

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN HIGH-PERFORMANCE WORK SYSTEMS, CAUSAL
ASCRIPTIONS, ORGANISATIONAL CITIZENSHIP BEHAVIOUR AND TASK
PERFORMANCE: A CROSS-LEVEL INVESTIGATION

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Abstract

Attribution scholarship to date has endeavoured to gain insights into employees' *human resource (HR) attributions*, or beliefs about why HR practices are in place, to explain the impacts of high-performance work systems on firm performance. When employees discern specific HR attributions, they gain a clearer understanding of the managerial motives driving HR initiatives, which in turn shapes their attitudes and behaviours. Following this logic, it is pertinent to design employee-centric HR initiatives that encourage the formation of benevolent HR attributions, fostering the alignment between employees' positive behaviours and organisation's priorities. However, this HR process approach has chiefly focused on a neutral context and a transitory state of cognitive psychology rather than a concrete setting and a long-term motivational process. In this light, HR attributions may fail to capture enduring volitional impulses, such as enhanced self-esteem, that largely determine individual conduct and long-term performances in the workplace. As such, strategic HR initiatives may not consistently yield the desired outcomes in the long run. By utilising signalling and attribution perspectives, the current study delves into employees' *causal ascriptions of success*, as key determinants of future behaviours and performance. In particular, the study builds and tests an integrative model where high-performance work systems, leader-member exchange and organisational cynicism work in concert to inform employees' causal ascriptions of why they and others around them progress and succeed. The stream of thought flowing from internal causes (nested within attributors rather than organisation) is likely to spark positive dynamics of feelings and volitional momentum that set a scene for employees to well perform and act proactively. Based on a sample of 108 teams of Vietnamese small and medium sized enterprises, and multilevel structural equation modelling with Mplus, the study found broad support for proposed hypotheses, expanding a potential psychological line of research into the organisational management and thereby providing implications for both researchers and practitioners.

Key words: High performance work systems, leader-member exchange, organisational cynicism, causal ascriptions, organisational citizenship behaviour, task performance

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Lists of Acronyms

CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CFA	Confirmatory Factor Analysis
CWB	Counter workplace Behaviours
CMB	Common Method Bias
CMV	Common Method Variance
CV	Curriculum Vitae
DPEs	Domestic Private Enterprises
DV	Dependent Variables
ECA	External Causal Ascriptions
EFA	Exploratory Factor Analysis
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FIEs	Foreign-Invested Enterprises
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HR	Human Resource
HRM	Human Resource Management
HPWS	High Performance Work Systems
ICA	Internal Causal Ascriptions
IV	Independent Variables
KMO	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin
LMX	Leader-Member Exchange
MBA	Master of Business Administration
MLM	Multilevel Modeling
MLR	Multiple Linear Regression
MSEM	Multilevel Structural Equation Modeling
OC	Organisational Cynicism
PAF	Principal Axis Factoring
PCA	Principal Components Analysis
PDO	Power Distance Orientation
SMEs	Small and Medium Sized Enterprises
SOEs	State owned Enterprises
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
SRMR	Standardised Root Mean Square Residual
TC	Task Performance
TLI	Tucker-Lewis index
VCCI	Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and Industry
VIF	Variance Inflation Factor
WLB	Work Life Balance

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction

Have you experienced or witnessed instances of professional success, such as receiving a promotion, pay raise, or stellar performance appraisal? How do you interpret these achievements? and What psychological impacts do these events have on your career development and future aspirations?

When success occurs in the workplace, some employees attribute it to internal qualities within their individual control, such as innate ability and/or a strong work ethic. These causal ascriptions, in turn, evoke positive affective responses, such as pride, optimism, or hope, which reinforce their sense of self-efficacy, or belief in capabilities (Weiner, 1985; Gundlach et al., 2003). In this regard, they gain greater clarity on what is required to tackle future challenges and continue achieving landmarks throughout their career (Weiner, 2014).

On the other hand, others might assign their random success for situational factors, such as luck, ease of tasks or co-workers' support, which are unstable and beyond their control (Weiner, 1985). By doing so, employees are more likely to experience adverse emotional reactions, for example, low self-esteem, anxiety, doubt, that undermine personal motivation and make it harder for them to decide on which skills and knowledge are needed to deal with imminent task difficulties (Harvey et al., 2014; Weiner, 1985). Hence, success here may inflict harm on employees' well-being, career development and organisational performance (Gundlach et al., 2003).

This distinction in attributional styles highlights the contrasting nature of internal versus external causal ascriptions and their influence not only on employees' emotions and motivations but also on long-term professional development and organisational welfare. This idea originates from the foundational work of Weiner and colleagues (1985), whose attribution theories gained significant prominence in social psychology during the 1970s. Building on this theoretical foundation, the extant study aims to extend these principles into the field of human resource management (HRM), offering a distinctive explanation of the HRM-performance linkage. In particular, research seek to develop a comprehensive framework that provides a deeper understanding of the drivers behind employees' causal attributions of success and their impact on individual behaviour and performance (McAuley, 1992; Guest et al., 2021; Harvey et al., 2014).

It is argued that causal attributions or psychological perspectives have garnered significant scholarly attention and have been widely applied in HRM research. Bowen and Ostroff (2004) and Nishii et al. (2008) are among the first to rely on the core tenets of attribution theories (Heider, 1958; Kelley, 1979; Weiner, 1985) to clear up the two distinct psychological pathways or HR process-based approaches for explaining the relationship between HR practices and firm performance (Sanders and Yang, 2016; Patel, Yang and Sanders, 2021). In particular, Bowen and Ostroff (2004), in their seminal work, leveraged insights from the organisational climate literature (Schneider, Salvaggio and Subirats, 2002) and the co-variation principle of attribution theory (Kelley, 1973) to introduce the concept of '*HR system strength*' as a powerful instrument to promote superior individual and firm performances. They contended that a robust HRM system reflecting three attributes-*distinctiveness, consistency and consensus*-enhances employees' clear understanding of managerial expectations, organisational values, and rewards. This clarity fosters alignment employee behaviours with organisation's strategic goals (Bowen and Ostroff, 2004; Ostroff and Bowen, 2016).

Nishii and colleagues (2008) advanced the field of HR processes by building on Heider's foundational principles of causal attributions (1958). Their research introduced a new construct of *HR attributions*, or employee beliefs about why HR practices are in place, to mediate the HR-performance linkage. To be more specific, they categorised HR attributions into two main dimensions: internal versus external. The former suggests the idea that HR practices are motivated by organisational strategies, such as, promoting employee well-being and service quality, exploiting employees and reducing costs for maximised performance. The latter, on the other hand, imply that HR practices are adopted in response to situational pressures, for example, complying with union demands or legal requirements (Nishii et al., 2008). The findings indicated that employees tend to exhibit higher levels of commitment and engage in extra role behaviours when they attribute HR practices to benevolent intentions rather than malevolent ones (Hewett et al., 2018; Hewett, 2021; Sanders et al., 2023).

Bowen and Ostroff (2004) and Nishii et al. (2008) have become a rich source of ideas for numerous thoughtful scholars to further explore the HR process, affording fascinating nuances of employee cognition regarding HR practices and underscoring its pivotal role in explaining the HR-performance nexus (Hewett et al., 2018; Hewett, 2021). However, attribution-oriented scholars have predominantly built on (rather than move beyond) these two prevailing strands of research to confirm, contradict, or extend upon their established findings (Wang et al., 2020; Hewett et al., 2018). This narrow focus limits the exploration of

other potential research avenues that could explain the HR-outcome linkage through unique psychological lenses (Harvey et al., 2014; 2017).

Reflecting on the history of attribution theory and research, Weiner (2008, p.154) argued that ‘attribution is better characterised as a field of study rather than a theory’. This perspective implies that *HR strength* and *HR attributions* are merely two of many research streams subsumed under the broad umbrella of HR process. Strategic HR scholars have thus been encouraged to look beyond these two constructs to adopt new approaches for exploring more nuances of the HR-performance relationship (Harvey et al., 2014; 2017; McAuley et al., 1992). Added to this, empirical evidence to date appears to paint a relatively convincing and comprehensive picture of *HR strength* and *HR attributions* (Hewett, 2021; Hewett et al., 2018; Sanders et al., 2023). It might, therefore, be an opportune moment for strategic HR scholars to explore the HR-performance linkage through alternative theoretical frameworks, thereby enriching the existing knowledge in this burgeoning area of research (Wang et al., 2020; Hewett et al., 2018; Hewett, 2021; Sanders et al., 2023).

The extant literature indicates that Eberly, Holley, Johnson, and Mitchell (2011) are among the first to move beyond the two mainstream approaches (e.g. Bowen and Ostroff, 2004; Nishii et al., 2018) and take interest in a new form of employee attribution known as *relational attributions*. This construct suggests that employees tend to assign causes for an unexpected/unimportant event based on the quality of the relationship they hold with another person (e.g. supervisor, colleague). *Relational attributions* differ from *HR attributions* since this concept reflects the idea that for any success or failure that occurs, employees do not only ascribe it to the causes which lie within and/or beyond themselves (Heider, 1958; Weiner, 1985) or inside and/or outside the organisation (Nishii et al., 2008), but also the ones arising from their dyadic workplace relationships and then act upon them to improve future outcomes (Eberly et al., 2011; Sun et al., 2019; Gardner et al., 2019).

Relational attributions are relevant in explaining employees’ psychological issues and the appraisal process because organisation is viewed as a coherent social community and employees, as members, interact with each other to maintain a good organisational functioning. Hence, in the presence of salient HR events, causal inferences might be not compelling if factors arising from interactions between attributors and those around them in the workplace are not taken into account (Carson, 2019; Eberly et al., 2011). In this regard,

Eberly and others (2011) expanded attribution in a relatively new direction, posing challenging conceptual questions as to the alignment and conflict of attributions between leaders and employees, and thereby intriguing other HR scholars to further develop this research avenue (e.g. Sun et al., 2019; Carson, 2019; Gardner et al., 2019).

In a similar line, Harvey and co-authors, in a meta-analysis of existing attribution theory research (2014), referred to the three attributional dimensions identified by Weiner (1985) - locus of causality, stability, and controllability - to investigate employees' *causal attributions/ascriptions* of specific outcomes. This means that when employees experience important and/or unexpected events, they are inclined to seek explanations to make sense of them. Any cause assigned, in turn, greatly influences their subsequent emotions, behaviours, and performance. As such, scrutinising employees' emotional and behavioural reactions to successful events can act as a useful basis to design effective HR strategies by which employees are encouraged to assign positive achievements for internal (rather than external) factors to secure consistently good performances at work (Weiner, 1985, 2018; Martinko et al., 2011; Harvey et al., 2014).

By comparison, this research stream differs from the approaches developed by Bowen and Ostroff (2004) and Nishii et al (2008) in terms of spatial and temporal awareness. For example, Weiner and colleagues place attributors in specific contexts which are well defined as either success or failure while Bowen and Ostroff (2004) and Nishii et al (2008) share commonalities in examining employees' cognitive sense-making processes within neutral or unidentified circumstances. Moreover, *causal ascriptions* of an un/successful event occurring in the past act as a starting point to trigger the attributional process at present, which in turn predicts attitudinal and behavioural responses in the future. In this light, *causal ascriptions* join up the dots of past, present and future time to reflect a temporal sequence, rather than a transitory state of cognitive psychology described in *HR attributions* and *HR strength* (Harvey et al., 2014; Hu et Oh, 2022; Wang et al., 2020).

Another striking difference is that *HR attribution* (Nishii et al. 2018) and *HR strength* (Bowen and Ostroff, 2004) largely focus on *the front end* of the appraisal process and describes perceivers as '*judges*' seeking cues beyond themselves (e.g. HR strategies or organisational purposes) to make *interpersonal or social attributions* to behaviours or outcomes of others. Conversely, *causal ascription* (Weiner, 1985) is concerned with *the back*

end and depicts attributors as '*scientists*' who reflect upon themselves to formulate *intrapersonal view* or *self-attributions* of why they and others succeed or fail (Luthans and Church, 2002; Harvey et al., 2014). In this context, employees are positioned as focal subjects to uncover deeper nuances of affect and volitional impulses that arise from their causal reasoning processes (Harvey et al., 2017; Martinko et al., 2011; Gundlach et al., 2003). Also of interest is that while the theoretical frameworks proposed by Heider (1958) and Kelley (1973) have been widely utilised within the field of HRM, the application of Weiner's attributional principles (1985) has been relatively neglected (Harvey et al., 2014; 2017).

This oversight is unexpected, given that employees cannot work without experiencing or witnessing success and failure of themselves and people around them in the workplace, such as meeting or missing tight deadlines. The psychological reactions employees make to these trigger events significantly influence their future behaviours and outcomes (Weiner, 1985; Harvey et al., 2014). Therefore, examining the attributional processes attached to specific workplace contexts can provide organisations with valuable insights into employees' psychological states and volitional impulses, which are crucial for either facilitating or impeding their career development. By understanding these dynamics, organisations can tailor more effective motivational HR strategies that can achieve organisational priorities and superior performances (Weiner, 1985; Gundlach et al., 2003).

In the current study, I take stock of the four existing applications of attribution theories within the HRM field, or extant HR process-related research streams, namely, *HR attributions*, *HR strength*, *relational attributions*, *causal ascriptions*, to highlight their merits and deficiencies upon which future directions are suggested. Central to this review process is an exploration of employees' causal ascriptions of success (e.g., receiving a promotion, an excellent performance appraisal, or overt praise). These HR events are perceived as more significant than routine activities, and thereby more likely propel employees into evaluative processes. The stream of thought flowing from internal causes (nested within attributors, such as ability, effort), rather than situational factors (e.g. random fortune, support from others) is likely to spark positive feelings and volitional drive that set a scene for employees to exhibit good behaviours and then attain more important milestones in their lifelong career (Weiner, 1985; 2008; 2014).

To provide a full understanding of causal ascriptions of success, I utilise signalling theory (Connelly et al., 2011) and attribution perspectives (Heider, 1958; Kelley, 1973; 1979; Weiner, 1985) as a solid theoretical foundation to build and test a holistic conceptual model through which high-performance work systems (HPWS), leader-member exchange (LMX), and organisational cynicism (OC), work in concert to influence employee causal ascriptions of success (e.g. internal versus external). Further, these causal ascriptions are independently associated with two outcomes, namely, organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB) and task performance (TC). This means that OCB and TC operate in parallel as two separate (rather than interrelated) outcomes of causal ascriptions. This proposed overarching framework is supported by several reasons.

First, HPWS, LMX, and OC serve as three key antecedents that interact to shape employees' causal ascriptions of success. This idea is deeply rooted in the influential works of Hewet et al. (2019) and Kelley and Michela (1980) reflecting that attribution is commonly influenced by three classes of antecedents: the main features of information or trigger events (*information*), the relevance of that information to attributor's interests (*motivation*) and the personal perceptions shaped by pre-existing experiences and characteristics (*belief*). Drawing on these tripartite principles, the current study posits that employees' causal ascriptions are not only driven by the distinct characteristics of well-interconnected HR practices to make them more salient to their interests (*information*), but also by the quality of relationship they hold with their leaders (*motivation*) and their attitude toward organisational sincerity arising out from prior experiences (*belief*). These three core elements represent three lines of antecedents that collectively work together to better elicit employees' causal ascriptions.

Second, OCB is construed as 'individual behaviour that is discretionary, not directly and explicitly recognised by the formal reward system and in the aggregate promotes the effective functioning of the organisation' (Organ, 1988, p.4). Conversely, TC reflects the restricted scope of employee behaviours that are displayed to barely fulfil the formal job requirements (Eisenberger et al. 2001; Zhang et al., 2019). As such, OCB and TC can be differentiated by the work behaviours that fall beyond and within the boundaries of contractual obligations or 'the formal call of duty' (Organ, 1988; Eisenberger et al. 2001).

For over three decades, OCB has been predominantly viewed in a positive light and closely linked with favourable outcomes, such as higher performance appraisals and improved

task performance (Podsakoff et al., 2009; Whiting et al., 2008). Collectively, these behaviours contribute to achieving organisational goals and enhancing overall firm performance (Zhang et al., 2008; Zhou et al., 2023). To stimulate employee's desired spontaneous and proactive behaviours, organisations have attempted to cultivate HPWS, ensuring people are well resourced to go the extra mile in the workplace (Zhou et al., 2023; Liao et al., 2009; Zhang et al., 2023). This is because that HPWS is a set of interrelated HR practices, rather than separate ones, which is designed to enhance employees' skills, knowledge and commitment, prompting them to exhibit prosocial behaviours and thus invigorate overall organisational well-being (Combs et al., 2006; Datta et al., 2005; Zhang et al., 2023). OCB, therefore, is needed within organisation, particularly in today's turbulent business climate, where companies increasingly rely on employees' discretionary efforts and dynamic capabilities to navigate unexpected challenges (such as COVID-19), foster creativity and innovation (Khan et al., 2020; Suwanti et al., 2018) and gain a competitive edge over their rivals (Pattnaik and Sahoo, 2021; Singh et al., 2020; Aboramadan et al., 2022).

However, the associations between HPWS, OCB and task performance are not always straightforward and positive as assumed. This positive view can be challenged by a range of instances (Atatsi et al., 2019). The extra behaviours are a multi-dimensional construct largely reflecting extra activities outside contractual requirements (e.g. helping others) (Singh et al., 2020; Aboramadan et al., 2022), but these social interactions are only beneficial when employees have the requisite knowledge, abilities, and skills (Pattnaik and Sahoo, 2021; Atatsi et al., 2019). For example, employees with poor interpersonal skills who volunteer to take part in a hiring selection committee may hinder organisation from attracting good talents (Atatsi et al., 2019). Added to this, spending a significant amount of time on interpersonal support or engaging in extra tasks can undermine in-role performance and harm career success (Bolino et al., 2004). OCB therefore needs to occur in addition to (rather than in place of) in-role behaviours (Anderson and Bolino, 2022). Under some circumstances, OCB can be interpreted as a result of poor management or understaffed organisation which causes heavy workload, work–family conflict, and deleterious consequences on well-being (Singh et al., 2020; Bolino et al., 2015; Aboramadan et al., 2022).

Given these inherent tensions, OCB does not necessarily serve as a mediator bridging HPWS and task performance (Bolino et al., 2004; Anderson and Bolino, 2022). This study, therefore, examines the two separate mechanisms through which HPWS independently

influence OCB and task performance via employee causal ascriptions of success. OCB here suggests extra-role behaviours, such as taking on a workload from colleagues or stepping in when they encounter task issues (Smith, Organ, and Near, 1983; Wayne et al., 1997). Task performance refers to in-role behaviours upon which employees fulfill their contractual obligations (Eisenberger et al., 2001). The study, therefore, is among the first to not only highlight the central role of employees' causal ascriptions of success within the organisational context but also examine both antecedents and consequences of this cognitive phenomenon into a single model.

Third, this study incorporates concepts from both signalling theory (Connelly et al., 2011) and attribution theory (Heider, 1958; Kelley, 1972; Weiner, 1985) to underpin the integrated conceptual model. To be more specific, signalling theory views the HRM process as a complex communication involving four key roles of *signaler*, *signal*, *receiver* and *feedback*. To promote an effective HR process or reduce informational asymmetries, Connelly and colleagues (2011) suggest that signallers, such as, senior or line managers, can demonstrate their strong HR credentials and competencies to communicate high-quality HR signals (e.g. HR practices) to receivers or employees. Following this logic, employees are more likely to share their interpretations of HR messages and then align their actions with organisational intentions and goals. Without careful consideration, HR values can be misread by employees, leading to unintended consequences that may negatively impact their performance (Connelly et al., 2011). In short, signalling theory provides a general framework for a full understanding of the signalling process, describing the pivotal role of each actor in creating an effective signalling environment (Guest et al., 2021).

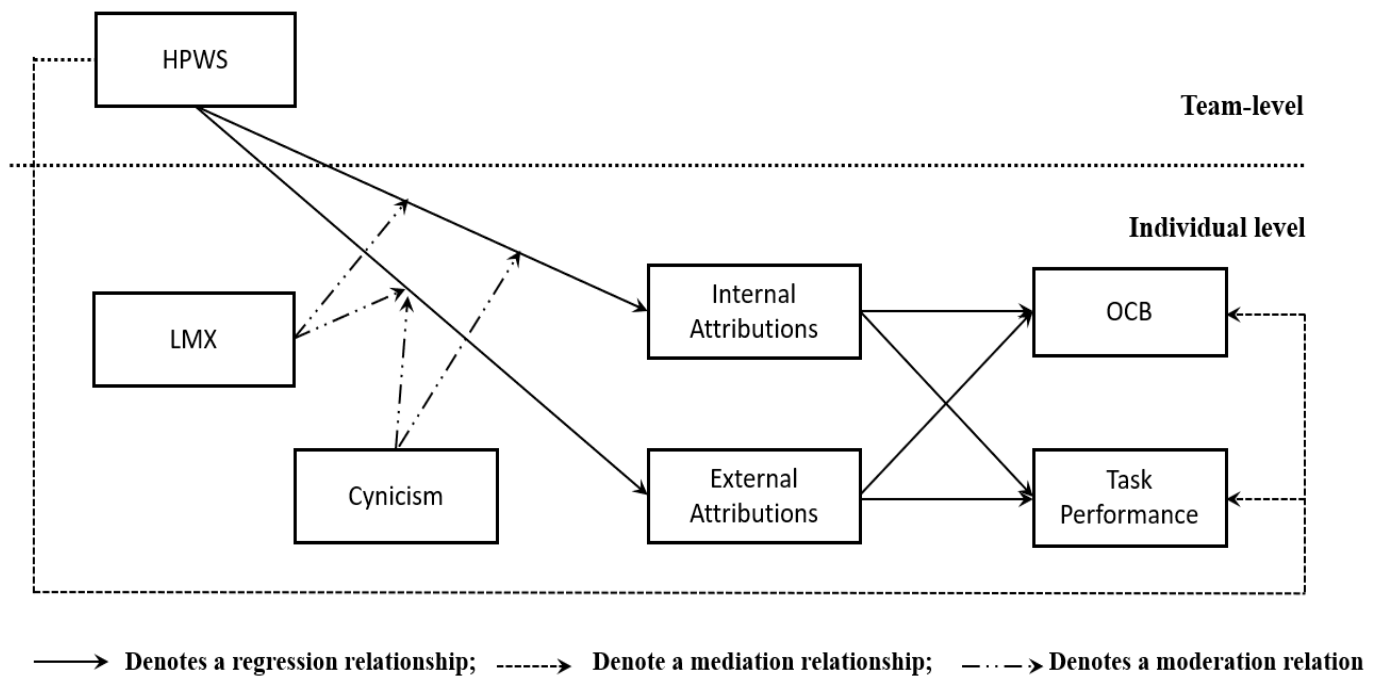
On the other hand, three attribution theories (Heider, 1958; Kelley, 1973; Weiner, 1985) barely focus on specific parts of the attributional process. None of them embraces both antecedents and consequences of attribution (Guest et al., 2021). For example, Kelly examines the first half of the appraisal process by which attributors rely upon three informational features: *distinctiveness*, *consistency*, and *consensus* to make causal judgements. Weiner pays more attention to the second half to underscore emotional and behavioural nuances of attributors. By comparing with signalling theory, it is argued that Kelley is primarily concerned with the quality or strength of *signals* whereas Heider and Weiner emphasise the role of *receivers* in interpreting these signals (Hewett et al., 2018; Wang et al., 2020).

Being aware of these deficits of attribution theories, Guest et al. (2021) adopt both signalling theory and attribution theory to explore the overarching framework through which HR attributions mediate HR practices and bank branch performance. Guest and colleagues (2021) asserted that signalling theory gives weight to all the elements of the signalling process: (1) the role of line managers as signallers of HR messages, (2) HR signals, (3) employees as receivers or HR interpreters, and (4) employees' feedback on transmitted signals and competencies of signaller. These factors work together to establish a solid theoretical framework to complement inherent shortcomings found in attributional perspectives on HRM (Bowen and Ostroff, 2004; Nishii et al., 2008) and thereby offers a more advanced understanding of HR processes (Guest et al., 2021).

Drawing on Guest et al. (2021), the current study incorporates signalling theory and attribution theories to construct and test a holistic model, where employees' causal ascriptions of success bridge HPWS and individual behaviours and performance. In particular, signalling theory, here, in conjunction with the tripartite framework (Kelley and Michela, Hewett et al. 2019) are employed to elucidate employees' causal ascriptions of success. This means that HPWS, LMX, OC representing three categories of *information, motivation, and belief* (Kelley and Michela, Hewett et al. 2019) are respectively viewed as three actors of the signalling process, *signal, signallers and receivers*. These two theoretical frameworks complement each other to cast better light on the antecedent-ascriptions microprocess (Guest et al., 2019; Hewett et al., 2019).

On the side of consequences, signalling theory (Connelly et al., 2021), reflecting receivers' *feedback*, complements attributional theory (Weiner, 1985) to unravel employees' psychological nuances. *Feedback*, here, suggests employees' attitudinal and behavioural responses to the quality of HR signals and line managers' competencies. This actor of the signalling process works in concert with emotional reactions described in the attributional theory (Weiner, 1985) to explain employees' performance in the workplace. In sum, signalling theory in combination with the tripartite framework (Kelley and Michela, 1980) and attributional theory (Kelley, 1973; Weiner, 1985) can paint a complete picture of employees' causal ascriptions by which the HPWS-outcome relationship is illuminated

Figure 1: The conceptual model



In the following sections, I will delve deeper into several key aspects of this research. First, **Section 2** outlines the **research problems**, clearly identifying the issues that this study seeks to address. Next, **Section 3** details the **aims and objectives**, providing a comprehensive overview of the specific goals and the intended scope of the investigation. Further, **Section 4** highlights the **research contributions**, emphasising the novel insights and advancements that this study brings to the field. Finally, **Section 5** describes characteristics of **research context** and explain why Vietnam is a relevant setting upon which this study is based. Together, these sections collectively provide a structured and in-depth examination of the key components of this research, setting the stage for the subsequent chapters and further discussions.

1.2 Research problems

The impactful works of Bowen and Ostroff (2004) and Nishii et al. (2008) have become a cornerstone for strategic HR scholars to scrutinise employees' psychological phenomenon and its impact on individual and firm performance (Wang et al., 2020; Hewett et al., 2018; Alfes et al., 2021). Given that HR strength and HR attributions have well-documented and establish their own legacies over the last 20 years, these two research lines appear to reach its zenith and are now experiencing a decline in interest and significance (Hewett, 2021; Hewett et al., 2018; Sanders et al., 2023). This could be a timely opportunity to forge a new path in explaining the HR-performance relationship, contributing more meaningful insights to this

expanding area of research (Hewett, 2021; Harvey et al., 2014; Sanders et al., 2023). The current study is motivated by several research gaps:

First, most HR process-oriented research focuses on *interpersonal approach*, which falls squarely into the narrative put forward by Kelly (1973), to examine employees' HR attributions in the workplace (Alfes et al., 2021; Shantz et al., 2016; Van de Voorde and Beijer, 2015). Kelley and colleagues (1973) suggested that in social psychology, individuals utilise environmental signals to make social attributions for the behaviour or responsibility of another party (e.g. organisation). By bringing this principle to the HRM domain, it is argued that employees usually attend to organisational cues to make deductions of managerial intentions and thereafter guide their attitudes and behaviours at work (Nishii et al., 2008; Bowen and Ostroff, 2004).

For example, according to Nishii and colleagues (2008), employee HR interpretations are generally categorised into external versus internal HR attributions. While the former suggests employees' belief that HR policies are designed due to a pressure to comply with third parties' requirements (e.g. trade union) and thus have no link with individual outcomes, the latter reflects that HR practices are freely chosen 'in a spirit of justice' (Sanders et al., 2021, p.3) and motivated by four concrete organisational rationales, namely enhancing service quality; improving employee well-being, reducing costs, and exploiting employees (Nishii et al., 2008). Utilising data from a service organisation, Nishii and others found that employees can derive a higher level of satisfaction and exhibit more OCB when they attribute the presence of HR practices to benign, rather than hostile motives. This research idea has accordingly become a rich source of information and formed the basis for much of the subsequent research (Hewett et al., 2018; Hewett, 2021; Wang et al., 2020).

Nevertheless, by mainly focusing on Kelly and colleagues' approach, strategic HR researchers appear to overlook another key motivation theory - *intrapersonal perspective* developed by Weiner (1985) which is concerned with the self-reflection process to explain the HR-performance relationship (Harvey et al., 2014; Weiner et al., 1985; 2000). According to Weiner and others, when people experience a success or failure, they are prone to seek causes behind this event to explain why they succeed and fail in life. These causal ascriptions are contingent upon both elements within and/or beyond the attributor in lieu of being predominantly restricted to environmental factors suggested by Kelley and others (1973).

For example, when an employee receives a promotion, he or she may attribute this successful event to either personal qualities (*internal ascriptions*) (e.g. inherent ability, willingness to exert effort) or situational factors (*external ascriptions*) (e.g. random luck and/or nature of task) (Weiner, 1985; 2014; Harvey et al., 2014). While *internal ascriptions* of success can trigger positive affective responses and in turn provide guidance on what behaviours are needed to move forward, *external ascriptions* can hamper developmental efforts as attributors have no blueprint to deal with future task challenges (Weiner, 1985; 2014; Gundlach et al., 2003).

In a similar line, when confronted with a failure, for example, a poor performance appraisal, assigned internal ascriptions can elicit a sense of shame or guilt that prompts attributors to invest more time and effort to improve their future outcomes whereas external ascriptions can be viewed as shirking duties or responsibilities and thereby may have no further action taken to change their current situation (Weiner, 1985; 2014; 2018). As such, attaching an un/successful event to internal qualities which are within the attributor's control, rather than uncontrollable external factors, is more likely to result in positive outcomes (Harvey et al., 2014).

Despite the comparison of two approaches, research has largely overlooked *the intrapersonal perspective* (Weiner, 1985) in solving the HR-performance puzzle (Hewett et al., 2018; Hewett, 2021; Hu and Oh, 2022; Sanders et al., 2023). Consequently, we may not fully understand how employees interpret their own achievements or failures, as well as those of others, in the workplace. Moreover, employees' causal attributions are strongly tied to their volitional impulses, which significantly shape their future performance (Weiner, 1985; Gundlach et al., 2003). Without integrating this attribution-affect-behaviour sequence or employees' perspectives into HR strategy design, organisations may fail to intrinsically motivate them to take pride in their successes or demonstrate perseverance and resilience in the face of failure. As a result, employees' behaviour may not align with the organisation's values and goals (Harvey et al., 2014; 2017).

Second, since the work of Weiner (1985), HR scholars have built on his framework to explore the impact of causal ascriptions on employees' emotions and behaviours which are closely linked to individual outcomes (Douglas et al., 2007; Gundlach et al., 2003; Harvey et

al., 2017; Martinko et al., 2011). Researchers have usually put attributors in negative (rather than positive) trigger events (e.g. abusive supervision, poor performance appraisal) and view this event as the sole antecedent of causal attributions (Harvey et al., 2014). Following this reasoning, they chiefly focused on various cognitive and behavioural consequences, for example, aggression and anger (Betancourt and Blair, 1992; Martinko and Zellars; 1998; Douglas and Martinko, 2001), counterproductive behaviour (Martinko et al., 2002); decreased motivation and withdrawal behaviours (Campbell and Martinko, 1998); decreased self-efficacy (Weiner, 1987; Gundlach et al., 2003), conflict resolution (Betancourt, 2004). As a result, very little is known about what other potential factors can drive causal ascriptions of success or failure and under what conditions organisations can promote positive causal attributions for desired behaviours and outcomes (Douglas et al., 2007; Martinko et al., 2006; Harvey et al., 2014; 2017).

This oversight is a missing piece of a puzzle, making us feel unclear to decide which factors are important to be incorporated into the design of an effective HR strategy that can elicit good causal ascriptions and then desired outcomes (Weiner, 1985; Harvey et al., 2014). To date, HR scholars have mainly focused on the well-established topic: *HR attributions* (Nishii et al., 2008) and delve into three specific pathways to predict HR attributions or explain the variability in this cognitive phenomenon (Hewett, 2021; Wang et al., 2020; Sanders et al., 2021; Hu and Oh, 2022; Meier-Barthold et al., 2023). Hewett and colleagues (2019) were predicated upon the work of Kelley and Micheal (1980) to suggest that HR attributions are a function of three key classes of determinants: *information* about the stimulus (2) *beliefs* about causes and effects of the stimulus, and (3) *personal motivation* or to what extent the stimulus is salient to attributor's interests. Following this logic, procedural and distributive fairness, organisational cynicism, and perceived personal relevance are respectively selected to inform HR attributions of workload management and measurement (Kelley and Michela, 1980; Hewett et al., 2019). In short, these three elements are brought together to create a rich context upon which HR attributions are firmly based.

Katou and co-authors (2021) built on the seminal work of Bowen and Ostroff (2004) to integrate *the HRM content*, *the HRM process* and *the role of line managers* into a single conceptual model to enhance the validity and reliability of employee HR attributions. In particular, they propose well-interconnected HR practices reflecting three salient characteristics, namely *distinctiveness* (e.g. HR practices stand out compared to other

companies), *consistency* (e.g. HR practices are coherent and well-aligned with the firm strategy), and *consensus* (e.g. fairness and agreement between HR message senders) as a fundamental tool to yield shared perceptions of managerial intentions among employees. Added to this, the role of line managers is highlighted as ‘interpretive filters of HRM practices’ (Bowen and Ostroff, 2004, p.216) who can communicate ambiguous HR signals in a clear way to subordinates (Nishii and Paluch, 2018). Line managers, therefore, are assigned to shape employee HR experiences and then help impede idiosyncratic impressions that may potentially derail the managerial intentions (Bowen and Ostroff, 2004; Hewett et al., 2018; Hewett, 2021; Nishii et al., 2018; Katou et al., 2021). Together, these three components are united under a general theoretical framework to synergically solidify HR attributions.

Finally, Sanders et al. (2021) are among a few researchers who responded the call for exploring factors outside the control of the workplace to unravel employees’ HR attributions (Xiao and Cooke, 2020; Kitt and Sanders, 2022; Sanders, Yang, and Li, 2021). By so doing, Sanders and others set perceived HPWS and power distance orientation (PDO) - ‘the extent to which an individual accepts the unequal distribution of power in institutions and organisations’ (Clughston, Howell, and Dorfman, 2000, p. 9), as two critical drivers of HR attributions. The reason behind using PDO is that cultural values vary across countries and differently influence employees’ perceptions, and behaviours in the workplace (e.g. Hofstede, 1980; Farndale and Sanders, 2017). Employees with various levels of PDO, therefore, may be more divergent in HR attributions (Sanders et al., 2021).

In short, these three works suggest distinctive approaches to explain what factors can influence employees’ HR attributions. Together, they complement each other to provide a relatively clear picture of the antecedent-HR attribution linkage (Meier-Barthold et al., 2023; Hewett et al., 2018; Hewett, 2021; Kitt and Sanders, 2022). Contrary to HR attribution, antecedents of causal ascriptions of failure and success (Weiner, 1985) are largely neglected (Harvey et al., 2014). This omission sparks an urgent call for strategic HR scholars to build and test a robust framework to cast light on the microprocesses of antecedent-causal ascriptions (Harvey et al., 2014; Martinko et al., 2006; 2007).

Third, the extant literature has indicated that existing work on HRM in SMEs has stood at a nascent stage of theory development (Harney et al., 2022; Chadwich et al., 2013) and in stark contrast to its significant potential and importance (Harney and Alkhalaf, 2021; Lai

et al., 2017). Papers published in HR and employment journals in conjunction with the SME context are found to account for a scant 0.5% (Harney and Alkhalaf, 2021; Harney et al., 2022). This reinforces claims of the ‘acute shortage’ (Gilman and Edwards, 2008, p.533) of empirical evidence in this area (Cooke et al., 2020).

Regarding HR process-related topics (e.g. HR attributions), most research has been mostly conducted in large-size companies (Shantz et al., 2016; Martinko and Mackey, 2019). Little research has been done to shed light on this cognitive phenomenon in other organisational and national settings, for example, SMEs (Fan et al., 2021). This scarcity is surprising because SMEs play a major role as the backbone of most national economies, particularly in developing countries (Chadwick and Li, 2018). They account for over 90% of all businesses and offer 50% of private sector employment and net job creation worldwide (World Bank, 2023). With its worldwide important roles and functions, SMEs deserve more attention from HR process scholars (Fan et al., 2021).

Further, dissimilar to large organisations, SMEs are widely acknowledged with inherent resource constraints, flatter hierarchy, strong owner-manager influence, informality, and a labour-intensive nature (Klaas et al., 2012; Harney and Alkhalaf, 2021). All these distinguishing characteristics challenge the universalistic stance or ‘best practices’, instead supporting the ‘best fit’ perspective (Huselid, 1995; Wright and Boswell 2002). In particular, the adoption of strategic HR practices cannot be directly transferred and extrapolated from their complex counterparts (Psychogios et al., 2019; Huselid, 1995). HR practices in SMEs should be configured in line with their distinctive characteristics to achieve superior firm performance (Datta, Guthrie, and Wright, 2005; Klaas et al., 2012). Given a lack of solid findings to understand and develop the ‘science’ of HPWS in the context of SMEs, more thoughtful research is sorely needed to provide evidence-informed insights into the nature of HPWS, its impacts on employee causal attributions, OCB, and task performance through which future roadmap on the HR-performance linkage in SMEs is framed out to drive the field forward (Huselid, 2003; Harney and Alkhalaf, 2021).

Moreover, existing research on HPWS and employees’ attributional process has been primarily undertaken in developed Western countries, with very little attention dedicated to these concepts and their interactions in other cultures (Hewett et al., 2018; Hewett et al., 2021; Sanders et al., 2023; De Cieri et al., 2021). HPWS and employee cognitive phenomena

in non-Western settings are heavily influenced by institutional and cultural traditions, which are likely to elicit distinct causal attributions about HR events (Cooke and Kim, 2017). As such, the same HR practice may stimulate divergent employee attributions in different contexts. For example, work-life balance (WLB) is prescribed in Western organisations to create a physical and psychological boundary between work and non-work life (Cooke, 2018). In this context, people tend to assume that working long hours can lead to personal conflicts and/or harm well-being, making it important to maintain a well-balanced life to avoid such negative consequences (De Cieri et al., 2007; Wang et al., 2020). However, WLB in Asian contexts might be perceived differently due to cultural values (e.g. power distance, collectivism), societal norms (e.g. Confucianism) and family factors (e.g. upbringings) (Cooke, 2015; 2018). Asian workers may view work as an obligation and the workplace as a source of happiness, spiritual support, and social life, where family members of employees can sometimes get involved in organisational activities as an extended part of the company (Abu Bakar, Cooke, and Muenjohn, 2016; Cooke, 2015).

In this regard, contextual considerations, such as institutional factors and societal norms, play a critical role in shaping employees' cognitive sense-making phenomena. These environmental elements vary significantly across countries, necessitating HR process scholars to extend their research beyond the predominant Western focus (Sanders et al. 2023; Cooke, 2015; 2018). Asian developing countries, with their unique cultural and socio-economic conditions, present challenging and dynamic contexts for management research (Rowley, 2017; Bhagat et al., 2010) (Rowley, 2017; Bhagat et al., 2010). Accordingly, more thoughtful research should be conducted in this geographical region to provide more nuances of employees' causal ascription and its central role in mediating the HR-performance nexus (Klaas et al., 2012; Harney and Alkhalaf, 2022).

1.3 Research aim and objectives

Motivated by the above gaps, this thesis aims to review the four key HR process-based perspectives- *HR attributions* (Nishii et al. 2008), *HR strength* (Bowen and Ostroff, 2004), *relational attributions* (Eberly et al., 2011) and *causal ascriptions* (Weiner, 1985). At the heart of this process, I examine employees' *causal ascription* of why they and those around them succeed in the workplace and build an overarching framework around this core concept (Weiner, 1985; McAuley et al., 1992). In particular, the research adopts a quantitative, multilevel approach in conjunction with attribution theory (Heider, 1958; Kelley,

1973; Weiner, 1985) and signalling theory (Connelly et al., 2011) to build and test a conceptual model through which causal ascriptions act as the underlying mechanism bridging the two separate relationships: HPWS and OCB versus HPWS and task performance. Moreover, drawing on prior work (Hewett et al. 2019; Kelley and Michela, 1980), two boundary conditions, namely, LMX and OC, are added to amplify the HPWS-causal ascription link. In doing so, the study aims to accomplish two key goals.

First, by reviewing the four key HR process-based lenses, the study seeks to reinforce Weiner's assertion (2008) that attribution is a broad and expansive research field, encompassing multiple research pathways, in lieu of being restricted to the two prevailing frameworks proposed by Bowen and Ostroff (2004) and Nishii et al. (2008) in elucidating the HR-performance relationship. Moreover, when these four main research streams, namely, *HR strength*, *HR attributions*, *relational attributions* and *causal ascriptions*, are brought together, the study provides a comprehensive picture of HR processes or employees' psychological perspectives through which characteristics and principles of each research line are carefully described, enabling a more nuanced understanding of their distinctive contributions to the extant HR literature. By doing so, this review process can provide good suggestions for future scholars to compare and integrate these key streams in their studies, thereby affording more insights into this promising research area.

Second, building upon the foundational work of Weiner (1985), this study attempts to explain the HR-performance linkage through employees' unique attributional processes. To be more specific, employees make causal assessment of a successful event rather than a neutral context suggested by Bowen and Ostroff (2004) and Nishii et al., (2008). They also reflect on themselves rather than largely seek external causes to make sense of achievements of their own and others. In this regard, the study not only underscores facets of employees' affective responses and volitional impulses which largely determine their behaviours and performance at work, but also redefines the concept of success within an organisational environment. Success here is construed as a continuous flow, as opposed to a destination, by which employees attribute their superior performance to their internal qualities and feel a great sense of satisfaction and self-efficacy (Weiner, 1985; Gundlach et al., 2003). These positive feelings in turn catalyse them to consistently overcome task challenges and reach key developmental milestones throughout their careers (Weiner, 1985; 2008; Harvey et al., 2014). This perspective may prompt strategic HR scholars and decision-makers to invest more in

motivational strategies and psychological factors that drive employee career development, ultimately benefiting both individual growth and organisational performance (Harvey et al., 2014). However, to achieve this, there are several key research questions (RQ) that need to be first addressed:

RQ 1: How do causal ascriptions differ from other research streams and what role does this construct play in explaining its impact on employee OCB and task performance?

RQ 2: How can SMEs design a strong HRM system through which employees can form positive causal ascriptions that prompt them to exhibit extra role behaviours and improve task performance?

RQ 3: What are potential boundary conditions surrounding the two relationships in question (e.g. HPWS-internal causal ascriptions versus HPWS-external causal ascriptions) and under what conditions are these interactions strengthened or weakened?

1.4 Research contributions

By dealing with existing research gaps, the extant thesis can contribute to the HR process literature in some respects. First, since the works of Heider (1958), Kelly (1973), Weiner (1985) and more recently Bowen and Ostroff (2004), Nishii et al. (2008), there has been an increasing number of published reviews as to employees' appraisal process in the organisational context (e.g. Martinko et al., 2006; 2007; Harvey et al., 2014; Hewett et al., 2018; Wang et al., 2020; Hu and Oh, 2022). However, these reviews are restricted to one or two research streams. For example, Martinko et al. (2006; 2007), and Harvey et al. (2014) largely focused on *causal ascriptions* within an achievement-related context whereas Hewett et al. (2018), Hewett (2021), Wang et al. (2020) and recently, Hu and Oh (2022) are chiefly concerned with *HR attributions* (Nishii et al., 2008) and *HR strength* (Bowen and Ostroff, 2004). None of these integrate all key existing research strands in their works. A potential explanation for this is that HR scholars pay much attention to two influential works of Bowen and Ostroff (2004) and Nishii et al., (2008) and then synthesise works using their principles to identify research gaps, and then propose avenues for future research. On the other hand, foundational research has yet to be established to provide HR scholars with a solid basis for exploring and advancing Weiner's ideas (1985) within the HRM domain. Hence, this might be

challenging to incorporate this strand of research and suggest future directions in their reviews.

In this study, I view attribution as a vast field of research which can consist of multiple potential streams rather than sticking to merely *HR strength* (Bowen and Ostroff, 2004) and *HR attributions* (Nishii et al., 2008). For this reasoning, the study goes beyond the current reviews by bringing together four key pathways, namely, *HR attributions* (Nishii et al. 2008), *HR strength* (Bowen and Ostroff, 2004), *relational attributions* (Eberly et al., 2011) and *causal ascriptions* (Weiner, 1985), through which people can understand their distinctive roles in bridging HPWS and performance. This study can serve as a foundation for future research to keep advancing the attributional approach of Weiner (1985), clear up a new path or seek new ideas by combining the existing research lines, to provide more insights into HR process.

Second, when HR scholars examine employees' causal ascriptions in achievement-related contexts, they primarily underline its impacts on focal individuals' affect, behaviours and expectancies, leaving potential drivers of this cognitive sensemaking largely neglected (Harvey et al., 2014; Martinko et al., 2006; 2007). By drawing on the tripartite model of Hewett et al. (2019), the study is among the first to bring together HPWS (*information*), LMX (*motivation*), and cynicism (*belief*) to evidence employees' causal ascriptions of success. The current study employs HPWS, LMX, OC, which act in unison to intensify employees' thoughts about successful events. Specifically, when employees experience a desired outcome, such as, having public praise or outstanding appraisal, they tend to form causal ascriptions by attending to the role of HR content in enhancing their abilities (*information*), reflecting on their prior experiences to assess organisational sincerity and integrity during HR implementation (*beliefs*), and relating their success to the quality of relationship with their leaders to weigh up values arising from supervision support (*motivation*) (Kelley and Michela, 1980; Hewett et al., 2019).

By doing so, the study also addresses the call of Hewett et al. (2018) in integrating different pathways to better inform employee's attributional process. The conceptual framework characterised by *HPWS*, *organisational cynicism*, *LMX* can be also interpreted as the combination of three pathways of research: *interpersonal*, *intrapersonal perspectives and relational attributions* (Kelley et al., 1973; 1979; Weiner, 1985; Eberly et al., 2011). Specifically, in the presence of successful events, employees tend to seek and confirm causes

behind by referring to the efficacy of HR practices (*interpersonal attributions*), assessing the integrity of organisation and their abilities based on their own experiences and beliefs (*intrapersonal attributions*) and considering their social interactions with leaders (*relational attributions*). In short, the research is not only among the first to examine antecedents of employee's causal ascriptions of success, but also to combine three research streams of HR process to shed better light on this antecedent-causal ascription microprocess.

Finally, the research is undertaken in the context of Vietnamese SMEs, a unique and vibrant economy (Harney and Alkhalaf, 2021; Do and Shipton, 2020). By doing so, the thesis expands the predominant Western research context (e.g. US, UK) to examine causal ascriptions in a developing country in transition with distinct institutional and cultural characteristics (Cooke, 2015; 2018). The research thereby makes unique contextual contributions to the extant literature.

Added to this, I embrace a preferred multilevel approach (i.e. team level and individual level) to examine the top-down influence of HPWS on causal ascriptions and thereafter behaviours and task performance. This is because organisations are by nature multilevel entities where employees are nested within teams and teams operate within organisation (Flinchbaugh et al., 2016; Kozlowski and Klein, 2000). People may not make full sense of any event or occurrence surrounding them in a nonsocial vacuum (Fan et al., 2021). Causal attributions are socially embedded phenomena and attributors are expected to exchange information within and across levels to inform and validate their thoughts about the success of their own and others around them (Hewett et al., 2018; Martinko, Harvey, and Dasborough, 2011). The thesis thus attempts to refine HR theories to justify the HR-performance relationship and bridge theoretical perspectives with empirical evidence (Do, Budhwar, and Patel, 2018). This is the third and last contribution to the extant HR literature.

In the following section: **Vietnamese research context**, I will further explore and delve deeper into the research context by outlining its key characteristics of history, economy and culture and then explaining why Vietnam is a particularly relevant setting for this study.

1.5 Why Vietnamese research context?

Vietnam has emerged as a country of transition since the economic reform (Đổi Mới) in 1986 with the aim of transforming from a centrally planned economy to a market-oriented one

with a multi-sectoral economic structure and a multi-ownership system (Zhu et al., 2008). Following ‘open door’ policies, Vietnam has experienced a spectrum of remarkable achievements, for example, a steady economic growth which are sustained by inflows of foreign direct investments (FDI) and export-driven development strategy. Vietnam today is acknowledged as a thriving lower middle-income economy, an attractive destination for FDI, and export powerhouse (World Bank, 2013; OECD, 2021). The poverty headcount fell sharply from 58 percent in the early 1990s to below 2% in 2021 (World Bank, 2022). The unemployment rate is relatively low, and women play an active role in the labour market since government facilitates equal access to education and job opportunities (OECD, 2021). Added to this, the economy has been diversified with other business types such as domestic-private enterprises (DPEs) and foreign-invested enterprises (FIEs), together with state-owned enterprises (SOEs) (Nguyen et al., 2011; Ren et al., 2021).

The economic, political, and social developments have resulted in significant changes in the applicability of HRM practices within Vietnamese enterprises and entities (Nguyen et al., 2018). For example, HRM and personnel management (PM) were introduced to replace socialist traditional HR practices. New forms of employment contracts, such as fixed-term, temporary, and unlimited-term contracts, have been used as alternatives to ‘jobs for life’ system that predominated in the old economic system (Zhu, 2005; Ren et al., 2021). Managers have gained some more degree of managerial autonomy to make decisions (e.g. choice of HR management system) rather than completely residing in the controlling hand of the government before economic reform in 1986 (Ren et al., 2021). However, managerial philosophy has generally drawn upon a mixture of core nationalist, socialist and Confucian values/traditions, such as respect for the elderly, harmonious community, high power distance, centralised decision making, high collectivism (Zhu et al., 2008; Ren et al., 2021).

Due to existing government regulations and laws, cultural customs, an incomplete market-oriented economic system, innovative forms of people management, such as HPWS, may go against established institutional traditions in Vietnam and has not been fully adopted in Vietnamese organisations (Vo and Bartram, 2012; Zhu et al., 2008). Strategic HRM is mostly found in FIEs in Vietnam, international market oriented DPEs, and large-scale private firms (Nguyen et al., 2018; Ren et al., 2021). For example, FIEs are more likely to display sophisticated HR practices by transferring integrated-HR practices system from the headquarter in their home country and following international HR management standards

(Zhu et al., 2008; Zhu and Verstraetan, 2013). These companies also tend to localise their Western managerial philosophies and practices to some certain extent to suit Vietnam's traditional cultural values, norms, and beliefs (Nguyen et al., 2018). Meanwhile, globalisation has required export-based domestic organisations or joint-ventures with foreign partners in Vietnam to flexibly learn, imitate and adopt sophisticated HR practices to develop a skilled workforce and sustain a competitive advantage (World Bank, 2012; Vo and Bartram, 2012; Zhu et al., 2008).

Also of interest is that local private firms nowadays are greatly influenced by Westernised HR practices. They have upgraded their HRM system rapidly to catch up with FIEs (Vu et al., 2019). Their HRM system predominantly comprises of core practices, such as, sophisticated recruitment and selection, extensive training, employee security, internal mobility, selective staffing, and incentive reward (Vu et al., 2019; King-Kauanui, Ngoc, and Ashley-Cotleur, 2006). However, by heavily getting influenced by several inherent characteristics (e.g. respect for high-ups, harmonious relationship, authoritarianism), it is less likely for these firms to adopt other modern HR practices, for example, employee participation in decision making process (Zhu et al., 2008; Zhu and Verstraeten, 2013). In contrast, state owned Enterprises (SOEs) and a large number of DPEs still maintain and practise socialist personnel management system distinctively characterised by government-controlled labour allocation, high hierarchy, relational-based commitment, lifetime employment, government scales-based pay system (Ren et al., 2021; Vu et al., 2019).

Like most countries, Vietnamese SMEs (representing 96% of all businesses) play a critical role as a driving force for the economic growth (OECD, 2021). However, they are also distinct in some respects compared to Western counterparts. For example, Vietnam do not differ firms by sector and view any firm having a limit of as few as 250 employees as SMEs while this definition varies across countries, such as the US and Canada, with SMEs' a maximum size of up to 500 employees (Krishnan and Scullion, 2017). Furthermore, Vietnamese SMEs are characterised by distinguishing entrepreneurial ethos vis-à-vis 'developed' economies due to the mixed influence of Confucian tradition (e.g harmonious work relationship), long-established national norms (e.g. high respect for higher-ups; collectivism), institutional regulations and Western values. All these forces may cause variations in conceptualising and configuring HPWS within organisation (Vu et al., 2019; OECD, 2021).

Together, drawing on a long history, a vibrant transitional economy, and distinctive cultural and institutional characteristics, Vietnam or more precisely, Vietnamese SMEs are expected to provide a unique context for this research for several reasons. First, a significant economic growth brings a dynamic and evolving workplace environment where Vietnamese firms are willing to adopt modern Westernised managerial strategies to stay more innovative, adaptive, and competitive during this period of economic transformation (OECD, 2021). By so doing, it creates favourable conditions for employees, particularly the young and growing workforce, to access sophisticated HR practices and feel a need to voice their concerns and thoughts about the success of their own and others within organisations. However, considering the use of HPWS at the nascent stage, employees' causal ascriptions of successful events in conjunction with HR practices may differ from those in more established economies (Ren et al., 2021; Vu et al., 2019).

Second, Vietnamese culture, influenced by Confucianism and collectivist values, places a strong emphasis on social harmony, respect for authority, and group cohesion. These cultural traits can influence how employees perceive and attribute success, potentially prioritising collective achievements over individual accomplishments and valuing the role of leadership and organisational support. As a result, when receiving the same success, for example, a promotion, Vietnamese employees' causal ascriptions may differ from their Western counterparts who are heavily influenced by prevalent work ethics and culture, such as individualism (Cooke, 2018).

In a similar vein, incongruent cultural influences also lead to differing perceptions about OCB. For example, Eastern employees may view prosocial behaviours as in-role tasks and more actively take part in extra activities on a daily basis such as helping others, working long hours, whereas Western employees put a high emphasis on work-life balance and draw a clear line between in-role and extra-role duties (Coyle-Shapiro, Kessler, and Purcell, 2004). As such, Vietnam can potentially provide interesting findings relative to relationships between causal ascriptions, OCB, and task performance.

In sum, as an emerging market with unique socio-economic and cultural characteristics, Vietnam offers a fresh and unique context for this research. Examining HPWS, causal ascriptions of success, OCB, task performance and their interactions in such a distinctive

organisational setting can contribute to a broader understanding of these concepts beyond Western-centric viewpoints, offering insights into the global diversity of workplace dynamics.

1.6 Thesis Structure

The remainder of this thesis is organised as follows:

Chapter 2 (*Literature review*) provides a comprehensive examination of four key strands of research: causal ascriptions, HR attribution, HR strength, and relational attributions. Each perspective is explored in depth, with fundamental issues and distinctive characteristics highlighted to trace their developmental trajectories. This analysis reveals existing limitations within each strand and suggests future research directions. Furthermore, the chapter defines and elaborates on the key constructs of the conceptual model, including HPWS, LMX, OC, OCB, and TP as well as their interrelationships. Importantly, this literature review not only substantiates the research problems identified in Chapter 1 but also provides a robust foundation for the subsequent chapters.

Chapter 3 (*The conceptual model, theoretical perspectives, and hypothesis development*) delves into the theoretical foundations that underpin the impact of HPWS on OCB and task performance. The chapter provides an in-depth explanation of signalling theory and attribution theory and articulates how these theories work in concert to form the basis of the proposed hypotheses. Two theories complement each other to elucidate the mechanisms through which HPWS separately impacts employee behaviours and task performance via causal ascriptions of success. The chapter aims to set the stage for the empirical investigation.

Chapter 4 (*Methodology*) provides a detailed discussion of the research methodology employed in this study. It describes the used research paradigm, research design, data collection methods, ethical works and analytical techniques to validate the proposed hypotheses. Additionally, it discusses the research procedures for ensuring the reliability and validity of the data. By establishing a clear and rigorous methodological framework, this chapter ensures the robustness and credibility of the empirical investigation.

