i.e., in-group collectivism, performance orientation, and power distance) are examined as boundary conditions in this relationship. The paper is concluded with several research directions that act as a platform for future scholarship. The findings within this paper have practical relevance for HR professionals and practitioners who intend to maximise the effectiveness of their HRM systems in their organizational context and cultures.

2.1 Introduction

HRM researchers have traditionally adopted a macro-level, employer-focused approach to examine the relationship between (one or bundles of) HRM practices and organizational outcomes (Wright & Ulrich, 2017). This approach is known as the content approach to HRM (Sanders et al., 2014). Despite the body of valuable knowledge gleaned from HRM content research, HRM process scholars have contended that HRM content research has oversimplified the HRM-performance relationship by assuming that HRM practices and systems always lead to the same organizational consequences (Kehoe & Wright, 2013; Nishii & Wright, 2008; Sanders et al., 2014).

Following this, scholars have paid increasing attention to the HRM process over the past two decades, arguing that the mechanisms through which HRM practices exert their effects can be further explained by focusing on the way HRM is communicated, and how employees understand and attribute HRM within organizations (Boon et al., 2019; Hewett et al., 2019; Ostroff & Bowen, 2016; Wang et al., 2020). To this end, attribution theories (e.g., Heider, 1958; Kelley, 1967, 1973; Weiner, 1985) are applied to explain the differences in employees' understanding and attribution of HRM within the same organization. Currently, scholars agree on the importance of clear, well-communicated, and easily understandable HRM systems for employee and organizational outcomes (for reviews see Bednall, Sanders, & Yang, 2021; Hewett, 2021; Hewett et al., 2018; Sanders, 2022; Sanders et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2020; Xiao & Cooke, 2020).

The HRM process literature is mainly composed of two key research streams (see Sanders et al., 2021). The first involves Bowen and Ostroff's (2004) *HR (system) strength*. Bowen and Ostroff (2004) applied Kelley's co-variation model of attributions (Kelley, 1967, 1973) to the HRM context to develop a theoretical framework that proposes that when employees perceive HR information as *distinctive* (i.e. visibility, understandability, strategic

relevance, and legitimacy of authority), *consistent* (i.e. instrumentality, the validity of HRM practices, and consistency of messages), and *consensual* (i.e. fairness and agreement between messages senders), it results in a ‘strong HRM system’. A strong HRM system facilitates a collective understanding of which behaviours are valued, expected, and rewarded by management, which ultimately helps to achieve the organization’s strategic goals (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004; Ostroff & Bowen, 2016). Although HR strength was originally intended as a unit-level construct, this study follows previous researchers by considering *perceived HR strength* as a meaningful individual-level construct (see Alfes et al., 2019; Bednall, Sanders, & Yang, 2021; Chacko & Conway, 2019; Delmotte et al., 2012).

The second stream includes Nishii and colleagues’ (2008) model of *HR attributions*, which is rooted in Heider’s theory of causal attributions (Heider, 1958). HR attributions refer to the causal explanations employees develop about why managers implement specific HRM practices within their organization. Nishii and colleagues categorised five HR attributions along the following dimensions: internal (initiated by the management of the organization) versus external (e.g., union and legal compliance); commitment versus control, and strategic versus employee focus. Research in this area illustrates that employees who develop stronger commitment-focused attributions are more satisfied, committed, and have fewer turnover intentions compared to those who develop stronger control-focused or external attributions (Sanders et al., 2016; Tandung, 2016; Van De Voorde & Beijer, 2015).

Until recently, the HRM process literature has been largely focused on the effects of perceived HR strength and HR attributions (e.g., Chen & Wang, 2014; Hauff, Alewell, & Hansen, 2017; Hewett et al., 2019; Shantz, Arevshatian, Alfes, & Bailey, 2016). As a result, studies that explore the antecedents of perceived HR strength and HR attributions have largely been overlooked (Hewett et al., 2018; Sanders, 2022; Wang et al., 2020). Scholars have attempted to remedy this gap by examining how internal organizational factors – such as

leadership (Weller et al., 2020), high-performance work systems (Sanders, Yang, & Li, 2021; Van De Voorde & Beijer, 2015) and distributive fairness, cynicism, and motivation to make attributions (Hewett et al., 2019) – act as prerequisites for perceived HR strength and HR attributions. However, more recently, researchers have begun to speculate that the variance of the HRM process may be explained by influences outside the control of the workplace (Hewett et al., 2018; Xiao & Cooke, 2020).

In developing this new research strand, an emerging body of work has begun to demonstrate the importance of employee dispositions, demographic characteristics, cultural values, and family dynamics as antecedents of the HRM process (e.g., Aktas et al., 2017; Babar, Obaid, Sanders, & Tariq, 2020; Heavey, 2012; Kitt, Sanders, Qureshi, & Obaid, 2020; Sanders et al., 2019). This body of work has highlighted the value of examining so-called ‘imprinting factors’ for cross-boundary influences on perceived HR strength and HR attributions. Due to a lack of consistency in the current definitions of imprinting factors, this study draws from prior research (Marquis & Tilcsik, 2013; Simsek et al., 2015) and refers to imprinting factors as the hereditary and familial/parental influences, individual differences, non-work contextual factors, and cultural beliefs that can affect the way employees understand and attribute HRM in their organization. This definition follows the developmental psychology (Kandler & Zapko-Willmes, 2017) and the anticipatory socialisation literature (Lupu et al., 2018) to argue that these characteristics are at least, in part, rooted in personal experience, culture, and nurture (e.g., childhood and upbringing) (Cohen-Scali, 2003; Thornton, Lounsbury, & Ocasio, 2012).

2.1.1 Imprinting Factors and an Imprinting Framework

Studies examining imprinting factors assume that employees do not enter the workplace as a blank slate; they bring with them their past experiences, values, and beliefs that are formed as a result of how they have grown up and now currently live and work (Lupu et al., 2018;

Marquis & Tilcsik, 2013; Thornton et al., 2012). The mechanisms through which imprinting factors exert their effects on the HRM process are less understood, but research shows that they play an important role in the way employees interpret HRM signals and managerial intentions (Babar et al., 2020; Heavey, 2012; Kitt et al., 2020). Indeed, while this exploration of imprinting factors has grown in recent years, this body of literature lacks a consistent and coherent theoretical framework. Furthermore, research in this area often only examines one level of analysis at a time by investigating individual differences (e.g., age, gender, level of education) and societal factors (e.g., national values) separately. This restricts researchers' capacity to understand the extent to which multi-level organizational and national context interacts with imprinting factors to influence perceived HR strength and HR attributions.

A promising avenue to bridge different levels of analysis between imprinting antecedents of the HRM process is by applying an *imprinting framework*. Imprinting refers to a “process whereby, during a brief period of susceptibility, a focal entity develops characteristics that reflect prominent features of the environment, and these characteristics continue to persist despite significant environmental changes in subsequent periods” (Marquis & Tilcsik, 2013, p. 199). Based on early animal behaviour studies (e.g., Lorenz, 1935), imprinting frameworks have been applied at multiple levels in several research fields including organizational ecology, institutional theory, career research, management, and child psychology (for reviews see Marquis & Tilcsik, 2013; Simsek et al., 2015).

Within the organizational literature, imprinting frameworks at the macro- and meso-levels has been used to describe how external forces (e.g., technological, economic, and social) and founding member characteristics (e.g., founder attachment style) can shape an organization's initial HR structures that persevere across modernising influences (Hedberg & Luchak, 2018; Inglehart & Baker, 2000; Leung et al., 2013; Mcevily et al., 2012; Stinchcombe, 1965). At the individual level, researchers have demonstrated how early-career and educational

experiences have long-lasting imprints on later career choices and behaviours which persist across organizational boundaries (Andrew, 2013; Azoulay et al., 2017). Although an imprinting framework has not yet been applied to the antecedents of the HRM process, imprinting frameworks serve to be a promising direction to explain what, how, and why pre-career experiences (e.g., childhood, education, and upbringing) are important for the way employees understand and interpret HRM.

2.1.2 Study Contributions

To provide a foundation for this work, a systematic review is conducted on 20 studies that examine imprinting antecedents on perceived HR strength and HR attributions. In doing so, this review aims to contribute to the HRM process literature in three important ways.

First, this review provides an overview of the research on imprinting factors in HRM process research to understand and identify the gaps in this field. Specifically, this review explores how imprinting factors have evolved and diverged differently in the perceived HR strength and HR attribution streams. Furthermore, this review identifies, organizes, and evaluates the empirical, theoretical, and methodological findings of the 20 studies in the field. These findings in this review allow for a better understanding of existing research and enable researchers to facilitate a more focused discussion on the role of imprinting antecedents of the HRM process currently and in future research.

Second, drawing on these insights and applying an imprinting framework, this review proposes a multi-level, integrative conceptual model that focuses on the relationship between imprinting factors and both aspects of the HRM process. In doing so, this review sheds light on the underlying mechanisms (i.e., attention and interpretation) which explain the imprinting-HRM process relationship. Hence, this theorising extends prior theory beyond early career-related experiences (e.g., Azoulay et al., 2017) to examine how experiences before entering the

workforce (e.g., educational and social processes) affect employees' understanding and interpretation of the HRM process (Cohen-Scali, 2003).

Finally, this review addresses the decontextualised nature of existing HRM process research models (Aktas et al., 2017; Sanders, 2022; Sanders, Bednall, et al., 2021; Sanders et al., 2014; Steffensen, 2019; Wang et al., 2020; Xiao & Cooke, 2020) by integrating multi-level contextual boundary conditions (e.g., HRM content and national values) into the conceptual model. Due to the subjective nature of employees' understanding and attributions of HRM systems (Fiske & Taylor, 1991), the consideration of organizational- (e.g., HRM content) and national-level variables (e.g., national values) are important because they influence the way employees make sense of HRM (Aktas et al., 2017; Guest & Conway, 2011; Sanders et al., 2014; Sikora & Ferris, 2011; Xiao & Cooke, 2020). In this way, it is argued that the degree to which imprinting factors influence the HRM process is contingent on HPWS and national values. Hence, this review provides a richer and deeper academic understanding of how employees interpret HRM systems. In addition, this inclusion adds strategic importance to HR practitioners by illuminating how HRM systems can be designed for employees with different backgrounds and past experiences (e.g., unionised families, managerial vs. non-managerial parents, differing levels of parental support) to ensure HRM systems are being interpreted as intended for positive employee and organizational outcomes in both local and international organizations.

This paper is organized as follows. First, the methods employed for the review of the 20 studies are described. Second, the results of the review are presented. Third, drawing on these findings and the (HR) management and psychology literature, this paper theoretically elaborates on how imprinting factors exert their influence on the HRM process across multiple levels. After this, research agenda is presented which outlines three directions for further study in this area. Finally, this review is concluded with several practical implications for HR

practitioners and managers.

2.2 Methods

2.2.1 Sample and Search Parameters

This review draws upon published and unpublished empirical quantitative (including experimental) studies in the field of HRM process research. To be included in the initial search, studies were subject to several criteria. First, studies must directly statistically examine at least one imprinting factor (i.e., demographics, individual differences, personality traits, beliefs, family situations and dynamics, or cultural factors) on either perceived HR strength or HR attributions (rated by an employee, line manager, or HR professional). Hence, imprinting factors were included as main effects, moderators, and control variables in the statistical analysis. However, when imprinting factors when they are positioned as mediators they were excluded as this distracts from the central question of this review. This is because explanatory (mediating) variables that exist within other relationships cannot be classified as true antecedents. Further, studies that examine perceived HR strength or HR attributions beyond the individual level of analysis were excluded (e.g., Li, Zhang, & Zhang, 2020). Any inclusion of HRM process aggregates at the unit- or organizational-level would reduce the relevance of any insights being extracted from the papers that would otherwise inform attribution formation and the development of the conceptual model.

Second, following Hewett and colleagues (2018), attribution studies of both conceptualisations of HR attributions were included, specifically: *functional attributions*, where the focal object of attribution is an individual's behaviour embedded within a HRM context (e.g., internal attributions of performance; Chiang & Birtch, 2007), and *attributions of intent*, where the focal object of attribution is on HRM, management, or the organization (e.g., commitment-focused HR attributions; (Hewett et al., 2019). This decision can be justified as

each conceptualisation originates from similar attribution(al) theories (Heider, 1958; Kelley, 1967; Weiner, 1985) and both types of attribution offer meaningful insights into the variance of HR attributions caused by imprinting factors in a HRM context. In a similar vein, perceived HR strength papers that examined either individual or combined meta-features of perceived HR strength (i.e., distinctiveness, consistency, or consensus) were included for the conceptual and theoretical relevance of this review.

Third, as mentioned in the Introduction, the focus of this review is on imprinting factors as antecedents of the HRM process, including demographics (e.g., age, gender, education), individual characteristics (e.g., beliefs, values, and personality traits), family dynamics (e.g., parental relationships), and national values (e.g., country-level power distance). The inclusion of these factors are justified as they are consistent with features within an imprinting framework and may have an imprinting effect on the way employees perceive and attribute HR in their organization (Marquis & Tilcsik, 2013). Specifically, following an imprinting framework, imprinting factors are viewed to have the following characteristics that 1) can emerge during sensitive periods of one's development prior to their entrance into the labour market (Allik, Laidra, Realo, & Pullmann, 2004; Dekas & Baker, 2014; McCrae et al., 2002; Min, Silverstein, & Lendon, 2012), 2) are influenced and internalised from environmental contexts (e.g., parents, teachers, role models, and cultural norms) (Allik et al., 2004; Cohen-Scali, 2003; Gibson, Greenwood, & Murphy, 2009; Ralston, Holt, Terpstra, & Kai-cheng, 1997), and 3) remain relatively stable over ones' lifetime (e.g., personality traits) (Marquis & Tilcsik, 2013; McAdams & Olson, 2010).

Here, it is important to note the distinction between *non-work* factors and *imprinting* factors, and the scope of this review. There are many non-work factors (e.g., marital status, number of children, work-related motivations, spousal support, etc.; see Geurts & Demerouti, 2004) and some imprinting factors (e.g., early career experiences; Azoulay et al., 2017) that are

not included in this review, although they may influence an individual's attributions of HRM. To clarify the exclusion of these variables, the distinction is drawn that, according to the definition of imprinting factors presented in this review, *non-work* factors are not classified as *imprinting* factors if they emerge, develop, or are experienced after the sensitive imprinting periods (e.g., infancy, childhood, adolescence) that occur before one's entrance into the labour market (i.e., pre-employment experiences). To maintain theoretical consistency, imprinting factors that emerge once an individual enters the workforce (e.g., early mentoring experiences, supervisory relationships) also are outside the scope of this review. Finally, only quantitative (including experimental) studies were included to align with the intention to provide a clear conceptual model for empirical testing. As a result, qualitative studies, book chapters, review papers, editorials, or theoretical papers were excluded for these reasons as they would create difficulty performing statistical analysis between the studies. However, it should be noted that one theoretical paper was encountered during the literature search (Hedberg & Luchak, 2018) that held some relevance to this review, but this was not included in the final matrix as it fell outside the scope of this review. However, due to the relatively small number of papers, it is expected that this exclusion does not have a significant impact on the findings or conceptual model presented in later sections of this review.

2.2.2 Procedure

To acquire both unpublished and published studies, a multi-method approach was applied. First, five major online databases were searched: JSTOR, ProQuest, Scopus, Web of Science, and Wiley Online, using a Boolean search string¹. Because the term 'imprinting factor'

¹ The search string included two blocks: [Block 1] ("HR(M) strength" OR "HR(M) system strength" OR "HR attribution") AND [Block 2] ("culture" OR "upbringing" OR "parents" OR "family" OR "children" OR "personality" OR "values" OR "past experience" OR "non-work" OR "attachment" OR "imprinting" OR "spillover").

is a relatively new concept to the HR (process) literature, initial searches using this term provided minimal results. Instead, a list of imprinting factor categories was identified, compiled, and included within the search terms to ensure that all relevant papers were identified. Second, a manual search was conducted in nine major peer-reviewed HRM and management journals: *Human Resource Management*, *Personnel Psychology*, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *Journal of Management*, *Academy of Management Journal*, *Human Resource Management Journal*, *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, *The Journal of Organizational Behavior*, and *The Journal of Management Studies*. Third, a cited reference search was conducted on the two seminal papers of Bowen and Ostroff (2004) and Nishii, Lepak, and Schneider (2008). Fourth, the papers referencing any of the previously published review articles in the area were examined including Ostroff and Bowen (2016), Hewett et al. (2018), and Wang et al. (2020). The paper by Farndale and Sanders (2017) was also included at this stage as their paper on the influence of national values on perceived HR strength is highly relevant to the current topic, despite it being theoretical in nature. Fifth, the matrices of HRM process reviews (where available) were examined, including Hewett et al. (2018), Wang et al. (2020), Hewett (2021), and Bednall et al. (2021). Finally, to capture unpublished literature (including unpublished manuscripts, abstracts, and conference presentations), authors of published papers in the research area were contacted directly. A call for papers was also disseminated via the AOM HR Division listserv and the HRM Process Google group. For relevant doctoral theses, a search via *ProQuest Dissertations and Abstracts* was conducted. The conference proceedings from the Academy of Management Annual Meetings in the most recent years were also searched.

2.2.3 Initial Yield and Sifting

The initial yield included 26 studies (24 papers). The imprinting factors in each study

were then assessed for relevance to an imprinting framework by applying additional criteria. During this process, the titles, abstracts, and, when further clarification was necessary, the content of each article was reviewed. As a result, two studies were removed whereby the imprinting factor (i.e., HR/managerial values and gender) was not associated with the individual providing the ratings of perceived HR strength or HR attributions (García-Carbonell, Martín-Alcázar, & Sanchez-Gardey, 2018; Igbaria & Baroudi, 1995). Furthermore, two studies that included measures of union membership as HRM process antecedents (Delmotte et al., 2012; Guest & Rodrigues, 2020) were excluded as union membership develops after one enters the workplace. Finally, two studies were removed as the imprinting factors (i.e., growth and esteem motivations, and locus of control) were aggregated or transformed into a work-related factor (i.e., work-motivations similarity and net resource index) when entered into the statistical analysis (Beijer, Van De Voorde, & Tims, 2019; Mayo & Mallin, 2010). As a result, 20 studies (18 papers) remained. The following section details how the information was coded for each study.

2.2.4 Data Coding and Analysis

Content analysis is regularly used to examine the content and methodological choices of studies (e.g., Hoobler & Johnson, 2004). First, to provide an overview of the field, several key characteristics of each article were coded, including the type of article (published, conference, thesis), design (quantitative or experimental), year of publication, country context, and the number of studies per paper. The number of citations each article had received on Google Scholar and Web of Science was also included to indicate how well each article was received in the field.

Next, the empirical content of each study was analysed, including the research content (research aim, design, theoretical framework, theoretical contributions, practical implications,

future research topics, limitations, and level of analysis) and research design (design choice, methods, sources of data collection, and respondent profiles). The imprinting factor–HRM process relationship that was present in each study was also outlined, including whether the relationship was supported, the type of analysis performed, the effect size of the relationship, and the key findings relating to the analysis.

Finally, to capture all relevant information about imprinting factors and the HRM process, each variable was explicitly named, the source (employee, co-worker, manager) of each variable, how the variables were positioned in the conceptual model (independent variable, moderator, or control), and the respective level of analysis (individual- or country-level). In addition, all other variables in each study were listed, including the control variables. The examination of the research content and empirical insights of each stream allows for the building of the conceptual model in the following section, and the generation of suggestions for future research. Overall, 43 categories were coded for each of the 20 studies. An abridged version of the studies in the sample is available in this paper (Table 2.1).

Table 2.1: Overview of the 20 studies included in the systematic review.

Study	Type of paper	Design	Context	Imprinting factor(s)	HRM process	HRM content	Statistical analysis	Summary of main findings
HR Strength Studies								
Aktas, Farndale & Gelfand (2017)	Conference paper	Survey	Cross-cultural study across 18 countries	Uncertainty avoidance (IV) Performance orientation (IV) Collectivism (IV) Tightness-looseness (mod)	HRM strength	n/a	n/a	Performance orientation, uncertainty avoidance, and collectivism had a direct effect on HRM system strength. Cultural tightness-looseness was found to amplify the effect of cultural values with a curvilinear effect.
Babar, Sanders, Obaid, & Tarik (2020)	Conference paper	Survey – time-lagged; multi-source	Employees and line managers within the telecom. industry in Pakistan	Faith in religion (mod) Gender (control) Age (control)	Perceived HR strength	Perceived performance appraisal quality	Hierarchical linear modelling	The effect of performance appraisal quality on perceived HR strength was stronger for employees with low faith in religion, compared to high faith employees. Age had a positive main effect on perceived HR strength.
Farndale, Metto, & Nakhle (2020)	Article	Survey – time-lagged; single source	Employees in various industries in Kenya, Lebanon, and the Netherlands	Gender (control) Age (control)	Perceived HR strength	High commitment HRM systems	PROCESS macro for SPSS	Gender and age were not found to have significant relationships with perceived HR strength.
Jorgensen & Van Rossenberg (2019)	Conference paper	Survey – cross-sec; multi-source	Employees and managers in various organizations across 10 countries	Uncertainty avoidance (IV) Gender (control) Age (control)	Agreement (consensus) between employee’s and manager’s talent and development perceptions	<i>Talent & development</i>	Hierarchical linear modelling	A positive significant relationship between uncertainty avoidance and perceptions of talent and development (T&D) agreement (consensus) between line managers and employees were found. Employee age had a negative relationship with T&D agreement. Males reported higher levels of agreement compared to females.

Kitt. Sanders, Qureshi, & Obaid (2020)	Conference paper	Survey – cross-sec; single source	Employees within various industries across China and Pakistan	Parental support (mod)	Perceived HR strength	Clear job descriptions	PROCESS macro for SPSS	Parental support moderated the indirect effect of perceived HR strength on the relationship between clear job description and innovative work behaviours so that the relationship is weaker when parental support is high rather than low.
HR Attribution Studies								
Arvey, Davis, & Nelson (1984)	Article	Survey – cross-sec; single source	Hourly employees at a large south-western chemical plant and oil refinery in the USA	Gender (control) Age (control) Ethnicity (control)	Attributional factors of the supervisor within the discipline process (internal; external)	<i>FHRA: Disciplinary system</i>	ANOVA	Age, gender, and ethnicity were not found to have significant relationships with attributions of any type.
Chen & Young (2013a)	Article	Experimental - vignette; time-lagged	Students at a USA university	Belief in a just world (mod)	Attributions of success (internal; external)	<i>FHRA: Promotion criteria</i>	Simple slopes analysis	Individuals gave less credit for someone's chance-related success (i.e. promotional success) when belief in a just world is weak, rather than strong.
Chen & Young (2013b)	Article	Experimental - vignette; time-lagged	Students at a USA university	Belief in a just world (mod)	Attributions of success (internal; external)	<i>FHRA: Promotion criteria</i>	PROCESS macro for SPSS	For individuals with weak just world beliefs, after recalling an unjust personal experience, their level of resentment carried over to give a person less credit for their workplace successes (i.e., promotional success).
Chiang & Birtch (2007)	Article	Survey – cross-sec; single source	Employees in the banking industry across multiple positions and four countries (UK, Finland, China, & Canada)	Individualism (IV) Collectivism (IV) Mastery (IV) Subjugation (IV) Power distance (IV) Gender (control) Age (control)	Attributions of performance (internal; external)	<i>FHRA: Performance evaluation</i>	MANCOVA	Individuals in cultures with higher levels of individualism, mastery over nature, and lower power distance were found to attribute co-workers performance to internal factors, rather the external factors. However, individuals in cultures with higher levels of collectivism, subjugation to nature, and power distance were not

				Educational level (control)				more likely to attribute their co-workers' performance to external factors more than internal factors.
De Stobbelier, Ashford, & Luque (2010)	Article	Experimental – vignette; single source	Former MBA students in the USA	Implicit person theory (IV) Gender (control) Age (control)	Attributions of proactive behaviour (impression management; performance enhancement)	<i>FHA: Performance evaluation</i>	General linear models	The more entity-oriented the theory of the manager (i.e., holding beliefs that performance doesn't change over time), the more likely the manager was to attribute frequent feedback-seeking behaviours to impression-management motives rather than performance-enhancement motives.
Guest, Sanders, Rodrigues, & Oliveira (2020)	Special Issue	Survey – cross-sec; multi-source	Employees and line managers in banks in Portugal	Gender (control)	HR attributions (control and commitment)	High commitment HRM practices	Hierarchical linear modelling	Females were more likely to develop stronger commitment attributions and lower control attributions compared to males.
Han (2016)	Thesis	Survey – cross-sec; multi-source	Employees in a construction company in South Korea	Gender (control) Age (control)	HR attributions (well-being, exploitation, and cost-reduction)	Productivity-oriented HRM system	Hierarchical linear modelling	Females were more likely to develop stronger well-being attributions compared to males.
Heavey (2012)	Thesis	Survey - longitudinal; single source	Organizational newcomers at USA cooperatives	Proactive personality (IV) Conscientiousness (IV) Openness to experience (IV) Emotional Stability (IV) Agreeableness (IV) Gender (IV) Major in school (IV)	HR attributions (well-being; trends; legal; costs)		Binary logistic regression	Students with employment-focused degrees developed stronger well-being and trends attributions compared with non-employment focused degrees. Proactive personality traits were positively associated with well-being and trends attributions. Openness to experience traits was negatively associated with trends and legal attributions. Emotional stability demonstrated a negative relationship with legal attributions. Females were marginally more likely to develop

								well-being attributions compared to males.
Hewett, Shantz, & Mundy (2019)	Article	Survey – cross sec; single source	Academic faculty in UK universities	Gender (control) Age (control)	HR attributions (control; commitment; external)		Linear regression	Older employees were less likely to develop exploitation attributions compared to younger employees.
Kaplan & Reckers (1993)	Article	Experiment – scenario; cross-sec	Auditors in a large public accounting firm in the USA	Social deference (IV) Tolerance for ambiguity (IV)	Attributions of performance (internal; external)	<i>FHRA: Performance evaluation</i>	ANCOVA	Social deference and tolerance for ambiguity personality attributes were not systematically associated with causal attributions.
Montag-Smit & Smit (2020)	Special review article	Survey – cross-sec; single-source	Employees in the USA sampled through MTurk	Gender (control) Age (control)	Pay secrecy attributions (malevolent; benevolent)	Pay secrecy policies	PROCESS macro for SPSS	Females were more likely to make benevolent attributions towards their organization’s pay policy practices than males. Younger employees were more likely to develop malevolent attributions towards their organizations pay policy practices than older employees.
Raemdonck & Strijbos (2013)	Article	Experiment – scenario; single-source	Secretarial employees in Dutch organizations of various sectors	Educational level (IV)	Dispositional attribution of the feedback sender (internal; external)		MANOVA	Less-educated employees were more likely to strongly react to supervisor feedback and develop stronger negative behavioural attributions towards their supervisors compared to highly-educated employees.
Sanders, Yang, & Li (2019a)	Article	Experiment – vignette; single source	Students in an Australian university	Power distance orientation (mod) Gender (control) Age (control)	HR attributions (quality enhancement; cost reduction)	High-performance work systems	PROCESS macro for SPSS	The effect of HPWS on quality-enhancement and cost-reduction attributions was stronger for low power distance employees compared to high power distance employees.

Sanders, Yang, & Li (2019b)	Article	Survey – cross-sec; single-source	Employees from a variety of industries in China	Power distance orientation (mod) Gender (control) Age (control)	HR attributions (quality enhancement; cost reduction)	High-performance work systems	PROCESS macro for SPSS	The effect of HPWS on quality-enhancement and cost-reduction attributions was stronger for low power distance employees than high power distance employees. Females were more likely to report higher levels of both quality-enhancement and cost-reduction attributions compared to males. Older employees were more likely to report lower levels of quality enhancement and cost-reduction attributions compared to younger employees.
Van De Voorde & Beijer (2015)	Article	Survey – cross-sec	Master's students in the Netherlands	Gender (control) Age (control) Educational level (control)	HR attributions (well-being; performance)	High-performance work systems	Hierarchical linear modelling	Females were more likely to develop stronger well-being attributions than males.

Items in italic indicate that HRM content was used in context only, not as an isolated variable that was tested in a conceptual model.

2.2.5 Reliability of the Coding Process

A coding taxonomy was designed to capture the aforementioned categories, each of which included a set of explanatory notes. Following the advice of Neuendorf (2017), a structured process was followed. Initially, two scholars independently coded the same five studies that were picked via a random number generator of the 20 studies. The scholars discussed any discrepancies, alternate classification options, or when any doubt arose about the inclusion of any specific coding criteria or classification. The reliability was calculated. Cohen's Kappa indicated a result of .84, indicating a high level of agreement. As a result, the first author of this paper coded the remaining 15 studies.

2.3 Results

In the following section, the results from this review are described. First, an overview of the studies is presented, including study characteristics and research design². Then, the research content of the papers is explored, including the nature and relationship between the imprinting factor(s) and the HRM process, whether the studies included HRM content (e.g., HRM practices or HPWS) in their conceptual models, theoretical contributions, practical implications, and methodological limitations of the articles. Throughout this section, distinctions are drawn between perceived HR strength and HR attribution streams where present as the streams have evolved separately to date (see Hewett et al., 2018; Wang et al., 2020).

2.3.1 Characteristics of the Studies

A total of 20 studies (18 papers) met the inclusion criteria and form the basis of this review. This constituted of 12 studies within 10 published articles, two special issue articles,

² The research team was unable to gain full access to one paper (i.e., Aktas, Farndale, & Gelfand, 2017) so comparisons are limited for this paper.

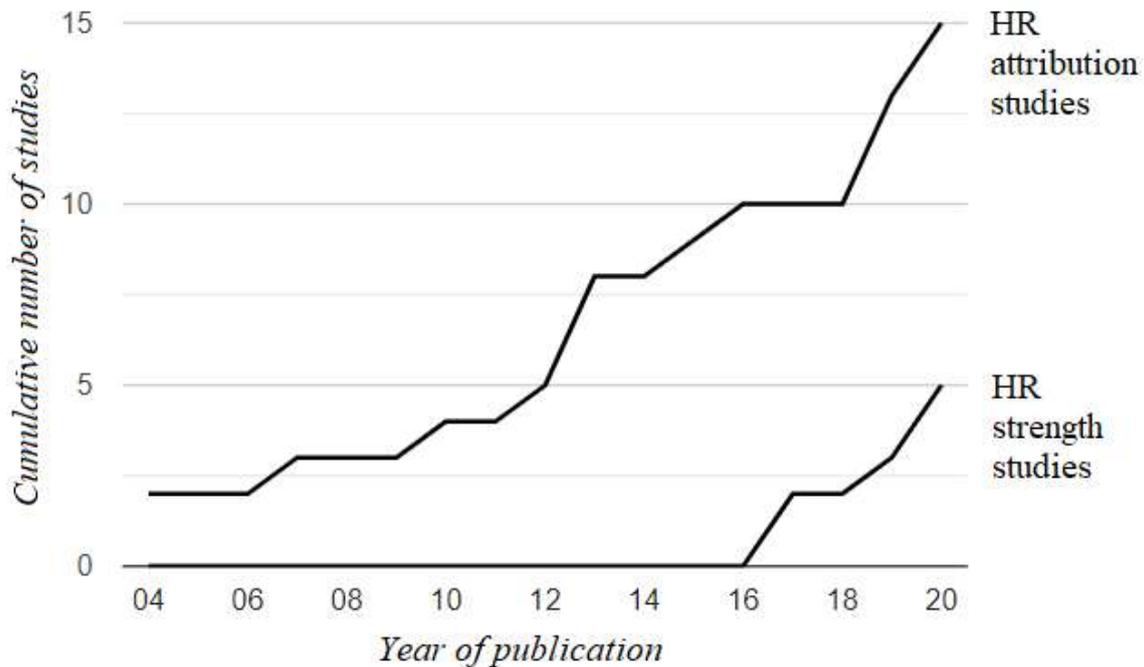
four conference papers, and two doctoral theses. Three-quarters (75%; 15 out of 20) of the studies consisted of HR attribution studies, leaving the imprinting antecedents of perceived HR strength less explored. The greater quantity of HR attribution related studies is likely a result of two reasons: 1) early attribution(al) theorists often emphasized the influence of individual characteristics (e.g., cognitive beliefs and biases) on attribution formation (Kelley & Michela, 1980), and 2) *functional* attribution(al) frameworks (Heider, 1958; Kelley, 1967, 1973; Weiner, 1985) were developed far before the conceptualisation of HR strength in 2004 (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004). Following this, it was not surprising that a significant difference was found between in the types (functional vs. intent) of attributions that are being examined over time ($\chi^2(1) = 8.04; p < .01$), indicating a recent shift in scholarly attention towards *attributions of intent* (e.g., Nishii et al., 2008) (mean age = 2.87; SD = 2.88) compared to the older *functional attributions* sub-stream (mean age = 16.29; SD = 11.59), which are absent in the sample past 2013.

Nevertheless, in total, half (10 studies; 50%) of the studies were published in the past five years (2016-2021; mean age of the studies = 7.65 years old; SD = 9.47), indicating a recent bloom of interest in the field. All five of the perceived HR strength studies were published since 2017 (mean age = 2.20 years old; SD = 1.64), and the HR attribution stream was over seven years older on average (mean age = 9.46, SD = 10.26) (see Figure 2.1).

Despite the recent growth of this body of research, the average number of citations according to Google Scholar (retrieved on 19/05/2021) for the studies (excluding conference papers and doctoral theses) was 43.08 (SD = 68.6). The highest cited study was by Van De Voorde and Beijer (2015) with 236 citations on Google Scholar and 107 on Web of Science, averaging 39.3 Google Scholar citations a year. This was the only study in the sample with over 100 citations. Van De Voorde and Beijer (2015) investigated the influence of high-performance

work systems employee outcomes mediated by HR attributions (including gender, age, and level of education as imprinting factors).

Figure 2.1: Studies examining imprinting antecedents of the HRM process by year of publication.



2.3.2 Research Design and Context

In the following, the research design, participants, and contexts of the studies are discussed. The research design is discussed as an indicator of the quality of imprinting factor–HRM process relationships. Several issues are highlighted that affect the internal and external validity of the studies, and methodological limitations in the field.

2.3.2.1 Design and methods

First, the design choices and methodological rigour of the studies for each stream are discussed. The majority of studies (12 studies; 60%) solely relied on survey methods to gather data from participants. This was the case for all five perceived HR strength studies. However, the HR attribution stream demonstrated a greater variety of research designs. Almost half (seven out of 15 studies; 47%) of HR attribution studies applied experimental designs (i.e.,

using a vignette or scenario as an experimental stimulus), all of which examined functional attributions. Despite this, the difference in methodological design choices between the streams was only marginally significant ($\chi^2(1) = 3.59, p < .10$).

