Exploring how and why the front line manager impacts employee attitudes and behaviours in the context of a high performance work system

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Exploring *how* and *why* the front line manager impacts employee attitudes and behaviours in the context of a high performance work system

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Volume I of I

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Abstract

ABSTRACT

The study evaluates the role of the front line manager in both the how and why of HRM and performance. Through the lens of social exchange theory, the study queries the mediating effect of supervisory and organisational support on front line manager and employee relationships. The study uses a single case study organisation, Medco, to test the research model using both an employee survey (n=613) and semi-structured interviews (n=22) with employees and front line managers. Findings show the front line manager displays influential behaviours relating to policy enactment, coaching, leadership and organisational agency styles. The study finds support for an association between perceptions of how a front line manager behaves in the workplace and employee attitudes and behaviours. The study also finds evidence that the front line manager may themselves be a victim of the HPWS environment displaying uncertainty, workplace pressure, a reliance on personal power (charisma), and a lack of institutional (HR department) support. The study, firstly, contributes to theory by furthering the applicability of social exchange theory, while also advancing understanding of the front line manager role within the context of HPWS. Secondly, new avenues of methodological investigation are advanced and discussed to understand the FLM impact at workgroup level. The study demonstrates the application of advanced mediation analysis, namely a bootstrapping technique, including the development of a macro for Minitab statistical software. Finally, the practical implications of this study are considered for HPWS and organisational management.
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I, Jennifer McDermott, certify that the thesis is all my own work and I have not obtained a degree in this University, or elsewhere, on the basis of this work.

______________________________
Date: ____/___/____
Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

According to Plato (380BC), the beginning is the most important part of any work (Lee, 2003). The beginning of the current study is an absence of good theory to explain how and why people management practices may have an impact on workplace performance. As a student of human resource management (HRM), and a former human resources professional, such absence motivated not only a change of career, but also the commencement of a PhD study towards a better understanding of the field of HRM. The ensuing research study attempts to add knowledge to the field of management by developing deeper understanding of the mechanisms by which good human resource practices may influence performance outcomes. The introductory chapter elaborates on the challenges and gaps in the HRM literature, culminating in a pointed research question to advance the theoretical foundations of a tenuous HRM-Performance Link. The research approach is subsequently provided by way of a chapter overview. The chapter overview includes a literature review, research methodology, empirical data collection and analysis, and a discussion to appropriately position the findings in relation to theory, methods and practice.

1.2 The Research Question

The current study is located in the field of management research, with specific relevance to the area of human resource management and employee relations. In recent decades, HRM literature has converged on a particular line of inquiry related to the potential relationship between HRM and organisational performance outcomes (Guest, 2011). Advancements in empirical studies
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have revealed a multi-faceted problem, commencing with a strategic level debate regarding the competitive value of employees and return on investment (Wright et al., 1994; Lepak and Snell, 1999); an institutional debate regarding organisational performance trends and investment in human resources (Huselid, 1995; Wall and Wood, 2005); a functional human resources debate regarding the configuration of policies and practices (Purcell, 1999); and more recently, a front line management debate regarding the specific enactment of those human resource practices and policies at the point of production (Renwick, 2003; Purcell and Hutchinson, 2007; Hutchinson and Purcell, 2010; Townsend et al, 2012; Vermeeren, 2014). Within each of the debates, there exists a number of contrasting perspectives. At a macro level, these perspectives may be divided between those who accept there is a connection between HRM and performance and those who do not. The latter perspective is primarily concerned with the continuity of studies concerned with establishing or disproving the so-called HRM-Performance Link (Wall and Wood, 2005). The former, where the study is best located, has turned attention to investigating the mechanisms to help explain how a relationship between HRM and performance might be enacted (Purcell et al, 2003). The micro issues, within this school of thought, are explored in the study towards understanding how the FLM can better inform the mechanisms of potential relationships, and why the FLM influence may occur.

Calls for research in this area have come, firstly, from empirical studies that have investigated the association between HRM and Performance and found a chasm in theory and understanding. Purcell et al (2003:02) put it simply: “we do not know why or how HR policies translate into performance”. The absence of knowledge on the ‘why’ and ‘how’ is commonly referred to as the “black box” (Purcell et al, 2003). The ‘black box’ metaphor represents the variables and interactions that bridge HR inputs with outputs in employee attitudes, behaviour and performance. Early studies focused on single respondent feedback from HR professionals, which is now understood to be a constrained or biased perspective on the mechanisms of any link between HRM and performance (Guest, 2011). In addition, recent advancements in relation to the black box have uncovered the enactment of HR policies and practices is often performed by the front line manager (Renwick, 2003; Purcell and Hutchinson, 2007; Boxhall and Purcell, 2008; Townsend et al, 2012). The study seeks to illuminate the ‘black box’ by further examining the potential value of the front line manager (FLM) as an explanatory variable. A second call for this type of study emerges from a realisation that there may be a gap between
intended and implemented HRM practices (Wright and Nishi, 2006). Guest (2011) highlights this gap is a major challenge for the advancement of HRM literature. As the FLM is a primary actor in the implementation of HRM practices, the research question will uncover the mechanisms by which policies are enacted by the FLM.

A final and important rationale for this study is the ‘atheoretical’ basis of HRM and management as an academic discipline of Guest (2011). With over 20 years of literature and hundreds of research studies, he claims that “we are still in no position to assert with any confidence that good HRM has an impact on organisation performance” (Guest, 2011:11). It appears that despite some studies demonstrating a link, the absence of an explanatory theory and causal understanding of the mechanisms of a HRM-Performance link will continue to prevent even the most rigorous studies from being a credible witness to that assertion. The shadow of doubt cast from a dearth of understanding bears heavily on the field, as if HRM studies are all unsuspecting victims of a management placebo effect. And, not surprisingly given that the logic of any given phenomenon is a key component of theory building (Eisenhardt, 1989), the question of a real impact versus an observed coincidence will continue until advances in the how and why are made.

In parallel to these challenges, the assumption of performance outcomes associated with HRM has given rise to the term High Performance Work System (HPWS), whereby HPWS represents the specific bundle and configuration of HRM practices that are focused on achieving performance outcomes, with a specific employee experience related to ability, motivation and opportunity (Appelbaum et al, 2000; Boxhall and Purcell, 2003; Townsend, 2012; Guest and Wright, 2013). It is within the context of HPWS that the current study seeks to advance understanding of the front line manager role. Hence, the primary research question is developed to include the HPWS context, the FLM role and a specific focus on the mechanisms of relationships in terms of both how and why they occur:

*How and why does the front line manager role impact employee attitudes and behaviours in the context of a high performance work system?*
INTRODUCTION

The next section provides a summary of the chapters that progress the response to this question through a process of literature review, research design, empirical data collection, analysis and interpretation, and culminating in a discussion to advance theory, methods, and practice.

1.3 Thesis Summary

The next chapter, Chapter Two, commences with a review of relevant literature in the field of HPWS, performance and front line management. It builds on existing studies to provide evidential support for the research question. The point of departure of the study is the process model of HRM, presented by Purcell and Hutchinson (2007). The model reveals the FLM role as existing at the intersection between intended HR practices and enacted HR practices. In their study, Purcell and Hutchinson (2007:04) define FLMs as “those in the lower echelons of the management hierarchy with immediate responsibility for their subordinates’ work and performance”. Chapter Two builds on the current FLM definition with a new construct to best inform the research question at hand. Beginning with a historical review of the FLM role, the chapter narrows to specify gaps in knowledge of the FLM. In response to gaps in knowledge, a new conceptualisation of the FLM role is defined by four behavioural types of interest to the study. Following a review of empirical studies that signpost relationships between FLM behavioural type and employee outcomes, a summary construct is offered. The chapter concludes with an adjusted relational model to explain how the FLM may impact a HRM-Performance relationship.

Chapter Three moves to a theoretical framework that offers explanatory logic regarding the why of a FLM impact. Social Exchange Theory (SET) offers a lens through which the research questions can be explored. Anchored in Gouldner 1960’s norm of reciprocity, the chapter reveals various exchange ideologies that may explain why employee performance changes in response to FLM behaviour. The chapter synthesises current models and proposes the conceptualisation of a ‘zone of reciprocity’. The ‘zone of reciprocity’ enhances the research model, adding a potential mediation effect of perceived support to further explain why the FLM may have an influence.
Chapter Four moves the relational model from the rhetoric to a testable reality through the development of a research methodology. A set of research objectives emerge from the research question, and a series of hypotheses underpinning the model are revealed. Both quantitative and qualitative approaches are explained in the context of a single case-study organisation. Specific statistical techniques are outlined to inform a multi-methods research design that combines numerical data with qualitative evidence to advance the research question. The research context is described briefly. Finally, a pilot study offers indicative support for a larger-scale study, as well as further exploratory opportunity using employee data, both of which ultimately inform the findings and conclusions from the study.

The initial biographical and descriptive findings are outlined in Chapter Five. Firstly a description of the respondent population is outlined by a set of biographical variables. Secondly, descriptive statistics are offered on the entire sample including mean, standard deviation, distribution, outliers and correlations. Scales outlined in chapter four are tested for validity, using Principal Component Analysis and Cronbach alpha statistics. The qualitative outcomes are also summarised including participant demographics, evaluation of the questionnaire instrument and a summary of emerging key themes.

Chapter Six presents the data findings relating to relationships between FLM behavioural type and employee behaviours and attitudes. It presents the quantitative data in terms of correlation analysis and regression testing, as well as qualitative excerpts for descriptive context. Findings are consolidated in a summary of hypotheses conclusions, based on the research model developed in Chapter Four.

Similarly Chapter Seven reports on the findings of the research model, this time with a focus on the mechanisms of reciprocity. Presenting an advanced statistical technique, it offers perspective on the mediating effects of perceived support on relationships between FLM behavioural type and employee attitudes and behaviours. In addition, qualitative evidence is
presented where applicable to give further contextual meaning to the mechanisms of organisational support.

Chapter Eight emerges with an exploratory multi-level approach to data analysis. Building on new relationships indicated in the pilot study, the chapter presents both quantitative and qualitative reflection on whether the FLM role matters at a group level, and who the FLMs are from the perspective of themselves and their employees.

The research study informs a discussion in Chapter Nine which attempts to reflect on the overall knowledge and understanding garnished from the study, and locate them in the context of current literature. It discusses the research findings in terms of how and separately, why the FLM role impacts employee attitudes and behaviours in a HPWS context. A “master-victim dichotomy” to represent the FLM impact is presented. As a master, the FLM has power and influence that can directly and indirectly affect employee attitudes and behaviours. However, as a victim of HPWS, the FLM is subject themselves to the power dynamics of the employment relationship, to the variation in enactment of HR practices, and to the dilemmas of perceived versus actual authority and agency behaviours. Drawing on a cross section of themes from the preceeding chapters, it presents new understanding and debates to advance the application of Social Exchange Theory as a potential theoretical foundation upon which to build logic and understanding in the field of HRM. Specifically, a “zone of reciprocity’ construct, acknowledges the individual nature of exchange relationships. Building on this, the chapter concludes with the identification of opportunities for further research.

Chapter Ten concludes the study by providing a summary of the key contributions of the research to theory, methods and practice. In addition it provides a synthesis of the key limitations of the research study. The chapter concludes that the research question has advanced to a new stage of inquiry. The key conclusion of the study is that the FLM impacts the relationship between HPWS and employee outcomes in how their role as masters and victims of the HR policies manifests in their behaviour towards employees - and why that in turn leads to
the addition or withdrawal of employee discretionary effort mediated by individual perceptions, of which organisational and FLM support are key factors of relevance.

1.4 Conclusion

Chapter One provides an introduction to the research study and its constituent chapters. Through an overview of the challenges in unlocking the black box of a HRM-Performance Link, as well as recent calls for further inquiry related to front line management, the stage is set for an important research question (Figure 1.4.1).

**Primary Research Question:**

*How and why does the front line manager role impact employee attitudes and behaviours in the context of a high performance work system?*

**Figure 1.4.1: Primary Research Question**

The question informs the subsequent study, which is summarised in the chapter format above. The next chapter starts to answer the research question by providing a review and integration of relevant front line management literature.
Chapter 2

UNCOVERING THE FLM ROLE IN THE HRM-PERFORMANCE LINK

2.1 Introduction

Building on the theoretical and empirical gaps outlined in the first chapter, a more pointed synthesis of relevant literature is now presented. The research question of how and why the FLM role impacts the HPWS-Performance relationship is clarified, and a model of inquiry emerges. The chapter narrows from the broader constructs of HRM and Performance, to the more specific influence of FLM behaviour. The chapter locates the FLM role within the current literature, offering a critique of traditional supervision and more recent devolution of HRM to the line. Employee discretionary behaviour emerges as a key lever of interest in this examination, providing a conduit for a potential FLM impact. The FLM construct is conceptualised as a set of four FLM behavioural types. The chapter provides a review of some previous empirical studies concerned with FLM behavioural type in the context of employee outcomes and performance. The integration of discrete literatures serves as a key contribution of this research, as a FLM construct is formed. Employing a behavioural typology, the chapter develops a relational model to further understand how the FLM role might impact HPWS relationships. In this way, the chapter presents a framework to advance the research question and develop a deeper theoretical inquiry in Chapter Three.

2.2 HRM-Performance Relationship

Investigations of a potential relationship between HRM and performance has given rise to a number of conceptual models, including ‘best practice HRM’, ‘best fit HRM’ (Purcell, 1999) and more recently HPWS. To many High Performance Work System (HPWS) represents a
synergistic collection of HRM practices intended to improve organisational performance through enhanced employee ability (A), motivation (M) and opportunity (O), or (AMO) (Appelbaum et al, 2000; Boxhall and Purcell, 2003; Guest and Wright, 2013). HPWS is a broad label that seeks to capture those practices to increase performance through a commitment based approach, rather than control based approach. The central thesis is that HRM practices, which develop employees’ ability, motivate them with reward and recognition, and provide opportunities for personal and career growth, will ultimately increase the employees’ commitment to their job and organisation (Huselid, 1995, Boselie et al, 2005; Jiang et al, 2012, Keheo and Wright, 2013). In turn, the employee demonstrates a willingness to ‘go above and beyond’ in their role, referred to as discretionary behaviour. An employee’s exercise of discretion in their role towards the betterment of the organisation is expected to deliver superior performance. In fact, the Strategic HRM literature argues that this can become an inimitable human capital advantage for organisations (Schuler and Jackson, 1987).

Advocates of HPWS are divergent across two schools of thought. One perspective is that a fixed bundle of HRM practices deliver optimum performance, irrespective of organisational factors. This school is referred to as ‘best practice HRM’. An alternative view is held by the ‘best fit HRM’ advocates, who argue that a HPWS must tailor its bundle of HRM practices to align to the strategic needs of the organisation. The debate uncovered a problem with the HPWS literature. Despite over 100 studies published by 2005 (Boselie et al, 2005), the absence of an accepted theory of the mechanisms of how and why HRM practices improve performance is evident. Guest (2001, 2011) claims a lack of theory on the outcomes of HRM makes it difficult to know what to measure in performance.

Despite ambiguity in the definition, empirical research has some common ‘performance’ constructs, typically drawing on financial metrics, published company reports, case specific operational metrics and, in some cases, employee outcomes (Wall and Wood, 2005). However, the content of the performance construct, in this regard, has come under criticism for its biased unitarist ideology (Marchington and Grugulis, 2000). In their critique of HRM-Performance relationship literature, Marchington and Grugulis claim that “by denying employees an active voice in the process and by ignoring the fact that contrasting viewpoints exist (the literature)
distorts the complexity of the workplace, reducing some of the most fascinating issues that can be studied, to the relatively simple problem of how to implement best practice” (Marchington and Grugulis, 2000:1119). Similar concern is proposed by advocates of labour process theory who claim that improved performance may “come to employees at the expense of stress, work intensification and job strain, the latter being a key explanatory factor in improved organisational performance” (Ramsay et al, 2000:505). Clearly the distinguishing factor here is whether the performance is achieved through the employee choice to deliver discretionary behaviour (Purcell et al, 2009), or if the performance improvement is explained by an alternative phenomenon. The explanatory mechanisms remain unknown, referred to as the ‘black box’ (Bowen and Ostroff 2004; Huselid and Becker 2011).

To that end, the research agenda is focused on developing a better understanding of the relationships between HRM practices and performance outcomes. One such attempt is the conceptualisation of a process model. The “people management-performance causal chain” (Purcell and Hutchinson 2007) represents a proposed relational model (Figure 2.2.1) that sets its foundations on the premise that one of the keys to managing performance through people, is triggering “discretionary behaviour” in employees. It identified that the performance of a unit, can be affected by employees’ discretion over their work effort and activities. The ability to give or withhold unspecified effort or goodwill is often referred to as 'discretionary behaviour'. Given this premise, it relates employee discretionary behaviour to employee attitudes, specifically claiming that satisfaction, motivation, and commitment are positively related to discretionary behaviour. The proposed model argues that it is in fact employees' perceptions of HRM policies that contribute to the corresponding attitudinal outcomes, hence placing the actual ‘enactment’ of the HRM practices as central to the relationship. It is in this regard that the FLM enters the equation, being presented as playing a pivotal role in implementing or enacting HRM, i.e. ‘bringing policies to life’ (Hutchinson and Purcell, 2003).

![Figure 2.2.1: The people management-performance causal chain (Purcell and Hutchinson, 2007)](image)
While the process model represents a conceptual anchor from which to develop further understanding, its simplification of the role of the FLM in the employment relationship cannot be overlooked (Townsend & Dundon, 2015). For example, discretionary behaviour is not restricted to the non-managerial employee workforce - FLMs, themselves, have discretion in how they conduct their role. Hence, employee discretion is “affected by the way in which FLMs exercise their own discretion in terms of how they manage people” (Hutchinson and Purcell, 2003:11). Also Purcell and Hutchinson (2007:16) recognise that the FLM-employee relationship does not occur in a vacuum. Others place organisational climate as central to the HRM-Performance link (Cafferkey & Dundon, 2015). The synthesis here is that the combination of leadership behaviours, HR practices and organisational climate lend further complexity to the range of possible influences: Truss (2001) identifies the impact of the ‘informal’ relations on employee outcomes; Renwick (2003) reflects on the challenges that FLMs face in ‘implementing’ HRM policies; while, Kuvass and Dysvik (2010) reveal the impact of ‘perceived supervisory support’ on employee outcomes. In order to navigate through this complexity, further unpacking of the FLM role is required.

2.3 Typical HRM Practices enacted by the FLM in HPWS

Early HPWS research concentrated on understanding HRM in relation to lists or bundles of policies, without specific concern for the enactment of the policies. Pfeffer (1994) purports 7 HRM practices that, he claimed, as universally applicable ‘best HRM practices’. These include employment security; selective hiring / sophisticated selection; extensive training; employee voice and involvement; self-managed teams and team working; rewards based on performance; and the harmonisation / removal of status differentials. Huselid (1995) also published a study based on a similar series of HR practices. The role of the HR department and the FLM are not distinguished in these early studies, as employee perceptions of HR are reported without investigating the ‘source’ of enactment. However, more recent studies start to delve into the specifics of FLM involvement (Wright et al, 2001; Renwick, 2003; Hutchinson and Purcell, 2008; Bos-Nehles, 2010; Townsend, 2013; Vermeeren, 2014).
In their study of FLMs in the NHS ward environment, Hutchinson and Purcell (2008) reveal 23 HRM practices that the ward managers are responsible for. The following practices were most broadly (90% of respondents) undertaken as part of the FLM role: employee selection; performance management practices; training; providing recognition; communication and involvement; teamwork; and, health and safety. However, despite strong agreement amongst FLMs regarding responsibility for these activities, variation in the effectiveness of enactment occurs. Hutchinson and Purcell (2008) discovered a number of reasons why the front line enactment of HRM may not be effective, including heavy workloads and stress; role conflict and ambiguity; a general lack of resources; inadequate training; and lack of support from senior management and HR. Similar challenges (i.e. lack of desire; lack of competence; lack of capacity; lack of support; and lack of policy and procedures) are explained by Bos-Nehles (2010) who summarises key literature regarding barriers to FLM enactment.

It is clear that in order to understand the FLM role in HRM policy enactment, it is necessary to garnish further information regarding the manifestation of enactment. In a review of literature regarding FLM enactment of specific HR policies, Renwick (2003) reveals a bleak assessment for FLM enactment. To provide some examples, performance appraisals are found to be the most disliked activity of line managers (Redman, 2001); HRM training perceived by some FLMs as not necessary (Cunningham and Hyman, 1995); FLMs sceptical of the motives of performance-related pay (Harris, 2001); and, the remaining requirement for HR intervention in grievance and disciplinary matters (Rollinson et al, 1996). In addition, the impact of technology on the HRM role of FLM is a new challenge in terms of web-based HR service desks (Deeks, 2000). Advancing the research question requires an understanding of the FLM enactment of policy, but also their general attitudes and approach regarding HRM and people management. As such, the next section seeks to locate the FLM role in terms of the broader HRM-Performance link.
2.4 Locating the FLM in the HRM-Performance Debate

In a search for knowledge about possible relationships between HRM practices and performance, the literature has revealed a possible impact of the FLM. Hutchinson and Purcell (2003) find supportive evidence for this impact. Their study revealed that FLM behaviour was the most important factor “in explaining the variation in both job satisfaction and job discretion” (Hutchinson and Purcell, 2003:22). In later research, connecting the FLM to theory on the HRM-Performance relationship, Purcell and Hutchinson (2007) elaborate to explain that part of the FLM role includes people management activities and that those activities may be described under two headings, firstly, Leadership behaviour and secondly, the application of HR policies. Specifically, their study finds that taken together, the combined effect of Leadership behaviour and HR practices explains 34.6% of variance in commitment (Purcell and Hutchinson, 2007:16) adding further support to the important role of the FLM. Concerned with the ‘how’ and ‘why’ of such an impact, the research question seeks to advance literature by providing greater understanding of the role of the FLM in HPWS. However, the FLM position is not a new role, and neither did it arise within the HPWS bundle. Therefore, advancement of the research question must build on the evolution of the FLM role in general management.

Evolution of the FLM Role

To understand the FLM role today, it is important to consider supervisory management in a deeper historical context. Asked more than a hundred years ago, the meaning of FLM role conjured a different image from today. Firstly, the role was likely referred to as ‘foreman’ or ‘charge hand’ (Child and Partridge, 1982). Both typically represented a highly skilled craftsperson, with a status in society superior to the general worker, often with salary and accommodation commensurate to this. With the FLM role came authority over selecting staff, organisation of working day, quality of work performed and general conditions of work environment. Their skill and knowledge in a specific industry gave them a respected ‘expert’ power base (French and Raven, 1959). In addition, as a delegate of the employer (Child and Partridge, 1982), they also had a ‘legitimate’ power base of influence (French and Raven, 1959). Employees recognised the FLM as the primary source of learning, reward and punishment. The historical exclusive status is not as prominent in the contemporary FLM role. The changing
landscape of industry through the nineteen hundreds, including higher volume output, technological advancements, collective labour organisation, saw a shift in the FLM role (Kerr et al, 1986). Two examples of this shift are discussed here.

Firstly, the ‘expert’ skill of the FLM was de-valued as machine advancements changed the nature of work. In an increasingly automated environment, it was challenging for the FLM to have influence on the quality of craft directly, instead relying on engineers and maintenance staff. The FLMs focus was redirected to ensure staff attended machines with a certain degree of efficiency, essential to justify the capital expenditure on the machines. The introduction of scientific management (Taylor, 1911) saw the breakdown of work into small tasks, furthering the emphasis on efficiency. Given that the final product was sometimes a collection of many individuals’ work (for example, assembly lines) the craft experience of a FLM was further diluted. Instead greater importance was given to: the speed of work; training workers on small tasks; the attendance of employees at work; managing break schedules; and, machine utilization. The breadth of FLM tasks is usefully summarised by Kerr et al (1986:103) as: planning and scheduling; documentation of records and reports; carrying out "human relations" counselling; coordination and control; organising work; maintaining external relations; managing performance - reward contingencies; maintaining quality and efficiency; maintaining safety and cleanliness; maintaining machinery and equipment; selecting employees; training employees; stimulating suggestions; and, maintaining union-management relations. The changing nature of the FLM role neither required, nor valued, a specific craft expertise; rather a new discipline of ‘management’ became an avenue of education and promotion for workers. The manifestation of management at the front line is explored later in this chapter, which gives a varied account. In summary, the actual tasks performed are “neither universal nor static rather they vary across organisations and over time” (Dawson, 1991:39). Expertise in front line management is not well defined and consequently the FLM role appears to have lost a once revered ‘expert’ power base.