Chapter 5 (*finding and discussion*) presents the findings from the empirical investigation and provides a comprehensive discussion of the results. The chapter begins by summarising the key data and statistical analyses performed, highlighting significant patterns

and relationships observed in the study. It then interprets these findings in the context of the theoretical framework and hypotheses outlined in earlier chapters. The discussion addresses how the results contribute to our understanding of the impact of HPWS on OCB and task performance through causal ascriptions.

Chapter 6 (*implications, limitations, future directions, and conclusion*) explores the implications of the findings for both theory and practice. It discusses theoretical contributions to the extant HR literature and the practical applications for HR professionals and leaders. In sum, the chapter emphasises the design of effective HR strategies that help employees enhance the quality of leader-member exchange while reducing organisational cynicism. These crucial factors facilitate employees to form positive causal ascriptions which set a scene to achieve great performances in the workplace. The chapter also acknowledges research limitations, and then propose directions for future research.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter begins by examining the foundational aspects of HPWS, including its conceptualisation, the evolution of its terminology, and various configurations. It then reviews the application of HPWS in SMEs, the service sector, and explores the dual nature of HPWS to provide deeper insights into this core construct. Subsequently, HPWS is analysed in relation to OCB and task performance, highlighting why HPWS impacts OCB and task performance separately, rather than treating these two outcomes as interdependent. In a similar vein, other concepts namely, LMX, OC, are also integrated and explained to support the overarching conceptual model. At the heart of this chapter, four key research strands, *causal ascriptions*, *HR strength*, *HR attributions*, and *relational attributions*, are reviewed to underscore its unique characteristics and their unique contributions to the HR process literature. Each is described regarding its definition, antecedents, consequences, contributions, research gaps, and future directions. By doing so, the chapter offers insights into where each line of research has progressed and how distinctive they are in explaining the HR-performance relationship. Of these approaches, *causal ascriptions* are brought to the forefront as an oversight in the HRM domain that urgently requires more scholarly attention. Overall, this chapter serves as a pivotal link, connecting the foundational discussions from Chapter 1 with the more advanced topics to be explored in subsequent chapters. By offering a comprehensive review, it deepens the understanding of the HR-performance relationship through the lens of employee cognitive sense-making, laying the groundwork for the theoretical framing and hypothesis development in Chapter 3.

2.2. Overview of HPWS

2.2.1 What are High-Performance Work Systems?

Describing HPWS has been a challenge to strategic HR scholars as researchers hold their own perspectives about the characteristics of HPWS and its influence on performance due to their distinct theoretical, empirical, and contextual approaches (Huselid, 1995; Sun et al., 2007; Sanders et al., 2023). Despite inherent divergences, all conceptualisations appear to reflect a key common thread that HPWS are a set of innovative HR practices that are mutually reinforcing and aligned with the organisation's strategy to yield better individual and, in aggregate, organisational performance (Boxall and Macky, 2014; Sanders and Yang, 2016,

Zhai and Tian, 2019) (*See Table 1 for details*). In other words, HPWS act as a complex and powerful whole, rather than individual practices, by which HR practices, procedures and people work in line with the strategic goals to engender effective impacts on employee competencies, commitment, and motivation, and thereby overall firm performance (Jiang et al., 2012; Combs et al., 2006; Kaushik and Mukherjee, 2022). For instance, when rigorous recruitment and selection techniques are combined with complementary HR practices, such as competitive pay and benefits, organisations are more likely to attract highly qualified candidates. Additional practices, such as training and development, job security, career advancement opportunities, and decentralized decision-making, can further enhance employee satisfaction and commitment, helping to develop and retain top talent (Combs et al., 2006; Kaushik and Mukherjee, 2022).

Table 1: Definitions of HPWS

Author(s)	Year	Definition
Huselid	1995	HPWS is designed to ‘improve knowledge, skills and abilities of a firm’s current and potential employees, increase their motivation, reduce shirking and enhance retention of quality employees while encouraging nonperformers to leave the firm’ (P.635).
Becker and Huselid	1998	HPWS as a set of distinct but interrelated HR practices together with selecting, developing, upholding, and motivating a workforce with a view to gaining the perceived performance of organisations and sustainable competitive advantage.
Tomer	2001	HPWS aims to achieve ‘high performance through people’ (P.64).
Datta, Guthrie and Wright	2005	HPWS as ‘a set of HR practices designed to enhance employee’s skills, commitment and productivity in such a way that employees become a source of competitive advantage’ (P.135).
Sun, Aryee, and Law	2007	HPWS practices can help enhance employees’ shared perceptions of a supportive organisational environment motivating discretionary behaviours that could lead to firm outcomes.
Liao et al.	2009	HPWS as a bundle of HR practices that are aimed at improving employees’ competences, motivation, and performance in terms of delivering high-quality service to customers.
Gittell, Seidner, and Wimbush	2010	HPWS as a system designed to ‘achieve high performance by adopting practices that recognise and leverage on employees’ ability to create value’ (P.490).

Patel et al.	2013	HPWS as ‘a system of horizontally and vertically aligned employment practices designed to affect both the ability and the motivation of employees’ (P.1421).
Giannikis and Nikandrou	2013	HPWS as a ‘bundle of synergistic HRM practices that results in improved firm performance through employees’ positive responses and enhanced job attitudes’ (P.3646).
Van De Voorde and Beijer	2015	HPWS as ‘a group of separate but interconnected HR practices designed to enhance employee and firm performance through enhancing employee skills, motivation and opportunity to contribute’ (P.63).
Hefferman and Dundon	2016	HPWS as ‘including a range of innovative HR practices and work design processes that, when used in certain combinations or bundles, are mutually reinforcing and produce synergistic benefits’ (P.212).
Liu et al.	2020	High-performance work systems (HPWSs) refer to an integrated set of human resource practices focusing on skill development, productivity, commitment, and which position employees as a source of attaining competitive advantage.
Xiao and Cooke	2023	HPWS encompass practices like selective hiring, extensive training, performance-based rewards, and fostering teamwork which are designed to maximise employee potential and create alignment between individual performance and organisational goals, ultimately driving productivity.

The history of HPWS began in the 1980s when some affluent economies heavily invested in their work system to boost the efficacy of the workforce (Kaushik and Mukherjee, 2022). For instance, Japan took the leading role with its principles of *lean production* while Germany and Sweden were respectively well-known for *diversified quality production* and *social-technical systems* (Kaushik and Mukherjee, 2022). Feeling left behind, the USA decided to restructure and redefine their work system to make it more competitive in the global market (Kaushik and Mukherjee, 2022). Huselid, in his work (1995), provided an integrated framework of HRM or HPWS by which HR practices are synergised horizontally with each other and vertically with the organisational strategy to outperform opponents. Since its inception, researchers largely rely on the content-based approach to emphasise that the intensive use of professional HR practices as a well-integrated system can result in desired outcomes (Huselid and Becker, 1996; Wright, Gardner, Moynihan, and Allen, 2005; Combs et al., 2006).

To strengthen their hypotheses, most scholars adopt social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) and the norm of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960), with the core tenet that employees feel obligated to work harder and display a higher level of commitment to common goals when they are treated favourably by organisation (Collins and Smith, 2006). For example, when organisation genuinely implements HR practices for the purpose of enhancing individual well-being and competencies, employees are likely to respond with increased trust in management. This trust, in turn, leads to higher levels of work engagement, affective commitment, and job satisfaction. These factors work together to ultimately invigorate organisational wellbeing (Schaufeli et al., 2002; Kitt and Sanders, 2022).

This idea is viewed as a reciprocal investment or win-win relationship that makes both parties satisfied in their role and then together act for organisational gains (Sanders and Yang, 2016; Sun et al., 2007). The ability-motivation-opportunity (AMO) theory is another widely referenced framework in the HPWS literature. According to this theory, well-structured HR initiatives that incorporate ability-enhancing practices (such as training, development, and performance feedback), motivation-enhancing practices (including job security and performance-based rewards), and opportunity-enhancing practices (such as decision-making involvement, autonomy, and job design) can boost employees' competencies and self-efficacy, ultimately enhancing their task performance (Do et al., 2016; Messersmith et al., 2011; Edgar et al., 2020).

However, HPWS are not always effective as expected and not all employees within organisation feel a need to repay their employer since they interpret them differently (Sanders and Yang, 2016). As such, scholars have devoted their attention to the process-based approach to highlight the importance of the psychological processes through which employees tend to assign causes for HR deployment, especially following the two influential studies of Bowen and Ostroff (2004) and Nishii et al. (2008). To unravel this cognitive sensemaking phenomenon, researchers can address the questions as to what causes the variabilities in employee HR interpretations and how organisations can minimise these divergences for optimised performance (Sanders et al., 2014; Kitt and Sanders, 2022; Xiao and Cooke, 2020). Recently, some scholars (e.g. Katou et al., 2014; Katou et al., 2021) have shown an interest in the integrative model where both the content and process of the HRM system are combined to provide more insightful nuances of the HPWS-performance relationship. This means that organisations not only endeavoured to develop a set of strategic

HR practices and relevant policies (Boselie et al., 2005; Combs et al., 2006) but also build up an effective communicative system through which HR messages are smoothly circulated within organisation (Li, Frenkel, and Sanders, 2011; Bowen and Ostroff, 2004). By doing so, employees can clearly understand what is expected of them and accordingly exhibit desired behaviours for great personal achievements and collectively for superior firm performance (Katou et al., 2021; Nishii et al., 2008).

Together with debates on HR content and process, the extant HR literature demonstrates a tension between the bright side and dark side of HPWS. While strategic HR researchers have usually converged into an optimistic idea that a coherent set of HR practices are beneficial for organisations, there is an alternative pessimistic view suggesting that HPWS, at times, are a modern exploitative tool which organisations use to gain a competitive advantage over rivals at the expense of employees (Jensen et al., 2013; Kroon et al., 2009). Given the rhetoric of HPWS seems to be soft, the reality is almost always hard because the interests of employers and employees are by nature not aligned and the deployment of HPWS varies across units, organisations, and countries (Jensen et al., 2013).

To survive, business performance, at times, trumps employee well-being and firms usually seek to get the most out of workers to maximise firm performance under a veneer of so-called strategic HR practices (Van der Voorde and Beijer, 2015; Kroon et al., 2009). As a result, this leads to deleterious consequences for employee health-related outcomes (e.g. heavy workload, burnout, heightened job pressure) (Jensen et al., 2013). For example, when development and career opportunities, rewards, performance appraisals, job design, autonomy, decision-making participation are carried out in the workplace, they may send the clear message that organisations are willing to offer the incentives to employees for enhanced satisfaction and commitment but also expect them to put in extra efforts by clarifying a high amount of job demands and control, thereby causing workers to feel exploited (Jensen et al., 2013; Kroon et al., 2009).

In the current study, HPWS are construed as a bundle of distinct yet interconnected HR practices that can produce the synergistic effect upon enhancing employees' knowledge, skills, and abilities, and thereby motivating them to act in the best interests of the organisation (Datta, Guthrie, and Wright, 2005; Combs et al., 2006; Cooke et al., 2019). By definition, HPWS here is viewed in good terms and the intensive use of strategic HR practices is

positively associated with OCB and task performance. Most organisational researchers have contended that there are interconnections concerning these three constructs because HPWS usually promote job satisfaction which prompt employees to engage in extra-role behaviours and then have a positive impact on individual outcomes (Organ, 1988; 1997; Jiao et al., 2013; Atatsi et al., 2019).

However, many instances can challenge these prevailing assumptions and demonstrate that these tripartite interactions are not always straightforward and positive as assumed due to a range of compelling tensions (Bolino et al., 2004; 2013). For example, employees frequently exhibit extra-role behaviours might feel overloaded and then cause harm to their well-being. By spending much time helping others, employees might not accomplish their prescribed job duties, which lead to poor performance appraisal, in aggregate weak organisational functioning (Bolino et al., 2013). Moreover, when HPWS are designed to maximise employee performance through practices such as rigorous performance evaluations, performance-based compensation, and high targets, they tend to prioritise their in-role tasks over discretionary behaviours, such as helping colleagues or engaging in voluntary organisational activities, which are not formally valued and rewarded (Jensen et al., 2013; Anderson and Bolino, 2022). For this reasoning, OCB and task performance are not related in the current research and thereby are examined separately in relation with HPWS. In short, HPWS are largely explored in a bright light in the current research and serve as a robust instrument that independently exerts influence on OCB and task performance.

2.2.2 Terminology of High-Performance Work Systems

'Work systems' is synonymous with HR practices, HR system, or HR configuration providing general ideas about how different HR components are 'bundled' or 'clustered' for better outcomes (Kaushik, and Mukherjee, 2022). In particular, these generic labels refer to a suite of interconnected (rather than separate) HR arrangements but do not reflect the underlying goal of the HR systems (Boon et al., 2019). Yet, when *'high-performance'* is paired with *'Work systems'*, the term can reflect more specific managerial purposes that organisations aim to use a set of complementary work practices to establish a performance-focused workplace through enhancing the value of human capital (Kaushik and Mukherjee, 2022). Thus, companies, which conduct HPWS, are expected to produce synergistic effects on employee competencies, motivating them to work hard for strategic goals, and eventually experience significant increases in productivity and financial performance (Posthuma et al.,

2013; Murphy et al., 2018). When HR practices fit into a coherent system, they complement each other and produce systematic effects on performance. In contrast, when not fit, they detract from each other's effects. Therefore, HR practices should be investigated jointly rather than separately (Boon et al., 2019).

Following this logic, HPWS can be also referred as high performance HR practices (Sun et al., 2007), or high performance work practices (Combs et al., 2006), but slightly differ from other labels with different organisational targets, such as high commitment work systems (Chiang et al., 2014), high involvement work systems (Boxall and Macky, 2009); relationship-oriented HR system (Kehoe and Collins, 2017), network-building (Collins and Clark, 2003), customer service (Chuang and Liao, 2010); knowledge-oriented organisational systems (Donate et al., 2020), and initiative/innovation-enhancing HRM system (Zhang et al., 2024) (see *Table 2 for details*). For example, HPWS might exert high expectations and pressure on their staff to well perform whereas relationship-oriented HR system or innovation-focused HR practices might aim to stimulate teamwork activities and interpersonal interactions (Kroon et al., 2009; Chadwich, 2010).

However, Boon and colleagues, in their systematic review of HRM systems and their measurement (2019), argue that despite some differences in strategic objectives, various labels for HRM systems have been used interchangeably, and the items used to measure these systems often overlap significantly (Kwon, Bae, and Lawler, 2010). For example, for instance, HPWS are congruent with high commitment HR systems in numerous studies. Added to this, a strategic HRM system may not always accurately reflect the intended focus and meaning of its measurement items. For instance, Camelo-Ordaz and colleagues (2011) utilise commitment and collaboration HR measures developed by Lepak and Snell (2002), yet they refer to it as a high involvement system. Such labeling inconsistencies can create ambiguity and confusion, leading to misalignment between the conceptualisation, measurement, and core theoretical assumptions regarding the synergies among HR practices within a system (Boon et al., 2019; Kwon, Bae, and Lawler, 2010). Therefore, Boon et al. (2019) call for more focused research to provide clear explanations of specific and targeted HRM systems and their measurement. This approach would enable scholars to better understand how to conceptualise, measure, and integrate HR practices into a strategic HRM system that consistently influences individual and organisational outcomes, thereby yielding more valid and reliable findings (Boon et al., 2019).

Table 2: Evolution of HPWS terminology across researchers

Author(s)	Year	Terminology	Context
Huselid	1995	High-performance work practices	Multisector
Wood and De Menezes	1998	High-commitment management	Multisector
Sun et al.	2007	High-performance HR practices	Service sector
Macky and Boxall	2008	High-involvement work processes	Multisector
Wood and de Menezes	2011	High involvement work systems	Multisector
Kim and Sung-Choon	2013	High-involvement work practices	Multisector
Weinberg Avgar, Sugrue and Cooney-Miner	2013	High-performance work environment	Service sector
Mitchell, Obeidat, and Bray	2013	High-performance human resource practices	Private sector
Cristini, Eriksson, and Pozzoli	2013	High-performance management practices	Private sector
Chiang, Shih, and Hsu	2014	High commitment work systems	Engineering industry
Neves, Almeida, and Velez	2018	Commitment-based HR practices	Multisector
McClean and Collins	2019	High-commitment human resources practices	Multisector
Abbasi, Shabbir, Abbas, and Tahir	2021	High performance work system	Public sector
Jiang, Shi, and Wen	2022	Strategic human resource management	Multisector

2.2.3 High Performance Work System Practices

The configuration of HPWS has been explained by two mainstream perspectives: universalistic versus contingency (Meuer, 2017; Kaufman, 2010). *Universalistic view* or *best practice approach* suggests that some HR practices are better than others and should be adopted by every business (Murphy et al., 2018). In particular, all organisations, irrespective of distinct characteristics and contextual factors, can implement some key HR practices to attain higher performance (Pfeffer, 1998; Meuer, 2017). Delery and Doty (1996, p. 802) also proposed 7 strategic HR practices including ‘internal career opportunities, formal training and development systems, appraisal measures job definition, employment security, voice mechanisms, and profit sharing’. More recently, Posthuma and colleagues (2013), in their meta-analysis of 193 studies, suggest 61 HR practices, of which ten are identified as key high-performance HR practices. Despite great effort, HR strategic scholars have yet to reach a consensus on a fixed set of HR practices that can work for all organisations (Murphy et al., 2018; Jewell et al., 2022; Kaushik and Mukkerjee, 2022). Combs et al. (2006) identified twenty-two practices that can be components of HPWS but noted that there is variability and

‘a lack of unanimity among SHRM researchers as to which ones are high performance work practices’ (p. 509).

In contrast, the contingency view, or best-fit approach, suggests that organisations by nature are unique entities that require customised HR architectures, rather than a one-size-fits-all solution (Kroon and Paauwe, 2022). Hence, constellations of management practices should be largely predicated upon unique internal factors (e.g. business model, organisational culture, strategic priorities, firm size) that vary across organisations, and external elements (e.g. technological advances, consumer behaviour change, financial crises) (Han et al., 2019; Shin and Konrad, 2014). Each organisation accordingly needs to flexibly adopt and configure a different cluster of HR practices that match their own resources and conditions (Cooke et al., 2019). For example, organisations pursuing different strategies are likely to incorporate different HR practices. Cost leadership-oriented companies tend to use HR practices that minimise operational costs while conforming with product or service standards. Innovation-oriented firms are prone to adopt a set of HR practices, such as learning, knowledge exchange, teamwork, participation, and risk-taking to facilitate employee creativity (Hayton, 2003; Kaushik and Mukherjee, 2022).

In relation to firm size, Mazzei and others (2016) drew on Posthuma et al. (2013) to develop nine HR practices that can foster innovation in SMEs, including selective hiring, great autonomy, onboarding, financial incentives/rewards, low status differentials, job security, formal information sharing program, personal development plans, and public recognition. They also posit that HPWS of SMEs cannot be directly transferred from large firms or any other firms without carefully considering societal and cultural organisational customs (Murphy et al., 2018). For this reason, each strategic HR system is unique and challenging for other companies to imitate. When such a system evolves over time and continues to effectively enhance the competencies of human capital, it can serve as a source of sustained competitive advantage (Barney et al., 2001; Murphy et al., 2018).

This study adopts a contingency approach by utilising the HPWS measure developed by Klaas et al. (2012), which is specifically tailored for the small business sector. However, this scale has been revised and further developed through preliminary interviews with HR specialists from Vietnamese SMEs to better align with the research context. This approach allows HPWS to be conceptualised, bundled, and measured in a unique manner, thereby

providing more accurate and reliable results (Chadwick, 2010; Boon et al., 2019; Colakoglu et al., 2022).

2.2.4 High Performance Work Systems in SMEs

HPWS are mostly examined in the context of large and complex organisations whereas a small fraction has addressed the impact of human resource systems within SMEs (Klaas et al., 2012; Guerrero et al., 2022). The sparseness of the current empirical record in SMEs is relatively surprising because SMEs account for a large majority of employment in private sector employment and thereby offer great job creation (OECD, 2022). Added to this, SMEs, with distinguishing characteristics, can provide a unique setting for strategic HR scholars to gain invaluable insights into how HPWS are applied and what potential challenges may emerge during implementation (Klaas et al., 2012; Chadwick and Li, 2018).

Human resource management in SMEs have prominently been presented in two starkly polarised terms: '*small is beautiful*' versus '*bleak house*' perspectives (Wilkinson, 1999; Mendy, Rahman, and Bal, 2020). '*Beautiful*' small and medium firms are described as good employment, distinct extensive communication, harmonious employment relations, adaptability to change and flatter hierarchy (Harney and Alkhalaf, 2021). For example, with a less hierarchical structure, a smaller span of control, and greater flexibility, SMEs are thought to encourage direct communication and cooperative employment relationships, fostering an work environment conducive to knowledge exchange, creativity, and innovation within the organisation (Hodson and Sullivan, 1985; Edwards, Sen Gupta, and Tsai, 2007). As a result, SMEs can outperform their competitors by becoming more innovative, agile, and responsive to change and environmental uncertainty (Do and Shipton, 2019; Haar et al., 2022).

Conversely, '*bleak houses*' scenario has revealed a dark side of small and medium organisations which are notorious for autocratic management style, poor working conditions, inherent resources constraints, owner-manager influence, predominance of informality, low level of unionisation, labour-intensive nature (Kroon and Paauwe, 2022; Klaas et al., 2012; Arthur et al., 2021). In particular, due to inherent financial restraints, SMEs tend to address cost pressures by allocating minimal investments in facilities, equipment, and staff. For example, unlike large firms where HR programs are usually designed and implemented by HR professionals, limited economies of scale may not permit SMEs to hire a full-time HR specialists and thereby strategic HR decisions reside in a small group of key people such as

owners/business leaders or assistants (acting under the supervision of business leader) (Klaas et al., 2012). These people may have a lack of expertise in HRM issues (Klaas et al., 2012; Harney et al., 2022). As a result, these deficiencies may give rise to HR problems, such as selecting wrong candidates through a poor recruitment process, or HR implementation is not fair and effective (De Winne and Sels 2012; Chadwick et al., 2013).

By comparison, SMEs are not ‘scale down’ version of large firms and transferability of large firm approach to HPWS may not be suited for SMEs (Sun and Mamman, 2022). For example, the HR practices, such as newsletters, formal voice mechanisms, formal systems for participation, may be less relevant within SMEs which are widely known for the nature of direct and flexible communication (Amarakoon and Colley, 2023; Harney et al., 2022). Added to this, SMEs, compared to large counterparts, are highly labour-intensive and thus organisational survival is largely predicated on skilled and talented employee discretionary effort and engagement (Patel and Conklin, 2012; Zhang and Edgar, 2022). Also, SMEs, as resource-constrained organisations, are highly aware of replacement costs associated with labour turnover and thus carefully design and consider HR practices to ensure that they are implemented effectively (Wu et al., 2015). For this reasoning, strategic HR practices in the context of SMEs are likely to be more organic in nature, ad hoc, adaptive, and more dependent on a web of social interactions and economic relationships (rather than mechanistic processes) to stimulate creativity, innovation, trust in management and flexibility among employees (Do and Shipton, 2019; Harney and Alkhalaf, 2021).

Given SMEs inherent traits, HRM systems in the current study, are designed and implemented in a straightforward and flexible manner and mainly consist of fundamental competence-enhancing HR practices such as training, recognition and reward, input solicitation, teamwork (Klaas et al., 2012). These practices enable SME employees to acquire the necessary skills and knowledge, while also providing them with the motivation to take on multiple roles and enhancing their self-esteem and confidence in accomplishing their daily tasks (Lee et al., 2019; Rauch and Hatak, 2016). In addition, Vietnamese SMEs, representing 96% of all businesses, employing 47% of the labour force and making up 36% of national value added, are characterised by distinguishing entrepreneurial ethos vis-à-vis ‘developed’ economies (OECD, 2021). All these forces may cause variations in HPWS applicability and its effects on employee ascriptions compared to Western counterparts. To sum up, HPWS are designed in line with SMEs unique traits and mainly consisting of competence-enhancing

policies to attract, develop and retain talent and thereafter achieve superior performances (Zhang and Edgar, 2022; Klaas et al., 2012).

2.2.5 High performance work systems in service sector

The service sector has become increasingly vital to modern economies, playing a major role in both employment generation and GDP growth (Kloutsiniotis and Mihail, 2020; Mihail and Kloutsiniotis, 2016). The service sector encompasses a wide range of industries, including banking, healthcare facilities like hospitals and aged-care centres, professional services such as accounting firms, hospitality businesses like hotels, and technology companies in IT and telecommunications, among others (Nayyar et al., 2021).

HPWS literature scholarship demonstrates that service-oriented firms are distinct from manufacturing counterparts regarding a range of factors, such as, outputs (tangible vs. intangible) and processes (prompt production and consumption vs. time lag between production and consumption), clients' involvement for service formation and customisation (Bowen and Schneider, 2014). As a result of these inherent divergences, a set of coherent HR practices cannot be directly transferred from the manufacturing industry. Service-focused organisations have sought to implement a set of professional HR practices tailored to their specific strategies and contextual factors, such as size, industry, and culture, to meet employees' job demands, enhance job satisfaction, and ultimately motivate them to provide exceptional service experiences to diverse groups of clients (Chang and Chen, 2011; Jo et al., 2021).

Due to intense competition, ever-changing technologies, diverse customer needs and behaviours, and employees' increasing job demands (Rubel et al., 2021; Sutarto et al., 2022), sector-oriented companies have endeavoured to invest in a talented and skilled workforce through coherent HR practices, such as HPWS, to well adapt to the constantly changing environment, deliver quality services and thereby stay competitive in the market (Chigeda et al., 2022; Rubel et al., 2021). To date, the emergence of a service-oriented economy has aroused interest among numerous HR scholars, and researchers to conduct a wide array of research in this area (Bowen and Schneider, 2014; Ashiru et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2020).

Over the past two decades, a substantial body of evidence has highlighted a positive correlation between HPWS and the performance of service-oriented firms (Jyoti and Rani,

2017; Ruiz-Palomino et al., 2021). To date, three significant reviews have assessed the impact of HPWS on performance within the service sector: Murphy et al. (2018), Kloutsiniotis and Mihail (2020b), and Dimple and Kuriakose (2023). Murphy et al. (2018) conducted an analysis of 89 empirical studies, comparing and contrasting HPWS in the hospitality sector with those in the broader service and manufacturing sectors, thereby enriching the knowledge base for the hospitality industry. Similarly, Kloutsiniotis and Mihail (2020b) reviewed 28 quantitative studies, focusing specifically on recent developments in HPWS research within the tourism and hospitality industries, providing valuable insights and outlining future research directions. More recently, Dimple and Kuriakose (2023) reviewed the latest advancements in HPWS literature across the entire service sector, providing a critical analysis of current academic research and proposing detailed theoretical frameworks to guide future studies on service-oriented HPWS.

According to these reviews, HPWS encompass innovative HR practices that are essential contributors to organisational success (Messersmith and Guthrie, 2010). When aligned with an organisation's strategic goals and objectives, these HR practices enhance performances across organisational levels (Úbeda-García et al., 2018; Yang et al., 2021). HPWS cultivate a positive organisational climate that boosts employee commitment and strengthens employee-customer relationships, leading to enhanced service quality, increased customer satisfaction, and greater customer loyalty (Chang, 2015; Fu et al., 2015, 2017; Úbeda-García et al., 2018). This positive climate, in turn, drives better financial and operational performance, such as higher sales growth and increased innovation (Jo et al., 2021; Yang et al., 2021). Cho et al. (2006) demonstrated that service sector firms implementing HPWS practices, such as quality of life programs, quality circles, participative management, and incentive plans, experience higher employee satisfaction and reduced turnover rates, ultimately reflecting improved organisational performance.

At the group level, Bartram et al. (2014) found that HPWS significantly impact employees' social identity within their groups in healthcare centres. In a recent study conducted in Chinese bank branches, Bartram et al. (2021) found that HPWS practices, including information sharing, training, semi-autonomous work teams, and quality-focused initiatives, enhance the social climate by fostering better social interaction, communication, and trust among employees. The research further demonstrated that the social climate serves as a mediator, linking HPWS practices to employees' social identification within their respective branches.

Despite great benefits, HPWS can cause detrimental effects on employees (Kaushik and Mukkherjee, 2022). The ‘conflicting outcome’ perspective suggests that employee-employer relationship is viewed as contradictory (rather than harmonious) interests. HPWS, therefore, are believed to create superior performance but at the expense of employee wellbeing (Kroon, et al., 2009; Jensen et al., 2013). HR practices may be viewed as a firm’s investment in human capital by which employees can gain access to various resources to enhance their knowledge, skills and abilities (Jensen et al., 2013). However, management undoubtedly feels great pressure for a return on that investment, such as strengthening organisational capabilities, gaining a competitive advantage. In this sense, those benefits are offset by increases in job demands that are rested on employee shoulders and continuously drain and squeeze their energy (Ogbonnaya et al., 2013; Ehrnrooth and Björkman, 2012). In this light, the HR framework acts as a ploy or an exploitative management tool to get the most out of workers and harm their well-being (Jensen et al., 2013).

Given the critical importance of the service sector, the current study focuses on knowledge-intensive SMEs that provide essential services, such as IT, consultancy, and pharmaceuticals. These firms play a crucial role in promoting socio-economic development and are more likely to adopt innovative HR practices to deliver more professional services to their customers. To advance our understanding of HPWS in this sector, the subsequent section delves into the intricate relationships between HPWS, OCB and task performance, exploring both their synergies and potential conflicts. It begins by defining OCB, highlighting its evolution and significance in organisational settings, and discussing the various dimensions and predictors of OCB. The section also describes task performance and distinguishes this construct from OCB. Furthermore, it addresses the contradictions that arise when HPWS is linked to both OCB and task performance, shedding light on the nuanced impacts and potential tensions that can occur within these interactions. This serves as justification for why HPWS in its relationships with OCB and task performance are examined separately. In short, this study aims to offer an understanding of how HPWS influences these two key independent outcomes, contributing to the broader discourse on strategic HR practices.

2.3. HPWS, OCB, task performance

2.3.1. Organisational citizenship behaviour

OCB has reflected discretionary actions on the part of employees that go beyond the realm of contractual obligations (Wayne et al. 1997; Yang and Arthur, 2021). Extra role behaviours are not required by formal organisational rules but viewed as a necessary informal basis for managers to make key decisions such as performance evaluation, promotion, training, and reward allocations (MacKenzie, Podsakoff and Paine, 1991; Chahal and Mehta, 2010). Organ (1988) proposed an expanded five-dimension model of OCB, which includes (1) altruism (e.g. helping others), (2) courtesy (e.g. being considerate of others), (3) conscientiousness (e.g. self-development, enthusiasm), (4) civic virtue (e.g. offers constructive feedback), and (5) sportsmanship (e.g. maintains a positive outlook despite challenges). Building on Organ's work, Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Moorman, and Fetter (1990) developed a measurement scale for OCB, incorporating subscales for each of these five dimensions. To date, the OCB scales developed by Podsakoff et al. (1990) have been among the most widely utilised in OCB research.

Even though OCB is not task-focused, it can significantly contribute to individual performance, in aggregate, to organisational success (Jiao et al., 2013; Kehoe and Wright, 2013). For example, helping colleagues can make people feel happy or trigger satisfaction with their job and career (Li et al., 2010; Curry et al., 2018). Employees who can assist leaders can build a high social exchange relationship and earn trust from them (Whiting et al., 2008; Zhang et al., 2022). Employees with a courteous and considerate manner can promote customers' satisfaction and in turn contribute to the prestige of the organisation (Nishii et al., 2008; Ocampo et al., 2018; Stokburger-Sauer and Hofmann, 2023).

There have been a range of key factors that can predict OCB, such as leadership, organisational justice, role clarity, individual traits (Chahal and Mehta, 2010). For example, when employees perceive HR practices (e.g. performance-based reward scheme) as righteous and fair, there is a likelihood that they can feel more motivated to engage in citizenship activities in the workplace (Chahal and Mehta, 2010). Following this vein, organisations with the high degree of OCB can result in various positive outcomes, for instance, reduced absenteeism and turnover (Teh and Sun, 2012), increased employee commitment (Xerri and Brunetto, 2013), willingness to share knowledge (Hsu and Lin, 2008), favourable performance appraisals and promotions (Whiting et al., 2008), consumer satisfaction and loyalty (Chughtai and Zafar, 2006). Overall, OCB helps create a dynamic and supportive

work environment that enables organisations to attract and retain talent, thereby securing their effective functioning (Bolino et al., 2013).

OCB has been essential for organisation's survival, competitiveness, and prosperity. Strategic HR scholars have contended that firms cannot thrive and succeed by barely banking on employee behaviours delineated in job descriptions (Bowler et al., 2010; Katz, 1964). Hence, OCB is suited for this research by considering the context of service-oriented SMEs where employees are supposed to be multi-tasked or multi-functioned due to distinct characteristics such as resource constraints and informality (Kloutsiniotis and Mihail, 2020). In this regard, organisational effectiveness is predicated on the voluntary efforts and willingness of employees to take the initiative in self-development, assist colleagues, and support leaders to drive the organisation forward (Organ et al., 2006; Xerri and Brunetto, 2013; Anderson and Bolino, 2023)

However, the current research primarily views OCB as extra-role performance, wherein employees willingly go beyond their contractual obligations to undertake voluntary tasks. These tasks encompass assisting colleagues during peak workloads, supporting leaders, and taking initiatives to improve the overall firm image (Smith et al., 1983; Wayne et al., 1997). OCB, therefore, does not include task-focused dimensions, for example, self-development (Jiao et al., 2013; Kehoe and Wright, 2013). By doing so, I aim to clearly differentiate OCB from in-role task performance which is described in the next section. Added to this, the efficacy of OCB is contingent upon employees' perceptions and cultural characteristics. For example, employees who view prosocial behaviours as in-role take part in these activities to a greater extent than employees who view them as extra-role (Coyle-Shapiro, Kessler, and Purcell, 2004). Thus, Vietnamese SMEs, which are heavily influenced by Confucianism, collectivism and harmonious relationships might provide a unique context to gain more nuanced understanding of OCB through employees' perceptions and its relationship with HPWS.

2.3.2. Task performance

Task performance, often referred to interchangeably as job performance or in-role behaviour (Whiting et al., 2008), includes activities directly aligned with the core functions and responsibilities defined by formal job descriptions (Borman and Motowidlo, 1993). It is a critical component of organisational behaviour, as it directly affects the technical operations

essential for delivering products or services to customers (Borman and Motowidlo, 1993; Rotundo and Sackett, 2002; Whiting et al., 2008). Employees' task-focused behaviours significantly influence supervisors' performance evaluations, as most appraisals are designed to assess this form of behaviour, which in turn underpins the allocation of rewards within the formal organisational system (Whiting and Pierce, 2008; Nadeem et al., 2019).

Task performance and OCB are the most desired goals of organisations (Shao et al., 2019). However, these two concepts are, by definition, distinct. Task performance is described as expected behaviours that are directly involved in producing goods and services to secure overall firm performance (Borman and Motowidlo, 1993; Motowidlo, Borman, and Schmit, 1997). It is also defined as in-role requirements that employees need to satisfy in exchange for their compensation packages (Rousseau and Parks, 1993; Miao, 2011). OCB, on the other hand, is discretionary behaviours which are not explicitly prescribed in employees' formal job description, and then not recognised by a formal reward system. However, OCB helps foster the effective functioning of the organisation (Organ, 1988). Simply put, task performance reflects business-oriented responsibilities while OCB suggests society-oriented activities (Shao et al., 2019; Zhang et al., 2022).

However, the dimensions of task performance and OCB can overlap to some extent due to contextual factors such as organisational culture, job characteristics, and individual perceptions (Miao, 2011; Fodchuk, 2007). For instance, employees in development-focused environments may perceive OCB as part of their in-role tasks and engage in prosocial behaviours more frequently than those in results-oriented firms (Miao, 2011). Similarly, employees in Eastern cultures (e.g., Chinese and Vietnamese workers) influenced by distinct cultural values such as collectivism, interpersonal harmony, and solidarity within social groups might view OCB as an integral part of their job and feel obliged to perform extra-role duties compared to their Western counterparts, who emphasise individualism and transparency in job descriptions (Gelfand, Enez, and Aycan, 2007). Additionally, the courtesy dimension of OCB recognised in Western literature (e.g., the USA, Australia) may not be perceived the same way in Eastern contexts such as China, Hong Kong, or Japan, where employees might consider such behaviours as apparent part of their formal job requirements or in-role duties (Miao, 2011).

In the current study, I distinctly define OCB and task performance within the context of Vietnamese SMEs. Task performance pertains to the completion of in-role duties that enhance overall individual performance, while OCB focuses on extra-role activities that foster social relationships and contribute to a cohesive working environment (Smith et al., 1983; Wayne et al., 1997; Whiting et al., 2008). Given this clear distinction, the two constructs are considered separate outcomes in relation to HPWS and employees' causal attributions, rather than functioning together as traditionally perceived. This approach offers a clearer understanding of the HR-performance relationship (Shao et al., 2019). In the next section, I will deeper investigate the nuances of the triadic interactions among HPWS, OCB, and task performance, and thus further justify why HPWS are independently associated with OCB and task performance.

2.3.3 HPWS and its separate influence on OCB and task performance

Given the benefits of OCB for organisational functioning, strategic HR scholars invest in a suite of interrelated HR practices designed to promote OCB and then enhance organisational outcomes (Sun et al., 2007; Jiao et al., 2013; Ocampo et al., 2017). In this regard, OCB serves as a mediator between HPWS and task performance, in aggregate contributing to overall firm performance (Zhang et al., 2019; Atatsi et al., 2019). However, these positive interactions are not always straightforward and consistent as assumed. HPWS, OCB, and task performance can sometimes reflect tensions and conflicts that challenge these optimistic assumptions (Anderson and Bolino, 2022; Bolino et al., 2004; 2013). These contradictions can be attributed to several underlying factors (Bolino, 2004; 2013; Anderson and Bolino, 2023).

First, OCBs may arise from self-serving motives. Some employees might engage in citizenship behaviours to enhance their own image (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, and Hui, 1993). For example, during times of economic uncertainty, layoffs, or other risks, employees may perform citizenship behaviours to distinguish themselves from their peers and safeguard their job security. Salamon and Deutsch (2006) argued that employees may exhibit citizenship behaviours for instrumental reasons, aiming to demonstrate that they are valuable employees worth retaining. Similarly, Bolino (1999) suggested that behaviours typically categorised as OCB can sometimes be forms of impression management—actions taken to enhance or protect one's image in the eyes of others (Bolino, Kacmar, Turnley, and Gilstrap, 2008). Because these behaviours do not stem from genuine intentions to improve abilities, assist

others, or support the organisation, regularly performing OCBs for self-serving reasons can, over time, have negative consequences for employees and may not positively influence task performance (Anderson and Bolino, 2013; Bolino et al., 2013).

Second, engaging in OCBs can lead to some deleterious consequences, for example, undermining in-role task performance and career success (Bergeron, 2007; Bergeron et al., 2013). Performing OCBs can also result in greater job stress, work–family conflict, and fatigue (Bolino et al., 2015; Bolino and Turnley, 2005; Halbesleben et al., 2009; Bergeron, 2007). For example, Bergeron (2007), using a resource-allocation framework, suggests that dedicating too much time to citizenship behaviours can reduce employees' in-role task performance, potentially harming their careers. Bergeron, Shipp, Rosen, and Furst (2013) found that committing to OCBs in a performance-based reward system can lead to negative career-related outcomes. Specifically, the more time employees spend on OCBs, the less time they focus on task performance. Additionally, their findings indicated that workers frequently showcase OCBs receive smaller increases in salary and fewer promotions than those who focus more on task performance (Bolino et al., 2013; Anderson and Bolino, 2023).

Third, employees may engage in OCB as a way to compensate for counterproductive workplace behaviours (CWB), which are actions that disrupt organisational operations, damage property, or hinder coworkers' productivity (Fox, Spector, and Miles, 2001). When individuals commit CWBs against their organisation, feelings of guilt may arise, prompting them to perform OCBs as a form of atonement for their misconduct (Bolino, 1999; Spector and Fox, 2010a, 2010b). Interestingly, Spector and Fox (2010b) suggested that OCBs can, under certain conditions, lead to subsequent CWBs. They noted that employees may develop feelings of frustration or resentment when pressured to take on additional responsibilities, work long hours due to organisational shortcomings (e.g., poor planning, insufficient resources, or miscommunication), or compensate for underperforming colleagues. Such emotions can result in counterproductive behaviours. Furthermore, frustration may also arise when employees feel their OCB efforts go unrewarded or unacknowledged, triggering anger and potentially leading to CWBs (Anderson and Bolino, 2023; Bolino, 1999).

Fourth, the effect of OCB is contingent upon the employees' perceptions and vary across research contexts. With high-collectivist and high-power-distance values (Hofstede, 1980), employees from Confucian Asian cultures are likely to define their work roles more

broadly than are Anglo employees (Carl, Gupta, and Javidan, 2004; Gelfand, Bhawuk, Nishii, and Bechtold, 2004; Hofstede, 1980). For example, Blakely et al. (2005) found that Chinese workers working in Confucian culture were more likely to consider OCB as part of their job, compared to US employees. As such, OCB makes a greater contribution to organisational functioning (Jiao et al., 2013). In collectivist cultures, the self is defined interdependently and as part of an “in-group” where individual goals align with or are subordinate to group goals; duties and obligations take precedence over personal preference in determining actions (Gelfand et al., 2004; Oyserman, Coon, and Kemmelmeier, 2002).

Added to this, in high-power-distance cultures, individuals tend to accept and comply with expectations and directives of powerful others (e.g., supervisors; Hofstede, 1980). By contrast, in other Western cultures characterised by individualism and low power distance, employees tend to perceive OCB as extra role behaviours and they do not feel obligated to engage in. Instead, they mostly focus on in-role behaviours to enhance their task performance. In this regard, good performance and OCB appear to be not related (Jiao et al., 2013).

In Vietnam, firms are significantly shaped by distinct cultural values such as collectivism, harmonious relationships, and high-power distance (Hofstede, 2001). As a result, employees are more likely to engage in OCB to foster social interactions and create a cohesive work environment (Triandis, 1995). However, the influence of these cultural values varies depending on the type of business ownership. For instance, private firms are more open to Western HR practices and are less affected by traditional cultural values (Chen et al., 2005).

Additionally, when examining knowledge-intensive SMEs, where employees are predominantly from Millennials and Generation Z holding different perspectives about extra-role behaviours, compared to older generations (Twenge, 2013; 2023; Campbell, et al., 2017). These young employees may sometimes assist their leaders or colleagues but do not view this as a job responsibility or obligation (Twenge, 2023). Consequently, OCB may not significantly impact their task performance (Zhou and George, 2001). Given the existing tensions between OCB and task performance, and considering the specific context of Vietnamese SMEs, the current study treats OCB and task performance as two parallel dependent variables and explores how HPWS influences these two constructs independently through employees' causal attributions of success (Nadeem et al., 2019).

In this study, employees' *causal ascriptions* of success mediate the relationships between HPWS and OCB, as well as HPWS and task performance. However, the next section does not only scrutinise this psychological phenomenon, but also examines three established perspectives—*HR strength*, *HR attributions*, and *relational attributions*—as key components of the HR process. This reinforces Weiner's (2008) assertion that attribution should be viewed as a research field, rather than a single theory. The four strands of research discussed here represent just a few of the many approaches that can distinctively illuminate employees' psychological processes and collectively provide a nuanced understanding of the HR-performance linkage. To be more specific, the section explores each perspective by describing its unique characteristics and principles, identifying existing gaps and suggesting future research directions. At the heart of this review is *causal ascriptions* are highlighted as a potential perspective which might be a rich source of idea for future research to advance the HR process literature. finally, this section establishes a solid foundation for the next chapter to develop the theoretical framework and proposed hypotheses.

2.4. Four HR process-based strands of research

'...Heider provided the initial spark, Jones and Kelley brought the kindling wood, and that started the fire. Others threw on logs and branches and soon there was a forest fire..... But rather than a central forest fire on which many heaps of wood and brush, the wind scattered the fire to various locations, giving rise to numerous smaller pockets of flame. There were indeed paths between these various bonfires, but nonetheless the fires remained separate, extinguished at different rates, and left separate legacies...' (Weiner, 2008, p.154).

When we refer to the concept of attribution or attribution theory, or more broadly, the HR process, there are three big names attached to its origin. Heider is among the first to initiate the core concept of *attribution* in his seminal work in 1958 by suggesting that lay people, who act as 'naïve' psychologists, attempt to seek internal and external cues to make sense of salient behaviours or events in their life. This idea was subsequently advanced by research lines of Kelley (1967, 1973) and Weiner (1985). Kelley and colleagues focused on three crucial informational patterns—*distinctiveness*, *consistency*, and *consensus*—to inform the process of attribution. Meanwhile, Weiner and co-authors built on Heider (1958) to uniquely examine individual attributions in an achievement-related context and concentrate more on subsequent emotional and behavioural reactions.

Together, these three impactful works gained great prominence in social psychology in the 1970s and have intrigued a large body of scholars to expand attribution theory in various disciplines (Weiner, 2008). However, given its distinct principles, each strand evolves at its own pace, exerting varying degrees of influence on other fields of research and subsequently developing its own literature (Weiner, 2008). In the domain of HRM, attribution has drawn a great deal of attention over the past two decades (Hewett et al., 2018; Hewett, 2021; Hu et Oh, 2022). In the current study, I aim to review four key strands of research with each describing employees' distinctive attributional processes and thereby advancing the knowledge of psychological perspectives or HR process.

2.4.1 HR system strength

2.4.1.1 What is HR system strength?

Bowen and Ostroff (2004) utilized Kelley's (1967, 1973) co-variation principle from attribution theory as a foundation for developing the concept of the 'strength of the HR(M) system.' This concept is often referred to interchangeably with terms such as HR(M) strength or HR(M) system strength. It aims to explain how HR practices, collectively, contribute to firm performance by motivating employees to adopt desired attitudes, which, in turn, support the organisation's strategic objectives (Bowen and Ostroff, 2004, p.204). In essence, HR system strength refers to the effectiveness of the HR system in 'conveying the types of information needed to create' shared perceptions of HR practices among employees (Bowen and Ostroff, 2004, p.208).

The co-variation principle suggests that when people interpret a behaviour or event, they usually attend to three key mega features, namely, *distinctiveness*, *consistency*, and *consensus*, to make sense of reasons behind it. Distinctiveness refers to the degree to which a behaviour or event stands out within its environment, capturing attention and sparking interest among observers (Sanders et al., 2008; Bowen and Ostroff, 2004). Consistency pertains to the reliability and stability of the relationship between an event and its effects, maintained consistently over time and across various contexts (Katou et al., 2014). Consensus reflects the extent to which employees share a unified perspective on the relationship between the event and its outcomes, partly due to the agreement among the message senders (Kelley, 1973; de la Rosa-Navarro et al., 2020). By considering different levels of the three mega-features,

individuals can attribute a behaviour or event to various causes: the entity or stimulus (when distinctiveness, consistency, and consensus are all high), the context or timing (when distinctiveness is high but consistency and consensus are low), or the individual themselves (when distinctiveness and consensus are low, but consistency is high) (*see Table 3 for details*).

Table 3: The information patterns for the three attributions (Kelley, 1987, p.162)

Attribution	Information Pattern		
	Distinctiveness	Consistency	Consensus
Entity/Stimuli	High	High	High
Person	Low	High	Low
Context/Time	High	Low	Low

For example, when an employee is late for an important meeting, observers (e.g. managers, co-workers) can determine the cause and effect of this behaviour by linking three information criteria to the employee. First, distinctiveness relates to within-person behaviour that ‘compares behaviours of the individual in other situations’ (Martinko and Thomson, 1998, p. 273) (e.g. has the employee been late in other circumstances, such as, informal meetings, training sessions?). Second, consistency is also associated with within-person information reflecting if the behaviour or action is similar or different across time (e.g. has the employee usually been late in the past?) (Kelley, 1973; Martinko and Thomson, 1998). Finally, consensus describes a between-person assessment that compares the actor’s behaviour with others (e.g. have other employees been late for the meeting? Based on the different levels of these three dimensions, observers can confirm whether being late for the meeting derives from either the employee (e.g. he/she is a tardy person who is unable to arrive on time) or situation (e.g. he/she is late due to a traffic congestion/accident or heavy rain) or the meeting (e.g. the meeting is not important to him/her) (Kelley, 1967, 1973; Harvey et al., 2014).

By linking this idea to the HRM domain, these three components create a strong HR situation where shared interpretations are likely to occur (Bowen and Ostroff, 2004; Ostroff and Bowen, 2016). Distinctiveness in this context means that HR practices are visible, transparent, and salient to the majority of employees, helping them clearly understand how organisational goals are achieved and their needs are met through work arrangements (Bowen

and Ostroff, 2004; de la Rosa-Navarro, 2020). Consistency implies that HR practices are mutually reinforced and implemented fairly, regardless of people and circumstances. Consensus refers to the extent to which policymakers agree on the message and values being circulated within organisation, leading to collective impacts on employee attitudes and behaviours (Bowen and Ostroff, 2004; Sanders et al., 2014).

In particular, each mega-feature comprises several specific dimensions that define the characteristics of HRM system strength. For instance, *distinctiveness* encompasses factors such as the visibility, understandability, legitimacy of authority, and relevance of HR practices. *Consistency* is characterised by dimensions like instrumentality, validity, and the uniformity of HRM messages. Meanwhile, *consensus* reflects the alignment among key HRM decision-makers and the perceived fairness in HRM implementation (Bowen and Ostroff, 2004) (*See Table 4 for details*). Drawing on various levels of the three features, individuals can attribute various causes to the deployment of HR practices at work.

Table 4: The nine specific characteristics of the HR system strength, clustered by the three meta-features (Bowen and Ostroff, 2004)

Meta-features	Characteristics	Descriptions
Distinctiveness	Visibility	HR practices are salient and readily observable, making them accessible to a great number of employees.
	Understandability	HRM content is unambiguous, transparent, and easy to understand. Employees clearly understand how HR practices work and thereby eschew suspicion and rumors.
	Legitimacy (of authority)	HRM function is perceived as a high-status and high-credibility function and activity. Employees accept some leaders (e.g. senior manager, HR specialists) as a role model who set behavioural standards and are in turn willing to perform according to perform according to such enacted standards.
	Relevance	Employees believe that their interests and needs are taken into account and strategic work arrangements are essential for achieving organisational goals.
Consistency	Instrumentality	Clear perceptions of the cause-effect relationship between desired behaviours and outcomes that boost employee motivation, commitment and desired behaviours.

	Validity	Agreement between what HR practices purport to do and what they actually do.
	Consistency of HRM messages	Compatibility and stability in sending HR signals over time and across situations.
Consensus	Agreement among principal HR decision makers	HR decision makers or ‘message senders’ agree on the HR purposes and means of communication.
	Fairness	HR practices reflect three dimensions of justice: distributive (the fair process in allocating benefits and resources), procedural (the reasons behind any decisions made must be well explained), and interactional (both parties are making a mutual investment).

These meta-features work in concert to create a powerful informational environment, facilitating greater behavioural consistency and uniformity within organisation (Bowen and Ostroff, 2004; Pereira and Gomes, 2012). A well-designed and effectively implemented HRM system that is distinctive, consistent, and congruent enables employees to receive clear and coherent HR messages. This fosters the development of shared beliefs and objectives, encouraging collective actions that align with and support the organisation’s strategic goals (Bowen and Ostroff, 2004; Van Rossenberg, 2021; Sanders et al., 2023).

Conversely, in the presence of a weak HRM system, Employees face significant ambiguity and uncertainty about expectations and values, making them rely on their own internal dispositions (e.g. prior experiences) to interpret HR practices or organisational behaviours. This is likely to cause differing reactions to HR messages, which can hamper collective efforts to fulfill organisational goals (Sanders et al., 2023; Bowen and Ostroff, 2004; Colakoglu, Chung, and Ceylan, 2022).

2.4.1.2. The development of HR strength

To date, several review papers on HRM system strength (e.g., Hewett et al., 2018; Wang et al., 2020; Ostroff and Bowen, 2016; Hu and Oh, 2022; Sanders et al., 2021) have been published, offering comprehensive overviews of its roles, levels of analysis, and measurement. The existing literature indicates that HR system strength positively influences various individual-level outcomes, such as job satisfaction and vigor (Li et al., 2011; Heffernan and Dundon, 2016), work engagement and OCB (Song et al., 2023; Katou et al., 2014), motivation and commitment (Hauff et al., 2017; Cafferkey et al., 2019), well-being (Baluch, 2017), creativity (Ehrnrooth and Bjorkman, 2012), and psychological contracts

(Bednall et al., 2014; Den Hartog et al., 2013; Guest et al., 2021). Furthermore, HR system strength is negatively associated with turnover intentions and negative emotions (Li et al., 2011; Frenkel et al., 2012). At the unit and organisational levels, HR strength is positively linked to firm performance, business unit quality, organisational voice climate, and the strength of goal climate (Aksoy and Bayazit, 2014; Katou et al., 2021; Meier-Barthold et al., 2023).

In their influential 2004 work, Bowen and Ostroff argued that HR strength acts as a social context that positively affects employee reactions and outcomes. Without this socio-contextual influence, employees may lack the motivation to respond effectively to HR systems (Colakoglu et al., 2022). Thus, HR strength should be conceptualised as an organisational-level construct that creates a strong organisational climate, aligning employee behaviours with shared values and strategic priorities (Colakoglu et al., 2022). In essence, HR strength serves as a bridge between HRM systems and employee outcomes, thereby enhancing overall firm performance (Bowen and Ostroff, 2004; Pereira and Gomes, 2012; Wang et al., 2020).

Moreover, HR strength and HR climate strength are frequently considered as organisational or unit-level factors that enhance the link between HRM practices and performance outcomes (Wang et al., 2020; Hewett et al., 2018; Li et al., 2011; Cafferkey et al., 2018). However, many researchers in the HR field view HR strength as a concept at the individual level, often referred to as perceived HR strength, which typically acts as a mediator in the relationship between HRM systems and individual-level outcomes (Bednall et al., 2022; Alfes et al., 2019). According to Ostroff and Bowen (2016), perceived HR strength is a "significant construct" because the effectiveness of an HR system is largely influenced by how employees perceive, interpret, and respond to it.

To date, HR scholars have explored several pathways to understand the role of HR strength in the HR-performance relationship. First, depending on the underlying theoretical framework, HR scholars often conceptualise HR strength either as a mediating or a moderating factor. The mediating perspective draws heavily from message-based persuasion literature (Chaiken, Wood, and Eagly, 1996; McGuire, 1972) and signalling theory (Connelly, Certo, Ireland, and Reutzel, 2011; Ehrnrooth and Björkman, 2012). This approach suggests that HR strength positively influences individual outcomes through perceived HR strength, or

employees' perceptions of HR practices in terms of distinctiveness, consensus, and consistency. To achieve this, it is crucial for management to communicate effective HR signals that encourage desired interpretations and responses from employees (Connelly et al., 2011).

Conversely, the moderating perspective is based on Kelley's covariation principle (1967, 1973), which posits that HR strength enhances the HR-performance relationship by acting as a situational factor. In this context, HR strength is usually studied at the organisational level, where it fosters conditions that enhance the connection between HR practices and performance outcomes (Sanders and Yang, 2016). For instance, Chen et al. (2007) conducted a study involving 307 hairdressers (individual level) and 103 shop owners/managers (organisational level) in Taiwan to explore the moderating role of HR strength (at the organisational level) in the relationship between perceived HR practices and affective commitment. Bednall et al. (2021) tested both mediating and moderating models to understand the impact of perceived HR strength on the relationship between HR practices and employee outcomes. Their results provided stronger evidence for the mediating model across five individual outcomes: performance, perceived organisational effectiveness, employee reactions, proactive behaviour, and burnout. In contrast, the moderating model was only supported for employee performance.

Second, Ostroff and Bowen, in their review (2016), proposed some key directions for future research to examine: (1) HRM strength as a continuum or additive and compensatory approaches suggesting that all the mega features can possess unique meanings and combine in various ways to shape the HR system; (2) exploring how some features act as precursors for the development of others; (3) whether there is equifinality, where different configurations of features may be equally effective in achieving desired outcomes. Motivated by this, numerous strategic HR scholars have pursued these paths to cast better light on the HR strength-performance relationship (de la Rosa-Navarro et al., 2020; Cafferkey et al., 2019; Alfes et al., 2019; Song et al., 2023).