Regardless of these differences, both streams were limited by a tendency to examine imprinting factors on HRM process variables with cross-sectional designs (14 studies; 70%). Only five studies (25%) in the sample used a time-lagged design. Furthermore, only one study (5%) (Heavey, 2012) adopted a longitudinal approach to examine the relationship between personality traits (e.g., proactive personality, conscientiousness, openness to experience, emotional stability) and demographic characteristics (e.g., gender, major in school) on the HR attributions of organizational newcomers, and how these attributions change over time. That said, there were no significant differences between each stream in terms of the cross-sectional nature of the studies ($\chi^2(1) = .317, ns$).

In addition, both streams were limited by the use of self-report, single-source data collection methods, which highlights issues of reliability, confounding factors, and the directional and multi-level nature of the relationships between imprinting factors and the HRM process (Campbell & Fiske, 1959; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). Only three HR attribution studies (Guest et al., 2021; Han, 2016; Van De Voorde & Beijer, 2015) and two perceived HR strength studies (Babar et al., 2020; Jorgensen & Van Rossenberg, 2019) gathered data from multiple actors (e.g., line managers and employees).

2.3.2.2 Sample and context

Second, the sample characteristics and generalizability of the studies are discussed. Although the HR attribution stream included several experimental studies which typically have lower sample sizes, the mean number of participants for both streams was 453 (SD = 458.58). However, the perceived HR strength studies had a higher average number of participants (mean

$n = 745$; $SD = 687.75$) compared to HR attribution studies (mean $n = 382.33$; $SD = 3217.59$), which was partially due to the differences in design choices. The greatest sample size was from Jorgensen and Van Rossenberg (2019) who gathered data from 1589 employees and 186 managers in 29 organizations across ten countries (China, Denmark, Indonesia, Nigeria, Norway, Malaysia, Portugal, Oman, Tanzania, and the UK) to examine how national values of uncertainty avoidance influences employees' levels of perceived HR strength.

Furthermore, cross-cultural datasets were more common in the perceived HR strength studies in comparison and significant differences are noted in the number of studies that included more than one country in their sample between the two streams ($\chi^2(1) = 10.76$, $p < .01$). Among the five perceived HR strength related studies, data was gathered from over 20 countries from a large range of industries in both Eastern and Western contexts, which indicates a good level of external validity of the studies (Calder, Phillips, & Tybout, 1982). Only one perceived HR strength study gathered data from just one country alone (Babar et al., 2020). In contrast, the HR attribution stream often relied on data from individual sectors and companies in one cultural context. Indeed, the majority of HR attribution studies (12 out of 15; 80%) were conducted solely in a Western context (i.e., Australia, Canada, UK, USA, Denmark, Finland, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal). Moreover, seven (out of 15; 47%) of these studies were conducted in the USA and five of those studies relied solely on student samples within universities. Only three HR attribution studies gathered data outside a Western context (Chiang & Birtch, 2007; Han, 2016; Sanders, Yang, & Li, 2021) and only one of these studies examined both Eastern and Western differences (i.e., Canada, China, Finland, and the UK) (Chiang & Birtch, 2007). Furthermore, it should be noted that only one study (Jorgensen & Van Rossenberg, 2019) in the entire sample included a population from low-middle income countries (i.e., Indonesia, Kenya Lebanon, Malaysia, Nigeria, Oman, & Tanzania) (World

Bank, 2021), which were far less represented when compared to developed countries (i.e., Australia, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, UK, and the USA).

In conclusion, the findings from this analysis demonstrate that greater attention to imprinting antecedents has been received in the HR attribution stream. However, despite there being substantially fewer studies in the perceived HR strength stream, these studies often gathered data from a greater variety of industrial and national contexts, thus improving their generalizability. In contrast, HR attribution studies had a greater reliance on participants in single organizations from Western contexts, in particular, using student populations. Regardless of this limitation, the HR attribution studies were stronger in terms of methodological rigour due to the number of experimental studies in this stream. Finally, single source, cross-sectional designs were common in both streams. Researchers should be mindful of causality, generalizability, and methodological limitations that may influence the quality of conclusions drawn from either body, respective of these weaknesses and strengths.

2.3.3 Research Content

In the following section, the nature of the imprinting factor-HRM process relationship is examined (e.g., conceptual positions, level of analysis, etc.). This also includes the empirical content of each study (e.g., research aims, theoretical framework, contributions, practical implications, and limitations) between both the perceived HR strength and HR attribution streams.

2.3.3.1 Imprinting antecedents

The studies were inspected for the nature of the imprinting factors, their relationships, conceptual positions, and levels of analysis. 25 unique imprinting factors were captured by the studies within this review, with a total of 55 imprinting factors that were statistically examined across the 20 studies. Within the perceived HR strength stream, eight different imprinting

factors (a total of 13 examined factors) were investigated: four country-level national values (i.e., uncertainty avoidance, performance orientation, collectivism, and tightness-looseness), one individual difference (i.e., faith in religion), one family situation (i.e., parental support), and two individual-level demographic variables (i.e., gender and age). The position of the imprinting factors in the perceived HR strength studies varied. Of the 13 examined imprinting antecedents, four (31%) were examined in a direct relationship (as an independent variable) of perceived HR strength, three (24%) were examined as moderators, and six (46%) were examined as controls.

In comparison, the HR attribution stream contained 20 different imprinting factors (a total of 42 examined factors), including five country-level national values (i.e., collectivism, individualism, mastery, power distance, and subjugation), ten individual differences (i.e., agreeableness, belief in a just world, conscientiousness, emotional stability, implicit person theory, power distance orientation, proactive personality, openness to experience, social deference, and tolerance for ambiguity), and five individual-level demographic variables (i.e., gender, age, ethnicity, level of education, and major in school). Of the 42 total examined imprinting factors, 16 (38%) were examined in a direct relationship (as an independent variable) on HR attributions, four (10%) were examined as moderators, and 22 (52%) were examined as control variables.

Furthermore, there were only a very few studies within each stream that examined models at multiple levels of analysis: only one perceived HR strength (Jorgensen & Van Rossenberg, 2019) and three HR attribution studies adopted a multi-level perspective (Guest & Rodrigues, 2020; Han, 2016; Van De Voorde & Beijer, 2015). The lack of multi-level frameworks limits researchers' ability to understand the multi-level nature of the imprinting factor-HRM process relationship which further adds importance to this current review. In addition, only one study within the sample incorporated both perceived HR strength and HR

attributions into one conceptual and empirical model (Guest et al., 2020), indicating that little advancement has been made to address the calls for greater theoretical integration between the two streams of attribution theories.

Finally, regarding the examination of the imprinting-HRM process relationship (for both streams), the most common statistical test used in the 19 available studies were regression models using the PROCESS macro for SPSS (seven studies; 36.8%). PROCESS is a regression path modelling tool that was used to estimate the direct, interaction, and indirect effects of moderation (three studies; Chen & Young, 2013a; Sanders, Yang, & Li, 2021a, 2021b) and moderated-mediation models (four studies; Chen & Young, 2013b; Farndale, Metto, and Narkhle, 2020; Kitt et al., 2020; Montag-Smit & Smit, 2020). For the latter, PROCESS shows the effect of the mediation while taking the effect of the moderator into account. For example, Chen and Young (2013b) examined the interaction effect of belief in a just world (imprinting factor; moderator) and justice conditions (IV) on resentment, of which resentment mediated the relationship between justice conditions and causal attributions. Several other statistical approaches were used for the remaining studies including hierarchical linear modelling (five studies; 26%), ANOVA, MANOVA or ANCOVA (four studies; 21%), ordinary logistic regression (one study; 5%), linear regression in MPlus (one study; 5%), and general linear models (one study; 5%).

2.3.3.2 HRM content

The studies were then examined for the inclusion of HRM content (i.e., HRM practices or HPWS) in their conceptual models. Ten studies (out of 20; 50%) directly included HRM content in their conceptual models, including high commitment HRM systems (Farndale et al.,

2020; Guest et al., 2020; Sanders et al., 2019a, 2019b³), productivity-oriented HRM systems (Han, 2016), high-performance HRM systems (Van de Voorde & Beijer, 2015), performance appraisal quality (Babar et al., 2020), pay secrecy policies (Montag-Smit & Smit, 2020), workload management practices (Hewett et al., 2019), and clear job descriptions (Kitt et al., 2020). The majority (seven out of 10; 70%) of those studies were in the HR attribution stream. Furthermore, HRM content was positioned as an independent variable in all studies within the sample, which highlights the predominant scholarly focus on work-related antecedents of the HRM process. Finally, in six (out of 10; 60%) of these studies, the imprinting factor was positioned as a moderator between HRM content and the HRM process. The remaining four (out of 10; 40%) studies included imprinting factors as control variables.

2.3.3.3 Theoretical frameworks, practical implications, and future directions

Finally, the studies were inspected for the use of different theories, practical implications, and future directions. The studies drew on a variety of social, communication, and attribution theories as theoretical underpinnings to explain the antecedents or outcomes of the HRM process. Within the five perceived HR strength studies, the most common (three studies; 60%) theoretical framework adopted was a (perceived) HR strength framework (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004). Kelley's co-variation model (1967), uncertainty reduction theory (Berger & Calabrese, 1975), signalling theory (Connelly, Certo, Ireland, & Reutzel, 2011; Ehrnrooth & Björkman, 2012), and social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) were referenced once equally between the perceived HR strength studies.

In contrast, the HR attribution stream relied more so on early attribution(al) theories (Heider, 1958; Kelley, 1967; Weiner, 1985), being referenced within 11 of the 15 (73%) studies.

³ For papers that include multiple studies, refer to Table 2.1.

More recent HR attribution studies also relied on HR attribution theory (Nishii et al., 2008), signalling theory (Connelly et al., 2011), social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), and social information processing theory (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978) more readily. Indeed, signalling theory was one of the few theories that was applied to both streams and was used as a means of theoretical integration between perceived HR strength and HR attribution frameworks in one study (Guest et al., 2020). However, beyond this, researchers demonstrated a propensity to rely on older theoretical frameworks and little advancement has been made towards the development of new (or integrated) theory.

Finally, the practical implications and future directions were inspected in the studies as a way to determine the practical uses of information, why this topic is important to practitioners, and to determine the maturity of the field (Judge, Cable, Colbert, & Rynes, 2007). Regarding practical implications, within the perceived HR strength studies the most frequently presented implication was for managers and organizations to provide clear and consistent communication through formal and established channels within their organization. This was provided as one of the key practical implications in all four studies that were accessible within this review. The importance of managerial communication at the local level was similarly expressed within the HR attribution studies with one caveat. Rather than simply offering clear communication, researchers emphasised the importance for managers to communicate the rationale behind the implementation of certain HRM practices and how they relate to organizational goals (six out of 15 studies; 40%). It was also equally recommended that managers should be conscious about the cultural, individual, or status-dependent differences (e.g., stakeholders, organizational newcomers) that affect employee reactions and interpretations of HRM within their organization (six out of 15 studies; 40%).

Finally, of the 17 studies that identified future directions, the majority of studies (nine out of 17; 53%) encouraged a closer examination of cultural factors (e.g., femininity,

uncertainty avoidance), contextual influences (e.g., internal or external factors), or individual differences (e.g., skill levels, motivation, and values) on the HRM process. Researchers also highlighted that future research should confirm the insights across different organizational, economic, and industrial settings (four studies; 24%), and more closely examine the role of line managers in influencing employees' cognitions and the formation of attributions (three studies; 18%). Methodological improvements (e.g., longitudinal, multi-level, and multi-source designs) were also highlighted as an avenue for future research (eight studies; 47%).

In summary, 25 unique imprinting antecedents of the HRM process were investigated across the 20 studies. The studies drew on a variety of social, communication, and attribution theories to explain these effects. However, only one study included both perceived HR strength and HR attributions in one conceptual model and few studies within each stream examined models at multiple levels of analysis. Indeed, researchers highlight that stronger methodologies are necessary for the evolution of the field, including multi-level models and closer examination of imprinting factors across organizational and cultural contexts. Nevertheless, the practical implications are clear: this field has strong implications for improving the effectiveness of management at communicating HRM practices and understanding how colleagues' backgrounds and past experiences can influence their interpretation of HRM.

In the next section, the key empirical findings across the streams are discussed to provide an overview of developments, areas of contention, and the focus of each stream at present.

2.3.4 Major Empirical Findings

2.3.4.1 Perceived HR strength studies

Despite the small number of perceived HR strength studies, five studies have provided empirical support for a variety of imprinting factors as antecedents to perceived HR strength at

multiple levels, including national values, faith in religion, parental support, age, and gender (Aktas et al., 2017; Babar et al., 2020; Farndale et al., 2020; Jorgensen & Van Rossenberg, 2019; Kitt et al., 2020). Among these studies, imprinting factors have been demonstrated as a moderator in the relationships between HRM and outcomes (e.g., Babar et al., 2020), whilst others have demonstrated a direct main effect (e.g., Aktas et al., 2017).

At the national level, scholars have theorised that national values (e.g., performance orientation, uncertainty avoidance, and collectivism) influence how organizations design their HRM systems, which have a direct effect on employees levels of perceived HR strength. It has further been suggested the strength of social norms (tightness-looseness) amplifies the impact of cultural values (Aktas et al., 2017; also see Farndale & Sanders, 2017).

At the individual level, faith in religion and parental support have been found to have an impact on how individuals attend and react to signals from HRM practices, which influenced their levels of perceived HR strength (Babar et al., 2020; Kitt et al., 2020). Finally, research has shown mixed results on the role of demographic characteristics (i.e., gender and age). One study found that older and female employees were found to report lower levels of perceived HR strength (Jorgensen & Van Rossenberg, 2019), but two studies found the influence of age and gender was non-significant or had only a marginal influence ($p < .10$) (Babar et al., 2020; Farndale et al., 2020).

In sum, this emerging body of research has begun to highlight the importance of imprinting factors in accounting for the variance of perceptions of *distinctiveness*, *consistency*, and *consensus* of the HRM system. Furthermore, researchers have taken the first steps to examine imprinting factors beyond the individual unit towards family relationships (e.g., Kitt et al., 2020), and have extended this towards imprinting factors at the national level in cross-national contexts (Aktas et al., 2017; Babar et al., 2020; Jorgensen & Van Rossenberg, 2019; Kitt et al., 2020). Yet, this body of work is still in its early stages of development. A concern

for this stream is the lack of HRM content within national-level studies. As such, researchers remain less aware of the interaction between HRM practices and national-level contingencies on the HRM process. Furthermore, two of these studies positioned perceived HR strength as a mediator (Babar et al., 2020; Kitt et al., 2020), which has been almost non-existent in prior HRM process literature. Indeed, a recent meta-analysis (Bednall et al., 2021) has demonstrated that there is stronger evidence for the position of perceived HR strength as a mediator than a moderator in the relationship between HPWS and employee outcomes. Beyond greater attention to imprinting antecedents on perceived HR strength, future research would also benefit from greater exploration into this (mediating) conceptualisation of perceived HR strength within an imprinting framework.

2.3.4.2 HR attributions studies

The 15 HR attribution studies have empirically examined a wide variety of imprinting factors on HR attributions, including academic background (Heavey, 2012), beliefs, motivations, and values (Chen & Young, 2013a; 2013; De Stobbeleir et al., 2010; Sanders et al., 2019), personality traits (Heavey, 2012; Kaplan & Reckers, 1993), national values (Chiang & Birtch, 2007) and demographic characteristics (e.g., gender, age, educational level, and ethnicity) (Arvey et al., 1984; Chiang & Birtch, 2007; De Stobbeleir et al., 2010; Guest et al., 2021; Han, 2016; Hewett et al., 2019; Montag-Smit & Smit, 2021; Sanders, Yang, & Li, 2021; Van De Voorde & Beijer, 2015).

At the national level, it has been demonstrated individuals within cultures with high individualistic, high mastery over nature, and low power distance values are likely to attribute their colleagues' performance to internal factors (e.g., skills, knowledge, effort) more than external forces (e.g., relationships, management, organizational resources), but not vice versa (Chiang and Birtch, 2007).

At the individual level, HR attribution researchers have taken a particular interest in employees' beliefs, values, and motivations. Several scholars have emphasised the role of beliefs in the development of causal attributional biases in accounting for whether employees interpret others' performance due to internal (dispositional) or external (environmental) motives (Chen & Young, 2013a; 2013b; De Stobbeleir et al., 2010). Furthermore, scholars have illustrated that several personality traits (e.g., proactive personality, openness to experience, emotional stability) influence whether employees interpret their organization in a positive light, while others had no significant effect (e.g., conscientiousness) (Heavey, 2012). Finally, similar to the perceived HR strength studies, demographic-related associations with HR attributions have been mixed. Five studies found that women were more likely to attribute HRM more positively (Guest et al., 2020; Han, 2016; Montag-Smit & Smit, 2020; Sanders et al., 2019b; Van de Voorde & Beijer, 2015). However, four other studies found no significance for the role of gender (Arvey & Davis, 1984; Heavey, 2012; Hewett et al., 2019; Sanders et al., 2019a). Similar conflicting results are for employees age on HR attributions (Arvey & Davis, 1984; Han, 2016; Hewett et al., 2019; Montag-Smit and Smit, 2020; Sanders et al., 2019a, 2019b; Van de Voorde & Beijer, 2015). However, there is an early indication that the type and level of education has an impact on individuals' HR and behavioural attributions (Heavey, 2012; Raemdonck and Strijbos, 2013).

To conclude, scholars have highlighted the role of imprinting factors for influencing how employees interpret HRM and significant advancements have been made, particularly at the individual level of analysis. However, despite classic attribution theories placing a heavy emphasis on differences across cultures (e.g., Martinko, Douglas, & Harvey, 2006), only one HR attribution study has examined imprints beyond the individual level (Chiang and Birtch, 2007). Furthermore, the research surrounding demographic characteristics are not conclusive.

2.4 Towards a Multi-level Model: Imprinting Antecedents of the HRM Process

In the following section, a multi-level model is developed to explain the effects of imprinting factors on the HRM process. Drawing on the empirical findings of the 20 studies in this review and the wider (HR) management and psychology literature, this model presents the interactions at three levels of analysis: individual-level imprinting factors, HPWS at the organizational level, and national values at the country level. A series of propositions are presented and the multi-level conceptual model is displayed in Figure 2.2.

2.4.1 Individual-level Imprinting Factors

Social psychologists have long since understood the importance of influential role-models (e.g., parents) for providing career templates for children that direct work-related decisions in later life, especially when they share the same biological sex (Bandura, 1971; Dekas & Baker, 2014; Lupu et al., 2018; J. T. Mortimer & Finch, 1986). Within this body of literature, empirical evidence strongly suggests that family socialisation plays a role in childrens' and adolescents' academic engagement, career aspirations, occupational choices, their importance of certain job rewards, occupational identities, and union attitudes (Barling, 1990; Darensbourg & Blake, 2014; Lupu et al., 2018; Mccall & Lawler, 1976; Sarma, 2014).

Within the imprinting literature, scholars have extended this by illustrating a variety of imprinting effects on individuals within educational and business settings, including how early mentoring experiences and educational achievements shape the behaviours, attitudes, and knowledge of organizational newcomers that last long into their careers (Azoulay et al., 2017; DiMaggio, 1997; Mcevely et al., 2012). Despite this, there has only been a few early developments in recent years where scholars have used imprinting frameworks within HRM research, which have had a particular focus on organizational start-ups. For instance, it has been theorised that early infant-parent attachment style (secure, avoidant, anxious)

relationships of founding members play a role in shaping the design, structure, and philosophies underlying management and HRM practices in developing organizations (Hedberg & Luchak, 2018). Further, it has been empirically demonstrated that the shared past experiences of founding team members impact the internal consistency and the distinctiveness of shared core HR values between them (Leung et al., 2013).

To explain the causal mechanisms that underpin the imprinting process (i.e., how past experiences influence current behaviours and attitudes), scholars have theorised that individuals absorb traits, beliefs, and behaviours from important *imprinters* (e.g., the environment, parents, teachers) during sensitive developmental, educational, and social processes, and then mirror these characteristics well into their career (see for reviews Marquis & Tilcsik, 2013; Simsek et al., 2015). Past experiences encourage the development of cognitive maps, scripts, or schemas: cognitive frameworks that help direct, organize, and interpret new information (DiMaggio, 1997; Dokko, Wilk, & Rothbard, 2008; Hedberg & Luchak, 2018; Higgins, 2005). Once formed, these cognitive frameworks act as an interpretive lens for new information to be processed and interpreted, which ultimately influences how individuals perceive and attribute causal relationships (Kelley, 1967, 1973; Kelley & Michela, 1980).

In this way, imprinting frameworks can be a useful tool to explain employee variations in perceived HR strength and HR attributions. The studies in this review suggest that HR communications are interpreted, distorted, and assimilated according to ones' suppositions, beliefs, and expectations (e.g., Chen & Young, 2013a, 2013b; Heavey, 2012; Jones, Goethals, Kennington, & Severance, 1972; Kelley & Michela, 1980), which are assumed to be the result of the cognitive frameworks developed before one's entrance to the workforce (Cohen-Scali, 2003; Kandler & Zapko-Willmes, 2017; Kelley & Michela, 1980; Lupu et al., 2018). Hence, past experiences provide individuals with a store of casual knowledge that can be drawn upon to make (in)effective interferences especially when information is limited (Kelley, 1973;

Mitchell & Kalb, 1982; Whitehead, 2014).

Following this line of reasoning, the main effects of imprinting factors on the HRM process are proposed. First, the effect on HR attributions is explained. It is proposed that imprinting factors are used as an interpretative lens to understand managerial intentions and how HRM is used within organizations. In an attempt to maintain cognitive consistency and stable interpretations of HRM, employees will develop HR attributions through a lens of past experiences, personal beliefs, and motivations (i.e., imprinting factors) (Heider, 1958; Kelley, 1973; Kelley & Michela, 1980; Nickerson, 1998; Nishii et al., 2008).

Furthermore, the strength of which imprinting factors affect HR attributions is also considered. Within the management literature, a personality strength perspective (Dalal et al., 2015; see also Meyer, Dalal, & Hermida, 2010) proposes that within-person variation of behaviour is accounted for by the 'strength' of individuals' personality traits. In other words, when personality traits are 'strong', individuals will exhibit consistency in their behaviour across different situations. In a similar way, it is expected that the degree to which imprinting factors influence HR attributions depends on the strength of imprinting factors, referring to the degree of consistency at which imprinting factors are drawn upon to interpret environmental cues across situations.

Following this line of reasoning, it is expected that people with strong imprinting factors are more likely to make stronger HR (commitment and control) attributions compared to people with weaker imprinting factors. This is because employees with stronger imprinting factors are more motivated to process HRM-related information to develop HR attributions so they can confirm pre-existing beliefs, motivations, and experiences, even if this means cognitively distorting HRM signals so that their meanings diverge from the original intent of management (Connelly et al., 2011; Ehrhart & Ziegert, 2005). For example, growing up in a household of senior managerial parents may consistently reinforce the belief that managers are there to

enhance commitment and service quality (i.e., commitment attributions). In comparison, there is likely to be a stark contrast in the types of attributions made by employees (i.e., control attributions) with parents who are enthusiastic union members (De Winne, Delmotte, Gilbert, & Sels, 2013; Guest & Rodrigues, 2020). Hence, the first proposition is formulated as follows:

Proposition 1: Imprinting factors will have a (direct) positive effect on HR attributions (commitment and control).

In addition to the direct effect of the imprinting factors on HR attributions, it is also expected that there is an indirect effect of perceived HR strength in this relationship. This is because information (i.e., distinctiveness, consensus, and consistency) precedes HR attributions in the causal attribution chain (Kelley & Michela, 1980). According to information processing theory (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978), employees first subconsciously choose to attend to aspects of HRM that are important to them, and then cognitively process this information into HR attributions. In this way, *attention* precedes *interpretation*, and both these mechanisms are expected to be influenced by imprinting factors. Supporting this, scholars have argued that individuals will only make attributions about HRM if they are motivated to do so (Drover, Wood, & Corbett, 2018; Guest et al., 2021; Heavey, 2012; Hewett et al., 2019; Jorgensen & Van Rossenberg, 2019).

Hence, following information process theory, the previous proposition is expanded upon through the argument that imprinting factors influence the HRM process through two mechanisms. First, through employees' *attention* to HRM signals (i.e., perceived HR strength; Bowen & Ostroff, 2004), then through their *interpretation* of those signals (i.e., HR attributions; Nishii et al., 2008). Specifically, it is proposed that individuals with strong imprinting factors are more attentive to HRM signals that are important to them, governed by their pre-existing beliefs, values, and suppositions. For example, a woman who was raised in a traditional household or culture, whose parents and family members consistently emphasised

the role of child-raising as ‘gender-appropriate behaviour’ for women (Bern, 1981), may pay particular attention to childcare-related practices which subsequently influences her attitudes towards her organization (Kodagoda, 2018; Piszczek & Berg, 2020).

To elaborate further, imprinting factors lead to increased monitoring and attention to HRM (e.g., supervisors, HRM practices, colleagues, policies, etc.). In turn, HRM gains greater *distinctiveness* by enhancing the visibility, understandability, and relevance of HRM content (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004; Guest et al., 2021; Malik & Singh, 2014). The stronger the imprinting factors, the more likely the individual will draw on information sources that are more salient to them which creates *consistency* and *consensus* according to their pre-existing imprinting factors and experiences (Dalal et al., 2015; Fiske & Taylor, 1991; Hewett et al., 2019; Taylor & Fiske, 1978). This heightened attention then allows for greater opportunities for sense-making and interpretation through which HRM signals are judged, distorted, and assimilated in reference to their imprinting factors and past experiences, leading to stronger HR attributions (Jones & Davis, 1965; Jones et al., 1972; Kelley & Michela, 1980; Sanders, Yang, & Li, 2021). Following this, the second proposition is formulated as follows:

Proposition 2: *Perceived HR strength (distinctiveness, consistency, and consensus) will mediate the relationship between imprinting factors and HR attributions (commitment and control attributions).*

2.4.2 Organizational-level High-performance Work Systems

HRM process research has inspired a plethora of research that empirically investigates the effect of HRM content (i.e., individual practices or HPWS) on the HRM process (see for reviews Bednall, Sanders, & Yang, 2021; Hewett, 2021; Hewett et al., 2018; Wang et al., 2020; Xiao & Cooke, 2020). Instead of focusing on specific HRM practices, the following theorises on the effect of HPWS, referring to a combination of interconnected HRM practices designed

to enhance positive employees' behaviours and attitudes (Boon et al., 2019; Van De Voorde & Beijer, 2015).

Scholars have suggested that the effectiveness of HPWS at facilitating perceived HR strength and HR attributions is partially determined (moderated) by individual characteristics (e.g., imprinting factors) (Hewett et al., 2019; Montag-Smit & Smit, 2020). For instance, Sanders and colleagues (2019) found that employees vary in their sensitivity and reliance on HPWS to perceive HR strength depending on the degree to which individuals value status, authority, and power in organizations (i.e., power distance orientation). Additionally, Farndale and colleagues (2020) illustrated that employees with high paternalistic values - referring to the belief that management is responsible for looking after employees and their families - do not rely on HPWS to perceive *distinctiveness*, *consensus*, and *consistency* and develop positive attitudes towards their organizations. They reasoned that characteristics of paternalistic values and perceived HR strength overlap; close employee-employer relationships form a context in which HRM signals are apparent and easily understood, leading to a greater understanding of the behaviours that are expected and rewarded by management. Similarly, an emerging body of research has suggested that career-related parental support (Kitt et al., 2020) and faith in religion (Babar et al., 2020) can play a vital role in whether employees attend to HRM practices (i.e., clear job descriptions and performance appraisal quality), and the degree to which HR strength is perceived.

From these studies, scholars have suggested that imprinting factors influence employees' attention and reactions to HRM content. However, this review proposes a more nuanced perspective by following a strong situation hypothesis (Mischel, 1973, 1977). According to a strong situation hypothesis (Mischel, 1973, 1977), HRM content plays a role in the expression and suppression of individual characteristics (see for reviews Cooper et al., 2009; Dalal et al., 2015; Meyer et al., 2010). When HRM systems provide clear and consistent

signals about what is expected from employees, employees become clear on how they should behave in organizations. Under these conditions, HRM facilitates a “strong situation” where individual differences are suppressed (Mischel, 1977). For example, high degrees of situational clarity communicate the behavioural intentions of management, resulting in the emergence of uniform expectations about the intent of implementing HPWS (Meyer et al., 2010; Mischel, 1977, 2004), though contextual suppressions may be particularly difficult if individual characteristics are strong (Dalal et al., 2015).

Following a strong situation perspective (Mischel, 1973; 1977), it is argued that HPWS act as important contextual cues which influence the degree to which imprinting factors influence perceived HR strength. Indeed, it was previously theorised that imprinting factors influence perceived HR strength via increased attention to HRM signals. However, it is also proposed that strong HPWS are more salient and easier to attend to than individual or weak HPWS. According to Van de Voorde and Beijer (2015), HPWS contribute to a ‘high coverage’ of HRM practices contributes to a strong HRM system. HPWS facilitate opportunities for employees to perceive, make sense of, and attribute HRM to management (also see Guest et al., 2020; Sanders et al., 2019).

Following Van de Voorde & Beijer (2015), HPWS are more *distinctive* and more readily capture employees attention to the wider HRM system compared to individual HRM practices. In addition, when HRM practices are mutually reinforcing, they bolster perceived HR strength by clearly signalling a *consistent* pattern across multiple practices, which results in greater levels of *consensus* between organizational members (Sanders, Yang, & Li, 2019; Van de Voorde & Beijer, 2015). In other words, HPWS have a stronger signalling effect when compared to individual practices so they are more likely to communicate the desirability of desired behaviours (Ehrnrooth & Björkman, 2012). This results in a strong situation that reduces the effect of imprinting factors on perceived HR strength (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004;

Mischel, 1977). In contrast, weak HPWS leave more room for idiosyncratic interpretations of HRM to emerge as environmental cues are not salient enough to create an agreement between organizational members (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004; Ostroff & Bowen, 2016), resulting in a stronger relationship between imprinting factors and perceived HR strength. Hence, the second proposition is formulated as follows:

***Proposition 3:** HPWS will moderate the indirect effect of perceived HR strength (distinctiveness, consistency, and consensus), so that the relationship between imprinting factors and perceived HR strength is weaker when HPWS are high, rather than low.*

2.4.3 Country-level National Values

Having theorised the interaction of individual-level imprinting factors and HPWS on the HRM process, the following section considers the role of national values (e.g., power distance, in-group collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, etc.; House et al., 2004). Hofstede (1980) defines national culture as “the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one human group from another” (p. 25). While national values are not characteristics of a particular individual, they refer to a set of values, norms, and beliefs shared by a group of people gained from similar life experiences (Hofstede, 1980). Hence, national values are considered as a country-level imprinting factor that becomes embedded at the individual level through a process of socialisation throughout one’s life (Thornton et al., 2012).

Imprinting scholars have identified national norms as an important environmental *imprinter* on organizations and individuals (Hofstede, 1980; Kim & Gao, 2010; Marquis & Tilscik, 2013; Simsek et al., 2015). According to an imprinting perspective, cultural heritage leaves an imprint on national values that are maintained through educational institutions, organizations, politics, traditions, and the media (Inglehart & Baker, 2000; Kim & Gao, 2013;

Seidel, 2020; Shinkle & Kriauciunas, 2012; Stinchcombe, 1965). National values provide era-specific institutional templates which guide organizational structures, designs, and systems, which persist even in the face of modernizing influences (Peng, 2004). For example, older organizations in China can still be identified by their deeply entrenched structures that were shaped by Communist bureaucracy at the time (Marquis & Qian, 2014).

Through a process of socialization, organizational imprints become embedded in societal collectives who develop persistent scripts, behavioural norms, and schemas to process information (Kostova, 1999; Kostova, Roth, & Dacin, 2008). This process of socialization begins at the earliest stages of social development (e.g. childhood), for example, as children adjust their behaviour to align with the gender norms of their culture (Bem, 1981). However, this also extends to shape employees' understanding of work, the nature of management, and their expectations about how they should be treated, all of which is carried across time and organizational boundaries (Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004; Dokko et al., 2008; Higgins, 2005).

Supporting the influence of cultural imprints on the HRM process, empirical research has illustrated that national values (e.g., uncertainty avoidance, power distance, etc.) have important implications for how, when, and why societal collectives are motivated to attend to HRM signals, and how they react as a result (Aktas et al., 2017; Chiang & Birtch, 2007; Farndale & Sanders, 2017; Jorgensen & Van Rossenberg, 2019). These cross-cultural variations occur because employees' interpretations of HRM are shaped by their values, beliefs, and motivations, all of which are rooted in cultural imprints (Hofstede, 1980; Marquis & Tilcsik, 2013). Beyond direct effects, a body of research has demonstrated that HPWS are not equally effective at producing high employee performance across cultural contexts (for a meta-analysis see Rabl et al., 2014; also see Dastmalchian et al., 2020). According to Rabl and colleagues (2014), HPWS are most effective when they 'fit' with the country's national values. That is, the content of HRM practices may become ineffective at influencing employee outcomes when

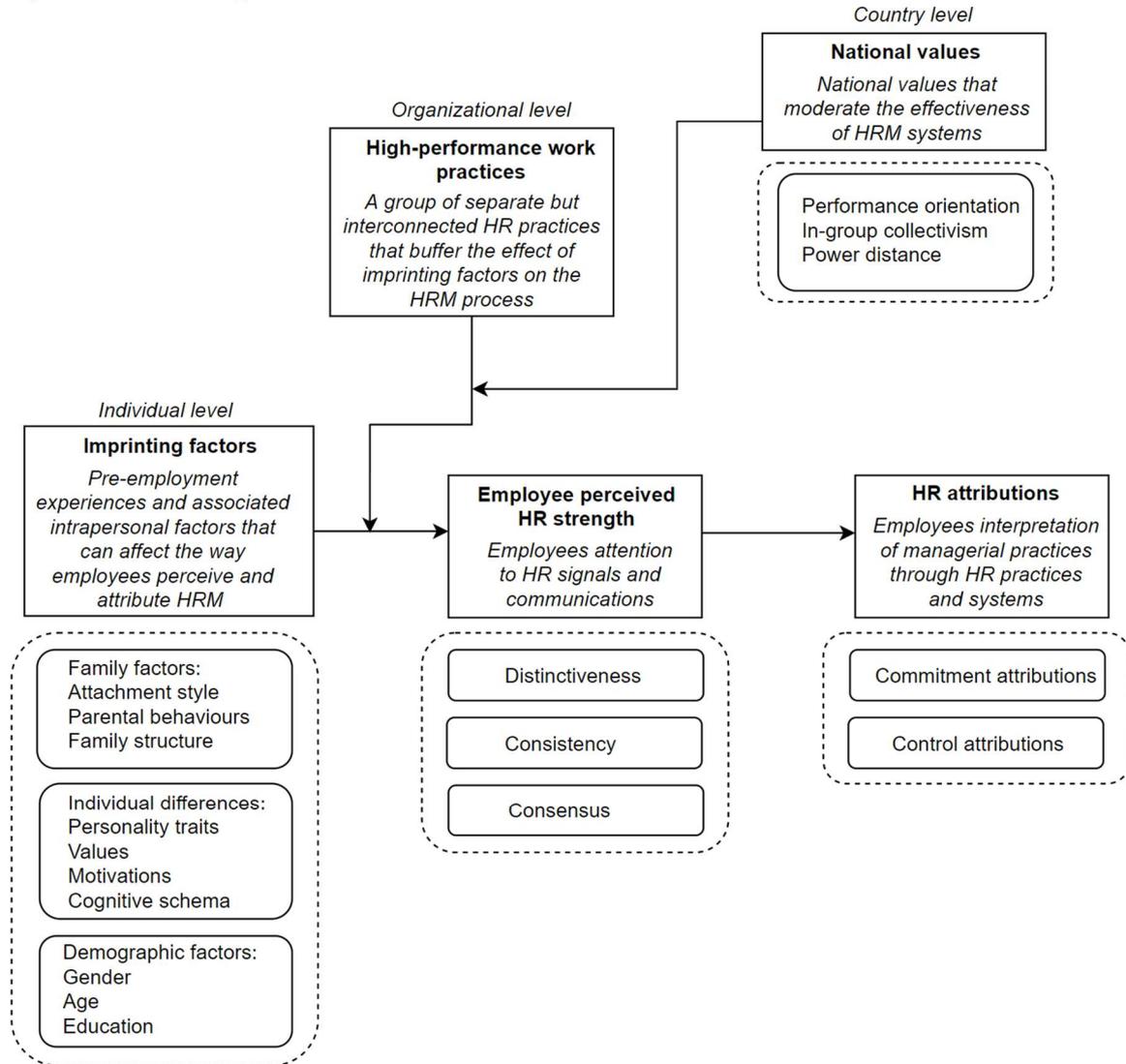
management practices are inconsistent and incongruent with employee expectations (Hofstede, 1993; Newman & Nollen, 1996; Sanders et al., 2018). Under such conditions, employees become “dissatisfied, distracted (...) and may be less able or willing to perform well” (Rabl et al., 2014, p.1012).