A second shift related to higher volumes. Increased output enabled by technology and smaller work tasks, drove increasing numbers of workers and machines participating in each product. As a result the FLM role grew in complexity. In response the division of the FLM role into separate functional components began and with it the emergence of separate administrative
departments. The departments took on responsibility for traditional ‘foreman’ duties. For example, the quality control department assured the quality of work; the maintenance department ensured the machines functioned well and, of course, the personnel department took on responsibilities for hiring, selecting, pay and entitlements (Child and Partridge, 1982; Kerr et al, 1986). The ‘legitimate’ power once associated with the FLM was eroded, as layers of organisational functions and bureaucracy displaced them to the lower tiers of the organisational hierarchy. In fact, in their recent study of the FLM, Purcell and Hutchinson (2007:04) define FLMs as “those in the lower echelons of the management hierarchy with immediate responsibility for their subordinates’ work and performance”. The modern FLM retains responsibility for the majority of workers, but has lost decision-making power over key aspects of a worker’s day. Even locating the role in organisational literature is difficult, as Hales (2005) outlines, some accounts and discussion treat ‘first line manager’, ‘shop floor manager’, ‘team leader’ and ‘supervisor’ as alternative FLM job titles. Becoming the squeezed middle, the FLM often has to implement various functional decisions, without having a managerial voice in those decisions. The FLM may be found “between the divergent interests and expectations” of strategic management executives and members of a given workgroup (Hales, 2007:153). Aptly described by Dawson (1991) as the ‘master and victim’ conundrum, the FLM is viewed as master of the shop floor, but in reality is a victim of other departments’ policies while not quite seen as managers by their superiors. What had once started as a powerful role of legitimacy and expertise now appears to be diminished. The dilemma for this study is to understand what remains. More specifically, this study seeks to understand how and why the current FLM role is manifesting as an explanatory variable in the relationship between HRM and employee outcomes. To that end, attention is now turned to how the FLM role relates and enacts HRM policies. Notwithstanding, the obvious position of the FLM as an employee themselves who is subject to the HR environment, this study focuses on the impact of the FLM role in relation to the HR experience of front line employees. Within that context, the devolution of HRM responsibility to the FLM is now explored.

Devolution of HR to the line

The literature reports the devolution of HRM activities to the FLM (Renwick, 2003, Sanders and Frenkel, 2011). In an effective reversal of early trends of centralisation, the HRM function is returning some practices for implementation by the FLM. However, the rational for this change
does not appear to be FLM driven. Summarised by Brewster and Larsen (2000), the HR department is devolving responsibility in order to reduce costs, to provide a more comprehensive approach to HRM, to place responsibility for HRM with managers most responsible for it, to speed up decision-making and to use the FLM as an alternative to outsourcing the HRM function. In this context the FLM is becoming an intentional part of the HPWS construct, as they become a ‘deliverer’ of the HRM practices and policies.

Within the HPWS literature, few studies have focused on the actual implementation process of HRM practices (Paauwe et al, 2013). Many studies have focused at the organisational level, expecting organisational intention translates to employee experience (Boselie et al, 2005). However, the FLMs delivery of HRM practices is one key line of inquiry to uncovering the mechanisms of a performance relationship. The FLM role in implementation of HRM practices could affect the unit level outcome within a work group (Nishi and Wright, 2008). Any given FLM may apply their own discretion to how and when they apply HRM practices (Purcell and Hutchinson, 2007; Harney and Jordan, 2008). FLM discretion may lead to variation in employee experiences between work groups and affect performance both at unit and organisational level, which may enable a better understanding of mechanisms. If a distinct group of FLMs report greater performance, perhaps their behaviours and approach have explanatory value in the relationships between HRM and performance. Two relevant perspectives are explored here.

Hales (2005) summarises the key between the role of ‘supervisor’ and ‘manager’. On one hand, there may be aspirations or limited attempts to shift the FLM role into something more discernibly ‘managerial’. However, in practice such attempts have been so piecemeal and compromised that, the role retains limited authority and low involvement in decision-making usually associated with the supervisor. Within this school of thought, the devolution of the HRM practices to the line would likely present as a set of HRM-related tasks that the FLM is responsible for, with little discretion over the specifics of their application. One might argue that this could ensure alignment between organisational intent and actual implementation, given the FLM just ‘does what HR says’. However, Purcell and Hutchinson (2007) highlight that the employee experiences HRM practices, not only through formal policy enactment, but also
through the FLM leadership behaviour. Truss (2001) also contends that there is a hidden impact of the informal organisation in employee experiences. The daily behaviour of the FLM is an important factor in the employee interpretation and perception of the HRM environment (Purcell and Hutchinson, 2007; Vermeeren, 2014). Therefore, even with limited discretion, it is possible that FLM behavioural type may impact how HPWS influence employee performance outcomes.

On the other hand, Hales (2005) outlines an alternative proposition that there has been a decisive shift in the FLM role away from supervision. The FLM shifts towards either a “facilitating and developing ‘team leader / coordinator’ role or a resource deploying ‘unit manager’ role” (Hales, 2005:479). From this perspective, the FLM may have greater discretion over HRM implementation, perhaps even having an influential voice in HR decisions. Truss (2001:1145) concisely describes this discretion in terms of the FLM behaviour in “choosing to focus his or her attention in varying ways”. Boxall and Purcell (2003:198) alternatively describe this in terms of the firm: “HR practices in the firm as norms around which there is variation due to the idiosyncratic behaviour of line managers”. While the rhetoric of a partnership between the FLM and the HR department may be appealing, studies have revealed that there are gaps in reality. Firstly, the extent to which ‘partnership’ can exist in reality can be challenged in terms of power differentials between the HRM department and the FLM role. In addition, in cases where partnership may exist, Renwick (2002:265) identifies a number of issues with the ‘partnership’ model, namely: the extent to which line managers are being ‘forced’ into taking on increased responsibilities in HRM; the capability of the line to learn about HR activities and to use this knowledge fairly and consistently; what happens in situations where the HR function is small and / or understaffed and cannot intervene to promote good practice; whether decentralisation and the greater involvement of line managers in HR decisions produces better organisational performance. Purcell and Hutchinson (2007:05) contribute further a issue identifying that “the fulfilment of FLMs people management roles often rely on the managers own sense of motivation and commitment”. In a qualitative study of line managers involvement in HRM, Renwick (2002:272) also found evidence that the partnership model had a legacy of hierarchical command, identifying that “the line proved inadequate in doing some HR work”, “took decisions in HRM that were later blocked by HR”, and that “the line felt they were being policed by the book”. Following this reasoning, the FLM behaviour, even with ‘managerial’ discretion, may still display variation from the intended HR practices. To advance
the research question, the role behaviours of the FLM and how they relate to performance is increasingly important. The next section explores different FLM behavioural types as a way to better specify how and why they may influence employee outcomes.

2.5 FLM behavioural type and Employee Outcomes

This section evaluates evidential support for the influence of FLM behavioural type on employee effort. The discussion is organised into four categories, informed by some key behaviours emerging from literature, namely:

- Policy Enactment Behaviour;
- Agency Behaviour;
- Leadership Behaviour; and,
- Coaching Behaviour.

Over the next three pages, Table 2.5.1 “Indicative FLM Behavioural Typologies” provides examples of previous empirical studies that discovered direct relationships between FLM behavioural type and Employee Outcomes. It synthesises key studies in terms of the FLM behavioural type constructs, employee outcomes and key findings of relevance. The table organises the literature into four broad behavioural types or categories. A supporting narrative for each behaviour follows.
### UNCOVERING THE FLM ROLE IN THE HRM-PERFORMANCE LINK

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FLM Behavioural Type</th>
<th>Some key studies</th>
<th>Relevant FLM Behaviour Construct</th>
<th>Indicative Employee Outcomes</th>
<th>Key Finding of Relevance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Policy Enactment Behaviour | Vermeeren (2014) | **Implemented HRM practices** as measured by line manager. Six HRM Practices were measured with multi-item scales. For example, Performance Appraisal item reads “In this unit, employees receive an assessment on paper” | • Perceived HRM  
• Perceived Unit Level Performance | A positive significant relationship was found between Implemented HRM and Employee Perception of HRM. In addition, Perceived HRM was found to mediate the relationship between Implemented HRM and Perceived Unit Performance. |
| | Gilbert et al, (2011) | **Line Manager Enactment Index** – 28 HR practice items measured by employees’ rate of agreement, subsequently converted to an index normalised for number of HR practices. | • Affective Commitment | Employees’ perception of Line Manager Enactment was positively and significantly related to Affective Commitment |
| Agency Behaviour | Eisenberger et al (2010) | **SOE – Supervisor’s organisational embodiment**, that is employee’s perception of their “supervisor’s shared identity with the organisation” p. 1086 | • Affective Commitment  
• In-role Performance  
• Extra-role Performance | SOE had an indirect effect on the relationship between Leader-Member Exchange and all three employee outcomes |
| | Van Dick et al (2007) | **Organisational Identity** – extent leaders identify with their organisation. Managers in a school case-study responded to a single item “I am personally identified with my school” p. 138 | • Job Satisfaction  
• OCB  
• Follower Identification | Direct correlation between Leader Identity and Follower Job Satisfaction as well as Follower Identification. No direct relationship to OCB found but evidence of an indirect relationship was detected. |
### Table 2.5.1: Indicative FLM Behavioural Typologies

| Leadership Behaviour | Gilbert et al, (2011) | Relations-orientated Leadership behavioural type—5 areas of Leadership behaviour (developing, empowering, consulting, supporting and recognising) as rated by employees. One example item reads “My supervisor tells us when we perform well”, p. 1626 | • Affective Commitment | Employees’ perception of the line manager relations-orientated Leadership behavioural type was positively and significantly related to Affective Commitment
| | Purcell and Hutchinson (2007) | Perceptions of Leaders Behaviour as measured by employees over 5 items. One item reads, “How good do you feel managers here are at treating employees fairly?” p.19 | • Commitment | There was a positive and significant relationship between Perceptions of Leadership behaviour and all employee outcomes included.
| Coaching Behaviour | Agarwal et al, (2009) | Manager Coaching Intensity as measured at middle and executive levels of management. A case-study based definition of coaching was assumed and a 2-item coaching intensity scale was measured by employees. Example item includes: “In the last few months, my manager’s coaching effectiveness has been..” with a response scale offering much more effective or much less effective (p.2120) | • Sales Performance | A significant positive relationship was found between Middle Manager Coaching Intensity and Staff Sales Performance. Also a significant positive relationship (slightly lower effect) was found between Executive Coaching Intensity and Manager Performance.
| | Liu and Batt, (2010) | Amount of Supervisor Coaching as measured by the logged time off for coaching by a supervisor. This is measured at the individual level for a call centre case-study in the investigation. | • Manager Performance | Amount of Supervisor Coaching was found to be significant in explaining variation in Call Handling Time Performance. The study found a significant negative relationship.
| | | | • Performance (Average Call Handling Time per Month) | |

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The four categories provide a further unpacking of the boundaries to the FLM construct and FLM roles for the study. As outlined previously, difficulties in operational definition of the FLM role have been one of the challenges to advancing research in this area (Hales, 2005). Other approaches in the literature include task based constructs (Kerr et al, 1986), whereby the FLM role is defined by the activities performed. Also to be found is, the supervisor-management continuum (Dawson, 1991), which positions the FLM construct in relation to its decision-making authority. The FLM behaviour construct, proposed in this study, seeks to build on other approaches in three ways. Firstly, it refines the activities performed to those of specific relevance to the HR-Performance chain through an examination of HR policy enactment. Secondly, it investigates the employee experience of the FLM’s decision-making authority and autonomy through perceived agency behaviour. Lastly, it investigates the people management approach of the FLM through a review of leadership and coaching behaviours.

Policy Enactment Behavioural Type

Investigating the process of enacting HRM practices is a relatively new departure in the HPWS literature (Paauwe et al, 2013). Gilbert et al (2011) investigates the enactment of 28 HR practices as perceived by employees (See Table 2.5.1). Aggregating the employee responses, they developed a Line Manager Enactment Index to examine the relationship to employee outcomes. They found a significant positive relationship between FLM enactment and affective commitment in employees. Affective commitment is considered to be an antecedent of employee discretionary behaviour and potentially performance. In a more recent study, unit level performance was a key outcome measured. Vermeeren (2014) investigated relationships between implemented HRM practices and unit level performance. It measured five items for perceived unit performance, based on Bernardin (2003), namely: (1) the quantity of the work of your unit, (2) the quality of the work of the unit, (3) the timeframe in which your team completes tasks, (4) the extent of goal achievement by the unit and (5) the overall performance of your unit. Answers were provided on a five-point Likert scale ranging from ‘very poor’ to ‘very good’. The study also captured employee perceptions of HRM practices. The findings revealed support for an effect of HRM practice implementation on both employee perceptions and perceived unit level performance. These results are in line with previous expectations discussed earlier in the chapter regarding line management involvement in the people management-performance chain (Purcell and Hutchinson, 2007). Interestingly, the specific
impact of the line manager enactment may be affected by employee perceptions of the FLM’s authority in the organisation. In other words, the organisational level impact of HRM practices may depend on the perceived relationship between the FLM (‘as deliverer’) and the organisation.

Agency Behaviour

“According to organisational support theory, employees view their supervisor’s orientation towards them as indicative of the organisation’s support because the supervisor acts as an agent of the organisation” (Eisenberger et al 1986). The FLM role as an agent of the organisation is relevant to the extent that it affects both the employee’s perception of and corresponding attitudes towards the organisation (Van Dick et al, 2007). Placing the FLM as an agent within the complexities of the organisational-employee relationships renders them at a critical control point in any potential causal relationship between HPWS and performance. Hence, major theories concerning the employee–organisation relationship holds that employees view supervisors as organisational agents (Van Dick et al, 2007).

Recent empirical evidence supports this notion, relating the local employee perceptions of the immediate line manager to the global perceptions of the organisation. In their study, Kuvaas and Dysvik (2010:146) reveal “the perceptions of the immediate line manager seem to influence employee attitudes both directly and indirectly through more positive perceptions of an organisation’s HR practices”. Eisenberger et al (2002) also revealed FLM agency behaviour as a source of variation in employee outcomes. They found that “support from a supervisor who is perceived to strongly embody the organisational ethos is more likely to be taken as organisational support than is support from a supervisor whom, the employee believes, less well represents the organisation” (Eisenberger et al, 2002:572).

More recently, Eisenberger et al (2010) revealed another relationship between the FLM agency behaviour and employee outcomes. In this study, a construct was formed called Supervisor Organisational Embodiment (SOE) to examine the extent of perceived agency behaviour demonstrated by a FLM. Their study revealed that SOE was related to three employee
outcomes, namely: Affective Commitment, In-Role Performance and Extra-Role Performance (See Table 2.4.1). Van Dick et al (2007) also found relationships between the extent to which a FLM relates to the organisation and employee job satisfaction (See Table 2.4.1). A construct for agency behaviour called “Organisational Identity” was construed and its relationship to employee outcome is well summarised by this excerpt:

“Identified leaders may be more likely to demonstrate their group mindedness by making more references to the collective history, the collective identity and interests, and collective efficacy than leaders who are driven by the desire for personal gains (Shamir, House, and Arthur, 1993). Moreover, the articulation of a compelling vision concerning the organisation’s ideal future will shift employees’ focus from self-interest to collective interests (Conger, 1999; Shamir et al., 1993). Finally, a leader who strongly identifies with his or her organisation may also contribute to follower identification by using socialisation procedures that emphasise the organisations’ vision, reputation and so on”. Van Dick et al (2007:135)

Despite such studies revealing connection between the FLM agency behaviour and employee outcomes, issues remain contestable. One challenge is highlighted by Dawson (1991), who reveals that management in an organisation may not be the only people to give authority. The challenge implies that a FLM may display agency behaviour in relation to another entity (e.g. acting as an agent of the trade union). Marchington & Suter (2010) highlight the relationship between informal HR mechanisms and employee voice. Similar to Truss (2001), Dawson raises the importance of informal relations of the workplace whereby peers or members of a work group vest authority in a FLM. Relating this to empirical research, Dawson (1991:40) argues there is “a major problem with identifying supervisors on the basis of their position within a hierarchical command structure in that it does not take into account the fact that the authority vested in an individual by his work group”. The issue is particularly poignant in the context of the FLM agency role, whereby it opens up the possibility that peers also have an influence on employee outcomes. Also in a similar context, the FLM may distort the actual agency powers (authority) vested in him / her by the organisation. Eisenberger et al (2002:572) contend that in order to foster personal loyalty, “many supervisors may exaggerate their positive valuation of their subordinates and their role in obtaining benefits for subordinates”. In context of HPWS,
the FLM may over-state their status as an agent of the organisation in relation to HRM practices, thereby altering employee perceptions. It may be difficult for an employee to discern which behaviours are ‘intended’ by the organisation and which are a manifestation of individual FLM discretion. These are, therefore, further variants to potential FLM behavioural influences.

**Leadership behavioural type**

As discussed earlier in the chapter, Leadership behavioural type of the FLM may have an expected, yet unknown, impact on employee perceptions of HRM practices. Purcell and Hutchinson (2007) explain that the manner in which the FLM performs the role, will impact perceived HRM enactment. In their study, Purcell and Hutchinson (2007) found a positive and significant relationship between Leadership behavioural type and commitment, job autonomy, job challenge and job achievement (See Table 2.4.1). And of course, from an employee perspective, like agency behaviour, it may be difficult for them to discern between organisational policy intention and FLM leadership behaviours.

In another study, Gilbert et al (2011) found that relations-orientated Leadership behavioural type related to employee affective commitment (See Table 2.4.1). Relations-orientated leadership are said to include behaviours of empowering, developing, consulting, supporting and recognising. What is striking is the overlap between intentional HPWS practices, such as development and leadership-behaviour that focuses on development. It is possible in this case to imagine how Leadership behavioural type may impact the HRM-Performance relationship through a confounding affect at a minimum. Studies attempting to measure developmental HRM enactment, without controlling for FLM leadership style, could draw incorrect inferences. However, such assumptions are often predicated on unitarist assumptions and ideologies. Leadership behaviours can be complex, exploitative and difficult to measure. Nonetheless, the leadership approach of FLMs requires study to advance the research question.

**Coaching behavioural type**

The final behaviour for discussion in this chapter is coaching behaviour. Unlike the previous three behaviours that are depicted as a group level FLM approach, coaching finds its relevance
in the individual FLM-follower relationships. Building on leader-member exchange theory (LMX) (Graen and Uhl-Bien, 1995), there are three key features in the FLM Coaching behavioural type construct. Firstly, the FLM style, secondly the follower receptiveness and finally the maturity of the FLM-employee relationship. The FLM Coaching behavioural type is concerned with the individual employee development and may give way to significant variation in approach amongst employees. Two studies in table 2.4.1 reveal how such variation may occur and its potential impact.

Firstly, Agarwal et al (2009) reveal variation in FLM Coaching behavioural type in terms of coaching intensity among sales managers. Their results found a relationship between changes in coaching intensity by the FLM and corresponding sales staff performance. The study suggests that higher coaching intensity by FLMs will result in higher performance. Similarly in another study by Liu and Batt (2010), a direct relationship was found between FLM Coaching behavioural type and employee performance. In their study FLM coaching variation was measured by ‘time spent coaching’ and individual differences may be explained by LMX theory in relation to maturity of the relationship and employee (follower) attributes. While studies concerning coaching are few in the HPWS literature, it is envisaged that this behaviour will be a feature in understanding the role of the FLM in the how and why of HPWS impact. The next section summarises the hypothesis regarding this behaviour and others to advance the research question.

2.6 A Process Model for ‘FLM behavioural type’ and HPWS-Performance Relationship

Having outlined four distinct FLM behavioural types that may impact the relationship between HR practices and employee outcomes, attention is now turned to re-positioning the construct into relevant literature. One-way to approach this is to utilise the process model perspective. The process model offers associations and relationships between independent concepts relating to HPWS and performance. Building on the people management-performance chain (Purcell and Hutchinson, 2007), Figure 2.6.1 below depicts how the FLM behaviour construct may be positioned.
The model portrays **FLM behavioural type** as a potential explanatory variable for gaps between intended and perceived HR practices. By displaying (or failing to display) one of the four types of behaviours, the FLM might alter the perception of the HR environment in the eyes of the employee. Also, the process model contends that such alteration could ultimately impact **unit level performance**, thus offering a theoretical model of how the FLM may impact the HPWS-Performance relationship. Developing and building this model with regard to the specific mechanism of why the FLM behaviour has an impact is addressed in the next chapter.

### 2.7 Conclusion

Locating the FLM role in the HRM-Performance literature is a key contribution of this chapter. Contributing a synthesis of extant literature is essential to uncovering the how and why of the FLM impact. Through a review of historical FLM evolution, contemporary FLM constructs and the integration of diverse but related FLM behavioural approaches, the research question advances on multiple fronts. Firstly, the rationale for the research question is enhanced through a series of evidential accounts of relationships between FLM and employee outcomes (Vermereen 2014; Gilbert et al, 2011; Purcell and Hutchinson, 2007). Secondly, the
operationalisation of the research question is progressed through the formation of a FLM construct (Chan, 1998). The FLM construct is defined initially as a set of independent behaviours. Finally, the FLM construct builds on current literature by positioning it within an existing process model of the people management-performance chain (Purcell and Hutchinson, 2007).
Chapter 3

EXAMINING THE FLM ROLE WITH THE LENS OF RECIPROCITY AND SOCIAL EXCHANGE IN HPWS

3.1 Introduction

Chapter Three investigates theoretical frameworks that offer explanatory logic regarding the why of a FLM impact. The chapter commences with a review of the dependent variable of interest, namely employee effort (or discretionary behaviour). It reveals theories that may aid understanding and some other possible influential factors that may impact discretionary behaviour. Returning to the possible FLM impact, Social Exchange Theory (SET) (Blau, 1964) is offered as a lens through which the research question can be explored. Informed by the norm of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960), the chapter examines various perspectives that may explain why employee performance can change in response to FLM behaviour. The chapter evaluates the contribution of perceived supervisory support (PSS) and perceived organisational support (POS) (Eisenberger et al, 2002) in advancing the research question. Finally, the relational process model outlined in Chapter Two is enhanced with a new construct, namely, a ‘zone of reciprocity’. The resulting research model is carried into Chapter Four to inform empirical inquiry.

3.2 Discretionary Behaviour

To understand why the FLM could impact the HRM-Performance chain, it is necessary to review the effect or dependent variable of specific interest. In this case, employee effort or discretionary behaviour is the dependent variable for which the study seeks to help explain and understand some combination of independent factors. Explanatory theory may be able to
explain and predict changes in employee effort based on some logical combination of influential variables. In order to conceptualise the mechanisms in the relationship between FLM and employee effort, one must acknowledge that the transactions between the employer and employee are not fixed and that there is an element of ‘discretion’ on both sides that can alter outcomes (Purcell and Hutchinson, 2007). In short it is a reward-effort relationship. This acknowledgement has been seen in management literature for years through early efforts of controlling employees in scientific management and Taylorism (1911), to the explicit realisation of the managerial problem of motivation (Fox 1974) and now the focus on engaging discretionary behaviour in HRM-Performance literature (Purcell et al 2009). In fact, the sociological analysis of Alan Fox (1974:16) has shown that “every job contains both prescribed and discretionary elements” and that the discretionary elements “require not trained obedience to specific external control, but the exercise of wisdom, judgment and expertise”. Fox (1974) identified that discretionary job elements could only be achieved by the occupant of the role deciding, or choosing, what would be the best thing to do. Interestingly, the application of discretionary behaviour normally assumes a positively biased outcome. It is often reflected as the ‘additional’ work effort that positively impacts the employer (or organisational performance) and that this is the workers’ choice being made is whether to give this discretionary behaviour or not. Given the FLM might be the sole interface between the employer and employee, their role has significant opportunity to impact this discretion offered by workers. The behaviour of the FLM has an ability to affect both individual employee discretion, and a group of employees’ effort through meeting or failing to meet their perceived obligations. Purcell et al (2009:78) highlight that discretionary behaviour can be damaging to the employer if collectively withdrawn, claiming “it lies with the employee to ‘give’ discretionary behaviour and to withdraw it”. In this way, discretionary behaviour is contended to be a critical part of delivering organisational performance, and as such is often cited as the catalyst which converts HPWS to performance (MacDuffie, 1995; Appelbaum et al, 2000; Hutchinson et al, 2002; Purcell and Hutchinson, 2007). In summary, the primary thesis is that HRM practices improve performance, only in so far as they elicit increased effort from workers. The employee effort is organisationally aligned and evoked through the employee choice of additional or ‘discretionary’ effort. Therefore, this chapter seeks a theory that explains changes in employee discretionary behaviour due to (in some part at least) changes related to the role of the FLM.
The notion of discretionary behaviour is not new. Arising in earlier literature as ‘extra-role behaviour’ (Katz, 1964), the concept sought to capture the effort that employees give in the workplace beyond what is expected in their job, in exchange for rewards. Organ in 1977 built on the Human Relations School’s suggestion that ‘a happy worker is a productive worker’ (Coyle-Shapiro et al, 2004). However, Organ and others recognised the challenge in connecting employee satisfaction or happiness, directly to productivity given the other influencing factors at play, e.g. technology, work design, aptitude (Bateman and Organ, 1983; Smith et al, 1983; Coyle-Shapiro et al, 2004). Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB) emerged as a construct to capture behaviour the employee chooses to give, which benefits the organisation’s performance. OCB was first defined as

> 'behaviour that is discretionary; not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal reward system, and that in aggregate promotes the effective functioning of the organization . . . the behaviour is not an enforceable requirement of the role or the job description . . . the behaviour is a matter of personal choice'

(Organ, 1988, p. 4).