Drawing on these suggestions, de la Rosa-Navarro and colleagues (2020) delved into the internal configuration within HRM strength or the interrelationships among three features of HR strength to contend that distinctiveness, consistency, and consensus are not independent dimensions. They in fact complement and interact with each other to explain

employee reactions in the workplace. In particular, distinctiveness and consensus are the key precursors to consistency. For example, consensus among key HR decisions makers creates a salient and strong working climate where HR practices are administered consistently, facilitating uniform interpretations for desired outcomes. The findings indicated that three features of HR strengths have a direct impact on employee behavioural reactions, and consistency mediates the relationship between consensus and OCB as well as intentions to remain.

Similarly, Bos-Nehles et al. (2021) tested all three approaches to HR strength as proposed by Ostroff and Bowen (2016), providing insights into how the three meta-features of HR system strength can be combined to foster affective commitment among part-time employees. Specifically, they examined both *the additive and compensatory models* of HR system strength to explore whether high levels of affective commitment can be achieved in non-traditional employees, even when certain dimensions of HR system strength are lower. Their findings suggest that a high level of one meta-feature can compensate for a lower level of another, resulting in a positive overall impact on individual outcomes among part-time employees.

Added to this, building on the arguments of Bos-Nehles and colleagues, who emphasise that HR values and meanings must be understood, communicated, and agreed upon by HR decision-makers to enhance distinctiveness and consistency, they developed a *mediation model* to explore how specific meta-features of HR strength mediate the relationship between consensus and affective commitment. Additionally, they employed a configurational model or equifinality approach to examine how different combinations of features can work synergistically to achieve optimal outcomes. The findings reveal that all meta-features of HR strength should be incorporated into HR design and implementation to foster affective commitment among part-time workers, albeit to varying degrees. Consistency emerges as the most influential factor, directly impacting affective commitment, while distinctiveness and consensus exert an indirect effect on commitment through consistency.

Third, HR scholars increasingly combine *HR strength* with *HR attributions* in response to the calls from some reviews (e.g. Hewett et al., 2018; Wang et al., 2020; Hu et al., 2022). This integration not only highlights different parts of the HR process but also generates synergistic effects on employee outcomes (Sanders et al., 2023; Katou et al., 2014; 2021).

Hewett et al. (2018) suggested bringing different pathways together in a single conceptual model to capture a more nuanced understanding of the HR-performance relationship. For example, Hewett and others propose a cross-level interaction by which employee HR attributions can moderate the relationship between climate-level HR strength and employee responses. This suggests that employees' interpretations of HR practices can shape the extent to which the strength of an HRM system affects their attitudes and behaviours.

Alternatively, HRM system strength can act as a moderator in the relationship between intended HR practices and employees' HR attributions, or between HR attributions and individual outcomes. The authors suggest that there are multiple ways to connect HRM system strength to HR attributions, but emphasize the need for more empirical studies to explore these dynamics at various levels. Recently, Hu and Oh (2022) proposed that HRM system strength can influence the connection between individual HR attributions and group-level outcomes by triggering three essential emergent states: cognitive, behavioural, and affective. They argue that a strong HRM system, as defined by Bowen and Ostroff (2004), can nurture these states, promoting a shared, commitment-oriented HR attribution and a collective drive to improve team performance.

In response to the calls from researchers like Hewett et al. (2018), Hewett (2021), Wang et al. (2020), and Hu and Oh (2022), Katou et al. (2021) proposed a comprehensive multilevel and multipath framework to investigate how HRM content influences organisational performance. This relationship is mediated by three sequential processes of HR strength: (1) HR strength fully mediates the connection between HRM content and line manager HR implementation; (2) line manager HR implementation fully mediates the relationship between HR strength and employee HR attributions; and (3) employee HR attributions fully mediate the link between line manager HR implementation and organisational performance. These interconnected mechanisms highlight the complex relationships among different factors, offering a deeper insight into how HRM practices can enhance performance across the organisation.

In a similar vein, Li et al. (2011) investigated the impact of individual perceptions of HRM system strength and organisational climate on hotel employees' job satisfaction, vigor, and turnover intentions within the Chinese context. Their study found that the distinctiveness of HRM system strength had a positive correlation with all three employee work attitudes.

Additionally, they discovered that organisational climate positively moderated the link between consensus and job satisfaction, while negatively moderating the relationship between consensus and turnover intentions. These findings highlight the significant role of both HRM system strength and organisational climate in shaping employee attitudes and behaviours.

In a more recent study, Meier-Barthold et al. (2023) aimed to merge the concepts of HR system strength and HR attributions to gain deeper insights into how employees make causal inferences about the intent behind HR practices. Their findings emphasize that the internal coherence of an HR system and the quality of HR signals play a crucial role in reducing variability in employees' well-being attributions, though they do not have the same effect on other types of attributions. Furthermore, HR system strength was found to have a significant impact on service quality and exploitation attributions, while it did not directly influence employees' well-being or cost-reduction attributions. This research underscores the nuanced role HR system strength plays in shaping employees' interpretations of HR practices.

In summary, HRM system strength has established its own legacy in the HR process literature and has demonstrated its pivotal role in shaping employee attitudes, behaviours, and overall organisational performance. During its development, HR system strength operates at various levels—individual, team, and organisational—acting as both a direct and indirect driver of positive outcomes. However, it appears that this approach has yet to reach its full potential. More thoughtful research needs to be conducted to address its research gaps and gain more insights into this core concept (Hewett et al., 2018; Hewett, 2021, Sanders et al., 2023).

2.4.1.3. Limitations and future directions

Even though strategic HR scholars have amassed significant theoretical and empirical knowledge surrounding HR strength since the seminal work of Bowen and Ostroff (2004), this area of study still requires further exploration to fully understand its complexities and implications for organisational performance.

HR research has employed a variety of methods to assess HR strength, whether perceived by individuals or as part of the HRM climate strength. These scales have become widely utilized in empirical studies (Sanders et al., 2023). For instance, Delmotte et al. (2012) were pioneers in developing a scale to measure perceived HR strength. Li et al. (2011) built

upon earlier work (e.g., Delmotte et al., 2007; Sanders et al., 2008) to create a scale for HPWS climate strength. Coelho et al. (2012) conducted multiple studies to identify how employees perceive HRM system strength. However, few studies have measured HRM system strength across different levels (e.g., team, department), and the existing measures are inconsistent (e.g., Cunha and Cunha, 2009; Guest et al., 2022; Katou et al., 2014). This gap highlights the need for more refined and comprehensive scales that can accurately capture HR strength at various levels of analysis (Wang et al., 2020; Hewett et al., 2018; Sanders et al., 2014). Sanders et al. (2023, p.187) emphasize that "as long as scholars use different conceptualizations and measurement approaches for the same constructs, progress in the HR process field remains limited." Therefore, there is a pressing need for more studies employing robust research designs and valid measurement tools (Sanders et al., 2021; 2023).

Second, while HR strength can take the multiple roles (e.g. mediator, moderator) in explaining the HR-performance linkage (Cafferkey et al., 2019; Alfes et al., 2019; Song et al., 2023), very little is known about what determines HR strength or under what conditions an organisation should design and implement a strong HRM system or how this system is received, framed, and interpreted among different employees (e.g. full-time and part-time workers), across various organisations (e.g. large firms, SMEs), industries (e.g. service, manufacturing), and countries with different cultural values (e.g. collectivism/individualism; high/low power distance) (Wang et al., 2020; Sanders et al., 2021). Building on the work of Bos-Nehles et al. (2021), HR scholars are encouraged to continue developing and testing the three models proposed by Ostroff and Bowen (2016)-additive and compensatory, mediation, and configurational-to gain insights into three key components of the HR strength and the mechanism by which they independently and synergistically impact employee reactions and outcomes across contexts (Sanders et al., 2023).

Third, despite the extensive research on the interaction between HR system strength and HR attributions at various levels of analysis (Meier-Barthold et al., 2022), several key questions remain unresolved: How do employee-perceived HR system strength and HR attributions compare with collective HRM strength and collective HR attributions at the group or organisational level? How do HR systems and HR attributions at different levels influence one another? What factors drive HRM system strength and HR attributions across levels? Moreover, what roles do these constructs play within the larger HR process? To address these gaps, HR researchers could benefit from adopting well-structured research designs that

consider both HR strength and HR attributions at multiple levels or at collective levels. This approach would provide deeper insights into how HRM system strength and HR attributions interact, leading to a more nuanced understanding of the HR-performance relationship (Sanders et al., 2023; Bos-Nehles et al., 2021; Keegan and Den Hartog, 2019).

2.4.2 HR attributions

2.4.2.1 Conceptualisation of HR attributions

In the HRM domain, Lisa Nishii, Dave Lepak and Ben Schneider (2008), in their *Personnel Psychology* article, largely drew on Heider (1958) original conceptions of locus of causality and Weiner's (1985) attributional theory to first introduced *HR attributions* or employee beliefs about why HR practices are implemented within organisation. In other words, employees tend to make sense of the purposes that lie behind HR deployment to inform their attitudes and behaviours (Nishii and Paluch, 2018). Different groups of employees may respond uniquely to the same HR practices, leading to diverse and idiosyncratic reactions (Nishii and Paluch, 2018; Kitt and Sanders, 2022). This variability in responses can, in turn, result in differences in their workplace behaviours and actions. For example, some employees may perceive that HR practices (e.g. training and development, performance appraisal) are adopted to enhance their well-being, while others might perceive it as a controlling mechanism for employee exploitation (Van De Voorde and Beijer, 2015; Katou et al, 2021).

By seeking to answer 'why' questions (e.g. why are performance appraisal implemented?), '*HR attributions*' are fundamentally different from '*HR-related perceptions*' that focus on 'what' questions (e.g. does a formal appraisal system exist in my organisation?) and 'how' questions (e.g. Is the performance appraisal fair and accurate?) (Alfes et al., 2012; Wright et al., 2005; Wang et al., 2020). In other words, while *HR attributions* refer to employees' beliefs about purposes behind HR deployment, *HR perceptions* reflect employees' HR descriptions or evaluations (Beijer et al., 2019). However, Hewett (2021) suggested that there is a lack of clear distinction between HR attributions and other types of HR-related perceptions, especially evaluative measures of HR practices, in relation with affect-related outcomes (e.g. job satisfaction, affective commitment). Hewett (2021), therefore, posit that it is of vital importance to gather more theoretical and empirical evidence to illuminate what drives *HR attribution* formation and how *HR attributions* go beyond and

above other types of HR-related perceptions in informing individuals' reactions to HR practices.

2.4.2.2 Typology of HR attributions

Building on Heider's (1958) classifications, Nishii and her colleagues (2008) identified five key reasons for the implementation of HR practices: (1) to promote employee well-being (internal, commitment-focused, employee-oriented); (2) to improve service quality (internal, commitment-focused, organisation-oriented); (3) to exploit employees (internal, control-focused, employee-oriented); (4) to achieve system-wide cost reductions (internal, control-focused, organisation-oriented); and (5) to fulfill trade union demands (external attribution).

The first two types of HR attributions are categorised as commitment-focused, reflecting the belief that HR activities are freely chosen by the organisation 'out of a spirit of justice' or 'to attract and retain talents', motivated by a concern for service quality and employee well-being (Koys, 1988; Sanders et al., 2023). These attributions are expected to be related to positive attitudes and behaviours (e.g. job engagement, involvement) and individual outcomes, when aggregated, to team or firm performance. (Kroon et al., 2009; Nishii et al., 2008).

On the other hand, the other two intended goals of HR practices, namely reducing costs and/or exploiting employees for maximised performance, are loaded onto control-focused HR attributions (Jensen et al., 2013; Nishii et al., 2008). Employees with these HR attributions are prone to exhibit negative attitudinal reactions at work, such as cynicism, anger, frustration, that are likely to harm their welfare (e.g. high pressure, burnout) and lead to anti-productive behaviours (e.g. absenteeism, turnover) (Sander and Yang, 2016; Nishii et al., 2008).

For example, Shantz et al. (2016) argue that when employees perceive HR practices as being designed to enhance service quality and job performance, they sustain high job involvement, which in turn leads to lower levels of emotional exhaustion. Conversely, when HR practices are viewed as being motivated by cost control, employees are likely to cope with increased workload which eventually translates into high levels of emotional exhaustion (Shantz et al., 2016). Likewise, Van De Voorde and Beijer (2015) argue that well-being HR attributions lead to higher levels of commitment and reduced job strain, while HR attributions

focused on performance demands can lead to employees' energy depletion, ultimately increasing the risk of job strains, such as burnout.

Despite different impacts on individual and organisational outcomes, all the four components (e.g. promoting service quality, enhancing wellbeing, exploitation, and reducing costs) are acknowledged as internal HR attributions, implying that HR objectives flow from organisational strategy and are under the control of management (Nishii et al., 2008). By contrast, the last dimension (e.g. meeting trade union requirements) is classified as external HR attributions suggesting that HR practices are forced by external pressures (e.g. to comply with trade union or government relations) rather than sincere HR concerns of the organisation (Koys, 1988; Nishii et al., 2008). As a result, there is no link to any outcomes when employees make external attributions because organisations have no control over their management and employees do not view such third party-motivated HR practices as stimulus to form attributions (Nishii et al., 2008) (*See Table 5 for details*).

Table 5: Typology of HR Attributions (Nishii et al. (2008), p.509)

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

2.4.2.3 Antecedents of HR attributions

The existing HRM literature has primarily focused on the connection between HR attributions and individual or organisational outcomes (Fan et al., 2021; Shantz et al., 2016; Van De Voorde and Beijer, 2015), with relatively little attention given to the factors that drive HR attributions (Hewett, 2021; Hewett et al., 2018; Wang et al., 2020; Sanders et al., 2021). In their research, Van De Voorde and Beijer (2015) noted that the extent of HPWS coverage is positively associated with employees' HR well-being and HR performance attributions. Building on Kelley and Michela's (1980) core principles, Hewett and colleagues (2019) proposed a tripartite framework that identifies three central predictors of both internal and external HR attributions in relation to workload management practices: information (distributive and procedural fairness), beliefs (organisational cynicism), and motivation (personal relevance).

Added to this, Sander, Yang and Li (2019) are among the first to explore cultural values (e.g. power distance orientation), together with employee perceptions of HPWS, as two key antecedents of quality-enhancement and cost reduction HR attributions. In a similar vein, Guest and co-workers (2021) integrate signalling theory into their conceptual model to highlight that the implementation of coherent HR practices and the HR agreement between managers and staff positively shape employee HR attributions in the banking sector. Alfes and others (2021) also concur that HPWS are an important precursor of HR attributions. Katou and co-authors (2021) expand this idea by demonstrating that HRM content, in conjunction with HRM strength and line manager implementation, can better explain employee HR attributions within Greek private organisations (*See Table 6 for details*).

Table 6: A review of empirical studies on HR attributions since the work of Nishii et al. (2008)

Study	Method	Context	Theory	Data analysis	Independent variables	Dependent variables	Moderators	Mediators
Nishii, Lepak and Schneider, (2008)	Survey-cross sec	a supermarket chain	Attribution Theory	Multilevel	Commitment focused HR attributions, control focused HR attributions, external HR attributions	Customer satisfaction		Employee satisfaction and commitment
Fontinha, José Chambel, and De Cuyper, (2012)	Survey-cross sec	Portuguese outsourcing companies in the IT sector	Attribution Theory	Individual level	Commitment-focused HR attributions, Control-focused HR attributions	Affective commitment to the client organisation		Affective commitment to the outsourcing company
Chen and Wang (2014)	Survey-cross sec	professional service companies	Social exchange theory; attribution theory, Organisational support theory	Individual level	Commitment-focused HR attributions, Control-focused HR attributions	Turnover intention, Task performance		Perceived organisational support,
Giesbers, Schouteten, Poutsma, van der Heijden, and van Achterberg (2014)	Survey-cross sec	A hospital	Job demands resources theory	Individual level	External attributions, Quality enhancement attributions, Nurse enhancement attributions, Internal, control-focused attributions	Job resource, job demand		
Van De Voorde and Beijer (2015)	Survey-cross sec	Organisations in Netherlands	Attribution theory, social exchange theory, and job demands-resources model	Multilevel	HPWS	Commitment, job strain		HR well-being attributions, HR performance attributions.

Shantz, Alfes, and Bailey (2016)	Survey-cross sec	A construction and consultancy organisation in UK	Attribution theory, conservation of resources theory	Individual level	HRM-performance attributions, HRM-cost attributions	Emotional exhaustion		Job involvement, work overload
Tandung (2016)	Survey: simple random sampling	multiple industries in the Netherlands	Attribution theory, social exchange theory	Individual level	Commitment-focused HR attributions, Control-focused HR attributions	Turnover intentions		Job satisfaction
Khan and Tang (2016)	Qualitative: interviews; Survey-cross sec	Mid to large-sized organisations from diverse industries in China	Social exchange theory		Cost reduction and employee exploitation attribution, Quality and employee enhancement attribution, Information privacy concerns, 'Heard from co-workers'	Affective commitment		
Sanders and Yang (2016)	Experiment	Dutch health care medium sized organisations	Attribution theory	Multilevel	High-commitment HRM	Affective commitment, Innovative behaviour		Commitment HR attributions
Valizade, Ogbonnaya, Tregaskis, and Forde (2016)	Survey-cross sec	Organisations of Irekand	Attribution theory	Individual level	HR attributions for indirect participation; HR attributions for direct participation	Job satisfaction, organisational commitment, perceived union instrumentality, employment relations climate		
Beijer, Van de Voorde, and Tims (2019)	Survey-cross sec	multiple companies in profit and non-profit sectors in The Netherlands	social information processing theory	Multilevel	HR practices	Commitment-focused HR attributions, Control-focused HR attributions, Union compliance HR attributions	Work Motivations of Coworkers	Line manager HR attributions, Coworker's HR attributions
Sanders, Yang and Li (2019)	An experiment and a field study	An Australian University and various Chinese organisations	Attribution theory, signalling theory	Individual level	Perceived HPWS	Quality enhancement HR attribution and cost reduction HR attributions	PDO	
Hewett, Shantz, and Mundy (2019)	an interview study and Survey-cross sec	Academic faculty in the United Kingdom	Attribution Theory	Individual level	Distributive and procedural fairness	Internal HR attributions, external HR attributions.	Personal relevant, organisational cynicism	

Cao, Zhao, and Zhao (2020)	Survey-cross sec	Organisations from manufacturing, high-tech, and service industries	Social information processing theory	Multilevel	Employee well-being HR attributions, employee performance HR attributions	Thriving at work, emotional exhaustion	HPWS	Psychological availability, role overload
Kong (2020)	Survey: snowball sampling	Multiple industries in Hong Kong	Social exchange theory	Individual level	Employee HR attributions	Turnover intentions		Psychological contract
Lee, Kim, Gong, Zheng, and Liu (2020)	Survey-cross sec	multiple automobile service shops of a company in China	Job mobility theory, Task ideals		Employee well-being HR attribution	External job change intention, internal job exchange intention	Task I-deals	
Zhang, Wang, Jia (2021)	Survey (lagged)	Multiple companies in China	Social information processing theory	Multilevel	Socially Responsible Human Resource Management	Well-being	Substantive attributions, symbolic attributions	Perspective taking
Giesbers, Schouteten, Poutsma, van der Heijden, van der Heijden, and van Achterberg (2021)	A convergent mixed-methods, multiple case study design	surgical wards within three teaching hospitals in the Netherlands	Job demandsresources theory	Individual	the feedback on quality measurements	Work engagement, burnout	Feedback environment set by the ward manager	Quality and nurse enhancement attributions, cost reduction and nurse exploitation attributions, compliance attribution
Guest, Sanders, Rodrigues, and Oliveira (2021)	Survey-cross sec	Branches of a large Portuguese bank	Attribution theory and signalling theory	Multilevel	HR practices	Branch performance	Agreement HR practices managers and staff	Commitment focused HR attributions, Control focused HR attributions
Montag-Smit and Smit (2021)	Survey-cross sec	Organisations in USA	Attribution theory	Individual level	Pay secrecy policies	Trust	Pay Sharing Preferences	Malevolent attributions, benevolent attributions
Yang and Arthur (2021)	Longitudinal research	Korean organisations	Attribution theory	Work group level	FLMs' commitment HR attributions	OCB		FLMs' implementation of commitment HR

Gürlek and Uygur (2021)	Survey-cross sec	Multiple five star hotels in Turkey	Trust formation		Service-oriented HPWPs	employee service performance		practices, employees' perceptions of commitment HR practice implementation by FLMs Service-quality HR attributions, employee well-being HR attributions, trust in organisation, affective commitment,
Katou, Budhwar and Patel (2021)	Survey-cross sec	Greek private organisations	Attribution theory; and social exchange theory	Multilevel	The HRM system including HRM content, HR strength, and line entation	Organisational performance		Commitment-oriented HR attributions, control-oriented HR attributions
Fan, Huang, and Timming (2021)	Survey-cross sec	Chinese manufacturing and service organisations in the Netherlands	Attribution theory	Team-level	Commitment-focused HR attributions, control-focused HR attributions	Team performance	Transformational leadership	Team engagement
Alfes, Veld, and Fürstenberg, (2021)	Survey-cross sec		The employment relationship literature and the job demands-resources model	Individual level	HPWS	Engagement		HR well-being attributions, HR performance attributions
Katou (2022)	Survey-cross sec	various private organisations in Greece	Social exchange theory	Multilevel	HPWS	Organisational performance		Employee well-being HR experienced attributions, employee exploitation HR experienced HR attributions, employee attitudes,

							employee behaviours
Gim, Ooi, Teoh, Lim, and Yeap (2022)	Survey-cross sec	Manufacturing companies in Malaysia	Conservation of resources theory		Green HRM, Leader-member exchange, core self-evaluations	Work engagement	HRM performance attributions
Smidt, Jimmieson, Bradley, and Edwards (2023)	Survey-cross sec	Australian organisations	job demands-resources theory, conservation of resources theories	Individual level	commitment attribution, control attribution, compliance attribution, image attribution	Job dissatisfaction, days impaired, Intentions to participate	Wellness program attributions
Meier-Barthold, Biemann, and Alfes (2023)	Scenario-based experiment	Participants from USA, Portugal, Canada, Mexico, Spain	Signalling theory and concept of situational strength	Individual level	HRM system configuration	HR attributions: service quality, employee well-being, cost reduction, employee exploitation	HRM strength

Drawing on the extant literature and signalling theory (Connelly et al., 2011), the antecedents for employee HR attributions are categorised along the four key components of the signalling theory: the signaller, the signal, the receiver, and the signalling environment (Hu et Oh, 2022). This means that employee HR attribution formation is predicated upon four elements: (1) the central role of management in delivering clear HR messages (*signaller*); (2) the salience of HR content to catch employee attention (*signal*); (3) ability and effort of employees to interpret HR intentions (*receiver*); and (4) influences of environmental factors around employees (*signalling environment*) (Hu et Oh, 2022).

First, signaler-focused antecedents largely reflect the role of line managers in influencing employee HR attributions. This is because line managers are ‘the source of employees’ most direct experiences with HR practices’ (Kehoe and Han, 2020, p. 111). Line manager has become an active actor of HR process who deliver actual HR values and make them salient to employees and thereby aligning employee attitudes and behaviours with strategic organisational goals (Bowen and Ostroff, 2004; Li, Frenkel, and Sanders, 2011; Nishii et al., 2008). According to social information processing theory (Salancik and Pfeffer, 1978), people tend to observe the behaviours of others and situational factors surrounding them as significant cues to interpret and react to the information they encounter. Building on this reasoning, the way line managers communicate HR practices plays a crucial role in shaping how effectively organisational intentions and motives are conveyed to employees. The extent to which employees rely on this communication channel significantly influences their perceptions of HR practices and, in turn, drives their engagement in desired behaviours (Katou et al., 2021; Kehoe and Han, 2020; Alfes et al., 2021).

HR scholarship has indicated that HR practices are usually developed by senior managers but implemented by line managers and perceived by employees (Bowen and Ostroff, 2004; Li 2011; Nishii et al., 2008). As such, line managers’ implementation is examined as a key driver of employee HR attributions. Bowen and Ostroff developed the term ‘HRM system strength’, which hinges on three essential characteristics -distinctiveness, consistency, and consensus - each crucial to influencing employees’ attributions and achieving desired organisational outcomes. Of these, consensus suggests the alignment among HR implementors, such as line managers, in effectively disseminating HR values to subordinates, fostering collective behaviours in the workplace.

Building on this influential work, several HR scholars have integrated HR strength and HR attributions into conceptual models to explain the connection between HR practices and performance outcomes (Katou et al., 2014; Katou et al., 2021; Meier-Barthold et al., 2023). Russell et al. (2018) developed a perceptual framework illustrating how line manager HR implementation shapes employee HR attributions, which, in turn, drive individual performance and, collectively, enhance firm performance. More recently, Katou et al. (2021) emphasized that an effective HRM system consists of three distinct but interconnected dimensions: HRM content, HRM strength, and HR implementation. These elements together foster commitment-oriented HR attributions, ultimately leading to superior firm performance. Central to this process is the role of line managers' HR implementation, which positively influences the formation of quality-focused and employee well-being attributions, thereby boosting individual task performance.

Nevertheless, team leaders or line managers tend to interpret the meaning of HR practices in varied ways, and their perceptions of HR motivations heavily influence their leadership style and how they circulate HR practices within their team (Zhang et al., 2021; Nishii and Paluch, 2018). For example, if leaders perceive benevolent work arrangements as being driven by malevolent motives, they may fail to convey the intended message to employees, hindering the desired behavioural responses (Zhang et al., 2021; Yahaya and Ebrahim, 2016). Therefore, distinguishing between the HR attributions of leaders and employees is crucial, as understanding team leaders' perspectives on HR objectives can help predict employee outcomes. Beijer and others (2019) posit that employees regularly interact with their supervisors to discern the underlying purposes of HR practices. The results demonstrate that employees are inclined to form commitment-focused, or control-focused or external HR attributions based on the alignment of their leaders' HR perceptions with those of organisational management.

In a similar vein, Yang and Arthur (2019) integrate frontline commitment HR attributions into their conceptual framework to predict the level of OCB. Empirical findings show that when frontline managers develop high commitment HR attributions of HR practices or strong beliefs that HR practices are employed to promote well-being and quality of products and services, there is a greater likelihood that they will cascade HR practices down in a coherent manner. This enables employees to receive clear informational cues, leading them to make similar HR attributions and then exhibit OCB at the group level. By contrast,

with low commitment HR attributions, frontline managers suspect organisational sincerity and are less likely to actively engage in commitment HR practice implementation, which in turn has a negative bearing on employee HR attributions and their extra role behaviours.

Second, signal-related antecedents refer to two critical constructs, HR content and HR strength, that influence employee HR attributions (Hewett et al., 2018; Hewett, 2021; Wang et al., 2020). HR content is understood as a collection of coherent and complementary HR practices (Huselid, 1995; Sun et al., 2007), whereas HR strength pertains to a strategic HRM system defined by three essential components: distinctiveness, consistency, and consensus (Bowen and Ostroff, 2004; Ostroff and Bowen, 2016). HR content (e.g., HPWS) has been established as a key signal of organisational intentions, and a more comprehensive use of HR practices is expected to lead to positive HR attributions among employees (Van de Voorde and Beijer, 2015; Sanders and Yang, 2016; Guest et al., 2021; Alfes et al., 2021). For example, Van de Voorde and Beijer (2015) suggest that a broad application of HPWS positively influences HR well-being and HR performance attributions. Guest et al. (2021), using signalling theory as a theoretical framework, validated this idea by analysing data from employees across 83 bank branches, demonstrating that the intensive use of high-commitment HR practices positively affects employee HR attributions and attitudes. Similarly, Alfes et al. (2021) showed that HPWS are positively linked to both HR attributions, with these attributions interacting to drive employee engagement.

On the other hand, HR system strength has been employed to cast important light on employee HR attributions (Katou et al., 2021; Meier-Barthold et al., 2023). Katou and co-authors (2021) combined HRM content, HR strength and line manager HR implementation as a powerful integrative system revealing more nuances of employee cognitive sensemaking phenomenon in the workplace. In a similar light, Meier-Barthold and others (2023) investigate the configuration and the strength of HRM system as well as its interaction in sending unambiguous and consistent signals to employees and thereby explain the variability in their HR attributions. Although significant strides have been made in studying HR strength as a precursor to HR attributions, there remains a limited understanding of how HR strength interacts with other influencing factors to shape employee psychological processes. Consequently, further in-depth research is required to address this gap in the existing HR literature (Hewett et al., 2018; Hewett, 2021)

Third, HR attributions are also shaped by individual factors, such as personal beliefs (e.g., cynicism) and characteristics (e.g., dispositions, personality traits, values) (Hewett et al., 2019; Kitt and Sanders, 2022). For instance, Hewett et al. (2019) build on Kelley and Michela's (1980) framework, combining perceptions of distributive and procedural fairness (information), organisational cynicism (beliefs), and personal relevance (motivation) to predict employee HR attributions related to workload management. Organisational cynicism, which stems from past experiences, reflects employees' negative attitudes toward their organisation's integrity (Chiaburu et al., 2013). Employees with high levels of cynicism are more likely to doubt the organisation's sincerity, leading them to form unfavourable HR attributions (Davis and Gardner, 2004).

In a different vein, Russell and others (2018) develop a perceptual model in which employees form attributions of organisational intent based upon four factors: (1) configurations of HR practices, (2) line manager's implementation of HPWS, (3) line manager's implementation styles (e.g. political skills) and (4) their own characteristics, namely, affective and attributional tendencies. Affective tendencies, here, means whether employees tend to approach stimuli with optimism or pessimism, while attributional tendencies reflect employee abilities to ascribe an event or occurrence to internal causes (within the actor) or external causes (beyond the actor). For example, in the presence of formal performance appraisal, employees with positive affective tendencies are likely to see the world through a positive lens and ascribe the HR practice to benevolent organisational motives.

By contrast, those with negative affective tendencies are suspicious of the world and prone to interpret this event as stemming from malevolent organisational intentions (Forgas and George, 2001; Johnson, 2008). Added to this, internal attributional tendency reflects employee beliefs that HR implementation derives from manager's sincere volitional elements whereas external attributional tendency refers to managers' involuntary action under organisational policies and pressures (Ferris et al., 1995; Forgas and George, 2001). In short, employees can partly rely on their attributional and affective states to evaluate or make HR attributions of any important event at work (Russell et al., 2018).

Furthermore, other receiver-focused elements, such as self-transcendence value (Hu and Oh, 2022), personality traits (Heavey, 2012), work experience, are viewed as potential drivers

of employee HR attributions. In particular, self-transcendence values describe the extent to which people care about others and place the interests of others, organisation, or society above their self-interests (Schwartz, 1992). Based on the core values of self-transcendence (Schwartz, 1992; 2012), employees with a high level of self-transcendence are more willing to help others (e.g. colleagues, supervisors) without thinking much about personal costs. They accordingly are believed to make more favourable HR attributions.

The role of employee personality should not be overlooked when examining employee HR attributions. According to Heavey (2012), employees with distinct traits can assign differing meanings to HR motivations. For example, proactive employees can greatly engage in HR activities and more attend to informational cues to form HR attributions. On the other hand, conscientious employees are more committed to HR work arrangements because they usually give priority to their work and responsibilities. This might result in more favourable HR attributions compared to negligible or cynical colleagues. However, the results of Heavey (2012) do not fully support hypotheses. Given a shortage of studies dedicated to this area of research, more in-depth research is required to provide more compelling evidence on the linkage between employee personality traits and HR attributions (Heavey, 2012; Gim et al., 2022).

Finally, signalling environment-related antecedents can contribute a great deal to the formation of employee HR attributions. The signalling environment here refers to situational factors within organisation where the signalling process and employees' cognitive appraisal occurs (Connelly et al., 2011). In this study, the environmental antecedents are grouped into three dimensions: interpersonal, organisational, and institutional contexts. Interpersonal relationships are defined as the social exchange employees have with other people around them, such as colleagues, supervisors, senior managers (Hu et al., 2022). For example, Gim et al. (2022) assert that line managers develop varying relationships with their subordinates and thus treat them differently. As such, employees are apt to make HR attributions based on the quality of the relationships they hold with their leaders. (Gim et al., 2022; Alvesson, 2011; Kilroy et al., 2023). Added to this, coworkers are also a rich informational source to influence employee HR attributions because employees by nature cannot work in a vacuum (Sanders et al., 2021). Instead, they frequently interact and cooperate with their teammates to achieve assigned tasks. As such, they are influenced by others' perspectives about the intent behind HR implementation. Beijer et al. (2019) found empirical support that employees'

commitment-focused and control-focused HR attributions were impacted by those of coworkers.

Organisational contexts are also construed as organisational climate, firm characteristics, organisational culture, and strategies which influence the extent to which the value of HR practices is internalised by employees (Hu et Oh, 2022). Organisational culture creates a unique context that can either foster or impede employee HR attributions. For instance, an employee-oriented organisational environment can generate and strengthen positive HR attributions because individuals believe that the employer sincerely cares about their well-being and personal needs (Eisenberger and Huntington, 1986; Hu et Oh, 2022). Tracey (2012) posited that a commitment-oriented organisational climate can provide a rich informational context, enabling employees to access abundant supportive resources, thereby reducing the likelihood of undesirable HR attributions. Similarly, Hewett et al. (2019) argued that an environment filled with high distributive and procedural fairness is positively related to commitment-focused HR attributions and negatively associated with control-focused HR attributions of workload measurement and management. Added to this, other firm characteristics, such as size, structure, strategies, can act as potential drivers of employees' assessment of HR purposes. For example, SMEs, with distinct characteristics, such as flatter hierarchical structure, direct communication, use of informal HR practices, resource poverty and labour-intensive nature, can uniquely impact employees' HR attributional process (Klaas et al., 2012; Harney and Alkhalaf, 2022).

More broadly, institutional, or national contexts, such as cultural values or legal requirements can exert influence on employees' HR appraisals (Hofstede, 2011; Sanders et al., 2021). Kim and Wright (2011) pointed out that people in different cultural and legal settings may view the same HR practices idiosyncratically. For example, performance-based appraisal can be viewed by employees as organisational goodwill in enhancing employee capabilities whereas perceived negatively as exploitation by others due to cultural differences (Kim and Wright, 2011). Sanders et al. (2021) are among the first to examine the moderating effect of power distance orientation (PDO) on the relationships between HPWS and the quality-enhancement and cost-reduction attributions. The experimental findings support the hypothesis that the relationships are stronger for low (rather than high) levels of employee PDO. They subsequently called for more in-depth studies dedicated to examining cultural

values across countries, such as uncertainty avoidance, collectivism versus individualism, masculinity versus femininity, to further investigate the HR process.

2.4.2.4 Outcomes of HR attributions

Much of the empirical research has used the key principles established by Nishii et al. (2008) as a blueprint to develop and test the conceptual model that examines how employees' HR attributions predict individual and organisational outcomes (Hu and Oh, 2021; Sanders et al., 2023). Commitment-focused HR attributions are closely associated with positive outcomes at various levels whereas control-focused HR attributions tend to result in negative outcomes. External attributions have no significant link with outcomes at any level (Hu and Oh, 2021). In the present study, the consequences of HR attributions are classified into several main groups: (1) individual outcomes (e.g. attitudes, wellbeing, behaviours), (2) collective outcomes, and (3) firm performance.

In addition to attribution theory, social exchange theory is another widely applied framework in HR attribution research (Hewett, 2021; Wang et al., 2020; Xiao and Cooke, 2022). According to social exchange theory, employees tend to feel an obligation to reciprocate with positive attitudes and behaviours when they are treated well by their organisation (Blau, 1964). Specifically, organisations must make strategic investments in their employees to cultivate commitment-oriented HR attributions, which in turn foster desired attitudes and behaviours, such as affective commitment (Fontinha et al., 2012; Van De Voorde and Beijer, 2015), a positive psychological contract (Guest et al., 2021), perceived organisational support (Chen and Wang, 2014), job satisfaction (Vlachos et al., 2013; Lai-Bennejean and Beitelspacher, 2021), engagement (Alfes et al., 2021), reduced turnover intentions (Tandung, 2016), trust in management (Tomlinson and Langlinais, 2021; Montag-Smit and Smit, 2021; Gürlek and Uygur, 2021), and organisational citizenship behaviours (Nishii et al., 2008). On the other hand, when organisations fail to invest adequately in their employees, control-focused attributions (such as cost reduction and employee exploitation) are more likely to arise, leading to negative outcomes such as stress, work overload, emotional exhaustion, burnout, and higher turnover intentions (Shantz et al., 2016; Van De Voorde and Beijer, 2015; Lee et al., 2020).

For example, Montag-Smit and Smit (2021) theorised that HR attributions mediate the relationship between pay secrecy policies and trust in management. Empirical findings demonstrate that benevolent HR attributions, such as those focused on employee well-being and performance enhancement, tend to foster higher trust in management, whereas malevolent HR attributions, such as cost control and exploitation ones, are found to erode faith in the organisation. Gürlek and Uygur (2021) shared similar findings that service quality and well-being HR attributions increase trust within organisations.

Moreover, Lee and others (2020) found empirical evidence supporting their hypotheses that when employees make commitment HR attributions or hold their beliefs about an employee-oriented management philosophy underlying their organisation's HR practices, they are motivated to advance their careers within the organisation rather than seek opportunities elsewhere. In short, favourable HR attributions are negatively associated with external job change intention and positively associated with internal job change intention.

HR strategic scholars have also drawn on job demands-resources theory (Bakker and Demerouti, 2014; 2017) to examine the relationship between employee HR attributions and well-being (Wang et al., 2020; Hewett et al., 2018; Hu and Oh, 2022). The theory highlights the core idea that when employees deal with high work pressure and challenging job tasks, they can count on the organisation to access the great deal of supportive resources from organisation, such as, job security, autonomy, flexibility, supervisor coaching and mentoring. This support helps them to mitigate negative effects of work demands, overcoming challenging tasks, and then moving their career forward (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007; Bakker et al., 2003). As such, employees are more likely to make service quality and well-being HR attributions, which can later enhance well-being and positive outcomes.

For example, Van de Voorde and Beijer (2015) infused job demand-resource theory in their conceptual model and posited that well-being HR attributions are related to higher levels of commitment and lower levels of job strain while HR performance attributions are associated with higher levels of job strain. Similarly, Giesbers et al. (2014) found that in the healthcare sector, nurses, who attribute quality enhancement to HR practices, perceive feedback from line managers as a job resource, which in turn facilitates them to thrive at work. By contrast, employees with control-focused HR attributions are likely to view such

practices as a job demand, leading to demotivation, which can harm both their physical and mental health conditions.

Second, recognizing that employees typically operate within hierarchical structures where social interactions influence one another, HR attribution scholars have sought to explore how these dynamics impact collective outcomes, such as team engagement (Fan et al., 2021), unit commitment (Nishii et al., 2008), team or branch performance (Guest et al., 2021; Fan et al., 2021), and customer satisfaction (Nishii et al., 2008). Fan et al. (2021) are among the pioneers in expanding the concept introduced by Nishii et al. (2008) to the team level. They apply attribution theory to investigate the relationship between commitment-focused and control-focused HR attributions and team performance, with engagement serving as a mediator. Their results confirm that team engagement is a significant mediator between commitment-focused HR attributions and team performance. However, no such mediating effect was found for the relationship between control-focused HR attributions and team performance.

Guest et al. (2021) developed a multi-level and multi-actor conceptual model wherein HR practices implemented by managers influence branch performance through individual-level HR attributions (commitment versus control orientation). Specifically, effective circulation of HR signals by managers was associated with stronger commitment HR attributions and weaker control attributions among employees. These positive attributions subsequently led to higher individual engagement and a more positive psychological contract, translating into better branch performance. While their hypotheses are largely supported, no evidence was found to confirm an association between HR practices and unit performance.

Third, HR scholarship indicates that there has been little research examining the role of HR attributions at the organisational level (Hu and Oh, 2022). Katou et al. (2021) and Katou (2022) are among the few scholars who developed an integrated multilevel and multipath framework to illuminate the ‘black box’ problems between two end points of HRM systems and organisational performance. In particular, Katou and others (2021) brought together HRM content, HR strength, and line manager HR implementation as a powerful whole that exerting a positive influence on employee HR attributions, which in turn contribute to superior firm performance. Empirical findings largely supported their hypotheses, significantly advancing the existing literature. Following this vein, Katou (2022) provided a more detailed picture of

the second half of HR attributions. To be more specific, Katou and others scrutinises the sequential consequences through which employee well-being attributions can stimulate higher levels of motivation and organisational commitment. These positive attitudes are subsequently expected to guide good behaviours, such as OCB, which are the fundamental ingredient to organisational success. By so doing, Katou provides a comprehensive account of the association between HPWS and organisational performance.

2.4.2.5 Limitations and future directions

Since the impactful work of Nishii et al. (2008), several published reviews have been published to provide excellent overviews of HR attributions (Hewett et al., 2018; Wang et al., 2020; Hewett, 2021; Hu and Oh, 2022). Grounded in these thoughtful reviews and the extant HR attribution literature, this research highlights various limitations and proposes future directions for further investigation.

First, despite recent advancements in HR attributions research, there are some areas requiring further improvement concerning research design, research method, measurement, and level of analysis. Much of the empirical research to date has collected data at a single time that does not answer questions about causality of HR attribution (Fan et al., 2021; Kitt and Sanders, 2022). Researchers therefore are recommended to adopt quasi-experimental, longitudinal, or at least time-lagged design to better understand the psychological mechanism by which employee HR attributions evolve and change over time (Sanders et al., 2021; Fan et al., 2021; Alfes et al., 2021; Sanders et al., 2023). These methodological approaches also facilitate exploration into how employees can transition between benign and hostile attributions, and how shifts in their mind leads to adjustments in their subsequent behaviours and then outcomes (Hu et Oh., 2022). Such research endeavours promise more precise modeling findings, better inform relevant practices, and thereby advance and enrich the extant knowledge about HR attributions (Hewett et al., 2018; Hewett, 2021; Hu and Oh, 2022).

Meanwhile, there is significant potential to enhance the robustness of understanding surrounding the cognitive phenomenon of HR attributions and its crucial role in shaping the HR-performance relationship through qualitative or mixed methods research (Sanders et al., 2021). The qualitative method, such as group interviews, offers employees the opportunity to freely describe their HR-related experiences and express their genuine thoughts and feelings

about their organisations and people around them. This approach not only enriches the depth of exploration but also opens avenues to identify additional antecedents of HR attributions, including the impacts of technological advancements and AI, which are valuable insights for both researchers and practitioners in the field of HR attributions.

Moreover, Sanders et al. (2021, p.7) argued that ‘although research on HR attributions have been conducted across multiple countries, very little addresses the influence of institutional factors or cultural values or challenge the universalistic approach of the HR attributions research’. Most measurement scales have been developed in Western countries with very little research conducted in other global contexts. This gap in the literature raises critical questions: Do HR attributions made by Eastern employees regarding organisational intent differ from those made by their Western counterparts? If so, what factors cause these differences? By adopting a qualitative approach and gathering data from multinational organisations, researchers not only address current gaps in the literature but also uncover inherent divergences in HR attributions across contexts and thereby inform more effective global HR practices.

Second, despite a great effort to explore antecedents of employee HR attributions, there has been great potential for thoughtful scholars to conduct in-depth studies and shed more nuanced light on the first half of HR attributions (Katou et al., 2021; Hewett et al., 2019; Guest et al., 2021, Sanders et al., 2021). Hewett and others, in their review (2018), claimed that research on the antecedents of HR attributions has predominantly been carried out in isolation, without sufficient integration of different factors or perspectives or ‘we know very little about how inter-related research streams are complementary, and we have yet to address the possibility that they can be united under a general framework’ (p.88).

Employee HR attributions can be influenced by several distinct streams of research. These include signaler-related elements, for example, signaler-related elements (e.g. line manager’s HR implementation, line manager’s HR attributions), signal-related factors (e.g. HR strength, HR content), receiver-related dimensions (e.g. personality traits, dispositions) and environmental influences (e.g. national cultural values, organisational culture, and strategy) (Hu and Oh, 2022). Despite the exploration of these individual streams, there is limited understanding of how these various factors interact and work synergistically to shape employee HR attributions (Hewett et al., 2018; Hewett, 2021).

Katou et al. (2021) responded to the call of Hewett et al. (2018) by theoretically proposing and empirically examining an integrative framework by which HRM content (*signal-related*), HRM strength (*signal-related*) and line manager HR implementation (*signaler related*) together influence employee HR attributions (e.g. commitment versus control). On the other hand, Hewett et al. (2019) drew on three classes of antecedents, namely, information, beliefs, motivation, illustrated by Jones and Davis (1965) and further developed by Kelley and Michela (1980), to bring together distributive and procedural fairness (*information*), personal relevance (*motivation*), and cynicism (*belief*) to evidence employee HR attributions of workload management framework.

Following the two works of Hewett et al. (2019) and Katou et al. (2021), strategic HR scholars are encouraged to combine different categories of antecedents to produce systematic impacts on employee HR attributions, and thereby cast better light on the antecedent-HR attribution microprocess. For example, the impact of leadership styles has been largely overlooked in HR attributions literature (Hu et Oh, 2022). Researchers in HR attributions can integrate different leadership styles—such as empowering, transformational, and servant leadership—with HRM content to influence and reshape employees' attribution processes (Hu and Oh, 2022; Gim et al., 2022). Transformational leaders, for instance, can significantly impact employees' perceptions and beliefs by elevating their goals and instilling confidence to exceed performance expectations outlined in formal agreements (Hewett, 2021). A robust transformational leadership style not only clarifies the purpose and intensive use of HR practices (Hu and Oh, 2022), but also has the potential to shift negative HR attributions towards positive ones (Fan et al., 2021).

Third, factors related to HR recipients and contextual signals have also been overlooked, requiring in-depth investigation, future research could explore organisational characteristics (e.g. strategy, firm size, organisational culture) across various firms, and/or cultural values at the national level (e.g. power distance orientation, collectivism versus individualism, and masculinity versus femininity) to elucidate the antecedent-HR attribution relationship (Hu et Oh, 2022; Sanders et al., 2023). For example, Newman and Nollen (1996) emphasise that 'national culture is a central organizing principle of employees' understanding of work, their approach to it, and how they expect to be treated' (p. 755). Culture can influence how employees make sense of their environment and respond to signals (Fiske and

Taylor, 1991; Sanders et al., 2014; Kitt and Sanders, 2022). For example, individualism versus collectivism can explain the attributional differences between West European and East Asian cultures (Hofstede, 1980, 1984). In Western European cultures, there is a predominant inclination towards individualism, where individuals tend to attribute behaviours and performance outcomes to internal or dispositional factors.

Conversely, East Asian cultures typically exhibit a greater collectivistic orientation, emphasising contextual or external attributes when explaining behaviours and performance (Chiang and Birtch, 2007; Morris and Peng, 1994). Added to this, strategic HR scholars can pay more attention to individual characteristics like competencies, efforts, and work experience could be considered in conjunction with other pathways (e.g. environment-related elements, HR signals). This approach aims to provide a clearer understanding of the cognitive sense-making process that employees not only attend to their organisational cues and are impacted by national culture values, but also reflect on their own characteristics to inform and validate their HR attributions (Sanders et al., 2021; Weiner et al., 1985; Xiao and Cooke, 2020; Kitt and Sanders, 2022).

Fourth, it is argued that some researchers attempt to go beyond Nishii and others' hypotheses (2008) to offer insights into HR attributions. For example, Alfes et al. (2021) demonstrate that an employee can simultaneously hold different HR attributions. To be more specific, drawing on job demands-resources theory, management can send strong HR signals by which employees can face pressure to work hard for increased productivity (*employees form cost-HR attributions*), however, with available social support and organisational resources, employees feel motivated to successfully deal with demanding job tasks and prevent them from experiencing adverse emotions (*employees form well-being focused HR attributions*). As a result, there is a possibility for employees to make two types of HR attributions at the same time and such a combination can jointly interact and thereby produce the highest level of engagement in the workplace (Alfes et al., 2021).

Further, cost-reduction policies do not always reflect low pay or low investment in employees. Instead, it can be achieved through operational excellence or technological advancements for better performance (Hu and Oh, 2022). In addition, in the event of an economic downturn or crisis where cost-reducing policies are solely needed to remain employees employed and drive organisations through financial difficulties, cost-focused HR

attributions might have less detrimental impacts on employee welfare (Hu and Oh, 2022). Control-focused attributions, therefore, do not necessarily result in negative consequences as presumed in the work of Nishii et al. (2008) (Lee et al., 2020).

Finally, external HR attributions have recently received more attention in explaining employee outcomes. This runs counter to Nishii et al. (2008)'s assumption that external attributions have no link or weakly related to individual reactions. Xiao and Cooke are among the first to focus on a novel type of external attributions (Labour Law external attributions) and posit that when employers abide by the Chinese Labour Law, employees are impressed that management is concerned about employees' legal rights and occupational health. This is relevant in such collectivist culture-oriented countries as China where labour rights violation is common (Cooney et al., 2013), and thereby strictly obeying Labour Law is viewed as a salient event that is positively associated with employee HR attributions and well-being (Xiao and Cooke, 2022).

There are some empirical studies examining HR attributions for single HR practices rather than a HRM system (Montag-Smit and Smit, 2021; Hewett et al., 2019). This is an interesting and important pathway because an employee can attribute to single HR practices differently. For example, extensive training is more likely to be interpreted as organisational care for employee developmental needs and/or service quality whereas performance appraisal can be viewed in a more negative term such as employee exploitation. Hewett et al. (2018) call on HR scholars to explore single HR practice-based attributions (rather than HRM system-based attributions) and the interactions among HR attributions of different single HR practices in impacting employee outcomes.

For instance, Hewett et al. (2019) examined how employees attribute their workload measurement and management practices and found that distributive and procedural fairness play a crucial role in shaping internal attributions of commitment, but have a lesser impact on cost-saving or exploitation attributions. Similarly, Montag Smit and Smit (2020) investigated employees' views on three aspects of pay secrecy policies (i.e., distributive nondisclosure, communication restrictions, and procedural nondisclosure). Their findings suggest that these pay secrecy practices are positively associated with malevolent attributions and negatively associated with benevolent attributions. Overall, strategic HR researchers are encouraged to

build on this body of work and further expand upon the insights provided by Nishii et al. (2008).

2.4.3 Relational attributions

2.4.3.1 What are relational attributions?

Attribution theories reflect the idea that when confronted with specific events, individuals seek to identify causes that reside either within (internal to) or outside (external to) themselves (Heider, 1958; Weiner, 1985; Kelley, 1973), or within and/or outside the organisation (Nishii et al., 2008), to make sense of their surroundings. Whether the cause is attributed to internal or external factors influences individuals' subsequent affect, motivation, and behaviour (Kelley, 1972; Weiner, 1985). For instance, if an employee fails to receive an anticipated promotion, they might attribute this failure to their lack of skills and abilities (internal attributions) or to their supervisor's bias and favouritism (external attributions). Consequently, the employee may choose to attend a training course if internal attributions are determined, or alternatively, they might request an internal job transfer or even resign when external attributions are assigned (Martinko et al., 2006).

Eberly and co-authors, in their work (2011), questioned whether the 'internal' and 'external' categories of causes can fully capture the conceptual space of employee cognitive sense-making phenomena. They argue that organisations are complex social systems where employees cannot work in silos. Instead, they are expected to interact with other stakeholders through daily activities (e.g. teamworking) across levels to accomplish their tasks and thrive at work (Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, and Johnson, 2005). Therefore, the success and failure employees experience at work may not only be attributed to internal and/or external causes but also to the quality of relationships they hold with people around them (e.g. something about us). For this reasoning, Eberly et al. (2011) proposed so-called relational attributions or a third class of the locus of causality, that pertains to the dyadic level of analysis, to explain specific events. They defined relational attributions as 'those explanations made by a focal individual that locate the cause of an event within the relationship that the individual has with another person' (p. 736).

Moreover, relational attributions are conceptually distinct from internal and external attributions in the sense that they involve two potential agents of change (Ferris et al., 2009;

Eberly et al., 2011). In particular, in the presence of negative events, people who form internal attributions, can later exercise some control by changing themselves, such as by exerting more effort or learning some new skills. In contrast, those with external attributions have little or no control over other people or the situation (Eberly et al., 2011). By assigning relational attributions, focal individuals can attempt to fix or improve their relationship. Nevertheless, relational attributions are shaped by the interplay between partners and cannot be reduced to the actions of either actor (Eberly et al., 2011; Gardner et al., 2019). Efforts are acknowledged only when they are reciprocated by the other party. In other words, the relationship progresses when both parties actively engage in intentional, mutual interactions focused on fostering positive growth.

Relational attributions are more commonly related to negative failure-related contexts rather than success-related ones. Unexpected and unfavourable episodes trigger stronger attributional processes because they hinder and threaten personal achievements, prompting people to seek underlying causes to make changes or avoid similar negative events in the future (Weiner, 1985; 1990). For this reasoning, negative achievement circumstances provide the most likely conditions for relational attributions to occur (Labianca and Brass, 2006; Eberly et al. 2011).

For example, when an employee misses a project deadline, he can ascribe this negative event to a wide array of causal explanations which are grouped into three streams of causality, namely, (1) to personal characteristics, such as a perceived lack of discipline (internal) or (2) to situational factors, for example, unrealistic deadlines, insufficient resources (external) or (3) a lack of clear communication with his line manager (relational). By identifying only relational attributions for his missed deadline, the employee does not place the blame entirely on his abilities or solely on his supervisor but instead sees this failure as a result of the poor interaction-a characteristic of their relationship (Eberly et al., 2011). To avoid such failures in the future, the employee needs to enhance his relationship with his leaders and this intent can only be achieved when his endeavour is acknowledged and responded favourably by the leader (Gardner et al., 2019; Martinko and Gardner, 1987) (*see Table 7 for details*).

Table 7: Contrasting Internal and External Attributions with Relational Attributions Within a Dyad in Response to Negative Achievement-Related Events (Eberly et al., 2011)

Events	Internal attribution	Relational attribution	External attribution
	Self	Self in relation to other	Other person/situation
“I did not get a positive performance review, because . . .	. . . I did not put in enough effort over the past few weeks.”	. . . my boss and I don’t have a positive relationship.”	. . . my boss is incompetent.”
“I was not chosen as the team leader, because . .	. . . I have poor communication skills.”	. . . my boss and I do not communicate well with each other.”	. . . it was my coworker’s turn—people are selected based on a policy of rotating responsibility.”
“I did not meet the project’s deadline, because . . .	. . . I did not ask for additional help soon enough.”	. . . my coworker and I did not give each other frequent enough updates.”	. . . I had to redo all the work my coworker turned in.”
“My boss always monitors me closely, because . . .	. . . I did not ask for additional help soon enough.”	. . . we dislike each other and he is looking for a reason to fire me.”	. . . he is a control freak.”

2.4.3.2. Antecedents of relational attributions

Eberly and others (2011) also draw on the covariation principles (Kelley, 1973; 1979) to suggest that relational attributions are likely to occur when consensus is low and both distinctiveness and consistency are high. For example, when an employee does not receive a pay rise, he can rely on three key informational characteristics to infer whether this outcome is attributable to internal, external or relational causes. Relational attributions are made when the employee observes that other people benefit from pay increases (low consensus), he has never got merit increases from his supervisor (high consistency), but frequently receives merit awards or credit from other supervisors (high distinctiveness). Based on these observations, the employee can conclude that he does not have a good relationship with his supervisor (Eberly et al., 2011).

Furthermore, Eberly and others (2011) argued that both personal characteristics (e.g. past interpersonal experiences; upbringing) and situational factors (e.g. leadership, teamworking activities) can influence individuals’ interpretative processes, facilitating

relational attributions. Specifically, individuals who perceive themselves as separate from others or a clear distinction between themselves and a relationship partner, are more likely to attribute their outcomes to internal or external causes. By contrast, people who tend to view themselves in relation to others are more likely to attribute their successes or failures at work to the dynamics of their relationships. They can easily detect when their line managers favour them or treat them unfairly compared to their coworkers, prompting them to form judgments about the overall quality of their relationship (Markus and Kitayama, 1991; Eberly et al., 2011).