Rabl and colleagues (2014) further argued that the best fitting national culture for the success of HPWS is one low on *power distance* (where society expects and agrees that power should be shared equally), low on *collectivism* (where individuals express pride, loyalty, and cohesiveness in their organizations or families), and high on *performance orientation* (where society is perceived to encourage and reward performance improvement), so long as the culture has high levels of cultural *tightness* (where deviance of social norms are not tolerated) (House et al., 2004). For instance, cultures with low collectivism (high individualism) expect that HRM decisions are based on an individual’s level of knowledge, skills, and abilities (Hofstede, 2001). As such, ability-, motivation-, and opportunity-based HRM systems that emphasise individual achievement and individual responsibility will be more effective as the intentions behind these HRM practices are congruent and consistent with national expectations. Similarly, in countries with low power distance and high-performance orientation, there is a stronger emphasis on individual performance, results, and achievement (Ayman, 2005; Peretz & Rosenblatt, 2011). As HPWS are naturally tailored towards facilitating these goals (e.g., training, hiring and selection, promotion, etc.), they are more effective when applied in cultures that hold these values. Following a fit perspective (Rabl et al., 2014), it is argued that when the intentions of HPWS are consistent with national values, they are more effective. Hence, make the final proposition is as follows:

Proposition 4: *National values will moderate the two-way interaction effect of HPWS and imprinting factors on perceived HR strength (distinctiveness, consistency, and consensus) so that this relationship is stronger when*

countries have lower levels of power distance, lower levels of in-group collectivism, and higher levels of performance orientation.

Figure 2.2: Conceptual framework for future research



2.5 Discussion

This review sought to understand how, when, and why imprinting factors influence employees' perceived HR strength and HR attributions. To address these questions, a systematic literature review was adopted to draw upon the insights of prior literature and to understand the methodological and theoretical gaps in the field. Drawing upon an imprinting framework (Marquis & Tilcsik, 2013), a conceptual model was proposed that theorises the multi-level mechanisms of how imprinting factors exert their effects on the HRM process.

In doing so, this review extends prior theory by examining the influence of past experiences before entering the workforce (e.g., educational and social processes) on the HRM process. In addition, this review answers the scholarly calls for greater consideration of the context in HRM process models through the theoretical integration of HRM content (i.e., HPWS) (Guest et al., 2020; Hewett, 2021; Ostroff & Bowen, 2016; Wang et al., 2020) and national values (power distance, in-group collectivism, and performance orientation), arguing that these features act as important boundary conditions within the imprinting factor-HRM process dynamic.

In the section below, this review makes its final contributions by detailing the limitations in the current body of research and outlining three avenues of future scholarship in the field. This paper is concluded by providing several practical implications for HR professionals and practitioners.

2.5.1 Limitations and Future Directions

2.5.1.1 Empirical testing of the model

The conceptual model in this review proposes a three-way interaction of individual-level imprinting factors, HPWS, and national values on HR attributions, mediated by perceived HR strength. First, these propositions require empirical testing. It is acknowledged that prior

research has been limited in scope regarding the examination of a variety of imprinting factors, which often opts for a greater focus on work-related antecedents (e.g., HRM practices, leadership, etc.). In particular, research at the family-level, such as number of siblings, socio-economic status, political affiliations, etc., is especially lacking. Only one study in this review directly examined family relationships. Parental support in this case (Kitt et al., 2020), and this was measured through individual-level reports about the respondent's past.

Scholars should expand on this line of research by examining the relevance of early family experiences on the HRM process in more detail. For example, it has been theorised that the types of attachment styles (avoidant, anxious, secure) infants develop with their parents are echoed in later life with the types of relationships they have with co-workers, management, and HRM (Bowlby, 1969; Hedberg & Luchak, 2018). It is possible that individuals with *avoidant* attachment styles – characterised by individuals whose emotional and attachment needs were consistently unmet during childhood - demonstrate stronger “command-and-control” orientations and lack of emotional connection towards HRM and management (Hedberg & Luchak, 2018). Compared to individuals with *secure* attachments - who value stable and secure emotional connections -, avoidant types may be less sensitive and reactive towards control-based HRM approaches as they often devalue work relationships and place a greater emphasis on independence and control (Harms, 2011; Nishii et al., 2008).

Furthermore, it is also recognised that the scope of imprinting factors in this review is limited to pre-career experiences, though imprinting research has taken a particular interest in a variety of early-career experiences in the development of behaviours and attitudes in later life (Andrew, 2013; Azoulay, et al., 2017; McEvily et al., 2012). Beyond pre-career experiences, exploration of early career-related experiences such as mentoring, onboarding practices, and (supportive vs. abusive) supervisory relationships would be an important addition to the field.

Finally, within this review, it is proposed that social information processing (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978) is a key underlying theoretical framework that can be used to understand how imprinting factors exert their effects on the HRM process, and for understanding the role of HRM content in this relationship. However, other researchers have indicated that signalling theory can also be useful to theoretically integrate both HRM content and process models (Guest et al., 2020). However, this study only examined one meta-feature of perceived HR strength (agreement; consistency) and perceived HR strength was positioned as a moderator between HRM practices and HR attributions, rather than a mediator as theorised in this review. Supporting these theorisations, a recent meta-analysis by Bednall and colleagues (2021) has provided empirical support that perceived HR strength is better positioned as a mediator in the HRM-outcome relationship. Despite this, researchers have been reluctant to position perceived HR strength as a mediator. This model provides an attempt for such integration, though this study joins HRM process scholars by calling for better theoretical integration between the two HRM process streams, HRM content, and a greater investigation of the role of perceived HR strength as a mediator in the proposed relationships (Guest et al., 2020; Hewett et al., 2018; Ostroff & Bowen, 2016; Wang et al., 2020).

2.5.1.2 Addressing methodological limitations

To answer the aforementioned propositions, a more robust methodology is required within the HRM process field. At present, it was found that research has been saturated with cross-sectional, single-source designs that are often restricted to one country. Only a few studies in the sample used time-lagged or longitudinal designs, which raises concerns about causality between imprinting factors and the HRM process. Although it is argued that it is not possible for the HRM process to directly influence imprinting experiences, it is possible that ones' understanding and attributions of the HRM process can influence individuals' post-hoc

recollections of their childhood and imprinting experiences. Furthermore, despite the methodological rigour gained by the number of (attribution) studies that have adopted experimental designs, these studies further inflate the issues of external generalizability. This is even further compounded by the tendency of HRM process researchers to use Western samples, often with student populations. Finally, future research requires much greater use of multi-level designs. Because of these limitations, researchers know little about the interaction between individuals, organizations, and national values that shape employee attitudes over one's life, how these features transform over time, and what are the contextual factors that influence the expression (or suppression) of imprinting factors on the attention and interpretation of HRM.

Along these lines, it would be of interest to empirically examine Simsek and colleagues' (2015) suggestion of a three-stage imprinting process: 1) *genesis*, where individuals adopt characteristics of their environment during sensitive developmental periods; 2) *metamorphosis* of imprints, where imprints change, evolve, and transform; and 3) *manifestations* of imprints, where imprints influence behaviours, attitudes, and employee outcomes. Indeed, researchers have argued that cognitive schemas tend to be easier to change during childhood but can become increasingly rigid and difficult to modify as people grow older (Padesky, 1994). However, it has also been indicated that cognitive models are susceptible to 'unfreezing' when during periods of uncertainty, such as periods of role transitions (Ashforth & Saks, 1996), where they can be replaced by schema more consistent with the work environment (Dokko et al., 2009).

These propositions serve as an interesting avenue for a new direction for the application of imprinting in the HRM process field. Questions such as 'When are the sensitive periods where individuals are most susceptible to imprints that influence their attitudes towards management and HRM?', 'What are the core organizational conditions that encourage the

reconfiguration of imprints to ensure employees are interpreting HRM as intended?', and 'To what degree does newly acquired (conflicting) information alter one's cognitive scripts about HRM: completely, or just some modification?' can be answered to bring the field further.

If future researchers intend to address these questions, researchers should employ both qualitative and quantitative methods. For qualitative methods, it would be useful to explore the aforementioned unanswered questions surrounding the genesis, metamorphosis, and manifestations of imprinting factors over time. This way, researchers can begin to uncover the core imprinting experiences and factors that are important for the HRM process. For quantitative methods, it would be useful to test the multi-level model proposed in this review and address the methodological flaws in prior literature by paying particular attention to longitudinal, multi-source, multi-actor designs.

2.5.1.3 Operationalization of imprinting factors

Finally, it is acknowledged that the operationalization of imprinting factors requires more attention, especially the development of standardised instruments. For instance, it is highlighted that scholars have found mixed results for the influence of demographic characteristics (e.g., age, gender) on the HRM process. However, without more developed scales, researchers cannot be certain about why and when these effects occur. For instance, the relationships between demographic characteristics on the HRM process could be explained by intermediary mechanisms, such as generational changes in attitudes towards work and management (Kelly, Elizabeth, Bharat, & Jitendra, 2016) or sociocultural norms of gender-appropriate behaviours at work (Bem, 1981). In this case, more robust and standardized instruments would allow researchers to examine the imprints that lay behind the surface of demographic characteristics consistently across studies.

Furthermore, it is noted that imprinting factors contain a variety of beliefs, values, norms, motivations, and presuppositions (Marquis & Tilcsik, 2013). However, without a well-defined typology, working definitions of the different dimensions of imprinting factors, or standardized measures, researchers are unable to determine the effectiveness of imprinting dimensions on the HRM process. Different types of imprints (e.g., beliefs vs. motivations) may precede or take precedence over one another in the causal attribution chain (Kelley & Michael, 1980). Furthermore, certain imprinting dimensions may be insufficient to influence the HRM process, or they may react with each other factors to produce amplifying, contradicting, or compensatory interactions (Kelley & Michela, 1980; Hewett et al., 2019). Finally, different types of imprinting factors may influence meta-features of perceived HR strength to varying degrees. However, at present, the knowledge in this area is restricted. It is recommended that future research moves towards the development of a clear typology that uncovers the dimensional structure of imprinting factors and standardized measures that can be used to enhance researcher knowledge of the cross-interaction effects between these features.

2.5.2 Practical Implications

Alongside the contributions to theory, there are significant implications of this review for practice. First, this review highlights the importance of clear and consistent HRM communication within organizations. HRM practices send signals which direct employees to develop a similar understanding about what behaviours and attitudes are desired, intended, and rewarded from management (Bowen & Ostoff, 2004; Ostroff & Bowen, 2016). However, it is proposed that weak, internally inconsistent, and/or mutually exclusive HRM practices do not help to clarify managerial intentions which, under these conditions, can be more readily distorted due to strong imprinting factors (Van de Voorde & Beijer, 2015). Thus, it is recommended that HR practitioners should be clear upon the reasoning behind the

implementation of HRM practices and ensure that this information is relayed across all layers of the organizational hierarchy (e.g., upper managers, line managers, and employees). Indeed, the effective translation of clear HRM messages to line managers should not be overlooked as they are key ‘sense-givers’ in the facilitation of shared HRM understanding between employees (Nishii & Paluch, 2018). Hence, organizations may wish to invest in training line managers to understand and convey HRM intentions to reduce employees’ idiosyncratic interpretations of HRM based on imprinting factors.

Second, the role of national values should also be considered, which provides important implications for HR practitioners in multinational organizations. In particular, it is advised that HR practitioners are mindful about implementing HRM practices that are incongruent with national values. Indeed, the propositions in this review that follow a fit perspective may only be applied under conditions of high cultural *tightness* (Rabl et al., 2014). In contrast, in high degrees of *looseness*, these relationships may be in the reverse direction, and HR practitioners should be mindful of these conditions. This may be especially the case as organizations have increasingly opted for global management practices to compete in the global market, so standardized approaches to HRM are likely to even more so influence the application of these findings across countries and cultures, especially in multinational organizations. Following this, it is advisable that HR practitioners – local or multinational – tailor their HPWS to fit with national expectations, even if it means minor adjustments to fit with the local population and demographics of their workforce. Otherwise, they risk incongruence and inconsistency of HRM messages which will confuse employees, providing an opportunity for employees to develop divergent interpretations of HRM, rather than those intended by management.

2.5.3 Conclusion

In conclusion, this review draws upon an imprinting framework (Marquis & Tilcsik, 2013), a strong situation hypothesis (Mischel, 1977), social information processing theory (Salanick & Pfeffer, 1978), and a national fit perspective (Rabl et al., 2014) to theorise and present a multi-level conceptual framework which proposes four propositions regarding the interaction between individual-level imprinting factors, HPWS, and national values on the HRM process. The theorising in this review explains how imprinting factors influence the way individuals cognitively process, distort, and attend to HRM signals, which ultimately impacts how they understand and interpret HRM in their organization. This proposition is contextualised in organizational- and national-level contingencies which addresses the decontextualisation of prior HRM process research. Finally, this review highlights the limitations in the field and points to several important directions as a platform for future scholarship in this area. It is hoped that this review can be used as a platform towards a greater integration of imprinting frameworks within HRM process research to further increase academic understanding of the antecedents of perceived HR strength and HR attributions.

INTERLUDE

In the previous chapter, a multi-level model of the antecedents of the HRM process is proposed. In this model, imprinting factors are theorised to exert their effects on the HRM process through two mechanisms. The first involves employees' *attention* to HRM. When imprinting factors are strong, employees are more attentive to HRM in their organization which results in greater levels of perceived HR strength. The second mechanism involves employees' *interpretation* of HRM practices. When imprinting factors are strong, employees more consistently interpret HRM through a lens of their pre-employment and personal histories.

The previous chapter further draws on social information processing theory (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978) to elaborate on the interaction between these two mechanisms by arguing that attention precedes interpretation in the causal attribution chain. In other words, for employees to attach meaning to HRM in the form of HR attributions, they must first attend to HRM signals. Furthermore, the context of HPWS and national values are considered as important contextual factors are proposed that either buffer the effect of imprinting factors by facilitating a strong situation (i.e., HPWS), or moderate the effect of HPWS practices through levels of consistency with national expectations (i.e., performance orientation, power distance, and in-group collectivism).

Chapter Two provides several avenues of future research for the examination of imprinting factors in HRM process research. Despite the advantages of orientating this review chapter around furthering future research via the development of a multi-level model, the proposed model is complex and would reasonably require several interrelated studies with elaborate datasets to fully examine in full detail. Hence, providing such a comprehensive examination of this model is beyond the scope of this thesis. That said, it is the intention within the following chapters (Chapters Three and Four) to empirically examine the model as

elaborated in Chapter Two. To make this feasible, the model is separated into two distinct conceptual models, each examining a single, core imprinting factor on separate aspects of the HRM process. The first empirical chapter (Chapter Three) focuses on the role of parental behaviours (i.e., support, interference, and engagement) as an important imprinting factor on perceived HR strength. The second empirical chapter (Chapter Four) focuses on the role of family motivation, as another important imprinting factor on HR attributions (i.e., commitment, control, and compliance attributions).

By isolating perceived HR strength and HR attributions into two conceptual models, this thesis aims to provide a greater theoretical depth and a richer elaboration of the mechanisms within the imprinting factor-HRM process relationship (i.e., attention and interpretation), whilst maintaining practicality, methodological rigour, and the main premise of this thesis. In addition, each Chapter includes a novel combination of organizational- and national-level boundary conditions that are justified to be the most critical contextual factors associated with each imprinting factor. In doing so, this thesis empirically examines the moderating effect of *both* individual HRM practices (i.e., job security) and bundles of HRM practices (i.e., HPWS) at the organizational level. In addition, performance orientation and power distance are included as critical national values at the country level. In doing so, the following chapters within this thesis add further theoretical value to HRM process research by examining an array of organizational and national contingencies on the effect of imprinting factors, and greater practical application for managers and HR practitioners who wish to more closely align HRM with their own organizational and national contexts for maximum HRM effectiveness.

CHAPTER 3

Career-Related Parental Behaviours and Perceived HR Strength:

The Moderating Role of Job Security and Performance

Orientation

Abstract

Parents play a critical role in shaping adolescents work-related attitudes, vocational identities, and career expectations. However, less is known whether parental behaviours extend their influence into organizations, such as how individuals understand human resource management (HRM) (i.e., perceived HR strength) in later life. In the current study, an imprinting framework is applied to examine the relationship between parental behaviours (parental support, parental interference, and parental engagement) and employees' perceived HR strength. In addition, the moderating role of the HRM practice of job security at the organizational level and performance orientation at the country level are examined as boundary conditions in these relationships. The hypotheses are tested on a survey of 855 employees and 61 managers from 39 organizations across three countries (China, Pakistan, and South Korea). The results showed that the positive association of parental support and parental interference on perceived HR strength became insignificant under high conditions of job security. However, performance orientation did not significantly affect these results. These findings expand on the antecedents of perceived HR strength and have important implications for the way HRM is designed and implemented in organizations to ensure that HRM is being understood by employees as intended by management.

3.1 Introduction

Over the past 15 years, the process approach to HRM has steadily gained increased attention from HRM scholars (Hewett et al., 2018; Sanders, Yang, & Patel, 2021). Rather than focusing on the aspects of HRM practices and systems that lead to organizational outcomes, HRM process research aims to uncover the ‘black box of HRM’ by focusing on the way HRM practices are implemented and communicated within organizations (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004; Nishii et al., 2008; Ostroff & Bowen, 2016). A major stream in this body of work has focused on the *perceptions of HR strength*, which refers to how HRM is communicated and understood by employees via HRM process mechanisms (Ostroff & Bowen, 2016). From a (perceived) HR strength perspective, when employees perceive HRM in their organization as *distinctive*, *consistent*, and *consensual* (i.e., a ‘strong’ HRM system), they have a better understanding of what behaviours are valued, expected, and rewarded from management which strengthens the HRM-performance relationship (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004).

Although perceived HR strength has become widely recognised for its positive effects on employee outcomes (see for a meta-analysis and reviews see Bednall et al., 2021; Hewett et al., 2018; Wang et al., 2020; Xiao & Cooke, 2020), researchers have contended that there remains pressing academic and practical questions as to why employees’ perceived HR strength varies in the same organization (Hewett, 2018; Hewett, 2021; Sanders, 2022). Understanding the antecedents of perceived HR strength is important because perceptual variations can lead to different attitudinal and behavioural outcomes that can be counterproductive to the strategic goals of the organization (Ostroff & Bowen, 2016).

3.1.1 Parental Behaviours and a Multi-level Imprinting Framework

To better understand the mechanisms through which employees differ in their

perceptions of HR strength, scholars have begun to investigate the interpersonal factors which influence the way employees attend and interpret HRM. According to an imprinting perspective (Chapter Two), employees do not enter organizations as a blank slate. They bring a set of beliefs, schemas, and expectations – known as imprinting factors – which develop at an early age as a result of childhood experiences from family relationships, social role modelling, and cultural norms (Lupu, Spence, & Empson, 2018; Marquis & Tilsik, 2013; Thornton, Ocasio, & Lounsbury, 2012). The current paper intends to advance this emerging body of work by empirically investigating one family-related imprinting factor on perceived HR strength, career-related parental behaviours.

Career-related parental behaviours refer to a set of parental behaviours through which parents influence adolescents' career development (Dietrich & Kracke, 2009). The choice of examining parental behaviours on perceived HR strength is justified according to an imprinting framework, i.e., they become internalised from social-environmental imprinters (e.g., parents) at an early age and can be expected to have a stable, long-lasting impact on one's perception of HR strength in later life. Indeed, a plethora of research from the last decade has demonstrated the transfer of parental values and behaviours on children's work-related aspirations, occupational identities, and career-related behaviours, which persist long into adulthood (Dietrich & Kracke, 2009; Giuseppe, de Blasio, & Se Stito, 2016; Johnson & Mortimer, 2015; Lupu et al., 2018; Sawitri et al., 2014; Šimunović et al., 2020).

In line with the theorisations in Chapter Two is the research which supports the idea that parental values and behaviours can influence adolescent sensitivity to environmental conditions (Johnson & Mortimer, 2015). (Supportive) parental behaviours promote a greater intensity of adolescents' career-related information-seeking activities (Dietrich & Kracke, 2009; Kracke & Schmitt-Rodermund, 2001; Kracke, 2002) and can provide learning opportunities and cognitive resources that affect environmental sense-making in later career

stages (Lent et al., 2000). Following this, it can be expected that parental behaviours facilitate the development of cognitive models which impact employees' tendency to attend to and actively seek HR-related information, which affects their receptivity to distinctiveness, consistency, and consensus (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004). Because of the above-mentioned arguments, the influence of parental behaviours as an imprinting factor is examined in this chapter.

Furthermore, researchers have critiqued the decontextualisation of previous (perceived) HR strength literature, arguing that little is known about to extent to which organizational (e.g., HRM content) and national contexts (e.g., national values) influence employees' perceived HR strength (Aktas et al., 2017; Beijer, Van de Voorde, et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2020; Xiao & Cooke, 2020). Considering context in perceived HR strength research is important because employees' understanding and interpretations of HRM can vary across organizational and social environments (Aktas et al., 2017; Johnson & Mortimer, 2015; S. Kim & Wright, 2011; Sanders et al., 2014; Steffensen, 2019). Indeed, depending on the HRM content and national values, employees may be more or less influenced by imprinting factors (e.g., parental behaviours) in their interpretation of HRM cues and signals to understand desirable behaviours in their organization (Chapter Two).

In the previous literature, job security, referring to the degree to which organizations offer stable positions for their employees (Herzberg, 1968), has been suggested to be an important organizational factor that communicates employees' role expectations in their organization, and the consequences of employees' behaviours and actions (Lu, et al., 2017). According to a strong situation hypothesis (Mischel, 1977), individual differences can be constrained by HRM practices like job security which provide powerful situational forces that closely link behavioural consequences to desired strategic behavioural goals of the organization (Dalal et al., 2015; Fuller, Hester, & Cox, 2010; Locke & Latham, 2004).

At the country level, performance orientation, defined as “the extent to which society is perceived to encourage and reward performance improvement” (House et al., 2004, p. 246), has been theoretically highlighted as a significant cultural dimension that affects employee reactions to job security (Sender et al., 2017). People in high performance orientated cultures place greater value on training, development, and achievement (House et al., 2004). According to a fit perspective (Rabl et al., 2014), HRM practices and systems that fit with national expectations are more effective. In this way, job security is seen as critical support that allows employees to focus on performance-related tasks and activities (Cogburn & Kearney, 2010; Lu, Du, Xu, & Zhang, 2017; Macky & Boxall, 2007; Umrani et al., 2019; Vijayan, 2017). Following a strong situation and fit perspective, it is expected that imprinting factors matter most when job security and performance orientation are low, rather than high.

3.1.2 Study Contributions

This study examines the relationship between parental behaviours (i.e. parental support, parental interference, and parental engagement; Dietrich & Kracke, 2009) and perceived HR strength. In addition, organizational-level job security and country-level performance orientation are included as boundary conditions (see Figure 3.1). In doing so, the current study contributes to the perceived HR strength literature in the following three ways.

First, this study answers the call for more research on the antecedents of perceived HR strength by adding parental behaviours to the recognised antecedents (Hewett, 2021; Hewett et al., 2018; Sanders, 2022). Further, by examining the effects of parental behaviours on perceived HR strength, this study advances existing perceived HR strength theory by arguing that parent-child relationships matter for employees’ perceptions of distinctiveness, consistency, and consensus in later life. Hence, this study adds to the small but growing number of antecedents of perceived HR strength by contributing to the effect of family influences, which are solely

lacking in perceived HR strength literature (Chapter Two).

Second, by considering the organizational context (i.e., job security), this paper answers the scholarly call for greater consideration of context in perceived HR strength research through the inclusion of HRM content into HRM process models (Ostroff & Bowen, 2016). In doing so, this paper provides deeper insight into the organizational conditions that emphasise when and why parental behaviours are related to perceived HR strength, and when they are not. More specifically, the focus of this study is on job security as a facilitator of a strong situation that matters for the influence of parental behaviours. The addition of job security advances the knowledge about the application of job security and how job security can be designed to ensure it is effective across organizational contexts.

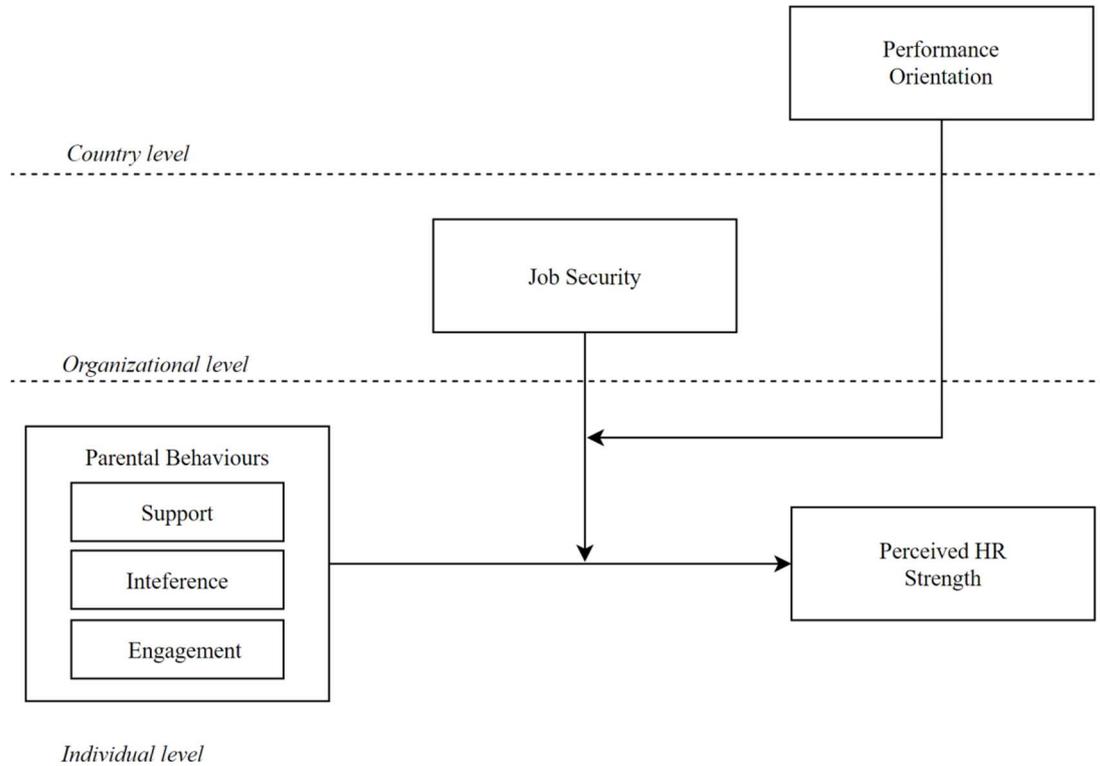
Finally, through the consideration of country-level performance orientation, this study further addresses the predominant universalistic approach in prior perceived HR strength research by arguing that HRM practices are *not* equally effective regardless of country context (see Farndale & Sanders, 2017). Presently, the cross-cultural application of perceived HR strength findings is limited, especially in explaining the effectiveness of HRM practices in Eastern markets (Kim & Wright, 2011; Wang et al., 2020; Xiao & Cooke, 2020).

The study uses a dataset of 855 employees and 61 line managers across 39 organizations and three countries (China, Pakistan, and South Korea). By comparing performance orientation in China, Pakistan, and South Korea, this study addresses the need for cross-cultural approaches within perceived HR strength research and further sheds light on the interplay between individuals, organizations, and wider national contexts beyond predominant Western perspectives in previous literature.

Beyond the theoretical contributions, this study has important practical implications. HR practitioners and managers in local and multi-national organizations can use the insights from this study to aid the design and implementation of HRM practices (i.e., job security) to

ensure that HRM is being interpreted as intended by management for positive employee outcomes.

Figure 3.1: The multi-level conceptual model in Chapter Three



3.2 Theoretical Model and Hypothesis Development

3.2.1 Parental Behaviours and Perceived HR Strength

Bowen and Ostroff (2004) suggest that HRM systems act as communication mechanisms from employer to employees which signal what behaviours are expected and valued in their organization. Drawing on Kelley’s co-variation model of attributions (1967), Bowen and Ostroff defined three meta-features of (perceived) HR strength: *distinctiveness*, *consistency*, and *consensus*. When the HRM system is *distinct*, HRM practices ‘strand out’ and are perceived as relevant and understandable. When there is *consistency*, there is a consistent application of HRM practices across HRM practices and over time. When there is *consensus*, there is agreement among organizational members about the nature and fairness of the HRM system. Taken

together, these three meta-features facilitate a 'strong HRM system' whereby organizations send clear signals to employees which ultimately leads to positive employee outcomes (see for reviews Bednall et al., 2021; Ostroff & Bowen, 2016 Wang et al., 2020; Xiao & Cooke, 2020). While Bowen and Ostroff (2004) originally intended for HR strength to be a unit-level construct, this study attends to perceived HR strength as a meaningful individual-level and most studied construct in the literature (see Alfes et al., 2019; Bednall et al., 2021; Chacko & Conway, 2019; Delmotte et al., 2012).

Given the importance of perceived HR strength for positive employee outcomes, researchers have shown increased attention to the factors that lead to strong HRM systems. However, so far, past research has been mostly silent on the antecedents of perceived HR strength, especially when regarding family relationships and upbringing although they can be assumed to extend their influence inside of organizations, such as the way employees attend to HRM signals (Chapter Two; Hedberg & Luchak, 2018; Piszczek & Berg, 2020). In this study, the focus is on parental behaviours as antecedents of perceived HR strength.

Dietrich and Kracke (2009) identified three career-specific parental behaviours which are experienced by adolescents: parental support, parental interference, and (lack of) parental engagement. When parents are *supportive*, they encourage adolescents to explore vocational interests and help them reflect on career experiences when needed. When parents *interfere*, they attempt to control their children's career choices and actions, and enforce their own ideas regardless of their children's wishes. Finally, parental *engagement* refers to a general interest in their children's career development. These parental behaviours have been related to a variety of career- and academic-related outcomes, including adolescents' career development, vocational identity, career choices, and career-related decision-making abilities (for a review see Metheny & McWhirter, 2013; also see Sawitri et al., 2014; Šimunović et al., 2020; Wong & Liu, 2010).

Although research has yet to examine parental behaviours as an antecedent to perceived HR strength, prior research suggests a possible relationship. Building on an imprinting perspective (Marquis & Tilcsik, 2013; Simsek et al., 2015), Chapter Two provides a theoretical framework to explain how an employee's understanding of HRM is embedded in their family context and upbringing. It is suggested that parents provide career templates for their children; their behaviours and work-related attitudes become replicated in later life by their children, consciously or unconsciously (Cohen-Scali, 2003; Lupu et al., 2018) and cognitive schemas are constructed in reference to these evaluations (Kitayama & Uchida, 2005). Ultimately, family experiences become internalised in the form of cognitive frameworks. Once formed, these frameworks act as an interpretive lens that helps direct, organize, and interpret new information, such as HRM in their organization.

Drawing on previous research (e.g., Johnson & Mortimer, 2015; Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 2000; Lupu et al., 2018) and an imprinting perspective (Chapter Two), it can be expected that employees with strong parental behaviours are more sensitive and attentive to HRM practices during employment. Indeed, research has supported the idea that parental values and behaviours can influence adolescent sensitivity to environmental conditions (Johnson & Mortimer, 2015), and provide the learning opportunities and cognitive resources that affect environmental sense-making in later career stages (Lent et al., 2000). By hearing their parents talk about their jobs, adolescents can learn a great deal about work, management, and the role of HRM in organizations. For example, when parents provide parental support (e.g., providing support for job applications and CV writing), interference (e.g., enforcing their own ideas about their children's career), or engagement (e.g., supporting adolescents in their job-related decisions) (Dietrich & Kracke, 2009), they create opportunities to share their ideas, opinions, and values surrounding work and management to their children. These experiences become internalised by adolescents so they can be drawn upon to make sense of HRM during

employment (Cohen-Scali, 2003; Leenders et al., 2017; Lupu et al., 2018).

By drawing on past information and experiences, employees are predisposed with a cognitive schema that helps them to more readily pick up HRM signals, filter through organizational noise to understand what is strategically important, and more easily understand the behaviours that are desired by management (Chapter Two). Due to increased attention and sensitivity to HRM, HRM signals ‘stand out’ more in the work environment and become more distinct to employees (Bowen & Ostoff, 2004; Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978). In addition, employees with predisposed schemas are more able to observe consistency and consensus by more readily and easily understanding the link between HRM practices and desirable behaviours, and observing their colleagues as a way to gather a consensus of understanding of HRM across the organizational hierarchy.