However, in later research OCB was found to play a role in managerial evaluation of employees, including formal performance appraisal (McKenzie et al, 1991; Podsakoff et al, 2000). Organ (1997) revised the definition of OCB to remove any requirement for it to be independent of behaviour that is formally monitored or rewarded. Instead, OCB is now interpreted as any discretionary behaviour that is supportive of the organisational goals. Interestingly, managerial interest provides some indication that OCB is a contributor to job performance. Supporting this, Podsakoff et al (1997) found in their empirical study a relationship between OCB and work group performance. Boxall and Purcell (2011) found similar in their attempts to ‘unlock the black box’. As an antecedent to organisational performance, OCB becomes the key employee outcome of interest in this study. To advance the research question, an understanding of why OCB varies among employees is required. The following section reviews a range of relevant explanatory theories.
**3.3 Explaining changes in Discretionary Behaviour**

Chapter Two reviewed various constructs that may affect discretionary behaviour. A HPWS organisation, FLM behavioural type and employee attitudes and outcomes, are revealed as key parts of the answers required. Chapter Two also proposed relational pathways between these independent factors. While this work contributes significantly to construct clarity, which Suddaby (2010) argues is essential to theory building, it falls short of answering the research question. As Purcell et al (2009:08) candidly pointed out during their detailed review of people management and performance, “even if robust causal correlations are found between the adoption of a certain mix of (HRM) practices and performance, we do not know why this occurs”. In order to understand why a relationship exists, one must therefore draw on theory that seeks to explain the context of relationships as opposed to explanation of the constituent factors themselves. Blau (1964:03) provides the metaphor of a “triangle” to strengthen arguments that such debates on construct definition eventually become a theoretical cul-de-sac (Purcell 1999). The metaphor reveals that while three dots on a page can define a triangle, it is not the three dots themselves that constitute the triangle (Blau, 1964). Relationships require a different focus; a focus that seeks to investigate relationships between constituents. In the same context, FLM and outcome constructs cannot, themselves, explain their relationship. Therefore, a theory of relationship is required.

On review of current literature, a range of theories is proposed that help explain why a FLM could impact employee outcomes. Table 3.3.1 summarises the **main theories** in this range, including their **key issue** or point of logic relating to OCB and its interpreted application **to the FLM role**. While presented as separate phenomena here for discussion purposes, it is important to recognise the interfaces and overlap between these theories. The motivational factors at play are involved in complex cognitive interactions, before a resulting behaviour is observed (Koorsgard et al, 2010). In fact, studies challenge two or more causal mechanisms acknowledging such complexity (Coyle-Shapiro et al, 2004). Cognisant of the breadth of theory available, the table also includes other **key indicative sources and studies** for further reference.
### Range of Relevant Theories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Logic or Causal Mechanisms for changes in OCB</th>
<th>Some key indicative sources and studies</th>
<th>How might this explain the FLM role in HRM-Performance Relationship?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social Exchange Theory</strong></td>
<td>Norm of Reciprocity – historical interactions in relationships can explain OCB based on a need to reciprocate perceived favourable treatment, to remove the 'uncomfortable' feeling of indebtedness. SET can have a social-psychological (e.g. Blau, 1964; McDermott, Conway, Rousseau and Flood, 2013) and/or sociological (e.g. Gouldner, 1960; Fox, 1974) antecedent. The key issue is modes of reciprocity in the employment exchange.</td>
<td>Gouldner (1960); Blau (1964); Fox (1974); Eisenberger, Stinglhamber, Vandenberghe, Sucharski &amp; Rhoades (2002); McDermott, Conway, Rousseau &amp; Flood (2013), Kilroy &amp; Dundon (2015), Townsend &amp; Dundon (2015)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organisational Justice Theory</strong></td>
<td>Perceived Procedural, Interactional and Distributive Justice – employee’s experience of the organisation’s fairness affects how valued they feel as an employee. If they perceive the organisation to be unfair, they withhold discretionary effort. The key issue is employee perceptions of a fair or unfair employment exchange.</td>
<td>Greenberg, (1990); Moorman (1991); Colquitt, Wessen, Porter, Conlon and Ng (2001); Coyle-Shapiro (2002); Coyle-Shapiro, Kessler and Purcell (2004); Cropanzano, Bowen and Gilliland (2007); Hollensbe, Khazanchi and Masterson (2008); Heffernan and Dundon (2016)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour Process Theory</td>
<td>Power imbalance between employees and management can explain management control based on employer and capitalist market needs to extract surplus value from employee’s efforts. The key issue is managerial control and exploitation of employee’s effort in employment exchange.</td>
<td>Braverman (1974); Thompson, (1983; 2011); Delbridge (1999); Ramsay, Scholarios and Harley (2000); Godard (2004) Townsend et al, 2012b</td>
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<tr>
<td>Organisational Identity</td>
<td>Human Other Orientation/Heuristic Processing- employees will demonstrate loyalty and commitment (e.g. OCB) if they identify with and adopt the organisation as a group to which they belong and support. The key issue presumed is aligned and motivated employees, where employees help themselves by supporting organisational goals.</td>
<td>Korsgaard, Meglino, Lester and Jeong (2010); Van Dick, Hirst, Grojean and Weiseke (2007); Van Dick (2004); Brewer (2004); Townsend et al (2012a)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.3.1: Summary of Theoretical Frameworks explored to explain ‘why’ the FLM may impact HRM-Performance relationships
Social Exchange Theory proposes that where an individual does another a favour, there is an expectation of some future unspecified return (Blau, 1964, Fox 1974, Dundon & Rollinson, 2011). The notion of such implied obligation is cast as an explanatory mechanism for patterns of behaviour observed in many social systems. Central to the theory, is the ‘norm of reciprocity’ labelled by Gouldner (1960), which claims a universal expectation that people should help and not injure those who help them. This expectation translates into a feeling of ‘being owed’ – for the favour-provider or helper – and a feeling of ‘owing’ or ‘indebtedness’ – for the receiver. There are circumstances of course, where a party may benefit another in the absence of any reciprocity. Gouldner (1960) identifies at least two situations, one relates to a significant power differential between the parties and the other to the options or choices that the parties have in relation to acquiring the “benefit” or service elsewhere (Gouldner, 1960: 164). However, Gouldner (1960) outlines that the generalised norm of reciprocity goes beyond obligation generated as a result of social standing or roles, to a norm that is fundamental to any relationship based on its previous history, as the following extract illustrates:

“There are certain duties that people owe one another, not as human beings, or as fellow members of a group, or even as occupants of social statuses within the group but, rather, because of their prior actions. We owe others certain things because of what they have previously done for us, because of the history of previous interaction we have had with them. It is this kind of obligation which is entailed by the generalized norm of reciprocity” (Gouldner, 1960:171)

Given this, Social Exchange Theory contends that the obligation will be created in the employment relationship, not solely as a result of the employer-employee contract, but also from the history of interaction that the employer and employee have had. Furthermore, according to Blau (1964), as both parties will seek balance in the relationship and the less appealing position is the one of owing a debt, the parties will continue to adjust their behaviour in attempts to restore the balance. In circumstance where the future return seems improbable (e.g. where one party has greater power) this ‘restoration’ may include with-holding favours or help. It is such a dynamic that provides a drive for further transaction, hence, continually developing and altering
the relationship between the two parties. The framework for understanding relationships has much relevance in an organisational setting, particularly regarding the less tangible aspects of the employment relationship. Coyle-Shapiro and Kessler (2002:70) highlight that this has been used “extensively by researchers as a framework for understanding employee attitudes and behaviours”. They place significant emphasis on the explanatory value of Social Exchange Theory contending that “in theory, the exchange relationship between the employee and the employer could be characterized as an ongoing repetitive cycle of conferring benefits that in turn induce an obligation to reciprocate” (Coyle-Shapiro and Kessler (2002:72). Townsend and Loudoun (2015) highlight that the cycles may be interrupted by an employee if the FLM fails where a trade union, or formal management channel, might succeed in ensuring perceived benefits are received. In terms of HRM-Performance relationship, research to date has developed a construct to capture such benefits conferred to an employer by employees outside of explicit contractual obligations. The implication being that the employment exchange is more than an economic one, but also a socio-political and psychological one (Dundon & Rollinson, 2011). Hence, the FLM role comes to the forefront, as a key interpersonal interaction in the context of the employee exchange effort (Eisenberger et al, 2002; McDermott et al, 2013). FLM enactment of HRM practices may be perceived as favourable treatment that creates a sense of reciprocity to the FLM. Social Exchange Theory lends itself to recognising both macro and micro sources of influence with a pluralistic orientation.

Organisational Justice Theory
Organisational Justice Theory (Greenberg, 1990; Moorman, 1991) contends that perceived fairness in an employment exchange is a key determinant of employee behaviours and attitudes (Colquitt et al, 2001; Cropanzano et al, 2007; Heffernan and Dundon, 2016). Perceptions of unfairness can lead to negative organisational outcomes resulting from employee behaviours, including sabotage, theft and aggression (Hollensbe et al, 2008). Alternatively, employees who perceive fair treatment exhibit pro-organisation behaviours to maintain a fair transaction (Coyle-Shapiro et al, 2004). The antecedents of positive reciprocation of fair treatment are associated with Social Exchange Theory (Blau 1964) that has been previously outlined.
Within organisational justice theory, three types of justice are dominant (Coyle-Shapiro et al, 2004). Procedural justice relates to the extent employees perceive fairness in the processes and decision-making practices relating to employment. Colquitt et al (2001) describes seven decision rules that employees use to determine the fairness of procedures: consistency (across persons and over time); bias suppression; accuracy of information; correct-ability (of wrong decisions); ethicality; voice and decision control. The FLM role as enactor of HRM practices may impact a number of these decision rules. For example, the extent to which the FLM is consistent in the application of HRM policies amongst employees, in a given workgroup, may impact an employee’s perception of fairness (Hollensbe et al, 2008). Distributive justice is concerned with the perceived fairness in the outcomes of processes and practices, i.e. the resulting punishment or reward. Equity theory (Adams, 1965) plays a part, as employees consider relative value of reward versus required effort. While pay and rewards are commonly centralized in organisations, the FLM often maintains responsibility for some local reward-related outcomes, e.g. availability and distribution of overtime hours; performance appraisals which may impact performance related pay; workload distribution, to give but a few examples. Again, a role emerges for the FLM in the perceived distributive justice of the organisation. Finally, interactional justice relates to the perceived quality of interpersonal treatment an employee receives from an authority figure during the enactment of procedures (Greenberg, 1990). At the front line of the HRM practices (Renwick, 2003), the FLM is located as a key factor in interpersonal exchanges. Justice theory tends to focus on micro factors of influence, with some macro variable influences as important with a pluralistic orientation.

There is a growing body of evidence to suggest that the consequences of HRM enactment by the FLM is not limited to the immediate work group but can also influence employee perceptions of how the overall organisation treats them (Coyle-Shapiro et al, 2004; Hollensbe et al, 2008). Agency behaviour (Eisenberger et al, 2010) outlined in the previous chapter, may lead employees to perceive the FLM as acting on behalf of the organisation. In one study to investigate how employees develop perceptions of fairness, Hollensbe et al (2008) found evidence of workers using the perceived fairness of the FLM to assess the fairness of the organisation. In their qualitative analysis, one employee quote identified the fairness of the FLM “as playing a big part in how (they) perceived the organisation” (Hollensbe et al,
Changes in OCB may be explained by the perceived fairness of the FLM behaviour.

**Labour Process Theory**

Labour process theory finds its explanatory value in the fundamental dynamics of work and employment. It observes the power of labour and the power of management and recognises their independent objectives to control the employment relationship (Braverman, 1974; Thompson 1983, 2001). Specifically, labour process theory perceives an imbalance in power in favour of management and employer. The perceived inferior labour power-base is subject to the expectations and decisions of management, which leads employees to exert additional effort, e.g. OCB. One causal mechanism outlined in relation to HPWS is *work intensification* (Godard, 2004). The deployment of HRM practices by management may result in an intensification of work for the employee. Conscious of the employer’s superior power status, employees raise their effort level owing to managerial pressure and exploitation to meet the additional expectations that may then appear in the form of OCB (Delbridge, 1999; Ramsey et al, 2000). Employees may perceive the FLM enactment of HRM policies, such as training and development, as a new job requirement that requires greater effort. They may expand the breadth of their role to now include attending training and up-skilling. This expansion leads to an intensification of their work, often without a corresponding change in the compensation and benefits received. In this way, organisational performance may improve but at the cost of employee effort and possibly dissatisfaction and lower commitment.

Given that any increased performance must come from some additional effort (psychologically, socially or physically), all explanatory theories involve some role expansion, either temporary or permanent (Coyle-Shapiro et al, 2004). The challenge that labour process theory poses, or its distinguishing issue, is the extent to which the additional effort, or OCB, is discretionary. Advocates of labour process theory argue that the FLM enacts policies in an unbalanced power environment, meaning that OCB is unlikely to arise from real employee choice. Employees comply with additional FLM expectations due to their positional power as an agent of the employer. Labour Process Theory is often concerned with the macro (capitalist) system influence on micro work relations, with a Marxist philosophy.
Organisational Identity Theory

Organisational Identity theory relates to the social behaviours inherent in human decision-making. The theory suggests that not all of human behaviour is motivated by rational self-interested logic. Rather, there are circumstances in which decisions are based on social norms, without careful consideration of the personal rewards or consequences. Korsgaard et al (2010) refer to this as a theory of other orientation, whereby behaviour is orientated towards others, through a cognitive process called heuristic processing (Brewer, 2004). Through this lens, OCB may be motivated by rational thought in anticipation of future reciprocated rewards, without due consideration for personal consequence. Group identity has been found as a key antecedent for heuristic processing. Employees who identify with their workgroup and organisation have been found to be more likely to conform to social norms, with less concern for personal consequences (Korgaard et al, 2010; Van Dick, 2004). Two mechanisms for this relationship are outlined. Firstly, it is argued that employees who identify with their organisation will be more aligned with organisational goals and values (Van Dick et al, 2007). A second mechanism, whereby organisational identification may stimulate followers to show OCB, “is that identification elicits a sense of oneness with the organisation, which leads individuals to internalize the organisation’s aims and goals as their own” (Van Dick et al 2007:136). The key issue here is that employees who are aligned will be more motivated to be an active contributor to the community, manifesting in mutual commitment and increased OCB (Coyle-Shapiro et al, 2004).

The FLM may impact both of these mechanisms. Firstly, it is shown that FLMs own identification with the organisation (leader identification) is an antecedent of employee identification (Van Dick et al, 2007). The greater the FLM identification with the organisation, the more likely their behaviour will be group or other orientated. Examples of this include, assisting employees with their duties, and self-sacrificing behaviour of putting the workgroup ahead of their own personal reward. This other-orientated behaviour may be a contagion effect for employee’s adoption of social norms. Secondly, the extent of congruence between organisational values and FLM enactment of HRM practices may impact the extent of employee identification with the overall organisation. As the custodian of group norms at the front line, the FLM affects employee internalisation of the organisational aims and goals. Problematically,
organisational identity theory has a unitarist bias, assuming common shared goals between employer and employee. It is also exclusively micro-orientated to the neglect of potential macro influences on behavioural outcomes.

3.4 Social Exchange Theory as a lens for the research question

Of the range of relevant theoretical frameworks available to better understand the research aims of this study, no one single theoretical lens is fully satisfactory. Nonetheless, Social Exchange Theory lends itself to the phenomenon of interest here for reasons of ‘reciprocity’ and ‘behavioural’ attributes associated with agency capacity of both employee and FLM roles. This is not to dismiss other theoretical value where relevant. For example, labour process theorists are not blind to the reciprocal dynamics of an employment exchange relationship that alludes to important sources of power and authority of organisations and FLMs (Heffernan and Dundon, 2016). Worker identity, commitment and potential patterns of cognitive processing may have further utility when examining yet to be defined empirical data. Thus while Social Exchange Theory has a connection to mutual reciprocal behavioural relationships between employees, their organisation and FLM, other theoretical lens may also shed explanatory light on the phenomena under investigation. Coyle-Shapiro et al (2004) demonstrate this point empirically as they investigate justice, identity and social exchange mechanisms to collectively explain changes in OCB. Heffernan and Dundon (2016) conclude that justice mediates perceptions of ‘unfairness’ and ‘lower employee satisfaction’, which may be resonant with some labour process theorists. Therefore, the illusion of a single causal mechanism, while attractive, is unlikely to manifest in the employment relationship. It is, however, useful to adopt a theoretical lens to advance the research question to deepen our understanding regarding possible mechanisms, and also to reveal further unanswered questions to advance knowledge. To that end, Social Exchange Theory provides a platform from which a research model can be built for empirical study.

The central tenet of Social Exchange Theory is that a party will adapt their behaviour where they feel obligated or unfairly compensated through the norm of reciprocity. In the employment
relationship where the work and reciprocated payment are generally explicit and controlled through organisational systems and statutory laws, parties will rely on other means of behaviour to affect changes in the relationship. However, social exchange theory reveals that understanding the role of the FLM in impacting that catalyst, is equally critical. Within the social exchange paradigm two frameworks (See Table 3.4.1) are dominant, namely the psychological contact and related (perceived) organisational support mechanisms (Coyle-Shapiro and Conway 2005:774). In the studies in Table 3.4.1, both psychological contract fulfilment and organisational support are both positioned as key means by which an employee globally evaluates the employment relationship (Coyle Shapiro and Conway, 2005:775). However, in their 2005 study, findings suggest that organisational support is distinct from the components of the psychological contract (Coyle-Shapiro and Conway, 2005:778). The two frameworks are found to “differently predict organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB) which further supports the distinct contribution of the two frameworks to understanding the employment relationship” (Coyle-Shapiro and Conway, 2005:778).

The first of these frameworks, the psychological contract, relates to an individual’s belief regarding the terms and conditions of the reward-effort employment exchange (Rousseau, 1989). Psychological Contract constructs capture the perceived mutual obligations and the extent to which they are fulfilled. It “predicts that it is not organisational treatment per se but the discrepancy between what is promised, and what is fulfilled” which impacts employee outcomes (Coyle-Shapiro and Conway, 2005:775). Anand et al (2010) label the discretionary management behaviour available to FLMs as “I-deals”, representing the individual ‘deals’ that FLMs can engage with individual employees. For example, the FLM may have discretion to allow an individual employee some extra break time for a personal errand each day. This ‘deal’ can become part of the employee’s psychological contract with specific importance to the individual in question. FLM behaviour relating to this ‘deal’ may create a sense of obligation for the employee to repay if the psychological contract is fulfilled, or a withdrawal of discretionary effort if, and indeed when, the psychological contract is violated (Cullinane & Dundon, 2006).
## The Lens of Reciprocity & Social Exchange Theory

### Social Exchange Framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Psychological Contract</th>
<th>Author (Year)</th>
<th>‘Norm of Reciprocity’ Constructs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Anand et al (2010)</td>
<td>• I-deals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rousseau (1990)</td>
<td>• New Hire Beliefs</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coyle-Shapiro and Kessler (2002)</td>
<td>• Perceived Employer Obligations</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Rousseau (1989, 1990)</td>
<td>• Perceived Employer Fulfilment of Obligations</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rousseau (1989, 1990)</td>
<td>• Employee Obligations</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rousseau (1989, 1990)</td>
<td>• Employee fulfilment of obligations</td>
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</tbody>
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|                        |                           | • Perceived Supervisory Support   |
|                        |                           | • Perceived Supervisor Organisational Status |

| Eisenberger et al (1986) | • Perceived Organisational Support |
| Kuvass and Dysvik (2010)  | • Perceived Investment in Employee Development |
|                          | • Perceived Supervisor Support     |

|                                                       |                   | • Psychological Contract Breach   |
|                                                       |                   | • Psychological Contract Violation|

| Coyle-Shapiro and Conway (2005) | • Psychological Contract fulfilment |
|                                 | • Perceived Organisational Support |
|                                 | • Employee perceptions of employer obligation |

Table 3.4.1: Constructs arising within Social Exchange Theory
Organisational support framework relates to an individual’s perception concerning the degree to which an organisation values their contributions and cares about their well-being (Eisenberger et al, 1986), namely perceived organisational support (POS). Support theory contends that favourable POS will be positively related to employee discretionary behaviour. Underlying this framework is the ‘norm of reciprocity’ as a potential explanatory mechanism relating to employee experiences, attitudes and behaviours arising from FLM operational approaches (Gouldner, 1960; Coyle-Shapiro and Conway 2005; Conway and Coyle-Shapiro, 2012). The key distinction between POS and the psychological contract framework lies in the ‘expectation’ or ‘promised’ nature of the support. POS captures an employee’s evaluation of the quality of organisational treatment, regardless of whether it was expected or not. Eisenberger et al (2002:565) go further and relate this specifically to FLM, arguing that “just as employees form global perceptions concerning their valuation by the organisation, they develop general views concerning the degree to which supervisors value their contribution and care about their well-being”. They describe this phenomenon as Perceived Supervisor Support (PSS).

Studies have since found support for the contention that PSS leads to POS both generally (Eisenberger et al, 2002) and more specifically in relation to employee development (Kuvass and Dysvik, 2010). Eisenberger et al (2002:572) contend that in order to foster personal loyalty, “many supervisors may exaggerate their positive valuation of their subordinates and their role in obtaining benefits for subordinates, resulting in greater PSS than POS”. Here Perceived Organisational Status construct is introduced to recognise variation in the FLMs agency behaviour and suggests a degree of discretion amongst FLMs in relation to their representation of organisation values and goals. It has been argued, however, that the structural conditions of a capitalist employment exchange make a pure psychological exchange problematic in key respects. Cullinane and Dundon (2006) argue that managers, including supervisors, may not be the agents with absolute authority or power to alter what are perceived obligations and expectations underpinning the psychological aspects of the exchange. Nonetheless, recognising the FLM as an agent of the organisation implies some potential impact on employee behaviours, expectations and/or perceptions. Both PSS and POS open up avenues to explore already established social exchange frameworks as a method of further understanding the impact of the FLM styles on employee outcomes. To that end, this study incorporates two further constructs for investigation, namely PSS and POS. Building on the relational model outlined previously,
Figure 3.3.1 below conceptualizes **employee perceived support** (POS and PSS) as the outcome of FLM behavioural type which in turn affects employee outcomes and unit level performance.

![Figure 3.3.1](image)

**Figure 3.4.1 Updated people management causal chain (Adapted from Purcell and Hutchinson, 2007)**

**POS and PSS Constructs**

“Perceived organisational support captures an individual’s perception concerning the degree to which an organisation values their contribution and cares about their well-being” (Eisenberger et al, 1986). Based on the norm of reciprocity; empirical studies support the relationship between high levels of perceived organisational support and OCB (Eisenberger et al., 1990; Coyle-Shapiro et al, 2004). POS may also increase commitment by fulfilling such socio-emotional needs as belonging and emotional support (Eisenberger et al., 1986). Such need fulfilment produces a strong sense of belonging to the organisation, involving the incorporation of employee’s membership and role status into their social identity. Coyle-Shapiro and Conway (2005) remind us that POS is a one-sided construct. It captures “the employee’s evaluation of the quality of organisational treatment, regardless of whether it’s expected or promised”. (Coyle-Shapiro and Conway, 2005:775)

PSS relates to the perceived support an employee receives from their FLM. Eisenberger et al (2002:565) claim that “just as employees form global perceptions concerning their valuation by the organisation, they develop general views concerning the degree to which supervisors value
their contributions and care about their well-being”. Employees may display increased discretionary in response to perceived favourable treatment by a FLM. While PSS is of interest in its own right, there is also some evidence that employees may in fact view their FLMs support towards them as indicative of the organisation’s orientation towards them (Eisenberger et al, 1986). In this case, favourable support received from the FLM may be reciprocated to the organisation irrespective of organisational intent or policy. Likewise, the reverse may occur. Employees may falsely attribute organisational support to the FLM. Eisenberger et al (2002) claim that in order to “foster personal loyalty, many supervisors may exaggerate their positive valuation of their subordinates and their role in obtaining benefits for subordinates, resulting in greater PSS than POS” (Eisenberger et al, 2002:572). The FLM is once again located as a key factor in the employer-employee relationship.

Of course, there are some circumstances where an employee may distinguish between PSS and POS. Eisenberger et al (2002) describe how the FLM behavioural type may mediate the relationship between PSS and POS. Specifically the extent of agency behaviour, or as a more recent construct is defined ‘Perceived Supervisor Organisational Embodiment’ (Eisenberger et al, 2002). Thus, “support from a supervisor who is perceived to strongly embody the organisational ethos is more likely to be taken as organisational support than as support from a supervisor whom, the employee believes less well represents the organisation” (Eisenberger et al, 2002:572). The research aligns with findings by organisational identity theorists also (Van Dick et al, 2007). Townsend et al (2012a) reveal a signalling construct to represent the organisational messaging and support, and its variation between organisational levels and FLMs.

Further critique of organisational support theory is its lack of explanatory utility in a ‘low support environment’. Coyle-Shapiro and Conway (2005:779) argue “in relationships characterized by decreasing organisational support, employees are more likely to invoke the psychological contract, possibly as a means of regulating a deteriorating relationship”. In this instant, the FLM-employee relationship may be more transactional characterised as “unidirectional downward influence, economic exchange based relationships” (Howell and Hall-Merenda, 1999:682). The exchange lacks the mutual trust and respect (Graen and Uhl-Bien, 1995) required for a relationship for an exchange of effort in return for un-specified future reciprocation. To gain understanding of the perceived state of reciprocity in the FLM-employee relationship.
relationship, the research model is updated with a new construct, namely the ‘zone of reciprocity’.

### 3.5 Zone of Reciprocity Construct

Chapter Two presented a relational model that proposed key constructs and their relationships in explaining how the FLM role impacts HRM-Performance relationship. Building on that model, chapter three has identified Social Exchange Theory as a lens through which the why of the FLM impact may be observed. Narrowing to the notion of perceived support received by employees from both the organisation and the FLM, the research question is advanced to present logic as to why employees adjust discretionary behaviour in response to the FLM role. The orientation may possibly be a positive, to enhance performance, or be a negative change in response to work intensification. Two key explanatory mechanisms come to the fore. Firstly, the norm of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960, Blau, 1964) is presented as a social norm that employees adopt in the employment relationship. Here, in return for perceived support or (un)favourable treatment, the employee chooses to reciprocate with (un)favourable treatment towards the organisation, in the form of adjusted commitment and OCB. Motivated by an ‘uncomfortable’ feeling of indebtedness, the employee may return additional effort to switch the sense of obligation firmly back to the employer. The motivational dynamic creates a cycle of reciprocal tension in the relationship as organisations reciprocate with further support. Over time, the long-term nature of this cycle engenders high commitment and desire to remain working at the organisation in employees. The resulting outcome is that organisational performance increases as discretionary behaviour from employees outweighs the cost of additional support by the organisation. Lack of support may engender the opposite outcome, if perceived so by employees.