In addition to personal characteristics, situational elements or working environments can activate and promote the relational self (Ferris et al., 2009). For example, when organisations implement HR practices, which aims to enhance interdependence, such as teamworking, direct feedback, team performance-based appraisal, employees are less likely to work in isolation or detach themselves from collaborative activities. Within such a collective organisational culture, employees can team up with other members and share knowledge across different levels to complete their assigned tasks. They are also required to engage in effective communication with supervisors to access resources such as information, financial support, and demonstrate good attitudes and behaviours for favourable performance evaluations (Rusbult and Van Lange, 2003, 2008). As a result, these day-to day interdependent activities enable employees to gather relational cues which create a rich context where the causes of positive or negative events are extended to their dyadic relationships beyond prevailing internal and external attributions (Johnson, Selenta, and Lord, 2006).

Conversely, in organisations that pursue the philosophy of individualism or prioritise personal accountability, autonomy, and results-based performance through which employees are encouraged to take ownership of their works, and interdependence and interconnectedness tend to be relatively low. For some companies like consulting or sales firms, employees' success is commonly measured by individual performance metrics such as billable hours, client acquisition, and project outcomes. Employees are expected to work independently, determine their own approaches to achieving required targets and be responsible for their own behaviours and actions. Added to this, organisations may outsource certain positions or hire specialists for unique technical expertise for a short run, which does not seem to develop a strong relationship with employees (Eberly et al., 2011; Gardner et al., 2019). In such a

context, attributional processes are more likely to focus on internal and external loci of causality, rather than relational attributions (Eberly et al., 2011).

2.4.3.3. Consequences of relational attributions

Relational attributions significantly impact how employees perceive their work environment and their relationships within it, influencing a wide range of outcomes from cognitive and affective reactions to job performance. Relational attributions are a complex psychological process that requires effort of both actors to establish and develop a dyadic relationship. When a low quality of relationship is identified as a main cause of negative outcomes, such as a poor performance appraisal, it is imperative for both employee and supervisor to take action to improve their interactions (Gabriel and Gardner, 1999; Gardner et al., 2019).

In particular, employees or attributors need to reflect on their own past actions and evaluate partner's reactions to determine what potential factors cause harm on the leader-member relationship. They later determine what necessary steps are taken to remedy the situation and consider how their leader might respond to these changes (Brewer and Gardner, 1996; Markus and Kitayama, 1991; Eberly et al., 2011). This process is inherently uncertain because employees cannot precisely predict or fully understand their leader's reactions. For instance, if the employee wants an informal conversation with his supervisor, he needs to take all possible outcomes into account by questioning whether this action will be effective or potentially exacerbate the situation? Will the leader perceive his efforts as sincere and genuine or hypocritical and manipulative? How would the leader act and behave during the meeting? Such uncertainties make the process of improving relational attributions complex and challenging, necessitating careful consideration and strategic planning (Maslyn and Uhl-Bien, 2001; Martinko and Mackey, 2019).

However, not all employees seek to solve this problem. In response to negative outcomes, some employees can endeavour to improve capabilities and adjust attitudes and behaviours and attempt to ameliorate the relationship. Others might consider requesting an internal position change or leaving their jobs. Regardless of the chosen option, the employee faces uncertainty. They cannot be certain about finding another job or attending a training course would be useful for enhancing his competencies or altering the leaders' perspective to

foster better mutual understanding. As a result, relational attributions are closely related to relational uncertainty (Eberly et al., 2011).

According to the uncertainty reduction theory (Berger and Calabrese, 1975), uncertainty is categorised into three dimensions: uncertainty about the self, uncertainty about the partner, and uncertainty about the relationship itself. Self-uncertainty refers to doubts regarding one's ability to implement desired actions. Partner uncertainty reflects the unpredictability of the partner's attitudinal and behavioural reactions. Relationship uncertainty encompasses the ambiguity concerning the status and future of the dyad as a whole (Knobloch and Knobloch-Fedders, 2010). Thus, relational attributions involve these dimensions of uncertainty, complicating the decision-making process for employees who must navigate their own capabilities, their partner's potential responses, and the overall stability of the relationship.

Moreover, relational attributions arising from negative events are likely to induce feelings of stress and anxiety, which in turn cause harm on psychological wellbeing (Wright and Bonett, 2007) because attributors experience uncertainty regarding how to make amends in the relationship with others and thus struggle to predict and control their own lives (Van den Bos and Lind, 2002). In the absence of compelling evidence and clear guidance about how to invest in and maintain strong interpersonal bonds, uncertainty becomes a common workplace stressor which can cause employees to feel highly anxious and then threaten their welfare (Garst, Frese, and Molenaar, 2000; O'Driscoll and Beehr, 1994).

Baumeister and Leary (1995, p.497) indicated that individuals have a "pervasive drive" to establish and develop interpersonal relations, experiencing emotional distress and anxiety at the prospect of losing important relationships. These harmful feelings are particularly salient in the organisational context where employees are under great pressure to promote mutual understanding and repair the relationship with their leader. This is explained by the idea that leaders are important actors within organisation who is not easily substitutable and play a central role in determining employees' goal accomplishments and career development in the future (e.g. in relation to merit rising, rewards, promotions) (Baumeister and Leary, 1995; Eberly et al., 2011). In sum, the pressure to maintain positive relationships with key organisational figures, such as supervisors, underscores the importance of addressing these relational concerns to safeguard employees' psychological well-being and ensure their career progression.

Finally, relational attributions can lead to two primary behavioural forms among employees: *remedial voice and interpersonal citizenship behaviours (ICBs)*. *Remedial voice* is a first step in conflict management, commonly used to address interpersonal mistreatment, such as humiliation or verbal aggression. In the organisational context, remedial voice suggests an initial conversation with a relationship partner to discuss and reconcile differing points of view. The idea exchange mainly focuses on specific tasks and explanations to identify whether two actors can align their attributions and improve the quality of their relationship (Eberly et al., 2011). However, some employees may choose not to explicitly express their remedial voice. Instead, they exhibit some extra-role behaviours to make leaders take notice of them and then spark a change in their interpersonal relations (Eberly et al., 2011).

ICBs mean that employees attempt to adjust aspects of their behaviours in the hope that supervisor will reciprocate favourably. If the leader's reactions are positive as expected, these exchanges can continue, allowing the relationship to evolve into high levels of mutual trust, affection, and understanding (Sparrowe and Wayne, 1997; Eberly et al., 2011). *ICBs* are split into two components: *task-focused and person-focused ICBs*, which share the common idea that people take discretionary actions that move beyond job requirements to enhance individual, team, and organisational performance (Bowler and Brass, 2006; Settoon and Mossholder, 2002). *Task-focused ICBs* involve a wide range of positive activities, such as sharing information, offering advice, assisting others or proposing good ideas, which contribute to strong coordination and collaboration among employees. *Person-focused ICBs* are concerned with emotional and mental support, counseling, and demonstrating care and respect for others (Bowler and Brass, 2006; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Paine, and Bachrach, 2000). As such, relational attributions can lead to changes in employee behaviour, such as *task- and person-focused ICBs*, in an attempt to activate reciprocal exchanges that foster mutual relationship development.

2.4.3.4 Development, limitations and future directions

Since the work of Eberly et al. (2011), a number of strategic HR scholars have pursued this pathway to further explore employee relational attributions and provide more nuances of the leader-member dyadic relationship (Gardner et al., 2019; Martinko and Mackey, 2019;

Munyon et al., 2019; Harvey et al., 2014). Most studies on this core concept are found in the special issue published in 2019 in the *Journal of Organisational Behaviour*.

Gardner and colleagues (2019) build on the work of Eberly et al. (2011) to explore dyadic or relational attributions within the context of leader-member relationships. They provide deeper insights into these interactions by examining how internal, external-person, external-situational, and relational attributions of both leaders and followers evolve after significant, unexpected, or negative events. Their study highlights how different combinations of these attributions—whether convergent or divergent—can lead to positive outcomes, such as self-work and relationship work, or negative workplace behaviours, such as conflict, ultimately influencing the quality of leader-member exchange. In their framework, external attributions are divided into two dimensions: external-person attributions, which attribute outcomes to the dyadic partner, and external-situational attributions, which link outcomes to contextual or environmental factors (Gardner et al., 2019; Munyon et al., 2019).

Self-work, here, is defined as self-reflective efforts to improve one's task-focused skills (e.g., technical skills) or abilities (e.g., communication, time management). Relational work means that both parties engage in shared tasks to develop their relationship. Conflict is concerned with perceptual disagreement between leaders and followers which can result from an array of elements including individual differences, communication, structural elements, and perceptions (Wall and Callister, 1995; Gardner et al., 2019).

This framework underscores the complex interplay between different types of attributions and their impact on LMX quality. For example, when both leader and follower converge in their relationship attributions of an unfavourable event (e.g. poor performance of follower) or both parties view some aspects of their relationship as causes of the unexpected event, all of them may experience feelings of guilt and attempt to reflect on their relationship to identify what areas are needed for the improvement of relationship (Brewer and Gardner, 1996; Gardner et al., 2019). As a result, the quality of LMX is likely to increase since both sides focus their attention on repairing the relationship (Brees and Martinko; 2015; Harvey et al., 2017). On the other hand, when the leader makes a relational attribution, and the follower makes an internal attribution or vice versa. This means that both are divergent in their beliefs about what causes a negative outcome. In this regard, the employee is inclined to feel guilty

and make a great effort to do their self-work (e.g. improving their abilities and skills), make amends and avoid such undesired consequences in the future (Allred, 1995; Weiner, 2004).

However, because only the leader makes a relational attribution, the LMX quality is likely to remain stable or increase (depending on the efficiency of leader relationship work), but not as much as if both parties share relational attributions. (*See Table 8 for details*). In comparison with other combinations, Gardner et al. (2019) assumed that convergent relational attributions will yield the highest levels of relationship work which make a greatest contribution to LMX quality while divergent external-person attributions (e.g. leader makes external-person attributions, follower makes relational attributions) can generate a conflict that may lead to deteriorating relationships because leaders assign the poor performance for internal qualities (e.g lack of effort), feel frustrated or angry and tend to punish their follower (Weiner, 1985; Martinko, Moss, et al., 2007).

Table 8: Combinations of leader and follower relational versus external attributions for negative achievement-related events (Gardner et al., 2019).

		Follower Attributions		
		Relational	External-Person	External-Situational
Leader Attributions	Relational	Convergent relational leader and follower relationship work; LMX quality increases	Divergent follower external-person relationship work; Follower-initiated conflict; LMX quality decreases	Divergent follower external-situational leader and follower relationship work; LMX quality remains stable or increases
	External-Person	Divergent leader external-person follower relationship work; Leader-initiated conflict; LMX quality decreases	Divergent external-person Mutual-initiated conflict; LMX quality decreases	Divergent external person/situational Leader-initiated conflict; LMX quality decreases
	External-Situational	Divergent leader external-situational Follower relationship work; LMX quality remains stable or increases	Divergent external person/situational Follower-initiated conflict; LMX quality decreases	Convergent external-situational LMX quality remains stable;

Carson (2019) continues to expand Eberly et al. (2019)'s conceptual model by suggesting two types of external attributional explanations: *external relational attributions* and *external nonrelational attributions*. External relational attributions are defined as explanations a focal individual makes for an outcome in relation to the relationship between

two other parties (not including the focal individual) (e.g. people, groups, organisations, or any combination).

On the other hand, external nonrelational attributions assign the cause of an outcome to a specific external actor (i.e. supervisor, coworker, organisation). As such, external relational attributions are distinct from relational attributions (Eberly et al., 2011) in which the attributor is a member of the causal dyad. For example, a follower might attribute team project failure to his leader's poor relationship with other members within the team (Patera, and McGregor, 2010; Herman, Ashkanasy, and Dasborough, 2012). Further, Carson builds on the covariation model of Kelley (1973) to suggest that the high consensus, consistency, and distinctiveness of a failure (e.g. a missed deadline) in conjunction with others' relationships can drive external relational attributions which in turn lead to emotional and behavioural responses.

Burton et al. (2014) conducted two-study research to theorise that employees can develop internal, external, and relational attributions in response to their perceptions of abusive supervision. Results demonstrated that internal and external attributions are positively and negatively associated with interactional justice, which in turn correspondingly influences citizenship behaviours and expressions of aggression. Conversely, relational attributions were found to be unrelated to justice perceptions, aggression, or citizenship behaviours.

In a similar vein, Sun et al. (2019) utilised multisource data collected from 137 Chinese social workers and their leaders across three phases to investigate the conditions under which servant leadership elicits gratitude and promotes prosocial behaviours, such as interpersonal citizenship behaviours and upward voice. They examined relational attributions as a moderator of the servant leadership-gratitude relationship. The empirical findings revealed that employees who do not heavily rely on relational attributions for their understanding of servant leadership, or who do not perceive the leader's positive behaviours as being highly dependent on their relationship, feel more gratitude and subsequently engage in more interpersonal citizenship behaviours and upward voice.

In contrast, employees who rely on relational attributions to explain their interactions with the leader, or who interpret a leader's "serving" as being part of their relationship with the leader, feel less gratitude and are less likely to exhibit proactive behaviours. This work combines servant leadership and employee relational attributions to explain the varying

emotional and behavioural responses of employees towards a certain type of leadership. It elucidates how relational attributions can have detrimental impacts on followers' perceptions of servant leadership and their resultant affective and behavioural responses (Sun et al., 2019; Martinko and Mackey, 2019). This research highlights the nuanced ways in which different types of attributions interact with leadership behaviours to influence employee outcomes. Understanding these dynamics can provide valuable insights for improving leader-follower relationships and fostering a more productive organisational environment.

Altogether, these thoughtful papers move the attribution theory forward by providing new insight into relational attributions and their application to real-life contexts (Sun et al., 2019; Gardner et al., 2019; Carson, 2019; Burton et al., 2014). Strategic HR scholars argue that when examining the causality for an important or unexpected outcomes in the workplace, it is essential to go beyond traditional internal and external causes residing within and beyond the focal individual (maintaining at the heart of attribution analyses). They therefore advocate for carefully considering factors regarding dyadic relationships to ensure a comprehensive understanding of individual emotional and behavioural responses to events (Eberly et al., 2011; Burton et al., 2014; Martinko and Mackey, 2019).

Despite advancements since the seminal work of Eberly et al. (2011), relational attributions have not fully matured into a robust area of research (Weiner, 2019). Numerous questions remain unanswered: What more should be done to better understand relational attributions? Under what conditions are relational attributions most relevant? Where do relational attributions fit within the existing locus dimensions? Whether or not relational attributions be viewed as a distinct dimension or a causal explanation that complements traditional models described by Kelley (1973) and Weiner (1985)?

Why HR scholars have not thoroughly addressed these questions, it is critical to extend the relational attributions in several potential directions and then build up its strong theoretical and empirical framework to provide nuanced insights into this relatively new construct and its impacts on employee's emotions and behaviours (Martinko and Mackey, 2019). Current research often relies on adapted scales from other attributional dimensions to measure relational attributions (Gardner et al., 2019; Carson et al., 2019; Eberly et al., 2011) which may not fully capture the nuances of relational attributions. There is a need to develop reliable and valid measurement tools specifically tailored to this construct. Developing robust

instruments will enable more precise investigations and facilitate comparisons across studies (Martinko and Mackey, 2019; Weiner, 2019).

Moreover, investigating the contextual factors and boundary conditions under which relational attributions are most salient is crucial. This includes exploring how organisational culture, leadership styles, team dynamics, and industry-specific norms influence the emergence and impact of relational attributions (Martinko and Mackey, 2019). Understanding these factors can provide insights into when and why relational attributions matter most. (Eberly et al., 2011; Martinko and Mackey, 2019; Sun et al., 2019).

Finally, given the lack of progress in relating attributional processes to emotional processes, future research should continue to explore the impact of relational attributions on specific emotions (e.g. anger, shame, and gratitude), behaviours (e.g. OCB, counter-productive behaviours) and organisational outcomes (Martinko, Moss, Douglas, and Borkowski, 2007; Harvey et al., 2017; 1985, 1986, 2004, 2018). Understanding these outcomes can inform organisational policies and practices aimed at fostering positive relational dynamics and enhancing overall organisational effectiveness (Weiner, 1985; 2018).

Further, since employees' emotions are likely to change, future researchers are recommended to employ longitudinal designs and multi-level analyses can help uncover the dynamic nature of relational attributions over time and across different organisational levels. Longitudinal studies can track changes in relational attributions and their consequences, offering insights into their stability and variability. Multi-level studies can explore how relational attributions manifest at individual, team, and organisational levels and their collective impact, thereby elucidating the relationship between HR practices and firm performance (Harvey et al., 2014; 2017). In short, future research on relational attributions should aim to refine theoretical frameworks, develop empirical evidence through rigorous methodologies, and provide practical insights that contribute to enhancing interpersonal relationships and organisational functioning.

2.4.4 Causal ascriptions

2.4.4.1 What are causal ascriptions?

In their seminal work, Weiner et al. (1972) examined the role of 'causal ascriptions' or 'causal attributions' defined as personal beliefs about why an important and/or unexpected

event occurs in life. When individuals experience a (un)desired outcome, they engage in a cognitive process to identify causes and make sense of why they succeed and fail. These self-directed thoughts are believed to determine self-directed emotions (e.g. pride, guilt, shame) which can translate into specific behaviours and thereby directly influence future outcomes (Weiner, 1985; 2000). Weiner and others (1972) drew on Heider (1958) to allocate the causes of success and failure to the four principal elements: *ability, effort, luck and task difficulty*. These four components are further grouped into three causal dimensions: *locus of causality, stability and locus of control*.

Locus of causality reflects the location of causes, which is either within or outside of the actor. While capabilities and efforts are viewed as personal qualities residing in attributors, luck, nature of tasks, or help from others are external causes (Weiner, 2000). In the presence of successful achievement, internal locus helps influence feelings of pride and level of self-esteem/self-efficacy. For example, students may feel a sense of happiness and pride when a high grade is attributed to their ability and hard work. This emotion may not be experienced when they believe that the generous teacher gives high grades to all students in class. On the contrary, failure is usually allocated to situational forces, like bad luck, the difficulty of task, to shirk responsibilities and defend identity (Hareli and Weiner, 2000; Weiner, 2018). For example, when students fail an exam, they are likely to biasedly blame this on the high difficulty of test and/or teacher bias, to avoid punishments from their parents (Betancourt and Weiner, 1982; Weiner, 2018).

Stability refers to the duration of a cause which is either lasting or temporary. Some elements, such as personal aptitude for sport or intelligence, are perceived as constant and permanent, whereas others, for example, random chance or support from colleagues, are rather unstable and transitory. It has been documented that if a cause is stable or difficult to change (e.g aptitude), the same outcomes are likely to occur following a success or failure. For example, when failure is caused by a lack of capacity, or an unfair teacher, then taking other exams from this teacher can lead to similar poor results. On the contrary, if failure is perceived as due to illness or bad luck, this unstable cause is not likely to be an indicator to predict future failures because students can have better conditions and well prepare for next exams and thereby get better outcomes (Weiner, 1985).

Finally, *controllability or locus of control* implies the actor's latitude of power in influencing or changing causes. Internal causes such as effort are subject to change as it lies within actors and under their volitional control, while external properties, like luck, cannot be willfully altered (Weiner, 2000; 2018). Controllability, in conjunction with locus, influences whether attributors feel guilty or shameful in the event of nonattainment of a goal. For example, when effort, a controllable within-person factors, is assigned for failure, perceivers may undergo a certain extent of guilt which may motivate them to put extra effort and energy into upcoming tasks. Conversely, feelings of shame, embarrassment, humiliation, are likely to occur when the unsuccessful event results from lack of aptitude since attributors cannot control and alter it for better future outcomes, particularly in the short run (Weiner, 1985; 2000).

The assigned cause of success or failure will be subsequently examined in three dimensions, namely *locus of causality, stability, and controllability*, which work together to elicit a set of emotions (e.g. guilt, shame, pride), guide attitudes and behaviours, and eventually anticipate future outcomes (Weiner, 1985; Jackson and Stoljar, 2020) (*see Table 9 for details*). For instance, when failing to meet deadlines is ascribed to poor effort, it is then locatable within a three-dimensional taxonomic space including internal, unstable, and controllable. This means that the cause is internal to the actor, not constant, and can be volitionally changed. The actor therefore can act on this basis of knowledge and have high expectations for more positive results in the future (Weiner, 1985; 2000; 2014; 2018).

Table 9: Causes of Success and Failure, Classified along Locus, Stability, and Controllability by Weiner et al. (1972)

Cause	Locus of Causality	Stability	Controllability
Ability	Internal	Stable	Uncontrollable
Effort	Internal	Variable	Controllable
Task Difficulty	External	Stable	Uncontrollable
Luck	External	Variable	Uncontrollable

Weiner (1979) extended his earlier work on the causal attributions of success and failure (Weiner, 1972, 1974, 1976) to develop a comprehensive theory of motivation applicable to school-related settings. He posited that while there is a myriad of perceived causes of achievement events, the causes most commonly attributed to success and failure are ability, effort, task difficulty, and luck. He also argued that failure, rather than success, is more likely

to prompt students to ask ‘why’ questions. For example, when students flunk a math test or receive a lower mark than their peers, they are inclined to seek explanations for these undesired outcomes. Furthermore, Weiner introduced two additional subordinate causal dimensions: intentionality and globality, alongside the three primary properties of causes (stability, locus, and control).

However, these subordinate dimensions have no influence on students’ psychological states or behavioural reactions within the classroom context. Weiner concludes that causes reflecting three elements: stability, locus, and control, are closely related to expectancy changes, affective responses such as self-esteem or depression, and interpersonal judgments (decisions about helping, evaluations, and sentiments). Weiner, in his review paper (1985) examined numerous empirical research to provide an excellent motivational sequence. At the heart of this appraisal process, he highlights a variety of emotional experiences, including anger, gratitude, guilt, hopelessness, pity, pride, and shame, which are among the most frequently reported affective responses (Bottenberg, 1975).

To effectively measure causal ascriptions, Russell (1982) built on the conceptual framing originally developed by Weiner to develop the Causal Dimension Scale (CDS) through soliciting open-ended causal attributions for achievement-related outcomes and then categorise them along three main causal dimensions of locus of causality, stability and controllability. This scale is superior to other traditional methods (e.g. Lefcourt, von Baeyer, Ware, and Cox, 1979; Peterson et al., 1982), to more accurately measure causal attributions. The social psychological literature shows that a large number of studies have used Russell’s CDS and then provided varying degrees of support for the validity and reliability of this scale (Mark et al., 1984; McAuley et al., 1983; Russell and McAuley, 1986; Wilson and Linville, 1985).

McAuley and co-authors (1983) built on the causal dimension scale (Russell, 1982) to measure perceived causal attributions of sports performance, for example, table tennis and examine its influence on affective reactions. They also split achievement-related emotions into two categories: outcome-dependent emotions and attribution-dependent emotions. The former suggests general positive or negative reactions experienced regardless of the perceived cause of success or failure. For example, people feel happy for the attainment of a goal and

sad or frustrated for unsuccessful events. Their feelings are mainly determined by the degree of goal accomplishment rather than the cause of the outcome (Weiner, 1985).

In the meanwhile, the latter refers to exact sentiments when performance is ascribed to a specific cause. For example, people can sustain a sense of pride and confidence when success is attributed to internal causes (e.g. competency) whereas external attributions made for success can trigger a feeling of gratitude and surprise. The findings indicate that attributional process determines affective responses in sports settings and this relationship is stronger for winning (rather than losing) performances. Moreover, controllability has the greatest influence on affective reactions in this study, distinct from the work of Russell (1982) where the locus of causality is the most important dimension (Anderson and Arnoult, 1985a; McAuley et al. 1983).

McAuley et al. (1992) expressed concerns about the structure and nature of the causal dimensions in Russell's (1982) framework, particularly regarding the locus of control. In response, they revisited the measure through four studies, reclassifying the controllability dimension into personal and external control dimensions. McAuley and colleagues argue that the revised Causal Dimension Scale is both reliable and valid across various domains.

2.4.4.2 Causal ascriptions and HR attributions

Considering these two concepts in the HRM domain, it is argued that while HR attributions have gained prominence since Nishii and others' work (2008), causal ascriptions have been largely neglected (Hewett et al., 2018; Wang et al., 2020; Hu et Oh, 2022). By definition, causal ascriptions (Weiner, 1985) are different from HR attributions developed by Nishii et al. (2008) in several respects. HR attributions scholars have built on the work of Kelley (1973; 1979) to describe attributors as '*judges*' who use the three types of information (consistency, distinctiveness, and consensus) to understand and explain the behaviours and outcomes of others. In other words, this perspective emphasises the antecedents or the reasons why focal individuals engage in an appraisal process to form judgments about others' actions and results (Martinko and Mackey, 2019).

Conversely, causal ascription researchers have drawn on Weiner's (1985) framework to depict attributors as '*scientists*' who seek causes of success and failure along three dimensions locus of control, stability, and controllability, and investigate how these dimensions impact

motivation and behaviour. This perspective is largely concerned with the consequences of attributions or the subsequent effects of attributions on individuals' affect, behaviour, and future expectations (Luthans and Church, 2002; Harvey et al., 2014).

Moreover, regarding research contexts, causal ascriptions arise from the context of specific achievements (either positive or negative) while HR attributions emerge out from neutral situations. To be more specific, Nishii et al (2008) focus on the present time to describe the appraisal process by which attributors have attempted to decipher ongoing events or occurrences. For example, when HR practices are being implemented within organisations, employees may question their existence and then activate an attributional process to understand the motivations behind it. Meanwhile, Weiner and others specify a concrete context and aim to connect the dots of the past, present, and future to divulge the temporal sequence through which causal ascriptions of success or failure predict subsequent emotions, behaviours and expectancies (Martinko and Mackey, 2019).

Despite distinct characteristics, these two perspectives can be mutually interactive and complement each other in explaining individual emotions and behaviours. For example, a student who performs poorly due to weak learning abilities (internal, stable, and uncontrollable) may suffer from a range of negative emotions such as sadness, shame, hopelessness (Weiner, 1985, 2000, 2018). When others, such as teachers, acknowledge this cause as internal to the student but beyond their control (Kelley, 1973; 1979), they are likely to convey signals of sympathy and pity. If the student accepts this information, it may reinforce the fact that he or she is an incapable person.

However, when failure is attributed to a lack of effort by both student and teacher, this arouses anger within the teacher because effort is an internal and controllable factor. If the student accepts these emotional cues from the teacher, he or she feels a sense of shame or guilt (Martinko and Thomson, 1998). As such, in this circumstance, the two motivational theories interact with each other to influence and intensify the thoughts, feelings, and actions of both an actor and an observer (Abramson, Alloy, and Metalsky, 1989; Dykman and Abramson, 1990).

Martinko and Gardner (1987) were pioneers in incorporating the role of both leader and subordinate attributions in shaping the quality of leader-member exchanges. They emphasised

the need to devote attention to the intra- and interpersonal attributions between the two parties to provide a more nuanced understanding of this dyadic relationship. Martinko and Thomson (1998) are among the first to synthesise and expand Kelley's situational analysis with Weiner's causal dimensions to enhance the understanding of the complex dynamics of attributional processes in organisational contexts and interactive leader–member and group emotions and behaviours. In addition, the integrative model provides a more complete explanation of the actor–observer and self-serving biases which are an important part of interpersonal interaction and evaluation in organisations (Martinko and Thomson, 1998; Ashkanasy, 1989, 1995). A more complete explanation of these biases provides detailed guidance for both researchers and practitioners that would be helpful in the design of effective management and motivational strategies (Martinko and Thomson, 1998).

The current study, causal ascriptions are examined within the achievement-related context (e.g. receiving promotion, reward) where employees try to understand why they and others succeed and progress. Specifically, in addition to the trigger successful event, employees' causal ascriptions are influenced by the three main factors: HPWS, organisational cynicism, and leader-member exchange. These reflective observations later play a crucial role in determining future emotions, extra role behaviour, and task performance in the workplace (Harvey et al., 2014). The research thereby can contribute to the extant literature by providing nuanced insights into this core HR concept and thereby advancing the knowledge about the HR-performance relationship.

2.4.4.3. The development of causal ascriptions in the HRM domain.

Causal ascriptions were well-documented by social psychologists and became an integral part of explanations for individual behaviour during 1970s-1990s in social psychology (Weiner, 1985; Harvey et al, 2014). Most research examined this construct and its impact on affective and behavioural reactions in the academic or sports settings (McAuley et al., 1983; Weiner et al., 1976; Heilman and Guzzo, 1978; McAuley et al., 1992). However, causal ascriptions have been under-utilised and under-researched in organisational sciences (Harvey et al., 2014; Martinko, Douglas, and Harvey, 2006; Hewett, 2021). Martinko and colleagues (2011) found that nearly six times as many papers on attributions were published in psychological journals compared to management journals.

To date, causal ascriptions have been largely neglected in the HRM field (Hewett, 2021). This disparity is surprising, especially considering the similar interpersonal behaviours between both domains. According to Martinko and others (2006, 2007, 2011), this disconnect may derive from several criticisms in 1980s. In particular, Mitchell (1982) posited that attributions play an insignificant role in comparison with other factors in determining behavioural reactions. In addition, Lord and his colleagues (1990; 1983) asserts that attributions developed by Heider (1958), Kelley (1973) or Weiner (1979; 1985) seems to be overcomplex, unrealistic, and cognitively demanding because people have an innate tendency to rely on most salient and immediate cues and more efficient cognitive schema, to respond instantaneously to daily events rather than going through such a rational attributional process (Taylor and Fiske, 1978).

However, in their reviews, Martinko et al (2006, 2007) drew on numerous theoretical and empirical evidence to counter these critical assumptions by showing that attributions make up a great percentage of the variability in leaders or members' behaviours (ranging from 17 to 36 percent) compared to other elements, such as core evaluations, organisational norms, industry-specific factors, histories, and national culture influences (ranging from 5 to 18 percent).

Further, Lord and others appear to misinterpret and overgeneralise attributional processes. Attributions are not activated by conventional interactions or routine daily activities. Instead, they are invoked by unexpected and/or important events in the workplace (e.g. receiving a promotion or poor performance appraisal). For this reasoning, attributions are, by nature, heuristics that do not require labourious cognitive effort. Additionally, there are several boundary conditions that influence the likelihood of leaders and members engaging in the cognitive effort required to form their causal attributions (Martinko et al., 2007). Martinko and others (2006, 2007) contended that attributions matter in the workplace and should be carefully investigated to understand a wide array of organisational behaviours and topics (Martinko et al., 2006, 2007, 2011; Harvey et al., 2014).

The HR literature has demonstrated that causal ascriptions in the HRM domain to date have evolved along two research lines: (1) leaders' attributions in relationships with subordinates or leader-member interactions (Ashkanasy and Gallois, 1994; Offerman et al.,

1998), (2) member's attributions and its impact on affect, behaviours and outcomes (Douglas et al., 2008; Gundlach and others, 2003).

First, in their seminal work, Green and Mitchell (1979) elucidated the causes of leader behaviour within leader-member interactions and introduced an attribution model of leadership. This topic captivated numerous scholars and catalysed a significant stream of research, particularly from the 1980s to the 2000s (e.g., Ashkanasy, 1989; Green and Liden, 1980; Heneman, Greenberger, and Anonyuo, 1989; Klaas and Wheeler, 1990; Offerman, Schroyer, and Green, 1998; Davis and Gardner, 2004).

The locus dimension plays a crucial role in shaping leader-member dynamics. Research indicates that when supervisors and employees have divergent attributions for negative outcomes, it frequently leads to interpersonal conflict and a decline in the perceived quality of their relationship (Martinko, Moss, Douglas, & Borkowski, 2007). This is especially evident when both parties assign blame to each other for undesirable results or when each claims personal credit for positive outcomes, further intensifying the discord.

The locus of attribution also significantly influences decisions related to rewards and punishments. Research indicates that employees are more likely to be rewarded for high performance when supervisors attribute success to internal factors, such as the employee's abilities, rather than to external circumstances (Johnson, Erez, Kiker, & Motowidlo, 2002). In contrast, punishments are more likely when negative outcomes are attributed to internal employee traits or behaviours, such as insufficient effort (Wood & Mitchell, 1981).

Martinko et al. (2007) conducted two studies utilising the Attribution Style Questionnaire (Kent and Martinko, 1995) to hypothesise that the interaction between leaders' and members' attribution styles exerts the most significant influence on members' perceptions of the quality of their leader-member relations. The empirical findings from these studies demonstrate that members' perceptions of poor leader-member relations are most pronounced when there is a clash between leader and member attribution styles. Specifically, negative perceptions are heightened when members attribute their negative outcomes to external and unstable factors, while leaders attribute these same outcomes to internal and stable characteristics of the members.

In a similar line, Martinko et al. (2011) utilised Kent and Martinko (1995) scale to assess attribution styles and found that these styles significantly influence members' perceptions of abusive supervision. They identified a clear positive correlation between external attribution styles for failures and perceptions of abusive supervision, with the impact being most pronounced when subordinates' attributions are stable. Furthermore, this dyadic relationship is mediated by perceptions of low-quality leader-member exchange.

Second, causal ascriptions have been used to elucidate individuals cognitive and affective attitudes and behaviours in the workplace. Gundlach and others (2003) conceptually describe how the underlying cognitive and emotional processes influence employee self-efficacy, or beliefs in capabilities, which in turn is closely related to individual and organisational performance. They propose a detailed psychological process wherein people, in response to negative outcomes (e.g. receiving a poor performance evaluation), are likely to make causal attributions characterised along three causal dimensions: locus of causality, stability and controllability. These different causal reasoning patterns are later predicted to elicit specific emotions (e.g. frustration, anger, guilt, shame) that determine their efficacy beliefs. Further, emotional intelligence influences the whole process by moderating the relationship between causal ascriptions and emotional responses.

Douglas and others (2008), in their conceptual work, proposed a theoretical framework outlining how trigger events (e.g. abusive supervision, rigid HR policies) can be interpreted through three routes (cognition-, attitude-, and affect-initiated processing) which can escalate into different types of aggressive behaviours. These relationships are also moderated by individual characteristics such as self-control and attitude toward revenge. For example, when people experience a negative workplace event, they are motivated to form strong unfavourable attributions and attitudes toward a target object, generating negative cognitions and emotions each time they encounter the target.

Douglas and co-authors term this phenomenon as 'a cognitive knot' or 'a biased mindset' which is easy to tie but hard to unravel (Olson and Fazio, 2006). Over time, this recurring process can polarise negative attitudes and intensify negative emotions. In other words, individuals persist in accumulating and intensifying hostile attitudes and emotions through a series of prior trigger events and interactions, making them prone to respond more severely to current incidents, which can eventually culminate in aggression and violence.

However, this undesired effect can be mitigated by some personal factors, such as propensity for revenge, and self-control. In particular, people, who possess positive attitudes toward revenge and/or high self-control, can suppress rash responses to frustrations and then less inclined to react aggressively to anger-producing events than those with strong revenge and low self-control (Geen, 2001). This theoretical framework highlights the importance of understanding individual differences in responses to negative workplace events and the potential for moderating factors to mitigate adverse outcomes.

In their meta-analysis, Harvey et al. (2014) highlight that attributional dimensions (such as locus, stability, and controllability) are typically explored in relation to four key categories of workplace outcomes: affective reactions (e.g., job satisfaction), individual and organisational outcomes (e.g., task performance), leader-member exchanges (e.g. leader-member conflicts; trust in management), and reward and punishment decisions (e.g., award allocation, intentions for reprimanding/punishing employees).

Despite its significant influence of causal ascriptions on the quality of the leader-member relationship and employees' cognitive and behavioural reactions (Douglas and others, 2008; Martinko et al., 2011; Green and Mitchell, 1979; Martinko et al., 2007), this topic has surprisingly received little attention from strategic HR scholars, requiring more dedicated research to move this area forward (Martinko and Mackey, 2019)

In summary, the literature review chapter examines four key research strands, *causal ascriptions*, *HR strength*, *HR attributions*, and *relational attributions*, to highlight their distinct principles and unique contributions to the HR process literature. These four streams of research represent critical dimensions of the HR process, each offering a unique perspective on the HR-performance relationship. This integration allows for a deeper understanding of how traditional *HR attributions* (Nishii et al., 2008), *HR strength* (Bowen and Ostroff, 2004), and *relational attributions* (Eberly et al., 2011) differ from *causal ascriptions of success* (Weiner, 1985). By doing so, I underscore the core idea that this thesis seeks to move beyond established pathways (Nishii et al., 2008; Bowen and Ostroff, 2004; Eberly et al., 2011) and to expand a largely overlooked perspective introduced by Weiner (1985) into the HRM domain. This approach offers more nuanced insights into the HR-outcome linkage.

However, at the core of the thesis, I only focus on *employees' causal ascriptions of success* to build and test an overarching framework around this concept. In particular, HPWS, LMX and OC interact to explain how employees' causal ascriptions are formed and how these sense-making cognitive processes prompt employees to exhibit extra-role behaviours in the workplace. As a result, the next section discusses two contingencies of the HPWS-causal ascription linkage: LMX and OC. The section begins by conceptualising these two constructs and then explains why they are chosen to enhance the impact of HR practices on employees' causal reasoning of success. This discussion serves as the final part of Chapter 2, complementing the previous sections to provide a comprehensive understanding of the overall conceptual framework.

2.5 Two boundary conditions of the conceptual model

2.5.1. Leader–Member Exchange (LMX)

LMX reflects the varying quality of exchange relationship between managers and subordinates (Graen and Uhl-Bien, 1995). In particular, a high-quality LMX relationship is characterised by frequent support, mutual respect and trust, clear informational communication, developmental opportunities and long-term benefits (Zhao et al., 2019; Cesário et al., 2022). By contrast, a low-LMX manager-subordinate dyad is exemplified by one-way, and downward influence, disagreement, high self-interest and immediacy and transactional activities strictly linked to contractual requirements (Janssen and Van Yperen, 2004; Beijer et al., 2019; Uhl-Bien and Maslyn, 2003).

As such, the quality of LMX can influence employee perceptions about manager's role which subsequently guide their work attitudes and behaviours (Schud et al., 2018). For example, high-quality LMX leaders can confidently place trust in subordinates, provide professional support and thereby delegate key work to team members in the belief that it will be accomplished successfully (Gardner et al., 2019). In the meantime, high LMX employees or in-group employees tend to react positively to supervisor's task delegation as a developmental opportunity that might help them to make significant progress in their career (Graen and Uhl-Bien, 1995; Cesário et al., 2022).

Conversely, low-quality LMX leaders are more likely to feel a perceived lack of trust that subordinates can perform assigned works well while employees in a low-LMX

relationship with their leader (out-group employees) tend to respond negatively to demanding tasks as they perceive them as a hindrance or punishment (Furst and Cable, 2008; Gardner et al., 2019). Consequently, the dyadic relationship demonstrates contrasting perspectives and interest conflicts. For example, low LMX leaders tend to criticise followers over their performance whereas employees can find these evaluations biased and unconvincing due to leader's disfavour and disapproval towards them (Bowler et al., 2010).

According to Jones and Davis (1965) followed by Kelley and Michela (1980) and Hewett et al. (2019), attributions are affected by three classes of antecedents: information, belief and motivation. Here, LMX joins HPWS and OC to create a solid tripartite framework and separately function as a motivation to influence employees' causal ascriptions of success (Hewett et al. 2019). LMX is relevant because in the context of SMEs, employees usually work under line managers' close supervision (rather than working in silos). Leaders' professional support is essential for fostering employees' job satisfaction, skill development and overall performance and thereby any attained workplace success cannot detach from the quality of relationship they hold with their leader (Lin et al., 2022). When pairing HPWS with LMX, it is argued that employees concurrently draw on HR content endorsed and implemented by employer (*interpersonal perspective*) (Kelley, 1973; 1979) and their social relationships with others at work (e.g. line managers, colleagues) (*relational perspective*) (Eberly et al., 2011) to infer from the success of their own and people around them. Hence, this new interaction may reveal more nuanced insights into the antecedent-ascription linkage.

2.5.2. Organisational Cynicism (OC)

Organisational cynicism has been defined as the negative belief and skeptical attitudes that employees hold toward the fairness, sincerity, and integrity of management (Hewett et al., 2019; Davis and Gardner, 2004; Abugre, 2017). These beliefs are accompanied by negative feelings, such as disenchantment, disillusionment, anger, contempt, which are manifested through various respects, for example, disparaging and critical statements, overt harsh criticisms and sarcastic humor regarding the organisation (Abraham, 2000; Davis and Gardner, 2004). These sentiments can also be expressed through covert nonverbal behaviours, such as 'knowing looks', 'rolling eyes', and 'smirks' (Dean et al., 1998, p.5).

There have been various potential factors that can ignite cynicism among employees, such as, poor organisational communication, psychological contract breaches, perceived violations of fundamental expectations, unfair and discourteous interpersonal treatment, incompetence in leadership and management (Andersson, 1996; Cole et al., 2006; Abugre, 2017). For example, when psychological contract is violated, or supervisor shirk job responsibilities, stealing credit from subordinates or treating them unfairly, the individual may feel resent or bitter, trust in the system is eroded, and faith in others is challenged (Abraham, 2000). These forces can work together to spark a high level of cynicism. Added to this, cynicism can emerge not only from individual's own experiences, but also from observations and evaluations about the experiences of others (Johnson and O'Leary-Kelly, 2003). For example, employees are likely to doubt and question the veracity of their employers and become disillusioned when they witness unethical organisational behaviours/actions in dealing with other organisations or in treating their co-workers (Johnson and O'Leary-Kelly, 2003).

On the other hand, organisational cynicism is closely associated with adverse emotional reactions (e.g. frustration, hopelessness, disillusionment, contempt) that can negatively influence employee wellbeing (e.g. high pressure, anxiety, burnout) (Abugre, 2017; Jiang et al., 2019) and thereby translate into work-related specific behaviours, such as, conflicts with co-workers, badmouthing, absenteeism, withdrawal behaviours, turnover (Arslan, 2019; Kim et al., 2009). All these elements can result in poor individual outcomes that in aggregate lead to decreased firm performance (Johnson and O'Leary-Kelly, 2003; Arslan, 2019). In other words, cynicism can cause employees to feel discontented and emotionally detached from the work environment and thereby make them less likely to engage in in-role/extra-role activities such as volunteering works, defending the organisation, helping co-workers, willingness to share knowledge, to enhance the organisational wellbeing (Abraham, 2000; Jiang et al., 2019).

Like LMX, OC represents a specific category of belief and interacts with HPWS to have a bearing on employees' causal ascriptions (Kelley and Michela, 1980). This means that employees not only attend to salient HR cues and values to interpret successful events but also reflect on their own belief established from prior experiences to weigh up the organisational sincerity in enhancing employee competencies and self-esteem (Hewett et al., 2019). This self-reflection contributes to their interpretations of success of their own and others within organisation (Hewett et al., 2019). By so doing, employees' causal ascriptions

are predicted by two distinctive perspectives, *interpersonal* (Kelley, 1973) vs *intrapersonal* (Weiner, 1985). Together with LMX, employees' causal ascriptions are informed by three elements, namely HPWS, OC, LMX which respectively indicate three main classes of antecedents: *information*, *belief* and *motivation* (Jones and David, 1965; Kelley and Michela, 1980) and three core attributional views: *interpersonal*, *intrapersonal*, and *relational* (Kelley, 1973; Weiner, 1985; Eberly, 2011). These fundamental components work together to explain employees' causal ascriptions (Hewett et al., 2019).

CHAPTER III: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

3.1 Introduction

Having provided an in-depth literature review of four key attributional approaches in Chapter 2, the research proceeds with Chapter 3 delineating the key theoretical perspectives and then develops hypotheses that are firmly rooted in these theories. By linking theory to practice, Chapter 3 aims to bridge the gap between what is known and what remains to be explored, setting the stage for a deeper understanding of the causal ascriptions and its relationships in question. Specifically, the chapter first complements the previous chapters by examining the theoretical perspectives of signalling theory and attribution theory. It also provides a rationale for integrating these two theories to support the conceptual framework. Building on this solid foundation, the chapter then formulates hypotheses around employees' causal ascriptions of success to clarify what drives this psychological process and how it has impacts on individual behaviours and outcomes in the workplace. Together, this chapter lays the groundwork for the subsequent empirical investigation, ensuring a coherent and logically consistent trajectory for the research.

3.2 Theoretical Perspectives

3.2.1 Attribution theory

Attribution theory is largely credited to the pioneering work of Heider (1958), Kelley (1972), and Weiner (1985). These influential scholars also created two strikingly dissimilar lines of thinking (*interpersonal vs intrapersonal*). Each approach reflects unique characteristics to describe how people attribute a particular event or occurrence on a daily basis and its impact on individual attitudes and behaviours.

Interpersonal perspective (Kelley, 1967; 1973)

According to Kelley and colleagues (1967, 1973), when experiencing or witnessing a salient event or behaviour in life, people as observers attend to three key informational patterns (e.g. distinctiveness, consistency, and consensus) which covary with actors'

behaviour to assign the causality for one of three properties: person, stimulus, or situation (Martinko and Mackey, 2019; Martinko et al., 2011). Put it simply, people try to infer causes about events or behaviours/responsibilities of others by using three characteristics of informational cues: distinctiveness, consistency, and consensus (Gardner et al., 2019).

For example, when a person is late for work, observers can attend to three prominent characteristics to determine the cause and effect of this behaviour. For example, when an employee is late for an important meeting, observers (e.g. managers, co-workers) can make causal attributions by considering three information criteria, namely distinctiveness, consistency, and consensus, that are linked to that employee. First, distinctiveness relates to within-person behaviour that “compares the behaviours of the individual in other situations” (Martinko and Thomson, 1998, p. 273) (e.g. has the employee been late in other circumstances?). Second, consistency also relates to within-person information that reflects if the behaviour or action is similar or different across time (e.g. has the employee usually late in the past?) (Kelley, 1973; Martinko and Thomson, 1998). Finally, consensus describes a between-person assessment that compares the actor’s behaviour with others (e.g. have other employees been late for the meeting?) (Kelley, 1973; Harvey et al., 2014).

By answering these questions, observers can confirm whether being late for the meeting drives from internal causes (e.g. ability and/or motivation to arrive on time) or external causes (e.g. traffic, weather). For example, when distinctiveness is high, consistency is high/low and consensus is low, causes are usually imputed to the actor’s internal qualities (e.g. she/he is a tardy person) (Weiner, 1985; Harvey et al., 2014). In the meantime, when information is low on distinctiveness and consistency but high on consensus, the behaviour or outcome can be explained by external locus of causality (e.g. an employee is late due to a traffic congestion or blustery snowstorm) (Gardner, 2019; Weiner, 1985). In essence, three forms of covariation information shape how an observer attributes a person's behaviour to either internal or external factors.

By applying attribution theory to the organisational context, it helps explain a wide range of organisational phenomena by which observers, such as employees, can assign causality and responsibility to individuals or parties within organisation (Harvey et al., 2014). The HR scholarship to date has indicated that strategic HR scholars have heavily built on the mainstream idea of Kelly (1973) to advance the understanding of the HR-performance link

through which employees (as observers) try to make their self-judgements about HR purposes of organisation (actor) to guide their attitudes and behaviours. Bowen and Ostroff (2004) are among the first to embrace Kelly's principles (1973) to propose nine meta-features of the HR system, grouped into distinctiveness (the information is standing out and able to capture employee's attention), consistency (HR practices are well aligned and coherent with each other and with firm strategy; and HR messages are delivered systematically across employee groups and over time) and consensus (agreement of HR values across different subunits of a company and among organisational members) (Ryu and Kim, 2013; Bowen and Ostroff, 2004).

These three HR features together create a strong system that is likely to trigger desired attitudes and behaviours (Guest et al., 2021). Clearly, when a HR system reflects three salient informational patterns: distinctiveness, consistency, and consensus, it conveys a clear signal that helps employees share a collective sense of what is expected and congruently exhibit their desired behaviours. By contrast, in an absence of strong HR practices, they are prone to form different views about the HR message based on their own idiosyncratic observations (Bowen and Ostroff, 2004; Kitt and Sanders, 2022).

In a similar vein, Nishii and colleagues (2008) build on a separate strand of attribution theory (Heider, 1957; Kelley, 1973) to suggest that employees have an innate desire to uncover organisational intentions to illuminate why HPWS are in place. Motivations behind HR practices may be attributable to several factors such as a concern for employee well-being/desire to enhance service quality and/or an effort to exploit employees/cut costs. In particular, Nishii et al. (2008) categorise HR attributions into three attributions: (1) commitment-focused internal HR attributions (2) control-focused internal HR attributions; (3) external HR attributions.

More specifically, commitment-focused HR attributions reflect a belief that HR system is designed for the purpose of improving service quality and employee welfare. By contrast, control-focused HR attributions emerge as HR practices are motivated by the motives for getting most out of employees and driving down the costs (Nishii et al., 2008). External attributions suggest that the implementation of HR practices is a result of complying with outside pressure (e.g. trade union, labour legislation) (Nishii et al., 2008). Nishii and others eventually contend that commitment (not control) HR attributions are positively related to

OCB, when aggregated, to team/firm performance. By contrast, external attributions have no link to any outcomes.

In summary, despite significant contributions to the existing HR process literature, influential works such as Bowen and Ostroff (2004) and Nishii et al. (2008) are chiefly grounded in Kelley's principles (1973; 1979), highlighting the core idea that employees tend to seek organisational attributes, or external factors that lie beyond themselves, to make HR attributions and thereby explain the HR-performance relationship. This results in a limited understanding of internal elements within attributors and its roles in elucidating the antecedent-attribution microprocesses. Addressing this gap therefore requires in-depth research from different perspectives to provide nuanced insights into this individual cognitive sense-making phenomenon in the workplace.

Intrapersonal perspective (Weiner, 1979;1985)

The second model of attribution is the work of Weiner and others (1979; 1985) that is greatly influenced by the core ideas of Heider (1958) and is sometimes termed as an attributional theory. Weiner and colleagues contend that in an achievement-related context, individuals tend to allocate causes of success and failure to four salient determinants: ability, effort, task difficulty, and luck (Heider, 1958; Weiner, 1972; 1985).

For example, a failure at work can be attributed to lack of ability and effort and/or task difficulty and bad luck. Added to this, any causal inference made from these four factors reflect three underlying dimensions, namely locus of causality, stability, and controllability that can anticipate attributors' future emotions, behaviours, and outcomes. For instance, in the presence of a negative outcome, observers are prompted to make self-judgements about who is responsible: individual or situational forces (e.g. locus of causality), whether assigned causes change over time, and whether and how similar failures can be controlled and avoided in the future (e.g. controllability) (Martinko et al., 2007).

To be more specific, locus of causality refers to the perceived location of the cause, either within (internal) or beyond (external) the individual. For example, ability and effort reside in a person while luck, ease of tasks, support from others, are associated with external

factors (Weiner, 1985; Harney et al., 2022). Locus of causality has remained at the heart of attribution analyses since it is viewed as an anchor point to infer two remaining dimensions: stability and controllability (Weiner, 2018; 2019; Harvey et al., 2014). For example, when missing a deadline is due to lack of effort. The attributor can attach this cause to two other properties to deduct its stability (e.g. whether it is in/variable in the future) and locus of control (e.g. whether it can be volitionally altered). All three dimensions in turn work together to predict future behaviours and outcomes (Harvey et al., 2014).

Stability involves the duration of the cause either invariant and enduring or variant and temporary (Weiner, 1985). Intelligence and task difficulty are typically viewed as relatively fixed factors whereas effort and luck are assumed to be temporary and variable over time (Harney et al., 2022). Stability is usually studied in conjunction with locus of causality to better determine future results. This is logical because stability of a cause can weaken or strengthen emotional and behavioural responses resulting from the locus of the attribution. For example, when employees cannot achieve their sales target and attribute it to their lack of ability (internal and rather stable), they may experience a feeling of shame as their ability may not change for better outcomes in the future (Gardner et al., 2019; Weiner, 2018). As such, the perceived invariability of the cause over time can amplify and exacerbate the actor's feelings as he or she has a very little chance to fix and/or improve future outcomes (Harvey et al., 2014).

Controllability reflects either individual's volition or situational control on the part of another party (Weiner, 1985; 2019; McCauley et al., 1992). The external components beyond people such as luck or the nature of tasks are generally perceived as uncontrollable whereas some internal factors (e.g. effort) are under one's volition (Weiner, 1985; Carson, 2019). Controllability dimension is a key determinant to forecast future outcomes (Eberly et al., 2017; Carson, 2019). Specifically, individuals who have control over causes of negative outcomes (e.g. little effort expenditure, poor communication) can find themselves more capable of correcting their mistakes and attempt to improve their future performances (Weiner, 2006; Carson, 2019). Conversely, when controllability is beyond a person over the cause of a failure, they may feel unable to avoid similar situations and/or attain achievements in the future (Weiner, 2018; Carson, 2019). For example, failure due to teacher bias or unfairness is external to and beyond the control of the pupil since he or she may not alter teacher's volition (Weiner, 2010; 2018). Controllability is paired with causality to forecast

future outcomes (Weiner, 2019). When people experience a failure due to external agents that are out of their control, they may sense anger and/or hopelessness, and thus weak performances are likely to be reiterated in the future (Weiner, 2018).

Together, these three causal dimensions work in sync to guide perceivers through a specific conduct towards future outcomes. In particular, causal ascriptions of success and failure are more likely to elicit an array of psychological states or emotional responses (e.g. shame, guilt, gratitude, frustration) that can translate into specific productive behaviours (e.g. helping people) or deviant behaviours (e.g. conflicting with others) (Weiner, 2010; Harvey et al., 2017). For instance, when employees have failed to meet a deadline and ascribe it to their poor effort (internal, unstable, and controllable), they are likely to feel guilt and then invest more time and energy to improve their future outcomes (Weiner, 1985; Carson, 2019).

Also of interest is that instinctively, people are inclined to attribute their success to internal factors to result in good feelings and affect whereas failure is usually explained by environmental forces to shirk responsibilities and shame (Weiner, 1972; 2010). For example, when positive outcome is assigned for internal determinants such as personal aptitudes/capabilities and/or willingness to exert effort, attributors are prone to feel more pride in accomplishment than success perceived as due to an easy task (Weiner, 1972; 2010). By contrast, failure can be ascribed to uncontrollable situational causes, such as bad luck to protect ego and self-esteem (Harvey et al., 2014).

Two perspectives in comparison

Two attribution theories of motivation are found to be intertwined and interactive to some extent (Weiner, 2000). The consistency of the behaviour that is echoed in the work of Kelley is clearly articulated by Weiner as the stability of the cause in an achievement context. When dimensions of stability and consistency are identified, they both complement causal analysis and make it more informative (Gardner, 2019). Moreover, two models are incorporated and mutually reinforced in between-person contexts to influence the thoughts, feelings, and actions of both an actor and an observer (Gardner, 2019; Weiner, 2000). For example, considering a student who performs poorly due to lack of aptitude or inborn ability which is perceived as an internal, stable, and uncontrollable cause. By getting informed of this, the teacher tends to express their pity and sympathy toward the student following his or

her failure. If these emotional reactions are accepted, the teacher's social attribution adds further information to the student's low-ability self-ascription to conclude that he or she is an incapable person. As such, two strands of theories here are interconnected to provide more nuances of individual affect and then help predict behaviours and outcomes in the future (Weiner, 2000).

Despite overlaps and interrelations, several distinct divergences are also identified. First, intrapersonal theory is defined as beliefs about the responsibility of others based on the emergence of a salient event. Hence, perceivers' feelings (e.g. anger, sympathy, gratitude) are directed by others and thus drive specific attitudes and actions (e.g. productive or counterproductive behaviours) (Weiner, 2000). Added to this, Kelley and others (1967; 1973) covariation model mainly focus on 'the front end' of the attributional process and metaphorically describe people as '*judges*' seeking external cues to make *interpersonal or social attributions* about intentions and purposes of individuals or entities (Kelley, 1973; Weiner, 2000). Conversely, intrapersonal theory highlights self-directed thoughts about the causes of attributors' success and failure that trigger self-directed emotions (e.g. pride, guilt, and shame). In other words, Weiner and co-authors work on 'the back end' and depict people as '*scientists*' who reflect upon themselves to formulate *intrapersonal or self-attributions* of why they succeed or fail (Luthans and Church, 2002; Harvey et al., 2014). They in turn draw on their own knowledge and causal interpretations to experience different emotions and thereby form corresponding behavioural reactions (Weiner, 2000).