Hence, the first hypothesis is formulated as follows:

Hypothesis 1: *Parental support (H1a), parental interference, (H1b), and parental engagement (H1b) have a positive association with perceived HR strength.*

3.2.2 The Moderating Role of Job Security

Although stronger perceived HR strength may be intuitively understood as positive for employee outcomes, a strong dependency on imprinting factors for HRM can become problematic for organizations aiming to foster a shared understanding of HRM systems between organizational members (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004). This is because relying on imprinting factors can lead to individualized interpretations that diverge from the original intentions of management. In addition, because parental behaviours are ultimately outside the realm of organizational control, HR practitioners and managers can do little to influence them. In the following section, it is proposed that job security can reduce the impact of parental

behaviours on perceived HR strength and create a stronger consensus of HRM understanding between organizational members.

According to the strong situation hypothesis (Cooper & Withey, 2009; Mischel, 1977), situations and external contexts can have powerful effects on the expression of individual differences. When the organizational environment provides clear, unambiguous, and explicit situational constraints, ‘strong situations’ are developed which reduces behavioural variations among organizational members (see for reviews Dalal et al., 2015; Keeler, Kong, Dalal, & Cortina, 2019; Meyer et al., 2010). This is because strong situations provide clear signals to what is expected and rewarded, which ultimately leads to uniform expectations and reduced within-person variability. In contrast, when situations are weak, environments do not provide clear directions, incentives, and expectations for desired behaviours (Mischel, 1977). Under these conditions, individuals become free to express individual differences and personality has a stronger effect on behaviour.

In this study, the moderating effect of job security is examined as previous research has suggested that characteristics of job security are in line with strong situations. For example, job security provides external rewards for employees that are associated with positive behaviours (Calder et al., 1982; Gagné et al., 2010; Mussagulova, Van Der Wal, & Chen, 2019). It is seen as a strong external motivator for many employees (Shore et al., 2004). When job security is high, employees become certain of the parameters of their role, the consequences attached to their work performance, and become more attached to their organization (Lu, Du, Xu, & Zhang, 2017). Under these conditions, organizations foster strong situations by sending clear and consistent messages that employees can expect to be secure in their role, which reduces ambiguity and enhances employees efforts toward fulfilling organizational goals. Hence, the strength of the parental behaviour–perceived HR strength relationship will be reduced.

In contrast, threats to job security lead to high ambiguity and weak situations (Grant &

Rothbard, 2013) because behavioural expectations become unclear as there is a lack of information about whether or not the continuation of their employment depends on other organizational factors (e.g., mergers, layoffs, reorganizations) beyond their performance of desired behaviours (Meyer et al., 2010). In addition, job security causes employees to be more concerned about lack of promotion opportunities, working conditions, long-term career opportunities, and experience diminished work motivation and greater anxiety (Cogburn & Kearney, 2010; Davy, Kinicki, & Scheck, 1997; Gagné et al., 2010). In turn, employees psychologically withdraw and distance themselves from their job, and divert their attention elsewhere (Davy et al., 1997; Meyerson, 1994). As a consequence, the salience of HRM in the organizations is reduced and the effect of parental behaviours will be increased. Hence, the second hypothesis is proposed as follows:

Hypothesis 2: *Job security moderates the relationships between parental support (H2a), parental interference (H2b), and parental engagement (H3a) and perceived HR strength, such that these relationships are weaker when job security is high, rather than low.*

3.2.3 The Moderating Role of Performance Orientation

The effectiveness of HRM across national contexts has received much attention in the strategic HRM literature which has led to the emergence of two competing sets of approaches. The ‘best practice’ (universalistic) approach argues that HRM is effective regardless of national context and the ‘best fit’ (contingency) approach argues that HRM must fit with the national expectations to be most effective (Newman & Nollen, 1996). To date, the literature on (perceived) HR strength has been largely universalistic, suggesting that HRM practices lead to similar outcomes regardless of cultural context (Farndale & Sanders, 2017). However, previous studies suggest that national values are an important influence on the way employees perceive

and make sense of the work environment.

Aktas et al. (2017) found that national values have a direct effect on HR strength. Jorgensen & Van Rossenberg (2019) showed that *consensus* between the employee and manager HRM perceptions is influenced by the uncertainty avoidance of a country. Farndale and Sanders (2017) question the universality of existing HRM research by suggesting that “there is growing evidence that although the effect of HRM practices on organizational performance is robust across cultural settings, the detail of that effect may be different in diverse cultural settings” (p. 139). They further explain that “this variation occurs because employee attitudes and behaviours are inevitably influenced by their values, motivations, and emotions, which are all rooted in national culture” (p. 139).

These studies suggest that scholars are becoming increasingly aware that national values have important implications for how and why societal members attend and react to HRM practices (Aktas et al., 2017; Farndale et al., 2020; Jorgensen & Van Rossenberg, 2019; Xiao & Cooke, 2020). However, due to the lack of studies that integrate cross-cultural perspectives in imprinting research, very little is known about the effectiveness of national culture on HRM content on the imprinting factor – HRM process relationship. Along these lines, Rabl and colleagues (2014), suggest that national values – referring to a set of values, norms, and beliefs shared by a group of people gained from similar work experiences (Hofstede, 1980) - are an important moderator for the effectiveness of HRM on organizational performance. In their meta-analysis of 156 HPWS-business performance effect sizes from 35,767 firms/establishments in 29 countries, they found that high performance work systems (HPWS) are most effective in cultures with low power distance, low in-group collectivism, and high performance orientation, depending on the level of national tightness-looseness in the country.

According to an imprinting perspective, national values provide era-specific institutional templates which guide organizational structures and employees’ understanding of

work, the nature of management, and their expectations about how they should be treated (Dokko et al., 2008; Newman & Nollen, 1996). Employees' understanding of HRM is a subjective process (Fiske & Taylor, 2013) which is influenced by where employees grew up, and currently live and work (Hofstede, 1980; House et al., 2004; Thornton et al., 2012). Along these lines and according to Rabl et al. (2014), HRM practices are most effective when there is consistency ('fit') between HRM and national values because employees feel more satisfied, focused, and committed when HRM matches their cultural expectations.

This study follows the work of Rabl et al. (2014) and a best fit approach (Newman & Nollen, 1996) by investigating the effect of performance orientation on the moderating role of job security on the parental behaviour – perceived HR strength relationship. The inclusion of performance orientation is justified in this study because 1) prior studies have suggested that performance orientation may be particularly important for the effectiveness of job security due to differences in cross-cultural expectations for job security (Ahmad & Allen, 2015; Cai, 2020; Islam, 2004; Xiao & Björkman, 2006) and 2) performance orientation has been theoretically highlighted as a moderator of the effectiveness of job security in previous research (Sender et al., 2017). In countries with high performance orientation (e.g., USA, China, and Canada), there is a greater focus on individual performance, results, and achievement versus social and family relationships, harmony, and indirect communication in low performance orientation (e.g., Russia, Venezuela, and Italy) (Aycan, 2005; House et al., 2004; Peretz & Rosenblatt, 2011). Employees in performance-oriented cultures obtain pleasure from steady improvement (McClelland, 1987). They prefer work that is more challenging and actively search out information on how to do their job better. In turn, HRM systems are orientated towards the organizational desire to promote, reward, and develop the highest level of employee performance. Managers prefer direct, explicit communication styles, and set high-performance targets for their employees (House et al., 2004).

Following this, job security is expected to be a good fit with high performance-oriented cultures because employees' security is seen as a critical organizational support factor by employees, which leads to greater productivity and commitment attitudes (Macky & Boxall, 2007). Lu and colleagues (2017) found that job security moderated the relationship between job demands and work performance, demonstrating that job security enables employees in high-demand jobs to perform better in their roles. They argued that when employers "make employees feel that their jobs are secure, the equal exchange relationships between employers and employees are established" (p. 7). In turn, employees are motivated to commit and perform well. This is especially the case when working hard, working overtime, and working with high workloads is considered to be an employee's obligation, which is more expected in performance-orientated cultures. Hence, job security makes it clear to employees that their jobs are safe so they can focus on performance-related tasks and activities, rather than non-productive concerns and distractions (Coggburn & Kearney, 2010). Feelings of support and security can alleviate job stress and the burden of job demands, which subsequently enhances employees' performance (Lu et al., 2017; Umrani et al., 2019; Vijayan, 2017). Following Rabl et al. (2014) job security practices better fit in cultures with a high performance orientation, so the effectiveness of job security practices is increased. Hence, the final hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 3: *Performance orientation will moderate the two-way interaction effect of job security on the relationship between parental support (H3a), parental interference (H3b), and parental engagement (H3c) and perceived HR strength, so that the buffering effect is stronger when performance orientation is high, rather than low.*

3.3 Methods

3.3.1 Sample

The final dataset included 855 employees and 61 line managers from 39 organizations across three countries (China, Pakistan, and South Korea). Similar to other international HRM studies (e.g. Lin, Sanders, Sun, Shipton, & Mooi, 2016; Sanders et al., 2018), the data was gathered from a variety of industries, sizes, and sectors (for an overview, see Table 3.1). Of the total sample of organizations, 69.2% of organizations had over 250 employees (large), 19.1% had 50-249 employees (medium), and 11.7% had less than 50 employees (small). 68.3% of organizations were from the public or not-for-profit sector; the remaining 31.7% were for profit. The largest proportion of organizations (35.9%) was from finance and insurance industries, particularly in Pakistan where 11 of the 12 organizations (91.66% organizations; 92.10% employees) were from banking functions.

Each country sample consisted of 12-15 companies ($M = 13.00$; $SD = 1.73$) of 18-27 employees ($M = 22.00$; $SD = 2.74$) with at least one line manager per company ($M = 1.79$; $SD = 1.70$). The China sample contains 12 organizations of 265 employees ($M = 22.08$; $SD = 2.97$) and 12 line managers; the Pakistan sample contains 12 organizations of 290 employees ($M = 24.16$, $SD = 2.54$) and 34 line managers ($M = 2.66$, $SD = 1.11$); and South Korea sample contains 15 organizations of 300 employees (every organization has 20 employees). Employees were on average 34.37 years of age ($SD = 7.84$), 65.7% were male, 96% had a Bachelor's degree or above, and they had an average tenure in the organization of 2.04 years ($SD = .99$). The managers were on average 38.28 years old ($SD = 7.24$), 78.7% were male, 95.1% had achieved a Bachelor's degree or higher, and they average tenure in the organization of 9.63 years ($SD = 6.36$). For an overview of organizational profiles, see Table 3.1.

Several observations were made to assess the employee demographic data and to highlight any areas of potential bias. First, the Clopper-Person exact method for binomial

confidence intervals using normal approximation was used to calculate 95% confidence intervals of the demographic variables. Second, the demographic variables were investigated for skew and kurtosis. Following the guidance of Hair and colleagues (2022), a general guideline for skewness and kurtosis is that a value greater than +1 or lower than -1 indicates a substantially skewed or peaked distribution. The results showed substantial peaks in both gender and tenure, indicated by a kurtosis of 1.56 and -1.04, respectively. Indeed, 65.72% of survey participants were male and 41.04% had been in their organization for 1-5 years, indicating an overrepresentation of young male participants in the dataset. This is likely caused by the large portion (37.4%) of finance and banking organizations in the sample. Banking and finance organizations are especially prevalent in the Pakistan sample whereby 92.10% of participants worked in finance and banking functions, 85.90% of whom are male and 78.60% are aged between 31-40. Comparable demographic spreads have been found in studies in the Pakistan banking sector which are typically composed of males between 20-35 years old with Master's degree level education (e.g., Asra-ul-Haq & Kuchinke, 2016; Farah, Hasni, & Abbas, 2018; Hunjra et al., 2010). Although the current sample included 62.6% of participants that worked outside the banking and finance sector, researchers should be mindful when generalising the results outside the current demographic parameters of this study. The demographic profiles, confidence intervals (including upper and lower bounds), skewness, and kurtosis can be found in Table 3.2.

3.3.2 Procedure

An international team of researchers gathered data for this project in 39 organizations across three countries: China, Pakistan, and South Korea. Following the guidance of Brislin (1980), the surveys were translated and back-translated by bi-lingual research scholars into Chinese and Korean languages to ensure equivalence to the original English version which was

used in Pakistan. The surveys were then piloted in the respective countries to ensure the readability of the items. The researchers intended to collect data from over 200 employees in their home country using their networks, which included the criteria of 20-30 employees and at least one line manager per organization. The researchers approached each organization directly via email or phone. On agreement that they could reach the desired number of respondents, the researcher organized a visit to each organization. The surveys were handed to a HR professional in the organization who was in charge of distributing and collecting the surveys to line managers and employees who volunteered to be a part of the sample. Although the employees and managers are from the same organization, the employees were not nested within managers. An accompanying letter and empty envelope were attached to each survey which explained that participation was voluntary and anonymous. They did not receive any benefits or rewards for their participation.

Table 3.1: Organizational profiles and respondents

Country	Org.	Participants: employees (managers)	Perceived HR strength (aggregate)	Job security (aggregate)	HPWS (aggregate)	Size	Industry	Sector	Performance Orientation
China	1	20 (1)	4.40	4.00	5.08	2	Education	0	4.45
	2	20 (1)	4.23	1.00	4.60	2	Education	0	4.45
	3	23 (1)	3.96	2.00	4.86	1	Retail	0	4.45
	4	24 (1)	4.67	2.00	4.34	3	Real Estate	0	4.45
	5	26 (1)	4.39	4.00	2.89	3	Real Estate	0	4.45
	6	21 (1)	4.85	6.00	5.75	3	Education	0	4.45
	7	23 (1)	4.83	2.00	4.60	2	Consulting	0	4.45
	8	18 (1)	5.05	2.00	4.81	1	Education	0	4.45
	9	19 (1)	4.39	4.00	3.68	1	Mass media, Broadcasting, and Publishing	0	4.45
	10	26 (1)	4.07	2.00	3.02	3	Chemical and Pharmaceutical	1	4.45
	11	26 (1)	4.04	2.00	2.24	3	Construction	0	4.45
	12	19 (1)	4.27	1.00	3.98	3	Healthcare	0	4.45
Pakistan	13	23 (6)	2.68	5.83	3.23	3	Education	0	3.87
	14	26 (3)	4.93	4.33	3.93	3	Financial and Insurance	1	3.87
	15	25 (4)	4.95	4.00	4.04	3	Financial and Insurance	1	3.87
	16	26 (2)	4.93	3.00	3.91	3	Financial and Insurance	1	3.87
	17	24 (3)	4.92	2.67	3.99	3	Financial and Insurance	1	3.87
	18	24 (2)	5.07	2.50	3.87	3	Financial and Insurance	1	3.87
	19	27 (3)	5.04	3.33	3.73	3	Financial and Insurance	1	3.87
	20	25 (3)	4.97	5.00	4.04	3	Financial and Insurance	1	3.87
	21	23 (3)	4.93	5.00	4.10	3	Financial and Insurance	1	3.87
	22	28 (1)	4.94	5.00	4.21	3	Financial and Insurance	1	3.87
	23	19 (2)	4.96	5.00	4.05	3	Financial and Insurance	1	3.87
South Korea	24	20 (2)	4.98	5.00	3.95	3	Financial and Insurance	0	3.87
	25	20 (1)	3.57	4.00	4.51	1	Financial and Insurance	0	4.55
	26	20 (1)	3.89	4.00	3.25	2	Entertainment	0	4.55
	27	20 (1)	5.12	4.00	4.28	2	Manufacturing	0	4.55
	28	20 (1)	3.50	5.00	4.06	2	Financial and Insurance	0	4.55
	29	20 (1)	3.51	5.00	3.67	2	Construction	0	4.55

30	20 (1)	3.52	4.00	4.26	3	Construction	0	4.55	
31	20 (1)	3.28	4.00	3.87	2	IT and Software	0	4.55	
32	20 (1)	3.74	4.00	3.77	1	IT and Software	0	4.55	
33	20 (1)	3.67	4.00	3.767	3	Food and Fruit	0	4.55	
34	20 (1)	3.68	5.00	3.76	3	Manufacturing	0	4.55	
35	20 (1)	3.74	4.00	3.70	3	Construction	0	4.55	
36	20 (1)	3.26	6.00	4.02	3	Manufacturing	0	4.55	
37	20 (1)	3.58	4.00	3.78	3	Other	0	4.55	
38	20 (1)	3.03	4.00	3.15	3	Information	0	4.55	
39	20 (1)	3.95	3.00	4.43	3	Hospitality	0	4.55	
Total (Mean)	39	855	4.24	3.76	3.98	2.54	(16)	0.28	4.29

Organizational size (1 = <50; 2 = 50-249; 3 = 250+ employees); Sector (1 = profit; 0 = public or not-for-profit).

Table 3.2: Demographic profile, confidence intervals, and checks for bias

Variable	n	% sample	Mean / 95% CI	95% CI lower	95% CI upper	Skewness (SD)	Kurtosis (SD)
Age	847	99.06	1.97	1.92	2.03	.66 (.08)	.31 (.17)
18-30	241	28.45	.29	.25	.32		
31-40	428	50.53	.51	.47	.54		
41-50	140	16.50	.17	.14	.19		
51-60	36	4.25	.04	.03	.06		
61-65	2	0.24	.00	.00	.01		
Gender	843	98.60	.34	.31	.37	.66 (.08)	1.56 (.17)
Male	554	65.72	.66	.62	.69		
Female	289	34.28	.34	.31	.38		
Education	842	98.50	2.63	2.59	2.67	-.80 (.08)	.33 (.17)
High school certificate	34	4.03	.04	.03	.06		
Bachelor's degree	261	31.00	.31	.28	.34		
Post-graduate degree	530	62.95	.63	.60	.66		
Doctoral degree	17	2.02	.02	.01	.03		
Tenure	843	98.60	2.04	1.97	2.11	.35 (.08)	-1.04 (.17)
1-5	346	41.04	.41	.38	.45		
6-10	167	19.81	.20	.17	.23		
11-20	286	34.00	.34	.31	.37		
21-30	39	4.63	.05	.03	.06		
30+	5	.60	.01	.00	.01		

In China, data collection was also supplemented by data gathered by Master's students as part of an assignment that was supervised by a member of the research team. This approach is consistent with other studies using multi-level data (e.g., Beijer, Van De Voorde, & Tims, 2019), and researchers have argued that student-recruited samples lead to a generalizable and heterogeneous sample (Demerouti & Rispens, 2014). The Master's students were briefed about the study and instructed on the importance of ethical conduct (e.g. anonymity, confidentiality, etc.). Using their personal networks, they contacted organizations and followed the similar aforementioned procedure.

3.3.3 Measurement

The survey items were measured using a six-point Likert scale (1 = *totally disagree* to 6 = *totally agree*) unless otherwise stated. Alike to Sanders, Yang, and Li (2019), the absence of a

“neutral” option was intended to encourage participants to choose between an “agree” or “disagree”. Peabody, (1961) suggests that Likert scales provide a direction (i.e., respondents agree or disagree), more so than the intensity (i.e., level of agreement or disagreement), especially in countries (e.g., China, South Korea and Pakistan) where there is a tendency to suppress positive emotions and select midpoints of a range (Lee, Jones, Mineyama, & Zhang, 2002). Eliminating the mid-point option in this study intends to capture this bipolar direction.

3.3.3.1 Perceived HR strength

Perceived HR strength was measured by a 6-item scale adapted from Delmotte et al. (2012) which measured employee-level perceptions of Bowen & Ostroff's (2004) distinctiveness (“*HRM practices are well known by everybody*”; 2 items), consistency (“*There is consistency between the words and the deeds of the HR department*”; 2 items), and consensus (“*All HR staff members are clearly on the same wavelength*”; 2 items). This scale was adopted to measure perceived HR strength more parsimoniously than the original 30-item scale, which is consistent with approaches from previous studies (e.g., Farndale et al., 2020). The items were selected based on their face validity, applicability across multiple sectors and countries, and reliability from previous studies (e.g., Bednall et al., 2014; Delmotte et al., 2012; Steffensen, 2019). As research shows that all items are highly correlated, and the mean of all items was used for the analysis. The Cronbach's alpha was .90 which is similar to the average reliabilities of the longer scale (Bednall et al., 2014, 2021; Sanders et al., 2018; Sanders et al., 2021).

3.3.3.2 Parental behaviours

Career-related parental behaviours (support, interference, and lack of engagement) was measured by an 8-item scale adapted from Dietrich and Kracke (2009). Employees were asked to state their level of agreement of experiences of parental support (e.g., “*My parents*

talk to me about the vocational interests and abilities"; 3 items), interference (e.g., *"My parents try to put through their ideas of my future vocation"*; 3 items), and lack of engagement (e.g., *"My parents don't care about my vocation"*; 2 items). To make the lack of engagement subscale easier to interpret, the employee ratings were inversed so a higher score reflects a higher level of engagement and vice versa which is referred to as '(parental) engagement'. Previous studies have shown good reliabilities for this scale in China and South Korea (Lee, 2018; Zhang, Chen, & Yuen, 2019). The Cronbach's alpha was .89 for support, .79 for interference, and .80 for engagement which demonstrated good reliability across countries.

3.3.3.3 Job security

Job security was measured by one item from Sun, Aryee, and Law (2007). Line managers were asked to rate the extent to which employees can be expected to assume that they will not lose the job they are currently holding on to by answering the question, "In my organization, employees can expect to stay for as long as they wish". Previous studies have used single-item measures of job security (e.g., Arnold & Feldman, 1982; Dello Russo et al., 2018; Witte, 1999) and researchers have argued single-item measures to be acceptable (for meta-analysis see Wanous, Reichers, & Hudy, 1997). When more than one line manager provided ratings of job security in one organization, the averages of those ratings were used in the analysis. To assess whether aggregation was appropriate, the intragroup reliability measures using intraclass correlations (ICCs) and within-group agreement measures (R_{wg}) were calculated. The results showed that $ICC(1) = .17$ and $ICC(2) = .81$, which were above the .07 and .70 cut off values as suggested by Bliese (2000). Further, the R_{wg} values were above the critical cutoff value of .70 (James, Demaree, & Wolf, 1984). These results indicate a high level of agreement between line managers and therefore aggregation of individual line manager responses to the unit level is justified.

3.3.3.4 Performance orientation

Performance orientation was added to this dataset at the country level using the GLOBE dataset (Global Leadership and Organizational Behaviour Effectiveness; House et al., 2004). The GLOBE measure distinguishes between social values and practices ranging from 1 (low) to 7 (high). The GLOBE dataset focuses on ‘as is’ (practices) vs. ‘should be’ (values) cultural dimensions. To maintain theoretical consistency, this study follows Rabl et al. (2014) and focuses on ‘as is’ practices, which are an important focus of normative/cognitive assumptions managers face when implementing job security. Since data from Pakistan was not gathered within the GLOBE dataset, a supplementary dataset by Nadeem and Sully De Luque (2020) was used who used the GLOBE instrument to gather primary data from 151 managers in Pakistan. In the current sample, performance orientation ranged from 3.87 (Pakistan) - 4.45 (China) - 4.55 (South Korea) (M= 4.31; SD = .30).

3.3.3.5 Control variables

Previous studies have documented that employee- and organizational-level variables can influence perceived HR strength (Bednall et al., 2014; Delmotte et al., 2012; Farndale et al., 2020; Hauff et al., 2017; Sanders et al., 2018). As a result, for several employee characteristics were controlled for including: gender (female = 0; male = 1), age (1 = 18-30; 2 = 31-40; 3 = 41-50; 4 = 51-60; 5 = 61-65; 6 = 65+ years), job tenure (1 = <5; 2 = 6-10; 3 = 11-20; 4 = 21-30; 5 = 30+ years); level of education (1 = High School degree; 2 = Bachelor’s degree; 3 = Master’s degree or equivalent; 4 = PhD/Doctoral degree). At the organizational level, controls were also included for organizational size (1 = <50 members; 2 = 50-249; 3 = 250+ members), industry (0 = not banking & finance; 1 = banking & finance), and sector (0 = not for profit/other; 1 = for profit).

3.3.4 Statistical Analysis

Since the employees and line managers were nested in organizations, and the organizations were nested in countries, a three-level hierarchical linear modelling (HLM) in SPSS v23 was conducted to analyse the cross- and multi-level interaction effects. Before the analysis, the variables were standardized to reduce multicollinearity, reduce between-organization differences in the observed results, and enhance the interpretability of the interactions. Hence, all reported results are based on standardised residuals (z-scores). The threshold for significant effects is $p < .05$.

3.4 Results

3.4.1 Measurement Model

A series of confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using Mplus v6.1 was conducted to establish the data fit of the employee-level data. All employee-level data which came from a single source was entered into the model (i.e., perceived HR strength, parental support, parental interference, and parental engagement). Other measures (e.g., job security and performance orientation) were not included as they were assessed by other actors (i.e., managers and the GLOBE dataset). All factors were allowed to correlate and all analyses were performed using the maximum likelihood robust estimator (Muthén & Muthén, 2007). Following Arbuckle (2006), a χ^2/df value of lower than 5 indicates an acceptable fit and lower than 2.5 indicates a good fit. A comparative index (CFI) value of greater than .90, and a root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) and the standard root mean square error of approximation (SRMR) of lower than .08 also indicates an acceptable fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999; Kline, 2011). The results showed that a four-factor model (three scales of parental support and perceived HR strength) was a good fit ($\chi^2 = 201.65$; $df = 71$; $\chi^2/df = 2.84$; $CFI = .97$; $RMSEA = .05$; $SRMR = .03$) and yielded the best fit when compared with a one-factor (all items), two-factor, and three-factor

models (see Table 3.3).

Table 3.3: Fit statistics from confirmatory factor analysis

Model	X^2	df	X^2/df	CFI	RMSEA	SRMR
Full model ^a	201.65	71	2.84	.97	.05	.03
Three-factor ^b	1332.39	74	18.01	.75	.14	.10
Two-factor ^c	683.71	76	9.00	.88	.10	.07
One-factor ^d	2172.60	77	28.22	.58	.18	.12

^a Full factor model.

^b Parental support and perceived HR strength combined into a single factor.

^c Parental support, parental interference, and parental engagement combined into a single factor.

^d Perceived HR strength, parental support, parental interference, and parental engagement combined into a single factor.

3.4.2 Descriptive Statistics

Bivariate correlations and descriptive statistics (i.e., means and standard deviations) are reported in Table 3.4. The bivariate correlations show that parental support ($r = .53, p < .01$), parental interference ($r = .39, p < .01$), and parental engagement ($r = .17, p < .01$) were positively related with perceived HR strength. Parental support was highly related to parental interference ($r = .69, p < 0.1$). This relatively high relation could be due to respondents categorising parental behaviours as either ‘good’ or ‘bad’. However, no correlations were above 0.70, so multi-collinearity should not substantially affect the predictors in the model (Kutner, Nachtsheim, Neter, & Li, 2005).

At the organization level, line manager-rated job security had a negative association with perceived HR strength ($r = -.14, p < .01$). At the country level, countries with higher performance orientation reported lower perceived HR strength ($r = -.37, p < .01$). All control variables (i.e., gender, age, organizational tenure, organizational size, industry, and sector) were significantly related to perceived HR strength except for level of education ($r = .01, ns$). Despite the non-significant effect of level of education, prior research has suggested that type of school major and education can impact employees reactions and attributions towards HRM practices (e.g., Han, 2016; Raemdonck & Strijbos, 2013), so it was included in the final model.

At the cultural level, performance orientation was found to have a negative correlation with job security ($r = -.25, p < .01$). This correlation contradicts a cultural fit perspective (Rabl et al., 2014) that posits job security fits most with performance-oriented cultures because it enables employees to perform in their roles through the reduction of reducing role ambiguity, stress, and anxiety (Coggburn & Kearney, 2010; Davy et al. 1997). Along these lines, it is expected that would be a strong positive correlation between job security and performance orientation. In contrast, this finding shows that this is not the case.

3.4.3 Hypothesis Testing

The hypotheses were tested via hierarchical linear modelling (HLM) using SPSS v23 following the procedure described in Heck, Thomas, and Tabata (2013). The results can be found in Table 3.5. Hypothesis 1 proposed that parental support (H1a), parental interference (H1b), and parental engagement (H1c) will have a positive association with perceived HR strength. In support of Hypothesis 1, parental support ($\beta = .29, p < .01$; M1a) and parental interference ($\beta = .14, p < .01$; M1b) had a positive association with perceived HR strength. However, not in line with expectations, the main effect of parental engagement was non-significant ($\beta = .00, ns$; M1c). Hence, there was support for H1a and H1b, but not for H1c.

Hypothesis 2 proposes that job security at the organizational level interacts with parental behaviours (parental support, H2a; parental interference, H2b; and parental engagement; H2c) such that the relationship between parental behaviours and perceived HR strength is weaker when job security is strong. To test this hypothesis, job security at the organizational level and the cross-level interaction term was added to model 1 (M2a-c). In support of Hypothesis 2, both parental support ($\beta = -.09, p < .01$; M2a) and parental interference ($\beta = -.13, p < .01$; M2b) showed significant interactions between parental behaviours and job security on perceived HR strength. However, there was no significant interaction of parental

engagement and job security ($\beta = .04, ns$; M2c).

A simple slopes analysis was conducted with job security at +1/-1 standard deviation (Aiken & West, 1991). The slopes (Figure 3.2 & 3.3) revealed that at low levels of job security, parental support ($\beta = .27, p < .01$) and parental interference ($\beta = .10, p < .05$) were significantly associated with perceived HR strength. However, at high levels of job security, the relationships between parental support ($\beta = .18, ns$) and parental interference ($\beta = -.03, ns$) became non-significant. Hence, H2a and H2b are supported, but H2c was not supported.

Hypothesis 3 proposes that performance orientation moderates the two-way interaction effect of job security and parental behaviours (support, H3a; interference, H3b; and engagement; H3c) on perceived HR strength, so that the buffering effect of job security is stronger in countries with higher levels of performance orientation, rather than low levels. To test this hypothesis, performance orientation at the country level and the different interaction terms were added to model 2 (see M3a-c; Table 3.4). However, this 3-way interactions was not significant for parental support ($\beta = -.06, ns$; M3a), parental interference ($\beta = -.09, ns$; M3b), or parental engagement ($\beta = .03, ns$; M3c) Hence, Hypothesis 3 (H3a, H3b, and H3c) was not supported.

Table 3.4: Means, standard deviations, and bivariate correlations

#	Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1	Perceived HR strength	4.28	.98												
2	Parental support	4.19	1.18	.53**											
3	Parental interference	3.78	1.09	.39**	.69**										
4	Parental engagement	4.32	1.35	.17**	.29**	.22**									
5	Job security	3.74	1.29	-.14**	-.04	-.01	.17**								
6	Performance orientation	4.25	.27	-.37**	-.43**	-.39**	-.57**	-.25**							
7	Gender	.34	.47	-.08*	.00	-.08*	-.11**	-.12**	.31**						
8	Age	1.97	.80	-.11**	-.27**	-.19**	-.05	.19**	.00	-.20**					
9	Education	2.63	.60	-.01	.11**	.14**	.37**	.41**	-.49**	-.23**	.10**				
10	Organizational tenure	2.04	.99	.12**	-.02	.03	.20**	.26**	-.44**	-.26**	.63**	.31**			
11	Organizational size	2.58	.69	.11**	.07*	.11**	.28**	.18**	-.43**	-.23**	.07*	.32**	.27**		
12	Industry	.36	.48	.39**	.35**	.34**	.47**	.21**	-.84**	-.27**	-.03	.45**	.34**	.25**	
13	Sector	.32	.47	.42**	.39**	.35**	.46**	.02	-.81**	-.26**	-.04	.32**	.31**	.41**	.77**

N = 855 employees, 61 line managers in in 39 organizations in three countries

* $p \leq .05$; ** $p \leq .01$;

Gender: male = 0, female = 1; age: (1 = 18-30; 2 = 31-40; 3 = 41-50; 4 = 51-60; 5 = 61-65; 6 = 65+); education (1 = High School degree; 2 = Bachelor's degree; 3 = Master's degree or equivalent; 4 = PhD/Doctoral Degree); organizational tenure (1 = <5; 2 = 6-10; 3 = 11-20; 4 = 21-30; 5 = 30+ years); organizational size (1 = <50 members; 2 = 50-249; 3 = 250+ members); industry (1 = banking; 0 = other); sector (1 = for profit; 0 = public or not-for-profit).