The second mechanism of interest is the reciprocation of effort by employees towards the FLM. Perceptions of the supervisor support received by employees can increase loyalty and leader-member relationships may prosper from support beyond what is offered or promised by the organisation as a whole. In this case, the FLM support is reciprocated at the individual level to the particular workgroup. The employee is cognisant of their unique or distinctive relationship
with a particular FLM and reciprocates in ways that they believe will help the FLM. Typically this OCB is more workgroup orientated and emotionally expressive. Likewise, absent support may be perceived as unfavourable treatment by the employee, stimulating an opposite dynamic in the relationship. Lee and Allen (2002) describe this as OCB-I (individual directed OCB), where by the discretionary effort manifests in helping other colleagues, helping new employee orientation, etc.

In order to operationalise these mechanisms, a zone of reciprocity is conceptualised where employees may be located in terms of their feeling of support and reciprocation in the employment. This zone comprises of POS, PSS and perceived current state of indebtedness in the relationship. It is hypothesised that high POS and PSS will be related to higher employee OCB. Given that FLM behavioural type have been found to have a direct relationship to employee outcomes (see review in Chapter Two), the model proposes that the support mechanisms will mediate the strength of that relationship. Therefore, the zone of reciprocity is set a mediator. For any given FLM, the outcomes will be mediated by the employee perception of support received. Figure 3.5.1 reveals the research model incorporating both Why and How the FLM impacts HRM-Performance Relationship. It also identifies the scope of the empirical research investigation to be carried into the next chapter.

Figure 3.5.1: Why and How FLM Impacts HRM-Performance Relationship?
This model is operationalised in the study through the investigation of a set of research hypotheses. Details of these are outlined in the next chapter. The research investigation centring on these propositions intends to inform current theory on the extent of its application to the FLM role in the relationship between HRM and performance, as well as clarifying the application, where relevant, hence extending the boundaries of current theory to new ground.

**Limitations of the research model**

The FLM role in the HRM-Performance relationship is a phenomenon that occurs as part of a broader organisational, social and economic landscape, which is connected to a broader set of relationships including other parts of the organisation, the organisation itself, and the wider external environment (Katz and Kahn, 1978; Kochan et al, 1994). These relationships operate in tandem with the FLM-employee relationship, making it difficult to isolate the specific phenomenon of concern to the research question. The model is limited within the constructs that it seeks to expose and measure, knowing that there are many possible antecedents excluded from discussion and empirical measurement. A second limitation of this model is the assumed direction of causality from FLM to employee. It is possible that relationships travel the opposite direction, e.g. maybe a good performing unit makes it easier for FLMs to adopt supportive behaviour than a lesser (poorer) performing unit. The experience is a ‘halo’ or ‘horns’ effect as described by Wright and Gardener (2000). As outlined by Purcell et al (2003), employees who work in high performing groups may also have a more positive view of their discretion.

**3.6 Conclusion**

This chapter theorises the primary research question, namely relevance of the FLM in the context of HPWS. It achieves this by considering the FLM role through the lens of Social Exchange Theory. Through analysis of current theory and previous empirical studies, the chapter proposes a model explaining why the FLM may have an impact on employee outcomes. The model provides a framework to investigate the research question through empirical research. The following chapter outlines a research strategy to test the model empirically. In
addition, empirical evidence is gathered to enhance the model, through qualitative evidence, presented in later chapters.
Chapter 4

RESEARCH METHODS

4.1 Introduction

Continuing exploration of the theoretical models developed in previous chapters, attention is now turned to empirically investigating their constituent constructs and relationships. The purpose of this chapter is to explain the rationale for the selected research methods to investigate both ‘how’ and ‘why’ the FLM may impact HPWS relationships. The chapter explains the methods, tools and instruments used to address the research questions and ultimately inform the findings and conclusions for this research. It includes a description of the research context and a reference to a pilot study that was undertaken. The chapter concludes with a summary of the research model. Commencing with a defence of the overall research strategy and approach, the chapter reveals various layers to the empirical study (Saunders et al, 2003) to uncover the specific measurements and tools applied. The research methodology seeks to address the primary research question of how and why FLMs’ impact the relationship between HPWS and employee behaviours and attitudes. Informed by the theory developed in chapters two and three, four, a set of subsidiary research objectives compliment the research question to operationalise the empirical study.

Research Question and Subsidiary Research Objectives

To progress understanding of the research question, namely how and why the FLM may impact employee attitudes and behaviours in a HPWS context, four complimentary research objectives are devised to further inform the study, as follows:

1. To explore and show variability in perceived FLM behavioural types in a HPWS context
2. To examine associations between perceived FLM behavioural types and employee behaviours and attitudes in a HPWS context

3. To investigate potential mediating influences on FLM and employee discretionary effort outcomes in a HPWS context

4. To identify and explain probable influences of perceived FLM behavioural types on employee relationship outcomes, including employee attitudes and behaviours

A two-stage research strategy is designed to achieve the research objectives. Stage One presents a quantitative approach to advance the research objectives including a measurement instrument for: perceived FLM behavioural type; perceived support constructs; and employee outcomes. It also utilises quantitative analysis tools to provide informative statistics and assess confidence in findings. Cognisant of the limitations of quantitative data, Stage Two presents a qualitative approach to collect and analyse experiential reflections from both FLMs and employees. This approach adds explanatory utility with regard to prior testable constructs and their relationships. A set of hypotheses were developed to test relationships and provide relevant data and conclusions to inform the research objectives. In aggregate the hypotheses and research objectives provide a more informed answer to the core research question. The outcome of the research objectives are delivered through interpretive amalgamation of the combined evidence, which advance the research question in later chapters.

4.2 Research Methods Approach

An independent research methodology chapter may risk the suggestion that the tools are somewhat independent of the findings. Van Maanen et al (2007:1146) in their review of this dilemma argue, “methods without theoretical substance can be sterile, representing technical sophistication in isolation”. To provide theoretical substance to the methods, the methodological approach is set within the context of furthering the explanatory value of the FLM role in social exchange theory, and subsequently the HPWS literature. The overall purpose of this research is to enhance the collective knowledge of a community of both
researchers and practitioners in the fields of management and organisation. The study seeks to resolve current problems of interest, by expanding on existing theory in the field (Van Maanen et al, 2007). Critically then, ‘theory building’ is one of the main features of the study.

Theory building is often rooted in either ‘inductive’ or ‘deductive’ reasoning (Saunders et al, 2003). “Inductive and deductive logics are mirrors of one another, with inductive theory building from cases producing new theory from data, and deductive theory testing completing the cycle by using data to test theory” (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007:25). In other words, inductive research requires that “theory would follow data rather than vice versa as in the deductive approach” (Saunders et al, 2003:87). Of course, the simplicity of this logic conceals some fundamental issues. Building theory is more complex, and often incremental. For example, debates include: agreement on what constitutes theory (Mintzberg, 1979; Pfeffer, 1993; Sutton and Staw, 1995; Klein and Zedeck, 2004; Van Maanen et al, 2007); and, acceptance of theory building methods (Morgan & Smircich, 1980; Lewin, 1990; Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007; Van Maanen et al, 2007).

What constitutes theory? It depends. Some argue that theories are evaluated on dimensions such as internal consistency, logic, organisation and clarity (Klein and Zedeck, 2004). From this perspective, theories would have greatest acceptance when they sit closest to ‘normal science’, such as laws of physics (Lewin, 1990; Pfeffer, 1993). However, other perspectives consider the value of theory in terms of its novelty and contemporary interest (Whettan, 1989), its contextual richness (Mintzberg, 1989), its ability to reveal new problems and to answer and explain questions (Lewin, 1990); and of its contribution to human aspirations (Wicks and Freeman, 1998). Of course, this diversity of perspective can result in only one answer, i.e. ‘good’ theory is not well defined. A conundrum emerges for the researcher seeking to ‘build theory’. On one hand, new theory must be understood and relevant in the context of existing knowledge. However, existing knowledge drives a retrospective focus, and may constrain concepts with historical boundaries and definitions. Yet, on the other hand, breakthrough concepts and new thinking are necessary to advance knowledge beyond the current state. Such knowledge advancement requires new construct boundaries and definitions to be formed. To that end, the study provides a synthesis of existing literature, ultimately advancing existing
RESEARCH METHODS

Constructs through redefined boundaries, connecting divergent concepts and drafting new relationships. The relationships are represented in a conceptual research model of new focal constructs (Chan, 1998), outlined later in the chapter.

To operationalise the research model, specific methods are adopted. Although both deductive and inductive reasoning can help explain methods selection, the acceptance of methods is often contingent on a given frame of reference or paradigm. According to Cannella and Paetzold (1994), organisational science could be viewed as pre-paradigmatic, in the sense that there is no one or new dominant paradigm that has emerged. The ‘older’ or current paradigms can be summarised in two schools, namely ‘positivism’ and ‘anti-positivism’ (Wicks and Freeman, 1998). Positivists perceive an objective truth in the world, where it is possible to separate constructs from the researcher and their approach. For example, employees may be perceived as objects to be tested. On the other hand, ‘anti-positivists’ perceive the truth as an interpretive science, at least partially subjective and dependent on contextual factors. For example, employees may be agents who in turn influence the phenomenon being tested. At its extreme, methods that deliver a personal opinion of an observed phenomenon may be considered valuable theory by one school and dismissed as an ‘error’ by the other (i.e. positivism). Of note, of course, is that presenting two opposing paradigms can be over-simplified, when there are, for instance, a range of competing perspectives within research approaches, e.g. post-modernist versus structural versus political nuances within the anti-positivist discourse.

For this study, the methods selected branch across both of these perspectives. Stage One has a decisively positivist posture on acceptable methods with a high degree of focus on measurement of particular type of ‘attitudinal’ data. However, Stage Two includes methods that may be considered more ‘subjective’ and ‘interpretive’ of the phenomenon. The rationale for this is driven by the research objectives. As Mintzberg (1979: 587) outlines, theory building seems to require rich description, whereby the “richness comes from anecdote”. All kinds of relationships in our hard data are uncovered, but it is from the use of the more interpretive data that explanation and clarity around phenomena emerge. Likewise, Lewin (1990) highlights that we may need combined methods to devise new theoretical explanations. The study draws significantly on quantitative methods, employing tools and analytical techniques that may
typically be considered positivist, which is complimented by qualititative approaches, thereby offering an overall mixed methods strategy.

4.3 Challenges with the current methods approach in this field

As with all methods and paradigms, there are criticisms. However, the issue is not specifically with the positivist paradigm, but more the application of the methods to this field. A useful summary of the key methodological critiques concerned with HPWS is provided by Marchington and Grugulis (2000). In an analysis of empirical studies on best practice HRM, they reveal multiple problems in terms of “problems in choosing appropriate measures of performance, doubts about directions of causality, contamination from other (non-HR) influences, exclusion of hard-to-measure items and the reliance on a single person to complete questionnaires or interviews” (Marchington and Grugulis, 2000:1105). Similar critiques have been shown by Wall and Wood (2005), Truss (2001) and Guest (2011). Some of these challenges are expanded on, and responded to below.

Challenge 1: Measures of Performance

To date the literature has not achieved consensus on exactly what measures, or indeed aspects, of performance should be considered in the framework. However, a number of recommendations for resolution have been made. Purcell et al (2003:53) argue that “we need to find measures that are meaningful to the firm and that are likely to be susceptible to employee behaviours.” Guest (2001:1102) goes even beyond the types of measures, to the source of those measures within an organisation, claiming that “one of the challenges in research where data are collected from multiple sources is to maintain a consistent level of analysis”. Truss (2001:1146) echoes this emphasis on the level of performance analysis, in her call for a “need to compare and contrast performance measures at a variety of organisational levels if we are to gain a real understanding of what ‘performance’ means”. She also calls for wider consideration of performance measurements, outlining that “adopting financial measure as the sole criterion of success is too limited and a broader perspective should be considered that additionally takes
account of the success in terms of the customer and employee constituencies, along the lines of the balanced scorecard” (Truss, 2001:1123).

The underlying issue here relates to the lack of direction or guidance in the literature on how empirical researchers should treat the performance construct (Guest, 2011). As Guest (2001:1100) highlights in earlier work “the theory of outcomes is weak and therefore there is some uncertainty about what to measure”. One explanation of how ‘weak’ theory relates to performance variables is provided by Fleetwood and Hesketh (2008) where they contend that “research that lacks a theory also lacks an adequate rationale for the choice of the phenomenon that will eventually become variables” (Fleetwood and Hesketh, 2008:129).

Response

The study acknowledges the difficulty in measuring performance. In response, the study has included only outcome measures that are supported by a significant body of research with the rationale and theory of such relationships. Social Exchange Theory provides both a rationale, by way of the norm of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960), and a series of empirically repeated relationships (Boxall and Macky, 2014, Eisenberger et al, 2002, Coyle-Shapiro et al, 2004) from which to hypothesize potential linkages (if not direct causal outcomes). The research question was refined from ‘performance outcomes’, to include specific ‘employee behaviours and attitudes’ that are of theoretical relevance. Three measures of employee attitude and behaviour are included in the study. These are Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB) (Lee and Allen, 2002), commitment (Purcell and Hutchinson, 2007) and turnover intention (Kuvaas, 2006). The benefit of using measures and constructs that have been widely validated is that it can minimise interference in the new constructs of greatest significance, namely FLM behavioural type. However, further study is required to confirm which specific employee outcomes that lead to meaningful performance changes in the organisation (Guest, 2011).

Challenge 2: Directions of Causality

Ambiguity about causal direction is an area of significant challenge, and perhaps even an indeterminable debate, for HRM-Performance relationship researchers. Statistical analysis, at
best, can indicate or rule out evidence of relationship, i.e. correlation; however, it cannot derive the causal direction of any such correlation found. It is plausible that HRM has resulted in improved organisational performance, or that high performing organisations have just adopted more fully the HRM practices as a result of financial success.

Purcell et al (2003) illustrate this point in their example from Tesco. Drawing on work by Wright and Gardner (2000), they describe the ‘halo’ or ‘horns’ effect, whereby employees who, for example, work in a high-performing store will have a more positive view of their discretion. In other words, “the direction of causation goes from performance to attitudes via discretionary behaviour, rather than from attitudes to performance” (Purcell et al, 2003:62). Woods (1999) reveals another problem with correlation, namely confounding, in his finding that innovations in HRM tend to accompany changes in production concepts. If an improvement in performance is experienced, is it as a result of the change in production concept or the HRM innovations? It may be difficult to separate effects if confounding exists. Of course, the cause of this improvement may be driven by an intensification of work rather than an act of discretion. It may come from added pressures to work harder (Ramsay et al, 2000). Or, as revealed by some labour process studies (Ackroyd and Thompson, 2005), perhaps restructuring of FLM roles does not entail a paradigm shift towards ‘post-bureaucracy’ but is instead part of the long-term rationalisation pressures associated with capitalism (McCann et al, 2008).

Again here, the dearth of explanatory theories in the literature makes it difficult to sustain argument for one influence over another. Researchers require theoretical advancement on ‘how’ and ‘why’ a correlation may be seen in order to overcome these challenges. However, to date, as Truss (2001) highlights, the literature “is very unclear on the subject of how human resource practices themselves should be measured and related to firm performance” (Truss, 2001:1123).

Response
This study does not claim definitive causality, but does add to knowledge about normalisation or persuasion about logical relationships, in three ways. Firstly, in response to the impact of external innovations and confoundings (Woods 1999), the study has minimised potential
external factors by containing the participant population. All respondents and their associated FLMs are of the same occupational type, in a single case-study organisation. This serves to limit the number of possible ‘causes’ at play. Secondly, a significant sample size for both employee respondents and FLM variety is a critical design feature. The study takes part across two manufacturing sites within the case-study organisation to ensure sufficient sample size to test relationships across a broad variety of FLMs. While it is not proof of causality, the replication of the same effect across a variety of FLMs will be indicative of a robust directional relationship.

Finally, in response to the dearth of explanatory theories, this research builds on Social Exchange Theory (Gouldner, 1960; Eisenberger et al, 2002) which provides a rationale for the ‘why’ of an impact. All factors included in the study are underpinned by the ‘norm of reciprocity’. This norm provides explanation for why one factor may impact another. To expand on this, Stage Two includes a qualitative element to hear from the respondents in relation to their experience of the factors and their perception of the impact. One advantage of multiple sources of evidence is that it facilitates “the development of converging lines of inquiry” (Yin, 2003:98). The idea of convergence is related to the triangulation made possible by validating the same phenomenon from multiple sources (Yin, 2003). Therefore, triangulation can provide “stronger substantiation of constructs” (Eisenhardt, 1989:537) and can improve the accuracy of judgements made regarding the evidence. If these relationships are confirmed, the FLM construct provides future studies with a controllable categorical variable for a more robust investigation of causality through a designed experiment. With a behavioural FLM model established, action research experiments could ascertain causal direction with greater confidence by intentionally changing FLM behavioural type and continuously monitoring outcomes.

Challenge 3: Exclusion of ‘hard to measure’ items
The social scientific approach faces challenge in relation to the focus on ‘measurability’ of variables for analysis. Empirical researchers face dilemmas in relation to those items that are difficult to quantifiably measure, despite being possibly core to the subject of analysis. In many cases, studies have excluded these ‘hard to measure’ items. Purcell (1999:29) considers this a worrying trend, commenting that a “huge amount of research and literature on work and
management processes seems to be side stepped because it cannot fit the research design”. However, such dilemmas are difficult to overcome. Guest (2001:1098) summarises this challenge explaining that “too much emphasis on objective measurement runs the risk of omitting some practices that lie at the heart of HRM. Too much scope for personal judgment risks reducing the reliability of responses” Examples of ‘hard to measure’ variables are included in Guest’s (2011) review of HRM theory. One example is the ability to detect and measure local differences in HR policy enactment within an organisation. Another is the difficulty in measuring the effectiveness of the policy implementation, or the quality of the enactment. In addition, a temporal challenge exists in the difficulty to detect and measure the potential ‘lag’ between enactment and impact. These are just a few examples that exist in a field of research that Guest describes to be “riddled with error” (2011:10).

Response
In the context of the research objectives, the FLM construct exhibits many of the difficulties described above. Specific behaviours may be local to one FLM. There may be varying degrees of effectiveness of the behaviours and the lag impact is unknown. Initial thoughts were to get as close as possible to the FLM to overcome measurement challenges, including ethnography and active research (Saunders et al, 2003). Measurement through an activity study to observe the behaviour, or to request the FLM to self-report on their behaviour, was considered. However the theory of relationships did not provide logic to support this approach. The hypothesised impact of concern in this study is based on employee’s ‘feeling of indebtedness’ (Gouldner, 1960). Therefore, it is necessary to garnish the employee’s perspective of the FLM. On review of the literature, a relevant scale is readily available for employee perspective on FLM Leadership behavioural type (Purcell and Hutchinson, 2007). Developing on that, three other scales are adapted to meet the needs of the study, namely Policy Enactment Behavioural Type (adapted from Huselid, 1995), agency behaviour (adapted from Eisenberger et al, 2002) and Coaching behavioural type (adapted from Heslin et al, 2005). Given that the study isolates the HR environment that all respondents are part of, the measure of Policy Enactment Behavioural Type risked not been sensitive to FLM variation. Therefore, for policy enactment behaviour, the study departs from the traditional Likert scale and choses a frequency measure. This decision attempts to improve distinction between the local enactments by FLMs. For example, if all FLMs perform some communication in line with organisational policy, a
'strongly agree’ response is likely on a Likert scale to that behaviour. However, in this study, employees instead report of the communication by the FLM is never, once, daily, weekly, or monthly. In addition, the length of time employees report to the FLM is included as a control variable to aid consideration of the potential lag effect between behaviour and impact. All items and scales are outlined later in this chapter.

Challenge 4: Reliance on single response surveys

Criticism can be found in the literature regarding the reliance of many empirical researchers on single respondent surveys for their data analysis and subsequent conclusions. Concerns in particular relate to the integrity of the data – how much can one person know? – and also to the risk of single response bias that may exist if the HRM owner is also asked to answer questions on outcomes of those HRM activities which he / she oversees (Guest, 2011). Earlier, Guest (2001:1098) represents these empirical concerns, explaining that many researchers “are deeply sceptical about the ability of someone at headquarters level to provide an accurate picture of what is happening inside the organisation or to be in a position to generalise across sub-units” Purcell (1999) also highlights that often the source of data is judgment, rather than fact based, through quick response surveys versus investigation of firm performance files. In addition, one can question the legitimacy of a claim of positive relationships between HR practices and employee outcomes, by the person accountable for HR effectiveness. Legge (2005) highlights the reality by which the relationships occur could be very different than the rhetoric. The perspective of the respondent is no doubt a consideration in interpretation of response. These are just some difficulties that a single-respondent study poses for research in this field.

Response

The nature of this study requires a large sample of employees so a single respondent option is no longer considered a problem. However, the single-respondent critique raises the question of whether the response is based on a limited or biased organisational perspective. As previously outlined, the primary line of inquiry in this study is concerned with employee perspectives of FLM behaviour. Cognisant of the limitation of that perspective, Stage Two of the study includes qualitative data collection with a sample of FLMs. It is envisaged that the inclusion of the FLM perspective can provide confidence, or further evidence, to data gathered from
employees. This provides greater context and explanatory value to the study findings and an understanding of broader generalizability. The study seeks to optimise the research design given these challenges, as outlined in the above responses, and is achieved through a two-stage research strategy.

4.4 A Two-Stage Mixed-Methods Research Strategy

As previously indicated, the research strategy draws on a mixed-methods configuration of inquiry. The strategy is driven by the research objectives, informed by previous studies and limited by the time boundaries of a doctorate study. A two-stage design delivers a methodology that can navigate the large employee sample size required to test and explore relationships, while also enabling a deeper dive to help explain issues and factors surrounding FLM behavioural type and types. According to Eisenhardt (1989), the accumulation of knowledge for theory building involves a continual cycle between theory and data. Van Maanen et al (2007:1146) describe this as “continuous interplay” in which there is a “back-and-forth character”. This paper achieves this by formulating hypotheses from current theory to test its application in a specific organisational setting and then informed by that data, Stage Two seeks out relevant qualitative inquiry towards building new contracts and relationships, and “perhaps framebreaking insights” (Eisenhardt, 1989:546).

Prior to specific data collection tools, a case-study organisation was selected with a specific criteria of having a human resources environment that can be classified as a high performance work system. Controlling the study population for specific inquiry (in this case a HPWS context) enables focus for theory building (Eisenhardt, 1989) and is practical when the relevant research objectives are premised on given organisational conditions (HRM practices applied, typical management structure in place, etc.). Within the case-study, a sampling plan for FLMs and corresponding employees is developed for both a pilot study and a larger scale survey, with survey administration completing the data collection for Stage One. In total 654 employees completed the questionnaire across both a pilot study (n=41) as well as a large scale survey (n=613). The employee survey that was distributed is available in Appendix 2. Stage One data
specification and analysis methods include a synthesis of the organisational context and occupational context of the sample respondents, followed by a validation of the survey scales with appropriate factor analysis. The research objectives are converted into a series of hypotheses, and Stage One concludes with statistical tests of mediation and hierarchical regression, outlined later in the chapter.

Stage Two builds on the quantitative study by sampling for qualitative evidence within the survey respondent population. It outlines a qualitative data collection and analysis approach for both employee, and FLM perspectives. Semi-structured interviews are conducted, individually, with a sample of FLMs and in focus group format with a sample of employees. In total, 22 interviewees participated across employee focus groups (n=17) and FLM interviews (n=5). Stage Two analysis involves reviewing qualitative feedback for key themes, as well as for understanding specific to the research hypotheses. The combination of quantitative and qualitative data informs an exploration of both ‘how’ and ‘why’ any FLM impact exists. The questions that were asked of the employee and the FLM, are available in Appendix 3 and Appendix 4 respectively.

4.5 Research Methods – Stage One

Building theory from case studies is a research strategy that involves using an organisational case (or cases) to create theoretical constructs, propositions and/or midrange theory from case-based, empirical evidence (Eisenhardt, 1989). The selection of the case-study organisation is generally informed by the research phenomenon under scrutiny. Typically, the case-study will provide data to offer understanding of complex social processes that quantitative data alone cannot easily reveal (Eisenhardt and Graebner (2007). A key advantage of a case-study is that there is a range of data collection methods that can be applied (Yin, 2003). Conversely, a key limitation is its inability to address questions of prevalence of a phenomenon across organisations and industries, and being “ill-equipped” (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007:27) to answer questions of frequency and importance. However, given the study seeks explanations of the FLM role in HPWS context, the concern for global occurrence rate is premature. It is
essential that firstly a model be built with depth in the FLM construct and its relationships. Therefore, the case-study provides in-depth detail for understanding of the FLM role. A set of criteria informed the selection of the case-study organisation, which are now explained.