Further, Kelley chiefly concentrate on a neutral circumstance and the current time to explain the observer's reaction to the actor's behaviour whereas Weiner specify a concrete context and then aim to connect the dots of the past, present, and future to divulge the temporal sequence through which actors' actual causal attributions of success or failure predict their subsequent expectancies, behaviours, and outcomes (Martinko and Mackey, 2019). As such, Weiner's perspective can potentially reveal more motivational aspects of attributions in explaining the HPWS-performance link.

I, in the current study, mainly draw on Weiner's self-perceived approach and place attributors in a specific achievement context, such as promotion, rewards/bonuses, public recognition, to examine how and why employee ascriptions precipitate their 'go the extra mile' behaviours and good task performance. While internal ascriptions of success arouse

positive feelings and provide people with a blueprint as to how to take steps to move forward, external ascriptions provoke doubt and ambiguity in the mind that can turn into a major hindrance to future achievements (McCaulay et al., 1992; Weiner, 1979; 1985).

3.2.2 Signalling Theory

Signalling theory (Connelly et al., 2011) aims to reduce informational gaps or asymmetry between information senders and receivers through effective signals or means of communication. Whereas signallers take the role as communicators who attempt to transmit high-quality signals, receivers interpret this rich source of information and exhibit desired reactions (Guest et al., 2021; Cañibano and Avgoustaki, 2022). This dual interaction occurs within a specific signalling environment (not neutral) where an array of potential factors can derail the intended interpretation of receivers (Suazo et al., 2009). Connelly and others (2011) give weight to four key actors of the signalling process- signallers, signals, receivers, and feedback to ensure a mutual understanding between two parties.

First, signalers are information holders or insiders who understand well attributes and values of signals they intend to communicate and have right to decide on when and how signals are delivered to receivers for favourable interpretation (Connelly et al., 2011). Signallers have usually conveyed positive (rather than negative) aspects of signals with the aim of reducing information asymmetry and thus achieving desired outcomes (Connelly et al., 2011; Taj, 2016).

Second, signals serve as informational cues that mediate the relationship between signallers' message and receivers' interpretation (Drover et al., 2018; Connelly et al., 2011).

The quality of signals is assumed to determine receivers' reactions. Strong signals require potential characteristics, such as clarity, frequency, intensity, and salience, to purportedly draw recipients' attention and thus influence their perceptions and behaviours (Drover et al., 2018).

For example, a potential job applicant who possesses high educational credentials and good work experience can set them apart from their less qualified counterparts. As such, they can use these advantages as high-quality signals to impress recruiters and increase the possibility to be selected (Drover et al., 2018).

Third, the signalling process cannot be completed without the role of signal receivers who are generally viewed as the key actor that determine if the signalling process is effective (Taj, 2016; Connelly et al., 2011). This is because receivers are entitled to capture ‘the process of translating signals into perceived meaning’ (Connelly et al., 2011, p54). Given inherent autonomy and discretion, receivers tend to interpret signals idiosyncratically based on their own personal qualities, observations, and experiences (Connelly et al., 2011). As such, the same signals may be deciphered differently. Added to this, receivers are acknowledged as outsiders who have a limited amount of information and heavily hinge upon senders’ signals to update themselves on attitudinal and behavioural reactions (Taj, 2016; Connelly et al., 2011).

Fourth, feedback is conceptualised as the receiver's reaction to both the capabilities of the signaler and the quality of the signal itself. It serves as a mechanism through which the signaler can ascertain whether the receiver's response aligns with the intended message. This alignment is crucial, as it not only confirms the success of the communication but also provides the signaler with valuable information to adjust future signals and maintain their relevance and effectiveness over time. Therefore, feedback is a dynamic and integral component of signalling theory, ensuring that the communication process remains effective and adaptable to evolving environmental conditions and changing needs of participants.

Together, these four elements possess distinct characteristics and play pivotal roles in shaping an effective signalling process (Guest et al., 2021). To achieve effective communication, signalers must deliver informational cues that are both salient and relevant to receivers. When signals are well-crafted in this manner, receivers are more likely to be engaged, prompting them to initiate cognitive processes that help them interpret and make sense of significant issues, people’s behaviours, or their environment (Taj, 2016). In the context of organisational studies, signalling theory has emerged as a powerful theoretical framework. It enables scholars to explore how organisational outsiders—such as potential investors or prospective employees—evaluate the quality of products or services, and more broadly, the prestige and reputation of a business (Drover et al., 2018; Plummer et al., 2016; Drover et al., 2017).

When applied to managerial contexts, signalling theory has evolved into a widely recognised framework that offers valuable insights into addressing uncertainty and

information asymmetry between managers or leaders (signallers) and employees or followers (receivers) (Drover et al., 2018; Park and Patel, 2015). At its core, HR practices are often employed as signals, serving as mechanisms through which firms can differentiate themselves in terms of quality, thereby shaping employee perceptions and behaviours (Connelly et al., 2011; Kehoe and Han, 2020; Purcell and Hutchinson, 2007). For instance, the coherent implementation of a set of high-commitment HR practices is shown to convey clear and unambiguous signals to employees, reducing the likelihood of misinterpretation. This clarity in signalling is associated with more favourable HR-related inferences and outcomes among employees (Guest et al., 2019; Nishii et al., 2008).

3.2.3. Why two theories in combination?

Signalling theory (Connelly et al., 2011) and attribution theory (Heider, 1958; Kelley, 1973; Weiner, 1985) are combined in the current study for several reasons. First, signalling theory complements attribution theory to create a solid theoretical framework underpinning the development of hypotheses. Based on distinct attributional approaches developed by Kelly (1973) and Weiner (1985), it is argued that Kelly largely focused on *the front end* of the inferential process to illustrate what drives individuals' attributions while Weiner pays much attention to *the back end* to delve into emotional and behavioural consequences (Wang et al., 2020; Hewett et al., 2018). Later, these two ideas have been respectively applied to the HRM domain by Bowen and Ostroff (2004) and Nishii et al. (2018) to explain the HR-performance relationship.

Even though these two foundational works have sparked a wealth of ideas for future research, each one is inclined to focus on different parts of attribution. None of these viewpoints fully capture the holistic attributional process or provide a 'general model of the attribution field' (Kelley and Michela, 1980, p. 459) through which both antecedents and outcomes of employees' attributions are examined (Guest et al., 2019). Kelley's model emphasises three key informational dimensions—distinctiveness, consistency, and consensus—that individuals use to form causal judgments. On the other hand, Heider and Weiner pay more attention to active actors involving the attributional process.

This deficit might lead to a lack of clarity about how attributions impact individuals' attitudes and behaviours under then view of Kelley and others or about what drives causal

ascriptions in the case of Weiner and colleagues. To offset this deficit, signalling theory covers all four key actors of the attributional process, namely, signaller, signal, receiver, and feedback and thereby illustrates a complete picture of this psychological phenomenon (Connelly et al., 2011). In particular, while signaler and signal are two core components to trigger and inform individual's causal ascriptions, feedback is referred to as receivers' attitudinal and behavioural responses to signalers. Drawing on these reactions, the research can assess the competence of signaler, the quality of signal and more importantly, efficiency of the signalling process.

Signalling theory is relevant in this study because I examine both antecedents and outcomes of employees' causal ascriptions of success and incorporate all four core factors of signalling process suggested by Connelly and others (2011), namely, line manager (signaller), HPWS (signal), employee (receiver), and OCB and task performance (feedback). While signalling theory is used to predominantly explain what elicits employees' causal ascriptions, it also reinforces the attributional theory (Weiner, 1985) through employees' feedback to cast better light on the second half of the causal attributions and then provide nuanced insights into emotions, behaviours and outcomes that employees experience following their assessment of success.

By comparing attribution theories (Kelley, 1973; Weiner, 1985) with signalling theory (Connelly et al., 2011), it is argued that Kelley is primarily concerned with the quality or strength of signals whereas Heider and Weiner highlight the role of receivers in perceiving and interpreting the signals (Hewett et al., 2018; Wang et al., 2020). Being aware of these shortcomings of attribution theories, Guest et al. (2021) adopt both signalling theory and attribution theory to explore the overarching framework through which HR attributions mediate HR practices and bank branch performance. Guest and colleagues (2021) posited that signalling theory gives weight to all the elements of the signalling process: (1) the role of line managers as signallers of HR messages, (2) HR signals, (3) employees as receivers or HR interpreters, and (4) employees' feedback on transmitted signals and competencies of signaller. These factors work together to establish a solid attributional framework to complement inherent deficits found in attributional perspectives on HRM (Bowen and Ostroff, 2004; Nishii et al., 2008). As such, this theoretical combination strengthens the proposed conceptual model and thereby advances our understanding of HR processes (Guest et al., 2021).

Further, signalling theory reinforces attributional theory (Weiner, 1985) to underscore volitional impulses and then specific behaviours and outcomes as employees' reactions or feedback to signal senders. Feedback acts as a final part of the signalling process reflecting signal recipients' responses to competencies of signallers (Connelly et al., 2011) but has been largely neglected in extant literature (Drover et al., 2018). To sum up, by integrating all four main actors of the signalling process, namely, signaller, signals, receiver and feedback, into this study, signalling theory plays a pivotal role as a backbone of the whole conceptual model. For the first half of employees' causal ascriptions, signalling theory, in conjunction with core tenets of Kelley and Michela (1980), to assert that causal ascriptions of success are impacted by three core categories of antecedents: information, motivation, and beliefs. In the meanwhile, signalling theory complements attributional theory (Weiner, 1985) in the second half to provide more nuances of employees' psychological reactions which in turn lead to a particular behaviour and performance.

3.3. Hypothesis Development

3.3.1. HPWS and causal ascriptions

Drawing on signalling theory (Connelly et al., 2011) and a tripartite framework (Jones and Davis, 1965; Kelley and Michela, 1980), employees' ascriptions of achievements, such as promotion, pay increase, public recognition, are informed by three classes of antecedents: information about the stimulus, beliefs based on prior experiences, and personal motivation (Kelley and Michela, 1980; Hewett et al., 2019). In the current study, HPWS, organisational cynicism, and LMX respectively represent these three categories and work together to shape employees' causal ascriptions. This means that when employees experience or witness a successful event in the workplace, they not only evaluate the salient features of the situation, such as a set of professional HR practices are implemented to enhance employees' expertise (*information*), but also their perceptions of whether the employer is fair and inclusive in management (*belief*) and of how these HR practices benefit their personal interests (*motivation*). HPWS here is defined as a set of coherent and interrelated HR practices and acts as a rich source of information that employees can primarily rest on to infer from why they or people around them succeed (Hewett et al., 2019).

Moreover, in line with the signalling theory suggesting that signaller and signal are two crucial factors that work in concert to determine receiver's thoughts and emotions (Guest et al., 2021; Connelly et al., 2011). In the context of organisational environment, a set of well-synergised HR practices, when smoothly implemented, can transmit effective HR signals to capture employees' attention such that they are more likely to trigger employees' cognitive sense-making mechanisms. This, in turn, prompts them to feed positive responses back to any success that occurs in the workplace (Guest et al., 2021).

To be more specific, if HR practices are effectively coordinated and consistently implemented, they help employees improve their professional skills and competencies to accomplish demanding task challenges and then attain great achievements. In other words, employees, who grow and prosper through knowledge exchange-focused practices, such as intensive training programs, teamwork, and merit-based reward, can possess strong capabilities and see themselves in control of their fate (Harvey et al., 2014; Gundlach et al., 2003; McAuley et al., 1992). This confidence enables them to effectively address and overcome the difficult tasks inherent in their jobs (Lin et al., 2022; Martinko et al., 2011; Zhou et al., 2022). Following this logic, when a reward occurs, competent and skilled employees are prone to reflect on themselves and proudly attribute this 'hard earned' outcome to internal strengths such as their invested energy and talent (Ng et al., 2006; Galvin et al., 2018).

Conversely, incompetent members, who perceive themselves incapable of accomplishing assigned duties and/or in a passive and vague role to control outcomes, are likely to assume external factors such as luck (not internal qualities) behind a random success (Weiner, 1985; 2014; Ng et al., 2006). In this context, attributing their success, such as a good performance appraisal, to their talent, may receive discontentment, anger and criticism from their colleagues (Weiner, 1985; Martinko et al., 2011; McAuley et al., 1992). Nevertheless, in the presence of good HR practices, these employees may improve and elevate their abilities to the level where they no longer victimise themselves in the face of demanding challenges (Weiner, 1985; Harvey et al., 2014). As a result, there is a likelihood for them to feel more confident and, more determinedly, relate their progress to internal qualities (Galvin et al., 2018).

The same processes are at play when individuals reflect on the achievements of those around them (McAuley et al., 1992; Russell, 1982). When HPWS is well deployed across circumstances and over time, people tend to attribute their colleagues' success to internal factors (e.g. abilities, efforts), rather than external influences (e.g. line manager's favouritism). In line with the principles of Kelley (1973; 1979), employees can assess achievements by attending to three key management characteristics: distinctiveness, consistency, and consensus. If HR practices are carried out in a salient, consistent, and congruent manner, employees are likely to share a clear understanding of the causal-and-effect relationship acknowledging that good efforts and behaviours are rewarded, while poor performance get penalised. As a result, in the presence of a successful event, employees are inclined to develop common attributions, assigning others' success for their own qualities rather than luck or random chance (McAuley et al., 1992; Weiner, 1985; 2008).

Literature on causal ascription indicates that there is a pervasive tendency for people to make attributional bias. This means that actors are likely to attribute their own success to internal factors and accomplishments of others to external influences (Jones and Nisbett, 1972). Such errors take place when individuals pay much attention to internal factors (e.g., lacking the ability to perform a task) rather than external ones (e.g., not having sufficient time) (Malle, 2006; Weary and Reich, 2000). For example, when employees receive a promotion, they are likely to credit their own talent for the success, but if someone else is promoted, they may ascribe it to favouritism (Jones and Nisbett, 1972; Ross, 1971).

However, a well-designed HPWS, when implemented effectively, can offset this attributional gap (Jones and Nisbett, 1972; Ross, 1971; Weary and Reich, 2000). For example, clear procedures regarding success and career progression help clarify what skills are needed, while policies supporting internal mobility outline the personal qualities required for promotion (Sun et al., 2007). This sends clear signals to employees' minds and fosters an internal sense of causality when employees are promoted or receive public recognition. Moreover, robust performance appraisal process helps ensure consistent and transparent evaluation of performance (Gardner et al., 2011; Guzzo and Noonan, 1994), reinforcing employees' internal causal ascriptions. Similarly, performance-rewards illuminate the consequences of behaviour in the eyes of the employee (Lin et al., 2022), giving employees a sense of control over the incentives they receive (Lin et al., 2022). When employees clearly acknowledge that rewards usually require hard work and great effort, they tend to appreciate

any attained success and attach it to internal strengths (Gardner et al., 2011). In sum, HPWS can spark a far-reaching effect by which employees tie their internal (rather than external) locus of causality to work achievements. I accordingly hypothesise that:

Hypothesis 1A. HPWS are positively associated with internal attributions.

Hypothesis 1B. HPWS are negatively associated with external attributions.

3.3.2. The moderating role of LMX in the HR-ascription relationship

According to Hewett et al. (2019), HR scholars tend to examine information, beliefs, and motivation as three main categories of antecedents that independently predict employees' attributions. This perspective appears to oversimplify cognitive sense-making activities and thus hide nuances of the antecedent-attribution microprocess. Added to this, they asserted that people are unlikely to make cognitive distinctions between information about the stimulus and general beliefs about the integrity of organisation or between information about the stimulus and personal motivation. Hence, Hewett and others (2019) explored a new pathway by which situational information, personally held beliefs, and motivation work in concert to cast better light on employees' causal ascriptions.

The current study is firmly anchored in Hewett and co-authors (2019) to delve into interactive effects of three antecedents, namely, HPWS, LMX, OC, to reveal insightful accounts of employee self-reflections on successful outcomes. HPWS (information) and LMX (motivation) are first brought together to inform this cognitive phenomenon. The logic behind this interaction is that employees are not only attentive to prominent features of HRM strategy (Kelley, 1973), but also weigh up benefits they can receive to initiate the appraisal process (Hewett et al., 2019). Put it simply, information is often intertwined with personal motivation to shape the way individuals attribute causes to events. For example, bullying policies do not work for those who never experience bullying problems and thereby they might not feel prompted to make assessments about these practices or relate them to any event they encounter in the workplace (Wang et al., 2020).

LMX reflects capture varying quality of dyadic relationship between managers and subordinates (Graen and Uhl-Bien, 1995). A high-quality LMX is characterised by frequent support, mutual respect and trust, clear informational communication, and developmental

opportunities (Zhao et al., 2019; Cesário et al., 2022). By contrast, a low-quality manager-subordinate dyad is concerned with downward influence, disagreement and transactional activities strictly linked to contractual requirements (Janssen and Van Yperen, 2004; Beijer et al., 2019).

In line with signalling theory (Connelly et al., 2011), line managers and HPWS are viewed as two key actors of the signalling process: signallers (or communicators) and signals (or organisational information), that mutually reinforce each other to transmit stronger signals to employees (or receivers) than one party acts separately from the other (Leroy, 2018; Hauff et al., 2022). While HR signals can be ambiguous, competent line managers can filter, clarify and illuminate HR messages to inform subordinates of attitudes and behaviours that the organisation aspires toward and simultaneously impart values that matter to them (Shipton et al., 2016; Pak and Kim, 2020). This fosters an information-rich environment where employees, as signal receivers, have a clear understanding of managerial requirements, feeling encouraged to align their thoughts and deeds with organisational goals (Kilroy et al., 2023; Hauff et al., 2022). This connection reflects the core idea that HPWS and LMX play distinct roles in the signalling process but complement each other to amplify employees' causal ascriptions at work (Guest et al., 2019; Connelly et al., 2011).

Moreover, LMX here acts as a source of motivation (Hewett et al., 2019; Kelley and Michela, 1980) that interact with HPWS to strongly influence employee causal ascriptions of success, especially in the context of SMEs widely known for a flatter hierarchy where line managers can become a pivotal determinant of the employee's fate within organisation (Lin et al., 2022). By virtue of proximity and discretionary authority, leaders can provide subordinates with significant support, such as direct feedback, useful advice, to progress through their work, while facilitating them to attend intensive training programs or involve in challenging and relevant tasks for enhanced competencies (Gilbert et al., 2011; Boss and Sims, 2008).

Employees, who hold a rich (not poor) LMX, have likely been exposed to developmental activities beyond their day-to-day remit, under the auspices of their superiors, to be able to build up a repertoire of knowledge and skills (Lin et al., 2022). Benefiting from supervisor-facilitated privileges equips employees with confidence and abilities to address daunting daily tasks. As a result, when talent and effort are invested to bring any assignment

or plan to fruition, high LMX employees are prone to take pride in their work and ascribe their success to their self rather than external factors (Weiner, 1985; Burton et al., 2014).

Further, according to Martinko and others (2007), due to different positions within organisation, leaders and employees usually have convergent attribution when facing the same situation. For example, employees tend to attribute their poor performance to uncontrollable external factors, such as, insufficient supportive resources. By contrast, leaders may interpret this failure as a lack of abilities and/or efforts and rely on these to make decisions about rewards and punishments (Mitchell et al., 1981). These similar tensions can occur in the presence of great achievements, for example, a promotion. Employees take credit for their talent while managers may ascribe such success to their supervision and leadership (Yvonne and Van Rossenberg, 2021; Yucheng et al., 2021).

However, this attributional bias can be reduced when leader and follower attempt to forge a high-quality work relationship (Martinko et al., 2007; 2011). More clearly, a good duo of leader and follower are more likely to indicate a prevalent homogeneity, rather than conflict, in making causal ascriptions of success. Accordingly, high LMX leaders are inclined to make assessments of an effective performance that resemble team members' self-serving ascriptions by assigning credit to their competencies and efforts (Burton et al., 2014). By doing so, managers not only boost members' self-esteem to encourage future accomplishments but also demonstrate their capabilities as a leader in motivating subordinates to well perform at work (Galvin et al., 2018). Furthermore, 'in-group' subordinates who gain clear signals from leaders, in favour of their own achievement, such as overt compliment, recognition, rewarding, can utilise this information as a solid basis to feel proud of themselves and thereby reaffirm their internal ascriptions of success (Weiner, 2000; Martinko et al., 2011; Yang and Van Rossenberg, 2021).

Overall, when both HPWS and LMX are strong and mutually supportive, they foster an information-rich environment that helps dispel beliefs that organisational success is driven by uncontrollable factors or unstable and inconsistent decision-making across stakeholders (Malle, 2006). Instead, employees who earn accolades can feel a sense of encouragement to take pride in their own abilities and engagement (Jones and Nisbett, 1972; Ross, 1971; Weary and Reich, 2000). Further, competent leaders, in conjunction with well-designed HR practices, will communicate effectively and fairly, making it more likely that employees give

credit to others' achievements, such as public recognition and/or promotion, rather than downplay them (Eberly et al., 2011; Weary and Reich, 2000). Hence, I hypothesise that:

Hypothesis 2A. The positive relationship between HPWS and internal ascriptions is stronger when LMX is high.

Hypothesis 2B. The negative relationship between HPWS and external ascriptions is stronger when LMX is high.

3.3.3. The moderating role of organisational cynicism in the HR-ascription relationship.

Similar to LMX, OC (*belief*) is combined with HPWS (*information*) to better explain employees' causal ascriptions (Kelley and Michela, 1980; Hewett et al., 2019; Davis and Gardner, 2004). Organisational cynicism, on behalf of personal beliefs (Kelley and Michela, 1980), is described as the negative attitude that employees hold toward the fairness and integrity of the management (Hewett et al., 2019). A personally held belief is viewed as germane in the formation of ascriptions because the processing of information about a stimulus rarely occurs without some influence from pre-existing beliefs (Kelley and Michela, 1980; Hewett et al., 2019). Strong HPWS may draw attention at first, however, employees usually rest on their own beliefs arising from prior experiences to attach different weight to organisational intentions. (Hewett et al., 2019; Garg et al., 2021).

When employees enter the workplace, they bring with them diverse experiences from previous jobs, along with unique personal characteristics, backgrounds, personalities, career goals, and the like. This can become a key factor that causes divergent views about organisational integrity and thereby different causal ascriptions of success of their own and those around them regardless of the high quality of HR signals (Smidt et al., 2023; Yvone and Van Rossenberg, 2021). For example, good HR practices might be misinterpreted by some employees who rely on their past experiences to evaluate the organisational rationale as an exercise in branding and marketing or public relations rather than a sincere concern for wellbeing of workforce (Smidt et al., 2023). These belief-based readings, in turn, lead to variabilities in their causal reasoning of success (Weiner, 1985; 2000; 2008).

From the signalling perspective developed by Connelly and others (2011), HPWS and OC are two key components of the signalling process, with HPWS acting as the signal and OC as the receiver. To reduce the information gap and ensure effective communication, the

receiver or employee is expected to clearly understand the values of the signals and accurately interpret the signaller or manager's intentions. However, this interaction is not always straightforward because the employee is not a passive receiver. They have a certain amount of authority and discretion to infer organisational intent based on their background experiences (Hewett et al., 2019; Connelly et al., 2011). For this reasoning, it is of importance to delve into personal factors of the receivers, for example, the level of the organisational cynicism and its interactions with either the signals or signaller to provide more nuanced accounts of the antecedent-ascription relationship (Hewett et al., 2018; 2019).

Also of interest is that the interaction between team-level HPWS and individual cynicism indicates a blend of key principles of Kelley (1973) and Weiner (1985). The former has been widely used to explain the evaluation process by which employees as observers form social attributions for the behaviour of others. Conversely, the latter views employees as actors and is primarily concerned with self-attributions in achievement-related contexts (Thomson and Martinko, 1995; Martinko and Thomson, 1998). This synthesis provides a theoretical foundation for comparing and combining self- and social attributions and thus provide more parsimonious explanations about why employees interpret the same HR practices differently in the workplace (Martinko and Thomson, 1998).

In particular, with a low level of organisational cynicism, employees have a greater propensity to believe that HR practices, such as intensive training programs, teamworking activities, are genuine in upgrading employee abilities for the personal development and increased quality of service (Hewett et al., 2018; Martinko and Thomson, 1998). Added to this, when such work arrangements are implemented effectively, and employees feel self-esteem and capable of surpassing the most daunting tasks, their trust in management and leadership is significantly shored up (Gundlach et al., 2003). As a result, in the context of a successful event, employees' positive HR observations and experiences are congruent with their good personal beliefs about the organisational intent and then tend to ascribe success of their own and others to internal qualities (Hewett et al., 2019; Bowen and Ostroff, 2004).

Conversely, when inconsistency occurs, organisational members tend to reject HR features to lean their ascriptions on their own faith in firm motivations (Hewett et al., 2019; Kelley, 1973). This argument is also justified by the discounting principle of Kelley (1973) asserting that 'the role of a given cause in producing a given effect is discounted if other

plausible causes are also present' (p. 8). When individuals are highly cynical, organisations cannot be trusted and HR procedures are out of keeping with their HR evaluation, so they are inclined to seek alternative explanations for success. For example, cynical employees do not appreciate the values that HR practices can bring to their competencies and may perceive HPWS as a facade or an attempt to manipulate them. They, therefore, may experience a lack of confidence to take credit for their talent and instead may face pressure to locate success to external forces, such as luck, co-workers' support, and downgrading the impact of HPWS (Jiang et al., 2019; Weiner, 1985). Moreover, cynical employees tend to interpret their colleagues' achievements, such as overt praise, pay increase, a result of external elements such as favouritism or bias shown by managers (Jiang et al., 2019).

To sum up, high organisational cynicism usually conflicts with the good nature of HPWS and acts as a significant barrier to the positive HR impact on individual performance and well-being. When employees harbor cynical thoughts and attitudes, their ascriptions of success are likely to be influenced by external factors, undermining the perceived effectiveness of HPWS practices. Hence, I hypothesise:

Hypothesis 3a. The positive relationship between HPWS and internal attributions is weaker when employees' perception of cynicism is high.

Hypothesis 3b. The negative relationship between HPWS and external attributions is weaker when employees' perception of cynicism is high.

3.3.4. The mediating role of ascriptions in the relationships between HPWS and OCB, and between HPWS and task performance

Weiner (1985) posits that causal ascriptions of goal attainment are related to the dynamics of emotions, behaviours and future expectancy. The extant research, grounded in their core principles, examines employee OCB and task performance as two key outcomes of causal ascriptions, with OCB as productive behaviours and task performance as future success.

OCB here reflects discretionary actions on the part of employees that go beyond the realm of formal role obligations (Wayne et al. 1997; Yang and Arthur, 2021). Dimensions of OCB are not specifically task-focused (e.g. self-development), but also a variety of social

works, for example, helping others when they encounter a heavy workload, assisting line manager with daily operations, or showing courtesies to customers, that together invigorate organisational image and prestige (Kehoe and Wright, 2013; Ocampo et al., 2018; Stokburger-Sauer and Hofmann, 2023).

By contrast, task performance encompasses activities that are closely aligned with the core responsibilities and functions of a job, as defined by formal job descriptions and duties (Borman and Motowidlo, 1993; Whiting et al., 2008). Task performance plays a vital role in organisational behaviour, as it directly affects the technical operations that enable an organisation to successfully deliver products or services to its customers (Borman and Motowidlo, 1993; Rotundo and Sackett, 2002; Whiting et al., 2008). Employees' task-oriented behaviours significantly influence supervisors' evaluations during performance reviews. In fact, most performance appraisals are designed to assess this behaviour, which serves as the foundation for allocating rewards within the formal organisational system (Whiting and Pierce, 2008; Nadeem et al., 2019).

The current study clearly indicates the clear distinction between OCB and task performance in the context of Vietnamese SMEs. While task performance pertains to in-role duties aimed at enhancing individual effectiveness, OCB focuses on extra-role activities that foster social relationships and contribute to a cohesive working environment (Smith et al., 1983; Wayne et al., 1997; Whiting et al., 2008). Due to their significant differences, these two constructs function as distinct outcomes in relation to HPWS and employees' causal attributions across organisational levels, rather than traditionally working in unison, thereby providing a more comprehensive understanding of the HR-outcome relationship (Shao et al., 2019).

When ability-focused HR programs (e.g. extensive training, teamworking) are synergised to support individual development, employees become more capable of handling the challenge of intense workloads (Klass et al., 2012). Following this reasoning, when a successful event emerges, employees are prone to appraise it based on internal causes, such as individual endeavours and capabilities. This mindset fosters feelings of pride and self-esteem, increasing the likelihood of future success and motivating them to engage in extra activities outside the call of duties, to stay on a winning streak (Weiner, 1985; 2018; Bergh et al., 2014). This is particularly relevant in service-oriented SMEs, where employees often take on

multiple roles and responsibilities due to the unique characteristics of these organisations, such as limited resources and informal structures (Kloutsiniotis and Mihail, 2020; Stokburger-Sauer and Hofmann, 2023). According to signalling theory (Connelly et al., 2011), OCB is perceived as a form of feedback through which employees reciprocate efficacious HR signals communicated by signallers or managers. OCB therefore helps complete the signalling process and determine the efficacy of HR initiatives.

By contrast, if employees assert that HPWS is not productive and then ascribe their own success to external causes, there is an inclination that they will experience negative affective states (e.g. anxiety) and have a low expectancy of future success, as they lack a blueprint for overcoming challenging tasks and progressing forward (Weiner, 1985; 200; 2018). These emotional reactions can give rise to antisocial behaviours, such as withdrawal, absenteeism, that in turn do harm to firm performance (Weiner, 1985; 2014). When others' success is attributed to external factors, such as leaders' favouritism, employees are more likely to view extra-role behaviours as a strategy to gain favour with line managers, rather than as a reflection of genuine commitment or intrinsic motivation (Harvey et al., 2014). In sum, I hypothesise that:

Hypothesis 4a. Internal ascriptions positively mediate the relationship between HPWS and OCB.

Hypothesis 4b. External ascriptions negatively mediate the relationship between HPWS and OCB

In a similar vein, well-interconnected HR practices can foster a supportive work environment where employees believe that their success flows more from their inherent attributes than from situational factors (Weiner, 1985). By doing so, employees can learn and improve from this experience to enrich their knowledge and skills. They can clearly understand where future developmental effort should be directed and what qualities are required to reach new milestones in their career (Huff and Schwenk, 1990). Furthermore, individuals who ascribe success to internal factors, such as ability and effort, experience positive emotions (pride, hope, self-efficacy). These feelings are more profound and long-lasting where the causes are relatively controllable and stable over time. This gives attributors the impression that they can control their own fate rather than leave it in the hands of others (Harvey et al., 2014; Martinko et al., 2006; Weiner, 1979; 1985). Following this logic,

employees are more proactive and motivated to design their own approach or strategies to effectively tackle difficult tasks and keep achieving superior performances (Weiner, 1985; Martinko et al., 2011).

Conversely, if employees do not believe that HPWS are effective, for example, training or internal mobility does not improve their personal development, employees may believe that their success is attributable to random, situational factors, such as luck or random support, which can escalate negative emotions and undermine motivation (Martinko et al., 2006; Huff and Schwenk, 1990). This makes it harder for the attributor to access a rich source of information and pick up on the knowledge and skills required to well perform and move forward at work (Weiner, 1985; 2000; 2018; Jensen et al., 2013). Similarly, when employees perceive decision-making on reward allocation is capricious or there is no clear message about how people are recognised and rewarded relative to others (Lin et al., 2022), employees tend to report external causal ascriptions when they and those around them achieve success. Causes of success may be attributable to luck or the preferences of managers which can provoke demotivation, discontent, and anger (Weiner, 1985; 2000; 2018). These negative feelings can culminate in antisocial behaviours and thereby diminish task performance (Harvey et al., 2014). Hence, I hypothesise that:

Hypothesis 5a. Internal ascriptions positively mediate the relationship between HPWS and task performance.

Hypothesis 5b. External ascriptions negatively mediate the relationship between HPWS and task performance.

CHAPTER IV: METHODOLOGY

4.1. Introduction

In Chapter 3, the theoretical framework and a set of hypotheses are established to provide the foundation for understanding the relationships among the key variables of interest. Chapter 4 outlines the methodological approach used to empirically test these proposed hypotheses and achieve the study's objectives. In particular, it begins by describing the research paradigm that underpins the quantitative-based approach. Following this, research design, data collection methods, ethical considerations and data analysis techniques are provided to ensure transparency, fairness, and reliability. Of these processes, data collection consists of two phases: preliminary interview and in-house questionnaire. The preliminary interview is conducted to consolidate the face and content of the questionnaire-based survey. Issues of ethics are carefully considered to make survey participants' responses genuine and credible. The data analysis was conducted using analytical techniques and software, such as, multilevel structural equation modelling with Mplus. Overall, this methodology chapter serves as a roadmap for the research, providing a detailed and transparent account of the methods used to conduct the study, ensuring the rigor and credibility of the research findings.

4.2. Research paradigm

The concept of paradigm reflects individuals' general beliefs and assumptions as to the nature of knowledge and the world (Leavy, 2020smith). This worldview acts as a filtering framework, guiding researchers in selecting appropriate techniques and methods for conducting their research (Collis and Hussey, 2021; Bryman, 1988). My research ideas largely derive from the review of the literature on employees' attributions or more broadly, the HR process (Bowen and Ostroff. 2004; Nishii et al., 2008). To date, there have been an array of key review papers published to provide excellent overviews of this sense-making cognitive phenomenon, demonstrating both exiting gaps and progress in this burgeoning area of interest (Wang et al., 2020; Hewett et al., 2018; Hu et Oh, 2022; Hewett. 2021; Sanders et al., 2023). However, these reviews tend to revolve around *HR strength* (Bowen and Ostroff, 2004) and *HR attributions* (Nishii et al., 2008), as two mainstream strands of research to illuminate the HR process. Added to this, reviewers attempt to scrutinise relevant papers using the key tenets of these two seminal studies to consolidate, contradict, and expand their

established findings, and thereby suggesting future directions. None of these works proposes new approaches to enrich our knowledge of the HR-outcome link (Wang et al., 2020; Hewett et al., 2018; Hu et al., 2022).

By viewing attribution as a vast field of study rather than limiting it to a theory, I do believe that employees' attribution is a complex psychological process that should be examined from various lenses to fully understand its impact on behaviour, decision-making, and organisational outcomes (Harvey et al., 2014). In other words, the HR process encompasses numerous potential approaches to explain the HR-performance causal chain, rather than being restricted to *HR strength* and *HR attribution* (Weiner, 2008). The literature to date has demonstrated that *causal ascriptions/reasonings* in achievement-related contexts (Weiner, 1985) and *relational attributions* (Eberly et al., 2011) can be applied to the domain of HR process, offering valuable insights into this research area (Harvey et al., 2014; Sun et al., 2019; Gardner et al., 2019). However, these lines of research appear to be largely overlooked in comparison with *HR attributions* and *HR strength* (Hewett et al., 2018; Wang et al., 2020; Hewett, 2021). This deficit necessitates more in-depth research to investigate these two distinctive constructs and their central roles in bridging HR practices and outcomes (Harvey et al., 2014).

Reviewing literature helps create my *positivist* paradigm reflecting three key assumptions, *ontological*, *epistemological*, and *methodological*, upon which the research is based (Collis and Hussey, 2021). In particular, the *positivist* philosophy guides my views on the nature of employees' attribution and key issues around this concept which in turn provides me with necessary tools and instruments to design and conduct my research in subsequent sections.

First, according to the *ontological* assumptions about the nature of the world, reality or knowledge is objective and apart from us and always exists regardless of whether we are aware of it. In this regard, I do believe that attribution is a fertile ground where strategic HR scholars can explore other potential research avenues beyond *HR strength* and *HR attributions* to decipher employees' cognitive phenomenon and then cast better light on the HR-outcome causal relationship (Harvey et al., 2014; Weiner, 2008). Like *HR attributions* and *HR strength*, *causal ascriptions* of success and failure or *relational attributions* are one of many distinct strands that can work separately or in tandem with others to contribute to a full picture of the HR process. These research streams have always been there in the world of knowledge and have been detached from the perspective of researchers (Collis and Hussey, 2021). This

contrasts with the *interpretivist* paradigm suggesting the nature of the world/reality as subjective and socially constructed/understood by HR scholars (Collis and Hussey, 2021).

Second, the *epistemology* assumption aims to address the relationship between the researcher and the researched subject. I perceive that employees' *causal ascriptions* are pre-existing knowledge/reality before I or any other scholars, take an interest in exploring it (Antwi and Hamza, 2015). Hence, I try to keep myself separated from what I am researching and then use all relevant measures to explore the facts/causes and interrelationships of this psychological phenomenon (Collis and Hussey, 2021). By doing so, I expect to generate objective and rigorous findings and then suggest useful directions for future HR process-focused researchers. However, since the act of investigating research problems and generating research outcomes does not affect pre-established reality (or employees' causal ascriptions is always there regardless of my interest), I might contribute by clarifying *causal ascriptions* and bringing it to better light rather than by adding new value to the domain of HR process (Collis and Hussey, 2021).

Again, this differs from *the interpretivist paradigm*, which highlights the world as interpreted, constructed, experienced by people in their interactions with one another and with wider social entities (Merriam, 1988; Maxwell, 2008). This means that social reality/knowledge is significant only when it is generated from within the human mind and people's perceptions (Bogdan and Biklen, 1992). Therefore, *interpretivists* immerse themselves in the process of research and attempt to unravel human behaviours/activities or social phenomena from the participant's own frame of reference rather than the measurement adopted by *positivists*. This idea was also supported by Smith (2012, p.7)'s argument that the 'interrelationship of the investigator and what was being investigated was impossible to separate, and what existed in the social and human world was what we (investigators and laymen) thought existed'. Following this logic, the process of research and findings are biased personal voice and perspective that influence what is researched and then add new values to extant literature (Collis and Hussey, 2021).

Third, *methodological assumption* refers to the question of 'What is the process of research?' or 'How do we obtain knowledge of that reality?' *Positivism* is predominantly related to the deductive cause-and-effect process while *interpretivism* is concerned about the inductive process. In particular, I largely build on the existing knowledge of causal ascriptions and relevant theoretical frameworks to construct hypotheses, which are, in turn, tested and validated using quantitative analytical measures (Clark et al., 2021). Data were gathered from

a sample of Vietnamese knowledge intensive SMEs via paper-based questionnaires. Following data analysis, findings might be generalised to SMEs in other sectors (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

In sum, the positivist paradigm serves as an initial foundation for my research on employees' causal ascriptions of success and its central role in elucidating the HR-outcome causal relationship. Three key assumptions attached to this paradigm about the nature of reality, the relationship between the researcher and the researched subject, and the methods guide me to further develop a robust research design to ensure the validity and reliability of research findings. As a result, the next section describes a detailed research plan characterised by specific steps and procedures to get the most valid findings: (1) literature review to identify research problems and then the researchable conceptual model, (2) data collection and ethics issues and (3) some challenges during these processes.

4.3. Research design

To review literature on employees' causal ascription, I used various keywords, that can be related to this core concept, for example, 'HR(M) process', 'HR(M) strength', 'HR(M) attribution', 'HR(M) perception', 'HR(M) experience,' 'causal ascriptions' and the like (Wang et al., 2020; Hewett, 2021). Added to this, to ensure the quality of referential resources, papers/book chapters were searched on major online credible databases, such as, JSTOR, ProQuest, Scopus, Web of Science, Wiley Online. Any relevant research, using appropriate concepts and attribution theories and/or citing either of the two landmark papers of Bowen and Ostroff (2004) and Nishii et al. (2008), was investigated (Wang et al., 2020; Van Beurden et al., 2021; Xiao and Cooke, 2022). The referencing of the key HR process-based reviews (e.g. Hewett et al., 2018; Hewett, 2021; Wang et al., 2020; Sanders et al., 2021; Kitt and Sanders, 2022; Xiao and Cooke, 2022) was scrutinised to filter out more potential papers. Most reviewed papers were published in major and reputable HR and management journals, for example, *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, *Human Resource Management Journal*, *Human Resource Management*, *Personnel Psychology*, *Academy of Management Review*, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *Journal of Organisational Behaviour* (Hewett et al., 2018; Hu and Oh, 2022).

Drawing on extensive literature review, I could identify research problems, research questions and theoretical foundation that inform research methods. In particular, since causal ascriptions of achievement-related contexts developed by Weiner (1985) has been largely neglected in the domain of HRM, we might feel unclear about employees' emotional and behavioural reactions to success or failure that employees and those around them experience in the workplace (Harvey et al., 2014). This deficit is surprising because employees cannot work without encountering any salient events such as meeting or missing a deadline and receiving a reprimand or praise from their leader. Assigning any cause for such events determines employees' attitudes and behaviours which in turn translate into a specific outcome in the future (Weiner, 1985; 2008; 2018). Hence, it is relevant to delve into this unique sense-making process to reveal more volitional impulses that drive positive feelings, productive behaviours and outcomes (Harvey et al., 2014; 2017). Not integrating these intrinsic motivations into HR initiatives means that organisations might be not capable of promoting employees' self-efficacy and pride in the presence of successful events to keep achieving remarkable performances or arousing their feelings of guilt and shame to make amends for their failure and thereby attain better future outcomes (Weiner, 1985; 2018). As a result, so-called strategic HR practices may not reap the benefits in the long run and organisation may lose the competitive advantage to their rivals (Gundlach et al., 2023; Martinko et al., 2011).

Motivated by this omission, I examine employees' causal ascriptions of success in the context of SMEs and attempt to clarify what key organisational factors drive causal ascriptions and how these interpretations can influence individual outcomes. This overarching conceptual model can answer a range of research questions and thereby make contributions to HR process literature: (1) what is causal ascription and how does it differ from other core constructs, such as HR strength, HR attributions, and relational attributions? (2) What factors drive causal ascriptions and how does this appraisal process of success influences employees' behaviours and outcomes in the context of SMEs? (3) Under what conditions can organisations promote positive causal ascriptions which in turn elicit productive behaviours and superior performance?

To answer these questions, I brought together HPWS, LMX, and OC to anticipate employees' causal ascriptions and examine OCB and task performance as two independent

outcomes of this psychological process when employees assess achievements of their own or others around them (Hewett et al., 2019; Eisenberger et al., 2001; Wayne et al., 1997; Weiner, 1985). This conceptual framework is underpinned by signalling theory (Connelly et al., 2011) and attribution theory (Heider, 1958; Kelley, 1973; Weiner, 1985). This dyadic theoretical foundation complements each other to elucidate the mechanism where HPWS, LMX and OC work in concert to trigger desired causal ascriptions of success which subsequently prompts employees to exhibit extra-role behaviours and well perform at work (Hewett et al., 2019; Guest et al., 2021; Connelly et al., 2011; Weiner, 1985).

The study proceeds with a detailed data management plan that elaborates on ethical principles, data collection, analysis, and storage. Measurable quantitative methods were designed to gather data from Vietnamese SMEs. This quantitative is aligned well with my view on the nature of knowledge which is reflected in *the positivist paradigm*. Moreover, Quantitative measures have been extensively utilised by HR process scholars to rigorously test and validate hypotheses, contributing significantly to the empirical foundation of the current research (Hewett et al., 2018; Hewett, 2021; Wang et al., 2020, Hu et Oh, 2022).

To be more specific, two paper-based questionnaires, specifically designed for line managers and subordinates, were administered to research participants at a single point in time. This approach, widely known as a cross-sectional design, was chosen to save time and costs (Clark et al., 2021). To gain deeper insights into employees' causal attributions, a multi-level research design was adopted, examining both team and individual levels. This approach recognises that causal attribution is a socially embedded psychological process that does not occur in isolation (Hewett et al., 2018; Fan et al., 2021). Employees tend to exchange information within their social context and across different organisational levels to make better sense of significant events (Hewett et al., 2018; Hewett, 2021).

Given the multilevel structure of the data (with employee data nested within leaders), the study utilised multilevel structural equation modeling (MSEM) to test the hypotheses using Mplus Version 8.6 (Muthén and Muthén, 2017). This method allows for the examination of differences both between groups and within groups, effectively controlling for individual differences within each group (Pak and Kim, 2018).

The chosen methodological approach, including the use of cross-sectional design and multilevel structural equation modeling (MSEM), underscores the importance of gathering comprehensive and nuanced data to understand employee behaviours and organisational dynamics. However, conducting such a study also brings forth significant ethical considerations. Ensuring ethical integrity is crucial, especially when handling sensitive data from both line managers and subordinates. Therefore, it is essential to address ethical issues such as informed consent, confidentiality, and the protection of participants' data to maintain the trust and integrity of the research process.

4.4 Ethical issues

Drawing on the key principles of these Codes, Nottingham Trent University (NTU) designed NTU code of practice for research (2021), the NTU Research Ethics Policy and Procedure, and other appropriate guidelines. These require researchers, who carry out research either at or in the name of NTU, to bear responsibilities for safeguarding the dignity, rights, welfare, and safety of any research participants. Being aware of these ethical principles involving human participants, the thesis incorporates them into the research procedures that are outlined below:

Beneficence ('to do positive good') and non-maleficence ('to do no harm'). This principle means that researchers need to make certain that their study is beneficial (not malevolent or harmful to all research stakeholders). Harm is not restricted to physical well-being but also participants' development, loss of self-esteem, stress, and 'inducing subjects to perform reprehensible acts' (Diener and Crandall, 1978, p.19). In this regard, risk analysis was conducted to identify potential risks and harm to stakeholders and then propose specific measures to reduce these concerns. For example, since the questionnaire solicits employee's opinions about managerial purposes, the integrity of the organisation, and motives behind success of their own and others in the workplace, respondents might feel discomfort and uneasy when filling out the survey. They might fear that their responses might be disclosed to third parties (e.g. leaders, colleagues) and then be judged unfavourably. To prevent these negative feelings, the cover letter, which clearly indicates research objectives, procedures, and benefits, was sent to the participants through HR departments/divisions ahead of the survey (*see Appendix-the cover letter*).

Moreover, the researcher considered the potential for physical or emotional harm to himself or other researchers as a result of exposure to a fieldwork setting. For example, due to

lone working and collecting in-person data from a large number of SMEs that spread across two big cities of Vietnam, the investigator is anticipated to spend much time traveling and addressing inquiries and concerns from numerous respondents, which might inflict harm on his physical and mental health. To mitigate these risks, I proactively attended training sessions on research conduct and ethics at NTU, learning experiences from the supervisory team and exchanging information with fellow members of the NTU doctoral school to effectively deal with thereby avoid putting himself at risk.

Informed consent, attached to each questionnaire, contains fundamental information about the purpose of the research, expected duration and procedures, research ethics, prospective research benefits, confidentiality (e.g. data coding, disposal, sharing and archiving). As mentioned earlier, the HR department of each organisation was asked to inform the participants of the survey around one week before the questionnaire was administered. *Informed consent* (see *Appendix-informed consent template*) here reinforces the cover letter to clarify that research objectives are beneficial, procedures are transparent, and their participation is entirely voluntary and anonymous (Fan et al., 2021; Do and Shipton, 2019). Central to this is that both line managers and employees were briefed on the important principle that there was no coercion to participate, and they are free to abstain from participation in the study or to withdraw consent at any time without reprisal (Xiao and Cooke, 2022). Withdrawal was accepted and respected before and during completing the questionnaire or even within two weeks of after submitting their ratings (after this time, data is hard to remove since it might be part of final analysis for publishable papers). Upon participants' understanding, the researcher directly handed *informed consent* to those who agreed to take part in the research. Where consent in writing is not obtained, participants cannot proceed to complete the survey.

Another principle for protecting participants from harm is ensuring *the confidentiality and security of records* obtained during research. This means that data concerning all research stakeholders (e.g. survey participants, companies) must not be divulged without permission (BSA, 2004). In this research, questionnaires are kept anonymous and do not allow individuals to be identified (Israel and Hay, 2006). However, grounding in principles of The Data Protection Act 2018 of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and NTU Data protection policy (2021) to process data lawfully, fairly and in a transparent manner, the researcher complied with various measures, procedures, and technologies to maintain the

security of data (e.g. interview notes, questionnaires, informed consent) from the starting point of data collection to data destruction.

To be more specific, completed paper-based questionnaires were scanned before being kept in a securely locked cabinet which could only be accessed by the researcher. The scanned copies were stored in a designated project folder on the NTU DataStore via permissions assigned to their unique NTU login profile. Passwords are stored in a secure, non-reversible format. It is obligatory to change the password every 180 days. There is a limitation of failed login attempts, and an implemented measure of inactivity lock. Data is not stored on any other devices, only accessed, and processed by the main investigator through his password protected and encrypted personal laptop with anti-virus packages for the purposes of data analysis. Data was not transferred to any third parties during the research process. After the end of the project, data is retained and deposited in the NTU Data Archive for at least ten years. Any data transfers or access during this time will be implemented upon consultations with NTU Data Protection Officer or Legal Services Team (*see Appendix-the Data Management Plan*).

4.5. Preliminary interview

Given the study involving human participants, thorough written research protocols on ethics and health and safety procedures for the project had been submitted to the Schools of Business, Law, and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (BLSS REC) prior to the implementation of the preliminary interview and questionnaire-based survey. Upon receipt of ethical approval, data collection was eventually carried out in Vietnam for the period of three months (July to October 2022).

The preliminary interview occurred prior to the official survey for several reasons. First, the influence of HPWS varies with organisational characteristics and contexts. Most research on HPWS and employees' attributions has been conducted within the large organisations (Klaas et al., 2012; Hewett et al., 2018; Wang et al., 2020; Sanders et al., 2023). Very little is known about these two core constructs and their relationship in the small and medium business sector. According to the contingency or 'best fit' perspective, HPWS of SMEs cannot be directly extrapolated from their large counterparts because they are quite distinctive both regarding the HR challenges and how HR practices are actually adopted and deployed (Klaas et al., 2012; Harney and Alkhalaf, 2021; Harney et al., 2022). In particular, SMEs are

characterised by resource restraints, informality and flatter hierarchy, requiring more flexible HR activities than large and complex organisations (Kotey and Slade, 2005; Cardon and Stevens, 2004; Harney et al., 2022). Added to this, among SMEs, HR practices are also used differently due to a range of factors, such as, industry, cultural influences, business strategy under which firms have operated (Harney et al., 2022; Chadwich et al., 2013). For example, manufacturing companies have different HR practices compared to service-focused firms (Boxall and Purcell, 2011; Drucker, 2007; Noe et al., 2006). Hence, this research firmly draws on the HPWS measure intended for SMEs, which were developed by Klaas et al. (2012), to interview HR professionals. Although the scale had previously been applied to the context of SMEs by Klaas and colleagues, HR practices in their study were largely Westernized and may not be directly applicable to Vietnamese SMEs, which are heavily influenced by unique institutional and cultural characteristics. Therefore, these informative interviews provided the investigator with valuable expertise and insights from HR specialists, enabling the adaptation and revision of the HPWS measure to better align with the specific conditions and context of Vietnam (Klaas et al., 2012).

Second, the preliminary interview is well aligned with my positivist paradigm which chiefly relies on measurable and observable phenomena to produce valid findings that can be generalised for other groups of populations and contexts. Here, interviewing HR professionals act as an important step to ensure the survey questions are clear and consistently understood by respondents, which in turn enhances the reliability and objectivity of the data collected. Added to this, compared to the interpretivist philosophy, the positivist approach indicates several shortcomings, for instance, outcomes might be too abstract and general for specific local contexts since researchers largely focus on theory and hypotheses testing (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). The preliminary interview helps to offset this deficit by effectively assessing if the surveyed companies implement HPWS, what HR practices these firms use and value, more importantly, how they perceive the meanings and purposes behind their HR strategy which can significantly influence employees' causal ascriptions of success (Klaas et al., 2012). Therefore, the interview helps accurately measure the HPWS construct and reflect real-world conditions that improve the content and construct validity of the survey and thereby minimise the bias and error in research findings (Klaas et al., 2012; Collis and Hussey, 2021).

To approach participants, the investigator contacted firms of interest through a comprehensive list of Vietnamese SMEs provided by Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VCCI) that contains key information, such as firm name, size, location, industry, contact details. VCCI is an independent, non-governmental, non-profit organisation with an interest in promoting economic, commercial, and technological co-operation between Vietnam and the world. The investigator had no relationship with SMEs before reaching them and received no compensation for conducting the study.

The preliminary semi-structured interviews with 13 HR specialists of knowledge intensive SMEs and two HRM academics took place via TEAMS to save costs and time. HR professionals (rather than business leaders) were selected because they are better positioned to provide insights into the aspects of HRM practices (Patton, 2015; Yin, 2018). Within organisation, they are more likely to directly propose new HR initiatives and closely work with other managers to put these HR arrangements in practice (Kvale, 2007). In the meanwhile, CEOs might have a broader focus on overall strategy and operations, potentially lacking the depth of knowledge required for the purpose of this interview (Boselie et al., 2005). Added to this, two HRM academics, who have a good command of HRM knowledge and Vietnamese research context can complement HR specialists to create a balance of practical, real-world insights and rigorous academic perspectives (Bryman, 2012). This combination helps ensure that research instruments are both theoretically sound and practically relevant (Van de Ven and Johnson, 2006; Bryman, 2012; Guest et al., 2013).

During the interviews, the research purposes, ethical procedures, participant rights, and benefits were explained to the interviewees to ensure they had a clear understanding of the overall project and the purpose of the interview (McGrath, Palmgren, and Liljedahl, 2019; Bolderston, 2012). The investigator also reassured participants that there were no “right” or “wrong” answers to the questions (O’Dwyer, 2004). Initially, interviewees were first asked for general organisational details (e.g., firm size, year of operation) and then had a short discussion about HPWS to see how they define this core concept and if their organisation used a strategic HRM system.

The interview then continues to gather participants’ perspectives on the face validity and content of the HPWS scale (Tian et al., 2016; Klaas et al., 2012). Participants were asked to identify what HR practices their firm had integrated into their HR system and which ones were not included. They were also encouraged to share their opinions as to which ones were the most salient to their employees, which ones were most commonly used by Vietnamese

service-focused SMEs, and to suggest any other HR practices they considered effective but were not addressed in the list of statements (Klaas et al., 2012).

Participants were also reminded to consider any potential ambiguities in how survey items might be interpreted by SME leaders and employees (Klaas et al., 2012; Tian et al., 2016). When confusion or vagueness arose regarding terminology or translation, the investigator provided clarification and encouraged participants to suggest alternative wording to make the HPWS scale more accessible and easier to understand for subsequent survey respondents (Klaas et al., 2012). Finally, interviewees were invited to discuss the inherent challenges their organisations faced in managing human capital and to offer ideas on how to mitigate these challenges to reduce their negative impact on firm performance (Klaas et al., 2012; O'Dwyer, 2004).

The average duration of each interview was between 40 and 60 minutes. Interviews were not recorded to protect participants' privacy and ensure they feel comfortable providing candid responses. The investigator aimed to maintain an informal conversation while attentively capturing and logging responses from the participants, particularly their views about a specific HR practice that they find different in the context of Vietnamese organisations. For example, regarding the item '*provide retirement plan options*', HR professionals shared the idea that Vietnam mandates social insurance contributions, which effectively serve as a retirement provision for employees, instead of specific retirement plan options typically seen in Western SMEs (Vietnamese Labour Code, 2019; Social Insurance Law, 2014). Specifically, employers must provide Vietnamese employees with compulsory social insurance based on their salary range, which covers pensions and other social benefits if their labour contract is more than one month (Social Insurance Law, 2014). In addition, participants noted that Vietnamese enterprises only require a general health examination regulated by the Ministry of Health rather than conducting 'pre-employment drug testing,' as outlined in the provided HPWS measure.

On the other hand, participants asserted that they used most of HR practices as suggested by Klaas et al. (2012), such as formal performance evaluations; frequent performance feedback, formal training programs; incentives and bonuses, recognition and reward programs; selection tests or other formal screening methods when hiring; input solicitation; formal procedures to set pay levels; written guidelines when dealing with an employee that doesn't meet expectations, background screening for job candidates, but to various extents. For example, even though some organisations followed some formal

procedures such as sending warning letters in some certain cases, they usually preferred to have an informal meeting in person when employees did not meet expectations or asked them to attend re-training sessions, making the situations less severe due to some cultural influences, such as harmonious relationships and collectivism (Nguyen and Tran, 2020). Further, incentives and bonuses varied between organisations, but they all offered typical policies such as 13th month salary; project-based compensation; direct cash; cash/gifts for employee parents' birthday; best employee award. Also of interest is that Vietnamese SMEs paid great attention to teambuilding activities to enhance organisational cohesion and solidarity, for example, year-end party, free collective Friday lunch, travel tours.