Figure 3.2: Slopes of interaction between parental support and job security on perceived HR strength

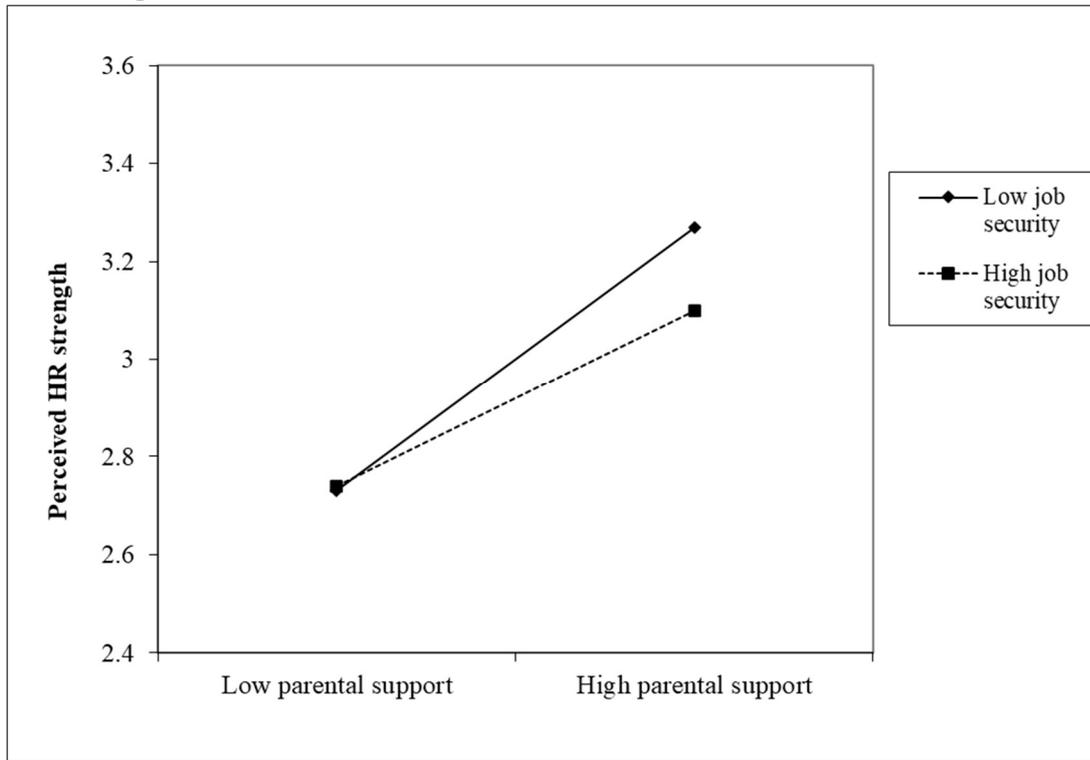
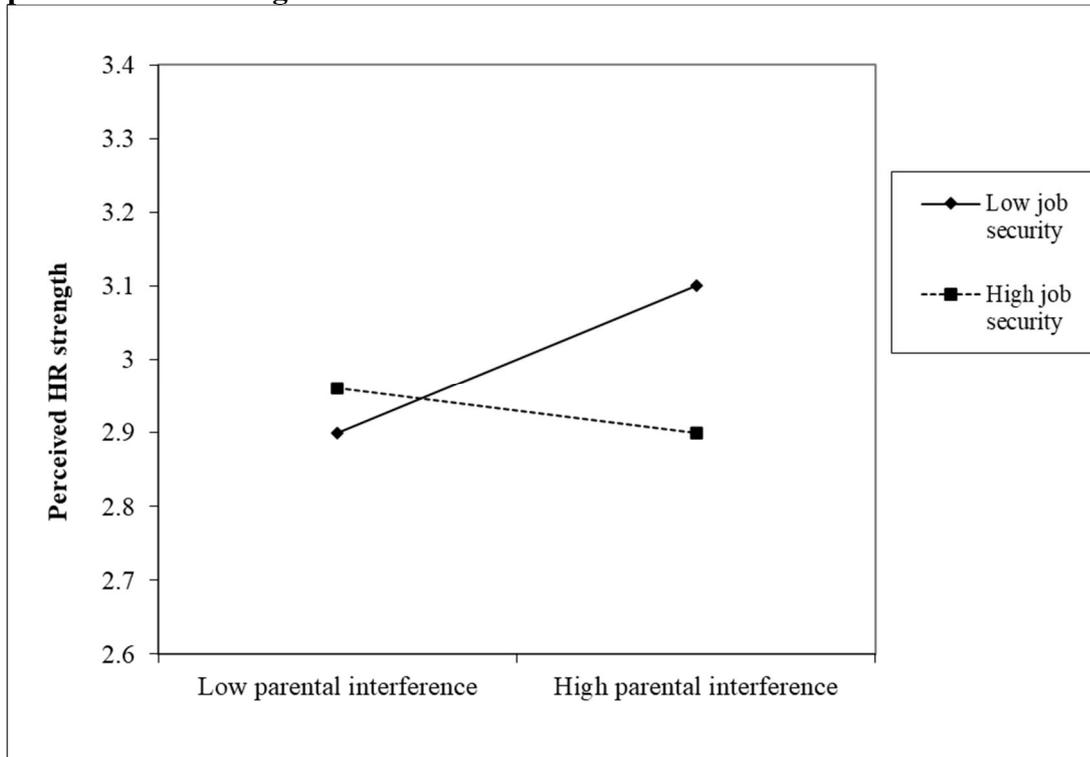


Figure 3.3: Slopes of interaction between parental interference and job security on perceived HR strength



3.4.4 Additional Analysis

Rabl and colleagues' (2014) meta-analysis demonstrated that HPWS are most effective in cultures with low power distance, low in-group collectivism, and high performance orientation, as long as cultural tightness, which refers to “the strength of social norms, or how clear and pervasive norms are within societies, and the strength of sanctioning, or how much tolerance there is for deviance from norms within societies”, is high (Gelfand, Nishii, & Raver, 2006, p. 1226). Following the theoretical reasoning of Rabl and colleagues (2014), it is suggested that job security is most effective in high performance orientated societies, but only under the conditions of high cultural tightness. To test this, cultural tightness was added to the analysis using the secondary dataset from Gelfand and colleagues (2011) who gathered tightness-looseness scores from 6823 participants in 33 cultures, including China, Pakistan, and South Korea. The standardised tightness scores for each country were used in the analysis.

The bivariate correlations showed that tightness was very highly correlated with performance orientation ($\beta = .88, p < .01$) and moderately high with job security practices ($\beta = .46, p < .01$). In addition, tightness was associated with all three parental behaviours: parental support ($\beta = .24, p < .01$), parental interference ($\beta = .26, p < .01$), and parental engagement ($\beta = .58, p < .01$).

To test whether the effect of performance orientation was significant under the conditions of high cultural tightness, tightness at the country level and the different interaction terms were added to model 3. However, the four-way interaction was found to be redundant, likely due to the high correlation between performance orientation and cultural tightness. Hence, the effect of tightness was insignificant and not supported.

Table 3.5: HLM results: parental behaviours predicting perceived HR strength, moderated by job security and performance orientation.

	Support			Interference			Engagement		
Model	M1a	M1b	M1c	M2a	M2b	M2c	M3a	M3b	M3c
Employee level									
Gender	-.13*	-.13*	-.13*	-.12*	-.13*	-.12*	-.12 [†]	-.12 [†]	-.11 [†]
Age	.01	.00	.01	-.01	-.01	-.01	-.03	-.03	-.03
Education level	-.08	-.07	-.07	-.05	-.04	-.03	-.03	-.03	-.03
Organizational tenure	.07 [†]	.07 [†]	.07 [†]	.06	.04	.04	.05	.05	.05
Parental behaviour (PB) (H1)	.29**	.27**	.22**	.14**	.10**	.10*	.00	.00	.01
Organizational level									
Organizational size	-.02	.00	.01 [†]	-.04	-.01	-.02	-.05	-.03	.05
Industry	.47	.48 [†]	.49	.50 [†]	.53 [†]	.44	.51 [†]	.55 [†]	-.04
Sector	.30 [†]	.26	.24 [†]	.34	.33	.24	.38	.35	.46
Job security (JS)		-.08	-.11		-.07	-.11		-.08	-.07
Country-level									
Performance orientation (PO)			-.02			-.08			-.09
2-way cross-level interactions									
PB*JS (H2)		-.09**	-.04		-.13**	-.09*		.04	.03
PB*PO			.09			-.02			-.02
JS*PO			.10			.10			.11
3-way cross-level interactions									
PB*JS*PO (H3)			-.06			-.09 [†]			.03
Model fit	1850.66	1848.89	1857.03	1909.51	1893.42	1900.66	1930.32	1935.77	1945.17
Deviance in model fit		1.77	-8.14		16.09	-7.24		-5.45	-9.40

Note: N = 855 employees, 61 line managers, across 39 organizations and 3 countries.

** $p \leq .01$; * $p \leq .05$; [†] $p \leq 0.10$.

Gender (male = 0, female = 1); age (1 = 18-30; 2 = 31-40; 3 = 41-50; 4 = 51-60; 5 = 61-65; 6 = 65+); education (1 = High School degree; 2 = Bachelor's degree; 3 = Master's degree or equivalent; 4 = PhD/Doctoral Degree); organizational tenure (1 = <5; 2 = 6-10; 3 = 11-20; 4 = 21-30; 5 = 30+ years); organizational size (1 = <50 members; 2 = 50-249; 3 = 250+ members); industry (1 = banking; 0 = other); sector (1 = for profit; 0 = public or not-for-profit).

3.5 Discussion

The current study examined the effects of career-specific parental behaviours (i.e., parental support, parental interference, and parental engagement) as antecedents of employees' perceived HR strength. The results supported that parental support and parental interference were positively associated with perceived HR strength, but not parental engagement. Furthermore, the associations between parental behaviours (parental support and interference) and perceived HR strength became insignificant under high levels of job security. However, including performance orientations as a country level moderator did not provide a significant three-way interaction, nor did cultural tightness influence these effects.

3.5.1 Theoretical Implications and Future Directions

These findings have three key theoretical implications for the perceived HR strength literature. First, this study provides empirical support for the effect of parental support and parental interference on perceived HR strength. Despite the growing interest by researchers to investigate the antecedents of perceived HR strength, the role of family dynamics and upbringing has remained empirically absent in the literature until now. These findings speak to the notion that employees do not enter the workforce as a blank slate ('tabula rasa'); they bring with them a set of past experiences that affect how they understand HRM in later life (Kelley & Michela, 1980; Lupu et al., 2018; Marquis & Tilcsik, 2013; Thornton et al., 2012). Drawing on an imprinting framework, it is explained that employees whose parents provided career-related support (i.e., encouraging vocational interests, providing instrumental support such as CV writing, and aiding reflection on career-related decisions) and career-related interference (i.e., parents pushing their own wishes for childrens' future career) are more receptive and sensitive to HRM signals in later life. These findings are consistent with the proposition in Chapter Two and previous studies that suggest that supportive parental behaviours provide the

learning opportunities and resources that affect HRM and environmental sense-making in later stages of their career (Johnson & Mortimer, 2015; Lent et al., 2000).

Interestingly, though not in line with expectations, parental engagement did not influence perceived HR strength. One explanation for this can be that parental engagement is not sufficient enough to provide an imprinting effect on perceived HR strength. Parental engagement is characterised by actions of caring and showing interest in an adolescent's career interests. Compared to parental support and interference, parental engagement behaviours are less actively involved in an adolescent's career activities (Dietrich & Kracke, 2009; Dietrich & Salmela-Aro, 2013). Instead of helping their children write CVs and apply for jobs (i.e., parental support), engaged parents show warmth and encouragement for their adolescent's career decisions, and support them in less active ways (Goodall & Montgomery, 2014). Yet, this doesn't mean that engaged parents care less about their adolescents' careers, but they may face conflicting demands or are not capable of helping youths cope with the challenges that come with career development (Guan et al., 2015; Mortimer, Zimmer-Gembeck, Holmes, & Shanahan, 2002).

As a consequence, parental engagement does not offer the same level of frequency and depth of career-related knowledge and expectations for adolescents when compared to parental support or interference (Goodall & Montgomery, 2014). Hence, adolescents have fewer and less rich opportunities for cognitive stimulation (Rosenbaum & Morett, 2009) that are important for the development of strong normative assumptions, beliefs, and schemas about HRM, so the effect of parental engagement on perceived HR strength is diminished. Along these lines, it is recommended that further research investigates which, to what degree, other aspects of child-parent relationships (e.g., family structure, managerial parents, family values) are important for perceived HR strength.

Second, this study addresses the decontextualisation of previous HR strength research

by considering organizational context as boundary conditions on the imprinting factor-perceived HR strength relationship. Following a strong situation hypothesis (Mischel, 1977), this study provides empirical support for the role of job security as a ‘strong situation’ which completely reduces the influence of parental support and parental interference on perceived HR strength. These findings are consistent with the strong situation hypothesis which suggest that environmental constraints suppress the expression of individual differences in organizations (Mischel, 1973, 1977). In this case, job security provides unambiguous contextual cues on employees’ role and behavioural expectations that matter for those with high degrees of parental support or parental interference.

The inclusion of job security in the proposed model also addresses the scholarly call for greater integration of HRM content in (perceived) HR strength models (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004; Katou, Budhwar, & Patel, 2014; Ostroff & Bowen, 2016). Previous research has shown a positive interaction between HRM content and HRM process on employee outcomes (e.g., Sanders & Yang, 2016). In this study, it is demonstrated that HRM content in the form of job security buffers the effect of parental behaviours on perceived HR strength. To date, integrative research that combines both content and process in one conceptual model has been limited, especially at multiple levels of analysis. This study emphasises that both HRM content and process are interlinked facets of the HRM system and thus, this study contributes to the HRM process literature via a integrative, multi-level model that details the interplay between of internal imprinting factors and external constraints on perceived HR strength.

Third, these findings also consider the role of national values in the parental behaviour-perceived HR strength relationship by examining the role of performance ordination. It was hypothesised that job security would be a good fit with high performance-oriented cultures due to its nature of being an important organizational support factor that enhances performance (Lu et al., 2017; Umrani et al., 2019; Vijayan, 2017). However, performance orientation did not

moderate the aforementioned relationships (Hypothesis 3).

These inconsistencies could be due to several reasons. It is possible that the limited range of performance orientation between the countries (3.87 – 4.55) was not enough to observe significant differences between the countries (China, Pakistan, and South Korea). Furthermore, job security practices and expectations can be undermined by commonplace practices in their countries or industries (e.g. *guanxi* and nepotism) (Ahmad & Allen, 2015; Huang, 2008; Z. Xiao & Björkman, 2006). For instance, China has a long-standing history of *guanxi* practices, whereby job positions and job continuity are connected to moral obligations and personal connections, which can impact security expectations (Huang, 2008). Similarly, while job security practices are consistent with Islamic values (*Eshan*) (Ahmad & Allen, 2015), nepotism, defined as “the employment of relatives in the same organization or the use of family influence to employ them in other organizations” (Abdalla, Maghrabi, & Raggad, 1998, p. 555), may play a role in Pakistan establishments which may undermine their job security practices (Islam, 2004). Additionally, the loss of job security in South Korea has become more prevalent due to globalisation and the financial crisis, which is particularly damaging for lower social classes (Cho, Eum, Choi, Paek, & Karasek, 2008). More recently, South Korea has experienced a substantial change in their labour market structures which has marked a rise in recent labour market insecurity and precarious employment practices (Yoon, Lim, & Kim, 2021).

Although in this study organizational-level factors such as sector, industry, cultural tightness, and organizational size were considered, future research can include institutional factors (e.g., institutional flexibility; Rabl et al., 2014), structural- (e.g., organizational structures; Marquis & Huang, 2010) or macro-economic conditions (e.g., socialist imprints; Kriauciunas & Kale, 2006) that may explain the discrepancies in these findings. For instance, this study did not account for state-owned businesses. China has a history of state-owned

enterprises that offered extensive job security to all employees as part of the communist regime where “it was technically impossible to fire any employee from the enterprise” (Xiao & Björkman, 2006, p. 415). Hence, job security may not be seen as a form of employers’ commitment to their employees in state-owned enterprises. In addition, large-scale private banks – the majority of the Pakistan sample – do not tend to provide job security to their employees and often lay off employees in cases of poor market conditions (Jha, Gupta, & Yadav, 2008). Future research should take these findings into account and more closely examine these differences between countries.

Furthermore, it should be noted that performance orientation was found to have a negative correlation with job security ($r = -.25, p < .01$) which contradicts the expectation that job security fits most in performance-oriented cultures. It is possible that this finding can be explained by more closely examining the relationship around performance expectations of employees in performance-oriented cultures. In performance-oriented cultures, organizations reward their members for striving for higher performance (House et al., 2004). They are more likely to provide training, advancement, and developmental opportunities to support employees achieve their goals. The clear focus on developmental opportunities, meritocracy, and a results-driven climate leads employees to naturally strive for high performance. Under these conditions, job security may not be a necessary condition for them to be motivated to perform well at work as they understand that the continuation of employment is contingent on their performance. Indeed, research has shown that job insecurity can be a powerful motivator of job performance, especially in performance-oriented cultures where there are stronger reactions to the potential loss of work-related resources (Sender, Arnold, & Staffelbach, 2017). In other words, performance-orientated countries are more focused on enhancing performance and less on job security, so a negative correlation is present. In light of these findings and the aforementioned suggestions above, future research should examine the negative relationship

between job security and performance orientation more closely, assuming that there is a greater fit with low performance-oriented cultures, rather than high performance-oriented cultures, as hypothesised in the current study.

3.5.2 Limitations and Future Directions

Although the current multi-level and multi-actor study has many advantages, it also has three main limitations. First, as the study uses a cross-sectional design, causality cannot be inferred among the variables. Although it can be argued that perceived HR strength cannot influence parental behaviours during adolescence, individuals who perceive higher levels of perceived HR strength may be more likely to reflect positively on their parents' behaviours and upbringing. Consequently, any assumptions of causality should be tempered until these relationships are tested with longitudinal data.

Second, the total number of countries is limited in this study which affects the generalizability of the findings. Although the effect of performance orientation was not found in this study, differences in performance orientation could be more noticeable with a greater range and diversity of countries. In a similar vein, the majority of the Pakistan sample was collected from large private sector and relatively homogenous banking functions (Chiang & Birtch, 2007; Hofstede, 2001). Due to this, generalizability outside of this setting is limited as employees' attitudes, experiences, and behaviours could be related to a specific family background and structures that influence career choice and workplace assumptions (Hall, 2003; Lupu et al., 2018). Future research would benefit by including a wider range of countries and organizational settings where cross-cultural differences are more apparent. In particular, it would be helpful to include Western and Eastern countries to examine the differences in expectations surrounding job security.

Finally, more developed and prevalidated scales are necessary for imprinting research.

In the current study, job security was measured by a one-item scale which may reduce the predictive validity for job security (Bergkvist & Rossiter, 2007). In addition, following the guidance of the authors (Dietrich & Kracke, 2009), parental behaviours were measured in the present tense by employees, who were not directly instructed to reflect on their childhood experiences of parental support, parental interference, or parental engagement. As such, employees may be reflecting on current parental behaviours, rather than those that occurred during childhood. This raises questions about the validity of the scale in relation to the objectives of the study. Future research should directly measure parental behaviours from the parent's themselves or specifically ask employees to reflect on past childhood events rather than present behaviours to assess the influence of childhood experiences more accurately on employees' current perceived HR strength.

Nevertheless, it is contended that perceptions of others' behaviour (i.e., parental behaviours) have a more formative influence than the actual behaviour itself (Boerchi & Tagliabue, 2018). It is also likely that employees would take a holistic reflection on their entire lives when responding to this scale. Indeed, it was not the case either that employees were asked to reflect on a specific time period (e.g., the past six months), but they were instructed to take a more generalised account of parental behaviours. That said, pre-validated scales for imprinting factors are sorely missing from the HR literature for future research should address this gap in the literature.

3.5.3 Practical Implications

The results from this study have two important implications for practice. First, management and HR practitioners should be aware that individuals can in their understanding of HRM due to factors outside the organizational environment. Specifically, employees' understanding of HRM is, in part, based on their past experiences (i.e. parental behaviours)

which can make them more sensitive and attentive to the HRM signals in their organization. Employees who experienced parental support or interference during childhood have another, and possibly conflicting, understanding of HRM systems compared to other employees.

Second, although parental behaviours are outside the control of the organization, the findings in this study suggest how these influences can be actively managed. In particular, job security practices can be designed to completely reduce the effect of parental behaviours under high conditions of job security. If organizational decision-makers, HR professionals, and managers wish to create congruence between employees' understanding of HRM, they should ensure that job security practices are available and well-communicated to employees. For instance, line managers should make sure that employees are made aware that their jobs are secure through internal HR communications and face-to-face conversations. This way, idiosyncratic understanding of HRM is reduced, leading to a unison understanding of HRM between organizational members for positive employee outcomes (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004).

3.5.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, this study provides empirical support for the positive relationship between parental behaviours (i.e., parental support and interference) on employees' perceived HR strength. Applying an imprinting framework (Chapter Two; Marquis & Tilsik, 2013), a strong situation hypothesis (Mischel, 1977), and a fit perspective (Rabl et al., 2014), this study begins to unveil the complex process and content dynamics involved in the expression of imprinting effects on perceived HR strength. Furthermore, job security and performance orientation are included as boundary conditions in this relationship, and it is theorised how and why these influences are important (or not) and how HRM practices can be designed to minimise these effects in multinational settings. This study takes an important step forward for the application of imprinting frameworks and HRM content in the perceived HR strength

literature to provide a wider understanding of the extent to which an individual's past experiences, their organizational context, and cultural norms influence how they understand HRM in their organization.

CHAPTER 4

Family Motivation and HR Attributions: The Moderating Role of High-Performance Work Systems and Power Distance

Abstract

Family motivation is considered an important motivator for the way employees' perceive, engage, and find meaning in their work. However, it is not yet known whether and how family motivation extends to influence the way employees attend and attach meaning to HRM practices, known as HR attributions. This is important because scholars and HR practitioners know little about the extent to which family-related factors impact employees' attributions of HRM, though previous literature suggests a possible effect. To address this gap, this study examines the relationship between family motivation and three HR attributions: commitment, control, and compliance. It is suggested that family-motivated employees are more attentive to HRM as a way to support their families and are more motivated to process HR-related information in the form of HR attributions. In addition, following a strong situation and fit perspective, it is hypothesised that family motivation matters most when organizational-level high-performance work systems (HPWS) and country-level power distance is low. Data from 855 employees across 39 organizations in three countries (China, Pakistan, and South Korea) found support for these hypotheses: family motivation is positively related to all three types of HR attributions and HPWS completely buffered these relationships. Furthermore, there were significant differences in the effectiveness of HPWS as a result of power distance. This study contributes to the HR attribution literature by examining the non-work-related antecedents of HR attributions. The findings have practical implications for HR practitioners and managers in both local and multinational organizations.

4.1 Introduction

Within the social psychology literature, attribution theories are used to explain how individuals understand the causes of social events and why individuals' behaviour and attitudes can differ in response to these conclusions. Drawing on Heider's attribution theory (1958), Nishii and colleagues (2008) applied attribution theory to the HRM context to develop *HR attributions*, referring to "causal explanations that employees make regarding management's motivations for using particular HRM practices" (p. 506). They argued that employees interpret managerial motivations through the HRM practices that are implemented in their organization. They further distinguished between two types of attributions. *Internal* attributions refer to employees' beliefs that HRM practices are implemented due to intentional managerial motives (e.g., to save costs or enhance service quality). *External* attributions refer to employees' beliefs that HRM practices are implemented due to situational forces outside the control of management (e.g., to comply with union or legal obligations), resulting in compliance attributions.

Since then, Nishii and colleagues' (2008) HR attribution framework has become a core stream within HRM process research which focuses on how HRM is communicated and understood by employees (Hewett, 2021; Hewett et al., 2018; Sanders et al., 2014; Sanders, Yang, et al., 2021). This body of work often contrasts the outcomes of *commitment* attributions (e.g., enhancing service quality or employee-well-being) vs. *control* attributions (cost-reduction or exploitation) (Beijer et al., 2019; Chen & Wang, 2014; Hewett et al., 2019; Tandung, 2016; Umrani et al., 2019). It has become widely understood that when employees interpret that HRM practices are intended to improve service quality or to benefit their well-being (i.e., commitment attributions) they are more likely to develop positive attitudes and behaviours (e.g., engagement, performance, commitment) compared to those who attribute

HRM practices towards cutting costs or exploiting employees (i.e., control attributions) (for reviews see Hewett, 2021; Hewett et al., 2018; Wang et al., 2020; Xiao & Cooke, 2020). Though, compliance attributions are seen as less indicative of employee outcomes (Nishii et al., 2008).

Despite the number of studies on employee outcomes, researchers have contended that little is known about the antecedents of HR attributions (Hewett et al., 2018; Hewett, 2021; Sanders, 2021). To address this gap, HR attribution scholars examined how organizational characteristics lead to varying attributions, such as leadership, co-workers attributions, and high-performance work systems (Beijer et al., 2019; Sanders, Yang, & Li, 2021; Van De Voorde & Beijer, 2015; Weller et al., 2020). However, even when accounting for organizational factors, scholars have found that employee attributions still vary in the same organization. This has caused researchers to speculate that factors outside the control of organizations may be responsible, such as personality traits, beliefs, and motivations (Han, 2016; Hewett et al., 2019). Understanding the intrapersonal influences is important since attributional differences can lead to divergent attitudinal and behavioural outcomes that may be counterproductive to the organization.

Developing this line of research, a systematic review was conducted of 20 studies that focused on the non-work, intrapersonal differences – known as ‘imprinting factors’ – that impact the way employees attend and attach meaning to HRM (i.e., perceived HR strength and HR attributions), 15 of those studies refer to the antecedents of HR attributions respectfully. This body of research posits that employees do not enter organizations as an empty slate. They understand and attribute HRM practices in accordance to their past experiences, such as their upbringing, childhood, or education. Drawing on an imprinting framework (Marquis & Tilcsik, 2013; Simsek et al., 2015), it was theorised that past experiences and associated intrapersonal factors lead to the development of a cognitive schema – a cognitive framework that helps

employees interpret and organize HR-related information (DiMaggio, 1997) - which enhances employees' *attention* and *interpretation* of the HRM environment (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978). Yet, research in this area is in its nascency. The current paper intends to advance this emerging body of work by empirically investigating one family-related imprinting factor on HR attributions, family motivation.

4.1.1 Family Motivation and a Multi-level Imprinting Framework

Family motivation is defined as the “desire to expend effort to benefit one’s family” (Menges et al., 2017, p. 697). It is understood as a form of pro-social motivation that provides a powerful motivator for people to work (Menges et al., 2017). An emerging body of work has demonstrated that employees with high family motivation have more energy, self-efficacy, commitment, and find more meaning in their work (Andi, 2021; Erum et al., 2021; Erum, Abid, Contreras, & Islam, 2020; Menges et al., 2017; Rafique, Rehman, & Afridi, 2019; Tariq & Ding, 2018; Umrani et al., 2019; Zhang, Liao, Li, & Colbert, 2020).

Despite this, family motivation has not yet been incorporated into HR research in general and HR attribution research more specific. However, previous research suggests a possible effect in line with an imprinting framework. Researchers have drawn attention to the hereditary role of upbringing and early family relationships in the production of family values, obligations, and motivations (Greenhaus & Powell, 2012; Lupu et al., 2018). Through conversations and role-modelling behaviours, adolescents observe and absorb the attitudes and values of their parents which influences their career behaviours and decisions in later life. Indeed, one’s motivation to support their family has been detected in adolescents as early as ten years old and can have profound influences on their career decisions, learning experiences, and academic achievement (Fuligni, 2001; Urdan, Solek, & Schoenfelder, 2007; Verkuyten et al., 2001).

In line with an imprinting perspective is the body of work which suggests that highly family-motivated employees attend to and attach greater meaning to their work and organizational practices. This research suggests that these employees are more energised to search for ways to benefit their families and even positively reframe hostile situations by focusing on how their work is aligned to their family values (e.g., Erum et al., 2021; Menges et al, 2017; Tariq & Ding, 2018). Along this line of reasoning, it is likely that employees with strong family motivation - who are assumed to observe their parents communicate the value of work and organizational practices at an early age – are more attentive to HR practices to support their families and attach more weight to this information, which ultimately leads to stronger HR attributions.

Furthermore, this study considers the organizational and national context that encompasses the family motivation-HR attribution relationship. At present, HR attribution researchers have highlighted the decontextualization of previous research which often adopts universalistic approaches, assuming that employees respond and develop HR attributions in similar ways regardless of different contexts (Sanders, 2022; Sanders et al., 2014; Sanders, Yang, et al., 2021; Steffensen, 2019; Wang et al., 2020; Xiao & Cooke, 2020). However, researchers have emphasised that the HRM process formation in general, and HR attributions more specifically, is a subjective process (Fiske & Taylor, 1991, 2013) and the consideration of organizational and national contexts is important to understand how employees make sense of HRM (Aktas et al., 2017; Cooke, 2018; Johns, 2017). To address these gaps, researchers have called for greater integration of HRM content (i.e., HRM practices) and national values (House et al., 2004) as the most important contextual factors in HRM attribution models (Aktas et al., 2017; Sanders, 2022; Sanders et al., 2014; Sanders, Yang, et al., 2021; Steffensen, 2019; Wang et al., 2020; Xiao & Cooke, 2020).

In light of this, high-performance work systems (HPWS) are argued to be an important

organizational factor that matters for the effect of family motivation, defined as “a group of separate but interconnected human resource practices designed to enhance employees’ skills and effort” (Takeuchi, Lepak, Wang, & Takeuchi, 2007, p. 1069). Yet, even though researchers have suggested that HPWS can play an important role in how employees’ make sense of the HRM environment (Sanders, Yang, & Li, 2021; Van De Voorde & Beijer, 2015), little is known about the role of HPWS in the relationship between imprinting factors (i.e., family motivation) and HR attributions. Drawing upon (perceived) HR strength theory (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004) and a strong situation hypothesis (Mischel, 1977), it is argued that stronger HPWS more readily capture employees attention and foster greater levels of distinctiveness, consistency, and consensus of HRM (Guest et al., 2021; Sanders, Yang, & Li, 2021; Van De Voorde & Beijer, 2015). In turn, HPWS create ‘strong situations’ which clearly communicate the managerial intentions behind HRM systems which reduces the effect of family motivation.

Furthermore, the wider cultural context is considered. Despite cultural values being demonstrated as crucial for the development of causal attributions and workplace expectations (Chiang & Birtch, 2007; Thornton et al., 2012), HR attribution research has been mostly silent in this area. Power distance is defined as “the extent to which a society accepts the fact that power in institutions and organizations is distributed unequally” (Hofstede, 1980, p. 45). Power distance refers to the nature of the employee-employer relationship; it is one of the most studied cultural variables and researchers have argued that that the effectiveness of HPWS is dependent on national expectations such as power distance (Rabl et al., 2014). According to a fit perspective (Rabl et al., 2014), HPWS are more effective when they are congruent with national expectations. In low power distance countries, ability, motivation, and involvement in organizations are perceived by employees and managers as more important. Since HPWS are more closely linked to enhancing their ability, skills, and performance towards organizational goals (Ayman, 2005; Rabl et al., 2014), HPWS are expected to be more effective in low power

distance countries.

4.1.2 Study Contributions

This study examines the effect of family motivation on commitment, control, and compliance attributions, and includes organizational-level HPWS and country-level power distance as important boundary conditions in these relationships. In doing so, this study contributes to the HR attribution literature in three distinct ways. First, this study adds to the small but growing number of antecedents of HR attributions. Specifically, this study examines the role of family motivation as an important imprinting factor and therefore extends HR attribution theory surrounding the antecedents that exist outside of work-related factors, especially with the work-family interface which, until now, have been solely theoretical in nature (Chapter Two; Piszczek & Berg, 2020). Further, the effect of family motivation is examined on *both* internal (i.e., commitment and control) and external (i.e., compliance) attributions, whereas previous literature often only examines internal attributions (e.g., Beijer et al., 2019; Hewett et al., 2019; Montag-Smit & Smit, 2020).

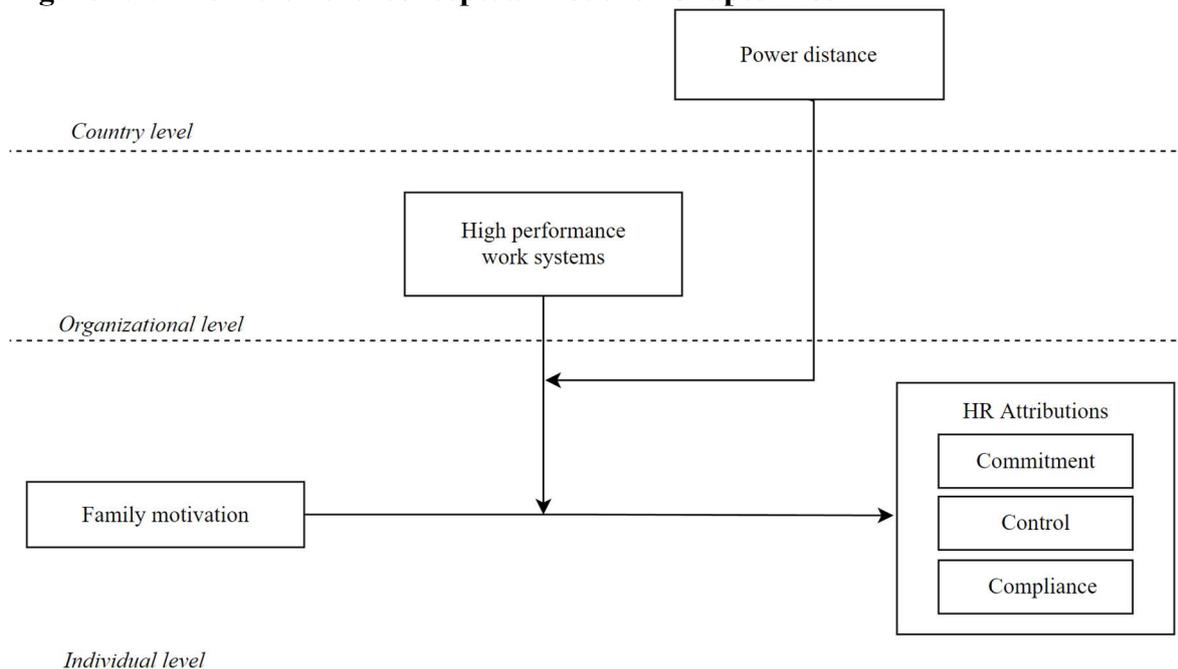
Second, by including HPWS as an organizational moderator boundary condition, this study addresses the need for greater application of organizational context in HRM research more general (Cooke, 2018; Johns, 2017), and HR attribution research more specifically (Guest & Conway, 2011; Sanders et al., 2018; Sanders & Yang, 2016). By incorporating HPWS as an organizational-level moderator, this study answers the scholarly for integration of HRM content (i.e., HPWS) in HR attribution models. Hence, this study directly empirically examines the proposals in Chapter Two by arguing that family motivation matters most in weak situations (i.e., low HPWS).

Finally, this study answers the scholarly call to include cross-cultural perspectives in HR attribution research, particularly in Eastern markets (Wang et al., 2020; Xiao & Cooke,

2020). Hence, this study tests country-level power distance using a dataset of 855 employees and 61 line managers across 39 organizations and three countries (China, Pakistan, and South Korea). In doing so, this study challenges the predominant universalistic paradigm to argue that cultural perspectives matter in HR attribution research. By examining the role of power distance, this study provides empirical support for a greater application of contingency (‘best fit’) approaches to HRM and begins to uncover the multi-level contextual factors that influence employees’ HR-related expectations and ultimately their attributions.

Beyond theoretical contributions, this study is of practical interest for HR professionals and practitioners aiming to design HRM systems that foster and maintain positive interpretations of HRM practices for positive employee outcomes in both local and multinational settings. The conceptual model for this study can be found in Figure 4.1.

Figure 4.1: The multi-level conceptual model of Chapter Four



4.2 Theoretical Model and Hypothesis Development

4.2.1 Family Motivation and HR Attributions

Family motivation is a form of pro-social motivation which drives employees to support and expend effort for their families (Menges et al., 2017). Family motivation is assumed to emerge early in childhood as adolescents internalise family-felt obligations through parent-child conversations and as parents role model the importance of family through their behaviours (Cohen-Scali, 2003; Lupu et al., 2018; Verkuyten et al., 2001). Yet, *family* is not restricted to just one's spouse or children within a single household, but people "related by biological ties, marriage, social custom, or adoption" (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000, p. 179) which includes more distant relatives (e.g., grandparents, cousins, etc.). In this way, family motivation is argued to be more influential than other forms of pro-social motivation because of the level of emotional closeness that is associated with one's family compared to other groups of people (e.g., co-workers) (Brehm & Self, 1989; Grant, 2007). The effect of family motivation is further exemplified as employees have frequent contact with family members so they can directly see the impact of their work on their family (Grant, 2007).

In the workplace, family motivation provides a powerful drive for people to work (Erum, Abid, Contreras, et al., 2020; Menges et al., 2017; Tariq & Ding, 2018). HRM scholars suggest that family motivation fosters greater meaning in one's work because it creates a reason for employees to work (Mengest et al., 2017; Umrani et al., 2020). Because of this, employees with higher family motivation are typically more engaged and prideful about their work and have greater energy, job performance, and commitment to their organization (Erum et al., 2021; Menges et al., 2017; Rafique et al., 2019; Umrani et al., 2019; Zhang et al., 2020). Family motivation can even make uninteresting work more meaningful and facilitate tolerability to hostile or unpleasant workplaces (e.g, abusive supervisors) (Tariq & Ding, 2018).