To meet the research objectives, the first criterion is sample type. Isolating the relevant type of variation is of greatest importance in theory-building to detect the diverse nuances of the FLM and employee relationship. The study seeks to minimize external influences (e.g. innovation and technology differences) that are not the focus of inquiry for Stage One relationship testing. To satisfy the criteria, the case-study selection sought to identify a FLM pool with similar occupational status, including type of work performed by workers, scope of responsibility and level of managerial status. A second criterion was one of size. As the data source depends on voluntary participation, non-respondent bias drives a greater sample requirement. Previous studies observed between 35%-90% response rate (Hutchinson and Purcell, 2010). A conservative response rate of 50% is applied here. Given there are four FLM behavioural types of specific interest, it would appear that the third key criterion for a case-study to include a large population of FLM roles to access variability in the sample population. In line with the case study organisation typical approach to employee voice surveys, a ratio of greater than 1 FLM to 5 employee respondents provides sufficient anonymity for employees, as well as a satisfactory minimum number of data points regarding each FLM. Given the criteria, and the time and resource bounds of the study (Bryman and Cramer, 1996), it is estimated that the case study organisation must provide access to >60 FLMs of similar occupational type, with a collective minimum of 600 employees reporting to them.

The study identified the medical device industry as a suitable case-study pool. The researcher’s own professional network through employment in the industry, combined with the existing relationship between local university institutions and this industry in Ireland, makes it an obvious selection within the time boundaries of a doctorate study. The medical devices industry in Ireland is a major employer of front line manufacturing staff, and associated supervision through FLMs. In addition to satisfying the sample size criterion, the types of respondents meet the requirement of minimum occupational variation. Due to strict regulation of medical device manufacture, similar working conditions exist across direct line employees and their
corresponding FLMs. Of course, as the researcher utilized an employment position to gain research access, there are limitations and ethical considerations to be discussed later in this chapter.

A secondary data source was used to identify the potential case-study options that are known to include a HPWS feature within the Irish medical device cluster (Heffernan et al, 2008). The classification of the selected organisation as a suitable case is based on evidence reporting the HPWS practices at 165 top performing organisations in Ireland. The study assessed the extent to which organisations have adopted a HPWS model (Heffernan et al, 2008). Heffernan et al (2008) published a report, ‘People Management and Innovation Survey’, with a HPWS intensity index, categorising each organisation out of a total possible score of 100. Organisations were classified as ‘high HPWS’ adopters (>65), ‘moderate HPWS’ adopters (35-65) and ‘low HPWS’ adopters (<35). On request to the authors, the current study confirmed that the selected case study organisation is ranked as a ‘high HPWS’ cluster of firms (HPWS index result >65). The case-study selection process included this classification as a pre-requisite.

4.5.1 Research Context – Medco

A large multi-national medical device company met all of the above criteria for the study. Its operation based in Ireland alone included approximately 30 FLMs that met the criteria for inclusion. The work content (specific device manufacturing) in the Irish operation is replicated at other global facilities providing opportunity to access a broader FLM sample for the study within the same HR system. For the purposes of the study, the organisation is referred to as Medco.

Medco is a multi-national medical device company with $12 billion annual revenue headquartered in the United States, with over 36,000 employees dispersed worldwide in various functions supporting Sales, Distribution, Manufacturing and Research and Development (Medco Annual Report, 2014). The organisation is divided into two corporate groups, each lead by a
Vice-President who reports directly to the CEO. The case study focuses on one of these groups, which specialises, for the most part, in implantable medical devices to treat cardiovascular disease (Medco Annual Report, 2014). The cardiovascular disease group is structured into different functions. The operations function is led by a Vice-President of Operations, responsible for global manufacturing plants (Medco Operations Overview PowerPoint, 2014).

The empirical research is conducted in two of these manufacturing plants, within the remit of a single Vice-President of HR. Combined, these plants account for over 50% of the employee workforce of the operations function, within the cardiovascular disease group. These two plants were purposively selected for maximum sample size, and also their minimum variability in occupational factors and HR practices, explained below. Limitations on increasing the number of plants included language barriers and researcher access. The researcher holds a senior management position in the Ireland facility, but with no direct authority for the case-study participants.

Since 2005 the organisation has focused on harmonising activities across the network of manufacturing facilities, not least because many of these plants supply each other with components, but also due to increasing FDA (regulatory body) expectations of a consistent approach to quality. This harmonisation has included the implementation of Quality, IT, Finance and HR systems across the network of plants. The HR systems are often designed and developed by a global team representing the various manufacturing facilities. Due to the regulatory focus on manufacturing, the harmonisation appears to have been most emphasised at direct front line employee level including common training systems, documents, job descriptions and more recently since 2008, employee involvement and empowerment processes. The two case-study plants would have internal expectation of harmonisation due to the large population of employees that they represent.

Strategically in Medco, the two plants selected for the empirical data collection are both categorised as ‘shared manufacturing centres’. The categorisation applied by Medco is based on similarity of capabilities, structure and activities. These plants are located in Ireland and Mexico
(Medco Operations Overview PowerPoint, 2014). The two plants are considered to be similar in size (approximately 3000 employees each) and in approach to manufacturing, as the Mexico plant received much of its early manufacturing processes from the Ireland facility. During this period front line employees and FLMs travelled between Ireland and Mexico to transfer practices and tacit knowledge. This practice continues today, but to a lesser degree.

In terms of occupational factors, the products in both facilities are manufactured in a controlled environment, known as a cleanroom. The room requires all staff in the production area to wear special clothing in terms of caps, coats and overshoes to maintain environmental conditions. The front line workers in both plants are organised into departments or teams, and report directly to a supervisor (FLM). Front line workers are referred to as direct operators, team members, direct employees and direct labour. FLMs are most commonly referred to as a supervisor, or a group leader. The harmonisation of the quality system meant that, on paper, both plants had very similar duties and responsibilities for staff. And in some instances, both plants manufacture the same product.

*Front Line Employee Role*

A typical front line employee is internally trained and qualified on the documentation pertaining to their role. They perform assembly type operations (welding, gluing, cutting, sewing, etc.), often under a microscope. It is typical that the full device might be assembled by up to thirty employees, each performing one specific role in an assembly chain. Workers are often co-located with the preceding and subsequent assembly steps, creating a production line type environment. During their working day, some employees may be rotated across work steps and production lines. During their career, an employee may work on numerous production lines, producing different products. However, regardless of product, the basic role involves maintaining the cleanliness of the workstation, performing assembly and paperwork operations per quality documentation instructions, and highlighting any concerns or problems to supporting staff, usually the FLM. Like other manufacturing contexts, an increasing focus on ‘lean’ production techniques reveals a dependency on the discretionary effort of employees to possess process information and use their tacit knowledge to highlight problems and make improvements (Purcell, 1999).
Although the official language of Medco is English, many workers are fluent only in one native language. In Ireland, English language proficiency is a recruitment requirement. However, in Mexico, the FLM is often bilingual, switching between Spanish and English in their daily work. A translation process was followed to convert the English survey to Mexican Spanish, detailed later in the chapter++. Front line employees had competitive compensation and benefits in both case-study sites, driven primarily by the high demand for staff in their regions, and Medco’s global strategy of paying local market rates.

++On an interesting aside, one research option that was investigated was a production facility in the USA. The logic was to maintain an English language survey instrument to reduce translation error; however the researcher discovered that in the USA, many front line employees in Medco were only fluent in their native language, often Spanish, Vietnamese or other Asian languages. Therefore, the USA would have, in fact, required much greater translation.

**FLM Role**
The FLM role, like the workers’ role, is driven in part by the quality system. The quality system requires the FLM to ensure all front line employees are appropriately trained, and that the relevant quality system documentation is complete, often performing a ‘sign off’ role. It also expects a response of the FLM where a concern is raised regarding the assembly methods. In these instances the FLM often communicates with a broader support team of technicians and engineers. From a HR perspective, almost all policies at Medco are expected to involve the FLM. The policies include, but are not limited to, maintenance of the time and attendance records for salary and benefits, liaising with HR department for leave requests, advocating employee names for learning and development programmes, planning job rotation, facilitating employee improvement ideas, administering disciplinary action, approving recognition of employees, etc. In addition to their role in quality and HR documentation, the FLM is often seen as responsible for the output performance of employees, including total units produced, labour required, scrap product, and adherence to quality procedures.

In terms of recruitment, many FLMs are promoted to the role, from manufacturing trainer or direct operator roles following a number of years employment. Some are hired externally,
typically with previous FLM experience in another company. Formal training for some FLM activities exist, but most job duties are learned from their peers, or their own manager. FLMs usually are allocated to production lines, and may have responsibility for between 10 and 60 employees. Some FLMs are responsible for one single production line with perhaps 30 employees, and others responsible for several smaller production lines. The FLMs typically report to a senior supervisor or production manager for their shift. Both facilities operate multiple work shifts, and the empirical research is gathers data from all shifts. To test the operationalization of the research methodology, a pilot study was initially conducted on a single shift in the Ireland facility.

4.5.2 Pilot Study

Weekend shift in the Ireland facility was selected as the context for the research pilot. Access for a pilot was negotiated informally with the local production manager and weekend shift FLM, through existing relationships. These colleague relationships enabled an informal pilot, (unlike the formal administration of the main study across both plants which required HR Director approval and senior operations management co-operation). The objective of the pilot was to simulate the entire research model including the survey instrument, qualitative focus groups and semi-structured interviews (See Appendix 6 for pilot summary, or Kilroy and Dundon (2015) for full findings of pilot study).

The primary purpose of the pilot was to trial the methodology to identify any potential sources of measurement error, as well as logistical barriers. The main sample consisted of 31 employees in non-managerial or worker positions within a semi-automated manufacturing environment. The respondents worked a weekend shift pattern of three shifts Friday-Sunday each week. The employees reported to one FLM, a female weekend-shift supervisor. Despite small size and atypical part-time work pattern, the sample included satisfactory variation in gender, age, tenure, work contract, and union membership. Of the sample respondents, 14 (45%) were female and 17 (55%) were male. The age of the respondents was as follows: 6 (19%) employees aged below 25 years; 10 (32%) employees aged 26-35 years; and, 15 (49%) were between ages of 35-
50. The nationality dimension revealed just 20% of respondents reporting a nationality other than Irish. In addition, 21 employees (68%) were union members (a compulsory requirement for all permanent staff in the company, which has a single union agreement for all shop-floor workers). The remainder were temporary agency staff. The educational level of the group was high with 20 (65%) reporting a third level education.

The findings provided exploratory support for the conceptualisation of variable FLM behavioural types to advance understanding of the relationships between HPWS practices, perceived support to employees, and a series of employment relationship outcomes. The pilot data also indicates that each FLM may have a dominant style, as perceived by employees. Given this indicative finding, an exploratory factor is added to the final study to provide a FLM group identifier. This identifier facilitates the analysis of FLM behavioural type at an individual FLM level to further advance the research question. In addition, qualitative evidence offered possible mechanisms regarding the nature of reciprocity. In response, a number of ‘zone of reciprocity items’ are added to the final survey instrument for exploratory purposes. Understanding gained from the exploratory addition of FLM level analysis and the reciprocity items are available in Chapter 8.

The pilot also informed some methodological improvements. Firstly, the format of the survey and the language used were adjusted between the pilot and the main study. These changes were based on feedback from participants to aid speed and accuracy of completion. Secondly, the purpose of the qualitative inquiry was refined, as the researcher discovered its explanatory value to develop specific examples regarding the key relationships in question. This pilot informed the questions and the themes used in Stage Two of the main study. The pilot provided clarification to the logistical process required to administer the survey and qualitative methods at Medco. The logistics ranges from minor issues like printing surveys and data entry to larger issues of employee access and research confidentiality. This process was key to ensuring an acceptable response rate across both plants in the main study.
Of course, the pilot was also key in developing confidence in the survey instrument prior to large-scale data collection. Although the scales, for the most part, had been already validated in literature. Minor adaptations for context were tested in the pilot. The pilot analysis provided general confidence in reliability of scales through relevant statistics. It also demonstrated the variability within the employee group to be sufficient to detect the signals of interest in quantitative study. Finally it provided confidence in the research methods to garnish new qualitative evidence, uninhibited by the researcher’s employment relationship with the organisation.

4.5.3 Instrument Design

A survey instrument is the primary data collection tool in Stage One (Survey can be found in Appendix. The survey comprises of a structured questionnaire with fixed multiple-choice response options for the respondents (Saunders et al, 2003). The questionnaire is designed to capture employee responses for a range of variables with hypothesized impact in the causal chain. The variables are represented by scales that have been previously developed and validated in literature, with some adaptation for the objectives of this study. The instrument also includes a number of items developed for the study. This survey enables the relationships between the variables to be tested in line with the first research objective. The limitations of this data collection technique include the inability to see additional relationships or relevant variables other than those included in the questionnaire, as well as concern for measurement error. The latter is mitigated by survey design, reverse coded items, as well as, tests for validity and reliability (Bryman and Cramer, 1996).

The survey seeks to capture employee perceptions of their FLM style, the perception of support received from the FLM, and the organisation, as well as individual outcomes. These individual outcomes include turnover intention, organisational citizenship behaviour, discretionary effort, and perceived performance indicators, in a 63-question instrument. In addition, ten control variables were included, as well as one group identifier variable. At the start of the questionnaire, a description of who a FLM might be in the organisation is provided to reduce
ambiguity about the management level under investigation (Hales, 2005). The description included examples of FLM responsibility in the case-study organisation, such as, “they would approve your holiday/vacation time”. The respondents then ticked a series of boxes in response to the scale item statements. To avoid later repetition, the coding system used at data entry is included in the description of the variables below.

**FLM Behavioural Type Variables**

**Policy enactment behavioural type** is measured by the extent to which employees have perceived their FLM enacting the HR policies. In total, 10 HR practices are included in the survey. Ten items on the list are developed from previous studies on HR practices that are normally part of HPWS bundles (Huselid, 1995; MacDuffie, 1995). The final item was changed from ‘employee involvement’ to ‘problem-solving in my area of work’ based on the pilot study, which learned this was an expected organisational activity of FLMs in terms of employee involvement. The survey prompts respondents to select a frequency for each HR practice in response to the following statement, “In the last 6 months, my front line manager has spent time with me (individually) on…”. A list follows of 10 HR practices, including “Formal Performance Reviews/Appraisal” and “Training Opportunities” for example, accounting for items 1-10 on the survey. Respondents tick the most appropriate of the following responses: daily (coded 5); weekly (coded 4); monthly (coded 3); once (coded 2); never (coded 1) and, don’t know (coded ‘missing’). As outlined earlier, a frequency scale (Fox et al, 2012) is chosen instead of an agreement scale to help differentiate between the extent of FLM enactment of similar HR practices.

**FLM Leadership behavioural type** is measured using a 5-item measure from Purcell and Hutchinson (2007), and uses a Likert ‘agreement’ scale to capture employees’ perception of their FLM leadership behaviour. These items are listed 11-15 inclusive. The scale seeks to assess employees’ experience of the FLM in relation to leadership activity, such as communication. For example, item 11 states “My front line manager is good at keeping everyone up to date with proposed changes”. For items 11-63, the same six responses are available to survey participants. These response and their data entry codes are as follows, ‘Strongly Agree=5’, ‘Agree=4’, ‘Neutral=3’, ‘Disagree=2’, ‘Strongly Disagree=1’ and ‘Don’t
know= ‘missing’. Where an item is stated in the negative, a reverse coding is applied whereby ‘Strongly Disagree=5’, ‘Disagree=4’, etc. ‘Don’t know’ remains coded as ‘missing’ irrespective of item phrase.

**FLM Coaching behavioural type** is measured using a 9-item scale adapted from Heslin et al (2006). The original 10-item scale measured Coaching behavioural type in terms of guidance (three items), facilitation (three items) and inspiration (four items) (Heslin et al, 2006:879). The study reduced it to a 9 item scale as their study revealed all four items had similar factor loading for inspiration. The study also reverses one of the original statements, from “encourages you to develop and improve”, to now read “My front line manager limits my ability to develop and improve” in survey item 23.

**Agency behavioural type** is measured using four items adapted from Eisenberger et al (2002). The scale seeks to assess the employee’s perception of the autonomy, or lack thereof, of the FLM in relation to the organisation. Written as Survey Items 42-45, respondents are asked for their extent of agreement with phrases such as “The organisation gives my front line manager the authority to try new things”. There are no reverse coded items in this scale. This 4-item scale failed to meet minimum internal reliability criteria in the pilot study, however it is included in the final survey as the sample type (weekend shift only) was a potential cause of failure in the pilot. The weekend shift respondents who only see a single FLM at work may, without exposure to the wider management system, have lacked a reference point for this autonomy. The adequacy of this scale in the full data set is outlined later.

**Mediating Variables**

**Perceived Supervisory Support** (PSS) is measured by a 6-item scale established by Eisenberger et al (2002). It has a slight adaptation to replace ‘supervisor’ wording with ‘front line manager’. This scale has a reverse-coded statement among the six items in the survey listed 25-31 (Survey Item 30). The scale assesses the perceived support that the FLM gives to the employee with emphasis on verbs such as “cares”, “values” and “considers”.

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Perceived Organisational Support (POS) uses the same PSS items (Eisenberger et al, 2002), replacing FLM with the word ‘organisation’. Contained as items 35-40 in the survey, the reverse coded item is replicated from the PSS scale also.

Employee Behaviours and Attitudes

A 3-item Organisational Commitment scale is adapted from the Purcell and Hutchinson (2007) causal chain empirical study. Items included pride to work for organisation, loyalty to organisation, and identification with company values. These items are numbered Survey Items 46-48 in the survey instrument.

Turnover Intention is measured using a prior 5-item scale (Survey Items 49-53 in this survey). It is defined as the behavioural intent to leave an organisation. It includes items such as “I will probably look for a new job in the next year”, and “I often think about quitting my present job”. Extent of agreement is measured on a Likert scale as previously outlined.

Adapted from previous studies of Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB) (Smith, Organ and Near, 1983; McNeely and Meglino, 1984; Lee and Allen, 2002), the research instrument contains a 6-item scale to measure OCB (Survey Items 54-59). The OCB scale used here investigates the discretionary effort directed towards employee co-workers (Lee and Allen, 2002), including their perceived willingness to help others with work-related problems, to make adjustments to their schedule and to make people feel welcome in the group. It includes at reverse coded item (item number 59) which states “I rarely assist others with their duties”.

Self-rated Performance

In addition, four items are included (Q60-63) to explore the employees’ current perception of their own performance and that of their work group (described in the study as ‘Self-rated Performance’). As discovered during the pilot, quality and productivity are two key performance indicators of relevance to the employee workgroup and their FLM. Two items were included to assess employee perception of their own individual quality and productivity of work compared to their peers, and two items were included to assess employee perception of
their entire workgroup when compared to other work groups. The inclusion of peer comparison in the items is intended to provide a reference point for the employee’s self-rating of performance. When objective performance data are not available, subjective (perceptual) performance measures can be an acceptable alternative, and there is evidence of a strong correlation between subjective and objective measures of performance as well as that the relationships between subjective and objective measures with various independent variables are equivalent (Delaney and Huselid 1996; Wall et al. 2004).

**Control Variables**

Control variables included site, nationality; age; gender; union membership; tenure reporting to current FLM; organisational tenure; education; working hours (full-time versus part-time) and contract type. To measure Site, respondents were simply asked to tick the location of their plant from two options in item number 64. Item number 65 measures Nationality. It includes the two countries of location, namely Irish and Mexican as well as an option to tick ‘Other’. Respondent Age category was captured in item 66, with 4 options of age brackets <25, 26-35, 36-50 and >50. Male and Female options were provided to measure the Gender variable in item 67. Union membership is indicated by a member or non-member option in item 68. Items 69 and 70 relate to ‘Tenure’. Firstly, respondents are asked how long they have reported to (worked for) their current FLM with 3 categories available. And secondly, they are asked how long they have been employed by the organisation with 4 categories available. Education queries the highest level completed with three options of response in item 71, namely primary education, secondary or third level. Finally the contract details are explored in terms of Working Hours in item 72 and Employment Contract Type in item 73. Options are part-time or full-time hours, and permanent, temporary or agency contract. During the pilot, it was noted that the organisation hires many front line employees through a flexible agency model and therefore this type was added as a category. During data entry, all responses were entered per their categorical option and later coded as required during analysis.

*Additional exploratory variable: Group Identifier Variable*

The pilot revealed opportunity to investigate the aggregate results of employee responses to explore the possibility of a FLM dominant behavioural type, FLM workgroup influence and
associated possible outcomes. The method used to identify FLM group is based on a direct consensus composite model (Chan 1998), where the meaning of the higher-level construct, namely FLM style, is in the consensus among the lower level units, i.e. the individual employee responses. According to Chan (1998) this is the most common of the composite models used in research that typically follows a two-step approach. Firstly the constructs are defined as two distinct variables, a separate lower-level and higher-level construct. In this study, individual employee perception of FLM behaviour is the lower level construct. As previously outlined, this study includes four measures of employee perception of FLM behaviour, namely Policy Enactment, Leadership, Coaching, and Agency. In Stage One, these variables are measured per employee. The higher-level construct emerges in Chapter 8, when employee responses are grouped in accordance with their FLM. Individual employee responses are assessed collectively (e.g. mean score of a group of employees) to infer a group FLM behaviour, for each FLM in the study.

The name of the FLM provides the identifier to group employee respondents together for analysis of FLM group effect. The survey includes an open space for employees to write the name of their FLM. This direct and specific approach for FLM name is a countermeasure for the temporary relocation of staff across different FLMs. Without it, a survey may be attributed to the incorrect group in Stage Two as employees could answer the survey with any FLM in mind. It also facilitates the option of subsequent with qualitative inquiry on a specific typology with FLM consent. Obviously, FLM anonymity is compromised here. Some drawbacks of this approach included FLMs opting out of the study. The benefit, however, is the opportunity to pair FLM survey results with FLM qualitative interviews to better understand the FLM. Also, it provides opportunity to conduct analysis of behaviours across FLMs.

Additional exploratory variable: Perceived State of Indebtedness

Three items are included to explore the employee perception of their present state of obligation or indebtedness (Gouldner, 1960; Korsgaard, Meglino, Lester and Jeong, 2010) with their FLM, named here as the ‘Zone of Reciprocity items’. These items asked participants if ‘at present’ and ‘currently’ whether they agreed that they ‘owe’ their FLM or if their FLM ‘owes’ them. As
these items are exploratory in nature, they will be used to provide insight and perhaps a degree of triangulation, in Stage Two rather than inform relationship testing in Stage One.

4.5.4 Survey Administration

The majority of the sample respondents at Medco do not have computer access in the workplace; therefore, a decision was taken to manually administer the surveys in hardcopy. Each survey is three pages in length and takes approximately 12-15 minutes to complete. In order to meet sample size requirements, the study was administered across two manufacturing plants within the case-study Medco organisation. Within Medco there are over 40 manufacturing plants world-wide. The selection of the sites for survey administration was driven by: HR reporting structure (to minimize impact of local variation in HR system both plants report to same VP of HR); employee work content (both plants were part of a dual manufacturing strategy for many of the same devices); and, FLM occupational considerations (both plants positioned the FLM with similar responsibility and work tasks). Most significantly, due to substantial knowledge sharing required for dual manufacturing, often the FLM and employee role was learned from one plant through redeployment of staff across sites. This meant that the training for a FLM and a worker sometimes could be of the same source.

Despite these similarities, there are also significant differences between the plants. The plants are located in two different countries, namely Ireland and Mexico. A cause for concern is the national cultural variation that exists (Hofstede, 1980). However, it is argued that this variation does not hinder the hypotheses investigation. Firstly, the phenomena of interest in this study is driven at the individual employee level and individual FLM relationships. Also, on review of Gouldner (1960) and subsequent work (Blau, 1964) the ‘norm of reciprocity’ is theorized to be primarily a human trait, not a cultural one. Finally, this survey includes a variable for the plant location to ascertain and control for any potential impact.
A more practical issue is the survey language. While English is the predominant language of business within Medco, it is not a requirement of front line staff in all countries. The majority of employees at the Mexico plant speak Mexican Spanish as their primary language. For the purposes of accuracy of interpretation, a decision was made to translate the survey from English to Mexican. A “back translation” process (Dawson and Dickinson, 1988:493) was used to confirm the intent of the survey items were not lost, literally, in translation. An independent native Spanish bilingual professional translated the English survey to Spanish. The Spanish version was then given to a bilingual professional based at the Mexico site. A Mexican native, this professional translated back to English and highlighted potential areas of confusion. As a result of the back translation, a number of recommendations were taken on board (e.g. ‘superintendent’ rather than ‘manager’ was used in Mexico) and adjusted to aid contextual interpretation. A final Spanish version of the survey became the research instrument for the Mexican site.

At both sites, employees were approached during their working shift at either their workstation or a nearby meeting area. Survey administration took place on three shifts, and sought to reach at least 30 FLM employee groups at each site. FLMs and their employees were informed of the voluntary and confidential nature of the study and the purpose of the study both orally and in writing (by way of an introduction on the survey title page). Employees placed their completed surveys in a brown envelope for return to survey administrator. The total survey data collection period spanned four months to cover multiple working shifts, buildings and sites. There were no known significant changes to the FLM population at Medco during this time.