Some of them felt that translations needed to be clearer. For example, they found some terms or phrases, such as 'formal screening methods', 'background screening' or 'formal procedures' a bit general. They propose alternative translations to make it more specific (e.g. 'background screening' is also translated into 'CV screening'; or 'formal procedures' may be understood as 'eligibility framework' or 'process of capacity assessment'). In addition, they also have different views about 'formal procedures to set pay level'. While some understands it as pre-employment criteria (e.g. educational background, work experiences, positions), others describe this statement as 'post-employment career path' based on the principle of 3P (Pay for Person, Position and Performance) to agree on salary range. All these opinions were written down carefully, acting as a referencing framework to revisit the questionnaire to make it more understandable for respondents.

Finally, interviewees were encouraged to share difficulty implementing these HR practices and the impact of these HR practices on individual and organisational performance. About 90 percent indicated that the biggest challenge for them is to recruit and retain competent and experienced employees as they prefer to work for large firms. For this reasoning, turnover rate remains relatively high. Some firms did not know how to adopt formal practices to effectively appraise individual and departmental performance within organisation since they think each unit had its own characteristics and functions. As a result, specific HR appraisal performance might not be applicable for everyone and all departments. Similarly, other firms also were concerned about how to make use of employees' competencies or input from employees for better organisational outcomes.

During the interviews, I was trying to get to know participants better and solicit their own views on HPWS used by their organisations and on the HPWS scale developed by Klaas and co-authors (2012). I also took this opportunity to introduce my research and then invited

them to take part in the next quantitative phase. After each interview, an encoded summary (without any identifiable details such as personal name, job title, email, company name) was sent to the respondents for verification and further comments (Britten, 2006; Misoch, 2019) (*see Appendix 2-the interview protocol and the results of preliminary interview*). Based on their valuable comments, some HPWS items were altered or eliminated when over 60 percent of the participants cited a certain practice ineffective or inappropriate for their organisation (Klaas et al., 2012). For example, the item '*pre-employment drug testing*' is slightly adjusted in line with the cultural and institutional context. Similarly, HR practices were rephrased when 40 percent of the sample indicated potential unclarity and ambiguity in relation to terminology or translations that might cause misinterpretations (Klaas et al., 2012). Some items regarding '*bonuses and incentives*', '*written guidelines*', or '*background screening*' were further clarified to ensure the shared understanding among questionnaire respondents.

Overall, it is argued that Vietnamese SMEs have been heavily influenced by Western HR practices as they have mostly used key HR work arrangement to manage their workforce. However, these HR activities have reflected distinct characteristics due to institutional and cultural influences (Nguyen and Tran, 2020). For example, the 13th month salary has been integrated into the incentive scheme as an end-of-year bonus to employees prior to the biggest break of lunar new year. This is distinct from Western counterparts and reinforces the '*best fit*' perspective that the same HR practices cannot be applied to all firms (Boxall and Purcell, 2003). Rather. They are usually modified and adjusted in line with the organisation's specific context and strategy (Boxall and Purcell, 2003; Delery and Doty, 1996).

The questionnaire was revisited upon interview results and then piloted by 30 MBA students of Vietnam-Japan University before officially distributing them to a larger sample size of SMEs (Robinson, 2018). MBA students were selected because they all have a full-time job and take on different positions and responsibilities within their organisation (e.g. employee, team leaders, CEOs). They therefore not only had work experience and were familiar with management practices, but also well understand business concepts and research process. This made them capable of providing insightful feedback on the clarity, relevance, and comprehensiveness of the questionnaire. Added to this, they are more likely to be readily available and willing to participate in academic research projects, especially if they are connected to the research institution. This accessibility makes it convenient for me to conduct a pilot study quickly and efficiently.

Following this step, the Likert scale-styled questionnaires were accordingly modified and were directly administered by the investigator to managers and employees of Vietnamese SMEs (Bell and Bryman, 2007). Again, all necessary information (e.g. the project brief document, informed consent, debrief/ withdrawal forms) was introduced and made available to organisations and employees wishing to proceed. The investigator was on-site to run the gamut of research process, from randomly selecting participants, handing out the paper-based questionnaires, answering possible questions, to finally collecting results. All the completed questionnaires were stored in a safely locked cabinet and then scanned and saved on the antivirus software-backed personal computer which was only accessed by the researcher (*see Appendix 1-the data management plan*).

4.6 Paper questionnaire-based survey

Using a sampling frame provided by the VCCI, the investigator initially contacted potential participants via email, seeking to arrange meetings with HR managers to explain the research's nature and purpose. Once the invitation was accepted, these HR managers acted as supportive coordinators by communicating the key aspects of the research to team leaders and employees. They also provided the investigator with a list of individuals interested in participating in the survey. Importantly, they facilitated access to the workplace, allowing the investigator to administer the questionnaires in person and collect responses directly.

The investigators primarily focused on two major cities in Vietnam: Hanoi, the capital, and Thanh Hoa, the country's third-largest city. Both cities have a high level of economic development and are home to numerous service-oriented SMEs (Jiang et al., 2012). Their geographical proximity also allowed for easier travel and reduced personal expenses. The study targeted knowledge-intensive SMEs in Vietnam, such as those in the IT, pharmaceutical, and consultancy sectors, with 50–250 employees that had been in operation for at least one year. These companies are more likely to satisfy research requirements about a number of key functional teams and the use of HR ideas and practices (Wiklund and Shepherd, 2003; Do et al., 2018; Patel et al., 2013). Additionally, unlike large firms, SMEs typically have less hierarchical structures, enabling HR systems to be more accessible to all employees. The teams are also small enough for all members to be familiar with the management style of their leaders and the behaviours of team members (Chadwick et al., 2013). These distinct characteristics make HR practices more salient to employees, prompting

them to seek causes behind the success of their own and people around them at work (Garg et al., 2021; Harney and Alkhalaf, 2021),

After reviewing the list of SMEs, the investigator reached out to 85 HR managers to explain the research's objectives and invite them to participate in the study. Of these, 40 firms accepted the invitation, 13 firms were willing to participate in both a preliminary interview and questionnaire-based survey. This led to a participation rate of 47%. This result was relatively encouraging given the post-pandemic context in Vietnam, where public health measures had been lifted and people were returning to normal life, but still rather concerned about emerging threats from new variants. As expected, firms with a good size (80-250 employees), operating in knowledge-intensive sectors, such as IT, consultancy, and pharmaceuticals, are more likely to take interest in the research because these firms are inclined to pursue innovation-oriented strategies and heavily rely on skilled and competent employees to achieve their goals and gain competitive advantage (Huselid, 1995; Lepak and Snell, 1999). Added to this, these firms have expanded in size and confront a range of HR issues, such as a high turnover rate and ineffective performance-HR practices. They therefore appear to more engage in studies on advanced HR practices through which they might gain insights into improving their human resource strategies and overall organisational performance (Minbaeva, 2005). To reciprocate their enthusiastic participation, I have arranged to present my findings at a conference to be held at Vietnam-Japan University in Hanoi, Vietnam, in 2025. Participants are encouraged to attend the presentation and contribute to the discussions on the research outcomes and their broader implications.

An in-house survey was conducted within each organisation, which typically yields a higher response rate and better-quality data (Baruch and Holtom, 2008). This approach offers direct interaction, encouraging full participation and reducing the likelihood of respondents ignoring the survey, as they are in a controlled, in-person environment (Groves, 2006). When employees are aware that the investigator has traveled a long way to conduct the survey and is patiently waiting for their responses, they might feel more valued and respected, which can enhance their willingness to complete the survey (Dillman et al., 2014). Additionally, being physically present at the workplace allows for real-time clarification of any questions or misunderstandings, ensuring that participants fully comprehend the survey questions, which leads to more candid and reliable responses (Tourangeau and Yan, 2007). For instance, some participants approached me to ask about specific parts of the questionnaire they were uncertain about or about sensitive topics such as cynicism, LMX, confidentiality, and their

rights and benefits upon completing the survey. After providing explanations, participants felt more comfortable and were more likely to provide accurate responses.

Before starting a survey, full package including the cover letter, consent form, questionnaire and sealable return envelope was distributed to each employee and line manager. In particular, the cover letter explains the purpose of the survey and assures that respondents' participation was anonymous and voluntary (without full name, contact details required), and they have the right to withdraw at any time before submission and within two weeks since their submission. After this time, their ratings cannot be removed as they might become part of publishable data analysis and thereby removing their data would influence the aggregated results (*please see Participant Information Sheet*). The informed consent indicates the willingness for participation. The completed questionnaires were returned in sealed envelopes to ensure confidentiality. Managers did not know subordinates' responses in order to prevent potential pressure on those employees. Line managers' ratings relative to specific individuals were not shared with any other members of organisation. The team manager was asked to provide basic information about the firm, such as industry, firm size, HPWS, OCB, and employee task performance, while the employee questionnaire asked employees to rate their opinions about HR attributions/causal ascriptions, organisational cynicism, leader-member exchange. Some questions as to firm size, year of operation, industry was put in the team leader questionnaire while the details about gender, educational background, tenure were asked in the subordinate questionnaire as control variables for data analysis (Sun et al., 2007; Do and Shipton, 2019).

To increase honest responses, a researcher-assigned identification number is encoded on each questionnaire to keep confidentiality and match each employee's responses with his or her line managers' ratings of each team. Based on the list of organisations and participants prepared by the researcher, the code includes a two-digit number, of which the 'tens' digit represents each organisation and the 'units' digit refers to each team (Fan et al., 2021). Codes are made and used only by the researcher as identifiers for follow-up activities (e.g. withdrawal). The researcher also bases on identification code to find participants' responses and delete them if they wish to withdraw. By surveying in teams, each team consists of between three and five employees, along with team leader (Kirkman et al., 2009). In cases where work teams had more than five employees or not all team members could participate in the survey, the researcher consulted line managers and selected a sample of employees from their work team (Van De Voorde and Beijer, 2015). Of the survey packages distributed to 40

SMEs, 35 were returned. After deleting non-usable questionnaires (e.g., not returned surveys or returned surveys with missing data), the researcher yielded a final sample of 30 firms (75% response rate) including 108 teams, 108 team leaders and 430 employees for data analysis (*See Table 10 for detail*). This response rate is relatively strong, especially considering the challenges encountered during the survey process at each organisation. For instance, when the investigator visited some firms, many employees were unavailable due to working from home because of COVID infections, being occupied with tight deadlines on new projects, or being on business trips. These obstacles extended the data collection period and led to some participants withdrawing from the survey.

Table 10: Sample Description (Individual N = 430; Team N = 108)

Individual (N = 430)			Team (N = 108)		
<i>Individual characteristic</i>	<i>Individual characteristic value</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Team characteristic</i>	<i>Team characteristic value</i>	<i>%</i>
Gender	Male	42.8	Team size	3-5	69.7
	Female	57.2		6-10	20.4
Age	Up to 25	20.0		11 and above	9.9
	26-30	43.7			
	31-35	27.4			
	36-45	7.0			
	46 and above	1.9			
Education	High school	4.9	Team functionality	Marketing and sales	23.3
	Junior College	17.4		HR/Administrative services	21.4
	Bachelor	74		RandD	15.1
	Master	3.5		Finance/Accounting	10.3
	Doctorate	.2		Customer service	17.5
Tenure	Up to 1 year	11.2		Others	12.4
	Over 1 to 5 years	81.4			
	Over 5 to 10 years	4.4			
	Over 10 years	3.0			
Industry	IT	50			
	Pharmaceuticals	16.7			
	Consultancy	10			
	Education	6.7			
	Insurance	10			

Table 10 provides a detailed summary of the demographic characteristics of the survey respondents, including information on gender, age, education level, tenure, as well as team and firm attributes. The sample comprises 430 respondents across 108 teams. Of the respondents, 42.8% are male and 57.2% are female. A significant proportion (63.7%) of the respondents are 30 years old or younger, suggesting that knowledge-intensive SMEs in Vietnam, such as those in IT, consultancy, and pharmaceuticals, preferentially recruit younger individuals who are perceived to be more dynamic and innovative, aligning with their innovation-driven strategies. In terms of education, the majority of respondents (70%) hold a bachelor's degree, while only 3.7% have completed a postgraduate degree. Regarding tenure, 81.4% of employees have been with their organisation for 1-5 years, whereas approximately 11% have less than 1 year of experience and 7.4% have over 5 years of tenure.

At the team and organisational levels, most firms have teams consisting of 3-5 employees (69.7%), with the remaining firms having larger teams of 6-10 employees or more than 10 employees. In terms of industry distribution, the majority of SMEs are engaged in IT (50%), followed by pharmaceuticals (16.7%) and consultancy (10%). These firms typically have key functional teams in areas such as marketing and sales, HR/administrative services, RandD, finance/accounting, and customer service. This comprehensive demographic overview is essential for understanding the sample's composition and for interpreting the study's findings within the context of Vietnam's knowledge-intensive SME sector.

4.7 Challenges during the data collection process

Given a relatively thoughtful research plan which was approved by BLSS REC, Nottingham Trent University, the investigator encountered some unexpected difficulties during the data collection process that might be relevant to reflect on for the future projects.

First, the investigator was collecting data in 2022 when new variants of COVID-19 were still posing high risks to human health. The investigator and many participants both got infected. While the investigator was advised to self-isolate at home for two weeks, participants were on sick leave and unable to complete the questionnaires in the workplace. Even though some people were willing to participate upon their recovery, many of them decided to withdraw. This gave the investigator a hard time finding appropriate alternatives. As a result, data collection was extended by one month and the whole process was slower than scheduled. This point was largely neglected in the research plan and then made the investigator feel quite overwhelmed and stressed to compensate for an unexpected number of

withdrawals. For future projects, the health issues need more careful consideration to alleviate or minimise the mental impacts on the investigator.

Second, even though the investigator always attempted to reassure informants about the ethical principles underpinning this research and reiterate the option of withdrawal at any time, some participants felt hesitant to continue because they assumed that seeking information regarding HR practices, employee performance, employee attributions and cynicism, was relatively sensitive and their participation might violate the organisational confidentiality. In most cases, the investigator always respected the opinion/decision and appreciated their time and effort. However, issues of sensitivity should be examined thoroughly in the upcoming project to get the investigator well-prepared and better address these similar circumstances.

CHAPTER V: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to describe the data processing by which data validity and multilevel path analyses are undertaken to confirm the proposed hypotheses. The researcher first introduces how measures and scales are selected and used in the study. Next, to validate data, the researcher employs some analytical software, such as EXCEL, SPSS and Mplus, to check descriptive statistics, correlations, the internal reliability, the convergent and discriminant validity, and to run EFA and CFA of all measures. Finally, MSEM using the bootstrap and model constraint procedures via Mplus is employed to investigate the path analysis for confirming the causal relationships. Given the cross-sectional data, some additional tests are also conducted to check the potential common methods variance of the core variables. Overall, the researcher reports the key findings that broadly support the hypotheses and provide some further discussions around the key analytical issues.

5.2 Selection of variables and scales

All the study variables and scales were identified and selected through an in-depth review of the extant literature and a set of hypotheses. The independent variables used in the current study comprised HPWS, LMX and organisational cynicism while dependent variables consisted of OCB and task performance. Internal and external causal ascriptions are two underlying mechanisms. To measure variables, the study used existing scales obtained from the extant literature. Items in the survey questionnaire were mostly measured using a five and seven-point Likert scale where 1 signified '*strongly disagree*' and 5 or 7 signified '*strong agree*'. For LMX, participants responded to the continuous scale of sum of 5-point items (*1 left to 5 right*) with various anchors ranging from 1 = '*rarely*', '*not a bit*', '*not at all*' to 5 = '*very often*', '*very high*', '*a great deal*'. The variables and items helped form the questionnaire which was designed upon the requirements of Churchill (1979) to ensure its accuracy and validity. The questionnaire was revised and optimised on the basis of the feedback of the preliminary interview and the pilot survey.

The interviews and questionnaires were implemented in Vietnamese SMEs where people use Vietnamese as the official language in the workplace. Therefore, all measures adapted from established scales in English was translated into Vietnamese using the back-

translation method to ascertain the cross-cultural validity between the English and Vietnamese versions (Brislin, 1970; Liao et al., 2009; Akhtar, Ding, and Ge, 2008; Kearney et al., 2009). In particular, the English version was converted into Vietnamese by a HR specialist with a good command of English and then back translated into English by another specialist. These two processes were done independently and then compared to ensure accuracy (Akhtar, Ding, and Ge, 2008), and consistency of meaning (Chang and Chen, 2011; Liao et al., 2009). After the preliminary interviews, the questionnaire was piloted on 30 MBA students at Vietnam Japan University as the final step before officially proceeding with the main phase of the study (Do and Shipton, 2019).

5.2.1 Team Level Measures

HPWS execution. This index was measured using a 14-item scale that was developed by Klaas et al. (2012) and then was validated through preliminary interviews. In particular, the line manager or team leader was asked to rate each item on a seven-point scale, from 1 = ‘*Strongly Disagree*’ to 7 = ‘*Strongly Agree*’. The HPWS scale includes the items as follows: (1) This company provides formal performance evaluations; (2) This company provides frequent performance feedback; (3) This company provides regular updates regarding developments in the business.

5.2.2 Individual Level Measures

Internal causal ascriptions were measured by the Causal Dimension Scale (CDS) was developed by Russell (1982) and revised by McAuley et al. (1992). Causal ascriptions include four dimensions: locus of causality, personal control, stability and external control, of which two first dimensions are loaded on one factor; stability was loaded on one factor and the last one is loaded on another factor (Russell, 1982; McAuley et al., 1992). Internal causal ascriptions consist of two factors (*See Table 11 for details*).

Following McAuley et al. (1992) respondents were first asked: ‘In this organisation, if an employee progresses well (e.g. receiving a promotion, a pay rise, or an award), what is likely the most important reason for this? Please write down the reason below’. Some of typical answers include: ‘Because they are competent, capable and diligent’, ‘Because they receive great support from leaders’, ‘Because they have good attitudes and behaviours’.

Following this point, participants were asked to rate on a continuum if this reason ‘reflects an aspect of the situation’ or ‘an aspect of the employee’. Items were rated on a seven-point scale (from 1 to 7). A higher number means the reason reflects more of an aspect of the individual, whilst a lower number means the reason reflects more emphasis on the situation. The study used data from the mid-point and higher in formulating this measure.

Table 11: Standardised factor loadings for employee ascriptions

Item	F1	F2	F3
<i>Combined locus of causality and personal control</i>			
That reflects an aspect of this employee or an aspect of the situation	.88		
Inside of the employee or outside of the employee	.81		
Something about the employee or something about others	.85		
Manageable by the employee or not manageable by the employee	.83		
Employee can regulate or employee cannot regulate	.78		
Over which employee has power, or over which employee has no power	.80		
<i>Stability</i>			
Permanent or temporary		.88	
Stable over time or variable over time		.91	
Unchangeable or changeable		.78	
<i>External control</i>			
Over which others have control or over which others have no control			.62
Under power of other people or not under the power of other people			.78
Other people can regulate or other people cannot regulate			.68
Alpha	.95	.88	.69
Note: N=430; all item loadings are statistically significant, $p < .01$; Coefficient alpha values of each factor are presented in italics along the diagonal.			

External ascriptions were measured using three items adapted from the CDSII (McAuley et al., 1992). Items include ‘Other people can regulate or cannot regulate’, ‘Under the power of other people/Not under the power of other people’, and ‘Other people can regulate/other people cannot regulate’. External causal ascriptions are comprised of a single factor (*see Table 11 for details*). Participants were asked to evaluate external causal attributions using the same method applied to internal causal attributions. The study used data from the mid-point and lower in formulating this measure.

LMX draws on seven items of Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995). Sample items include: ‘Do you know where you stand with your leader...do you usually know how satisfied your leader is with what you do?’ and ‘I have enough confidence in my leader that I would defend and justify his/her decision if he/she was not present to do so.’ Responses were anchored on a continuous scale of sum of 5-point items with 1 = ‘rarely’, ‘not a bit’ or, ‘not at all’ to 5 = ‘very often’, ‘very high’, or ‘a great deal’.

Cynicism was assessed by the five items adapted by Hewett et al. (2019). Example items are ‘I believe my organisation says one thing and does another’; ‘My organisation’s policies, goals, and practices seem to have little in common.’, ‘When top management says it is going to do something, I wonder if it will really happen.’ Items were rated on a 7-point scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*).

OCB was measured by using six items that were developed by Smith, Organ, and Near (1983) and was slightly modified by Wayne, Shore, and Liden (1997). The example items included: (1) This employee takes the initiative to orient new employees to the department even though it is not part of his/her job description. (2) This employee helps others when their workload increases (assist others until they get over the hurdles) even when he/she is not required to do so; (3) This employee helps others with their work when they have been absent even when he/she is not required to do so. Managers indicated the extent to which their employees had engaged with each item on a seven-point scale with anchors ranging from 1 = ‘not at all’ to 7 = ‘a great extent’.

Task performance was assessed with 4 items, based on Eisenberger, Armeli, Rexwinkel, Lynch and Rhoades (2001). The example items include: (1) This employee meets formal performance requirements of the job. (2) This employee fulfills responsibilities specified in the job description. (3) This employee performs tasks that are expected of him or her. Line managers indicated the extent to which each statement is characteristic of the employees in their team on a five-point scale with anchors ranging from 1 = ‘very uncharacteristic’ to 5 = ‘very characteristic’.

Table 12: The measurement scales.

Measurement scale	Scale items
Team-level	
<i>HPWS (Adopted and modified by Klaas et al. 2012 and the researcher through the preliminary interview)</i>	<p>This company provides formal performance evaluations</p> <p>This company provides frequent performance feedback</p> <p>This company provides regular updates regarding developments in the business</p> <p>This company provides training programs after hiring</p> <p>This company holds social events like collective lunches/dinners, team-building activities. etc.</p> <p>This company provide incentives and bonuses such as 13th month salary, paid vacations, cash/gifts on public holidays (i.e., Independent Day, New Year, Lunar New Year),</p> <p>This company uses recognition and reward programs</p> <p>This company solicits input on how to improve the company</p> <p>This company provides social/health insurance based on employees' pay levels</p> <p>This company uses selection tests or other formal screening methods when hiring</p> <p>This company uses background screening for job candidates</p> <p>This company considers teamwork as vital part of job design</p> <p>This company uses written guidelines when dealing with an employee that doesn't meet expectations</p> <p>This company sets pay levels based on employees' job position, experience and performance</p>
Individual level	
<i>Internal causal ascriptions (developed by McAuley et al. 1992)</i>	<p>Reflect an aspect of something outside of this employee/Reflect an aspect of this employee</p> <p>Not manageable by the employee/Manageable by the employee</p> <p>Temporary/Permanent</p> <p>The employee cannot regulate/The employee can regulate</p> <p>Outside of the employee/Inside of the employee</p> <p>Variable over time/ Stable over time</p> <p>Something about others/ Something about the employee</p> <p>Over which the employee has no power/ Over which the employee has power</p> <p>Changeable/Unchangeable</p>
<i>External causal ascriptions (developed by McAuley et al. 1992)</i>	<p>Over which others have control/Over which others have no control</p> <p>Under the power of other people/Not under the power of other people</p> <p>Other people can regulate/other people cannot regulate</p>

LMX (developed by Graen and Uhl-Bien, 1995)

Do you know where you stand with your leader... do you usually know how satisfied your leader is with what you do?
How well does your leader understand your job problems and needs?
How well does your leader recognise your potential?
Regardless of how much formal authority he/she has built into his/her position, what are your changes that your leader would use his/her power to help you solve problems in your work?
Again, regardless of how much formal authority he/she has, what are the chances that he/she would 'bail you out' at his/her expense?
I have enough confidence in my leader that I would defend and justify his/her decisions if he/she was not present to do so?
How would you characterise your working relationship with your leader?

Organisational cynicism (developed by Hewett et al. 2019)

I believe that my organisation says one thing and does another.
My organisation's policies, goals, and practices seem to have little in common.
When top management says it is going to do something, I wonder if it will really happen.
My organisation expects one thing of its employees, but rewards another.
I see little similarity between what my company says it will do and what it actually does.

OCB (adapted and modified by Wayne, Shore, and Liden. 1997)

This employee takes the initiative to orient new employees to the department even though it is not part of his/her job description.
This employee helps others when their workload increases (assist others until they get over the hurdles) even when he/she is not required to do so.
This employee helps others with their work when they have been absent even when he/she is not required to do so.
This employee willingly attends functions not required by company management, but which helps its overall image.
This employee volunteers to do things not formally required by the job.
This employee assists me with my duties.

Task performance (developed by Eisenberger, Armeli, Rexwinkel, Lynch and Rhoades. 2001)

This employee meets formal performance requirements of the job.
This employee fulfills responsibilities specified in job description.
This employee performs tasks that are expected of him or her.
This employee adequately completes assigned duties.

5.2.3 Controls

Due to hierarchical data, control variables at organisational-, team- and individual-level, such as age, gender, educational background, were used because these elements can influence proposed variables (Hewett et al., 2019; Fan et al., 2021; Burton et al., 2014). In particular, individual-level potential factors, such as, employee age, gender, education, and tenure, were integrated in the questionnaire since they are expected to impact employee ascriptions/HR attributions, LMX, cynicism which, in turn, inform OCB and individual performance (Hewett et al., 2019; Jensen et al., 2013; Smidt et al., 2022). For example, gender was measured as a dummy variable with 1 = male and 0 = female. Tenure indicates the time of working for the organisation. At the team level, the extant literature shows that the effect of HR practices

varies across work teams and team members and the basic characteristics of a team, which might influence line managers' judgements about HPWS, employee OCB and performance. The researcher therefore controlled for a range of elements, for example, team size, functionality, leader gender and age (Fan et al., 2021; Jensen et al., 2013; Flinchbaugh et al., 2016; Liu et al., 2009). Finally, since the adoption of certain sophisticated HR practices can be contingent upon firm size, age, and ownership (Liu, Guthrie, Flood, and MacCurtain, 2009), these components were also incorporated in the leader's questionnaire. Firm age is calculated based on its founding date as recognised in the survey via the question 'How long has your firm been in operation?' (McClean and Collins, 2011; Guthrie, Flood, Liu, MacCurtain, and Armstrong, 2011). Size is measured as the logarithm of the number of full-time workers at the time of the survey (Klaas et al., 2012; Liao et al., 2009; Sun et al., 2007). Firm ownership was measured as a dummy variable (e.g. 0 = state/collectively owned firms; 1 = private firms; 2=others).

5.3. Analysis of results

This section details the systematic approach taken to analyse the data and validate the hypotheses. The analysis begins with an evaluation of **convergent** and **discriminant validity**, ensuring that the constructs are both internally consistent and distinct from one another. Following this, **descriptive statistics** and **zero-order correlations** are examined to provide an overview of the data and highlight any initial relationships between variables. To ensure the robustness of the findings, a **common method variance** test is conducted to detect and mitigate any potential biases from data collection methods. Next, an **exploratory factor analysis (EFA)** is carried out to identify the underlying factor structure, followed by a **confirmatory factor analysis (CFA)** to validate the reliability and fit of the measurement model. Finally, **multiple path analyses** or **multilevel structural equation modeling (MSEM)** are employed to test the hypothesised causal relationships and examine the model's overall fit. These advanced modeling techniques provide a robust framework for confirming the study's theoretical propositions and validating the causal pathways between constructs.

5.3.1. The convergent and discriminant validity

The assessment of convergent and discriminant validity is critical in research involving latent variables, as it helps prevent multicollinearity issues that could distort the analysis (Henseler, 2015). Failure to address multicollinearity can lead to misleading conclusions or

render the testing of causal relationships in the hypothesised model unreliable (Hamid et al., 2017). To mitigate these risks, this study rigorously established both convergent and discriminant validity prior to further analysis, employing Fornell and Larcker's Criterion (1981) as the primary method to ensure the constructs were appropriately validated.

Convergent validity is defined as the level of correlations among multiple measures of the common trait. When two or more measures in agreement indicate the amount of convergent validity and all factor loadings for traits are statistically significant, they are expected to covary highly (Widaman, 1985). Convergent validity can be evaluated by investigating the factor loadings of the indicator, composite reliability (CR) and the average variance extracted (AVE) (Hair et al., 2014).

On the other hand, discriminant validity is concerned with the extent to which measures of dissimilar concepts differ from each other. This means that if two or more variables are unique, correlations are not too high (Campbell and Fiske, 1959). According to Heeler and Ray (1972; p. 362), discriminant validity is indicated by 'predictably low correlations between the measure of interest and other measures that are supposedly not measuring the same variable or concept'. Evaluating the discriminant validity helps to ensure that the latent variables are truly distinct from each other before further measuring the causal relationships. This study uses Fornell and Larcker criterion to establish the discriminant validity since it is the most widely used method in research (Hamid et al., 2017) (*See Table 13 for details*).

Table 13: Composite reliability and validity scores of the variables

Latent constructs	α	CR	AVE	Latent constructs						
				A	B	C	D	E	F	G
HPWS (A)	.93	.92	.63	.80						
ICA (B)	.89	.94	.65	.04	.81					
ECA (C)	.70	.83	.62	-.03	.29	.79				
LMX (D)	.77	.85	.61	.07	.01	.01	.78			
OC (E)	.88	.91	.68	-.07	.04	.10	-.18	.82		
OCB (F)	.88	.91	.63	.02	.01	-.02	.12	.05	.79	
TP (G)	.87	.91	.72	.05	-.03	.01	.07	.07	.60	.84

N = 430; α = Cronbach's alpha CR = Composite reliability; HPWS = High-performance work systems; ICA = Internal Causal Ascriptions; ECA = External Causal Ascriptions; LMX = Leader Member Exchange, OC = Organisational Cynicism, OCB = Organisation Citizenship Behaviour, TP = Task Performance.

Table 13 contains the data of Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, average variance extracted (AVE) and the square root of AVE. The composite reliability and Cronbach's Alpha of all constructs are higher than .70 and less than .95 which showed good reliability regarding internal consistency of each construct (Hamid et al., 2017; Tavakol and Dennick, 2011). Convergent validity for each dimension was assessed by calculating the average variance extracted (AVE) based on the individual proxy loadings. Discriminant validity for each factor was established by determining the scale composite reliability (SCR), which was derived from the AVE values (Ganguly et al., 2019).

According to table 13, I found that the AVE for all constructs ranged from .61 to .72 (much higher than the threshold of .50) and SCR is greater than 0.7, which demonstrates adequate convergent validity (Ganguly et al., 2019). Further, Fornell and Larcker criterion (1981) asserted that the discriminant validity is achieved when a latent construct explains greater the variance of its own indicator rather than the variance of other latent constructs. I also found that square root of the AVE had a greater value than all the inter-construct correlations, confirming adequate discriminant validity (Chen and Paulraj, 2004). Additionally, I calculated the heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT), a more robust criterion for assessing discriminant validity as recommended by Henseler et al. (2015). The HTMT values were below the suggested threshold of 0.85, further indicating sufficient discriminant validity.

5.3.2. Descriptive statistics and zero-order correlations

Descriptive statistics provide a comprehensive overview of your data which enables assessing key measures such as the mean, standard deviation, and range. These metrics offer valuable insights into the central tendency, variability, and overall distribution of the data (Field, 2013). In parallel, zero-order correlations offer an initial understanding of the relationships between variables, indicating whether the associations are positive, negative, or non-existent. These correlations help determine how changes in one variable may be linked to changes in another, providing a foundation for further analysis (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2019). Using both Excel and SPSS for data analysis, Table 14 presents a detailed summary of the descriptive statistics and correlations for the variables in this study. This allows for a clearer understanding of the dataset's structure and initial relationships between constructs (*see table 14 for details*).

Table 14: Descriptive statistics and zero-order correlations

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
1. GENDER (E)	1.63	.55	1														
2. AGE (E)	2.31	.92	-.03	1													
3. TENURE (E)	1.18	.47	-.01	.39**	1												
4. EDUCATION (E)	3.74	.65	.23**	-.04	.13**	1											
5. TEAM SIZE	1.37	.57	-.08	-.02	.03	-.17**	1										
6. FUNCTION	2.84	.63	.06	-.03	-.02	.03	-.18**	1									
7. AGE (L)	3.27	.83	-.06	.14**	.10*	-.07	.05	.23**	1								
8. TENURE (L)	1.19	.40	.09	.03	.05	.12*	-.06	.05	.27**	1							
9. HPWS	4.06	.82	.15**	-.01	-.10	.04	-.01	.04	.15**	-.04	1						
10. ICA	3.80	.84	.03	-.01	.03	.03	-.01	-.01	-.01	.06	.04*	1					
11. ECA	4.80	.86	.04	-.04	.01	.13**	.01	-.01	.03	.01	-.03*	.29**	1				
12. LMX	3.51	.54	-.06	-.03	-.02	.00	-.01	.03	.03	.03	.07	.01	.01	1			
13. CYNICISM	2.43	.70	-.04	.06	.09	.03	-.11*	.08	.07	-.05	-.07*	.04*	.10*	-.18**	1		
14. OCB	5.28	.90	.05	-.09	-.02	.08	-.01	-.13**	-.06	-.15**	.02*	.01*	-.02*	.12**	.05	1	
15. TP	4.09	.69	-.05	-.04	-.01	.04	-.02	-.07	.07	-.18**	.05*	-.03	.01	.07	.07	.60**	1

Note: **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

N = 430; (E) = Employee; (L) = Leader; EDU = Education; HPWS = High-performance work systems; ICA = Internal Causal Ascriptions, E = External Causal Ascriptions; LMX = Leader Member Exchange; OCB = Organisational Citizenship Behaviour; TP = Task Performance.

Table 14 showed that the standard deviation values of variables range from .40 to .92 (lesser than one). This means that the respondents exhibited a good degree of agreement despite being surveyed separately, which increased the reliability of the research. Moreover, by looking at the correlations among the key variables, I found that HPWS had significant positive and negative correlations with almost all the other corresponding variables (except for LMX). ICA and ECA were respectively positively and negatively associated with OCB. This lays a good foundation for the subsequent findings of the research.

5.3.3 Common method variance

Given the nature of multi-level study, data were obtained from two distinct sources within the same organisation, namely from line managers and employees. Some statistical remedies were conducted to check the potential common method variance (CMV) (Podsakoff et al., 2003; Malhotra et al., 2017; Craighead et al., 2011). In particular, the full multicollinearity assessment of the variables was examined to see if the empirical findings were impacted by the CMV (Kock, 2015) (*see Table 15 for details*).

Table 15: the collinearity statistics (tolerance and VIF).

Model	Collinearity Statistics	
	Tolerance	VIF
ICA	.87	1.15
ECA	.89	1.12
HRM	.91	1.10
LMX	.91	1.10
OC	.91	1.10
INDUSTRY	.80	1.25
TEAM SIZE	.85	1.18
FUNCTION	.89	1.13
AGE (L)	.79	1.27
TENURE (L)	.84	1.19
GENDER (E)	.88	1.14
AGE (E)	.78	1.28
TENURE (E)	.79	1.26
EDUCATION (E)	.85	1.18

N = 430; dependent variables: organisation citizenship behaviour (OCB), task performance (TP), (E) = Employee; (L) = Leader; EDU; HPWS = High-performance work systems; ICA = Internal Causal Ascriptions, ECA = External Causal Ascriptions; LMX = Leader Member Exchange, OC = Organisational Cynicism.

The results indicated that tolerance ranged from .79 to .91 (much higher than the threshold of .10) and the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) ranged from 1.10 and 1.28 (much

lower than the threshold of 10 or 5) (O'Brien, 2007) when OCB and task performance are regressed on HPWS, internal and external ascriptions, LMX, cynicism, and the demographic control variables. The results indicate that there was no sign of serious multi-collinearity problems. In other words, the data collected using the research survey instrument does not seem to suffer from common method bias (Hair et al., 1998, Wong et al., 2020) (O'Brien, 2007; Hair et al., 2009).

Further, I ran Harman's Single-Factor test to check the possible effect of common method bias (CMB). Harman's test helps identify if the data collected using questionnaires introduces bias, potentially inflating or distorting the relationships between variables (Booth et al., 2020). The results showed no potential for CMB because that the percentage of variance was 19.012, far below the cut-off value of 50% (Booth et al., 2020). Hence, I believe that the potential impact of CMB calculated using CMV to be non-substantial and thereby the variables are reliable and appropriate for data analyses.

5.3.4 Exploratory factor analysis and confirmatory factor analysis

5.3.4.1 Exploratory factor analysis

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) plays a vital role in HRM scholarship by serving several key purposes: it reduces large sets of variables into more manageable subsets, refines measurement scales, and explores relationships among variables to generate new hypotheses about underlying theoretical processes (Reio and Shuck, 2015; Thompson, 2004). EFA can be implemented using two common factor extraction approaches: Principal Components Analysis (PCA), which operates on a component model, and Principal Axis Factoring (PAF) with communality estimates, which follows a common factor model (Conway and Huffcutt, 2003; Onwuegbuzie and Daniel, 2003). While PCA focuses on reducing the number of constructs for a more streamlined study model without emphasising the interpretation of latent variables, PAF aims to uncover the latent (unobserved) variables that explain the relationships among measured variables. As Conway and Huffcutt (2003) note, PAF is particularly useful for understanding the underlying structures driving these relationships.

The current study conducted EFA using PAF to mainly identify the underlying structure of seven latent constructs, including HPWS, ICA, ECA, LMX, OC, OCB, TC (Bandalos,

1996). During analytical procedures, EFA helped assess the adequacy of the items in measuring the given constructs, discarding the weak items, and refining measurement instruments accordingly. By running EFA for each dimension via SPSS, the results indicated that almost all observed variables were well correlated and loaded on the respective factors (*See Table 16 for details*). However, EFA for HPWS ($n = 14$) showed that the 13th item (*e.g. This company uses written guidelines when dealing with an employee that doesn't meet expectations*) was weak (principal axis factoring yields loadings much below .50). The researcher decided to remove this item and executed EFA again with the revised scale (HPWS, $n = 13$). The subsequent results demonstrated that the rotated factor matrix yielded a one-factor solution. Cronbach's Alpha for all dimensions was $\geq .70$, that indicates great reliability of the scale (DeVellis, 2011).

It is noteworthy that The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) of all variables is within .65 to .95 (close to 1) (*See Table 16 for details*). This suggests that the variables in the dataset are highly intercorrelated and that the sample size is excellent to conduct SEM analysis. Added to this, Table 16 shows that Bartlett's test of sphericity among constructs is statistically significant, rejecting the null hypothesis. Together, it is concluded that the variables are sufficiently interrelated and thereby the dataset is suitable for factor analysis and model the causal relationships between them (Reio and Shuck, 2015).

Table 16: results of factor matrix and KMO and Bartlett's Test

Measure	Items	Factor Matrix (FM)		Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy	Bartlett's Test of Sphericity		
		FM1	FM2		Appro. Chi-Square	df	Sig.
HPWS	13	.83		.93	5621.31	91	.000
		.65					
		.85					
		.80					
		.81					
		.89					
		.83					
		.83					
		.84					
		.83					
		.87					
		.58					
		.53					
LMX	7	.56		.81	655.40	21	<.001

		.65					
		.66					
		.68					
		.57					
		.53					
		.62					
OC	5	.76		.88	1074.93	10	<.001
		.81					
		.69					
		.78					
		.83					
OCB		.61		.85	1355.15	15	<.001
		.81					
		.81					
		.79					
		.76					
		.70					
TC		.79		.83	836.61	6	<.001
		.78					
		.80					
		.82					
ICA	9	.73		.95	3806.81	36	.000
		.69					
		.82					
		.83					
		.78					
		.74					
			.66				
			.76				
			.80				
ECA	3	.81		.65	232.08	3	<.001
		.61					
		.57					

N = 430; FM = Factor Matrix, OCB = organisation citizenship behaviour, TP = task performance; HPWS = High-performance work systems; ICA = Internal Causal Ascriptions, ECA = External Causal Ascriptions; LMX = Leader Member Exchange, OC = Organisational Cynicism.

5.3.4.2 Confirmatory factor analysis

Following EFA, CFA is used as a powerful method to provide diagnostic information about the validity of constructs, test and confirm an a priori theory about underlying latent processes at later stages of research (Bagozzi, Yi and Phillips, 1991; Schmitt and Sass, 2011). In other words, CFA specifies the pattern of intervariable relations as a priori and tests the hypothesised structure statistically (Byrne, 2012). According to contemporary scholars, the CFA model is viewed as ‘the preferred method of analysing the multitrait-multimethod matrices’ (Schmitt and Stults, 1986, p.9). The CFA approach model overcomes limitations

inherent in other traditional procedures (e.g. see Campbell and Fiske, 1959) and gains some advantages regarding construct validity. To be more specific, CFA permits methods to affect measures of trait in different degrees and to correlate freely among themselves (Bagozzi, Yi and Phillips, 1991). It, therefore, supplies a rich abundance of information on the overall fit of the study model (e.g. the chi-square goodness-of-fit test), indicates precise criteria for evaluating convergent and discriminant validity (e.g. through chi-square difference tests, the size of factor loadings for traits), and describes explicit estimates of trait, method and error variance that aid in the process of diagnosing and validating constructs (Bagozzi and Phillips, 1982).

In the current study, CFA (via Mplus) was conducted for each study construct, including HPWS, ICA, ECA, LMX, OC, OCB, TP (*see table 17 for details*). The results show that X^2/df values range from 1.60 to 4.33, less than 5, which is an acceptable fit (Arbuckle, 2006). The incremental fit index (IFI) and the comparative fit index (CFI), values equal to and greater than 0.90, indicate a good model fit (Bentler, 1990). For the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) and the standardised root mean square residual (SRMR), values less than 0.08, indicate an acceptable model fit (Hu and Bentler, 1998). Based on these interpretations, the validity of the seven study constructs is ascertained.

Table 17: Confirmatory factor analysis results

Variable	Factor	χ^2	df	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	SRMR
HPWS	one	1036.89	650	.91	.90	.05	.04
LMX	one	143.82	54	.93	.91	.05	.03
OC	one	34.63	8	.92	.90	.06	.04
ICS	two	168.88	76	.96	.95	.05	.03
ECS	one	233	83	1	1	.02	.01
OCB	one	127.01	61	.91	.90	.05	.04
TP	one	5.16	2	1	.99	.03	.01

N = 430; OCB = organisation citizenship behaviour, TP = task performance; HPWS = High-performance work systems; ICA = Internal Causal Ascriptions, ECA = External Causal Ascriptions; LMX = Leader Member Exchange, OC = Organisational Cynicism.

5.3.5.2 Multiple Structural Equation Modelling

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) is a widely used statistical method in social sciences for analysing relationships between constructs based on quantitative data (Dadeliene et al., 2020). One of its key advantages is that it accommodates both directly measured variables and latent variables (those that cannot be directly observed), or a combination of both (Kalapouti et al., 2017). Kaplan (2008, p.1) described SEM as ‘a class of methodologies that seeks to represent hypotheses about the means, variances and covariances of observed data in terms of a smaller number of structural parameters defined by a hypothesised model’. SEM combines two statistical methods: confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and path analysis. CFA is the method to measure and estimate the latent variables based on the correlated variations of the dataset or exploring the patterns of relationships among variables (Byrne 2013). Path analysis, on the other hand, is developed to find causal relationships among variables (Wright 1918, 1920; 1921).

SEM (Mplus) was utilised for several reasons. First, SEM (Mplus), widely known in psychology and social sciences, is viewed as the most appropriate and powerful analytical tool to analyse the complex networks of causal relationships (e.g. multilevel and multipath data/models; multiple observed and latent variables; direct and indirect effects) to enhance the strength of the test over conventional regression method (Preacher et al., 2011; Gong, Chang and Cheung, 2010; Fan et al., 2016).

Second, SEM gains advantages over conventional modeling techniques regarding factor analysis, principal components analysis, discriminant analysis, canonical correlation, or multiple regression because of the greater flexibility that a researcher has for the interplay between theory and data (Hox and Bechger, 1998; Chin, 1998).

Third, traditional multivariate approaches may be incapable of either assessing or correcting for measurement errors which may, ultimately, lead to serious inaccuracies. Using SEM via Mplus provides explicit estimates of these error variance parameters, and thereby avoids such mistakes (Byrne, 2012). The software also overpowers and outperforms other hierarchical linear modelling regarding the relative and absolute model fit, and clustered data nesting (Mehta and Neale, 2005; Preacher et al., 2010).

By considering the multilevel structure of our data (the employee data is nested in leaders), I applied multilevel structural equation modelling (MSEM) to test our hypotheses via Mplus Version 8.6 (Muthén and Muthén, 2017). These analyses include both differences between groups and within groups (differences between individuals controlled for differences between groups) (Pak and Kim, 2018). According to Preacher et al. (2011), MSEM exhibits the potential to outperform traditional multilevel modeling (MLM)-based methods in two-level model, sometimes referred to as hierarchical linear modeling or mixed-effects modeling. In particular, considering mediation analysis, traditional MLM cannot aggregate mediators or outcomes to the upper Level 2. The models regarding Level 2 variables are usually anticipated by Level 1 which cause biases between effects. MLM, therefore, cannot be used for some theoretical models, such as 1-1-2 or 1-2-2 (Raudenbush and Bryk, 2002). In simple words, MLM conflates Between -and Within-level effects (Zhang et al., 2019). Variables are observed, and measurement error is not accounted for in model estimation (Preacher et al., 2011).

By contrast, MSEM also differentiate the Between and Within parts of all constructs, allowing researchers to examine both direct and indirect effects of each level and across levels (Preacher, 2010). Accordingly, MSEM enables researchers to assess fit indices at different levels of nesting for clustered data, including the comprehensive testing of all measurements simultaneously, between-group (level 2), and within-group (level 1) (Preacher et al., 2011; Ryu, 2011). Added to this, in MSEM, traditional latent variables are observed and accounted for measurement error that helps significantly reduce or eliminate bias in contextual effects compared to a group mean-centred MLM approach (Marsh et al., 2009; Lüdtke et al., 2008). Finally, MSEM performs well in terms of confidence interval coverage, efficiency of estimation, model convergence, statistical power for detecting nonzero indirect effects, and the robustness/accuracy of the results (Jensen et al., 2013; Preacher et al., 2011). With these salient features, the MSEM approach is proposed as a robust tool to investigate hierarchical data (Preacher et al., 2010). In the current study, MSEM consists of two parts, CFA, and path analysis. A series of CFA was implemented to check the measurement issues and verify the proposed seven-factor multilevel model while path analysis was used to investigate the correlations among study variables.

5.3.5.2.1 Measurement issues

Given all the measures were collected at a single time, the researcher conducted a series of confirmatory factor analyses to evaluate the potential influence of common method bias and to confirm the discriminant validity of the study model (Reddy, 1992). More specifically, seven measures including HPWS, ICA, ECA, LMX, OC, OCB, TP were examined to assess if they were distinct from one another. The results of the one-factor model indicate $\chi^2/df = 6318.617/1110 = 5.7$; ($p < .01$), $CFI = .35$, $TLI = .34$, $RMSEA = .10$, $SRMR (within) = .19$, $SRMR (between) = .45$. This means that the one-factor model demonstrated a poor fit with the data because X^2/df value is insignificant (higher than the benchmark of 5) (Arbuckle, 2006). CFI and TLI, much below .90, indicate a poor model fit (Bentler, 1990). Values of RMSEA and SRMR (greater than .08) show an unacceptable model fit (Hu and Bentler, 1998). In contrast, the hypothesised seven-factor measurement model demonstrated a good fit with the data ($\chi^2 = 2424.988$, $df = 1073$; ($p < .01$); $CFI = .91$; $TLI = .90$; $RMSEA = .05$; $SRMR (within) = .04$; $SRMR (between) = .05$), and significantly better than one-factor model.

Other alternative models were conducted to further enhance the model validity. The first alternative model was tested with a five-factor model where ICA and ECA were loaded onto one factor and OCB and TP were loaded onto another factor. The second alternative model was conducted with a three-factor model where ICA and ECA were combined into one factor, OCB and task performance were combined into one factor, and HPWS, LMX and cynicism were combined into one factor. A third alternative factor was measured with the two-factor model in which ICA, ECA, OCB, and TP were combined into one factor while HPWS, LMX, and cynicism were combined into another factor. The results revealed that all the alternative models fit the data significantly worse than the seven-factor model. Taken together, the results demonstrated that the seven factors were distinct from one another (Liao et al., 2009) (See Table 18 for details).

Table 18: Summary of Fit Indices of Confirmatory Factor Analysis for the Measurement Model

Model	χ^2	df	P-value	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	SRMR (Within)	SRMR (Between)
Seven-factor	2424.988	1073	$p < .01$	.91	.90	.05	.04	.05
Six-factor	3201.422	1347	$p < .01$	.81	.80	.06	.11	.05

Five-factor	2652.920	1078	p < .01	.80	.80	.06	.12	.47
Three-factor	3368.284	1082	p < .01	.71	.70	.07	.13	.46
One-factor	6318.617	1110	p < .01	.35	.34	.10	.19	.45

Note: The hypothesised seven-factor model demonstrated a better data fit than one-factor model and other alternative measurement models.

5.3.5.2.2 Hypothesis testing

Multilevel path analysis is used in order to test the multilevel structural equation models (Jensen et al., 2013). I used a full information maximum likelihood estimator for all analyses, and the weighted least squares mean and variance-adjusted estimator to test model fit based on chi-square measures. The structural models were tested in accordance with the following hypotheses: (1) a 2-1 direct effect model; (2) a moderation model at Level 1; (3) a 2-1-1-mediation model. Of these hypotheses, the 2-1-1 multilevel mediation model is the most frequently used by researchers for testing substantive research questions (McNeish, 2017; Piontek et al., 2008; Roth et al., 2007). The 2-1-1 data design was selected in the current study because X = HPWS (as the independent variable) exists at Level 2; M = ICA and ECA (as mediators) are measured at Level 1; and Y = OCB and TP (as dependent variables) are all assessed at Level 1 of a two-level hierarchy (Preacher et al., 2010; Fang et al., 2019).

To test the hypotheses. I conducted a path analysis in Mplus 8.3 (Muthén and Muthén, 2017) with robust maximum likelihood (MLR) estimators and followed the analytical approach outlined by Edwards and Lambert (2007). To account for the nesting in our data, the researcher used a Huber–White ‘sandwich estimator for the computation of standard errors and chi-square tests (Asparouhov and Muthen, 2006). In this regard, previous research has highlighted the usefulness of accounting for nesting with sandwich estimators even when the number of higher-level clusters is less than the recommended 20 (Liu et al., 2017).

Tables 2 and 3 below present the results of the estimation. I followed others (e.g., Jensen et al., 2013) to use the residual covariance matrix that is generated after excluding the effects of control variables. Hypotheses 1a and 1b respectively postulated that HPWS are positively related to internal ascriptions, but negatively related to external ascriptions. The results of Table 19 show that HPWS are positively associated with internal ascriptions ($\beta =$

.74; $p < .01$), but negatively associated with external ascriptions ($\beta = -.05$; $p < .05$), thereby supporting Hypotheses 1a and 1b.

Table 19: Results of hypothesis testing

Paths	Estimate	SE
<i>Hypothesis 1a</i>		
HPWS → Internal attributions	.74	.04**
<i>Hypothesis 1b</i>		
HPWS → External attributions	-.05	.02*
<i>Hypothesis 2a</i>		
HPWS → LMX	.13	.05**
LMX → Internal attributions	.16	.03**
HPWS × LMX → Internal attributions	.12	.01*
<i>Hypothesis 2b</i>		
HPWS → LMX	.07	.03*
LMX → External attributions	-.13	.06**
HPWS × LMX → External attributions	-.23	.12*
<i>Hypothesis 3a</i>		
HPWS → Cynicism	-.03	.02*
Cynicism → Internal attributions	-.12	.09
HPWS × Cynicism → Internal attributions	.05	.01
<i>Hypothesis 3b</i>		
HPWS → Cynicism	-.15	.05**
Cynicism → External attributions	.33	.12*
HPWS × Cynicism → External attributions	-.19	.22*

Note: N = 430; HPWS = High-performance work systems; LMX = Leader Member Exchange

Hypotheses 2a and 2b hypothesised the moderating effect of LMX on the relationships between HPWS and both ICA and ECA such that the relationships are stronger when employees' quality of relationship with line managers is high. A model constraint procedure was adopted to test these hypotheses, and this procedure was appropriate since it was utilised to test and calculate required additional parameters within the model (Hayes, 2017). As shown in Figure 2, the interactions between HPWS and LMX on internal ascriptions was positively significant ($\beta = .12$; $p < .05$). and between HPWS and LMX on external ascriptions was negatively significant ($\beta = -.23$; $p < .05$). Further, Figures 2 and 3 illustrate the interaction plots for these relationships. Thus, the researcher concludes that Hypotheses 2a and 2b were supported.

Figure 2: Moderation effects for HPWS x LMX => Internal causal ascriptions

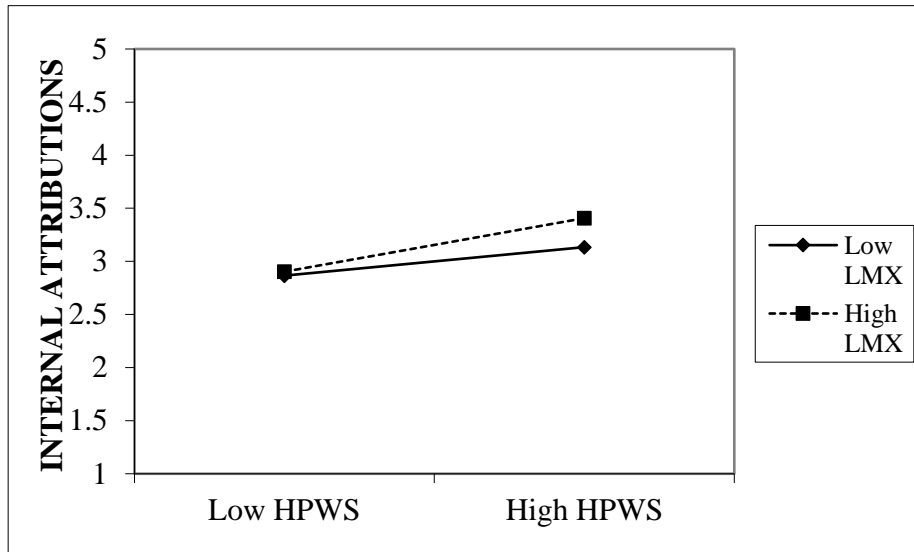
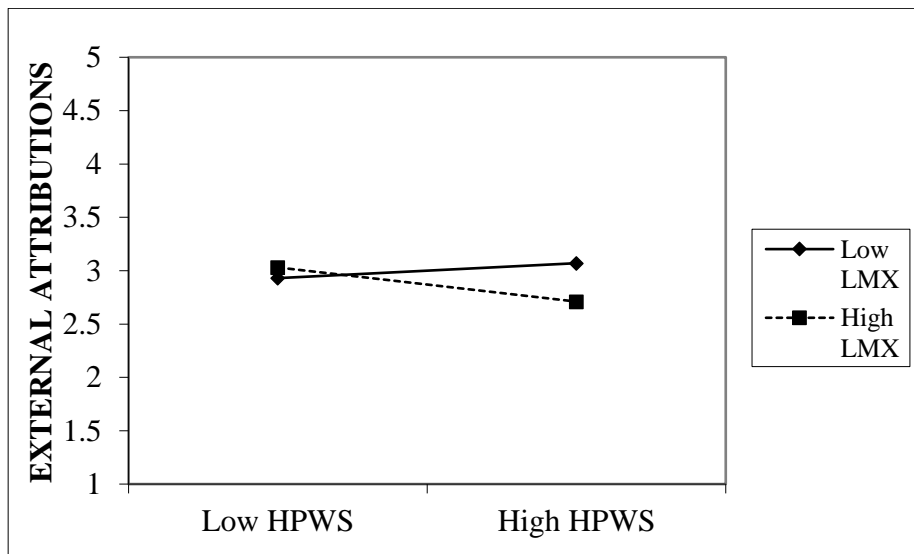


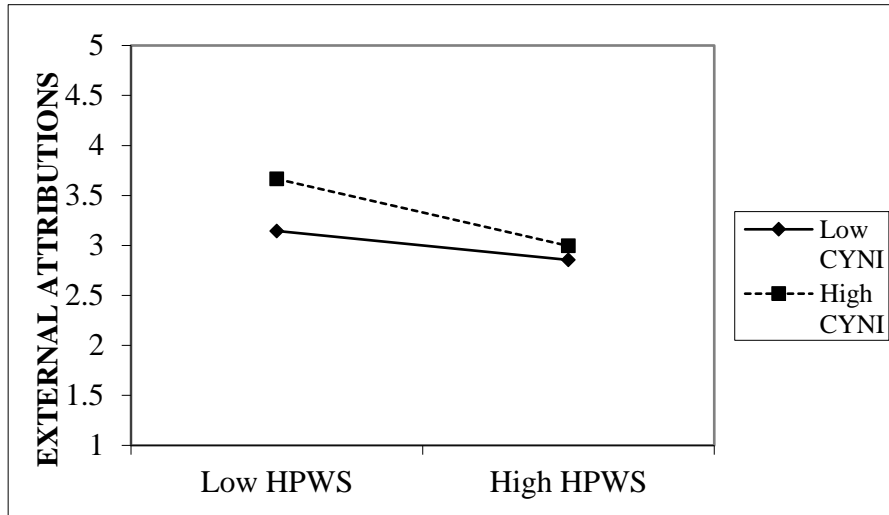
Figure 3: Moderation effects for HPWS x LMX => External causal ascriptions



In the similar vein, Hypotheses 3a and 3b hypothesised the moderating effect of organisational cynicism on the relationships between HPWS and both internal and external ascriptions such that the relationships are weaker when organisational cynicism is high. As shown in Table 2, the interactions between HPWS and organisational cynicism on internal attributions was not positively significant ($\beta = .05$; $p > .05$); and between HPWS and organisational cynicism on external ascriptions was negatively significant ($\beta = -.19$; $p < .05$). Figure 4 illustrates the interaction plot for the impact of HPWS-cynicism interaction on

external ascriptions. Thus, we conclude that Hypothesis 3a was unsupported while Hypothesis 3b was supported.