Although research has yet to examine the relationship between family motivation and

HR attributions, previous research suggests a possible effect. According to social information processing theory (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978), employees first choose environmental stimuli to which to pay attention, then they assign that information in categories, and ultimately give meaning to that information in the form of HR attributions (Sanders et al., 2019). In other words, people attend to stimuli and make attributions if they believe the stimuli is important to them and are more motivated to cognitively process that information to develop attributions (Fiske & Taylor, 1991; Hewett et al., 2019; Kelley & Michela, 1980; Weiner, 1985). Indeed scholars have suggested that those who are more proactive in information-seeking are more likely to pick up on HRM signals and develop stronger attributions (Han, 2016). Similarly, as demonstrated by Hewett and colleagues (2019), employees are more likely to develop stronger internal attributions when the outcome is more personally relevant to them (see also Kelley & Michela, 1980).

In line with social information processing theory (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978) and an imprinting perspective (Chapter Two), this study elaborates on the role of family motivation on HR attributions. As family motivated people are more engaged and energised to search for ways to support and benefit their family through work (Erum et al., 2021; Menges et al., 2017), they are expected to be more *attentive* to HRM practices and *interpret* HRM systems according to their family obligations and values (Chapter Two). For example, a family with young children may be particularly attentive to HRM as a way to support their family (e.g., promotion opportunities, flexible working practices, work-family culture, and leave benefits). In turn, family-motivated employees are more attentive to HRM practices which makes HRM salient and observable to them (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004). Due to their increased proactivity in HRM-information seeking, they have more opportunities to process HRM-related information which leads to stronger commitment, control, and compliance attributions compared to those lower on family motivation (Fiske & Taylor, 1991; 2013).

Hypothesis 1: *Family motivation has a positive association with commitment (H1a), control (H1b), and compliance attributions (H1c).*

4.2.2 The Moderating Role of High-Performance Work Systems

HR attribution scholars have affirmed that the content of HRM practices plays a vital role in influencing employee attributions and attitudinal outcomes (Guest et al., 2020). Indeed, previous research has suggested that HR attributions are not independent of social and organizational characteristics, so it is important to consider the context in which HR attributions occur, such as HPWS (Beijer et al., 2019; Nishii & Paluch, 2018; Van De Voorde & Beijer, 2015).

HPWS constitute a group of separate but interconnected HRM practices aimed at enhancing human capital (e.g., skills, motivation, and opportunities) in an organization (Van De Voorde & Beijer, 2015). In HRM research, HPWS are seen as an important characteristic of the work environment which employers use to communicate desired behavioural expectations to employees (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004; Van de Voorde & Beijer, 2015). Van de Voorde and Beijer (2015) suggested that, compared to individual HRM practices, HPWS are more effective at facilitating the attribution-making process through the mechanisms of *distinctiveness*, *consistency*, and *consensus* (i.e., strong HRM systems) (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004). In this way, high HPWS contribute to stronger HR attributions because their synergistic and reinforcing nature causes them to ‘stand out’ in the work environment (*distinctiveness*), reinforce HRM signals with consistent messages (*consistency*), and foster agreement about the nature of HRM practices between organizational members (*consensus*) (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004; Van De Voorde & Beijer, 2015; also see Sanders et al., 2019). Due to these characteristics of HPWS, HRM becomes more salient, allowing employees to pick on HRM signals and use this information to form HR attributions (Sanders et al, 2019).

Along these lines, a strong situation hypothesis (Cooper & Withey, 2009; Mischel, 1977) suggests that the process characteristics derived from HPWS (i.e., distinctiveness, consistency, and consensus) can lead to a ‘strong situation’ which ultimately leads employees to understand HRM in similar ways. This is because HPWS provide clear signals about the managerial intentions behind HRM practices and how HRM practices lead to strategic goals. As a consequence, HPWS can reduce the effect of intrapersonal differences and resulting idiosyncratic interpretations of HRM in organizations. In contrast, ‘weak situations’ (i.e., low HPWS) do not provide sufficient information about the role of HRM in the organization and why certain HRM practices are important. Hence, employees are more likely to develop HR attributions based on intrapersonal differences.

Following this line of reasoning, it has been proposed that imprinting factors (e.g., family motivation) become a weaker predictor of HR attributions when HPWS are high, rather than low (Chapter Two). In the context of the current study, family motivation drives employees to be more attentive to HRM and to interpret it through a family-oriented lens. However, high HPWS fosters *distinctiveness*, *consistency*, and *consensus* (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004) which draws employees’ attention to the wider HRM system and provides unambiguous information about managerial intentions behind implemented HRM practices. This, in turn, encourages employees to make sense of HRM in a similar way as intended by management. As a consequence, employees have a better understanding of the HRM practices in their organization they can make more accurate HR attributions. Hence, the effect of family motivation is reduced. Following an imprinting perspective (Chapter Two) and a strong situation hypothesis (Mischel, 1977), the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 2: *HPWS moderate the relationship between family motivation on the one hand, and commitment (H2a), control (H2b), and compliance attributions (H2c) on the other hand, so that these relationships are weaker*

when HPWS are high, rather than low.

4.2.3 The Moderating Role of Power Distance

The effectiveness of HRM across national contexts has received much attention in the strategic HRM literature which has led to the emergence of two competing sets of approaches. The ‘best practice’ approach argues that HRM is effective regardless of national context and the ‘best fit’ approach argues that HRM must fit with the national expectations of the culture to be most effective (Newman & Nollen, 1996). However, the vast majority of research on imprinting factors which includes HRM content and HR attributions has been conducted on populations from a single country context (see Chapter Two). No studies have yet applied multi-country comparative approaches to empirically examine the effectiveness of HRM content (e.g., HPWS) on the imprinting factors – HR attribution relationship across geographical regions. Hence, researchers know little about whether best fit or best practice approaches are most relevant to this body of work. However, the wider HRM and HR attribution literature suggests that national cultures can act as an important boundary condition on the effectiveness of HPWS within this dynamic.

National culture refers to a set of values, norms, and beliefs shared by a group of people gained from similar work experiences (Hofstede, 1980) and is argued to be an important factor in (HR) attribution research (Mason & Morris, 2010; Tilley, Farver, & Huey, 2020). Cross-cultural differences influence the way people attribute social events (Chiang & Birtch, 2007) and early attribution theorists have long emphasised the role of culture in attribution formation (Kelley & Michela, 1980). However, most relevant to this current paper and a strong situation hypothesis is the body of research which illustrates that national culture significantly moderates the relationship between HPWS and organizational outcomes. Brewster et al. (2004) argued that culture, legislative frames, and institutional factors play an important role in the

effectiveness of HRM between countries and can be used as a competitive tool to enhance employee performance. Stavrou et al. (2010) found that 10 distinct ‘HRM bundles of competitive advantage’ were significantly related to performance in different geographic regions. Aycan (2005) argues that cultural, institutional, and structural factors have an impact on the way HRM is implemented and understood by employees between countries.

In their meta-analysis of 156 HPWS-business performance effect sizes from 35,767 firms/establishments in 29 countries, Rabl et al. (2014) found that there was a most positive relationship between HPWS and performance when there was consistent or ‘fit’ between HPWS and national cultural expectations, depending on the level of national tightness-looseness in the country. They argued that HPWS are not particularly effective in every country because national differences (e.g., employee expectations and institutional characteristics) constrain the effectiveness of HPWS. In line with an imprinting perspective, national values provide era-specific institutional templates which guide organizational structures and employees’ understanding of work, the nature of management, and their expectations about how they should be treated (Dokko et al., 2008; Newman & Nollen, 1996). For HPWS to be most effective, Rabl and colleagues (2014) suggest HPWS must fit with the local culture to produce positive outcomes. That is, when HPWS are consistent and congruent with employee expectations, employees feel more satisfied and HPWS become more effective (Hofstede, 2001; Rabl et al., 2014).

This study adopts a best fit perspective to investigate the moderating effect of power distance on the interaction between family motivation and HPWS on HR attributions. Power distance is one of the six cultural dimensions identified by Hofstede (1980; 2001). Its inclusion is justified in this study because it is a commonly studied cultural variable in HRM and has subsequently been found to have meaningful relationships with a variety of important organizationally relevant outcomes, HR attributions, and employees’ emotions (Chiang &

Birtch, 2007; Daniels & Greguras, 2014; Hofstede, 2011). Following Rabl et al. (2014) and a best fit perspective (Newman & Nollen, 1996), HPWS are expected to become more effective in low power distance cultures. In low power distance cultures (e.g., Austria, New Zealand, Denmark), employees and managers in organizations perceive ability, motivation, and involvement as more important (Hofstede, 2001). There is a close relationship between performance and rewards, and advancement to higher levels of the organizational hierarchy is based strongly on an individual's performance, rather than other factors such as connections or social class (Aycan, 2005).

HPWS are expected to be most consistent with lower power distance cultures because HPWS are more closely linked to employees' involvement and enhancing their ability, skills, and performance towards organizational goals (Aycan, 2005; Rabl et al., 2014). HPWS consist of a set of practices that aim to enhance performance by tightly linking performance to rewards (e.g., performance pay, hiring, staffing). Investment in training, development, and participation is supported by HPWS as they are implemented by management to enhance human capital (Ployhart & Moliterno, 2001). When power distance is low, employees more clearly understand the reasoning why HPWS are implemented and easily make sense of their presence. In contrast, in high power distance countries (e.g., Malaysia, Mexico, China), employees are more responsive to status and hierarchy rather than HRM practices. Employees expect to follow top-down instructions from managers and are more receptive to political connections and social class which are used to determine and maintain one's position on the organizational hierarchy (Aycan, 2005). As factors other than performance are used makes sense of strategic organizational directions and maintain a strict hierarchy, HRM practices such as reward, participation, and staffing practices become less important. In other words, there is a greater reliance on following managerial instructions rather than HRM practices in high power distance countries which undermines the effectiveness of HPWS. In line with Rabl and

colleagues (2014), this study elaborates on the effect of power distance on HPWS by proposing the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3: *Power distance moderates the two-way interaction effect of high-performance work practices on the relationships between family motivation on one hand, and commitment (H3a), control (H3b), and compliance attributions (H3c) on the other; so that the buffering effect is stronger when power distance is low, rather than high.*

4.3 Methods

4.3.1 Sample

The final dataset included 855 employees and 61 line managers from 39 organizations across three countries (China, Pakistan, and South Korea). Similar to other international HRM studies (e.g., Lin et al., 2016; Sanders et al., 2018), the data was gathered from a variety of industries, sizes, and sectors (for an overview, see Table 4.1). Of the total sample of organizations, 69.2% of organizations had over 250 employees (large), 19.1% had 50-249 employees (medium), and 11.7% had less than 50 employees (small). 68.3% of organizations were from the public or not-for-profit sector; the remaining 31.7% were for profit. The largest proportion of organizations (35.9%) was from finance and insurance industries, particularly in Pakistan where 11 of the 12 organizations (91.66% organizations; 92.10% employees) were from banking functions.

Each country sample consisted of between 12 and 15 companies ($n = 13.00$; $SD = 1.73$) of between 18 and 27 employees per company ($n = 22.00$; $SD = 2.74$) and with at least one line manager per company ($n = 1.79$; $SD = 1.70$). Employees were on average 34.37 years of age ($SD = 7.84$), 65.7% were male, 96% had a bachelor's degree or above, and they had an average tenure in the organization of 2.04 years ($SD = .99$). The managers were on average 38.28 years

old ($SD = 7.24$), 78.7% were male, 95.1% had achieved a bachelor's degree or higher, and their average tenure in the organization of 9.63 years ($SD = 6.36$).

Several observations were made to assess the employee demographic data and to highlight any areas of potential bias (see Table 4.2). First, the Clopper-Person exact method for binomial confidence intervals using normal approximation was used to calculate 95% confidence intervals of the demographic variables. Second, the demographic variables were investigated for skew and kurtosis. Following the guidance of Hair and colleagues (2022), a general guideline for skewness and kurtosis is that a value greater than +1 or lower than -1 indicates a substantially skewed or peaked distribution. The results showed substantial peaks in both gender and tenure, indicated by a kurtosis of 1.56 and -1.04, respectively. Indeed, 65.72% of survey participants were male and 41.04% had been in their organization for 1-5 years, indicating an overrepresentation of young male participants in the dataset. This is likely caused by the large portion (37.4%) of finance and banking organizations in the sample. Banking and finance organizations are especially prevalent in the Pakistan sample whereby 92.10% of participants worked in finance and banking functions, 85.90% of whom are male and 78.60% are aged between 31-40. Comparable demographic spreads have been found in studies in the Pakistan banking sector which are typically composed of males between 20-35 years old with Master's degree level education (e.g., Asra-ul-Haq & Kuchinke, 2016; Farah, Hasni, & Aabbas, 2018; Hunjra et al., 2010). Although the current sample included 62.6% of participants that worked outside the banking and finance sector, researchers should be mindful when generalising the results outside the current demographic parameters of this study.

Table 4.1: Organizational profiles and respondents

Country	Org.	Participants : employees (managers)	Commit. attributions (aggregate)	Control attributions (aggregate)	Compliance attributions (aggregate)	HPWS	Size	Industry	Sector	Power distance
China	1	20 (1)	4.20	3.66	3.85	5.08	2	Education	0	5.04
	2	20 (1)	3.96	3.59	3.90	4.60	2	Education	0	5.04
	3	23 (1)	3.99	3.93	3.01	4.86	1	Retail	0	5.04
	4	24 (1)	4.47	3.64	3.08	4.34	3	Real Estate	0	5.04
	5	26 (1)	4.03	3.82	3.35	2.89	3	Real Estate	0	5.04
	6	21 (1)	4.50	3.52	3.63	5.75	3	Education	0	5.04
	7	23 (1)	4.26	3.30	2.99	4.60	2	Consulting	0	5.04
	8	18 (1)	4.53	3.76	3.33	4.81	1	Education	0	5.04
	9	19 (1)	4.13	3.93	3.79	3.68	1	Mass media, Broadcasting, and Publishing	0	5.04
	10	26 (1)	3.64	3.81	3.19	3.02	3	Chemical and Pharmaceutical	1	5.04
	11	26 (1)	3.59	3.88	3.79	2.24	3	Construction	0	5.04
	Pakistan	12	19 (1)	3.93	3.99	3.37	3.98	3	Healthcare	0
13		23 (6)	1.60	3.05	3.40	3.23	3	Education	0	5.86
14		26 (3)	4.14	4.33	4.10	3.93	3	Financial and Insurance	1	5.86
15		25 (4)	4.18	4.50	4.22	4.04	3	Financial and Insurance	1	5.86
16		26 (2)	4.16	4.52	4.04	3.91	3	Financial and Insurance	1	5.86
17		24 (3)	4.09	4.45	4.12	3.99	3	Financial and Insurance	1	5.86
18		24 (2)	4.10	4.45	4.15	3.87	3	Financial and Insurance	1	5.86
19		27 (3)	4.28	4.46	4.23	3.73	3	Financial and Insurance	1	5.86
20		25 (3)	4.26	4.46	4.15	4.04	3	Financial and Insurance	1	5.86
21		23 (3)	4.17	4.33	4.06	4.10	3	Financial and Insurance	1	5.86
22		28 (1)	4.19	4.54	4.15	4.21	3	Financial and Insurance	1	5.86
South Korea	23	19 (2)	4.11	4.47	4.19	4.05	3	Financial and Insurance	1	5.86
	24	20 (2)	4.12	4.48	4.12	3.95	3	Financial and Insurance	0	5.86
	25	20 (1)	3.44	3.43	3.00	4.51	1	Financial and Insurance	0	5.61
	26	20 (1)	3.55	3.38	2.92	3.25	2	Entertainment	0	5.61
	27	20 (1)	4.37	3.95	3.35	4.28	2	Manufacturing	0	5.61
	28	20 (1)	3.30	3.46	3.07	4.06	2	Financial and Insurance	0	5.61
	29	20 (1)	3.30	3.33	3.00	3.67	2	Construction	0	5.61
	30	20 (1)	3.23	3.20	3.30	4.26	3	Construction	0	5.61

31	20 (1)	3.31	3.26	3.00	3.87	2	IT and Software	0	5.61	
32	20 (1)	3.40	3.58	3.17	3.77	1	IT and Software	0	5.61	
33	20 (1)	3.31	3.23	3.17	3.767	3	Food and Fruit	0	5.61	
34	20 (1)	3.46	3.23	3.18	3.76	3	Manufacturing	0	5.61	
35	20 (1)	3.36	3.69	3.12	3.70	3	Construction	0	5.61	
36	20 (1)	3.15	3.30	3.08	4.02	3	Manufacturing	0	5.61	
37	20 (1)	3.23	3.25	3.15	3.78	3	Other	0	5.61	
38	20 (1)	3.15	3.31	3.10	3.15	3	Information	0	5.61	
39	20 (1)	3.44	3.38	3.12	4.43	3	Hospitality	0	5.61	
Total (Mean)	39	855	3.79	3.79	3.51	3.98	2.54	(16)	0.28	5.52

Organizational size (1 = <50; 2 = 50-249; 3 = 250+ employees); Sector (1 = profit; 0 = public or not-for-profit).

Table 4.2: Demographic profile, confidence intervals, and checks for bias

Variable	n	% sample	Mean / 95% CI	95% CI lower	95% CI upper	Skewness (SD)	Kurtosis (SD)
Age	847	99.06	1.97	1.92	2.03	.66 (.08)	.31 (.17)
18-30	241	28.45	.29	.25	.32		
31-40	428	50.53	.51	.47	.54		
41-50	140	16.50	.17	.14	.19		
51-60	36	4.25	.04	.03	.06		
61-65	2	0.24	.00	.00	.01		
Gender	843	98.60	.34	.31	.37	.66 (.08)	1.56 (.17)
Male	554	65.72	.66	.62	.69		
Female	289	34.28	.34	.31	.38		
Education	842	98.50	2.63	2.59	2.67	-.80 (.08)	.33 (.17)
High school certificate	34	4.03	.04	.03	.06		
Bachelor's degree	261	31.00	.31	.28	.34		
Post-graduate degree	530	62.95	.63	.60	.66		
Doctoral degree	17	2.02	.02	.01	.03		
Tenure	843	98.60	2.04	1.97	2.11	.35 (.08)	-1.04 (.17)
1-5	346	41.04	.41	.38	.45		
6-10	167	19.81	.20	.17	.23		
11-20	286	34.00	.34	.31	.37		
21-30	39	4.63	.05	.03	.06		
30+	5	.60	.01	.00	.01		

4.3.2 Procedure

An international team of researchers (the authors of this paper) gathered data for this project in 39 organizations across three countries: China, Pakistan, and South Korea. Following the guidance of Brislin (1980), the surveys were translated and back-translated by bi-lingual research scholars into Chinese and Korean languages to ensure equivalence to the original English version which was used in Pakistan. The surveys were then piloted in the respective countries to ensure the readability of the items. The researchers intended to collect data from over 200 employees in their home country using their networks, which included responses of 20-30 employees and at least one line manager per organization. The researchers approached each organization directly via email or phone. On agreement that they could reach the desired number of respondents, the researcher organized a visit to each organization. The surveys were handed to a HR professional in the organization who was in charge of distributing and

collecting the surveys to line managers and employees who volunteered to be a part of the sample. Although the employees and managers are from the same organization, the employees were not nested within managers (for a similar data collection see Sanders et al., 2018). An accompanying letter and empty envelope were attached to each survey which explained that participation was voluntary and anonymous. They did not receive any benefits or rewards in return for their participation.

The line managers completed a survey that assessed the HPWS within their organization and organizational demographic characteristics (e.g., organizational size, sector, and industry); the employees answered items relating to family motivation and HR attributions. Each participant was asked to provide their own demographic information (e.g., age, gender, level of education, and organizational tenure). The multi-source of data collection reduces common method bias. On completion of the survey, the employees returned their surveys in a sealed envelope to the HR professional which was then collected by the researcher the following day. Due to the voluntary nature, response rates were unable to be recorded within the sample.

In China, data collection was also supplemented by data gathered from Master of Business Administration (MBA) students as part of an assignment that was supervised by a member of the research team. In sum, 88 of the 265 responses in China were collected among four groups of students from four organizations. The remaining 177 responses were collected directly by the researcher. This approach is consistent with other studies using multi-level data (e.g., Beijer et al., 2019), and researchers have argued that student-recruited samples lead to a generalizable and heterogeneous sample (Demerouti & Rispens, 2014). The Master's students were briefed about the study and instructed on the importance of ethical conduct (e.g., anonymity, confidentiality, etc.). Using their personal networks, they contacted organizations and followed the similar aforementioned procedure.

4.3.3 Measurement

The survey items were measured using a six-point Likert scale (1 = *totally disagree* to 6 = *totally agree*) unless otherwise stated. Like Sanders and colleagues (2019), the absence of a “neutral” option was intended to encourage participants to choose between an “agree” or “disagree”. Peabody (1961) suggests that Likert scales provide a direction (*i.e.* respondents agree or disagree), more so than the intensity (*i.e.*, level of agreement or disagreement), especially in countries (e.g., China, South Korea and Pakistan) where there is a tendency to suppress positive emotions and select midpoints of a range (Lee et al., 2002). Eliminating the mid-point option in this study intends to capture this bipolar direction.

4.2.3.1 HR attributions

HR attributions were measured by a 12-item scale by an adapted version of Nishii, Lepak, and Schneider (2008), adapted by Xiu (2019) to be applicable in an Eastern context. Employees were asked why their organization provides them with the HRM practices (e.g., training, pay for performance, and other benefits, etc.) it does, which measured three distinct attributions: commitment (“...in order to help employees deliver high-quality services to customers”), control (“... in order to increase the profits of the organization”), and compliance (“...because they are required to by labour law”). The attributions scale shows a good reliability: commitment attributions (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .85$), control attributions (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .83$), and compliance attributions (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .80$).

4.2.3.2 Family motivation

Family motivation was measured by a 5-item scale from Menges et al. (2017). They developed this measure from Grant (2008) and Ryan and Connell (1989). Employees were asked to state their level of agreement on statements that assessed their level of motivation towards expending effort to support their family (e.g., “I care about supporting my family” and

“It is important for me to do good for my family”). The Cronbach’s α is .93.

4.2.3.3 High-performance work systems

High-performance work systems were measured by the mean of eight HRM practices (a total of 27 items) items from Sun et al. (2007). Line managers were asked to rate the extent to which their organization employed eight HRM practices: selective staffing (e.g., “Great effort is taken to select the right person”; four items), extensive training (e.g., “There are formal training programs to teach new hires the skills they need to perform their job”; four items), internal mobility (e.g., “Employees have clear career paths in this organization”; five items), job security (“Employees in this job can be expected to stay with this organization for as long as they wish”; two items), clear job description (“The duties in this job are clearly defined”; three items), results-oriented appraisal (“Performance is more often measured with objective quantifiable results”; three items), incentive reward (“Individuals in this job receive bonuses based on the profit of the organization”; two items), and participation (“Employees in this job are often asked by their supervisor to participate in decisions”; four items). The average of the eight HRM practices was used to create the high-performance work practices variable. When more than one line manager provided ratings in one organization, the averages of those ratings were used in the analysis.

To assess whether aggregation was appropriate, the intragroup reliability measures using intraclass correlations (ICCs) and within-group agreement measures (R_{wg}) was calculated for this measure. The results showed that $ICC(1) = .79$ and $ICC(2) = .92$, which were above the .07 and .70 cut off values as suggested by Bliese (2000). Further, the R_{wg} value (.96) was above the critical cut off value of .70 (James et al., 1984). These results indicate a high level of agreement between line managers and therefore aggregation of individual line manager responses to the unit level is justified.

4.2.3.4 Power distance

Power distance was added to this dataset at the country level using the GLOBE dataset (Global Leadership and Organizational Behaviour Effectiveness; see House et al., 2004). The GLOBE measure distinguishes between ‘should be’ social values and ‘as is’ practices as cultural dimensions ranging from 1 (low) to 7 (high). To maintain theoretical consistency, this study follows Rabl et al. (2014) and focuses on ‘as is’ practices, which are an important focus of normative/cognitive assumptions managers face when deciding the implement HPWS. Since data from Pakistan was not gathered within the GLOBE dataset, the primary dataset used data from a supplementary dataset by Nadeem and De Luque (2020) who used the GLOBE instrument to gather primary data from 151 managers in Pakistan. In the sample, power distance ranged from 5.04 (China) – 5.61 (South Korea) – 5.86 (Pakistan) ($M = 5.51$; $SD = .34$).

4.2.3.5 Control variables

Previous studies have documented that employee- and organizational-level variables can influence employees’ HR attributions (Bednall et al., 2014; De Winne et al., 2013; Farndale et al., 2020; Hauff et al., 2017; Sanders et al., 2018). As a result, several employee characteristics were controlled for including: gender (female = 0; male = 1), age (1 = 18-30; 2 = 31-40; 3 = 41-50; 4 = 51-60; 5 = 61-65; 6 = 65+ years), job tenure (1 = <5; 2 = 6-10; 3 = 11-20; 4 = 21-30; 5 = 30+ years); level of education (1 = High School degree; 2 = Bachelor’s degree; 3 = Master’s degree or equivalent; 4 = PhD/Doctoral degree). Controls at the organizational level were also included for including organizational size (1 = <50 members; 2 = 50-249; 3 = 250+ members), industry (0 = not banking & finance; 1 = banking & finance), and sector (0 = not for profit/other; 1 = for profit).

4.3.4 Statistical Analysis

Since the employees and line managers were nested in organizations, and the

organizations were nested in countries, three-level hierarchical linear modelling (HLM) in SPSS v23 was conducted to analyse the cross- and multi-level interaction effects. Before the analysis, the variables were standardized to reduce multicollinearity, reduce between-organization differences in the observed results, and enhance the interpretability of the interactions. Hence, all reported results are based on standardised residuals (z-scores). The threshold for significant effects is reported at $p < .05$.

4.4 Results

4.4.1 Measurement Model

A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using Mplus v6.1 was conducted to establish the data fit of the employee-level data. All employee-level data which came from a single source was entered into the model (i.e., family motivation, commitment attributions, control attributions, and compliance attributions). Other measures (e.g., HPWS and power distance) were not included as they were assessed by other actors (i.e., line managers and the GLOBE dataset, respectfully). All factors were allowed to correlate and all analyses were performed using the maximum likelihood robust estimator (Muthén & Muthén, 2012). Following Ardbuckle (2006), a χ^2/df value of lower than 5 indicates an acceptable fit and lower than 2.5 indicates a good fit. A comparative index (CFI) value of greater than .90, and a root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) and the standard root mean square error of approximation (SRMR) of lower than .08 also indicated an acceptable fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999; Kline, 2011). The results showed that a four-factor model (three HR attributions and family motivation) was an acceptable fit ($\chi^2 = 531.63(113)$; $\chi^2/df = 4.70$; CFI = 0.93; RMSEA = .06; SRMR = .07) and yielded the best fit when compared with a one-factor (all items), two-factor (commitment attributions and family motivation), and three-factor models (commitment, control, and compliance attributions) (see Table 4.2).

Table 4.3: Fit statistics from the confirmatory factor analysis

Model	X^2	df	X^2/df	CFI	RMSEA	SRMR
Full model	531.63	113	4.70	.93	.06	.07
Three-factor	1809.21	116	15.60	.71	.13	.15
Two-factor	6030.62	136	44.34	.74	.12	.11
One-factor	3765.31	121	31.12	.38	.19	.22

^a Full factor model.

^b Family motivation and commitment attributions combined into a single factor.

^c Commitment attributions, control attributions, and compliance attributions combined into a single factor.

^d Family motivation, commitment attributions, control attributions, and compliance attributions combined into a single factor.

4.4.2 Descriptive Statistics

Bivariate correlations and descriptive statistics (i.e., means and standard deviations) are reported in Table 4.3. The bivariate correlations showed that family motivation has positive associations with commitment ($r = .22, p < .01$), control attributions ($r = .47, p < .01$), and compliance ($r = .43, p < .01$). At the organizational level, line manager-rated HPWS had a positive association with commitment ($r = .31, p < .01$) attributions, but not control ($r = .01, ns$) or compliance attributions ($r = .02, ns$). In addition, HPWS did not have a significant association with family motivation ($r = -.01, ns$). At the country level, power distance was negatively associated with commitment attributions ($r = -.14, p < .01$), but positively associated with control ($r = .27, p < .01$) and compliance attributions ($r = .23, p < .01$). Power distance was also positively correlated with family motivation ($r = .54, p < .01$).

All control variables (i.e., gender, age, organizational tenure, organizational size, industry, and sector) were significantly related with either commitment, compliance, or control attributions. Most notably, family motivation was strongly associated with industry (0 = other; 1 = banking and finance) ($r = .70, p < .01$) and sector (0 = not for profit; 1 = for profit) ($r = .67, p < .01$). However, no correlations are above 0.70, so multi-collinearity should not substantially affect the predictors in the model (Kutner et al., 2005).

4.4.3 Hypothesis Testing

The hypotheses were tested through HLM using SPSS v23 following the procedure described in Heck, Thomas, and Tabata (2013). Hypothesis 1 proposed that family motivation has a positive association with commitment (H1a), control (H1b), and compliance attributions (H1c). The results showed that family motivation had significant positive associations with commitment ($\beta = .13, p < .01$; M1a), control ($\beta = .15, p < .01$; M1b), and compliance attributions ($\beta = .10, p < .05$; M1c). Hence, H1a, H1b, and H1c were supported.

Hypothesis 2 proposes that HPWS at the organizational level interacts with family motivation such that the relationships between family motivation and commitment (H2a), control (H2b), and compliance attributions (H2c) are weaker when HPWS is high, rather than low. To test these hypotheses, HPWS at the organizational level and the cross-level interaction term was added to model 1 (see model 2). Significant interactions were found for family motivation and HPWS for control ($\beta = -.10, p < .05$; M2b) and compliance attributions ($\beta = -.14, p < .01$; M2c), but not for commitment attributions ($\beta = -.04, ns$; M2a). A simple slopes analysis was conducted with HPWS at +1/-1 standard deviation (Aiken & West, 1991). The slopes revealed that family motivation was positively associated with control attributions when HPWS was low ($\beta = .15, p < .01$) (Figure 4.2). However, this relationship became non-significant at high levels of HPWS ($\beta = .05, ns$). Similarly, at low levels of HPWS, family motivation was positively associated with compliance attributions ($\beta = .10, p < .05$) (Figure 4.3). However, this relationship became non-significant at high levels of HPWS ($\beta = -.03, ns$). Hence, H2b and H2c were supported, but H2a was not supported.

Table 4.4: Bivariate correlations of the study variables

#	Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1	HRA commitment	3.80	.77												
2	HRA control	3.82	.78	.40**											
3	HRA compliance	3.54	.84	.32**	.55**										
4	Family motivation	4.88	.93	.22**	.47**	.43**									
5	HPWS	3.96	.63	.31**	.01	.02	-.01								
6	Power distance	5.52	.34	-.14**	.27**	.23**	.54**	-.12**							
7	Gender	.34	.47	-.01	-.18**	-.10**	-.25**	.07	-.33**						
8	Age	1.97	.80	-.13**	-.05	-.12**	-.02	-.05	.27**	-.20**					
9	Education	2.63	.60	-.17**	.14**	.24**	.38**	-.18**	.70**	-.56**	.10**				
10	Org. Tenure	2.04	.99	.01	.181**	.15**	.33**	-.01	.51**	-.26**	.64**	.31**			
11	Org. Size	2.58	.69	-.03	.16**	.21**	.34**	-.31**	.36**	-.23**	.07*	.32**	.27**		
12	Sector	.32	.47	.28**	.49**	.41**	.67**	.07*	.53**	-.26**	-.04	.32**	.31**	.42**	
13	Industry	.36	.48	.25**	.48**	.41**	.70**	.08*	.69**	-.27**	-.03	.45**	.34**	.25**	.77**

N = 855 employees, 61 line managers in in 39 organizations in three countries

* $p \leq .05$; ** $p \leq .01$;

Gender: male = 0, female =1; age: (1 = 18-30; 2 = 31-40; 3 = 41-50; 4 = 51-60; 5 = 61-65; 6 = 65+); education (1 = High School degree; 2 = Bachelor's degree; 3 = Master's degree or equivalent; 4 =PhD/Doctoral Degree); organizational tenure (1= <5; 2 = 6-10; 3 = 11-20; 4 = 21-30; 5 = 30+ years); organizational size (1 = <50 members; 2 = 50-249; 3 = 250+ members); industry (1 = banking; 0 = other); sector (1 = for profit; 0 = public or not-for-profit).