4.5.5 Response Rate

The final data set included 613 employee surveys, across 50 FLM workgroups, which represented an approximate 71% participation rate amongst all possible FLM workgroups. An FLM workgroup is defined as a group of workers who are supervised or managed by the same FLM. Each FLM can be paired to a workgroup (i.e. the employees who list them as their supervisor or immediate manager), which are given the combined label of FLM workgroup.
Some FLM’s did not want to be identified by employees during the survey while others did not want their workgroup to participate at all. Reasons cited by FLMs for opting out of the study included, concerns for confusion with the internal Medco employee voice survey, fears for raising topics among their groups that they would not be able to respond to, and lack of trust in the confidential nature of the study. The researcher delayed the survey administration until at least two months after the internal Medco survey as a measure to minimise potential confusion with the internal survey. Also, cognisant of ethical responsibilities, the researcher was transparent about her employment position in the case-study organisation in the survey, which may explain concerns for confidentiality. In relation to the survey administration within the participating FLM work groups, employees had a high participation rate. The response rate for employees was between 20%-100% in each FLM group, with an overall response rate of 82% of those surveyed. This was likely assisted by the administration during working hours. When the total potential employee pool is considered, the final response rate is 58%.

4.5.6 Data Analysis Methods – Stage One

Stage one of the research strategy seeks to meet the first research objective as outlined at the beginning of this chapter, namely to empirically test how FLM behavioural types impact employee behaviours and attitudes in a HPWS context. In order to operationalise this research objective a survey instrument is used in a case-study organisation to capture employee responses regarding relevant variables. The next of the research is the analysis of those responses using ‘Minitab’ statistical software. The diagram below in Figure 4.5.6.1 outlines the model for analysis. The dilemma of FLM direct relationships versus the indirect impact of reciprocity is undertaken through a series of hypothesis tests. Each FLM behaviour drives the primary relationship of interest (labelled H1-H4). Each FLM behaviour is then tested for evidence of direct association with employee behaviours and attitudes (labelled a-d). Finally, the question of indirect effect is addressed by testing for mediation by the zone of reciprocity (identified as i-ii). The model in Figure 4.5.6.1 can be read such that H1a is the hypothesis that Policy Enactment is related to OCB, while H1a(i) hypothesizes that the relationship between Policy Enactment and OCB is in fact mediated by POS.
To prepare for analysis, the survey response data is entered into a database from which all quantitative hypothesis testing is performed. Columns in the database are labelled carefully to serve two purposes: firstly, for quick data selection to aid in the analysis; and secondly, to make the analysis output easier to identify (Ryan and Joiner, 1994). Missing data is coded appropriately for the statistical software, which is an asterisk in the case of Minitab (Ryan and Joiner, 1994:13). Reverse coded items are adjusted for analysis using a recoding process (Bryman and Cramer, 1996:43).

Having prepared the database, a descriptive analysis is performed. The data can be divided into two types, attribute (e.g. the gender variable is measured male/female) and variable data (e.g. the PSS variable is measured using a scale of agreement). While agreement scales could be strictly interpreted as ordinal data (as the difference between each level of agreement may not be equal), it is increasingly the practice in social sciences to consider these multi-item Likert scales as interval data (Bryman and Cramer, 1996:59). The data type informs the analytical tools and techniques applied to the study.

Figure 4.5.6.1: Hypotheses testing in Stage One Analysis
4.5.7 Descriptive Analysis

The control variables in this study are categorical in nature. A descriptive or summary analysis of the categorical data provides information on the sample demographic (e.g. frequency and proportion information about gender, age, education level). This univariate analysis is concerned with presenting information about the single variables to increase understanding of the sample and data set (Bryman and Cramer, 1996). In addition, descriptive analysis of the variable data provides understanding of the distribution of responses (e.g. range of response across the Likert scale). This descriptive analysis enables perspective regarding the variability in the study, in terms of both the respondents demographic and the diversity in responses. The descriptive analysis is also useful to identify data entry errors, or outliers for further investigation. Once the characteristics of the dataset are understood, the multivariate analysis becomes the focus to understand the relationships between multiple variables as outlined in the hypotheses. It is generally expected that prior to hypotheses testing, the measurement devices should be confirmed as reliable and valid.

4.5.8 Reliability and Validity/Principal Components Analysis

The constructs in this study are concerned with human attitudes and behaviours, which are difficult to directly operationalize. This study follows recent quantitative studies in the use of scales to measure these constructs (e.g. Kuvaas, 2006). These scales are listed as separate items on the survey instrument. However, in order to answer the research question, the focus is not on the individual response to any one single item, but rather the aggregation of these items into higher-level variables, namely factors. The technique for this aggregation is called factor analysis and in this study serves two main purposes (Bryman and Cramer, 1996:252):

1. Factor analysis tells us the extent to which the individual scale items appear to be measuring the same concept (construct validity)
2. Factor analysis can determine the degree to which our individual items can be reduced to a smaller set to aid in hypothesis testing
“Principal Components Analysis” is the statistical technique applied in this study for factor analysis. This technique is one of the most common methods applied in the literature (Ford et al., 1986; Hinkin, 1995). Each construct scale is subjected to principal components analysis using statistical software. The output of the analysis is used to convert the individual item scores to a single variable to be used for hypothesis testing. The single variable (aggregated factor) is calculated by averaging the retained items in the scale (Kuvass, 2006). The reduction process is informed by the eigenvalue (include only those >1) and the scree plot (Bryman and Cramer, 1996:258).

Following this, as guided by common practice in relevant literature (Peterson, 1994), construct validity is investigated for the remaining items in each scale using the Cronbach alpha statistic. Construct validity is deemed particularly important when the variable of interest, e.g. Perceived Supervisory Support (PSS), is measured using a series of indirect measures (e.g. items in the PSS scale) (Cronbach and Meehl, 1955). The Cronbach alpha statistic provides quantitative evidence as to the consistency of responses, given the items are expected to report a similar phenomenon. The descriptive statistics regarding Principle Component Analysis and Cronbach alpha are available in chapter 5.

4.5.10 Correlation

Having established the validity of the scales, and extracted the relevant factors for inquiry, the database now contains factors for hypotheses testing. The initial inquiry tests for association between all of the variables in the study, which provides initial information about possible relationships between variables. Pearson correlation is the most common measure of association between variables (Ryan and Joiner, 1994), providing a correlation co-efficient, $r$. Particular attention is paid to the $r$ value between independent variables, as values of greater than 0.8 may be exhibiting multicollinearity. Multicollinearity may be a problem for the next stage of analysis, namely regression. The Pearson values are presented in Chapter 5, with accompanying narrative in Chapters 6 and 7.
4.5.11 Regression and Mediation Testing

Advancing the research question and objectives requires multivariate analysis as it is concerned with the relationships between four independent variables of FLM behavioural type and four dependent variables of employee behaviours and attitudes. In addition, the study is interested in the relationships of the reciprocity related variables. Multiple regression is the most widely used method for conducting such analysis quantitatively, as it enables the expression of relationships across multiple variables (Bryman and Cramer, 1996). To test the direct effect hypotheses the control variables are first regressed onto the dependent variables, followed by the four FLM behavioural types. In terms of output, the probability of a relationship not existing (p-value) is used to determine the statistical significance of any association. The total variation explained by the model is identified by the ‘adjusted R-squared’ statistic. These statistics are reported in the findings chapters for three stages of the hierarchical regression: (1) Control Variables; (2) Direct Relationships, and (3) Mediation. However, the third regression stage is contingent on an investigation of mediation. Mediation analysis is now explored.

The study conceptualises a single step multiple mediator model (Hayes, 2009), where multiple mediators are POS and PSS, and the single step exists between FLM behaviour and employee behaviours and attitudes. In other words, the hypotheses contend that among the ways in which FLM behaviour exerts an effect on employee behaviours and attitudes, is through the intervening ‘zone of reciprocity’ variables. There are a number of methods available to ascertain mediation effect using statistical criteria. The most widely used method is the Baron and Kenny (1986) causal steps approach (Hayes, 2009). This method infers the mediating effect through a series of relationship tests. This 4-step causal model provides the analysis tool used for the pilot study. During the pilot, using the Baron and Kenny steps, this study met the criteria for a mediating impact of POS and PSS (Kilroy and Dundon, 2015).

However, the features that made the Baron and Kenny method attractive for the pilot (i.e. commonly used in relevant literature, ease of application, simple logic, and descriptively concise for publication) have been questioned. In a critique of the Baron and Kenny approach, Hayes
(2009) reveals its key limitations and weaknesses. While it is relatively simple to apply, it has been shown to be among the lowest in power in terms of detecting a mediating effect. Secondly, its simple logic bases the mediating effect on an inference from the outcome of a set of hypothesis tests rather than a quantification of the effect itself. And finally, the resulting conclusion of the analysis, while concise, may be incomplete. The Baron and Kenny method does not test for indirect effects in the absence of a total effect; however, a multiple mediator model could explain this absence.

Of the alternative methods available for better detecting mediating effects, bootstrapping technique is among those recommended (Preacher et al, 2007) (Reference Appendix 7 for Bootstrapping Approach and software Macro). Hayes (2009) describes the advantages to this technique. Firstly, it is shown in some research to be one of the more valid and powerful methods. In addition, the inference is based on an estimate of the indirect effect itself and it requires fewer assumptions regarding distribution and error. Finally, it can be used in complex models including multiple mediators, such as in the case of PSS and POS for this study. Of course, bootstrapping itself has limitations including being more time-consuming to apply and producing different statistical characteristic outputs each time it is performed (Preacher et al, 2007). However, these limitations may be considered minor in the context of this study.

Statistically, “bootstrapping generates an empirical representation of the sampling distribution of the indirect effect by treating the obtained sample, of size \( n \), as a representation of the population in miniature, one that is repeatedly resampled during analysis as a means of mimicking the original sampling process” (Hayes, 2009: 412). The outcome of this technique is to provide \( k \) estimates of the mediating effect (where \( k \) is often 1000 or greater). Having 1000 estimates of the mediating effect enables the quantification of the ‘true’ mean effect, within 95% confidence intervals, to test if the effect is or is not zero. This technique is used to achieve the research objective of understanding the impact of FLM behavioural type, by exploring the possibility of a mediating effect of reciprocity measured by PSS and POS. In order to operationalise the bootstrapping method, the study developed a Macro (a programme code that can automate manual aspects of testing) to run in Minitab (Ryan and Joiner, 1994) to execute \( k=1000 \) tests. In total eight macros are written for the study (derived from 2 mediating paths namely, POS and
PSS, for 4 unique FLM behavioural types). An example of the Minitab Macro code, along with the specific methodology steps pursued is outlined in appendices. Chapter 7 presents the findings of the mediation analysis.

The outcome of the multivariate analysis (both direct and indirect relationships) is reported and discussed in the findings chapters 5, 6, and 7. The next section of the methodology chapter describes Stage Two of the research strategy, including supporting literature, debates and limitations.

### 4.5 Research Methods – Stage Two

Following the quantitative analysis, Stage Two of the research strategy enhances and complements the statistical analysis. Stage Two includes qualitative data collection and analysis regarding the approaches of FLMs and their relative impact on employee behaviours and attitudes. In particular, supplementing the quantitative findings with examples and perspectives on what constitutes and differentiates FLM behavioural types helps uncover the why FLMs impact potential HPWS outcomes.

Purposive sampling is used to select the FLMs and the employees for participation in the qualitative data collection. This sampling strategy is deemed appropriate, since the qualitative analysis concerns itself with building new theoretical propositions, rather than generalisation to populations (Bryman, 1988). The sample includes:

- Three dayshift FLMs
- One eveningshift FLM
- Two dayshift focus group (n=4 in each) of employees (mixed across FLMs and departments)
- Two eveningshift focus group (n=4 and n=6) of employees (mixed across FLMs and departments)
All participants are invited to participate on a voluntary basis, and given assurances about the option to opt out both in writing and verbally. FLMs participate in a one-to-one semi-structured interview, while employees participate in focus groups. Sample representation and variability in the qualitative stage of research is achieved by mixing shifts and FLM groups. While n=22 may be on the lower side for case-study research (Saunders and Townsend, 2016), it is neither primary nor sole data collection tool in the study. Rather, the data is used to inform on context and expand on explanation of the statistical findings.

Semi-structured interviews deliver qualitative data from the perspective of the FLM. Yin (2003) contends that the interview is one of the most important case study information sources, suggesting that such interviews will be “guided conversations rather than structured queries” (Yin, 2003:89). The interview will facilitate the pursuance of an inquiry about the FLM behavioural type and style and also provide the opportunity to discover further relevant topics. The interview questions are likely to prompt self-reflection for the FLM; therefore a one-to-one setting is selected over a focus group. The purpose of the semi-structured interviews is to include the FLM perspective in the study, conscious of the employee bias in Stage One.

The interview setting allows an exploratory approach with open-ended questions and opportunity for follow up clarification (Saunders et al, 2003). With similar intent, a focus group is performed with a group of front line employees. The group setting allows the diversity in experience of different FLM behavioural type to be discussed relative to each other. Themes of interest in the qualitative analysis include: some insight into the approach of the FLM; perceived consequences and outcomes for the employees; and examples of reciprocity in relationships. These themes mirror the key constructs in the research model, namely FLM behavioural type, employee behaviours and attitudes and zone of reciprocity. The transcripts are reviewed and coded with these themes in mind, with one further category for interesting observations. Interesting observations are topics that emerge from the research through inductive reasoning by the researcher based on literature and case-study knowledge (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007; Saunders et al, 2003; Yin, 2003).
Conducting Qualitative Inquiry

Qualitative data collection is conducted in the Galway facility due to language barriers between the researcher and the Mexico facility. Stage Two administration involved the random selection of FLMs based at the Ireland facility. The FLMs were contacted via email to inform them about the nature of the study, the time requirement and the voluntary nature of participation. Of the six randomly selected FLMs contacted, four responded with availability, while two others were unavailable due to personal annual leave. A calendar appointment was then sent to the participants with a meeting location and time. A similar process was used for employee input, although meeting time and location was communicated via the local production manager. A cross section of employees from different FLM workgroups, nationalities, ages, genders and tenure was requested. The biographical details of participating employees are presented in Chapter 5. Each interview ranged from 30 to 45 minutes in length.

At the start of the qualitative interviews and focus groups, participants were informed of the purpose of the study, the role of the researcher, the protection of identity, the use of a recording device and the plans for transcription. Following this information, participants were given an opportunity to opt out of the interview. All participants agreed to proceed. Biographical summary of the respondents was gathered at the start of the interviews and then questions followed. A series of direct questions themed around the key constructs of the study were posed. Questions were designed to advance the research objectives (Saunders et al, 2003). Sample questions included open questions, such as describe your FLM leadership approach and what are your experiences of FLM involvement in HR practices? to more specific closed questions, such as, do you think your FLM impacts your willingness to stay with the organisation? Why / why not?. Respondents were encouraged to elaborate where relevant enabling the flow of conversation to take an informal route. The recorded interviews and focus groups were transcribed into Microsoft Word files for analysis (Appendix 5).
Qualitative Analysis

There are a number of methods for qualitative analysis available (Saunders et al, 2003). The transcribed information was analysed manually and coded through the use of a coloured highlighter to highlight quotations and messages that were relevant to the hypotheses. Selected descriptive quotes are included in the findings chapters. In addition, a second review of the transcripts was sought to identify themes that emerged across the interviews. The focus of this analysis was to identify data and evidence regarding the employee and FLM perspectives. As the research had a significant amount of statistical analysis in Stage One performed in a statistical software package, the decision was taken not to apply qualitative analysis software to the qualitative data. The researcher relied on reading and re-reading transcripts and analysing phrases, terms, expressions and key words using search facilities in MS word.

4.6 Ethical Considerations

There are at least three lenses through which ethics can be viewed for the research study. Firstly, at a macro level, the perspective of moral obligations and standards for humanity are a consideration. The question here lies in the overall contribution of the research study. Does the activity serve human purposes and improve lives? (Wicks and Freeman, 1998) One response to this is to be cognisant of the theoretical and contextual assumptions of the study. For example, improved organisational commitment, discretionary effort and performance are often assumed a desired outcome in management research (Godard, 2010). However, this is underpinned by a capitalist accumulation system, which may not have a desirable outcome for all human lives, in particular employees. It is important the research does not benefit any corporate entity at the expense of human interest. It is noted that HPWS is applied in non-profit sector also (Kellner et al, 2016).

Secondly, at a micro level, the impact of the research on individual participants and case-study stakeholders are a factor (Saunders et al, 2003). In this study, confidentiality and trust are significant keys to the data collection process. The FLM names provided by employees must be protected. As such, the names are coded in the data analysis and hardcopy surveys will be
confidentially disposed of at the end of the study. Likewise, the organisational identity is not disclosed. All participants in the qualitative study are offered anonymity in the use of their quotes and so the findings chapters omit direct quotations that may reveal their identity.

Finally, at a personal level, the researcher’s employment position in the organisation is a possible ethical consideration. Ethically, the researcher considers it crucial to disclose this status as a functional senior manager, based in the Ireland facility. This role has no doubt assisted the research access. However, it is important to note that there is no direct authority or reporting relationship between the participants involved and the researcher. Voluntary participation is the key mitigation applied for any unintended outcomes of this role, along with the research instruments declaring the relationship in writing.

In response to these considerations, the research aspires to the following three principles that Remenyi (1998) argues will “ensure a standard of ethics in research”:

1. “ensure a high degree of respect for the autonomy of the individual;
2. work towards the beneficiation of society is a primary motivation of research; and
3. respect fairness” (Remenyi, 1998:115).

4.7 Further Limitations

Limitations and constraints of this research methodology have been covered through the chapter. While the limitations will vary depending on the paradigm from which one perceives it, representation is likely an obvious limitation of this study. This research is conducted within a single case-study organisation. Eisenhardt (1989) suggests that it is difficult to generate complex theory with few cases and also that its empirical grounding may be questioned. As such, this single case-study seeks not to generalise to a wider population, but rather to add to a growing body of empirical research in this field, thereby contributing to total generalisability. Incrementally building new understanding, a community of researchers can collectively develop theory from multiple studies and cases in literature (Suddaby, 2006).
4.8 Integrated Conceptual Model for Stage One and Stage Two

This chapter outlines the research methodology for this study. Commencing with the philosophical considerations, moving to the two-stage mixed method strategy adopted, outlining the quantitative instruments and qualitative techniques and lastly presenting the analysis approach, all designed to advance the research objectives. The summary of the research methodology is presented in the model (Figure 4.8.1) below. It includes the exploratory FLM workgroup level analysis outlined in Chapter 8.

![Figure 4.8.1: Summary Multi-Level Exploratory Research Model](Image)

Firstly, the model conceptualises a **realm of the worker**. This realm is the sole source of quantitative data (Saunders et al, 2003) in this study. In this realm, the employee is conceptualized to experience **FLM behavioural types** and develop views about their behaviour (Purcell and Hutchinson, 2007). The employee perceives a degree or absence of support
(Eisenberger et al, 2002) and reciprocation (Gouldner, 1960), in the **zone of reciprocity**. The employee is hypothesised to have perceptions of their own behaviour in terms of **organisational citizenship behaviour** and **work performance** (Guest and Conway, 2011). They develop attitudes to the organisation including their **commitment** (Purcell and Hutchinson, 2007) and **intention to leave** or quit (Kuvaas, 2010). The dashed arrows represent the dynamic nature of the relationship. It highlights the complexity of causal direction, acknowledging that perhaps employees may alter perceptions of support and FLM behavioural types as their own outcomes change. The research model purports that these phenomena are both measurable and related. It builds on previous research (Purcell and Hutchinson, 2007; Eisenberger et al, 2002) to operationalise a quantitative study investigating this through an employee survey and hypotheses testing. Each relationship is a hypothesis (Bryman and Cramer, 1996), labelled individually as H - number - letter - Roman numeral. The H represents the FLM behaviour observed (e.g. H1 is Policy Enactment); the subsequent letter represents the employee attitude or behavioural type tested and explored (e.g. H1a is the relationship between FLM Policy Enactment behavioural type and OCB). Finally the Roman numeral represents a test of mediation (Baron and Kenny, 2007; Hayes, 2009; Preacher et al, 2007) (e.g. H1ai investigates the extent to which the relationship between FLM Policy Enactment and OCB is mediated by POS). This supports the first research objective to test how the FLM behavioural types may impact employee behaviours and attitudes. A full list of hypotheses with labels (e.g. H1a) and text explanation is available in Table 4.9.1 below, and also for reference in Appendix 1.

The model also conceptualises an exploratory **realm of the front line manager**. This realm is informed through both quantitative and qualitative inquiry (Saunders et al, 2003; Yin, 2003). Quantitatively, the employee perception of the FLM is constructed into a **FLM Work Group**, through the means of a direct consensus composite model (Chan, 1998). The FLM Work Group is derived from the responses of employees who report to the same FLM. In other words, it aggregates the responses of employees who ‘work for’ the same FLM in to one result for an FLM Work Group. It is operationalised through hypotheses **H5a-H5d**. This dimension of the model was included following indications of a further line of inquiry in the pilot study. Chapter 8 outlines the analysis methods and findings relating to the realm of the front line manager.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Labels</th>
<th>Text Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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</tr>
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<td>The relationship between Policy Enactment Behavioural Type and Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB) is mediated by Perceived Organisational Support</td>
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<tr>
<td>H1a(ii)</td>
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<td>H1b</td>
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<td>H1c(i)</td>
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<td>H1c(ii)</td>
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<td>H1d(i)</td>
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</table>
Chapter 4 presents the research methodology selected to advance empirical study towards advancing the research question. It presents four research objectives and a two-stage research strategy to achieve those objectives. Stage one presents a quantitative methods approach. Stage two offers a qualitative data collection approach, to help understand and discover key perspectives necessary for the research objectives. The chapter culminates in a conceptual research model. The model presented is a framework to advance the research question. As such, it may be seen as an over-simplification and un-realistically concise perspective on employment relationships between a FLM and employees. However, the model operationalises the research objectives through a theory and literature based methodology, with a certain specificity and focus, to progress a complex question. The next chapters reveal the outcome of the empirical study and relocate the findings within the broader and appropriately complex world of social exchange and management literature.
Chapter 5

PRELIMINARY DATA DESCRIPTION AND EXAMINATION

5.1 Introduction

Chapter five provides a description of the quantitative data, in terms of biographical representation and scale validity and qualitative data, in terms of participant profile and key emerging themes. The quantitative data analysis is performed in Minitab statistical software package. Graphical output is provided where possible with a summary description. Some tabled data is used to describe multi-factor outputs. Qualitative data is transcribed from a Dictaphone and coded for common themes. Relevant extracts from the transcripts are included to inform the research context. The purpose of the chapter is to understand the data used to inform the research findings in later chapters. It begins with a summary of the biographical statistics pertaining to the quantitative study participants. Graphical Representation of the Biographical Summary is shown in Appendix 8.

5.2 Biographical Summary for Survey Respondents

As outlined in the previous chapter, survey data collection took place across two separate manufacturing plants within the case-study organisation. Table 5.2.1 below reveals the sample size ($n$) for the responses in each facility, as well as the other categorical control variables. Of a total 613 completed surveys, 41.3% or 253 were returned from Tijuana facility, while 58.7% or 360 were completed in Galway. This summary data represents an 84% response rate in Tijuana, and 82% in Galway.
## Summary of Biographical Statistics for Survey Respondents

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<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-2 years Tenure</td>
<td>250</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-5 years Tenure</td>
<td>104</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-10 years Tenure</td>
<td>126</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 10 years Tenure</td>
<td>118</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-Time Working Hours</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>557</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Part-Time Working Hours</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>39</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agency Contract</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temporary Contract</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permanent Contract</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>459</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.2.1: Summary of Biographical Statistics for Survey Respondent
As expected, given the case-study manufacturing locations, 298 respondents were of Irish nationality, 231 were of Mexican nationality and 36 reported other nationality. There were 48 non-responses to this question. Of the total respondent pool, 249 respondents (40.6%) reported Male gender and 345 (56.3%) reported Female gender while there were 3% non-responses. The researcher observed that the gender balance in Mexico respondents was significantly weighted toward female gender (approximately two thirds female).

The Galway facility is engaged in a single-union agreement and mandates all permanent staff must become a member as a condition of employment. Therefore, it is not unusual that 226 respondents identified as union members in Galway. Conversely, no Mexico employee reported a trade union membership. Medco has a single union agreement at Galway, as per industry practice at the time of establishment in Ireland, however Mexico has no such agreement. A majority of respondents had completed a minimum of second level education (n=266). Just over one fifth of respondents had ceased education at primary level (n=130), while the remaining 191 of respondents had a third level qualification. There were also 26 non-responses to the question. The sample covered the full range of age distribution. 47 respondents were aged over 50 and 128 were aged under 25. The remaining respondents were split almost evenly between 26-35 and 36-50 age brackets at 209 and 208 respectively. 21 respondents left this question blank. Although the majority of respondents in the survey were reporting to the FLM for less than one year, the sample contains representation from 204 respondents in the 1-5 year bracket and 49 with more than 5 years reporting to the FLM. Interestingly, despite the majority of employees reported to their current FLM for less than one year, the sample revealed that the majority of respondents had greater than two years’ service (n=331) with Medco. The figure highlights the rotation of staff amongst FLMs at Medco over the life time of employment. Almost 20% (n=118) of respondents worked with Medco for more than 10 years. The sample had representation in all tenure categories, with 15 non-responses to the question. Over 90% (n=557) of the survey respondents worked full-time hours with only 6.4% (n=39) reporting part-time working arrangements. The figure is in line with Medco’s hiring policy, typically recruiting all staff on full time contracts and facilitating part-time arrangements for existing staff (for example job-sharing or reduced hours) on an individual case basis. Medco hires employees on three independent contract types. Firstly, employees may be hired via an agency in the case of the Galway plant. In this case, the employee is hired
on a contract for service basis from the agency. These employees have different terms and conditions to Medco employees. At both Mexico and Galway plants, Medco employees are often hired on a temporary contract initially, with the award of a permanent contract occurring in the time after probationary period. In some cases, employees may not receive a permanent contract until a number of years’ service has passed, but normally within three years. All three contract types are represented in the respondent sample, in ratio of 459 Permanent, 89 Agency and 62 Temporary.