Figure 4: Moderation effects for HPWS x Cynicism => External ascriptions



I estimated the theoretical model to test hypothesis 4a (H4a) and hypothesis 4b (H4b). H4a and H4b purposed that internal and external ascriptions would respectively positively and negatively mediate the relationships between HPWS and OCB. To establish mediation, I drew on cross-level analysis steps to measure mediation (e.g. Baron and Kenny, 1986; Heffernan and Dundon, 2016). To assess the significance of the potential indirect effect, I employed a bootstrap procedure (Hafenbrädl and Waeger, 2017), resampling 1,000 times and using the bootstrap percentile method to create 95% confidence intervals. The results of Table 3 indicate that HPWS positively influence internal ascriptions ($\beta = .29$; $p < .01$) but negatively influence external ascriptions ($\beta = -.19$; $p < .01$); internal ascriptions positively relate to OCB ($\beta = .12$; $p < .01$) but external ascriptions negatively relate to OCB ($\beta = -.30$; $p < .01$). I further examined the effect of HPWS on OCB, and the results show that HPWS significantly impact OCB via internal and external causal ascriptions ($\beta = .09$; $p < .01$) These results suggest that the HPWS – OCB link is initially established and mediated through both internal and external ascriptions. I then used a 2- 1-1 model to test this hypothesis, using the Mplus syntax proposed by Preacher, Zhang and Zyphur (2011). The indirect effect of HPWS on OCB as mediated by internal ascriptions is significant ($\beta = .04$; $p < .01$; 95% CI of [.01 to .06]) and as mediated by external ascriptions is also significant ($\beta = -.06$; $p < .01$; 95% CI of [-.09 to -.03]) (see Table 20 for details). Therefore, I conclude that Hypotheses 4a and 4b were supported.

Table 20: Mediation results (OCB)

	Internal ascriptions	External ascriptions	OCB	
HPWS (between)	.29**	-.19**	.09**	
Internal ascriptions (within)			.16**	
External ascriptions (within)			-.29**	
Internal ascriptions (between)			.12**	
External ascriptions (between)			-.30**	
	Effect size	SE	Lower (CL _{95%})	Upper (CL _{95%})
Indirect effect via internal ascriptions	.04**	.01	.01	.06
Indirect effect via external ascriptions	-.06**	.02	-.09	-.03

Similarly to H4a and H4b, to test hypothesis 5a (H4a) and hypothesis 5b (H4b), I then used a 2- 1-1 model (Mplus) (Preacher, Zhang and Zyphur, 2011) and employing a bootstrap procedure (Hafenbrädl and Waeger, 2017) to test these hypotheses.

The results show that that HPWS not significantly positively influence internal ascriptions ($\beta = -.04$; $p > .05$) but significantly positively influence external ascriptions ($\beta = .50$; $p < .01$); internal ascriptions significantly negatively relate to TP ($\beta = -.24$; $p < .01$) and external ascriptions significantly negatively relate to TP ($\beta = -.13$; $p < .01$). Overall, the indirect effect of HPWS on TP as mediated by internal ascriptions is not significant ($\beta = .01$; $p > .05$; 95% CI of $[-.01$ to $.02$]) including zero. Therefore, the indirect effect of HPWS on TP via internal ascriptions was not significant. In other words, internal causal ascriptions do not appear to mediate the relationship between HPWS and TP. H5a was accordingly not supported by the data. By contrast, the HPWS-TP relationship mediated by external ascriptions was significant ($\beta = -.07$; $p < .01$; 95% CI of $[-.12$ to $-.01$]) (*see Table 21 for details*). This means that HPWS significantly negatively influence TP through external causal ascriptions. H5b was thus supported by the data.

Table 21: Mediation results (TP)

	Internal ascriptions	External ascriptions	TP	
HPWS (between)	-.04	.50**	.17**	
Internal ascriptions (within)			-.24**	
External ascriptions (within)			-.07	
Internal ascriptions (between)			-.24**	
External ascriptions (between)			-.13**	
	Effect size	SE	Lower (CL _{95%})	Upper (CL _{95%})
Indirect effect via internal ascriptions	.01	.01	-.01	.02
Indirect effect via external ascriptions	-.07**	.02	-.12	-.01

CHAPTER VI: SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

6.1. Introduction

This chapter begins with an overview of the study's ideas, goals and outcomes, examining the extent to which the research objectives have been met. In particular, it provides an explanation of why the research integrates four key strands of research within the framework of HR process. Of these, causal ascriptions and its relationships with other core constructs are examined to paint a full picture of what drive employees' causal ascriptions of success and how this evaluation process translates into specific outcomes. Added to this, key findings are summarised to identify which hypotheses are supported and unsupported. The implications of the findings, both theoretical and practical, are also explored in depth, highlighting the broader significance of the research in the relevant field. Finally, this chapter discusses the limitations encountered during the study, offering insights into potential areas for future research.

6.2. Summary of research and key findings

The current study incorporates four research lines regarding employees' cognitive sense-making phenomenon, namely *HR strength*, *HR attribution*, *relational attribution* and *causal ascriptions*, to explain the HR-performance linkage. At the core of this reviewing process, I draw on a sample of 108 teams of Vietnamese SMEs to build and test an integrative model illustrating both antecedents and consequences of employee' ascriptions of success. In particular, HPWS, LMX, and organisational cynicism act as a tripartite framework to inform employees' thoughts of why they and people around them progress and succeed in the workplace (Hewett et al., 2019). These causal inferences, in turn, separately influence two outcomes: OCB and task performance. The findings supported the hypothesis that coherently interconnected HR practices can arm employees with necessary competences and skills, and thus sow the seed of self-esteem in their mind to confidently address daunting tasks arising from their work (Weiner, 1985; Gundlach et al. 2003). As a result, HPWS are positively associated with internal ascriptions such that employees determinedly assume dispositional aspects (rather than situational forces) as key causes for success. Once this reasoning is identified, employees know what they need to invest in and feel motivated to exhibit OCB in an effort to achieve future milestones (Harvey et al., 2014; Harvey and Martinko, 2009). This

is the contrary to external ascriptions which reveal no clues of what employees should learn and improve to propel forward because external factors, such as accidental chance or sporadic support from co-workers, are relatively unstable and out of their control (McCaulay et al., 1992; Weiner, 1985; 2004).

Together with HPWS, LMX and cynicism are incorporated to amplify the antecedent-ascription relationship. The findings showed that the high-quality relationship that employees hold with their leaders reinforced both the positive HPWS-internal ascription interaction and the negative HPWS-external ascription relationship. By contrast, the research assumes that the high level of organisational cynicism is likely to diminish both the positive HPWS-internal ascription association and the negative HPWS-external ascription link. However, the former premise was not supported by empirical analysis (*see figure 5 and table 22*). I previously assumed that cynical employees, who do not find HR practices effective in improving abilities, are inclined to attribute others' success to third parties, for example, ease of task, supervisor/co-worker favouritism or issues regarding politics and power (Gundlack et al., 2003; Martinko et al., 2007). Nevertheless, since this premise was not empirically supported, a potential explanation can be found in the discounting principle (Kelley, 1973). According to this principle, when information and beliefs are inconsistent, individuals tend to prioritise the more salient information when forming their attributions. In this context, the perceived effectiveness of HPWS may be more salient and, therefore, more likely to override organisational cynicism in shaping employees' cognitive schemas (Hewett et al., 2019). Consequently, cynical employees who benefit from robust HR practices that enhance their skills and capacities may attribute their own success (or the success of their colleagues) to internal factors rather than external ones (Taylor and Fiske, 1978; Martinko et al., 2007).

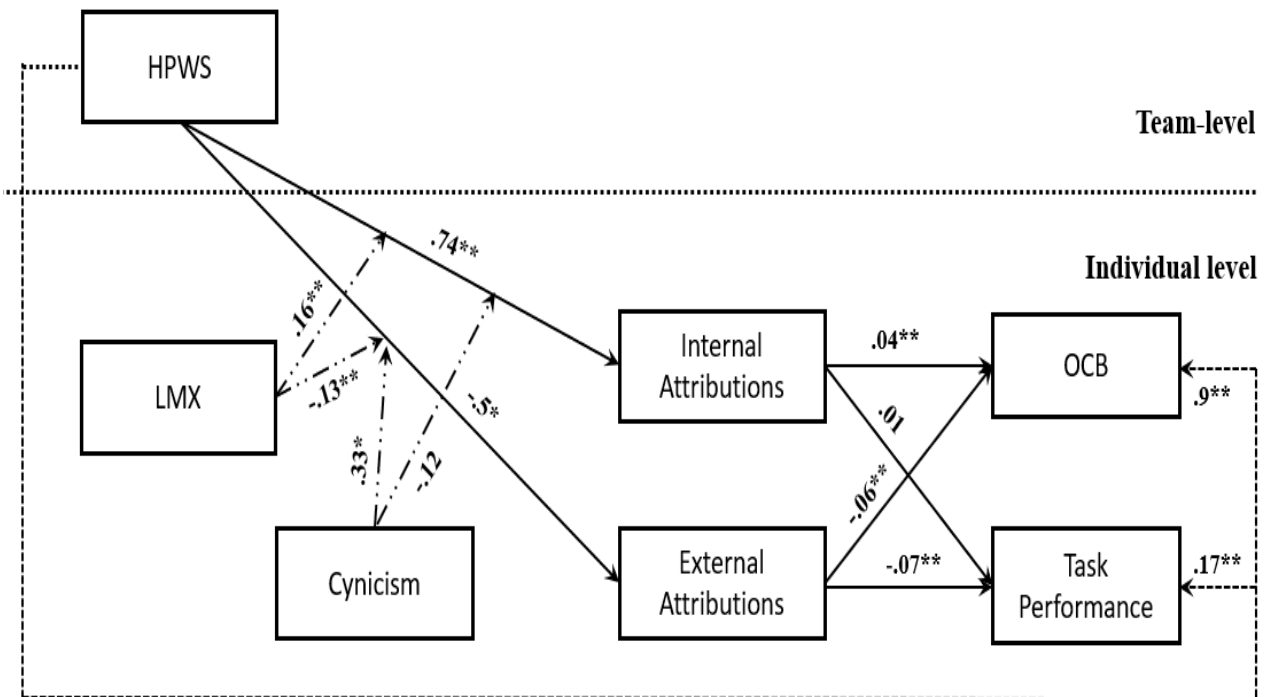
According to *Figure 5 and Table 22*, there is no association between HPWS, internal causal attributions and task performance with reference to Vietnamese collective culture. This can be potentially explained by the idea that in a collectivist culture like Vietnam, individuals tend to prioritise group harmony and collective goals over personal achievements (OECD, 2021). They may avoid making internal causal attributions (e.g., attributing success to their own abilities or effort) to prevent being perceived as boastful or disrupting group cohesion. This avoidance can weaken the link between HPWS and internal attributions (Nguyen et al., 2018). Moreover, high power distance orientation or high deference to authority may be one of reasons that limit the development of internal attributions. Employees may attribute their

own success to leaders' guidance and support rather than linking it to their personal qualities, even within HPWS frameworks. Hence, HPWS, as a typically individualistic framework, may not fully align with the collective cultural values and attribution styles prevalent in Vietnam (Nguyen and Tran, 2020). To achieve better outcomes, HPWS practices may need to be adapted to emphasise team-based rewards, collective goals, and relational dynamics consistent with the Vietnamese cultural context (Nguyen et al., 2018; Ren et al. 2021).

Guest et al. (2021) utilise signalling theory (Connelly et al., 2011) to integrate the two primary attributional approaches outlined by Bowen and Ostroff (2004) and Nishii et al. (2008). Building on this, I combine signalling theory with attributional theory (Weiner, 1985) to offer a more complete picture of a long-term motivational process where employees run the whole gamut of activities from reacting and thinking to feeling and doing to determine their behaviours and performance. In particular, they first attend to successful workplace events, forming specific causal ascriptions that trigger a certain set of emotions, and subsequently display varying levels of discretionary behaviours and performance at work. In short, this integrative model, grounded in a dual theoretical foundation, provides a robust explanation of the mediating role of causal ascriptions in linking HPWS to OCB and task performance

Regarding consequences of employees' causal ascriptions of success, the research highlights OCB and TC as two separate outcomes of this complex psychological process. The results show that HPWS significantly impact OCB via internal and external causal ascriptions. Unlike OCB, whereas external causal ascriptions significantly mediate the relationship between HPWS and TP, this HPWS-task performance relationship via internal causal ascriptions is not supported by empirical analysis (*see figure 5 and table 22*). Overall, I can affirm that the overarching conceptual framework is robustly supported with empirical demonstrations except hypotheses 3b and 5a (*see Figures 5 and Table 22*).

Figure 5: Cross-level Multilevel Path Analysis Results



————> Denotes a regression relationship; - - - - -> Denote a mediation relationship; - · - · -> Denotes a moderation relation

Table 22: Summary of the Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis	Model	Expected Result	Empirical Finding	Supported /Not Supported
Hypothesis 1A. HPWS are positively associated with internal attributions.	Direct	+	+	Supported
Hypothesis 1B. HPWS are negatively associated with external attributions.	Direct	-	-	Supported
Hypothesis 2A. The positive relationship between HPWS and internal ascriptions is stronger when LMX is high.	Moderation	+	+	Supported
Hypothesis 2B. The negative relationship between HPWS and external ascriptions is stronger when LMX is high.	Moderation	-	-	Supported
Hypothesis 3A. The positive relationship between HPWS and internal attributions is weaker when employees' perception of cynicism is high	Moderation	-	+	Not supported
Hypothesis 3B. The negative relationship between HPWS and external attributions is weaker when employees' perception of cynicism is high.	Moderation	+	+	Supported

Hypothesis 4A. Internal ascriptions positively mediate the relationship between HPWS and OCB.	Mediation	+	+	Supported
Hypothesis 4B. External ascriptions negatively mediate the relationship between HPWS and OCB	Mediation	-	-	Supported
Hypothesis 5A. Internal ascriptions positively mediate the relationship between HPWS and task performance.	Mediation	+	+	Not supported
Hypothesis 5B. External ascriptions negatively mediate the relationship between HPWS and task performance.	Mediation	-	-	Supported

6.3. Research contributions and implications

6.3.1. Theoretical implications

The research contributes theoretical value to the HR process literature in several ways. First, by integrating four key strands of research—*HR strength*, *HR attributions*, *relational attributions*, and *causal ascriptions*—into a unified framework, this work not only underscores the distinct principles underlying each strand but also reinforces Weiner's (2008) assertion that HR process remains an emergent field of inquiry, rather than a fully developed theory. Each of these constructs adopts a distinctive psychological perspective to explain how HR practices influence organisational performance, thereby enriching the understanding of the HR process literature.

Bowen and Ostroff (2004) and Nishii et al. (2008) are among the first to explore the psychological dimensions of HR processes, emphasising the critical role of *HR strength* and *HR attributions* in shaping employees' interpretations of HR practices. Bowen and Ostroff (2004), for example, mainly focus on the quality of HR practices in shaping positive employee HR interpretations, whereas Nishii and colleagues (2008) devote much attention to different types of employees HR attributions upon which HR strategies are based. In sum, these two constructs serve as a solid foundation to the design and execution of strategic HRM practices, offering valuable insights into how organisations can promote a shared thoughts and behaviours for achieving their superior performance (Hewett et al., 2018; Wang et al., 2020).

In extending this line of inquiry, Eberly et al. (2011) introduce the concept of *relational attributions* or considering employees' attributions regarding the quality of relationship they

hold with leaders. This work moves in a new direction and become a good source of ideas for other scholars to further explore and provide more fascinating findings around this psychological phenomenon (Sun et al., 2019; Carson, 2019; Gardner et al., 2019). Added to this, Harvey and colleagues (2014), drawing on Weiner's (1985) attribution theory, underscore employees' cognitive processes or *causal ascriptions* in a specific context of either success or failure in the workplace. This approach tends to reveal more insights into employees' subsequent emotions, affect and behaviours in comparison with three existing perspectives.

By synthesising these four streams of research, this study posits that employees' attributions are best understood as a complex and multifaceted psychological process, requiring analysis through multiple lenses rather than being confined to the dominant frameworks of Bowen and Ostroff (2004) and Nishii et al. (2008) (Troth and Guest, 2020). This is based on the recognition that employees are not 'putty' or 'blank slate' for organisations to easily mould them, via HRM practices, into the 'organisational ideal' (Troth and Guest, 2020: 38). Simply put, they are not passive recipients of organisational practices. Rather, they enter the workplace with prior experiences, shaped by broader social, educational, and economic contexts, which influence how they interpret and react to HR policies and initiatives (Troth and Guest, 2020; Sanders et al., 2023). As such, the same HR practices may be interpreted differently by individual employees, and the indiscriminate application of HRM strategies may fail to yield desired outcomes if organisations do not take into account these inherent divergences (Hewett et al., 2018; Garg et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2020).

Consequently, psychology-oriented HR scholars are encouraged to both compare and integrate these four key strands of research, while also considering new theoretical approaches that can further enhance the design and implementation of HR initiatives. By doing so, organisations can better align HR practices with the diverse psychological perspectives of their workforce, thereby minimising perceptual discrepancies and fostering collective behaviours toward shared organisational goals (Troth and Guest, 2020; Meier-Barthold et al., 2023; Garg et al., 2021). Ultimately, a clear understanding of psychological insights and integration of four salient psychological perspectives into HR processes can lead to more thoughtfully crafted HR practices that resonate with different employee groups, thereby strengthening the HR-performance link (Hewett et al., 2018; Wang et al., 2020; Hu and Oh, 2022).

Second, the study contributes to the growing body of research by applying the *intrapersonal perspective* (Weiner, 1985) to organisational management, a perspective that has been largely overlooked in the HRM domain. Dissimilar to the *interpersonal perspective* (Kelley, 1932; Nishii et al., 2008), the study places employees or attributors in achievement related settings where they feel a need to make causal ascriptions of why they and those around them progress and succeed. During their appraisal process, employees or attributors tend to reflect on their within-person values, rather than largely referring to external stimuli described by Nishii and others (2008), to assign causes for any achievements of their own and others. These evaluative thoughts in turn determine the level of motivation and engagement that are fundamental to organisational survival and growth (Weiner, 1985; Harvey et al., 2014).

Successful events here described as specific episodes where employees gain important workplace achievements, such as a promotion, a pay rise, public acknowledgement or something else that matters to them, which likely motivate employees to initiate a psychological process to make sense of it (Weiner, 1985; Harvey et al., 2014). In this sense, the study redefines the concept of success by viewing it as the ongoing development cycle (rather than the ultimate goal of career) through which employees can develop the best within them, feeling proud of themselves when experiencing their own success and then getting motivated to continuously achieve other important landmarks in their lifelong career (Weiner, 1985; 2000; 2008).

Moreover, Weiner and others (1985) asserted that people are more likely to make attributions of negative or unexpected events compared to positive ones (e.g. students fail a math test; tennis player loses an important match). An unfavourable trigger event elicits stronger and more immediate emotional responses since it can threaten individual interests in the future. Similarly, in the HRM domain, researchers have usually put attributors in negative (rather than positive) trigger events (e.g. abusive supervision, poor performance appraisal) to shed light on their emotional and behavioural responses (Douglas et al., 2007; Gundlach et al., 2003; Harvey et al., 2017; Martinko et al., 2011). For example, when missing a deadline occurs, employees might immediately jump into an attributional process to understand the reasons behind this and then take specific action, such as, meeting with their supervisor, to avoid or reduce consequences (Weiner, 1985; 2000, 2008).

However, the current study investigates employees' causal ascriptions within positive achievement-related context which is widely overlooked in management. The reason behind this is that success in the workplace is a result of many factors and thus should not be taken for granted. Hence, employee's causal reasoning of achievements may produce the same level of critical analysis as unsuccessful events (McAuley et al., 1992). Moreover, examining causal ascriptions of success can help evaluate the efficacy of HR implementation within organisations. People tend to make attributional bias when judging their success of their own and others. For example, they usually take credit for their good performances while locating external causes, such as leaders' favouritism or political power, behind colleagues' achievements (Ross, 1977; Nisbett et al., 1973; Markus and Kitayama, 1991). As such, delving into this psychological phenomenon can assess if HPWS foster a culture of trust and create an effective work environment where people believe that their hard work will be rewarded whereas poor performance or lack of effort will receive appropriate consequences. This system promotes perceptions of fairness and equity in the workplace, leading to more balanced and just evaluations of others (Weiner, 1985; Harvey et al., 2014; Harvey and Martinko, 2009).

Third, since the work of Weiner (1985), HR scholars have largely built on his framework to largely focus on various cognitive and behavioural consequences, for example, aggression and anger (Martinko and Zellars; 1998; Douglas and Martinko, 2001), counterproductive behaviour (Martinko et al., 2002); decreased self-efficacy (Weiner, 1987; Gundlach et al., 2003), conflict resolution (Betancourt, 2004), decreased motivation and withdrawal behaviours (Campbell and Martinko, 1998). This has left relatively little knowledge about potential factors that can drive causal ascriptions of success or failure (Douglas et al., 2007; Martinko et al., 2006; Harvey et al., 2014; 2017). Without this, organisations may not have evidence-based insights into what should be incorporated into their HR strategy to elicit positive causal reasoning for desired outcomes (Harvey et al., 2014; 2017).

Building on Hewett et al. (2019), the study develops a tripartite framework comprising HPWS as informational cues, cynicism as a belief system, and LMX as a motivational factor, which work together to inform employee causal ascriptions. However, this model differs from Hewett et al. (2019) in some respects. While Hewett and colleagues focus on three individual-level antecedents of employee HR attributions specifically related to workload management

practices, my research investigates a multi-level mechanism through which employees simultaneously assess the effectiveness of HPWS in fulfilling developmental needs, the benefits derived from LMX, and their own beliefs to understand why they and their colleagues succeed (Hewett et al., 2019; McAuley et al., 1992). Hewett et al. (2019) draw on Nishii et al. (2008) to predict employees' HR attributions of a single HR practice or more specifically workload distribution and management. The current research uses Weiner's ideas (1985) to inform employees causal ascriptions of success via an integrative HRM system.

Further, both two works build upon the conceptual framework suggested by Kelley and Michela (1980) to select three classes of antecedents, namely information, belief and motivation. However, by considering this antecedent-attribution micro process regarding three four existing strands of research, it is argued that Hewett and others (2019) focus on *the intrapersonal perspective*, including perceptions of fairness, personal relevance and beliefs, to clarify employees' HR attributions. in the meanwhile, I move beyond this model to integrate three key approaches, for example, HPWS (*interpersonal perspective*), OC (*intrapersonal perspective*) and LMX (*relational perspective*) to cast better light on employees' causal ascriptions of success.

This approach addresses Hewett et al.'s (2018) call for the combination and interactive effects of research streams to cast better light on employees' psychological issues and thereby enrich the knowledge of this research area.

Fourth, the research is believed to make contextual contribution to the extant literature. Attribution-focused research has been conducted in large Western firms, leaving a limited understanding of how this psychological perspective is explored in the context of other cultures, for example, developing Eastern countries. Vietnam is a vibrant economy with distinctive institutional and cultural characteristics can provide a unique research context for employees' causal ascriptions of success. According to Troth and Guest (2020), workplace psychology is a scientific study which delves into personal thoughts, emotions and behaviours to better understand and optimise wellbeing and effectiveness of both individuals and organisations.

However, psychological issues differ across contexts and over time, and employees attend to various factors to make their own causal judgements of success. Vietnamese SMEs

are characterised by informality, financial restraints, flexibilities and heavily get influenced by Confucianist values, such as, collectivism, high power distance, and harmonious relationship (Nguyen et al., 2018; Ren et al., 2021). These factors work in concert to create distinct research setting upon which Vietnamese SMEs' employees' beliefs about successful events are firmly based. This represents my fourth and final theoretical contribution to the existing literature.

6.3.2. Practical implications

Organisations should clearly understand the central role of attribution or psychological perspective in explaining the HR-performance relationship. This core concept is also a complex phenomenon that varies across employees, contexts and over time. It therefore should be examined through multiple lenses, such as *interpersonal*, *intrapersonal* or *relational perspectives* rather than barely focusing on one of them. In this sense, organisations can flexibly apply and combine these research lines to their managerial policies to yield desired outcomes (Wang et al., 2020; Harvey et al., 2014; Eberly et al., 2014). Moreover, firms should make a distinction between two types of causal ascriptions of success (internal vs external) and apprehend its influence on employees' behaviours and performance.

For example, employees who attribute their success to their own abilities or engagement are more likely to feel competent and self-reliant, leading to higher commitment and motivation. They take more initiatives, engage in extra-role activities, and be proactive in their roles to enhance their task performance. By contrast, employees who perceive positive achievements as results of external factors, such as, random luck or others' support, may feel out of control of their fate which might sow the seed of uncertainty and low confidence in their mind and thereby cause passive behaviours and poor performance at work (Weiner, 1985; Harvey et al., 2014).

Similarly, when employees tend to assign internal rather external factors to the achievements of their colleagues, it reflects the idea that the organisation successfully creates an effective and fair work environment where hard work is rewarded, and weak performance is more likely to receive consequences. As such, organisations should thoughtfully craft and implement HR strategies to prompt employees to make internal (rather than external) causal

ascriptions for success of their own and others (Weiner, 1985; 2008; 2018). To achieve this goal, organisations can take into account several respects:

First, organisations can learn from micro or employees' perspectives to design, utilise, and revise HR practices to make its motives widely salient to employee interests. HRM system should be coherently interconnected in a bid to produce synergistic effects on improving employee skills, abilities and knowledge for enhanced self-esteem and sense of achievement (Katou et al., 2014; Meier-Barthold et al., 2023). Individuals have an innate tendency to make attributional bias about why they and those around them achieve due to incomplete evidence, subjective assumptions, or misleading contextual information (Zuckerman, 1979; Kelly 1973; Gardner et al., 2019). For example, people who receive a reward can credit it to their talent or capabilities while viewing others' achievement as a result of favouritism or political maneuvering (McCaulay et al., 1992; Weiner, 1979). However, a well-designed HRM system that is circulated in a consistent and transparent manner, can create a rich informational environment and reduce attributional bias through which employees are prompted to access full details of success events and make fair performance evaluations upon which internal, controllable qualities (rather than external, unpredictable factors) are based (Gardner et al., 2019; Martinko et al., 2006).

Second, being aware that high-quality LMX can serve as a catalyst to bring the best out of employees, organisations should encourage managers to develop mature exchange relationships with all followers, rather than just a select few (Lin et al., 2022). It means that managers need to be trained to become effective HR communicators who send clear and consistent HR signals and treat all subordinates with fairness and respect (Nishii and Paluch, 2018; Kitt and Sanders, 2022). When any goal attainments are made, managers should be the first to acknowledge and laud followers' achievements to evidence their talent and perseverance (Lin et al., 2022). By doing so, leaders can significantly influence employees' attribution styles, making them more likely adopt internal attributions for success (Guest et al., 2021).

Moreover, by promoting a culture of transparency, responsibility, and continuous improvement, employees tend to be more proactive in seeking out new opportunities and taking initiative. As a result, when a successful event occurs within a team, other members tend to adopt internal causal ascriptions and acknowledge their colleagues' talents and

abilities rather than attributing it to managerial favouritism or preferentialism (Guest et al., 2021; Fan et al., 2021). This results in thriving collaboration as team members will see their contributions as meaningful and impactful. They are more likely to experience job satisfaction and a sense of accomplishment which in turn incentivise them to offer and accept help, eventually driving collective performance (Hu et al., 2022; Hewett, 2021; Sanders et al., 2023).

Third, even though the interaction between cynicism and HPWS was partially supported, decision-makers should always keep in mind that each and every employee is unique and thus the same HR practices might be interpreted idiosyncratically across various groups within organisation. For cynical people, any smallest cue of favouritism or injustice shown by managers can cause undesired emotional reactions, such as discontentment, anger, that might hinder them from attributing success of their own and/or their colleagues to internal properties (e.g. talent) (Zhu et al., 2022; Weiner, 2004). To combat negativity, bias, and cynicism, organisations need to create a strong HRM system where employees' developmental needs are well met. Further, information is salient, transparent, and accessible to foster trust in employees and reduce uncertainty (Gardner et al., 2019; Eberly et al., 2011). In the meantime, leaders, as effective implementors, need to embrace impartiality in making any decisions, promote open communication, be sensitive to employee concerns and feedback, and try to tailor their behaviours to different characteristics of subordinates (Sun et al., 2019; Liao et al., 2009).

6.3.3. Limitations and future directions

First, data were collected using paper-based questionnaires at a single time that does not answer questions about the stability or consistency of causal attributions (Fan et al., 2021; Kitt and Sanders, 2022). For example, an employee may attribute success to their competencies and personal effort today but might attribute future success to external factors like team support or luck. Added to this, causal attributions of success may vary due to changing circumstances, such as, economic conditions, work environments, personal growth, different leadership styles, or organisational dynamics, which are not observable in a single snapshot (Kitt and Sanders, 2022; Hu et al., 2022; Meier-Barthold et al., 2023). Future scholars, therefore, should use time-lagged or longitudinal designs to explore how ascriptions can

evolve, change, and be managed over time (Sanders et al., 2021; Fan et al., 2021; Alfes et al., 2021).

Additionally, longitudinal data can capture how different interventions—such as training programs, feedback mechanisms, or leadership styles—can influence the way employees ascribe success. For example, through time-lagged studies, organisations could determine whether continuous feedback leads to employees increasingly attributing success to their own effort and skills, rather than external factors, thus fostering a culture of personal responsibility and growth (Fan et al., 2021; Sanders et al., 2021). Further, longitudinal research enables the examination of long-term outcomes of causal attributions, such as, career advancement, job satisfaction, or employee retention over extended periods. By mapping changes over time, organisations can also identify key moments where shifts in attributions could either positively or negatively impact employee performance and organisational outcomes.

Also of interest is that there has been potential scope to use qualitative or mixed methods to bring more robustness to the study (Sanders et al., 2021). Qualitative methods, such as interviews and focus groups can gain rich, detailed narratives from employees about how and why they attribute success to certain factors (Sanders et al., 2021; Fan et al., 2021). Meanwhile, mixed methods would allow for both the depth of qualitative data and the generalisability of quantitative findings (Alfes et al., 2021; Creswell and Plano Clark, 2017). These approaches would not only provide insights into attribution processes but also capturing the complexity and dynamic nature of success attributions, offering organisations a more nuanced and actionable understanding of how to support employee development and performance (Fan et al., 2021; Creswell and Plano Clark, 2017).

Second, success and failure, in achievement-related settings, do not occur in a vacuum (Weiner, 2000). Failure is an integral part of working life and is usually viewed as a steppingstone to great achievements (Boss and Sims, 2008). However, not everyone reacts to their failure in the same way (Boss and Sims, 2008; Brown and Gallagher, 1992). Some people can overcome the momentary sting of grief and guilt, shake it off and quickly move on, while others languish and let themselves fall into the downward spiral in which self-esteem and confidence are badly damaged (Boss and Sims, 2008). Given that I primarily focus on success in this study, it might be intriguing for future scholars to investigate

employee causal ascriptions in the event of failure and thereafter develop ideas about bouncing back from failures to germinate seeds of success and help them sprout (Yamakawa et al. 2013).

In particular, when employees attribute failure to personal factors, such as lack of effort or skill, they may feel a sense of shame or guilt that can motivate them to make amends in the future (Weiner 1985). Engagement or skills are relatively unstable and within personal control. Employees therefore can expect or achieve more desired outcomes through the use of different strategies, or other factors, such as taking an active task-oriented approach to those goals, dedicating themselves to assigned tasks, or acquiring more training to help them address deficiencies (Jenkins 2012; Homsma et al. 2007).

By contrast, when failure is attributed to external factors, such as poor management, insufficient resources, leadership, or simply bad luck, employees interpret such causes as outside of their personal control and thereby may feel less personal responsibility to learn from this experience or they believe their actions have little to no impact on future outcomes (Homsma et al. 2007; Jenkins 2012). In some circumstances, external causal ascriptions can lead to avoidance behaviours or learned helplessness, such as withdrawing from challenging tasks, blaming others, or distancing themselves from responsibility as employees may feel there is no point in trying to improve or change their behaviours (Caron and McGrath 1999; Yamakawa and Cardon, 2015). Over time, this mindset can lead to disengagement, procrastination, or lack of initiative that in turn cause weak performances (Yamakawa and Cardon, 2015; Gundlach et al., 2003).

Therefore, both HR researchers and practitioners should clearly understand this core concept to promote a learning culture and encouraging adaptive responses to failure. For example, by providing constructive feedback, recognising effort and improvement, organisations can help employees focus on controllable, internal factors in their attributions of failure (Dweck, 2006; Weiner, 1985). Moreover, offering training that focuses on building resilience, problem-solving skills, and a growth mindset can help employees view failures as learning opportunities rather than threats to their self-esteem (Dweck, 2006). Leaders can also play a central role in creating an environment where employees feel safe to take responsibility for failures and learn from them, ultimately driving better performance (Edmondson, 1999; Yamakawa and Cardon, 2015).

Third, given the research builds on the work of Hewett et al. (2019) to bring HPWS (*information*), LMX (*motivation*) and OC (*belief*) to evidence employees' causal ascriptions, I feel that LMX here may not well represent the category of *motivation*. Hence, I recommend future research to keep pursuing this tripartite framework to inform employees' causal ascriptions. Alternatively, HR scholars can address the call of Hewett et al. (2018) to integrate multiple perspectives, namely interpersonal, intrapersonal and relational approaches, to cast better light on the antecedent-causal ascriptions linkage and thereby advance our knowledge of this complex psychological phenomenon.

Further, my findings might be limited to the research context of Vietnamese SMEs indicating distinctive cultural and institutional factors (OECD, 2021). For example, selected knowledge-intensive SMEs are restricted to industries, such as IT, pharmaceuticals, which are well known for a relatively young age, relatively short tenure, and high educational backgrounds. Hence, I encourage future studies to validate and expand the model in wider contextual influences (e.g. different firm ownerships, industries, countries) to reduce common method variance (Podsakoff et al., 2003) and make it more generalised across different contexts and situations (Martinko and Mackey, 2019; Sanders et al., 2021).

Fourth, the AMO (*Ability, Motivation, Opportunity*) model plays a pivotal role in understanding how HPWS exert influence on employee performance (Appelbaum et al., 2000). *Ability-enhancing* practices usually include recruitment and selection, training and development, and performance appraisals. *Motivation-enhancing* practices can encompass reward and compensation, job design, teamworking while *opportunity-enhancing* practices can reflect participative decision-making or flexible work arrangements (Marin-Garcia and Tomas, 2016). The AMO framework highlights the effectiveness of HPWS arising from the interplay of its three components. That means that employees with *ability* can only perform well if they are sufficiently *motivated* and have *opportunity* to apply their skills (Bos-Nehles et al., 2023).

As such, strategic HR scholars should adopt the AMO model to design HPWS and examine how these key factors interact to influence employees' causal ascriptions of success or failure, and then their outcomes (Bos-Nehles et al., 2023; Weiner, 1985; 2008; 2014). Pursuing this pathway not only highlights the role of a well-design HR initiative in shaping

employees' causal ascriptions, but also more beyond my conceptual model to support the idea that attributing success to external factors can lead to positive outcomes. For example, employees' attributions of success may hinge on whether they have been given fair opportunities to perform or employees with high abilities may attribute success to HPWS practices rather than personal effort if opportunity structures are particularly robust (Bos-Nehles et al., 2023; Marin-Garcia and Tomas, 2016). Hence, HR scholars are recommended to delve into the AMO framework in conjunction with HPWS and the nuanced interactions of the three components (e.g. ability, motivation, opportunity) to yield deeper insights into employees' causal ascriptions of success or failure.

6.3.4. Conclusion

While many of us may occasionally experience task accomplishment in the workplace, our reactions to such achievements can vary significantly based on our individual causal ascriptions. Some individuals may attribute their success to their own merits and feel a sense of pride, while others may focus on perceived deficiencies and feel undeserving of personal credit. Similarly, when evaluating others' successes, individuals often attribute these outcomes to external factors, such as managerial favouritism or organisational politics. These causal attributions can lead to specific attitudinal and behavioural consequences that, in turn, impact the organisation's strategic goals and overall performance. Understanding these psychological differences is crucial for organisations. To foster a positive work environment and enhance long-term motivation, organisations should invest in HRM systems that promote internal, rather than external, attributions. Such systems, coupled with effective communication mechanisms, can reduce individual cynicism toward organisation integrity, attributional bias, encourage individual enthusiasm and energy, ultimately contributing to overall organisational well-being.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: THE PRELIMINARY INTERVIEW



Nottingham Trent University
50 Shakespeare Street, Nottingham NG1 4FQ
Tel. +44 (0)115 941 8418 www.ntu.ac.uk

Participant Information Sheet

Invitation

I am a PhD student at Nottingham Trent University, UK. I am presently in the process of collecting data for my PhD thesis. I would like to invite you to take part in a research study: **‘Relationships between HPWS, causal ascriptions and organisational citizenship behaviour: A cross-level investigation.’**

Before you decide if you would like to participate, take time to read the following information carefully and, if you wish, discuss it with others such as your family, friends or colleagues.

For any queries or concerns before your decision, please ask Mr Ngoc Manh Dao, by email manh.dao2020@my.ntu.ac.uk or tel: (+84) 965515508.

What is the purpose of the study?

The purpose of this project is to empirically examine the effects of high-performance work systems (HPWS), described as a bundle of human resources (HR) practices (e.g., staffing, training and development, appraisal, rewarding), on employee performance through employee perceptions about HR implementation (e.g. commitment-HR attributions and cost-HR attributions) in the context of Vietnamese small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

Why have I been chosen?

You have been chosen to take part in this project because your organisation meets eligibility requirements for our research, for example, being a SME with 40-200 employees and adopting HPWS practices. As such, we would like to examine how employees attribute to the organisation's purpose in implementing HRM practices in the first place and how these HR attributions accordingly explain variability in employee attitudes and behaviours which eventually influence employee outcomes and performance in the context of Vietnamese SMEs.

What will happen to me if I take part?

You will complete an anonymous paper-based survey that will ask you a set of questions in relation to a company's HPWS practices. In addition, you will be asked questions about your perceptions about the HRM implementation, leader-member exchange, line manager's solicitation of voice that influences your attitudes, behaviours, well-being and thereby your performance. Some questions about your background (e.g., age, gender) are also put forward in the survey.

Do I have to take part?

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. We do appreciate your kind help and willingness to contribute to scientific research.

You can withdraw the participation any time: before, during and after answering the questionnaire. Before filling out the questionnaire, you are kindly asked to sign on the consent form, which indicates their willingness to participate in the research. If you would prefer not to take part, you can stop completing the survey at any point. If you wish to withdraw after submitting your questionnaire, you can withdraw within two weeks after completing the survey. After this time, we cannot remove your ratings as they become part of publishable data analysis.

What will happen if I take part?

We will collect data within two months. You will need to fill in a survey questionnaire about the HPWS-individual performance link. Survey will take you about 10 to 15 minutes. For research purposes, we also need to collect your personal data (e.g., age, gender, tenure, educational level). However, your personal and institutional information will be strictly managed under ethical regulations set by the Nottingham Trent University.

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

Yes. A code will be attached to all the data you provide to maintain confidentiality.

The questionnaire only includes your personal details (e.g., sex, age, tenure) without identifiers such as full name, email address, telephone number. Your personal data will only be used by the researcher and are not revealed to anyone else. Analysis of your data will be undertaken using coded data.

All completed questionnaires will be scanned and stored in a designated project folder on the NTU DataStore. Data will not be stored on any other devices, only accessed by password protected and encrypted personal laptop with anti-virus packages for the purposes of data analysis.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

Your participation will contribute to our understanding on the indirect underlying mechanism through which HPWS influence employee well-being and outcomes. The findings of this project provide empirical evidence to evaluate HPWS practices and its implications for employees' well-being through their perceptions about the purposes of HR implementation within the organisation. In addition, it also helps policy/decision makers to develop HR management practices for the purpose of improving work quality and employee well-being, especially in the event of such the unexpected changes as the COVID-19.

The findings of this project will be disseminated in the formats of academic papers and feedback reports. Note that only aggregate statistics, such as means and correlations will be reported in the dissemination process. No third party, even your organisation, can access your individual responses and personal data. If you are interested in the results of this project, we are more than willing to send you a copy of executive summary for review at your request. Please contact Mr. Ngoc Manh Dao (Email: manh.dao2020@my.ntu.ac.uk) for detailed information.

What are the possible risks and burdens of taking part?

Aside from giving up your time, we do not expect that there will be any risks or costs associated with taking part in this study.

What will happen to the results of the study?

The findings of this research study will be circulated in the formats of presentations and publications.

Note that the researcher only reports the results in the format of aggregated data, such as means, standard deviations, and correlations. The researcher guarantees that the reports will not disclose any your personal information.

Has anyone considered the study?

The project has received a favourable ethics opinion from the Schools of Business, Law and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee.

Your Personal Data

Your privacy and protection of your personal information is very important and the researcher is committed to robust compliance with the UK General Data protection Regulation and the Data Protection Act 2018 (*For further information, please read <https://www.gov.uk/data-protection>*).

Participation in this research project is entirely voluntary and confidential, and data is stored anonymously. After completing the survey, the data will be used by the researcher to contribute to the study outcomes. Data will be directly collected by researcher and stored in a designated project folder on the NTU DataStore. Data will not be stored on any other devices, only accessed by password protected and encrypted personal laptop with anti-virus packages for the purposes of data analysis. Passwords are stored in a secure, non-reversible format. It is obligatory to change the password every 180 days. There is a limitation of failed login attempts, and an implemented measure of inactivity lock. All operating systems have firewall protection and security-related upgrades and patches to avoid viruses and malicious code. Data transfers will be kept to a minimum. The data will only be accessible by researcher and will not be sent via email or other file transfer means without first encrypting them.

Has anyone considered the study?

The project has received a favourable ethics opinion from the Schools of Business, Law and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee.

What if I have a concern about my participation in the study?

If you have any concerns about your participation in this study, please contact Mr Ngoc Manh Dao who is currently studying a PhD course at Nottingham Trent Univeristy in the UK by email: manh.dao2020@my.ntu.ac.uk or tel: (+84) 965515508

Your rights

The research team will rely on your consent to process the data you provide to enable them to facilitate this study. This means you have the right to withdraw your consent at any time before completing the questionnaire and after two weeks after your submission. If at any point you wish to withdraw your consent, please contact Mr Ngoc Manh Dao by email: manh.dao2020@my.ntu.ac.uk

You also have the additional rights:

- to obtain a copy of your personal data.
- to rectify inaccuracies, and where appropriate, the right to have incomplete data completed.
- to have your personal data erased in limited circumstances (it will not apply where the personal data is needed for the purposes of an overriding public interest).
- to restrict the use of your personal data. This is a limited right which will apply in specific circumstances and for a limited period (e.g. where a complaint has been received, until that complaint has been resolved).
- to object to use of your data by the researcher for any direct marketing, and to require him to stop such marketing.

Research Team

The research team consists of: Professor Helen Shipton, Professor Daniel King and Mr Ngoc Manh Dao from Nottingham Trent University.

Contact person: Mr Ngoc Manh Dao

Email: manh.dao2020@my.ntu.ac.uk

Consent Form for Interview

Name of Principle Investigator: Ngoc Manh Dao

Please initial

boxes

1.	I confirm that I have read and understand the Participant Information Sheet for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.	
2.	I understand that taking part in this research is voluntary and that I can withdraw my participation at any point before and during my interview and within two weeks after interview.	
3.	I agree that organisational data collected during the interview will be processed as described in the Participant Information Sheet.	
4.	I agree to organisational data being used by the research team for future research purposes.	
5.	I agree to take part in this study.	

Name of participant

Date

Signature

Name of Person receiving
consent.

Date

Signature

PRELIMINARY INTERVIEW TEMPLATE

Code:

Date:

Time:

Venue:

Interview Length:

Part A: Please provide some organisational details.

1. How many employees are there in your organisation?
2. What industry does your organisation operate in?
 - ☐ IT
 - ☐ Pharmaceutical
 - ☐ Consultancy
 - ☐ Healthcare
 - ☐ Other professional services (Please specify in the blank space)
3. How long has your organisation operated?
4. What is your category of ownership?
 - ☐ Public sector
 - ☐ Private sector
 - ☐ Others

Part B

1. HPWS is defined as a system of HR practices designed to enhance employees' skills, commitment, and productivity in such a way that employees become a source of sustainable competitive advantage.
2. Do your organisation execute HPWS? How do you relate this definition to the HR practices adopted in your firm?
3. Please read these following statements carefully and answer some questions below?
 - a. Provide frequent performance feedback
 - b. Provide regular updates regarding developments in the business
 - c. Provide formal training programs
 - d. Use incentives and bonuses
 - e. Use recognition and reward programs
 - f. Solicit input on how to improve the company.
 - g. Provide health insurance plans
 - h. Provide retirement plan options
 - i. Use selection tests or other formal screening methods when hiring
 - j. Use pre-employment drug testing
 - k. Use background screening for job candidates
 - l. Use written guidelines when dealing with an employee that doesn't meet expectations
 - m. Provide formal performance evaluations
 - n. Use formal procedures to set pay levels
1. Which practices of the list has your organisation implemented? What are they?
2. Which ones are the most salient and effective?
3. Are there any other practices you find effective but are not addressed here?
4. Are there any practices you find ineffective?
5. Is there any potential ambiguity or confusion in understanding or interpreting these HR practices? If so, please indicate and provide further explanation.

6. Are there any HR challenges facing your organisation?

The investigator/interviewer: Ngoc Manh Dao

Tel: (+84) 965515508

Mail: manh.daongoc2020@my.ntu.ac.uk

Thank you for your participation!

RESULTS OF PRELIMINARY INTERVIEW

(9/7/2022)

Outcomes of preliminary interviews are summarised as follows:

2. Interview dates: 3/7-8/7
3. Time: any working hours suitable for interviewees
4. Venue: at enterprises located in big cities (e.g Ha noi, Thanh Hoa)
5. Average Interview Length: 45'
6. Number of interviewees: 15.
7. 15 enterprises operate in IT; pharmaceutical; tourism; healthcare; real estate; insurance; consultancy.
8. SMEs size: 50-249 employees
9. All enterprises are private.
10. Years of operation: 3-23 years
11. After reading the list of HR statements (Klaas et al. 2012):
 - a. Provide formal performance evaluations
 - b. Provide frequent performance feedback
 - c. Provide regular updates regarding developments in the business
 - d. Provide formal training programs
 - e. Use incentives and bonuses
 - f. Use recognition and reward programs
 - g. Solicit input on how to improve the company.
 - h. Provide health insurance plans
 - i. Provide retirement plan options
 - j. Use selection tests or other formal screening methods when hiring
 - k. Use pre-employment drug testing
 - l. Use background screening for job candidates
 - m. Use written guidelines when dealing with an employee that doesn't meet expectations
 - n. Use formal procedures to set pay levels.

100 % of enterprises have implemented a. b. c. d. e. f. g. h. j. l. m, n

100% does not completely provide (i) and (k) that are explained as follows:

- Regarding (i), according to Vietnam Law, it is compulsory for enterprises to provide social insurance (varied in salary ranges) for employees whose labour contract is more than one month. Following this logic, employees will receive their corresponding pension when they are retired and there are no any other retirement plans.
- Regarding (k), Vietnamese enterprises only require applicants to have a general health test in hospital stipulated by the Ministry of Health and thus pre-employment drug testing is not needed.

100 % of enterprises have implemented teamwork activities at different levels (this HR practice is outside the list).

Most of interviewees ask for (j) (l) (n) to be more specific. They find some terms such as 'formal screening methods', 'background screening' or 'formal procedures' a bit general for full/clear understanding. They propose alternative translations to make it clearer (e.g 'background screening' is

also understood as ‘CV screening’; or ‘formal procedures’ may be translated as ‘eligibility framework’ or ‘process of capacity assessment’). In addition, they also have different views about ‘formal procedures to set pay level’. While some understands it as pre-employment criteria (e.g. educational background, work experiences, positions), others describe this statement as ‘post-employment career path’ based on the principle of 3P (Pay for Person, Position and Performance) to agree on salary range.

In terms of (m), organisation rarely uses written guidelines when dealing with an employee that doesn’t meet expectations. Even though they follow some formal procedures such as sending warning letters in some certain cases, due to harmonisation culture, they normally ask employees to attend re-training sessions for improved performance.

All interviewed enterprises use a variety of incentives and bonuses (e.g. 13th month salary; project-based compensation; direct cash; cash/gifts for employee parents’ birthday; best employee award on a weekly/monthly/quarterly/yearly basis). They also pay attention to reward and recognition programs (e.g. Year End Party) or teambuilding (e.g. all employees have a free Friday lunch altogether; travel tours) and see these activities as the effective way to attract and retain talents.

It is salient that one 120-employee IT company organises a collective meeting every week through which employee can interact and speak up any their concerns, ideas, questions that will be considered and solved thoroughly to assure employees’ welfares.

By implementing these HR practices, these enterprises share great difficulty finding eligible or competent candidates and retaining these experienced employees. As employees prefer to work for large firms, turnover rate remain relatively high among these SMEs. Some firms have not known how to effectively appraise employee performance of functional departments (e.g. finance) or how to systematically solicit input from employees for greater improvement. In addition, employees may experience job variety without associating with specific benefits and thus lead them to the feeling of unfairness/heavy workload.

Phiếu thông tin dành cho người tham gia khảo sát

Lời mời

Chúng tôi trân trọng mời bạn tham gia vào một dự án nghiên cứu.

Trước khi bạn quyết định có tham gia hay không, xin vui lòng dành thời gian đọc kỹ thông tin sau đây và nếu muốn, bạn cũng có thể thảo luận với những người khác trong gia đình, bạn bè hoặc đồng nghiệp.

Mọi thắc mắc hoặc băn khoăn trước quyết định, xin vui lòng liên hệ ông Đào Ngọc Mạnh, qua email manh.dao2020@my.ntu.ac.uk hoặc số điện thoại: (+84) 965515508.

Mục đích của dự án nghiên cứu này là gì?

Hệ thống làm việc hiệu suất cao (HPWS) được miêu tả như một nhóm các hoạt động nhân sự (ví dụ: tuyển dụng, đào tạo, đánh giá hiệu suất, khen thưởng) bổ sung và hỗ trợ nhau để cùng hướng đến thực hiện hóa những mục tiêu chiến lược của tổ chức. Dự án này nghiên cứu tác động của HPWS đến nhận thức mục đích nhân sự, hành vi, thái độ cá nhân, qua đó ảnh hưởng đến sức khỏe và hiệu suất lao động của nhân viên trong các doanh nghiệp vừa và nhỏ Việt Nam.

Vì sao chúng tôi chọn bạn?

Chúng tôi chọn bạn tham gia dự án này vì tổ chức của bạn đáp ứng đủ các yêu cầu của dự án, chẳng hạn là một doanh nghiệp vừa và nhỏ với quy mô 30-200 nhân viên, đồng thời có áp dụng hệ thống lao động hiệu suất cao. Do đó, chúng tôi muốn kiểm tra nhận thức của nhân viên về mục đích thực hiện HPWS, từ đó giải thích sự thay đổi trong hành vi và thái độ làm việc, và cuối cùng là sức khỏe và hiệu suất lao động của nhân viên trong các doanh nghiệp vừa và nhỏ Việt Nam.

Tôi sẽ làm gì nếu tham gia?

Bạn sẽ hoàn thành một cuộc khảo sát ẩn danh trên giấy trong vòng 10-15 phút bao gồm các câu hỏi liên quan đến HPWS, nhận thức của bạn về việc tại sao HPWS được triển khai trong tổ chức, trao đổi giữa lãnh đạo và nhân viên cũng như các câu hỏi về sức khỏe cá nhân ảnh hưởng đến hiệu suất lao động. Ngoài ra, để phục vụ mục đích nghiên cứu, chúng tôi cũng cần thu thập dữ liệu cá nhân của bạn (ví dụ: tuổi, giới tính, số năm làm việc, trình độ giáo dục) và một số thông tin tổ chức (ví dụ: số lượng nhân viên, lĩnh vực hoạt động, số năm hoạt động).

Tuy nhiên, thông tin cá nhân và tổ chức sẽ được quản lý chặt chẽ theo các quy định đạo đức nghiên cứu của Trường Đại học Nottingham Trent, Vương Quốc Anh.

Tôi có phải tham gia không?

Việc tham gia của bạn vào nghiên cứu này là hoàn toàn tự nguyện. Chúng tôi đánh giá cao hỗ trợ và đóng góp của bạn cho nghiên cứu khoa học.

Bạn có thể từ chối tham gia bất kỳ lúc nào: trước, trong và sau khi trả lời bảng hỏi. Trước khi điền vào bảng câu hỏi, bạn vui lòng ký vào phiếu đồng ý để thể hiện bạn sẵn sàng tham gia vào nghiên cứu này. Bạn cũng có thể dừng tham gia bất kỳ lúc nào trước khi hoàn thành khảo sát và rút lại phản trả lời trong vòng 2 tuần sau khi hoàn thành khảo sát bằng cách liên hệ với chúng tôi qua email: manh.dao2020@my.ntu.ac.uk. Sau thời gian này, chúng tôi rất tiếc không thể xóa phần đánh giá của bạn vì chúng có thể trở thành một phần của kết quả phân tích dữ liệu phục vụ xuất bản.

Việc tôi tham gia vào nghiên cứu này có được bảo mật không?

Có. Tất cả dữ liệu bạn cung cấp sẽ được mã hóa để duy trì tính bảo mật.

Bảng câu hỏi chỉ bao gồm các chi tiết cá nhân của bạn (ví dụ: giới tính, tuổi, số năm làm việc, trình độ giáo dục) mà không có các thông tin định danh như họ tên, địa chỉ email, số điện thoại. Dữ liệu cá nhân của bạn sẽ chỉ được sử dụng bởi nhóm nghiên cứu cho mục đích nghiên cứu và không được tiết lộ cho bất kỳ ai khác. Quy trình phân tích dữ liệu sẽ được thực hiện bằng cách sử dụng dữ liệu được mã hóa.

Tất cả các bảng câu hỏi đã hoàn thành sẽ được quét (scan) và lưu trữ trong một thư mục dự án được chỉ định trên NTU DataStore. Dữ liệu sẽ không được lưu trữ trên bất kỳ thiết bị nào khác, chỉ được truy cập bằng máy tính xách tay cá nhân được bảo vệ bằng mật khẩu và được mã hóa với các gói chống vi-rút toàn diện. Máy tính chỉ phục vụ cho mục đích phân tích dữ liệu.

Những lợi ích có thể có khi tham gia là gì?