Figure 4.2: Simple slopes analysis: family motivation and HPWS on control attributions

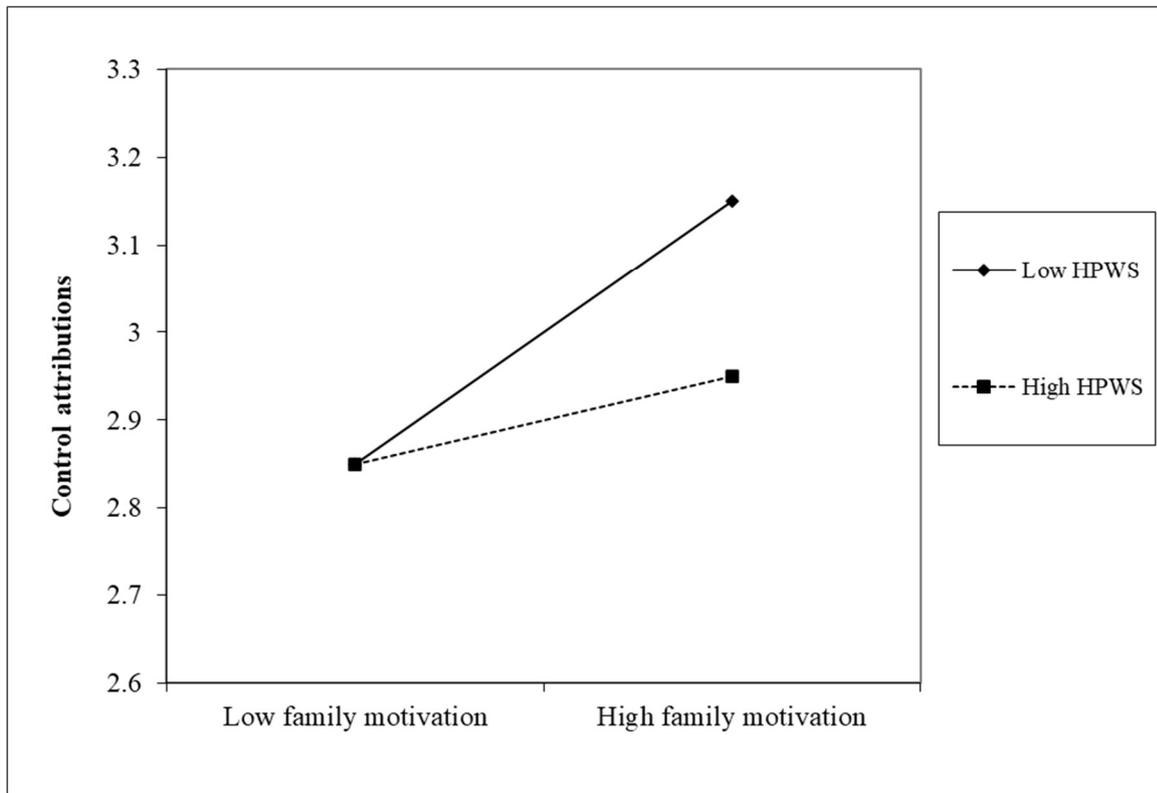
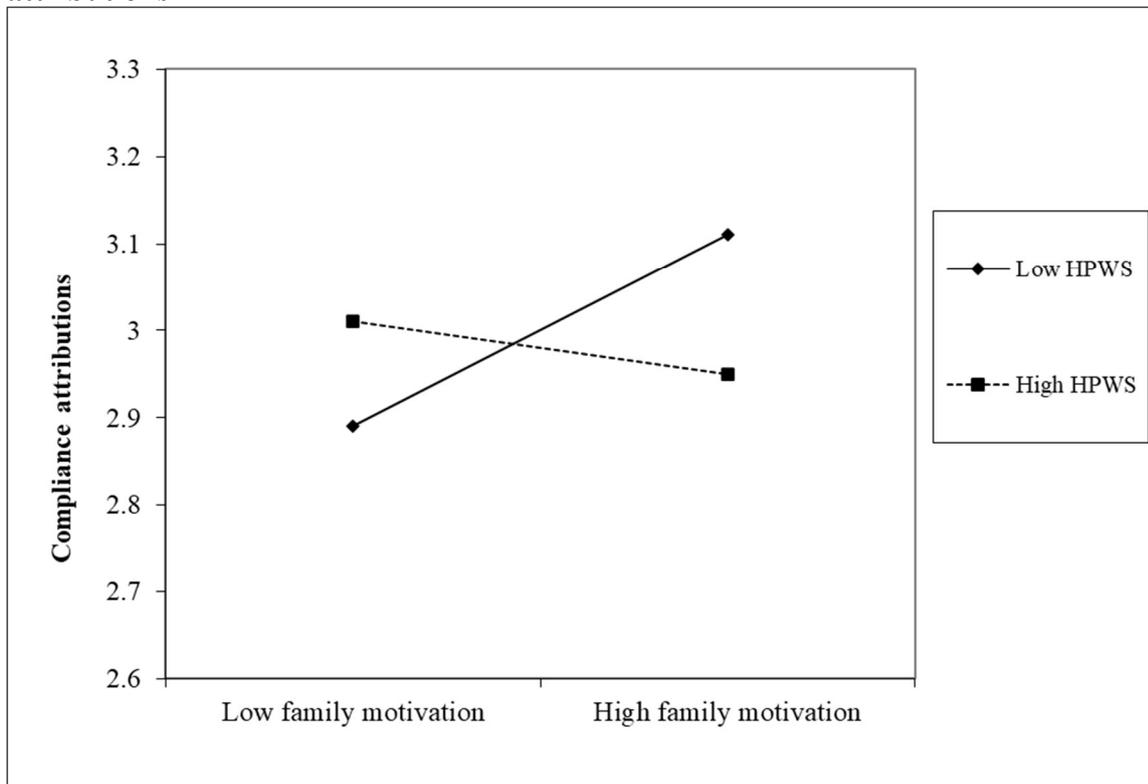


Figure 4.3: Simple slopes analysis: family motivation and HPWS on compliance attributions



Hypothesis 3 proposes that power distance moderates the two-way interaction effect of HPWS and family motivation on commitment (H3a), control (H3b), and compliance attributions (H3c), so that the buffering effect of HPWS is stronger in countries with lower levels of power distance, rather than high levels. To test this hypothesis, power distance at the country level and the different interaction terms were added to model 2 (see model 3). A significant three-way interaction was found for control attributions ($\beta = .16, p < .05$; model 3b), but not for commitment ($\beta = .04, ns$; M 3a) or compliance attributions ($\beta = .07, ns$; M3c) (see Figure 4.4).

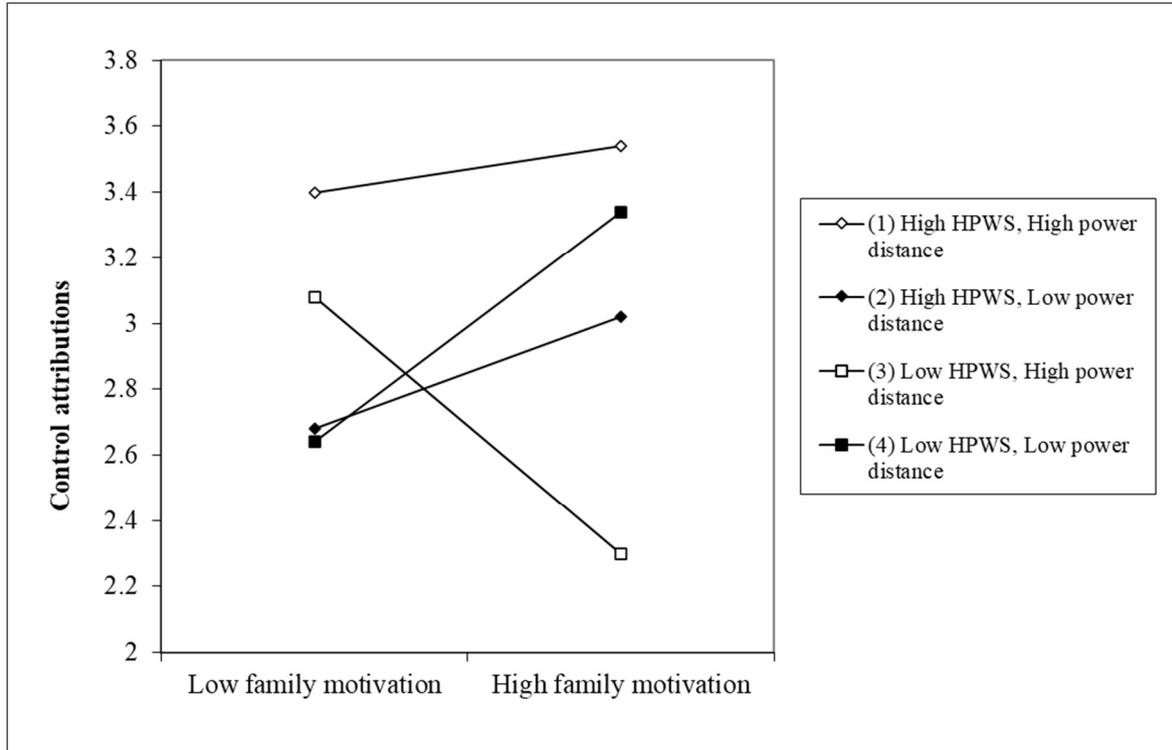
A simple slopes test was conducted to investigate the differences between the pairs slopes with HPWS and power distance at $+1/-1$ standard deviation (Aiken & West, 1991). Contrary to expectations, the results showed that there were no significant differences between the slopes when HPWS was high or low in either case when power distance was low ($t = -0.19, ns$) or high ($t = -0.47, ns$). Hence, H3a, H3b, and H3c were not supported (see Table 4.4). On further inspection of the simple slopes, the slopes revealed that there was a significant enhancing effect of power distance on the relationship between family motivation and control attributions when HPWS was high compared to low HPWS conditions ($t = -3.83, p < .01$). Furthermore, there was a significant antagonistic effect (i.e., the direction of the slope reversed) of power distance on the relationship between family motivation and control attributions when HPWS was low compared to high HPWS conditions ($t = -18.17, p < .01$).

4.4.4 Additional Analysis

Following the theoretical reasoning of Rabl and colleagues (2014), it is suggested that HRM systems are more effective in low power distance societies, but only under the condition of high cultural tightness. To test this, cultural tightness was added to the analysis using the secondary dataset from Gelfand et al. (2011) who gathered tightness-looseness scores of 6823

participants in 33 cultures, including China, Pakistan, and South Korea. The standardised tightness scores for each country were used in the following analysis

Figure 4.4: Simple slopes analysis: family motivation, HPWS, and power distance on control attributions



The bivariate correlations showed that tightness was very highly correlated with power distance ($\beta = .94, p < .01$) and family motivation ($\beta = .68, p < .01$), though no correlation was found with HPWS ($\beta = -.01, p < .01$). To test whether the effect of power distance was significant under the conditions of high cultural tightness, tightness at the country level and the different interaction terms were added to model 3. A positive four-way interaction was found for control attributions ($\beta = .16, p < .01$), but not for commitment ($\beta = .55, ns$), or compliance attributions ($\beta = .07, ns$). However, when the model was performed, the main effects of power distance and cultural tightness were removed from the model. Therefore, it can be considered that the model was unstable and the four-way interaction was inconclusive.

Table 4.5: HLM results: family motivation predicting HR attributions, moderated by HPWS and power distance

	HRA Commitment			HRA Control			HRA Compliance		
	M1a	M1b	M1c	M2a	M2b	M2c	M3a	M3b	M3c
Employee level									
Gender	-.07	-.07	-.07	-.13 [†]	-.13 [†]	-.13*	.05	.05	.05
Age	.04	.04	.04	.00	-.01	-.01	-.15**	-.16**	-.16**
Education level	.02	.02	.02	-.01	.00	-.02	.24**	.22**	.22**
Organizational tenure	.02	.02	.02	.03	.03	.03	.09 [†]	.09 [†]	.08 [†]
Family motivation (FM) (H1)	.13**	.13**	.11*	.15**	.15**	.05	.10*	.11*	.01
Organizational level									
Organizational size	-.11	-.02	-.02	-.03	-.04	-.09	.07	.08	.05
Industry	.80*	.64 [†]	.63*	.50*	.55*	.26	.22	.23	.04
Sector	.45	.55 [†]	.50 [†]	.37*	.39 [†]	.19	.16	.23	.10
HPWS		.22*	.37*		-.10*	.16 [†]		-.02	.10
Country level									
Power distance (PD)			-.54*			.08			.09
2-way cross-level interactions									
FM*HPWS (H2)		-.04	.00		.10*	.07		-.14**	-.08
FM*PD			-.06			-.21**			-.16**
HPWS*PD			.14			.23**			.13
3-way cross-level interactions									
FM*HPWS*PD (H3)			.04			.16**			.07
Model fit	1880.29	1880.37	1882.32	2020.39	2022.74	2007.72	2102.21	2101.42	2102.88
Deviance in model fit		-.08	-1.95		-2.35	15.02		.79	-1.46

Note: N = 855 employees, 61 line managers, across 39 organizations and 3 countries.

** $p \leq .01$; * $p \leq .05$; [†] $p \leq 0.10$.

Gender (male = 0, female = 1); age (1 = 18-30; 2 = 31-40; 3 = 41-50; 4 = 51-60; 5 = 61-65; 6 = 65+); education (1 = High School degree; 2 = Bachelor's degree; 3 = Master's degree or equivalent; 4 = PhD/Doctoral Degree); organizational tenure (1 = <5; 2 = 6-10; 3 = 11-20; 4 = 21-30; 5 = 30+ years); organizational size (1 = <50 members; 2 = 50-249; 3 = 250+ members); industry (1 = banking; 0 = other); sector (1 = for profit; 0 = public or not-for-profit).

4.5 Discussion

The current study examines the role of family motivation as an antecedent on commitment, control, and compliance attributions. The results showed that there was a positive direct effect of family motivation on both internal (i.e., commitment and control) and external (i.e., compliance) HR attributions. In addition, HPWS at the organizational level and power distance at the country level were included as boundary conditions. HPWS was found to buffer the effect of family motivation on control and compliance attributions, but not commitment attributions. In addition, a three-way interaction between power distance, HPWS, and family motivation was found for control attributions. Moreover, cultural tightness was found to further moderate this three-way interaction.

4.5.1 Theoretical Implications and Future Directions

The findings from this study have several theoretical implications for the HR attribution literature. First, this study generally contributes to the antecedents of HR attributions. Moreover, this study extends HR attribution theory by adding family motivation to the repertoire of family-related, intrapersonal antecedents of HR attributions which have only been strictly theoretical in nature until now (Piszczek & Berg, 2020). Specifically, this study demonstrates that high family motivation leads employees to develop stronger commitment, control, and compliance attributions.

Family motivation is a powerful driver for people to find ways to support their family through work (Erum, Abid, & Ahmed, 2020; Erum et al., 2021; Menges et al., 2017; Tariq & Ding, 2018). Following social information processing theory (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978) and an imprinting perspective (Chapter Two), high family motivation led employees to be more attentive to HRM to find ways to support their families. In turn, HRM becomes more salient to

them, and they have more opportunities to cognitively process that information to develop HR attributions (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004; Fiske & Taylor, 1991; 2013). In comparison, low family motivated employees are less motivated to attend and understand HRM as it is less important to their goals and values (i.e., supporting a family). These findings are consistent with the theoretical propositions in Chapter Two which proposes that employees attend and interpret HRM through their past experiences and associated beliefs, motivations, and values (i.e., imprinting factors).

Although this study focuses on the role of family motivation as a significant antecedent of HR attributions, there are likely other unexplored family-transmissible values that have been unexplored. For instance, researchers have drawn attention to the transmission of gender role attitudes in children (Min et al., 2012). For instance, women who understand child-raising as gender-appropriate behaviour for women may orientate their attitudes and attributions around the availability of family-supportive HRM practices in their organization (Kodagoda, 2018; Piszczek & Berg, 2020). Similarly, it has been suggested that employees' religious identities can substantially affect their levels of identity and commitment to organizations (Héliot, Gleibs, Coyle, Rousseau, & Rojon, 2020) and attribute their own and others' behaviours (Proudfoot & Shaver, 2019). These effects may extend to how they interpret managerial behaviours and motivations through HRM practices, including how much they attend to HRM signals (Babart et al., 2020). A greater comprehensive examination of family transmissible values and HR attributions would be useful to uncover the complex interactions between family characteristics, upbringing, and the development of HR attributions.

Second, this study directly responds to the scholarly call for greater integration of HRM content perspectives in HR attribution research (Hewett et al., 2018; Hewett, 2021; Sanders, 2021). Hence, this study proposes that both internal (i.e., family motivation) and external (i.e.,

HPWS) factors are important for the development of HR attributions. It has been suggested that HPWS facilitate more accurate HR attributions by clearly communicating managerial intentions through the process characteristics of distinctiveness, consistency, and consensus (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004; Sanders, Yang, & Li, 2021; Van De Voorde & Beijer, 2015). Drawing on (perceived) HR strength theory (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004) and a strong situation hypothesis (Mischel, 1977), it was hypothesised that high HPWS facilitate strong situations from distinctiveness, consensus, and consistency which reduce the effect of family motivation.

In line with expectations, the effect of family motivation on control and compliance attributions became insignificant under high conditions of HPWS. These findings are consistent with the core strong situation hypothesis (Mischel, 1977). On the other hand, they are inconsistent with the findings of Hewett et al. (2019) who did not find an interaction between intrapersonal motivation (i.e., personal relevance of HRM practices) and a single HRM practice (i.e., distributive and procedural fairness of workplace measurement and management practices) on HR attributions. This can be explained as family motivation is seen as a stronger source of motivation than workplace motivation (Menges et al., 2017) and HPWS are more effective when compared to isolated HRM practices (Van De Voorde & Beijer, 2015). Hence, family motivation and HPWS are expected to have a much stronger effect on HR attributions when compared to other forms of (pro-social) motivation, like one's work.

Interestingly, though not in line with expectations, HPWS did not significantly reduce the positive effect of family motivation on commitment attributions. This could be explained due to the strong effect of family motivation on positive attributions of one's organization. Previous literature has highlighted that family motivation leads to greater meaning at work as employees frame work as a means to support their families (Menges et al., 2017). Employees' motivation to support their family becomes a core part of their self-concept as they identify as

a ‘family-focused person’ and ‘provider’ for their family (Erum et al., 2020; Erum, 2021). This enhances their positive emotions at work, leads employees to see their organization in a more positive light, and even enhances their resilience to unpleasant workplace environments (i.e., abusive supervisors) (Erum et al., 2020; Tariq & Ding, 2018).

In this way, employees may be predisposed to attribute HRM in a positive light which becomes more resistant to environmental influences change. This is in line with the personality strength literature that proposes predispositions are more resilient to situational strength constraints when they are ‘strong’ (Dalal et al., 2015). This is also supported by the early attribution literature that suggests one’s own past experiences, beliefs, or motivations can take precedence over information (i.e., distinctiveness, consistency, and consensus) in the causal attribution chain (Kelley and Michela, 1980). In other words, employees may overlook aspects of their environment in an attempt to maintain cognitive consistency and stable (positive) perceptions of one’s self-identity, work, and organization (Tariq & Ding, 2018). Future research is required to further test these propositions and examine to what degree employees’ pre-existing motivations are susceptible to environmental constraints.

Finally, this study makes its final contribution by incorporating country-level power distance as a boundary condition on the effectiveness of HPWS on the family motivation-HR attributions relationship. To date, cross-cultural perspectives are lacking in HRM process research in general, and HR attribution research more specifically (Xiao & Cooke, 2020). By including power distance, this study contributes to this gap in knowledge and begins to uncover the cultural differences which influence the effectiveness of HPWS through a HR attribution lens.

Specifically, this study demonstrates that power distance moderates the effect of HPWS on the relationship between family motivation and control attributions. However, while it was

hypothesised that HPWS would be more effective when power distance was low, this pattern was only found in low power distance countries. These findings are consistent with a fit perspective and the findings with Rabl and colleagues (2014) that HPWS are more effective in cultures with low power distance. In other words, when employees cultural expectations are consistent with HPWS, they are more effective.

However, less is known why the effect of country-level power distance was not significant for commitment and compliance attributions. Indeed, research explaining these inconsistencies is limited as HRM research examining the function of HPWS in Eastern countries is strikingly low (Fu et al., 2016). Institutional factors (e.g., organizational structures) may explain the discrepancies in these findings. Additionally, due to the inconclusive findings with cultural tightness, this study cannot draw accurate conclusions whether the moderating effect of power distance is contingent on the tightness of social norms in the country, as suggested by Rabl and colleagues (2014). It is recommended that future research further incorporates cross-cultural perspectives in HR attribution research to provide a more complete picture of HR attributions, by paying particular attention to structural and industrial norms as boundary conditions.

4.5.2 Limitations and Future Directions

Despite the advantages of the multi-level, and multi-actor design, this study is not without limitations. First, the current study uses a cross-sectional design so causality cannot be inferred among the relationships. Although the findings suggest that family motivation influence HR attributions, it is also possible this relationship exists in the other direction. For example, employees who develop stronger HR attributions may be more likely to have a stronger desire to expend effort for their families. Indeed, researchers have suggested that both ‘work’ and ‘non-work’ are highly interrelated and spill-over to affect how each domain is

perceived by individuals (for a review see Guerts & Demerouti, 2004). However, researchers assume that family motivation develops at an early age (Verkuyten et al., 2001), so causality can be assumed to not be an issue. However, until these relationships are tested with longitudinal data or experimental designs, researchers should express caution with applying causality to the study findings.

Second, this study is limited by its use of single line manager responses for measuring HPWS. Of the 39 organizations, only 12 organizations include responses from more than one line manager. Using this approach, it is assumed that line managers are qualified in providing accurate information about the organization. That said, in this study, the within-group agreement measures (R_{wg}) values of the line manager data were found to be acceptable. Hence, it can be assumed that line managers' ratings of HPWS are relatively homogenous and accurate. Nevertheless, future researchers are encouraged to incorporate multiple respondents to these measures into their datasets.

Finally, this study only included three countries (i.e., China, Pakistan, and South Korea) and was conducted solely in an Asian context where family motivation is particularly prevalent (Erum et al., 2021). Whilst this is in line with other attribution studies that include a limited number of countries in their datasets (e.g., Chiang & Birtch, 2007; Guest et al., 2020), researchers should acknowledge that the generalisability of this study is limited to this setting and researchers should be mindful when generalising these findings to other (e.g., Western) samples. For instance, researchers have emphasised East vs. West differences whereby employees apply different weights to internal (personality), external (situational), and government factors for causal attributions (Chiang & Birtch, 2007). Individualist societies (e.g., USA, UK) are more likely to use internal (i.e., dispositions) to interpret events, whilst collectivist societies (e.g., China) are more likely to place greater emphasis on situational cues

such as collective norms (Martinko et al., 2006; Xiao & Cooke, 2020). Future research would benefit from a wider sample, including both Eastern and Western cultures, which may shed further light on these findings and the boundary conditions in the imprinting factor-HR attribution relationship.

In a similar vein, although significant differences were found for the effect of power distance on HPWS, the slopes themselves were not significant. This may be caused by the limited number of countries in the sample. However, if significant differences can be found in a range in power distance (5.04 - 5.82) in this study, these differences are likely to become more pronounced with a greater range of countries and power distance in the sample. Hence, a comparison of these three countries provides a good starting point for cross-cultural considerations in HR attribution research. However, more countries should be considered in future research to provide a more comprehensive examination of national culture on HPWS effectiveness through a HR attribution lens. For example, in cultures where in-group collectivism and family orientation is lower, HPWS may have stronger effects (Rabl et al., 2014).

4.5.3 Practical Implications

Beyond theoretical contributions, the findings from this study have several implications for HR professionals and managers. First, HR professionals and managers should be aware that variations in employees' attributions can occur because of factors that exist outside the realm of organizational control. In the case of this study, employees with higher family motivation have different attributions of HRM compared to other employees. This may lead to idiosyncratic interpretations of managerial intentions and HRM in the organization, and varying behavioural outcomes.

Second, this study demonstrates that 'strong situations' in the form of high HPWS can

reduce individualised and idiosyncratic interpretations (from family motivation) of HRM. In this way, organizations can gain more control over employees' HR attributions and can ensure they are using accurate information to understand managerial intentions. Most importantly, HPWS specifically reduce the positive effect of family motivation on control and compliance attributions, but maintain the positive effect on commitment attributions. Hence, implementing HPWS is a net gain for organizations: HPWS can be implemented to ensure that positive attributions are being maintained, while at the same time reducing attributions that can lead to undesirable attitudes and behaviours. Managers and HR professionals are recommended to design HPWS that 'stand out' in the work environment, create reinforcing HRM practices that send similar messages, and ensure management agree on the nature of why certain HRM practices are in place in their organization. This way, employees can foster an environment where employees make sense of HRM as intended for positive organizational outcomes.

Finally, this study suggests that power distance is a cultural factor that should not be overlooked when determining the effectiveness and design of HPWS for those with varying levels of family motivation. HR practitioners should be cognizant that employees act and interpret HRM in different ways and take this into account when designing and communicating HRM systems in both international and local contexts. HR professionals need to be careful in their implementation of HPWS to make sure that they are not undermining their effectiveness. Specifically, this study suggests that HPWS are more effective in low power cultures and less so in high power distance cultures. Because of this, HR professionals may have to communicate managerial intentions and desired behaviours through other channels (e.g., direct feedback from management) when employees are less responsive to HPWS. Hence, HPWS and management practices should be adapted to conform to local norms and workplace expectations to maximise their effectiveness.

4.5.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, this study contributes to the growing number of imprinting antecedents by demonstrating the direct effect of family motivation on both internal (commitment and control) and external (compliance) HR attributions. Applying an imprinting framework (Chapter Two; Marquis & Tilcsik, 2013), a strong situation hypothesis (Mischel, 1977), and a fit perspective (Rabl et al., 2014), this study begins to uncover the relationship between imprinting factors and HR attributions, and the organizational- and country-level boundary conditions that affect this relationship. Hence, this study provides a foundation for future research to examine family-related situations, dynamics, and characteristics that are greatly required in this field.

CHAPTER 5

Discussion

5.1 Introduction

This thesis aimed to address the limitations of the existing HRM process literature by advancing scholarly knowledge of the non-work-related imprinting antecedents of the HRM process in general, and perceived HR strength and HR attributions more specifically. Building on the assumption that employees do not enter the workplace as a blank slate, this thesis aimed to answer the overarching research question, “*How can we explain the influences of imprinting factors on perceived HR strength and HR attributions and how can we explain the effects of the multi-level contextual boundary conditions (organizational and national context) in this relationship?*”. To answer this research question, four research objectives were proposed:

1. To advance theory by developing a multi-level, integrative, conceptual framework that details the three-way interaction between imprinting factors, HRM content, and national culture on perceived HR strength and HR attributions.
2. To examine the effect of parental behaviours on perceived HR strength, and to what degree organizational-level HRM content (i.e., job security) and country-level national values (i.e., performance orientation) act as boundary conditions in this relationship.
3. To examine the effect of family motivation on HR attributions, and to what degree organizational-level HRM content (i.e., HPWS) and country-level national values (i.e., power distance) act as boundary conditions in this relationship.
4. To provide practical advice to managers and HR practitioners about the

effects of imprinting factors on the HRM process and how imprinting factors can be managed to ensure that HRM systems are being interpreted by employees as intended by management.

The aforementioned research aim and research objectives were addressed through a series of three studies (see Table 5.1). In Chapter One, the background and the limitations of HRM process research was presented. In Chapter Two, a systematic review of imprinting factors in existing HRM process literature was conducted. This chapter proposes a multi-level, integrative, imprinting conceptual model and theoretical framework which elaborates on the mechanisms that underpin the relationships between imprinting factors, HRM content, and national culture on perceived HR strength and HR attributions (research objective one). In the following chapters (Chapters Three and Four), the multi-level model and theoretical framework was investigated in two distinct models, each focusing on a unique core imprinting factor and organizational- and national-level boundary conditions on each aspect of the HRM process. Chapter Three examined the role of parental behaviours on perceived HR strength, emphasising the role of organizational-level job security and country-level performance orientation as boundary conditions (research objective two). Chapter Four empirically examined the effect of family motivation on HR attributions, using organizational-level HPWS and country-level power distance as boundary conditions (research objective three).

Furthermore, within each chapter, several practical implications are offered to managers and HR practitioners. These recommendations relate the research findings to the effects of imprinting factors on employees' understanding and attributions of HRM, and how these factors can be managed within organizations to ensure employees are interpreting HRM as intended by management (research objective four).

In the following chapter, the main findings from these studies are summarised. This

final chapter is concluded with a discussion of the theoretical implications and future directions, limitations, and practical implications of these chapters and the thesis as a whole.

Table 5.1 Research objectives and related chapters

#	Research objectives	Related chapter
1	To advance theory by developing a multi-level, integrative, imprinting framework that details the three-way interaction between imprinting factors, HRM content, and national culture on perceived HR strength and HR attributions.	Chapter Two
2	To examine the effect of parental behaviours on perceived HR strength, and to what degree organizational-level HRM content (i.e., job security) and country-level national values (i.e., performance orientation) act as boundary conditions in this relationship.	Chapter Three
3	To examine the effect of family motivation on HR attributions, and to what degree organizational-level HRM content (i.e., HPWS) and country-level national values (i.e., power distance) act as boundary conditions in this relationship.	Chapter Four
4	To provide practical advice to managers and HR practitioners about the effects of imprinting factors on the HRM process and how imprinting factors can be managed to ensure that HRM systems are being interpreted by employees as intended by management.	Chapter Two Chapter Three Chapter Four

5.2 Main Findings

5.2.1 Chapter Two

Chapter Two aimed to address the following research objective: *“To advance theory by developing a multi-level, integrative, imprinting framework that details the three-way interaction between imprinting factors, HRM content, and national culture on perceived HR strength and HR attributions”* (research objective one). To address this, a systematic literature review was conducted which examined imprinting factors on perceived HR strength and HR attributions in the existing literature. Twenty published and unpublished empirical studies were evaluated for their characteristics, research design and context, research content, major

empirical findings, methodological limitations, theoretical implications, and practical applications. Overall, the findings within this chapter demonstrated that researchers have shown increased attention to imprinting factors as antecedents within HRM process research in recent years, including personality characteristics (e.g., proactive personality; Heavey, 2012), beliefs (e.g., belief in a just world; Chen & Young, 2013), national culture (Aktas et al., 2017; Chiang & Birtch, 2007), and demographic characteristics (e.g., type of education; Heavey, 2012).

These studies demonstrated that employees' understanding and interpretations of HRM are not only influenced by characteristics of the work environment, but by their beliefs, motivations, and values that are formed before entry to the workplace (e.g., pre-employment experiences, childhood, and education). Yet, in order to explain these influences, previous research has drawn on a variety of theoretical frameworks (e.g., HR attribution theory; Nishii et al., 2008; HR strength theory; Bowen & Ostroff, 2004; social exchange theory; Blau, 1964; signalling theory; Connelly et al., 2011; social information processing theory; Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978), which highlights the absence of a coherent theoretical underpinning within this body of work.

Furthermore, this review chapter uncovered several important theoretical and methodological limitations within this body of research which indicates how this body of work can be advanced. First, the majority of studies adopted the use of self-report, single-source, survey methods to gather data that highlights issues of reliability, confounding factors, and causality within existing research. Second, only a few studies within each stream examined models at multiple levels of analysis (Guest et al., 2021; Han, 2016; Jorgensen & Van Rossenberg, 2019; Van De Voorde & Beijer, 2015). This highlights that little is known about the boundary conditions of the imprinting–HRM process relationship. Finally, this research is

limited by a lack of cross-cultural perspective. Indeed, a large majority of studies were conducted solely in Western countries like the USA which restricts the application of the findings to Eastern markets (Xiao & Cooke, 2020).

In line with these insights and research objective one, a multi-level, integrative, conceptual model was developed which detailed the interactions between imprinting factors, HPWS, and national values on the HRM process. In parallel, a theoretical framework was developed that elaborated on the underlying mechanisms within these relationships. Applying an imprinting framework (Marquis & Tilcsik, 2013; Simsek et al., 2015) and social information processing theory (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978), it was theorised that imprinting factors influence the HRM process through cognitive schemas that affect employees' *attention* and *interpretation* of HRM systems. Furthermore, it was proposed that perceived HR strength mediated the relationship between imprinting factors and HR attributions through these causal paths. At the organizational level, HPWS was proposed to buffer the effect of imprinting factors via 'strong situations' (Mischel, 1977). Following a strong situation hypothesis, when HRM systems are well-designed and communicated, the effect of imprinting factors was expected to be reduced (Mischel, 1977). At the country level, national values were proposed to influence the effectiveness of HRM systems. Following a fit perspective (Rabl et al., 2014), when HPWS fit with national expectations they are more effective, such as low in-group collectivism, low power distance, and high performance orientation.

In light of this, scholars were recommended to empirically test the conceptual model and propositions developed within this review (see Table 5.2). In particular, it was emphasised that the use of multi-level, and international datasets were required in the field. This way, researchers can address the methodological limitations of previous research (e.g., causality and generalizability). Finally, the paper was concluded with a call for greater operationalization of

imprinting factors. Specifically, the literature requires standardised measures of imprinting factors and a well-defined typology of the types of imprinting factors that are important for HRM process research moving forward.

Table 5.2 Propositions within Chapter Two

#	Proposition
1	Imprinting factors have a (direct) positive effect on HR attributions (commitment and control).
2	Perceived HR strength (distinctiveness, consistency, and consensus) mediates the relationship between imprinting factors and HR attributions (commitment and control attributions).
3	HPWS will moderate the indirect effect of perceived HR strength (distinctiveness, consistency, and consensus), so that the relationship between imprinting factors and perceived HR strength is weaker when HPWS are high, rather than low.
4	National values will moderate the two-way interaction effect of HPWS and imprinting factors on perceived HR strength (distinctiveness, consistency, and consensus), so that this relationship is stronger when countries have lower levels of power distance, lower levels of in-group collectivism, and higher levels of performance orientation.

5.2.2 Chapter Three

Following the theoretical propositions in Chapter Two, Chapter Three aimed to test part of the multi-level conceptual model by addressing the following research objective: “*To examine the effect of parental behaviours on perceived HR strength, and to what degree organizational-level HRM content (i.e., job security) and country-level national values (i.e., performance orientation) act as boundary conditions in this relationship*” (research objective three). Hence, this chapter empirically examined the relationship between parental behaviours (i.e., parental support, parental interference, and parental engagement) and perceived HR strength. These relationships were examined through the theoretical framework proposed in Chapter Two. Drawing upon an imprinting framework (Chapter Two; Marquis & Tilcsik, 2013) and social information processing theory (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978), it was theorised that adolescents develop cognitive schemas by hearing their parents talk about work and career

expectations which enables them to more readily perceive, organize, and interpret HRM signals in organizations in later life (Dietrich & Kracke, 2009; Johnson & Mortimer, 2015; Leenders et al., 2017; Lupu et al., 2018). Consequently, it was hypothesised that employees who received higher levels of parental behaviours during adolescence – in this case, higher parental support, parental interference, and parental engagement – are more attentive and sensitive to HRM signals which leads to stronger levels of distinctiveness, consistency, and consensus (i.e., perceived HR strength) (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004; Ostroff & Bowen, 2016).

Furthermore, the wider organizational and national context was considered. Following a strong situation hypothesis (Mischel, 1977), it was expected that organizational-level job security signals clear and consistent messages about organizational goals which reduces the effect of parental behaviours on perceived HR strength. In addition, following a fit perspective (Rabl et al., 2014), job security was expected to fit with cultures with higher performance orientation where employees expect to be protected in their jobs so they can focus on performance-related tasks and activities (Coggburn & Kearney, 2010).

These hypotheses (see Table 5.3) were tested on a dataset of 855 employees and 61 line managers across 39 organizations and three countries (i.e., China, Pakistan, and South Korea). The results showed that both parental support and parental interference had significant, positive main effects on perceived HR strength, but parental engagement did not have a significant effect. It was reasoned that parental behaviours differ in their levels of knowledge transfer and engagement with adolescents' learning about HRM. Compared to parental support and parental interference, parental engagement behaviours (i.e., listening to adolescent's talk about careers and supporting their decisions), offers fewer opportunities to foster the development of a cognitive schema that influences adolescents' understanding of HRM during employment (Goodall & Montgomery, 2014). Furthermore, in line with expectations, job security

completely buffered the effect of parental support and parental interference on perceived HR strength. However, performance orientation did not moderate the aforementioned relationships, arguably due to institutional or situational factors (e.g., state-owned enterprises in China) that affect employees expectations of job security in China, Pakistan, and South Korea (Ahmad & Allen, 2015; Xiao & Björkman, 2006), which were not accounted for in this study.