Coding of Biographical Variables

The biographical factors were numerically coded to enable inclusion in a wider range of statistical investigations and tests. Biographical variables once coded as numbers were assigned prefix ‘c’ in the dataset to indicate ‘coded variable’. Table 5.2.1 below outlines the coding process. Facility had two codes, namely Galway and Tijuana, coded 0 and 1 respectively. Nationality was coded 0, 1, and 2 representing Irish, Mexican and Other respectively. Gender had two codes, 0 for male and 1 for female. Similarly union membership was coded 0 for non-member and 1 for member. Three levels of education were numerically coded 0, 1, and 2 for primary, secondary and third level respectively. Age had the highest number of levels with under 25 coded 0, 26-35 coded 1, 36-50 coded 2 and over 51 coded 3. Employee years working for the current FLM were coded 0 for less than 1 year, 1 for 1-5 years, and 2 for over 5 years. Tenure working for Medco had three levels coded 0 for 0-2 years, 1 for 2-5 years and 2 for over 5 years. Responses to working hours were coded 0 for part-time and 1 for full-time. Finally, employment contract was coded 0 for agency, 1 for temporary and 2 for permanent contract.
Table 5.2: Table of Coded Biographical Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Biographical Factor</th>
<th>Numerical Coding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>c Facility</td>
<td>Galway = 0, Tijuana = 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c Nationality</td>
<td>Irish= 0, Mexican=1, Other=2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c Gender</td>
<td>Male=0, Female=1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c Union Membership</td>
<td>Non-member =0, Member=1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c Education Level</td>
<td>Primary=0, Secondary=1, Third=2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c Age</td>
<td>&lt;25=0, 25-35=1, 36-50=2, &gt;50=3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c Years with FLM</td>
<td>&lt;1 year=0, 1-5years=1, &gt;5years=2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c Employment Tenure</td>
<td>0-2 years=0, 2-5years=1, &gt;5years=2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c Working Hours</td>
<td>Part-time=0, Full-time=1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c Employment Contract</td>
<td>Agency=0, Temporary=1, Permanent=2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**5.3 Scale Validity**

The purpose of this section is to report the factor analysis and validation of scales being used in this study. In line with recommendations for research reporting (Ford et al, 1986), it endeavours to contain the necessary information for (a) critical evaluation of the research, (b) replication of the findings and (c) advancement of knowledge. In preparation for a review of the scale validity, reverse coded items and ‘don’t know’ responses are updated in the dataset appropriately. ‘Don’t know’ responses are treated as missing data, replaced with an ‘*’ for analysis in Minitab. Following updated coding in the dataset, factor analysis can be performed. A series of criteria are used to ascertain the appropriateness of the scales used in the survey instrument. To reduce subjectivity and improve robustness of the analysis, a number of conditions are explored for each research scale as guided by Ford et al, 1986. The criteria includes:

I. Observations to Variable Ratio (Minimum of 10 observations per variable included);
II. Principle Component Analysis and Varimax Rotation (Best fit Factors);
III. Factor Loadings Pattern and Value; (Per Factor Loadings Plot, acceptable at >0.4);
IV. Eigenvalues (Acceptable >1.0 with corresponding sharp drop in Scree Plot); and,
V. Cronbach Alpha (Acceptable at >0.7). (See Appendix 9 for sample of graphical analysis)

Each criterion is applied to the ten research scales included in the study. Adjustments and factors are extracted on the basis of the above criteria, in order of I to V. Factor scores are calculated for later analysis by simply summing the variables salient to the particular factor (Ford et al, 1986). While there are alternative and arguably more sophisticated mechanisms for calculating factor scores, there is little consensus on the best approach. Hence, the simplest method is adopted here to facilitate ease of study replication. Given that the majority of scales are adapted from previous studies, the factor analysis is primarily confirmatory in nature (See Appendix 10).

**Policy Enactment Behavioural Type**

Policy Enactment Behavioural Type is a 10-item scale adapted from HRM practice bundles used in HPWS studies (e.g. Huselid, 1995). Adjusted for FLM behaviour, it is measured on a frequency of enactment basis with specific focus on those HRM practices administered by the FLM. During factor analysis, review of the factor loadings (using Varimax rotation) for policy enactment revealed three distinct factors emerging, interpreted here as: (1) Commitment-based Enactment (2) Control-based Enactment (3) Involvement-based Enactment. Figure 5.3.1 below provides a graphical representation of the relative factor loadings for each question. Circles are used to highlight the extraction of factors from the dataset. In addition, the questions are labelled to indicate reason for selecting titles of “involvement and control based enactment”. Factor labelling is a subjective process informed by the subject matter understanding (Ford et al, 1986).
Three distinct **Policy Enactment Factors** are included in the study. Table 5.3.1 below outlines the three factors labelled in each column and the corresponding questions allocated per row. In addition the Cronbach alpha and Eigenvalue are provided for each factor. The relative loading of each question is provided in the relevant column. **Control-based Enactment** is computed on two items, namely ‘Time-keeping and Attendance” and “Disciplinary or Corrective Action”. Cronbach alpha for this scale is 0.8547, and eigenvalue is 1.75. Factor Loadings are 0.412 for Time-keeping and Attendance and 0.911 for Disciplinary or Corrective Action. **Involvement-based Enactment** is computed on two items, namely “Problem-solving in the area of my work” (Loading= 0.916) and “Following up on Employee Ideas” (Loading =0.4). Cronbach alpha for this scale is 0.8564 and eigenvalue is 1.73.
### Table 5.3.1: Factor Extraction Summary for Policy Enactment Behaviour

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Commitment-based Enactment</th>
<th>Control-based Enactment</th>
<th>Involvement-based Enactment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cronbach Alpha</td>
<td>0.8736</td>
<td>0.8547</td>
<td>0.8564</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eigenvalue</td>
<td>3.66</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>1.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal Performance Appraisal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training Opportunities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Development or Educational Opportunities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognition (Formal/Informal)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rewards, Compensation/Benefits</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication of department goals and objectives</td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.153 – omitted from factor score)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time-keeping and Attendance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.412</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disciplinary or Corrective Action</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.911</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Following up on Employee Ideas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem-solving in the area of my work</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.916</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Commitment-based Enactment** is computed on five items namely: “Formal Performance Appraisal”, “Training Opportunities”, “Career Development or Educational Opportunities”;

112
“Recognition (Formal/Informal)” and “Rewards, Compensation/Benefits”. Loadings are 0.781, 0.864, 0.854, 0.450, and 0.660 respectively. Cronbach alpha is 0.8736 and Eigenvalue is >1. Please note that one item Q6 “Communication of department goals and objectives” was omitted from the scale on basis of “omitted variable Cronbach alpha” statistic and low factor loading (0.153).

**FLM Leadership Behavioural Type**

Leadership behavioural type is computed on five original items adapted from Purcell and Hutchinson (2007). Cronbach alpha statistic is strongest with all five items included, 0.8909. A single factor is included in analysis for these items, labelled **FLM Leadership behavioural type** (See Table 5.3.2 below).

**FLM Coaching Behavioural Type**

Rotational Varimax analysis relating to FLM Coaching behavioural type revealed two distinct factors (Figure 5.3.2). Items Q16, Q17 and Q18 are summed to create one single factor labelled “**Managerial-Focus Coaching**”. These items collectively have a Cronbach alpha statistic of 0.8682 and factor loadings of 0.839, 0.794 and 0.835 respectively. A second factor “**Employee-Voice Coaching**” emerges with items Q19, Q20, Q21, Q22 and Q24. Internally consistent with a Cronbach alpha statistic of 0.9109, these items each have loading greater than acceptance level 0.4 (See Table 5.3.1 above). The reverse coded item Q23 is omitted from analysis due to unusual observations.
Figure 5.3.2: Rotational Varimax Loading Plot for Coaching behavioural type (excluding item Q23)
### Table 5.3.2: Summary of Factor Extraction for Leadership, Coaching and Agency Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cronbach Alpha</th>
<th>0.89</th>
<th>0.868</th>
<th>0.856</th>
<th>0.696</th>
<th>0.808</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eigenvalue/Variance</td>
<td>2.23</td>
<td>2.61</td>
<td>3.46</td>
<td>1.55</td>
<td>1.69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item Factor Loadings for FLM Behaviours (Leadership, Coaching &amp; Agency)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My front line manager is good at keeping everyone up to date with proposed changes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My front line manager is good at providing everyone with a chance to comment on proposed changes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My front line manager is good at responding to suggestions from employees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My front line manager is good at dealing with problems at the workplace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My front line manager is good at treating employees fairly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My front line manager provides guidance regarding performance expectation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My front line manager helps me analyse my performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My front line manager acts as a sounding board for me to develop my ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My front line manager offers useful suggestions on how I can improve my performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My front line manager facilitates problem-solving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My front line manager encourages me to explore and try out alternatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My front line manager supports me taking on challenges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The organisation gives my front line manager the authority to try new things</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The organisation supports decisions made by my front line manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The organisation allows my front line manager to run things the way he/she wants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The organisation gives my front line manager the freedom to determine how they treat me</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FLM Agency Behavioural Type
Agency Behaviour included four items in the survey. Principle component analysis revealed two distinct factors. Q42 and Q43 loaded onto a single factor, labelled here “FLM Agent Behaviour”. Q44 and Q45 are summed to combine a factor “FLM Autonomous Behaviour.” Table 5.3.2 above reveals the Cronbach statistic of 0.696 and 0.808 for these two factors.

Perceived Supervisory Support (PSS) and Perceived Organisational Support (POS)
For the purposes of analysis, the study confirmed the scale factor loadings for PSS using non-rotated Principle Component Analysis. No new factors are extracted and all six items are loaded on one factor, namely PSS. On an un-rotated basis all factor loadings are acceptable at >0.4 and internal consistency is acceptable with Cronbach alpha is 0.878. Similarly, the study confirmed the scale factor loadings for POS using non-rotated Principle Component Analysis. No new factors are extracted and all six items are loaded on one factor, namely POS. On an un-rotated basis all factor loadings are acceptable at >0.4 and internal consistency is acceptable with Cronbach alpha is 0.882.

Organisational Commitment
The three item Commitment scale loaded on to one single factor, with all factor loadings acceptable at >0.4. The Cronbach alpha statistic is 0.854, indicating acceptable internal consistency. There are no adjustments being made to this scale, so all three items are summed to deliver a total factor score.

Turnover Intention
Five items are loaded onto the Turnover Intention factor. Un-rotated principle component analysis reveals five high loadings ranging from 0.768 - 0.922. Also a high Cronbach alpha of 0.911 indicates a highly reliable scale.
OCB

Cronbach alpha for the OCB scale indicates acceptable internal consistency of 0.758. On review of the confirmatory factor analysis, one item has a slightly lower loading than is desirable (0.323). Given the scale is adopted from previous studies with successfully validation (Lee and Allen, 2002) and the Cronbach alpha is acceptable, the study proceeds with all items in the scale to sum an overall OCB factor score.

5.4 Stage Two: Biographical Summary and Preliminary Findings

This section outlines the biographical summary for qualitative study participants. It also elaborates on initial assessment of the qualitative transcripts. Stage Two findings are expanded in next chapters.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Summary of Biographical Statistics for Qualitative Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tijuana Facility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Galway Facility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;25 years of age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-35 years of age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-50 years of age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;50 years of age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irish Nationality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexican Nationality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Nationality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union Member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Union</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.4.1: Summary of Biographical Statistics for Qualitative Participants
Biographical Summary for Qualitative Participants
One criterion for the selection of qualitative participants is sample representation from diverse backgrounds (See Table 5.4.1 above). Due to language and logistical barriers, Stage Two of the study was restricted to the Galway facility. However, within the Galway facility, employees from other nationalities (n=3) took part in employee focus groups. Participants included 9 males and 7 females. Candidates represented the full range of age categories included in the study. Also, representatives with both union-membership (n=8) and non-union status (n=8) participated. Two shifts were representatived in both employee focus groups and FLM interviews. Of the total sixteen participants, 4 held the position of FLM at Medco. 3 of the FLMs are male and 1 is female. Further description of the FLM demographics are available in Chapter 8.

Preliminary Qualitative Data Examination
As per the method outlined in Chapter 4, transcripts are initially reviewed for content patterns of specific relevance to the research objectives. Following an affinitisation of messages and repeating topics, the following constructs are used to examine which the qualitative findings are organised. The next chapters draw on transcript extracts as appropriate.

- FLM Behavioural examples and descriptions
- Influences on perceptions of FLM Behavioural Typologies
- Outcomes or impacts associated with FLM behavioural Typologies
- Examples of organisational and FLM support and/or reciprocity

5.5 Correlations among variables

Table 5.5.1 below reveals the analysis of linear relationships between the survey factors. The table is split over two pages (a) and (b) to aid legibility. Relationships are tested in pairs of factors, indicated by the row and column headings of the table. For each pair the table reveals the level of statistical significance of relationships as denoted by the ‘*’ suffix. Relationships with three symbols, ‘****’, are most statistically probable, indicating a p value of equal to or
less than 0.001 (or greater than 99.9% probability). Those with two symbols, “**”, are significant at a p value or equal to or less than 0.01 (or greater than 99% probability) and finally a single symbol, “*” is significant at a p value of equal to or less than 0.05 (or greater than 95% probability). This symbol annotation is used throughout the remainder of the chapters with the same attached meaning. No figure (i.e. “-”) indicates no significant linear relationship is found.

Table 5.5.1 also includes the estimated size of the effect or extent of the relationship between the variables. The Pearson correlation coefficient provides an indication of how highly correlated variables are. The closer the value is to one, the greater degree of linear fit between them both. The correlation coefficient indicates how much a variable tends to increase, as the other variable increases. In some cases the coefficient figure is presented in parentheses to indicate a negative correlation between variables, i.e. as one variable increases, the other tends to decrease. Irrespective of direction, higher values indicate strongest relationships. It is important to remember that correlation tests do not indicate causation. Theory and hypotheses building in previous chapters offer the logic that might support a causal reasoning where correlations are found quantitatively. However, statistically correlation tables cannot provide evidence of causation. The table informs the analysis in later chapters, and extracts from the table are replicated as required. However, for the purposes of this biographical and descriptive statistics chapter, two dimensions of the table are now discussed. Firstly, initial observations on the strength and significance of relationships are summarised. Secondly, the relationships between biographical factors are discussed to provide greater understanding of the data sample.
Table 5.5.1 (a): Correlation Table All Factors (*= p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001)
Table 5.5.1 (b): Correlation Table All Factors (*= p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001)
Initial correlation observations
The first observation from the correlation table is the reassuring presence of statistically significant relationships amongst the factors hypothesized in the study. Table 5.5.1 (a) reveals that the output variables of OCB, Turnover Intention and Commitment are correlated to most of the input variables hypothesized in the study. Importantly, the conduit of reciprocity is not disproven either as both POS and PSS are correlated to all three output variables. In addition, POS and PSS have significant correlations with many of the FLM behavioural factors. The precise details of the relationships are outlined in the next chapters as part of a comprehensive review of empirical evidence regarding the research model. The second observation is the strength and significance of the relationships. The majority of the correlations detected are significant at a p-value of less than 0.001 indicating 99.9% probability that the correlation is upheld in broader population, beyond the data set. In addition, the range of correlation coefficient includes very high results above 0.7 in instances. The stronger relationships are indicated in bold, highlighting any relationship with a correlation coefficient of greater than 0.5. The final observation, at this early stage of analysis, is the high degree of correlation among the biographical variables. As these factors may impact signals interpreted in later data analysis, it is important to understand the relationships. Therefore, the next section reflects on correlation table 5.5.1 (b) in the context of this specific case-study and broader literature.

There a number of control variables that have correlation values of greater than 0.5. Such relationships may be considered medium to highly correlated, and are outlined here. Facility is highly correlated to nationality (0.629). Facility is also correlated to union membership (0.626) and education level (0.691). Employment tenure has strong correlations with both union membership (0.737), age (0.509), and employment contract (0.117). This figure indicates that the more tenure an employee has, the greater tendency to be a union members (explained by Medco Galway union policy***), older and permanent (explained by permanent contracts normally offered after a period of employment). The biographical factor correlations may be of explanatory value in later discussions.

***Medco Galway requires all permanent staff to join a single union.
5.6 Conclusion

The chapter presents the preliminary findings related to the empirical study in the context of the research question. It achieves this by presenting the biographical summary of the survey respondents and qualitative participants to inform the research context. Through analysis of survey data, scales are refined and factors are extracted for further testing. The chapter also provides a table summary of all factors and their correlations. In addition, initial qualitative themes are outlined. The following chapters build on the preliminary data to further test and explore the factors, specifically investigating FLM behavioural type in Chapter 6.
Chapter 6

FLM BEHAVIOURAL TYPOLOGY FINDINGS

6.1 Introduction

In an endeavour to explore the how and why of a FLM impact on HRM-Performance relationship, the journey exposed questions regarding the enactment of HRM policy by FLMs (Renwick, 2003; Gilbert et al, 2011). The extent to which the FLM is perceived as an agent of the organisation (Eisenberger et al, 2010; Van Dick et al, 2007), the leadership demonstrated by the FLM (Purcell and Hutchinson 2007) and the individual coaching invested by FLMs with their employees (Heslin et al, 2005). Evidence from literature indicated a case for such FLM behavioural types to impact employee’s behaviours and attitudes and consequently performance.

Chapter 4 outlined a research model and testable concepts to gain further comprehension of these questions. Chapter six now outlines the empirical findings concerning FLM behavioural types and their relationship to employee’s attitudes and outcomes. The relationships of interest can be observed in Figure 6.1.1 - labelled as the following hypotheses:

- **H1a –H1d** - FLM Policy Enactment behavioural types are related to (a) OCB, (b) Turnover Intention, (c) Organisational Commitment and (d) Self-rated Performance.
- **H2a –H2d** - FLM Agency behavioural types are related to (a) OCB, (b) Turnover Intention, (c) Organisational Commitment and (d) Self-rated Performance.
- **H3a-H3d** – FLM Leadership behavioural types are related to (a) OCB, (b) Turnover Intention, (c) Organisational Commitment and (d) Self-rated Performance.
- **H4a-H4d** – FLM Coaching behavioural types are related to (a) OCB, (b) Turnover Intention, (c) Organisational Commitment and (d) Self-rated Performance.
The hypotheses are informed by the quantitative data analysis performed for the Stage One survey responses, as well as including the subsequent qualitative evidence gathered in Stage Two. In order to inform the findings, triangulation of data is used. Firstly, extracts from the correlation table in Chapter 5 (Table 5.5.1 (a)) are reviewed for indication of significance and size of potential associations. Second, transcript extractions are included where applicable to provide description and context (Yin, 2003). Third, hierarchical regression is conducted to control for biographical variables, as well as understand the percentage of overall variation in the dependent variables that is explained by the relevant variables. Each FLM behaviour is refined to advance construct definition (Suddaby, 2006) and statistically tested regarding relationships to employee outcomes and behaviours (Ryan and Joiner, 1994). Qualitative data is explored to help further explain relating to possible direction of relationships and explanatory mechanisms (Yin, 2003). The chapter concludes with a summary of the empirical findings that informs the theory and literature discussion in chapter nine.

### 6.2 FLM Policy Enactment Behavioural Type– Empirical Findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Code Definition - Behavioural Type &amp; Employee Behaviours and Attitudes &amp; Zone of Reciprocity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H1a</td>
<td>Policy Enactment Behavioural Type ia related to Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H1b</td>
<td>Policy Enactment Behavioural Type is related to Turnover Intention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H1c</td>
<td>Policy Enactment Behavioural Type is related to Organisational Commitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H1d</td>
<td>Policy Enactment Behavioural Type is related to Self-Rated Performance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.2.1: Hypotheses H1a-H1d
Purcell and Hutchinson (2007) highlight that an employee experiences the HRM practices not only through formal policy enactment, but also through the FLM leadership behaviours. Support for the construct of FLM policy enactment emerges from the reporting of devolution of HRM activities to the line (Renwick, 2003). However, Truss (2001) reminds us that although formally the FLM may be required to enact policy, there is an informal organisational dynamic whereby FLM discretion may enhance or diminish intended HRM practices. The research model sought to investigate the extent of FLM Policy Enactment by enquiring about the frequency of HRM policy enactment. (A reminder of the hypotheses are in Table 6.2.1) During initial analysis, three factors emerged within the FLM Policy Enactment construct, namely Commitment-based Enactment, Control-based Enactment and Involvement-based Enactment. Findings regarding the three factors are now outlined, in table 6.2.2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Involvement-based Enactment</th>
<th>Control-based Enactment</th>
<th>Commitment-based Enactment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-rated Individual Performance</td>
<td>0.168***</td>
<td>0.101*</td>
<td>0.122*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-rated Workgroup Performance</td>
<td>0.180***</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OCB</td>
<td>0.256***</td>
<td>0.106**</td>
<td>0.203***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turnover Intention</td>
<td>(0.117)*</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>0.283***</td>
<td>0.194***</td>
<td>0.212***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control-based Enactment</td>
<td>0.625***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment-based Enactment</td>
<td>0.631***</td>
<td>0.640***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.2.2: Correlation Statistics relating to hypotheses H1a-H1d (*= p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001)

The “commitment-based enactment” factor represents the frequency of FLM enactment of HRM practices related to training and career development, recognition, performance appraisal, rewards and compensation. So-called high commitment HRM practices emerge from a longer-term or strategic investment perspective of human resources (Barney and Wright, 1998). The ideology espouses that increasing: employee knowledge; skills; motivation; and longer-term career and benefits focus, will inevitably result in improved business performance (Huselid, 1995). Correlation analysis supports this idea (See Table 6.2.2), as significant positive relationships are found between ‘commitment-based enactment’ and commitment (0.212),
OCB (0.203) and with a smaller effect, self-rated comparative performance (0.122). It is not possible to infer causality from the correlation analysis; however it is observed that as the frequency of ‘commitment-based enactment’ increases, employee attitudes and behavioural outcomes also tend to improve.

Examples of FLM enactment of commitment-based policies emerged in the qualitative analysis. One employee gave an example of recognition and reward indicating:

“If (the FLM) has six good workers who are working well together and hit target, then they might let you off an hour earlier, and people will respect that.”

Others described less formal approaches, perceiving recognition as “acknowledgement that you have put the work in”, highlighting that “a thank you goes along way”. FLM 114 described the importance of reward and recognition to them, explaining that they always take the time to hand out pay slips to each employee individually each week. FLM 108 described the enactment of another policy, namely the performance appraisal process, as a procedure to comply with:

“A tick-the-box exercise to say that you’ve had your review and some people like them. Some people will tell you it’s the only chance that they sit down with someone, which is a shame as well”.

The distance between the HRM policy of annual performance reviews and the desired approach of the FLM is evident in their daily management approach.

“If someone is having time-keeping issues... there is no point in waiting to address it... or if there is conflict... you just need to address it”.

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This FLM provides further perspective regarding the gap between the perception of the daily FLM role and the HRM policies elaborating:

“do I want to be the point of contact for HRM policies, No. Am I? Yes... by default”.

The second factor of relevance here is “control-based enactment”, which loaded on items that may have more of a traditional (or labour process) adversarial impression (Braverman, 1974). The policies measured are concerned with the monitoring transactions of the employment relationship including time keeping, attendance and corrective or disciplinary action where role performance is below expectation. Previous studies suggest that fewer grievances and disciplinary events indicate a more effective labour system and improved productivity. Therefore, this factor is particularly interesting in terms of directional relationship with employee outcomes. Surprisingly, correlation analysis reveals increased frequency of ‘control-based enactment’ being positively correlated to commitment (0.194), OCB (0.106) and self-rated comparative performance (0.101), albeit with smaller size effects than the ‘commitment-based enactment’. As employees report higher frequency interactions with their FLM regarding time keeping, attendance and disciplinary or corrective action, they tend also to report increased commitment, OCB and performance. The mechanism of supervisory support (Eisenberger et al, 2002) and reciprocation (Blau, 1964) is not an intuitive explanation of such a finding and therefore additional theories may be required to more fully understand the dynamics at play, including labour process explanations of line managers (Delbridge, 1999; Townsend, 2014).

During qualitative analysis, examples of FLM enactment of ‘control-based enactment’ policies included planned absence. One employee explained, “some (FLMs) are more lenient if you want time off, while others want to know why you want time off”, even though in one employee’s opinion “it is clearly none of their business”. Another employee recounted a lack of FLM support for planned absenteeism, recalling, “Some (FLMs) just look at you as if to say why
do you want a day off”. The variation in ‘leniency’ of FLM approach may highlight that it is not just the frequency of ‘control-based enactment’ but also the perceived quality or intention of the interaction that affects employee’s attitudes. One employee empathised with the FLM position, proposing the variation arises from the relative impact of the absence on the production area, outlining that “maybe they (FLMs) don’t want to have to look for a replacement”. Another example of ‘control-based enactment’ is evident in the FLM perspective; FLM 109 gave an example of applying the time-keeping policy when an employee has repeated late arrivals at work,

“Someone had one or two ‘lates’ coming in, you might have to pull them aside on a one-to-one basis. The first thing I’d always ask is everything ok, to take in the personal side... maybe there are reasons for them being late... I’d remind them the policy is to start at x time, and you’re coming in a few minutes later and it’s not acceptable”.