Sự tham gia của bạn sẽ góp phần vào sự hiểu biết của chúng tôi về cơ chế gián tiếp mà qua đó HPWS ảnh hưởng đến sức khỏe và hiệu suất cá nhân thông qua nhận thức của nhân viên về mục đích thực hiện HPWS trong các doanh nghiệp vừa và nhỏ Việt Nam. Thêm vào đó, các phát hiện của dự án này cung cấp bằng chứng thực nghiệm giúp các nhà hoạch định chính sách phát triển các phương pháp quản lý nhân sự nhằm cải thiện chất lượng công việc và phúc lợi của nhân viên, đặc biệt là trong bối cảnh khó lường như COVID-19. Nếu bạn quan tâm đến kết quả nghiên cứu của dự án này, vui lòng liên hệ ông Đào Ngọc Mạnh (Email: manh.dao2020@my.ntu.ac.uk) và chúng tôi rất sẵn lòng gửi cho bạn một bản tóm tắt phân tích để xem xét.

Những rủi ro có thể có khi tham gia là gì?

Ngoài việc bỏ thời gian của bạn, sẽ không có bất kỳ rủi ro hoặc chi phí nào liên quan đến việc tham gia vào nghiên cứu này.

Điều gì sẽ xảy ra với kết quả của nghiên cứu?

Những phát hiện của nghiên cứu này sẽ được lưu hành dưới dạng các bài thuyết trình và ấn phẩm khoa học. Lưu ý rằng nhóm nghiên cứu chỉ báo cáo kết quả ở định dạng dữ liệu tổng hợp, chẳng hạn như giá trị trung bình, độ lệch chuẩn và mối tương quan. Chúng tôi đảm bảo rằng các báo cáo sẽ không tiết lộ bất kỳ thông tin cá nhân nào của bạn. Không có bên thứ ba nào, ngay cả tổ chức của bạn, có thể truy cập câu trả lời và dữ liệu cá nhân của bạn.

Dữ liệu cá nhân của bạn

Quyền riêng tư và bảo vệ thông tin cá nhân của bạn là nhiệm vụ rất quan trọng và chúng tôi cam kết tuân thủ chặt chẽ Quy định bảo vệ dữ liệu chung của Vương quốc Anh và Đạo luật bảo vệ dữ liệu năm 2018 (*Để biết thêm thông tin, vui lòng đọc <https://www.gov.uk/data-protection>*).

Việc tham gia vào dự án nghiên cứu này là hoàn toàn tự nguyện và bảo mật. Dữ liệu được lưu trữ ẩn danh. Sau khi hoàn thành khảo sát, dữ liệu sẽ được nhóm nghiên cứu sử dụng để phục vụ kết quả nghiên cứu. Dữ liệu sẽ được nhà nghiên cứu trực tiếp thu thập và lưu trữ trong một thư mục dự án

được chỉ định trên NTU DataStore. Dữ liệu sẽ không được lưu trữ trên bất kỳ thiết bị nào khác, chỉ được truy cập bằng máy tính xách tay cá nhân được bảo vệ bằng mật khẩu và được mã hóa với các gói chống vi-rút toàn diện và chỉ sử dụng cho mục đích phân tích dữ liệu. Mật khẩu được lưu trữ ở định dạng an toàn, không thể đảo ngược. Bắt buộc phải thay đổi mật khẩu sau mỗi 180 ngày. Có giới hạn về số lần đăng nhập không thành công và chế độ khóa tự động khi không hoạt động. Tất cả các hệ điều hành đều có tường lửa bảo vệ và nâng cấp an ninh, và lỗi liên quan đến bảo mật để tránh vi rút và mã độc hại. Việc truyền dữ liệu sẽ được giữ ở mức tối thiểu. Dữ liệu sẽ chỉ được truy cập bởi nhóm nghiên cứu và sẽ không được gửi qua email hoặc các phương tiện truyền tệp khác mà không mã hóa chúng trước.

Dự án này có được xem xét và phê duyệt không?

Dự án đã nhận được phê duyệt về đạo đức nghiên cứu từ Ủy ban Đạo đức Nghiên cứu, Khoa Kinh doanh, Luật và Khoa học Xã hội.

Nếu tôi lo lắng hay băn khoăn về việc tham gia nghiên cứu của tôi thì sao?

Nếu bạn có bất kỳ thắc mắc nào về việc tham gia nghiên cứu này, vui lòng liên hệ ông Đào Ngọc Mạnh, hiện đang theo học Tiến sĩ tại Trường Nottingham Trent, Vương quốc Anh qua email: manh.dao2020@my.ntu.ac.uk hoặc số điện thoại: (+84) 965515508

Quyền lợi của bạn

Nhóm nghiên cứu chỉ có thể tiếp cận và sử dụng dữ liệu cá nhân phục vụ mục đích nghiên cứu dựa vào sự đồng ý của bạn. Điều này có nghĩa là bạn có quyền rút lại đồng ý của mình bất kỳ lúc nào trước khi hoàn thành bảng câu hỏi và trong vòng hai tuần kể từ khi gửi phản đánh giá cho chúng tôi.

Bạn cũng có các quyền khác:

- yêu cầu một bản sao dữ liệu cá nhân của bạn.
- yêu cầu sửa chữa những điểm không chính xác, và khi thích hợp, có quyền hoàn thành dữ liệu không đầy đủ.
- xóa dữ liệu cá nhân của bạn.
- hạn chế việc sử dụng dữ liệu cá nhân của bạn.
- phản đối việc nhà nghiên cứu sử dụng dữ liệu của bạn cho bất kỳ hoạt động tiếp thị trực tiếp nào và yêu cầu nhà nghiên cứu ngừng các hoạt động tiếp thị như vậy.

Nhóm nghiên cứu

Nhóm nghiên cứu bao gồm: Giáo sư Helen Shipton, Giáo sư Daniel King và Ông Đào Ngọc Mạnh đến từ Đại học Nottingham Trent, Vương Quốc Anh.

Người liên hệ: Ông Đào Ngọc Mạnh

Email: manh.dao2020@my.ntu.ac.uk

Tel: (+84) 965515508

Cảm ơn bạn đã dành thời gian đọc phiếu thông tin này. Nếu bạn có bất kỳ câu hỏi nào liên quan đến nghiên cứu, vui lòng liên hệ ông Đào Ngọc Mạnh.

APPENDIX 2: QUESTIONNAIRE-BASED SURVEY

Participant Information Sheet (Questionnaires)

Invitation

We would like to invite you to take part in a research study.

Before you decide if you would like to participate, take time to read the following information carefully and, if you wish, discuss it with others such as your family, friends or colleagues.

For any queries or concerns before your decision, please ask Mr Ngoc Manh Dao, by email manh.dao2020@my.ntu.ac.uk or tel: (+84) 965515508.

What is the purpose of the study?

The purpose of this project is to empirically examines the effects of high-performance work systems (HPWS), described as a bundle of human resources (HR) practices (e.g., staffing, training and development, appraisal, rewarding), on employee performance through employee perceptions about HR implementation (e.g. commitment-HR attributions and cost-HR attributions) in the context of Vietnamese small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

Why have I been chosen?

You are chosen to take part in this project because your organisation meets eligibility requirements for our research, for example, being a SME with 40-200 employees and adopting HPWS practices. As such, we would like to examine how employees attribute to the organisation's purpose in implementing HRM practices in the first place and how these HR attributions accordingly explain variability in employee attitudes and behaviours which eventually influence employee outcomes and performance in the context of Vietnamese SMEs.

What will happen to me if I take part?

You will complete an anonymous paper-based survey that will ask you a set of questions in relation to a company's HPWS practices. In addition, you will be asked questions about your perceptions about the HRM implementation, leader-member exchange, line manager's solicitation of voice that influences your attitudes, behaviours, well-being and thereby your performance. Some questions about your background (e.g., age, gender) are also put forward in the survey.

Do I have to take part?

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. We do appreciate your kind help and willingness to contribute to scientific research.

You can withdraw the participation any time: before, during and after answering the questionnaire. Before filling out the questionnaire, you are kindly asked to sign on the consent form, which indicates their willingness to participate in the research. If you would prefer not to take part, you can stop completing the survey at any point. If you wish to withdraw after submitting your questionnaire, you can withdraw within two weeks after completing the survey. After this time, we cannot remove your ratings as they become part of publishable data analysis.

What will happen if I take part?

We will collect data within two months. You will need to fill in a survey questionnaire about the HPWS-individual performance link. Survey will take you about 10 to 15 minutes. For research purposes, we also need to collect your personal data (e.g., age, gender, tenure, educational level). However, your personal and institutional information will be strictly managed under ethical regulations set by the Nottingham Trent University.

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

Yes. A code will be attached to all the data you provide to maintain confidentiality.

The questionnaire only includes your personal details (e.g., sex, age, tenure) without identifiers such as full name, email address, telephone number. Your personal data will only be used by the researcher and are not revealed to anyone else. Analysis of your data will be undertaken using coded data.

All completed questionnaires will be scanned and stored in a designated project folder on the NTU DataStore. Data will not be stored on any other devices, only accessed by password protected and encrypted personal laptop with anti-virus packages for the purposes of data analysis.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

Your participation will contribute to our understanding on the indirect underlying mechanism through which HPWS influence employee well-being and outcomes. The findings of this project provide empirical evidence to evaluate HPWS practices and its implications for employees' well-being through their perceptions about the purposes of HR implementation within the organisation. In addition, it also helps policy/decision makers to develop HR management practices for the purpose of improving work quality and employee well-being, especially in the event of such the unexpected changes as the COVID-19.

The findings of this project will be disseminated in the formats of academic papers and feedback reports. Note that only aggregate statistics, such as means and correlations will be reported in the dissemination process. No third party, even your organisation, can access your individual responses and personal data. If you are interested in the results of this project, we are more than willing to send you a copy of executive summary for review at your request. Please contact Mr. Ngoc Manh Dao (Email: manh.dao2020@my.ntu.ac.uk) for detailed information.

What are the possible risks and burdens of taking part?

Aside from giving up your time, we do not expect that there will be any risks or costs associated with taking part in this study.

What will happen to the results of the study?

The findings of this research study will be circulated in the formats of presentations and publications. Note that the researcher only reports the results in the format of aggregated data, such as means, standard deviations, and correlations. The researcher guarantees that the reports will not disclose any your personal information.

Has anyone considered the study?

The project has received a favourable ethics opinion from the Schools of Business, Law and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee.

Your Personal Data

Your privacy and protection of your personal information is very important and the researcher is committed to robust compliance with the UK General Data protection Regulation and the Data Protection Act 2018 (*For further information, please read <https://www.gov.uk/data-protection>*).

Participation in this research project is entirely voluntary and confidential, and data is stored anonymously. After completing the survey, the data will be used by the researcher to contribute to the study outcomes. Data will be directly collected by researcher and stored in a designated project folder on the NTU DataStore. Data will not be stored on any other devices, only accessed by password protected and encrypted personal laptop with anti-virus packages for the purposes of data analysis. Passwords are stored in a secure, non-reversible format. It is obligatory to change the password every 180 days. There is a limitation of failed login attempts, and an implemented measure of inactivity lock. All operating systems have firewall protection and security-related upgrades and patches to avoid viruses and malicious code. Data transfers will be kept to a minimum. The data will only be accessible by researcher and will not be sent via email or other file transfer means without first encrypting them.

Has anyone considered the study?

The project has received a favourable ethics opinion from the Schools of Business, Law and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee.

What if I have a concern about my participation in the study?

If you have any concerns about your participation in this study, please contact Mr Ngoc Manh Dao who is currently studying a PhD course at Nottingham Trent Univeristy in the UK by email: manh.dao2020@my.ntu.ac.uk or tel: (+84) 965515508

Your rights

The research team will rely on your consent to process the data you provide to enable them to facilitate this study. This means you have the right to withdraw your consent at any time before completing the questionnaire and after two weeks since your submission. If at any point you wish to withdraw your consent, please contact Mr Ngoc Manh Dao by email: manh.dao2020@my.ntu.ac.uk

You also have the additional rights:

- to obtain a copy of your personal data.
- to rectify inaccuracies, and where appropriate, the right to have incomplete data completed.
- to have your personal data erased in limited circumstances (it will not apply where the personal data is needed for the purposes of an overriding public interest).
- to restrict the use of your personal data. This is a limited right which will apply in specific circumstances and for a limited period (e.g. where a complaint has been received, until that complaint has been resolved).
- to object to use of your data by the researcher for any direct marketing, and to require him to stop such marketing.

Research Team

The research team consists of: Professor Helen Shipton, Professor Daniel King and Mr Ngoc Manh Dao from Nottingham Trent University.

Contact person: Mr Ngoc Manh Dao

Email: manh.dao2020@my.ntu.ac.uk

Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet. If you have any questions regarding the study, please don't hesitate to ask Mr Ngoc Manh Dao.

Consent Form for Questionnaire

Name of Principle Investigator: Ngoc Manh Dao

Please initial

boxes

	I confirm that I have read and understand the Participant Information Sheet for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.	
2.	I understand that taking part in this research is voluntary and that I can withdraw my participation at any point before completing my questionnaire and within two weeks after my submission.	
3.	I agree to my personal data and data relating to me collected during the study being processed as described in the Participant Information Sheet.	
4.	I agree to my data being used by the research team for future research purposes.	
5.	I agree to take part in this study.	

Name of participant

Date

Signature

Name of Person receiving
consent.

Date

Signature

Nottingham Trent University
50 Shakespeare Street, Nottingham NG1 4FQ
Tel. +44 (0)115 941 8418 www.ntu.ac.uk

HR Survey - Team Leader Questionnaire

(Research project: Relationships between HPWS, causal ascriptions, organisational citizenship behaviour and task performance: A cross-level investigation)

Dear team leader,

We are conducting a survey to gain understanding of the HR management within your organisation and how it influences employees' attitude and performance. We cordially invite you to participate in this survey.

The survey will take you about 5-7 minutes. Your participation is voluntary and anonymous. There is no risk of disclosing your identity. We would highly appreciate your participation and contribution to our research.

If you have any questions regarding the survey, please do not hesitate to send us an e-mail. We can be contacted at manh.dao2020@my.ntu.ac.uk

PART A: SURVEY

I. In this section, we would like to know your opinion about your HR policies and practices within your organisation. Please tell us the extent to which you agree with each of the statements below.

High Performance Work System

Strongly disagree	Disagree	To some extent agree	Agree	Strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5

	Training					
1.	Extensive training programs are provided to employees.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Employees will normally go through training programs every few years.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	There are formal training programs to teach new hires the skills they need to perform their job.	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Formal training programs are offered to employees in order to increase their promotability in this organisation.	1	2	3	4	5
	Staffing					
1.	Great effort is taken to select the right person.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Long-term employee potential is emphasized.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Considerable importance is placed on the staffing process.	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Very extensive efforts are made in selection.	1	2	3	4	5
	Internal Mobility					
1.	Employees have few opportunities for upward mobility	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Employees do not have any future in this organisation.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Promotion in this organisation is based on seniority	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Employees have clear career paths in this organisation	1	2	3	4	5
5.	Employees in customer contact jobs who desire promotion have more than one potential position they could be promoted to	1	2	3	4	5
	Employment Security					

1.	Employees in this job can be expected to stay with this organisation for as long as they wish.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Job security is almost guaranteed to employees in this job.	1	2	3	4	5
	Job description					
1.	The duties in this job are clearly defined.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	This job has an up-to-date description.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	The job description for a position accurately describes all of the duties performed by individual employees.	1	2	3	4	5
	Appraisal					
1.	Performance is more often measured with objective quantifiable results.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Performance appraisals are based on objective quantifiable results.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Employee appraisals emphasize long term and group-based achievement.	1	2	3	4	5
	Incentive Reward					
1.	Individuals in this job receive bonuses based on the profit of the organisation.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Close tie or matching of pay to individual/group performance.	1	2	3	4	5
	Participation					
1.	Employees in this job are often asked by their supervisor to participate in decisions.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Individuals in this job are allowed to make decisions.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Employees are provided the opportunity to suggest improvements in the way things are done.	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Supervisors keep open communications with employees in this job.	1	2	3	4	5

II. Please rate task performance of 3-5 team members by indicating to what extent you think the following statement is characteristic of the employees in your team.

Extremely uncharacteristic	Somewhat uncharacteristic	Uncertain	Somewhat characteristic	Extremely characteristic
1	2	3	4	5

Staff number _____

	Task performance					
1.	This employee meets formal performance requirements of the job.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	This employee fulfills responsibilities specified in job description.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	This employee performs tasks that are expected of him or her.	1	2	3	4	5
4.	This employee adequately completes assigned duties.	1	2	3	4	5

Staff number _____

	Task performance					
1.	This employee meets formal performance requirements of the job.	1	2	3	4	5

2.	This employee fulfills responsibilities specified in job description.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	This employee performs tasks that are expected of him or her.	1	2	3	4	5
4.	This employee adequately completes assigned duties.	1	2	3	4	5

Staff number _____

	Task performance					
1.	This employee meets formal performance requirements of the job.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	This employee fulfills responsibilities specified in job description.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	This employee performs tasks that are expected of him or her.	1	2	3	4	5
4.	This employee adequately completes assigned duties.	1	2	3	4	5

Staff number _____

	Task performance					
1.	This employee meets formal performance requirements of the job.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	This employee fulfills responsibilities specified in job description.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	This employee performs tasks that are expected of him or her.	1	2	3	4	5
4.	This employee adequately completes assigned duties.	1	2	3	4	5

Staff number _____

	Task performance					
1.	This employee meets formal performance requirements of the job.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	This employee fulfills responsibilities specified in job description.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	This employee performs tasks that are expected of him or her.	1	2	3	4	5
4.	This employee adequately completes assigned duties.	1	2	3	4	5

PART B: PERSONAL DETAILS

1. How many members are there in your team (excluding you)? _____

2. What is the function of your team?

☐ Marketing and sales

☐ HR

☐ Finance/Accounting

☐ General management/administration

☐ RandD

☐ Others (Please indicate your team's function in the blank space).

3. What is your gender?

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Other

4. What is your age?

5. How long have you worked for this firm?

----- year(s)

----- month(s)

**We highly appreciate your opinion,
Thank you so much for your participation!**

HR Survey - Employee Questionnaire

(Research project: Relationships between HPWS, causal ascriptions, organisational citizenship behaviour and task performance: A cross-level investigation)

Dear participant,

We are conducting a survey to gain understanding of the HR management within your organisation and how it influences employees' attitude and performance. We cordially invite you to participate in this survey.

The survey will take you about 10-15 minutes. For your peace of mind, please understand that your participation is voluntary and anonymous (without any identifiable details asked) and your responses are not revealed to any third party including your manager. As such, there is no risk of disclosing your identity. We would highly appreciate your participation and contribution to our research.

If you have any questions regarding the survey, please do not hesitate to send us an e-mail. We can be contacted at manh.dao2020@my.ntu.ac.uk

PART A: SURVEY

III. In this section, we would like to know your opinion about HR policies and practices within your organisation by indicating to what extent you agree with each of the following statements below:

High Performance Work System

Strongly disagree	Disagree	To some extent agree	Agree	Strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5

	Training					
1.	Extensive training programs are provided to employees.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Employees will normally go through training programs every few years.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	There are formal training programs to teach new hires the skills they need to perform their job.	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Formal training programs are offered to employees in order to increase their promotability in this organisation.	1	2	3	4	5
	Staffing					
1.	Great effort is taken to select the right person.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Long-term employee potential is emphasized.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Considerable importance is placed on the staffing process.	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Very extensive efforts are made in selection.	1	2	3	4	5
	Internal Mobility					
1.	Employees have few opportunities for upward mobility	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Employees do not have any future in this organisation.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Promotion in this organisation is based on seniority	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Employees have clear career paths in this organisation	1	2	3	4	5
5.	Employees in customer contact jobs who desire promotion have more than one potential position they could be promoted to	1	2	3	4	5
	Employment Security					

1.	Employees in this job can be expected to stay with this organisation for as long as they wish.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Job security is almost guaranteed to employees in this job.	1	2	3	4	5
	Job description					
1.	The duties in this job are clearly defined.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	This job has an up-to-date description.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	The job description for a position accurately describes all of the duties performed by individual employees.	1	2	3	4	5
	Appraisal					
1.	Performance is more often measured with objective quantifiable results.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Performance appraisals are based on objective quantifiable results.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Employee appraisals emphasize long term and group-based achievement.	1	2	3	4	5
	Incentive Reward					
1.	Individuals in this job receive bonuses based on the profit of the organisation.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Close tie or matching of pay to individual/group performance.	1	2	3	4	5
	Participation					
1.	Employees in this job are often asked by their supervisor to participate in decisions.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Individuals in this job are allowed to make decisions.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Employees are provided the opportunity to suggest improvements in the way things are done.	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Supervisors keep open communications with employees in this job.	1	2	3	4	5

II. In this organisation, if an employee progresses well (e.g. receiving a promotion, a pay rise or an award), what is likely the most important reason for this? Please write down the reason below.

Think about the reason you have written above. The item below concerns your impressions or opinion of the cause of this employee's progression. Circle one number for each of the following questions.

Is the cause something:

1. that reflects an aspect of this employee	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	reflects an aspect of something outside of this employee
2. manageable by the employee	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	not manageable by the employee
3. permanent	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	temporary
4. the employee can regulate	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	the employee cannot regulate
5. over which the employee has control	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	over which the employee has no control
6. inside of the employee	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	outside of the employee L
7. stable over time	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	variable over time S

8. under the power of someone other than the employee	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	not under the power of someone other than the employee C or L
9. something about the employee	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	something about others
10. over which the employee has power	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	over which the employee has no power
11. unchangeable	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	changeable
12. other people than the employee can regulate	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	other people than the employee cannot regulate

III. Please indicate your attitude towards your work/job based on the following statements:

Work engagement

Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very Often
1	2	3	4	5

1.	At my work, I feel bursting with energy.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	At my job, I feel strong and vigorous.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	I am enthusiastic about my job.	1	2	3	4	5
4.	My job inspires me.	1	2	3	4	5
5.	When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work.	1	2	3	4	5
6.	I feel happy when I am working intensely.	1	2	3	4	5
7.	I am proud of the work that I do.	1	2	3	4	5
8.	I am immersed in my work.	1	2	3	4	5
9.	I get carried away when I'm working.	1	2	3	4	5

Burnout

Completely disagree	Disagree	Partly disagree	Partly agree	Agree	Strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5	6

1.	I am snowed under with work.	1	2	3	4	5	6
2.	I feel dispirited at work and I think of leaving my job.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3.	I often sleep poorly because of the circumstances at work.	1	2	3	4	5	6
4.	I frequently question the value of my work.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5.	I feel that I have gradually less to give.	1	2	3	4	5	6
6.	My expectations to my job and to my performance have reduced.	1	2	3	4	5	6
7.	I constantly have bad conscience because my work forces me to neglect my close friends and relatives.	1	2	3	4	5	6
8.	I feel that I am gradually losing interest in my customers or my other employees.	1	2	3	4	5	6
9.	Honestly, I felt more appreciated at work before.	1	2	3	4	5	6

IV. Please tell us your opinion about your leader-member exchange and voice solicitation of leader by choosing the appropriate numbers as follows:

Leader-Member Exchange

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Undecided	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

1.	Regardless of how much power he/she has built into his/her position, my supervisor would be personally inclined to use his/her power to help me solve problems in my work.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2.	I can count on my supervisor to 'bail me out', even at his or her own expense, when I really need it.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3.	My supervisor understands my problems and needs.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4.	My supervisor understands my potential.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5.	My supervisor has enough confidence in me that he/she would defend and justify my decisions if I were not present to do so.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6.	I usually know where I stand with my supervisor.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7.	How would you describe your working relationship with your supervisor?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Line manager's solicitation of voice

Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very Often
1	2	3	4	5

1.	Asks me personally to tell him/her about things that I think would be helpful for improving this organisation.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Asks me personally to tell him/her about how things have been done in my previous job(s).	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Seeks out task-related knowledge from me.	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Asks me personally what skills I have that s/he may not know about that might contribute to our performance here.	1	2	3	4	5

PART B: PERSONAL DETAILS

Please answer the following questions:

1. What is your gender?

☐ Male

☐ Female

2. What is your age?

----- years

3. How long have you worked for this firm?

----- year(s)

----- month(s)

4. What is your highest education attainment?

☐ Doctoral Degree

☐ Master's Degree

☐ Bachelor's Degree

☐ Vocational Degree

☐ Others

**We highly appreciate your opinion,
Thank you so much for your participation!**

Phiếu thông tin dành cho người tham gia khảo sát

Lời mời

Chúng tôi trân trọng mời bạn tham gia vào một dự án nghiên cứu.

Trước khi bạn quyết định có tham gia hay không, xin vui lòng dành thời gian đọc kỹ thông tin sau đây và nếu muốn, bạn cũng có thể thảo luận với những người khác trong gia đình, bạn bè hoặc đồng nghiệp.

Mọi thắc mắc hoặc băn khoăn trước quyết định, xin vui lòng liên hệ ông Đào Ngọc Mạnh, qua email manh.dao2020@my.ntu.ac.uk hoặc số điện thoại: (+84) 965515508.

Mục đích của dự án nghiên cứu này là gì?

Hệ thống làm việc hiệu suất cao (HPWS) được miêu tả như một nhóm các hoạt động nhân sự (ví dụ: tuyển dụng, đào tạo, đánh giá hiệu suất, khen thưởng) bổ sung và hỗ trợ nhau để cùng hướng đến thực hiện hóa những mục tiêu chiến lược của tổ chức. Dự án này nghiên cứu tác động của HPWS đến nhận thức mục đích nhân sự, hành vi, thái độ cá nhân, qua đó ảnh hưởng đến sức khỏe và hiệu suất lao động của nhân viên trong các doanh nghiệp vừa và nhỏ Việt Nam.

Vì sao chúng tôi chọn bạn?

Chúng tôi chọn bạn tham gia dự án này vì tổ chức của bạn đáp ứng đủ các yêu cầu của dự án, chẳng hạn là một doanh nghiệp vừa và nhỏ với quy mô 30-200 nhân viên, đồng thời có áp dụng hệ thống lao động hiệu suất cao. Do đó, chúng tôi muốn kiểm tra nhận thức của nhân viên về mục đích thực hiện HPWS, từ đó giải thích sự thay đổi trong hành vi và thái độ làm việc, và cuối cùng là sức khỏe và hiệu suất lao động của nhân viên trong các doanh nghiệp vừa và nhỏ Việt Nam.

Tôi sẽ làm gì nếu tham gia?

Bạn sẽ hoàn thành một cuộc khảo sát ẩn danh trên giấy trong vòng 10-15 phút bao gồm các câu hỏi liên quan đến HPWS, nhận thức của bạn về việc tại sao HPWS được triển khai trong tổ chức, trao đổi giữa lãnh đạo và nhân viên cũng như các câu hỏi về sức khỏe cá nhân ảnh hưởng đến hiệu suất lao động. Ngoài ra, để phục vụ mục đích nghiên cứu, chúng tôi cũng cần thu thập dữ liệu cá nhân của bạn (ví dụ: tuổi, giới tính, số năm làm việc, trình độ giáo dục) và một số thông tin tổ chức (ví dụ: số lượng nhân viên, lĩnh vực hoạt động, số năm hoạt động).

Tuy nhiên, thông tin cá nhân và tổ chức sẽ được quản lý chặt chẽ theo các quy định đạo đức nghiên cứu của Trường Đại học Nottingham Trent, Vương Quốc Anh.

Tôi có phải tham gia không?

Việc tham gia của bạn vào nghiên cứu này là hoàn toàn tự nguyện. Chúng tôi đánh giá cao hỗ trợ và đóng góp của bạn cho nghiên cứu khoa học.

Bạn có thể từ chối tham gia bất kỳ lúc nào: trước, trong và sau khi trả lời bảng hỏi. Trước khi điền vào bảng câu hỏi, bạn vui lòng ký vào phiếu đồng ý để thể hiện bạn sẵn sàng tham gia vào nghiên cứu này. Bạn cũng có thể dừng tham gia bất kỳ lúc nào trước khi hoàn thành khảo sát và rút lại phần trả lời trong vòng 2 tuần sau khi hoàn thành khảo sát bằng cách liên hệ với chúng tôi qua email: manh.dao2020@my.ntu.ac.uk. Sau thời gian này, chúng tôi rất tiếc không thể xóa phần đánh giá của bạn vì chúng có thể trở thành một phần của kết quả phân tích dữ liệu phục vụ xuất bản.

Việc tôi tham gia vào nghiên cứu này có được bảo mật không?

Có. Tất cả dữ liệu bạn cung cấp sẽ được mã hóa để duy trì tính bảo mật.

Bảng câu hỏi chỉ bao gồm các chi tiết cá nhân của bạn (ví dụ: giới tính, tuổi, số năm làm việc, trình độ giáo dục) mà không có các thông tin định danh như họ tên, địa chỉ email, số điện thoại. Dữ liệu cá nhân của bạn sẽ chỉ được sử dụng bởi nhóm nghiên cứu cho mục đích nghiên cứu và không được tiết lộ cho bất kỳ ai khác. Quy trình phân tích dữ liệu sẽ được thực hiện bằng cách sử dụng dữ liệu được mã hóa.

Tất cả các bảng câu hỏi đã hoàn thành sẽ được quét (scan) và lưu trữ trong một thư mục dự án được chỉ định trên NTU DataStore. Dữ liệu sẽ không được lưu trữ trên bất kỳ thiết bị nào khác, chỉ được truy cập bằng máy tính xách tay cá nhân được bảo vệ bằng mật khẩu và được mã hóa với các gói chống vi-rút toàn diện. Máy tính chỉ phục vụ cho mục đích phân tích dữ liệu.

Những lợi ích có thể có khi tham gia là gì?

Sự tham gia của bạn sẽ góp phần vào sự hiểu biết của chúng tôi về cơ chế gián tiếp mà qua đó HPWS ảnh hưởng đến sức khỏe và hiệu suất cá nhân thông qua nhận thức của nhân viên về mục đích thực hiện HPWS trong các doanh nghiệp vừa và nhỏ Việt Nam. Thêm vào đó, các phát hiện của dự án này cung cấp bằng chứng thực nghiệm giúp các nhà hoạch định chính sách phát triển các phương pháp quản lý nhân sự nhằm cải thiện chất lượng công việc và phúc lợi của nhân viên, đặc biệt là trong bối cảnh khó lường như COVID-19. Nếu bạn quan tâm đến kết quả nghiên cứu của dự án này, vui lòng liên hệ ông Đào Ngọc Mạnh (Email: manh.dao2020@my.ntu.ac.uk) và chúng tôi rất sẵn lòng gửi cho bạn một bản tóm tắt phân tích để xem xét.

Những rủi ro có thể có khi tham gia là gì?

Ngoài việc bỏ thời gian của bạn, sẽ không có bất kỳ rủi ro hoặc chi phí nào liên quan đến việc tham gia vào nghiên cứu này.

Điều gì sẽ xảy ra với kết quả của nghiên cứu?

Những phát hiện của nghiên cứu này sẽ được lưu hành dưới dạng các bài thuyết trình và ấn phẩm khoa học. Lưu ý rằng nhóm nghiên cứu chỉ báo cáo kết quả ở định dạng dữ liệu tổng hợp, chẳng hạn như giá trị trung bình, độ lệch chuẩn và mối tương quan. Chúng tôi đảm bảo rằng các báo cáo sẽ không tiết lộ bất kỳ thông tin cá nhân nào của bạn. Không có bên thứ ba nào, ngay cả tổ chức của bạn, có thể truy cập câu trả lời và dữ liệu cá nhân của bạn.

Dữ liệu cá nhân của bạn

Quyền riêng tư và bảo vệ thông tin cá nhân của bạn là nhiệm vụ rất quan trọng và chúng tôi cam kết tuân thủ chặt chẽ Quy định bảo vệ dữ liệu chung của Vương quốc Anh và Đạo luật bảo vệ dữ liệu năm 2018 (*Để biết thêm thông tin, vui lòng đọc <https://www.gov.uk/data-protection>*).

Việc tham gia vào dự án nghiên cứu này là hoàn toàn tự nguyện và bảo mật. Dữ liệu được lưu trữ ẩn danh. Sau khi hoàn thành khảo sát, dữ liệu sẽ được nhóm nghiên cứu sử dụng để phục vụ kết quả nghiên cứu. Dữ liệu sẽ được nhà nghiên cứu trực tiếp thu thập và lưu trữ trong một thư mục dự án được chỉ định trên NTU DataStore. Dữ liệu sẽ không được lưu trữ trên bất kỳ thiết bị nào khác, chỉ được truy cập bằng máy tính xách tay cá nhân được bảo vệ bằng mật khẩu và được mã hóa với các gói chống vi-rút toàn diện và chỉ sử dụng cho mục đích phân tích dữ liệu. Mật khẩu được lưu trữ ở định dạng an toàn, không thể đảo ngược. Bắt buộc phải thay đổi mật khẩu sau mỗi 180 ngày. Có giới hạn về số lần đăng nhập không thành công và chế độ khóa tự động khi không hoạt động. Tất cả các hệ điều hành đều có tường lửa bảo vệ và nâng cấp an ninh, và lỗi liên quan đến bảo mật để tránh vi rút và mã độc hại. Việc truyền dữ liệu sẽ được giữ ở mức tối thiểu. Dữ liệu sẽ chỉ được truy cập bởi nhóm nghiên cứu và sẽ không được gửi qua email hoặc các phương tiện truyền tệp khác mà không mã hóa chúng trước.

Dự án này có được xem xét và phê duyệt không?

Dự án đã nhận được phê duyệt về đạo đức nghiên cứu từ Ủy ban Đạo đức Nghiên cứu, Khoa Kinh doanh, Luật và Khoa học Xã hội.

Nếu tôi lo lắng hay băn khoăn về việc tham gia nghiên cứu của tôi thì sao?

Nếu bạn có bất kỳ thắc mắc nào về việc tham gia nghiên cứu này, vui lòng liên hệ ông Đào Ngọc Mạnh, hiện đang theo học Tiến sĩ tại Trường Nottingham Trent, Vương quốc Anh qua email: manh.dao2020@my.ntu.ac.uk hoặc số điện thoại: (+84) 965515508

Quyền lợi của bạn

Nhóm nghiên cứu chỉ có thể tiếp cận và sử dụng dữ liệu cá nhân phục vụ mục đích nghiên cứu dựa vào sự đồng ý của bạn. Điều này có nghĩa là bạn có quyền rút lại đồng ý của mình bất kỳ lúc nào trước khi hoàn thành bảng câu hỏi và trong vòng hai tuần kể từ khi gửi phản đánh giá cho chúng tôi.

Bạn cũng có các quyền khác:

- yêu cầu một bản sao dữ liệu cá nhân của bạn.
- yêu cầu sửa chữa những điểm không chính xác, và khi thích hợp, có quyền hoàn thành dữ liệu không đầy đủ.
- xóa dữ liệu cá nhân của bạn.
- hạn chế việc sử dụng dữ liệu cá nhân của bạn.
- phản đối việc nhà nghiên cứu sử dụng dữ liệu của bạn cho bất kỳ hoạt động tiếp thị trực tiếp nào và yêu cầu nhà nghiên cứu ngừng các hoạt động tiếp thị như vậy.

Nhóm nghiên cứu

Nhóm nghiên cứu bao gồm: Giáo sư Helen Shipton, Giáo sư Daniel King và Ông Đào Ngọc Mạnh đến từ Đại học Nottingham Trent, Vương Quốc Anh.

Người liên hệ: Ông Đào Ngọc Mạnh

Email: manh.dao2020@my.ntu.ac.uk

Tel: (+84) 965515508

Cảm ơn bạn đã dành thời gian đọc phiếu thông tin này. Nếu bạn có bất kỳ câu hỏi nào liên quan đến nghiên cứu, vui lòng liên hệ ông Đào Ngọc Mạnh.

Khảo sát Nhân sự - Bảng hỏi dành cho Trưởng nhóm

(Dự án nghiên cứu: *High-performance work systems, HR attributions and employee well-being: A study of Vietnamese SMEs*)

Kính gửi Trưởng nhóm,

Chúng tôi đang tiến hành một cuộc khảo sát để tìm hiểu về thực tiễn Quản trị Nhân sự trong tổ chức của Quý vị và phạm vi ảnh hưởng của hoạt động này đến nhận thức, thái độ, sức khỏe và hiệu suất lao động của nhân viên. Chúng tôi trân trọng kính mời Quý vị tham gia cuộc khảo sát này.

Quý vị chỉ mất khoảng 10-15 phút để hoàn thành bảng khảo sát. Chúng tôi cũng xin lưu ý rằng sự tham gia của Quý vị là tự nguyện. Thông tin cá nhân của Quý vị sẽ được bảo mật tuyệt đối. Chúng tôi đánh giá cao sự tham gia và đóng góp của Quý vị trong dự án nghiên cứu này.

Nếu Quý vị có bất kỳ thắc mắc nào liên quan đến bảng khảo sát, xin vui lòng liên hệ với chúng tôi qua e-mail: manh.dao2020@my.ntu.ac.uk

PHẦN A: KHẢO SÁT

Dưới đây là những nhận định về chính sách nhân sự được thực hiện trong tổ chức của Quý vị. Xin vui lòng cho biết mức độ đồng ý với mỗi nhận định bằng cách khoanh tròn vào con số tương ứng (từ '1 = hoàn toàn không đồng ý' đến '7 = hoàn toàn đồng ý')

1	Công ty chúng tôi thực hiện đánh giá hiệu suất năng lực của nhân viên	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2	Công ty chúng tôi thường xuyên đưa ra các phản hồi về hiệu suất lao động của nhân viên.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3	Công ty chúng tôi thường xuyên cập nhật tình hình kinh doanh của doanh nghiệp.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4	Công ty chúng tôi cung cấp các chương trình đào tạo sau khi tuyển dụng.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5	Công ty chúng tôi tổ chức sự kiện giao lưu như ăn trưa/ăn tối cùng nhau, các hoạt động team-building giúp gắn kết nhân viên.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6	Công ty chúng tôi cung cấp các chính sách tiền thưởng khích lệ cho nhân viên, ví dụ như tháng lương thứ 13, kỳ nghỉ lễ do công ty chi trả, tiền mặt/quà tặng vào các ngày lễ tết (ví dụ: ngày quốc khánh, tết dương/âm lịch).	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7	Công ty chúng tôi áp dụng các chương trình trao thưởng và ghi nhận cho nhân viên.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	Công ty chúng tôi khích lệ đưa ra ý kiến đóng góp để cách cải thiện công ty.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9	Công ty chúng tôi cung cấp chương trình bảo hiểm xã hội/y tế theo mức lương của nhân viên.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10	Công ty chúng tôi sử dụng các bài kiểm tra tuyển chọn hoặc các phương pháp sàng lọc khác khi tuyển dụng.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11	Công ty chúng tôi sàng lọc lý lịch/trình độ giáo dục của các ứng viên tuyển dụng	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12	Công ty chúng tôi xem làm việc nhóm như một phần quan trọng của thiết kế công việc.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13	Công ty chúng tôi sử dụng các hướng dẫn bằng văn bản để giải quyết các trường hợp nhân viên không hoàn thành nhiệm vụ.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

14	Mức lương của nhân viên trong công ty chúng tôi dựa vào vị trí công việc, kinh nghiệm và hiệu suất lao động.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
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Xin vui lòng đánh giá hiệu suất làm việc của nhân viên thông qua mức độ đồng ý của Quý vị với mỗi nhận định dưới đây (từ '1 = không hoàn thành' đến '7 = hoàn thành xuất sắc')

Staff number _____

1	Nhân viên này có những sáng kiến để định hướng nhân viên mới của phòng ngay cả khi điều này không có trong miêu tả công việc của anh/cô ấy.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2	Nhân viên này giúp đỡ đồng nghiệp khi khối lượng công việc nhiều (hỗ trợ họ cho đến khi vượt qua những khó khăn trong công việc) thậm chí ngay cả khi không được yêu cầu làm vậy.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3	Nhân viên này giúp đỡ đồng nghiệp trong công việc khi họ vắng mặt thậm chí khi không được yêu cầu làm vậy.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4	Nhân viên sẵn sàng tham gia vào các chức năng nhiệm vụ mà lãnh đạo không yêu cầu nhằm giúp nâng cao hình ảnh/uy tín của công ty.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5	Nhân viên này xung phong làm các công việc không có trong hợp đồng.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6	Nhân viên này hỗ trợ tôi hoàn thành nhiệm vụ của mình	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Staff number _____

1	Nhân viên này có những sáng kiến để định hướng nhân viên mới của phòng ngay cả khi điều này không có trong miêu tả công việc của anh/cô ấy.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
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5	Nhân viên này xung phong làm các công việc không có trong hợp đồng	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
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Staff number _____

1	Nhân viên này có những sáng kiến để định hướng nhân viên mới của phòng ngay cả khi điều này không có trong miêu tả công việc của anh/cô ấy.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
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5	Nhân viên này xung phong làm các công việc không có trong hợp đồng	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6	Nhân viên này hỗ trợ tôi hoàn thành nhiệm vụ của mình	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Staff number _____

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6	Nhân viên này hỗ trợ tôi hoàn thành nhiệm vụ của mình	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Staff number _____

1	Nhân viên này có những sáng kiến để định hướng nhân viên mới của phòng ngay cả khi điều này không có trong miêu tả công việc của anh/cô ấy.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
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6	Nhân viên này hỗ trợ tôi hoàn thành nhiệm vụ của mình	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Xin vui lòng đánh giá hiệu suất làm việc của nhân viên thông qua quan điểm của Quý vị đối với mỗi nhận định dưới đây về nhân viên trong nhóm của mình (từ '1 = rất không điển hình' đến '5 = rất điển hình')

Staff number _____

1.	Nhân viên này đáp ứng yêu cầu về hiệu suất công việc	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Nhân viên này hoàn thành trách nhiệm quy định trong miêu tả công việc	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Nhân viên này đáp ứng kỳ vọng khi triển khai công việc	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Nhân viên này hoàn thành tốt công việc được giao	1	2	3	4	5

Staff number _____

1.	Nhân viên này đáp ứng yêu cầu về hiệu suất công việc	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Nhân viên này hoàn thành trách nhiệm quy định trong miêu tả công việc	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Nhân viên này đáp ứng kỳ vọng khi triển khai công việc	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Nhân viên này hoàn thành tốt công việc được giao	1	2	3	4	5

Staff number _____

1.	Nhân viên này đáp ứng yêu cầu về hiệu suất công việc	1	2	3	4	5
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2.	Nhân viên này hoàn thành trách nhiệm quy định trong miêu tả công việc	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Nhân viên này đáp ứng kỳ vọng khi triển khai công việc	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Nhân viên này hoàn thành tốt công việc được giao	1	2	3	4	5

Staff number _____

1.	Nhân viên này đáp ứng yêu cầu về hiệu suất công việc	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Nhân viên này hoàn thành trách nhiệm quy định trong miêu tả công việc	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Nhân viên này đáp ứng kỳ vọng khi triển khai công việc	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Nhân viên này hoàn thành tốt công việc được giao	1	2	3	4	5

Staff number _____

1.	Nhân viên này đáp ứng yêu cầu về hiệu suất công việc	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Nhân viên này hoàn thành trách nhiệm quy định trong miêu tả công việc	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Nhân viên này đáp ứng kỳ vọng khi triển khai công việc	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Nhân viên này hoàn thành tốt công việc được giao	1	2	3	4	5

PHẦN B: Anh/Chị xin vui lòng cung cấp một số thông tin sau:

1. Có bao nhiêu nhân viên trong công ty Anh/Chị?

2. Công ty Anh/Chị hoạt động trong lĩnh vực gì?

- ☐ CNTT
☐ Dược/Vật tư y tế
☐ Bảo hiểm
☐ Chăm sóc sức khỏe
☐ Du lịch lữ hành
☐ Bất động sản
☐ Dịch vụ khác (vui lòng chi tiết):

3. Công ty Anh/Chị hoạt động được bao lâu rồi?

4. Công ty Anh/Chị thuộc loại hình doanh nghiệp nào?

- ☐ Nhà nước
☐ Tư nhân
☐ Khác (Xin vui lòng chi tiết):.....

**Chúng tôi đánh giá cao ý kiến đóng góp của Quý vị,
Chân thành cảm ơn Quý vị!**

Khảo sát nhân sự - Bảng hỏi dành cho nhân viên

(Research project: High-performance work systems, HR attributions and employee well-being: A study of Vietnamese SMEs)

Kính gửi thành viên tham gia khảo sát,

Chúng tôi đang tiến hành một cuộc khảo sát để tìm hiểu về thực tiễn Quản trị Nhân sự trong tổ chức của Quý vị và phạm vi ảnh hưởng của hoạt động này đến nhận thức, thái độ, sức khỏe và hiệu suất lao động của nhân viên. Chúng tôi trân trọng kính mời Quý vị tham gia cuộc khảo sát này.

Quý vị chỉ mất khoảng 10-15 phút để hoàn thành bảng khảo sát này. Chúng tôi cũng xin được lưu ý rằng sự tham gia của Quý vị là tự nguyện. Thông tin cá nhân của Quý vị sẽ được bảo mật tuyệt đối. Chúng tôi đánh giá cao sự tham gia và đóng góp của Quý vị trong nghiên cứu này.

Nếu Quý vị có bất kỳ thắc mắc nào liên quan đến khảo sát này, xin vui lòng liên hệ với chúng tôi qua e-mail: manh.dao2020@my.ntu.ac.uk

PHẦN A: KHẢO SÁT

Trong tổ chức này, nếu một nhân viên có nhiều tiến bộ (ví dụ: được thăng chức, tăng lương hoặc nhận thưởng), lý do quan trọng nhất cho việc này có thể là gì? Xin vui lòng ghi lại lý do dưới đây:

Hãy suy nghĩ về lý do Quý vị đã viết ở trên. Các nhận định phía dưới liên quan đến cảm nhận hay ý kiến của Quý vị về nguyên nhân dẫn đến sự thăng tiến của nhân viên đó. Các nhận định được sắp xếp đối xứng và có ý nghĩa tương phản nhau. Xin vui lòng có biết mức độ đồng ý của Quý vị bằng cách khoanh tròn vào con số tương ứng.

1 = Hoàn toàn đồng ý với nhận định bên trái	2 = Đồng ý với nhận định bên trái	3 = Đồng ý một phần với nhận định bên trái	4 = Không xác định	5 = Đồng ý một phần với nhận định bên phải	6 = Đồng ý với nhận định bên phải	7 = Hoàn toàn đồng ý với nhận định bên phải
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Nguyên nhân nhân viên được thăng tiến là:

Phản ánh một khía cạnh nào đó bên ngoài	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Phản ánh một khía cạnh nào đó của nhân viên
Ngoài tầm kiểm soát của nhân viên	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Trong tầm kiểm soát của nhân viên
Tạm thời	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Lâu dài
Nhân viên không thể chỉnh đốn công việc	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Nhân viên có thể chỉnh đốn công việc
Do ảnh hưởng từ bên ngoài	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Xuất phát từ chính bản thân nhân viên
Thay đổi theo thời gian	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Ổn định theo thời gian
Đến từ những người khác	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Đến từ nhân viên
Về một vấn đề nào đó nhân viên không có quyền hạn/sức ảnh hưởng	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Về một vấn đề nào đó nhân viên có quyền hạn/sức ảnh hưởng
Có thể thay đổi	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Không thay đổi

Dưới đây là nguyên nhân vì sao công ty Quý vị triển khai các hoạt động quản lý nhân sự. Xin vui lòng cho biết mức độ đồng ý hoặc không đồng ý với mỗi nhận định bằng cách khoanh tròn vào con số tương ứng (từ '1 = hoàn toàn không đồng ý' đến '7 = hoàn toàn đồng ý').

1.	Để đặt ra những tiêu chuẩn quá cao về hiệu suất	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2.	Để khuyến khích nhân viên làm việc nhiều hơn quy định trong hợp đồng lao động	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3.	Để khuyến khích nhân viên làm việc vào buổi tối hay cuối tuần	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4.	Để cắt giảm các chi phí của công ty	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5.	Để cắt giảm chi phí hoạt động	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6.	Để tiết kiệm tiền cho tổ chức	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7.	Để giúp tổ chức hoạt động trơn tru	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8.	Để hỗ trợ hiệu suất của nhân viên	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9.	Để tăng tính hiệu quả trong công việc của nhân viên	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10.	Để nâng cao mức độ hài lòng công việc của nhân viên	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11.	Để đảm bảo khối lượng công việc có thể kiểm soát được.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12.	Để tăng cường sức khỏe cho nhân viên	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13.	Để đáp ứng các yêu cầu của công đoàn về tính công bằng cho nhân viên	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14.	Để thỏa mãn yêu cầu của công đoàn	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15.	Để minh bạch vì lợi ích của công đoàn	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Xin vui lòng cho biết ý kiến của Quý vị về tương tác giữa nhân viên và lãnh đạo bằng cách khoanh tròn vào lựa chọn câu trả lời cho các câu hỏi sau:

1.	Bạn biết mình đứng ở vị trí nào trong mối quan hệ với lãnh đạo... bạn có thường xuyên biết lãnh đạo của bạn hài lòng như thế nào với những gì bạn làm không?	Hiếm khi	Vài lần	Đôi khi	Khá thường xuyên	Rất thường xuyên
2.	Lãnh đạo hiểu rõ các vấn đề và nhu cầu công việc của bạn đến mức nào?	Không chút nào	Một chút	Tương đối	Khá nhiều	Rất nhiều
3.	Lãnh đạo công nhận tiềm năng/năng lực của bạn như thế nào?	Hoàn toàn không	Một chút	Bình thường	Khá nhiều	Hoàn toàn có
4.	Bạn có những thay đổi như thế nào khi lãnh đạo dùng những quyền lực họ có để giúp bạn giải quyết các vấn đề công việc?	Không bao giờ	Một chút	Bình thường	Nhiều	Rất nhiều
5.	Bạn có cho rằng dù quyền hạn như thế nào thì lãnh đạo của bạn cũng sẽ đứng ra bảo lãnh/bảo vệ cho bạn dù phải chịu thiệt thòi cho bản thân không? .	Không bao giờ	Hiếm khi	Bình thường	Thường xuyên	Rất thường xuyên
6.	Tôi có đủ có niềm tin vào lãnh đạo của mình để bảo vệ và biện minh cho các quyết định của lãnh đạo nếu anh ấy/cô ấy không có mặt để làm hoặc giải quyết một việc gì đó.	Hoàn toàn không đồng ý	Không đồng ý	Không có ý kiến	Đồng ý	Hoàn toàn đồng ý

7.	Bạn sẽ mô tả mối quan hệ công việc của mình với lãnh đạo như thế nào?	Rất không hiệu quả	Kém hơn bình thường	Bình thường	Tốt hơn bình thường	Rất hiệu quả

Xin vui lòng cho biết mức độ đồng ý của Quý vị với mỗi nhận định phía dưới (từ '1 = hoàn toàn không đồng ý' đến '7 = hoàn toàn đồng ý').

1.	Tôi tin rằng tổ chức của tôi nói một đằng làm một nẻo	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2.	Các chính sách, mục tiêu và hoạt động thực tiễn của tổ chức dường như có rất ít điểm chung.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3.	Khi Ban giám đốc nói sẽ làm một cái gì đó, tôi tự hỏi liệu điều đó có thực sự xảy ra hay không.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4.	Tổ chức của tôi mong đợi nhân viên làm hoặc thể hiện một điều gì đó, nhưng lại trao thưởng cho một điều khác.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5.	Tôi thấy có ít tương đồng giữa những gì công ty nói sẽ làm và những gì công ty thực sự làm.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Vui lòng cho chúng tôi biết ý kiến của Quý vị về mức độ lãnh đạo khuyến khích nhân viên đưa ra quan điểm/tiếng nói của mình bằng cách khoanh tròn vào mức độ đồng ý với từng nhận định dưới đây (Từ '1 = không bao giờ' đến '5 = rất thường xuyên').

1.	Yêu cầu riêng tôi nói với anh ấy/cô ấy về những điều tôi nghĩ sẽ giúp ích cho việc cải thiện tổ chức.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Yêu cầu riêng tôi cho anh ấy/cô ấy biết về cách mà mọi thứ đã được thực hiện trong (các) công việc trước đây của tôi.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Hỏi tôi kiến thức liên quan đến công việc	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Hỏi riêng tôi những kỹ năng anh ấy/cô ấy có thể không biết để giúp nâng cao hiệu suất chung của tổ chức.	1	2	3	4	5

Vui lòng cho biết mức độ Quý vị đồng ý với các phát biểu bằng cách khoanh tròn vào số tương ứng (từ '1 = hoàn toàn không đồng ý' đến '7 = hoàn toàn đồng ý').

1.	Ở cơ quan, tôi cảm thấy tràn đầy năng lượng.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2.	Trong công việc, tôi cảm thấy mạnh mẽ và đầy sức sống.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3.	Tôi nhiệt tình/tâm huyết với công việc của mình.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4.	Công việc truyền cảm hứng cho tôi.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5.	Khi tôi thức dậy mỗi sáng, tôi cảm thấy muốn đi làm.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6.	Tôi cảm thấy hạnh phúc khi được làm việc hăng say.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7.	Tôi tự hào về công việc mà tôi làm.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8.	Tôi đang đắm chìm trong công việc của mình.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Vui lòng cho biết mức độ Quý vị đồng ý với các phát biểu bằng cách khoanh tròn vào số tương ứng (từ '1 = hoàn toàn không đồng ý' đến '7 = hoàn toàn đồng ý').

1.	Tôi thích công việc của mình	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
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2.	Đôi mắt với trọng trách công việc hàng ngày là một trải nghiệm khổ cực và nhàm chán	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3.	Công việc đối với tôi giống như làm việc vật hoặc cảm thấy nặng nề.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4.	Tôi bị cuốn đi khi tôi đang làm việc	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5.	Tôi dành thời gian suy nghĩ để làm sao hoàn thành công việc tốt hơn.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6.	Tôi cảm thấy gắn kết với các sự kiện tổ chức tại cơ quan.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7.	Tôi đã từng có nhiều tham vọng về công việc của mình hơn bây giờ.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8.	Tôi đã từng quan tâm đến công việc của mình, nhưng bây giờ những thứ khác quan trọng hơn đối với tôi.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9.	Tôi khá thường xuyên cảm thấy muốn ở nhà thay vì đến cơ quan làm việc.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Vui lòng cho biết mức độ Quý vị đồng ý với mỗi câu dưới đây bằng cách khoanh tròn số tương ứng (từ '1 = hoàn toàn không đồng ý' đến '6 = hoàn toàn đồng ý').

1.	Tôi đang ngập đầu trong công việc.	1	2	3	4	5	6
2.	Tôi cảm thấy mất niềm tin/tinh thần trong công việc và tôi nghĩ đến bỏ công việc của mình.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3.	Tôi thường ngủ không ngon giấc vì công việc ở cơ quan.	1	2	3	4	5	6
4.	Tôi thường xuyên đặt câu hỏi về giá trị công việc của mình.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5.	Tôi cảm thấy tôi ngày càng dành ít tâm trí để cống hiến cho công ty	1	2	3	4	5	6
6.	Kỷ vọng và hiệu suất công việc của tôi đã giảm xuống.	1	2	3	4	5	6
7.	Tôi liên tục cảm thấy có lỗi vì công việc của tôi buộc tôi phải bỏ bê những người bạn thân thiết và người thân của mình.	1	2	3	4	5	6
8.	Tôi cảm thấy rằng mình đang dần mất hứng thú/quan tâm với khách hàng hay với những nhân viên khác.	1	2	3	4	5	6
9.	Thành thật mà nói, tôi cảm thấy được đánh giá cao hơn trong công việc từ trước đến nay	1	2	3	4	5	6

PHẦN B: Xin vui lòng trả lời câu hỏi sau:

1. Giới tính của bạn là gì?

- ☐ Nam
☐ Nữ
☐ Khác

2. Bạn bao nhiêu tuổi?

3. Bạn làm việc trong công ty được bao lâu rồi?

----- năm

----- tháng

4. Vui lòng cho chúng tôi biết trình độ giáo dục cao nhất của bạn?

- ☐ Trung học cơ sở hoặc thấp hơn
☐ Trung học phổ thông
☐ Cao đẳng hoặc học nghề
☐ Cử nhân
☐ Thạc sĩ
☐ Tiến sĩ

**Chúng tôi đánh giá cao ý kiến đóng góp của Quý vị,
Chân thành cảm ơn Quý vị!**