Table 5.3 Hypotheses and results within Chapter Three

#	Hypothesis	Results
1	Parental support (H1a), parental interference, (H1b), and parental engagement (H1b) have a positive association with perceived HR strength.	H1a – supported H1b – supported H1c – not supported
2	Job security moderates the relationships between parental support (H2a), parental interference (H2b), and parental engagement (H3a) and perceived HR strength, such that these relationships are weaker when job security is high, rather than low.	H2a - supported H2b - supported H2c – not supported
3	Performance orientation moderates the two-way interaction effect of job security on the relationship between parental support (H3a), parental interference (H3b), and parental engagement (H3c) and perceived HR strength, so that this buffering effect is stronger when performance orientation is high, rather than low.	H3a - not supported H3b - not supported H3c - not supported

5.2.3 Chapter Four

Chapter Four aimed to address the following research objective: “*To examine the effect of family motivation on HR attributions, and to what degree organizational-level HRM content (i.e., HPWS) and country-level national values (i.e., power distance) act as boundary conditions in this relationship*”. Hence, the effect of family motivation was examined on three HR attributions: commitment, control, and compliance. Drawing upon an imprinting perspective (Chapter Two; Marquis & Tilcsik, 2013) and social information processing theory (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978), it was argued that people attend to HRM signals if they believe they are important to them and are more motivated to cognitively process this information into

attributions (Fiske & Taylor, 1991; Hewett et al., 2019; Kelley & Michela, 1980). Following this, family motivation, assumed to be developed in childhood (Grant, 2007; Verkuyten et al., 2001), was hypothesised to lead to stronger HR attributions as family-motivated employees are more engaged and energised to search for ways to support and benefit their family through HRM practices (Erum et al., 2021; Menges et al., 2017).

At the organizational level, HPWS were expected to facilitate strong situations by causing HRM to stand out, reinforce internally consistent HRM signals, and create consensus between organizational members through the process mechanisms of distinctiveness, consistency, and consensus (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004). In this way, HPWS were hypothesised to lead employees to interpret HRM in similar ways which reduces the effect of family motivation. Furthermore, following a fit perspective (Rabl et al., 2014), HPWS were expected to be more effective in low power distance cultures where employees are more receptive to ability-, motivation-, and skill-enhancing HRM systems like HPWS (Aycan, 2005; Rabl et al., 2014).

These hypotheses (see Table 5.4) were examined on the same dataset from Chapter Three of 855 employees and 61 line managers across 39 organizations and three countries (i.e., China, Pakistan, and South Korea). The results showed that family motivation had a positive association with commitment, control, and compliance attributions. Moreover, HPWS was found to completely buffer the effect of family motivation on control and compliance attributions, but not for commitment attributions. It could be partially explained as family motivation provides a strong motivational force that encourages positive attributions of one's work and organization (Erum et al., 2020; Menges et al., 2017), which becomes more resistant to environmental influences (Dalal et al., 2015). In addition, a three-way interaction between power distance, HPWS, and family motivation was found for control attributions, but the

expected pattern only held when power distance was low.

Table 5.4 Hypotheses and results within Chapter Four

#	Hypothesis	Results
1	Family motivation has a positive association with commitment (H1a), control (H1b), and compliance attributions (H1c).	H1a - supported H1b - supported H1c - supported
2	HPWS moderate the relationship between family motivation on the one hand, and commitment (H2a), control (H2b), and compliance attributions (H2c) on the other hand, so that these relationships are weaker when HPWS are high, rather than low.	H2a – not supported H2b - supported H2c - supported
3	Power distance moderates the two-way interaction effect of HPWS on the relationship between family motivation on the one hand and commitment (H3a), control (H3b), and compliance attributions (H3c) on the other, so that the buffering effect is stronger when power distance is low, rather than high.	H3a – not supported H3b - supported H3c not supported

5.2.4 Summary

In summary, each chapter specifically addressed the research aim and objectives set out in the introduction of this thesis. In addition, each chapter also incorporated several practical implications to address the final research objective: *“To provide practical advice to managers and HR practitioners about the effects of imprinting factors on the HRM process and how imprinting factors can be managed to ensure that HRM systems are being interpreted by employees as intended by management”* (research objective four). In light of the findings within each chapter, three important practical implications can be gleaned from these studies. First, that managers and HR practitioners should be aware that employees can have very a different understanding and attributions of HRM based upon their childhood, and where they currently live and work (i.e., parental behaviours and family motivation). Second, the effect of imprinting factors can be reduced by designing HRM practices and systems (i.e., job security and HPWS) to facilitate strong situations which communicate clear, consistent, and

unambiguous managerial intentions to employees. Finally, managers should be mindful that the effectiveness of HRM systems depends, in part, on the national expectations of employees (i.e., power distance). If managers and HR practitioners wish to ensure that HRM is most effective, they should confirm that HRM practices and systems are consistent with the power distance of the country.

5.3 Theoretical Implications and Future Directions

In light of these main findings, this thesis has several theoretical implications which are described in the following section.

5.3.1 Expanding the Scope of HRM Process Research through an Imprinting

Framework

First, the results in this thesis show that upbringing can have a significant effect on the way employees' understand and interpret HRM in later life. Previous research has had a strong focus on the influence on work-related antecedents of perceived HR strength and HR attributions, such as leadership and HRM practices (e.g., Hewett et al., 2019; Sanders et al., 2019; Van de Voorde & Beijer, 2015; Weller et al., 2020). Regardless of this valuable knowledge, this thesis suggests that prior research has provided only a partial picture of the antecedents HRM process. By drawing attention to the factors that occur in one's personal history (i.e., imprinting factors), this thesis challenges the assumption in prior HRM process research that employees' reactions to HRM are simply due to work-related environmental conditions.

In doing so, this thesis extends previous research by adding to the small but growing repertoire of antecedents of perceived HR strength and HR attributions. Specifically, Chapter Three and Chapter Four empirically demonstrate that parental behaviour and family motivation

are significant predictors of perceived HR strength and both internal and external HR attributions, respectfully. For a long time, early attribution researchers recognised that pre-employment experiences and beliefs, values, and motivations affect how people understand and interpret social events (e.g., Kelley & Michela, 1980; Rousseau, 2001). Yet, HRM process researchers have been almost entirely silent on this matter, especially when considering the role of employees' family and upbringing which are missing from the HRM process literature, although they can be assumed to have an effect (Hedberg & Luchak, 2018; Lupu et al., 2018; Piszczek & Berg, 2020). This thesis illustrates that these factors should not be overlooked when accounting for employee-level variations in the HRM process and should be explored further for a more complete picture of the HRM process.

However, in line with Marquis and Tilcsik (2013), "...simply recognizing *that* history matters is of little help unless we understand *how* it matters" (p. 230). Hence, this thesis further contributes to the literature by incorporating an imprinting perspective (Marquis & Tilcsik, 2013; Simsek et al., 2015) with HRM process theories (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004; Nishii et al., 2008). To date, researchers have drawn upon several fragmented social communication and process theories to explain employee variations in the HRM process resulting from individual differences (see Chapter Two). There have been few theoretical advancements towards a coherent and consistent framework that details the underlying mechanisms that explain how these effects occur. At the same time, studies have attempted to integrate (perceived) HR strength and HR attributions in one conceptual framework (e.g., Guest et al., 2020).

By orienting this thesis around a systematic review and the development of a multi-level conceptual framework, this thesis not only provides a more focused understanding of existing research, but it provides a parsimonious theoretical framework that deepens scholarly knowledge of *how* imprinting factors influence the HRM process as a whole. Specifically,

drawing on imprinting frameworks (Marquis & Tilcsik, 2013; Simsek et al., 2015) and social information processing theory (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978), this thesis suggests that social and developmental experiences (e.g., childhood, parent-child relationships, education) influence the development of cognitive schemas which aid in employees' attention and interpretation of HRM systems. Using this framework, academics can have a more focused and meaningful discussion about why employees respond differently to HRM when subject to the same HRM practices which helps unify future research on the antecedents of the HRM process.

Despite these advances, imprinting in HRM process research is still in its stages of nascency. It is acknowledged that prior research has been limited in scope regarding the examination of imprinting factors, which has often placed a greater focus on work-related antecedents (e.g. HR practices, leadership, co-workers). While significant advancements have been made that link imprinting with HRM process and content research, few studies have examined imprinting factors beyond the individual level (Chiang & Birtch, 2007). Research on family units (e.g. number of siblings, socio-economic status, political affiliations) is especially lacking, despite the contributions made by the current thesis.

Future research should also place a greater emphasis on examining the characteristics of family dynamics (e.g. family structures and relationships) which could influence the HRM process. For instance, Hedberg and Luchak (2018) theorised that infant-parent attachment styles (i.e., anxious, secure, and avoidant) could affect the level and quality of employees' attachment to their organization. Employees who experienced unmet security needs during childhood, such as in the case of those with an anxious attachment style, may be more sensitive to HRM practices as they are driven to seek environmental cues that fulfil their need to be seen as adequate in the eyes of authority figures (e.g., managers) (Berglas, 2006). Researchers have also suggested that social class is a relatively stable imprinting factor that directs behaviour in

later life, including how employees cognitively appraise themselves in organizations (Kish-Gephart & Campbell, 2015; Phillips, Martin, & Belmi, 2020). Due to their limited access to social safety nets, children in lower-class families are taught by their parents to be aware of social and political threats that may risk their financial well-being (Kish-Gephart & Campbell, 2015; Miller, Chen, & Cole, 2008; Stephens, Hamedani, & Destin, 2014). Over time, this could facilitate a cognitive schema that causes employees to become more attentive to HRM and management practices to alleviate feelings of uncertainty and avoid behavioural mistakes that may lead to unemployment (Adler et al., 1994). Similarly, it is expected that employees of strong unionized families may have a very different understanding and attribution of HRM compared to those in professional, managerial households (De Winne et al., 2013; Guest & Rodrigues, 2020).

To bring this body of work further forward, researchers should also consider examining the strength of the effect of different types of imprinting factors (e.g., cultural and individual) on the HRM process. In this thesis, to not make the theoretical framework too complicated, attention was not given to the relative strength of imprinting factors on perceived HR strength and HR attributions. However, it can be expected that certain imprinting factors exert more powerful effects according to the frequency and intensity of their expression in social environments. For instance, the effect of national cultural values like power distance, uncertainty avoidance, and (in-group) collectivism can be expected to be different as they are shared among colleagues in comparison to the work-related conversations of the parents (Farndale & Sanders, 2017; Lupu et al., 2018). Individual imprinting factors, such as extreme poverty in early childhood or experiences with domestic violence can be expected to have a different effect as they are less openly shared with colleagues (Bradbury-Jones, 2015).

Similarly, the moderating effects on the relationships between imprinting factors on the

one hand and perceived HR strength and HR attributions on the other can be examined. For instance, imprinting factors may have different effects on women and men, or individuals with a low or high educational background. Employees who grew up in a strong unionized household may harbour strong feelings toward those in senior management positions, leading them to more readily attribute control-related motivations to HRM practices in their organization. However, it could be the case that these effects could be diminished for employees with higher educational levels, which could be studied in future research. Similarly, the wider context of employees with strong imprinting factors should be taken into account such as the effects of family members and partners. Individuals who live and work with people with similar backgrounds (e.g., colleagues, partners, and family members) could strengthen the effects of imprinting factors through frequent conversation and exposure to similar beliefs and values. In contrast, it is also possible that common histories (similar imprinting factors) could weaken the effects as people help each other to understand the effect of these imprinting factors and how they bias their perceptions and attributions of HRM practices in their organization (Lysova, Korotoc, Khapova, & Jansen, 2015). In addition to the private situations at home (husbands and wives), discussing and sharing the effects of imprinting factors among colleagues within the work context can also be studied to bring this body of work forward.

Furthermore, this thesis did not distinguish between the biological and environmental origins of imprinting factors which may influence their effect on the HRM process. Following an imprinting perspective, this thesis predominantly adopts an environmental perspective which assumes that imprinting factors develop as the result of early childhood and social experiences, such as parent-child relationships (Lupu et al., 2018). A key limitation of this assumption, however, is that this body of work does not always isolate the unique experiences which lead to the development of imprinting factors. Hence, it cannot be assumed that

imprinting factors – such as family motivation – can be solely attributed to childhood events.

Indeed, it is widely recognised by psychologists that behaviour and motivations are influenced by a wide variety of biological (e.g., genes) and environmental factors (e.g., upbringing); these factors do not exist in isolation (Deckers, 2018). Without pinpointing the experiences (e.g., parental behaviours) that precede imprinting factors, researchers may lead to the wrong conclusions and receive inconsistent results. This could explain the findings in Chapter Two which demonstrate mixed results of gender on perceived HR strength and HR attributions. On one hand, males and females are more likely to be subject to different imprinting experiences because of their gender during childhood, which then governs their perceptions and attributions of HRM in later life. On the other hand, it could be the case that biological factors influence the cognitions of men and women such as the way they process information (Becker et al., 2008), which influences their perceptions of HR strength and HR attributions during adulthood. Without measuring the actual experiences that lead to these differences, it is difficult to conclude the effect is solely a result of imprinting effects and reliably measure their influence on the HRM process.

An explanation for these inconsistencies is that biological elements interact with the environment and become ‘activated’ if subjected to the right environmental conditions. For instance, a child may have genetically inherited genes for tallness, but will not become tall without getting proper nutrition. In the same way, there may be genetic elements which predispose employees to attribute HRM more positively, however, if they grew up in a family with particularly strong anti-managerial values this may not be the case. In another case, an employee may work for years reporting average levels of family motivation until they have children of their own when suddenly family motivation has a much greater impact on how they perceive their work and organization. This line of reasoning also raises questions as to whether

imprinting factors vary over time as a result of organizational factors. Researchers have argued that cognitive scripts tend to be easier to change during childhood but can become increasingly rigid and difficult to modify as people grow older (Padesky, 1994). However, it has also been indicated that cognitive models are susceptible to ‘unfreezing’ when during periods of uncertainty, such as periods of role transitions (Ashforth & Saks, 1996) where they can be replaced by scripts that are more consistent with the work environment (Dokko et al., 2008).

Future research is needed to test these propositions by examining the biological and environmental origins of imprinting factors, and investigating the degree employees’ imprinting factors are susceptible to environmental changes (both work and non-work related). It would be useful to investigate these propositions through the application of robust methodologies, such as longitudinal studies, twin studies, as well as qualitative studies. For instance, it would be of interest to longitudinally examine adolescents' development using Simsek and colleagues’ (2015) framework of a three-stage imprinting process: 1) the genesis of imprints (where individuals adopt characteristics of their environment during sensitive developmental periods), 2) the metamorphosis of imprints (where imprints change, evolve, and transform), and 3) the manifestations of imprints (where imprints influence behaviours, attitudes, and employee outcomes). Similarly, twin studies could illuminate environmental effects by examining the degree to which twins with similar upbringings now differ in imprinting factors due to differences in the cultures and contexts in which they now live and work. Tracking the genesis, metamorphosis, and manifestations of imprinting factors over time will allow researchers to better understand the origins and environmental constraints of imprinting factors, and more accurately create the conditions in which employees can perceive and interpret HRM as intended for positive outcomes.

In sum, this thesis makes its first contribution by demonstrating that childhood and

upbringing matter for employees' perceived HR strength and HR attributions. Future research on imprinting in HRM process research is ripe with promising research directions which serve to embolden academic knowledge on the what, why, and how employees' understanding and attributions of HRM can be predicted by one's upbringing, the people who surround them, and where they currently live and work. Advancing this research will help academics and practitioners identify important employee characteristics which may lead to asynchronous interpretations of HRM if left unmanaged.

5.3.2 The Role of HRM Content and Strong Situations

Second, this thesis contributes to a better understanding of the organizational-level contextual factors that influence the imprinting–HRM process relationship. Specifically, this thesis answers the scholarly call to address the decontextualisation of previous HRM process research by integrating HRM content into HRM process models (Aktas et al., 2017; Ostroff & Bowen, 2016; Sanders, 2022; Sanders et al., 2021; Sanders et al., 2014; Steffensen, 2019; Wang et al., 2020; Xiao & Cooke, 2020). Existing HRM process researchers have often adopted a universalistic perspective which assumes that employees respond to HRM systems in similar ways regardless of context or culture (Aktas et al., 2017; Xiao & Cooke, 2020). However, this thesis challenges this assumption by adopting a contingency approach (Clinton & Guest, 2013) and demonstrating that context matters for how employees understand and interpret HRM in organizations.

Specifically, this thesis emphasises that employees' personal history leads to distortions of HRM signals that can cause employees to interpret HRM systems differently in the same organization. However, the empirical findings in Chapter Three and Chapter Four demonstrate that organizational-level job security and HPWS entirely reduce the effect of family motivation and parental behaviours on the HRM process. These findings illustrate that, whilst employees

interpret HRM according to past experiences, employees also draw on information sources from the immediate work environment which help them to construct an accurate understanding and interpretation of management and HRM in their organization (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004; Nishii et al., 2008).

Furthermore, this thesis helps explain why HRM practices and systems vary in their effectiveness at reducing the effect of imprinting factors on the HRM process. This thesis follows a strong situation hypothesis (Mischel, 1973; 1977) to argue that when situations provide clear, unambiguous, and explicit situational constraints (i.e., strong situations), they reduce behavioural variations across employees in organizations (see for reviews Dalal et al., 2015; Keeler et al., 2019; Meyer et al., 2010). However, while researchers have theoretically recognised that aspects of the environment can have varying constraining effects on individual differences (Cooper & Withey, 2009; Dalal et al., 2015; Meyer et al., 2010), less is known to what degree HRM practices and systems facilitate strong situations. Hence, this thesis advances this knowledge by identifying job security and HPWS as critical aspects of the organizational context that are important for imprinting factors. In other words, job security and HPWS provide strong situational forces that communicate unambiguous managerial expectations and desirable behaviours that lead employees to understand and interpret HRM in the same way (Grant & Rothbard, 2013; Lu et al., 2017; Van De Voorde & Beijer, 2015), regardless of past parental behaviours or family motivation. Following this, researchers can apply the core concepts of strong situations to better understand why HRM systems vary in their effectiveness for imprinting factors, and how they can be designed to ensure employees are interpreting HRM in the same way.

Through these insights, this thesis provides a subtle shift of scholarly focus within HRM process research. In previous HRM process research, researchers have predominantly

examined imprinting factors as a moderator between HRM content and the HRM process (e.g., Barbar et al., 2020; Chen & Young, 2013; Kitt et al., 2020). Accordingly, researchers have been occupied with theorising how employees' personal characteristics can distort managerial intentions that are communicated through HRM. However, this thesis proposes a nuanced perspective. By conceptualising imprinting factors as the independent variable and HRM content as the moderator, this thesis suggests that imprinting factors can be seen as something that can be controlled for by factors in the immediate organizational environment (i.e., HRM systems). In doing so, researchers can begin to see variations of the HRM process as less of an inevitable outcome of imprinting factors, but something that can be actively managed by organizations through the design of HRM systems. In this way, the present can, in effect, influence the past.

However, the findings in this thesis are not entirely consistent with expectations. It is assumed that strong situations reduce the effect of imprinting factors to the same degree, regardless of the outcome variable. However, in Chapter Four, HPWS completely buffered the effect of family motivation on control and commitment attributions, but HPWS did not have a significant interaction for commitment attributions. This provides a novel finding that requires further investigation. It is possible that imprinting antecedents may have different levels of susceptibility to strong situations when associated with different outcomes. Indeed, the personality strength literature (Dalal et al., 2015) suggests that strong intrapersonal traits are less influenced by situational constraints than weak intrapersonal traits. However, this does not explain why HPWS did not buffer the effect of family motivation similarly across all HR attributions.

It is possible that when employees are presented with information that contradicts with their pre-existing evaluations about work (e.g., hostile work environments) – especially when

that evaluation conflicts with a strong motivation to see work as positive and meaningful as a way to provide for ones' family (Erum, Abid, & Ahmed, 2020; Erum et al., 2021; Menges et al., 2017; Tariq & Ding, 2018) - employees may overlook aspects of their environment in an attempt to maintain cognitive consistency and hold stable (positive) attributions of one's work and organization (Tariq & Ding, 2018). As a consequence, family motivation may be cognitively reinforced when challenged by contradictory environmental information as a way to reduce cognitive dissonance, rather than being constrained as expected by strong situations. Indeed, once formed, pre-existing beliefs and motivations can become resistant to change and may override new information in the causal attribution chain (Kelley & Michela, 1980). Hence, the findings in Chapter Four take a step further by suggesting that the buffering effect of strong situations is dependent on the relationship between imprinting factors and the outcome variable. Future research is required to further test when imprinting factors are susceptible to strong situations and whether or not they can be overcome by different aspects of the organizational context.

Along these lines, these findings suggest several novel directions for future research. Specifically, it would be useful to further explore the interplay between person and context to provide new explanations for why employees converge or diverge in their HRM understanding and interpretations, even when subject to the same HRM systems. While this thesis focused on HRM practices and systems as the most important organizational factor for imprinting factors, other aspects of organizations may exist that have not yet been explored. For instance, Nishii and Paluch (2018) draw attention to the role of leaders as HRM sense givers within organizations. They argue that leadership should be understood as an attribution process whereby line managers play a critical role in drawing attention to aspects of the HRM environment that are important. Managers are important for articulating and translating HRM

messages in ways that are understandable to employees (Podolny, Khurana, & Hill-Popper, 2004). In this way, managers may facilitate strong situations that can align employee behaviours with the strategic objectives of the organization, ultimately reducing the effect of imprinting factors.

Similarly, Beijer and colleagues (2019) offer another avenue for examining the wider organization context by drawing attention to intrapersonal perspectives of HR attributions, specifically co-worker similarity. Drawing on social information processing theory (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978), they argue that co-workers are an important source of HRM information and employees adapt their attributions to fit with the views of their co-workers. In particular, they demonstrate that employees are more likely to develop similar HR attributions to their co-workers and managers when they share similar growth-, esteem-, and generativity work motivations. Hence, even when an employee holds strong beliefs that management are simply there to exploit them, familiar co-workers may temper these beliefs by exposing them to consistent contrary viewpoints that may be overlooked when communicated through other information channels (i.e., HRM systems).

In sum, this thesis makes its second contribution by providing a more comprehensive understanding of the organizational conditions which influence the effect of imprinting factors on the HRM process. In addition, whilst this thesis argues that HRM practices and systems are most important for imprinting factors, many organizational contextual factors exist outside the scope of this thesis (e.g., leadership, co-workers) provide novel and interesting directions for this area of research.

5.3.3 The Role of National Culture and a Fit Perspective

This thesis makes its third and final contribution by offering a broader understanding of country-level differences in HRM process research. Specifically, this thesis further addresses

the decontextualisation of existing HRM process research by considering the role of national culture (i.e., country-level performance orientation and power distance; House et al., 2004) on the effectiveness of HRM systems on the imprinting–HRM process relationship (Farndale & Sanders, 2017; Xiao & Cooke, 2020). Following the model in Chapter Two, it is argued that national values have implications for how, when, and why societal collectives are motivated to attend to HRM systems (Aktas et al., 2017; Chiang & Birtch, 2007; Jorgensen & Van Rossenberg, 2019). Accordingly, the effectiveness of HPWS and HRM practices are argued to be contingent on how much they are consistent and congruent with national expectations, so long cultural tightness is high (Rabl et al., 2014).

Following a fit perspective (Rabl et al., 2014), this thesis aimed to investigate whether job security and HPWS was more effective in societies with a high performance orientation and low power distance, respectfully. However, this thesis found mixed results. In Chapter Three, performance orientation did not have a significant effect on job security. Additionally, in Chapter Four, the expected moderating effect of power distance on HPWS was only found in low power distance countries. However, despite the significant differences between the slopes, the slopes themselves were insignificant. Furthermore, the effect of cultural tightness cannot be concluded from this thesis due to the instability of the models when the four-way interaction effect was added.

These results are only partially consistent with the findings by Rabl and colleagues' (2014) and a fit perspective. In fact, these findings are arguably more in line with 'best practice' approaches which suggest culture is largely irrelevant when considering the effectiveness of HPWS across national contexts (Dastmalchian et al., 2020; Gould-Williams & Mohamed, 2010). However, whilst this thesis may have overestimated the effect of country-level differences, these inconsistent findings can be explained due to several factors that should be

recognised.

First, Rabl et al. (2014) argued and demonstrated the case for the moderating effect of performance orientation and power distance on HPWS, not individual practices like job security. Indeed, it is likely that employees draw upon multiple HRM practices when deciding whether HRM is congruent with their expectations (Bowen and Ostroff, 2004; Ehrnrooth and Björkman, 2012; Nishii et al., 2008). Hence, individual practices like job security may not be salient enough to override the combined signalling effects of collective HRM systems and cause discrepancies in HRM practice effectiveness (Van de Voorde & Beijer, 2015).

Second, pressures of globalization have facilitated cultural changes across national contexts which can moderate social norms (Rabl et al., 2014). To compete in a global market, managers in multinational organizations have been required to look beyond their local cultures to ensure that HRM systems are effective across diverse employee groups (Pudelko & Harzing, 2007). As managers are forced to adapt to a competitive global environment, employees are exposed to different HRM configurations which may have otherwise conflicted with local norms and expectations. In turn, they understand that this is a necessary change and have become open to 'best practice' HRM systems which ultimately reduces conflicting employees reactions and international differences to HRM.

Finally, researchers have drawn attention to an array of institutional factors that affect employee expectations which were not accounted for in this thesis (Vaiman & Brewster, 2015). For example, Chiang (2005) demonstrated that employees' HRM preferences were, in part, related to economic downsizing and layoffs (i.e., institutional factors). Kim and Wright (2011) suggest that HRM practices lead to conflicting attributions when they are a legally mandated practice and therefore not indicative of managerial intentions (Wang et al., 2020). Similarly, state-owned enterprises in China may undermine the effectiveness of HRM practices when

employees can come to expect that these practices are nationally expected nor seen as a form of employers' commitment to employees (Xiao & Björkman, 2006). Including these factors in future research can illuminate the inconsistencies in this thesis and improve future findings.

Nevertheless, this thesis provides early theorising by examining imprinting antecedents in tandem with the organizational and cultural environment, rather than viewing each feature in isolation. This suggests that by exploring the interplay between person and context, future research can provide new explanations for why employees converge or diverge in their understanding and interpretations of HRM in the same organization. The findings within this thesis suggest that imprinting factors are contingent on present working conditions (i.e., HRM practices and systems) and, to a certain extent, cultural contexts, which should be considered for future research.

5.4 Limitations

It is important to note that there are several limitations of this thesis which are discussed in the following section. First, the development of a multi-level, multi-actor conceptual model that focuses on the antecedents of the HRM process addresses several of the methodological issues in existing HRM process research. Like many of the studies within this body of research, the use of cross-sectional data in this thesis means that causality cannot be established between the imprinting and HR process variables. On the one hand, due to the nature of imprinting factors, it can be argued that parental behaviours and family motivation develop early in one's life in response to childhood conversations and parental role-modelling (Fuligni, 2001; Lupu et al., 2018), so causality can be assumed not to be an issue. On the other hand, we can not reliably assume that adult recollections of childhood phenomena are accurately recalled over time in a way that they are free from memory bias (Coleman, Kingsbury, Naicker, & Pattern, 2015). Indeed, research on adult recollections of childhood memories suggests that "childhood events

are filtered through an adult autobiographical memory to produce narrative accounts of early experiences that only in a small part remembered” (Wells, Morrison, & Conway, 2014, p. 19). Memories are non-consciously ‘filled in’, re-constructed over time, and altered in response to the present context. Research has shown that our memory can be biased by current emotional states (e.g., depressive symptoms) which can alter the way people recall childhood events like maternal support and attachment information (Alexander et al., 2010; Dujardin et al., 2014).

Without time-series data, researchers should be cautious when inferring causality and future research should address this limitation by using longitudinal designs such as childhood studies. In particular, it would be worthwhile to examine the childhood development of imprinting factors over time as suggested by Simsek and colleagues (2015), including the degree to which their recall can be influenced by later life events, or if they remain stable and reliable measures throughout one’s life. It may also be worthwhile to compare parental and employee accounts of imprinting factors, which would also assist in minimising common method variance.

Second, the findings in this thesis are also limited by the application of non-probability sampling when gathering the data. Specifically, this thesis relies on employees who volunteered to take part in the research. Although voluntary sampling methods are convenient, they may disproportionately select employees with certain traits which may differ from those who do not volunteer. As a result, the findings may be subject to volunteer bias which limits the generalisability of the findings (Sharma, 2017). Additionally, response rates for each empirical chapter could not be calculated. Future research should adopt types of probability random sampling (e.g., systematic sampling) to improve generalisability and representation of the findings.

Third, this thesis does not provide a full empirical examination of the conceptual model

in Chapter Two. Due to the complexity of the model, the model is separated into two distinct conceptual models in Chapter Three and Chapter Four, each focusing on a different aspect of the HRM process as the outcome variable (i.e., perceived HR strength and HR attributions). In doing so, despite the valuable theorising within Chapter Two, this thesis does not provide empirical support for the mediating effect of perceived HR strength between imprinting factors and HR attributions as proposed.

Nevertheless, perceived HR strength was theoretically accounted for in Chapter Four. It was argued that HPWS moderated the effect of family motivation through the process mechanisms of distinctiveness, consistency, and consensus (i.e., perceived HR strength). In this way, Chapter Four does elaborate on perceived HR strength within a HR attribution lens, but it was expected to have an effect as a moderator in Chapter Four (theoretical model), not as a mediator as proposed in Chapter Two. Despite this discrepancy, conceptualising perceived HR strength as a moderator has valuable implications for how researchers understand the role of HRM content in organizations and is not inconsistent with previous literature (Bednall et al., 2022). Indeed, HRM process researchers are still uncovering the position of perceived HR strength within the HRM–performance relationship and have examined it as both a significant moderator and mediator (e.g., Rabenu, Tziner, Oren, Sharoni, & Vasiliu, 2018). However, a recent meta-analysis by Bednall and colleagues (2021) indicates that there is more support for the mediating role of perceived HR strength between HRM practices and employee outcomes when positioned at the individual level. Hence, this thesis follows Bednall and colleagues (2021) for the conceptual model in Chapter Two, though empirical evidence is required to test this proposition and how to best incorporate both HRM process streams into one conceptual model.

Finally, this thesis is limited by the total number of countries in the dataset which makes

it difficult to draw convincing conclusions of country-level differences on HRM system effectiveness. Specifically, in Chapter Three, performance orientation was not found to moderate the effectiveness of job security practices. Similarly, in Chapter Four, power distance was found to significantly moderate the effectiveness of HPWS. However, the slopes themselves were insignificant. Furthermore, the role of cultural tightness cannot be concluded from this thesis as the models became unstable when including cultural tightness in the models.

Nevertheless, while the number of countries is rather limited, there is still noticeable variation in the country scores of power distance (5.86 - 5.04) and, to a lesser extent, performance orientation (4.45 - 3.87). It is also promising to see that the moderating effect of power distance was still significant regardless, and including countries with more pronounced cultural differences will likely lead to more noticeable variations in HRM system effectiveness. Furthermore, by examining these propositions using a dataset that is strictly situated in an Eastern context (i.e., China, Pakistan, & South Korea), this thesis not only provides much-needed theorising on the HRM process from an Eastern perspective (Xiao & Cooke, 2020; Wang et al., 2020), and it partially controls for cross-national factors that may otherwise affect the results (e.g., East vs. West differences). Despite this, it would be useful to develop extensive datasets with both Eastern and Western countries in future research.

5.5 Practical Implications

Beyond theoretical applications, this thesis has two clear practical applications for managers and HR practitioners which are discussed below.

First, this thesis helps managers and HR practitioners understand why employees deviate in their understanding and attributions of HRM in the same organization. HRM process research is saturated with studies that emphasise the importance of developing HRM systems that foster common interpretations of managerial intentions across employees for positive

behaviours and attitudes (for reviews and meta-analyses see Bednall et al., 2021; Hewett, 2021; Hewett et al., 2018; Ostroff & Bowen, 2016; Wang et al., 2020). In turn, HRM process scholars have encouraged HR practitioners to be aware of aspects of organizational factors (e.g., leadership) and HRM systems that can enhance employees understanding of HRM, and ultimately maximize their performance (Beijer et al., 2019; Sanders, Yang, & Li, 2021; Van De Voorde & Beijer, 2015; Weller et al., 2020). This thesis moves beyond previous recommendations to draw attention that factors that exist outside of the organization. Specifically, managers and HR practitioners should be aware that employees' childhood and upbringing matter for the way they understand and interpret HRM. In essence, it should not be simply assumed that HRM should work as intended or espoused; managers and HR practitioners should be mindful that employees may draw very different conclusions due to pre-existing schemas about HRM and management, regardless of being subject to the same HRM practices and systems.

Second, and arguably most importantly, managers and HR practitioners should recognise that, by becoming aware of the importance of imprinting factors on the HRM process, they can also understand how these factors can be actively managed. In this way, HR practitioners and managers can play an active role in ensuring that employees interpret HRM as intended by management. The results in this thesis suggest that the design of HRM practices and systems is paramount for making sure that employees interpret HRM in unison. Specifically, this thesis illuminates job security and HPWS as facilitators of strong situations (Mischel, 1973; 1977) that constrain the effect of imprinting factors, like family motivation and parental behaviours. If managers examine HRM systems through a strong situation lens, they can understand how to design HRM for maximum effectiveness across diverse employee groups with different backgrounds. Most importantly, HRM systems and practices should

clearly and unambiguously communicate desired behavioural expectations to employees, be internally consistent with other management practices, and ensure that managers should agree on the nature of HRM in the organizations. In doing so, employees will gain a better understanding of HRM as intended by management and rely less on pre-existing schemas to understand and interpret HRM, which may lead to undesirable behavioural consequences.

5.6 Final Conclusion

In summary, this thesis contributes to the HRM process literature through a conceptual and empirical advancement of the imprinting antecedents of the HRM process and the organizational- and country-level boundary conditions within this dynamic. Hence, this thesis makes several theoretical and practical contributes to existing literature. First, this thesis adds to the nomological net of HRM process antecedents with the addition of parental behaviours and family motivation. Second, through the integration of an imprinting perspective with HRM process theories, this thesis sheds light on how employees' upbringing and childhood can lead to variations of the HRM process and uncovers the underlying mechanisms that explain these effects (i.e., attention and interpretation). Third, this thesis incorporates HRM content and national culture into HRM process models and demonstrates that context matters for how employees understand and interpret HRM. Finally, this thesis informs HR practitioners and managers about how HRM systems can be designed for maximum effectiveness for employees with different personal histories and experiences. Taken together, this thesis can be used as a platform for greater integration of imprinting with HRM process theories in future research which serves to embolden the academic landscape surrounding the antecedents of the HRM process, and ultimately how HRM systems can be designed for positive behavioural and attitudinal outcomes in organizations.

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