The final “involvement-based enactment” factor discerns employees’ perceptions of the FLM’s behaviour regarding employee suggestions and collaborative working practices. Participative employment relations practices can be associated with a longer-term investment in employees that provide future advantages (Dundon et al, 2004). Through involvement in decision-making and innovation, employees are thought to increase their knowledge and skills relating to the critical competencies of the organisation (Wilkinson et al, 2013). In addition, increased voice in decisions relating to work may help employee motivation and commitment towards workplace performance specificity through line manager agency (Townsend, 2014). The correlation analysis revealed support for such relationships. A significant correlation is found between all dependent variables and ‘involvement-based enactment’, with the strongest relationships being with commitment (0.283) and OCB (0.256), followed by self-rated performance (0.180 workgroup, and 0.168 individual) and turnover intention (-0.117). Such findings are in line with expectations of social exchange theory. In other words, providing employees with a voice about their area of work and following up on their suggestions, can be facilitated through two forms of FLM behaviour. One explanation of the correlation, between involvement-based enactment and employee outcomes, is a felt obligation by employees to
reciprocate such support, consistent with social exchange theoretical explanations (Blau, 1964; Fox, 1974).

Evidence of involvement-based enactment and the absence thereof, is revealed in qualitative data collection, pointing to a degree of tension and issues of power within the relationship. Commencing with the latter, one employee described how some FLMs might take an employee suggestion as “a criticism” of their work, responding defensively. However, another reported more participative dialogue and involvement. For example, FLM 109 described the importance of involving all employees, outlining its

“not just making the stronger stronger... maybe stronger people can help out weaker people”.

Describing an approach to encourage employees to participate in employee suggestion schemes, the FLM explained that they might

“Pick a person who hasn’t done it before... bring them (out of the production line) and talk them through the process”.

In addition to above examples, qualitative analysis reveals that both employees and FLMs suggest there is variation in the enactment of policies amongst FLMs (Table 6.2.3). Possible reasons for variation are offered across the qualitative data collection including “newer supervisors”; “personality”; “performance of the employee”; “personal circumstances”; a introduction of HRM automated “helpdesks” and broader FLM responsibilities. While this is not an exhaustive list, it provides some evidence of possible sources of variation within, and between, FLM groups regarding policy enactment, consistent with the survey findings. Another interesting finding in relation to policy enactment is the perceived distance between daily work activities and the HRM policies. Leave entitlements, disciplinary and bullying policies appeared to be the most common first reactions to questions about HRM policies. FLM 108 gave perspective regarding this gap:
“Our hr policies?... I would struggle to give an example of how I would use them on a daily basis, apart from knowing what they are there”.

FLM 109 elaborated further indicating the role they would have in HRM enactment:

“to have a general idea of what’s there and if someone comes with a query about something, to know where to get them... as regards drawing them up or input into them, there wouldn’t be anything like that”.

According to FLM 109, HRM policies are:

“Something less frequent that you’d need to refer back to” explaining “most people are aware of their entitlements...”

The FLM also highlighted a union impact claiming “union reps know these verbatim”.
Table 6.3.1: Hypotheses H2a-H2d
The FLM Agency Behaviours construct is concerned with the extent to which employees perceive FLM behavioural types as representing the organisation. The construct is operationalised in the survey with a 4-item scale drawing from a larger scale designed to measure Supervisory Organisational Embodiment (Eisenberger et al, 2002). Two items loaded onto a **FLM Authority behaviours** factor and two onto **FLM Autonomy behaviours** factor. FLM Authority behaviours is the extent to which employees perceive the FLM as acting with the permission of the organisation as a delegate, consistent in part with control feature characteristics of labour process perspectives. At the same time, however, FLM Autonomy behaviours relates to the employee perception of FLM’s freedom to act on their initiative and discretion, reminding us that social exchanges can be dynamic and uneven.

Correlation analysis reveals interesting associations. **FLM Authority behaviour** is significantly and negatively correlated to all employee outcomes. The greater the FLM is perceived to have delegated authority (e.g. control perspectives) of the organisation, the lower the employee outcomes. These include -0.188, 0.228, 0.294, 0.304 for **self-rated individual performance, self-rated group performance, OCB and commitment**, respectively. In addition **Turnover Intention** tends to increase as FLM Authority (0.228) and **FLM Autonomy (0.108)** increases. Conversely, FLM autonomy behaviour is positively associated with self-rated workgroup performance. Correlation analysis raises questions regarding the mechanisms of relationships between agency behaviour and employee outcomes. The data alerts us to the complexity of employment relations and line management including tensions, control, participative coaching along with uneven and unpredictable behavioural patterns and real world inter-relationships. In short, managing people on the line displays inherent tension and uncertainties.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>FLM Autonomy Behaviour</th>
<th>FLM Authority Behaviour</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self-rated Individual Performance</strong></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.188***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self-rated Workgroup Performance</strong></td>
<td>0.105*</td>
<td>0.228***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>OCB</strong></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.294***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Turnover Intention</strong></td>
<td>0.108*</td>
<td>0.228***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Commitment</strong></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>(0.304)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FLM Authority Behaviour</strong></td>
<td>(0.284)***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6.3: Correlation Co-efficients for Hypotheses H2a-H2d (*= p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001)

Examples of a command and control type agency behaviour are evident in the qualitative analysis. FLM 108 gave a concise description of perceived legitimacy of authority behaviours, claiming that employees “understand the concept of supervision”. One employee supported this perspective in a focus group, one articulated,

“\textit{I'm here to do a job and the supervisor (FLM) is here to monitor that job}”.

FLM 109 identified an example of authority behaviours. With regard to providing support for employees, the FLM explained that they were acting with “how the business wants us to go at the minute”. However, FLM 114 revealed the tension between authority and autonomy, outlining that sometimes providing support for employees means that

“\textit{you cannot follow policy to the letter of the law... trying to be human}”.

In response to a question about representing the organisation, FLM 114 elaborated that FLMs are seen to represent the company in terms of implementing policy and procedures, but some people could perceive that as just a FLM preference, explaining “\textit{I don't like taking short-cuts... and that's just the way I am the whole time}”. FLM 109 explained their efforts to represent the organisation as a means to develop employees, specifically

“\textit{to understand more of what we are trying to do here, as a bigger identity than just one workstep}.”
Further evidence of FLM Autonomy behaviours emerged in discussions regarding turnover intention. Both FLMs and employees revealed an expectation that people would most likely move department to work with a different FLM, rather than leave the organisation, if dissatisfied with their working environment. This result indicates that FLMs are seen to have sufficient autonomy to have a meaningful difference in an employee’s workplace experience.

6.4 FLM Leadership Behavioural Type – Empirical Findings

The FLM leadership behaviours construct seeks to capture employees’ perception of their FLM’s approach to people management. Purcell and Hutchinson (2007) reveal that the employee experience of HRM practices includes, not just a bundle of policies, but also the FLM’s people management approach. The leadership behaviours of a FLM reflect how he / she might choose to interact with employees, as well as what they choose to pay attention to (Truss, 2001). The construct is operationalised using five items from Purcell and Hutchinson (2007) concerned with communication, responding to employee voice, treating employee fairly and approach to employee participation during changes. Employees rated their FLM in relation to these items, which subsequently loaded onto a single factor, FLM Leadership Behaviour.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>FLM Leadership Behaviour</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-rated Individual Performance</td>
<td>0.125**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-rated Workgroup Performance</td>
<td>0.333***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OCB</td>
<td>0.177***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turnover Intention</td>
<td>(0.245)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>0.320***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.4.2: Correlation Statistics relating to hypotheses H3a-H3d (*= p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001)

Quantitative investigation revealed significant correlation (p value <0.01 in all cases) between FLM leadership behaviours and all employee outcomes measured in the study (See Table 6.4.2). The highest correlation is found to be with self-rated workgroup performance (0.333). A
similar strength association is found with commitment (0.320). The study also revealed that as perceptions of FLM Leadership behavioural types increased, turnover intention tended to decrease, with a negative correlation coefficient of 0.245. A significant positive correlation association of smaller effect is found with both OCB (0.177) and self-rated comparative performance (0.125). The correlation statistics provide indicative support for further testing hypotheses H3a-H3d using multiple regression analysis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Code Definition - Behavioural Type &amp; Employee Behaviours and Attitudes &amp; Zone of Reciprocity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H3a</td>
<td>Leadership Behavioural Type is related to Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3b</td>
<td>Leadership Behavioural Type is related to Turnover Intention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3c</td>
<td>Leadership Behavioural Type is related to Organisational Commitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3d</td>
<td>Leadership Behavioural Type is related to Self-Rated Performance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.4.1: Hypotheses H3a-H3d

Two themes emerge within the qualitative analysis relating to FLM leadership behaviours. It is apparent in the study that each FLM has a unique intention or desire relating to their leadership approach. The following excerpts from three of the FLM interviews demonstrate the variation amongst FLMs in response to a question to describe their supervisory or leadership approach:

“I’d be very hands-on. I like to be hands-on with people all through the shift. I’d be very dedicated to achieving target at the end of shift. I come in before everyone else so I get a heads up on what’s going on so that when people come in I’m there straight away to make a decision... I’d be on the line all the time, seeing where the problems are, trying to see where there are potential areas to do better... often fire-fighting” (FLM 114)

“My leadership approach is that I’m a very open person. I try to get to know my people, treat them with respect, very approachable. I’ve a good manner about me; I don’t lose the cool, even if there is a situation in which you would normally lose the cool. I try to stay calm and that comes across to people... if people have problems they will know I’m not going to blow up” (FLM 107)
“Open and honest. I’m present, I’m visible. If I’m asked a question, I’ll answer a question, or if I don’t have time, I’ll get back to people. I would see myself as the point of contact for a lot of things for a lot of people” (FLM 109)

Each FLM has an expectation of how they behave as leaders in the workplace and how they think they are perceived. The study finds FLMs attempting to differentiate themselves from other FLMs by their presumed style or intention. In the examples above we see a differentiation on ‘dedication to shift target’; ‘ability to stay cool’ or ‘a reliable person to ask questions’ off. Despite intention regarding leadership, inevitably during the interview, variation in approach becomes apparent in relation to employees whom they have had issues or conflict with.

**Interpersonal relationships** appear to affect the approach FLMs will take with certain employees. A consistent message from employee focus groups, is that employees have different relationships with different supervisors. One employee explained, “you would never have just one perception of a FLM. I think people read things differently”. Another employee highlights that sometimes you have a perception of a FLM based on what you hear from other people, but on working with them you find them “totally different”. FLMs also recognise that employees may have different perceptions with one FLM explaining

> “Maybe ones (employees) that I would have had issues with... my relationship with them would be different (FLM 108).”

### 6.5 FLM Coaching Behavioural Types – Empirical Findings

FLM Coaching behavioural type is a construct concerned with the guidance, facilitation and inspirational behaviours that FLM may display in the workplace (Heslin et al, 2006). The concept is tied to LMX theory (Graen and Uhl-Bien, 1995), whereby the trust required for
coaching to prosper is predicated on the nature of the relationship between the FLM and employee. Eight items are included in the survey to measure FLM Coaching Behaviours. During factor analysis, two factors emerged namely, **Employee-Voice Coaching** and **Managerial-Focus Coaching**. Employee-Voice Coaching is related to items that facilitate growth driven by the employee, while Managerial-Focus coaching is concerned with guiding and facilitating growth through managerial feedback on work performance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Code Definition - Behavioural Type &amp; Employee Behaviours and Attitudes &amp; Zone of Reciprocity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H4a</td>
<td>Coaching Behavioural Type is related to Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H4b</td>
<td>Coaching Behavioural Type is related to Turnover Intention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H4c</td>
<td>Coaching Behavioural Type is related to Organisational Commitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H4d</td>
<td>Coaching Behavioural Type is related to Self-Rated Performance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 6.5.1: Hypotheses H4a-H4d**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Employee-Voice Coaching</th>
<th>FLM Managerial-Focus Coaching</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-rated Comparative Performance</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-rated Workgroup Performance</td>
<td>0.285***</td>
<td>0.328***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OCB</td>
<td>0.279***</td>
<td>0.214***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turnover Intention</td>
<td>(0.210)***</td>
<td>(0.254)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>0.328***</td>
<td>0.310***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FLM Managerial-Focus Coaching</td>
<td><strong>0.767</strong>*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 6.5.2: Correlation Statistics relating to hypotheses H4a-H4d (*= p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001)**

Correlation analysis shows support for a significant association between FLM Coaching behavioural type and all employee outcomes measured in the study. The first important
correlation statistic to notice is the significant co-efficient of 0.767 between the two coaching factors. Typically, correlation coefficients with values greater than 0.7 are considered highly correlated. The two factors are highly correlated, so attention is advised for problems of multicollinearity that may arise in later regression analysis. However, in terms of correlation co-efficients, there is indicative support for H4a-H4d, as significant co-efficients ranging from 0.129 to 0.328 demonstrate that as FLM Coaching behavioural type increases, employee discretionary behaviour (OCB), commitment, and self-rate performances tend to increase also. In addition, turnover intention tends to decrease as FLM employee-voice coaching and managerial-focus Coaching behavioural type increases, demonstrated with respective negative correlation co-efficients of 0.210, and 0.254. Worth noting is the significant positive association between managerial-focus coaching and self-rated individual performance (0.129), which is not replicated by the employee-voice coaching factor. With this exception, the overall positive association between FLM Coaching behavioural type and employee attitudes and behaviours are in line with the expectations of the research model, consistent with social exchange expectations.

FLM 107 describes their approach to employee-voice coaching with respect to one of Medco’s employee participation programmes:

“In most cases I try to back off, let them do the work, come up with their own problems, their own fixes… it’s really a coaching role”.

When asked to describe coaching, FLM 107 depicts trying:

“to explain things in a way that simplifies whatever it is they (the employee) want to achieve, but not necessarily give an answer... to help them figure out the answer, try to teach them how to come to the answer... it’s harder, you have to be quite patient... but in long run its better for the company and the person involved”.

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There is some evidence for FLM Coaching behavioural type being part of the autonomous FLM role. For example, FLM 114 describes the same Medco employee participation programme with emphasis on recognition rather than voice. FLM 108 describes “bringing an employee along” whereby you would see “more pride”, “more engagement” and “the employee would be more involved”. The necessity of a mature relationship for coaching is experienced by this FLM, who reveals that it is important to try harder with the employees that are difficult to “bring along”.

6.6 Hypothesis Testing – Empirical Findings

Approach, Assumptions and Limitations
All stage one hypotheses are tested using multivariable general regression models. Regression provides evidence of the statistical probability that an independent set of variables have an impact on the variation of a dependent variable. A p-value indicates the likelihood that the variation observed is random. A low p-value, <0.05, indicates that there is a less than 5% probability that the variation is random, and therefore it is possible to conclude that the pattern of variation between a dependent and independent variable is significant. Regression also estimates the size of the impact, using an R-squared statistic. The adjusted R-squared statistic is a more conservative estimate of the percentage of variance in the dependent variable that is explained by the independent variables included in the model. The regression analysis tool provides a quantitative estimate of the value of the FLM behaviour variables as predictors of employee outcomes, hence enabling a conclusion on the hypotheses. Each combination of dependent and independent variables is referred to as a model. In performing general regression, it is important to be cognisant of the two limitations of this tool. Firstly, the tool will provide a p-value and R-squared value for every model. However, only models that meet the assumptions of regression may be considered reliable. There are a number of assumptions in the regression output that must be validated during the analysis of each model (Bryman and Cramer, 1996). These include the:
1. Assumption of independence of variables
2. Assumption of linearity
3. Assumption of homoscedasticity
4. Assumption of normality
5. Assumption of independence of errors

The assumptions are validated in each regression model in this study, with further discussion on those models that fail to meet these assumptions.

A second limitation of regression analysis exists in the methods available for reducing the model to its significant terms. Regression analysis that is concerned with the discrete mechanisms at play in the variation of a dependent variable, will have limited or enhanced utility depending on the manner in which the regression models are formulated. The process of developing regression models may be summarised in two words, (1) additive or (2) reductive. Additive models build a regression model by incrementally adding independent variables to the model using a previously outlined logic. Such ‘forward selection’ of variables may be done manually using hierarchical regression or using manual or automated forward selection stepwise regression (Cohen and Cohen, 1983). These distinct processes seek to add independent variables until they find a model that best explains the variation observed in the dependent variable. Hierarchical regression draws on the analyst’s understanding of the phenomenon to sequence the addition of variables, while stepwise, uses quantitative data. The latter is thought to be prone to user error, specifically in relation to the availability of degrees of freedom for each ‘step’ in the automated process (Babyak, 2004). Reduction methods are the inverse approach, focusing on the removal or backward selection, of variables from a model until a ‘best fit’ is achieved (Cohen and Cohen, 1983). The methods outlined have their advantages, (for example automated stepwise regression is efficient), but may not be appropriate for certain investigations. A common problematic outcome from the selection process is ‘overfitting’ of the model, or ‘capitalising on the idiosyncratic characteristics of the sample at hand’ (Babyak, 2004:411).
‘Overfitting’ in regression refers to an exaggerated extrapolation of a model to the population (Harrell, 2001) resulting from the imperfect process of sampling. In other words, the influence of certain data in the sample can be exaggerated beyond their actual influence in the population due to the smaller number of data points. The outcome of ‘overfitting’ may be an inflated $R^2$ value. The likelihood of a larger $R^2$ value increases as the ratio of variables to samples decreases. A rule of thumb applied to avoid ‘overfitting’ in regression is a minimum of 10 to 15 estimates per independent variable included in the model (Babyak, 2004). However, this is cautioned when effect sizes are likely to be small and predictor variables highly correlated (as expected in social sciences).

In response to these concerns, the study pursued the advised response by “entering the data analysis stage in good faith, with a firm set of a prior (not posthoc) hypotheses and tests in mind, cognisant of the sample size available for the given models (Babyak, 2004). In addition, reduction of variables is guided by the least sum of squares and understanding of the data, rather than a quantitative p-value, to remove variables of smallest impact rather than probability. In addition, concerns on degrees of freedom are mitigated in the second stage of hypotheses testing using a bootstrapping technique in the next chapter. The study considered the limitations of assumptions and variable selection at all stages of analysis, and the resulting regression output and hypotheses conclusions are presented.

Control Variables
Control variables were regressed once onto all four independent variables; OCB, commitment, turnover intention and self-rated performance. Most control variable models failed the assumptions of the regression. One example of this is due to the natural correlation between the variables (e.g. age being naturally correlated to education level as the accessibility of third level education has changed over generations). In addition, the control variables are such that heteroscedasticity may be expected. For example, it is conceivable that variation in turnover intention is less in younger third level graduates, as they have qualifications beyond the requirements of the direct line career, along with less financial pressure to maintain a career. In
fact, many are motivated to take the job to fund their ‘year out’ after college. As a result, it was decided to carry all control variables into step two of regression that included each set of FLM behaviour variables. The combined model is reduced using sum of squares and p-value, along with researcher subject matter understanding. The final reported model included only significant terms (p-value < 0.5). Only the control variables found significant in the first model are carried into the subsequent models, as the study is specifically interested in additional FLM behaviour relationships, not the control variables.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employee Outcome (Attitudes &amp; Behaviours)</th>
<th>Significant Control Variables (Co-efficients based Model 1)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OCB</td>
<td>0.109***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turnover Intention</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-rated Individual Performance</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.6.1: Significant Control Variables for four dependent variables (*= p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001)

Table 6.6.1 summarises the significant control variables included in the models. Only age is significant for OCB (p < 0.001). Facility (p < 0.001) and Education (p < 0.05) significantly impact turnover intention, no control variables are significant for commitment, but union membership, gender and years with FLM are included in each Self-rated Individual Performance measure (p-value <0.001). Beta values from the first model equation (i.e. when significant control variables are regressed with FLM policy enactment behaviours) are included in the table (6.6.1), for indicative purposes.

**Dependent Variables**

Four dependent variables are included in the study to represent employee outcomes, namely OCB, turnover intention, commitment and self-rated performance. As outlined in earlier chapters, the expectation is that higher OCB and commitment may lead to better performance. Lower turnover intention is also associated with better performance. In addition, an indicator of employee’s perceived performance is included as a proxy measure for actual workgroup
performance. Of the total data set (n=617), full responses available for inclusion in regression for OCB is n=527, for commitment is n=580, for turnover intention is n=459 and for self-rated performance is n=505.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptive Statistics - Dependent Variables</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>St Dev</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OCB</td>
<td>527</td>
<td>3.80</td>
<td>0.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turnover Intention</td>
<td>459</td>
<td>1.82</td>
<td>0.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>580</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>0.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-rated Individual Performance</td>
<td>505</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>0.78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.6.2: Descriptive Statistics for Dependent Variables

As outlined in Table 6.6.2, responses averaged 3.8 out of possible 5 for OCB items. In other words, on average employees ‘agreed’ with statements regarding their organisational citizenship behaviour. The scale includes statements such as “I help others who have returned to work after being absent”.

During FLM interviews, FLM 109 gave an example of OCB in action, describing an employee who influences and impacts the behaviour of the FLM; for example, regarding ‘good manufacturing practice’ in their work area. “If I walk into the cell without gloves, she will stop me”. Although it is not her role to correct other members of staff on this, she is going above her role, acting like a citizen of the organisation. For turnover intention, people indicated on average that they ‘disagreed’ (μ=1.82) with statements regarding leaving the organisation. Interestingly, turnover intention displayed the greatest variation in responses with a standard deviation of 0.84. Qualitative evidence from focus groups highlighted a nuance in the organisational culture that may not be detected by this outcome. Employees who are ‘dissatisfied’ may be intending to change departments or move from one FLM to another, without necessarily leaving the organisation. An improved measure of turnover intention for FLM studies might be the intention to leave the FLM workgroup. Commitment had the highest response (μ=4.25) with employees on average tending above agreement, towards strong agreement, with statements regarding organisational commitment. Items included pride and
loyalty regarding the company. This finding indicates a high degree of commitment by employees towards the organisation in line with the expectations of a HPWS case study. When asked to comment on their performance regarding quality and productivity relative to peers, employees gave a neutral to mildly positive response (µ=3.45).

**H1a-H1d FLM Policy Enactment Type Behaviours**

Regression analysis reveals support for hypotheses H1a, H1b, and H1c, meaning FLM Policy Enactment behaviours were found to be directly related to (a) OCB, (b) Turnover Intention, (c) Organisational Commitment. Hypothesis H1d is not supported regarding Self-rated Performance. In all three cases, H1a, H1b and H1c, the lower order factor of ‘involvement-based enactment’ revealed a significant p-value. **No significant relationship** was found between the Policy Enactment Behavioural Type factors and **self-rated performance** (See Table 6.6.3). FLM involvement-based enactment, combined with the only significant control variable ‘age’, explains 7.31% of the variance observed in OCB. This adjusted R-squared value is within the range expected for a study investigating behavioural relationships to OCB (Lee and Allen, 2002). The regression equation reveals a **beta value of 0.108**, significant at a **p-value less than 0.001**.

It is possible to conclude that it is probable that as the frequency of FLM involvement-based policy enactment increases by one increment, an individual workers’ OCB score increases by 0.108 (which equates to an almost two standard deviation difference in outcome).
### Table 6.6.3: Final Stage One – Direct Effect Independent Regression Models (H1a-H4d)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OCB</td>
<td>Co-efficient (factor) 0.108*** (Involvement Based Enactment) R-sq (Adjusted) 0.0731</td>
<td>Co-efficient (factor) 0.118*** R-sq (Adjusted) 0.0426</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Co-efficient (factor) 0.173*** (Employee Voice Coaching) R-sq (Adjusted) 0.0765</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turnover Intention</td>
<td>-0.133*** (Involvement Based Enactment) R-sq (Adjusted) 0.0646</td>
<td>-0.245*** R-sq (Adjusted) 0.0744</td>
<td>0.025* (Autonomy) 0.0866</td>
<td>-0.21*** (Employee Voice Coaching) R-sq (Adjusted) 0.0669</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>1.19*** (Involvement Based Enactment) R-sq (Adjusted) 0.1004</td>
<td>0.264*** R-sq (Adjusted) 0.118</td>
<td>-0.139*** (Autonomy) 0.1038</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-rated Individual Performance</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.101* (Authority) R-sq (Adjusted) 0.1094</td>
<td>0.169*** (Authority) 0.0796</td>
<td>0.109* (Managerial-based Coaching) R-sq (Adjusted) 0.0793</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(*= p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001)
Variation in **turnover intention** revealed a significant impact by ‘facility and education level’ along with ‘**involvement-based enactment**’, culminating in an **adjusted R-squared value of 6.46%** for the model. The regression equation predicts with high probability that **turnover intention** reduces by **0.133** for every additional increment in policy enactment type behaviours by FLMs.

The regression model for **commitment** explained **10.04% of variance**, with a significant p-value of **<0.001**, and a **co-efficient of 0.119** for ‘**involvement-based enactment**’. No control variables emerged as significant for **commitment** outcomes in the sample. Therefore, changes in ‘involvement-based enactment’ wholly explained 10.04% of variation in commitment results. This is not surprising given that HPWS policies are sometimes referred to as ‘high commitment’ HRM (Purcell, 1999). However, as ‘involvement-based enactment’ is highly correlated with both ‘control-based enactment’ and ‘commitment-based enactment’, it is difficult to discern the specific nuances of HRM policies that impact OCB, commitment and turnover intention at this point, other than the issue of ‘enactment’ of policies at the point of production is significant.

**H2a- H2d FLM Leadership Type Behaviours**

Support is found for all four hypotheses regarding a direct effect relationship between FLM Leadership behavioural type and employee outcomes. **FLM leadership behaviour**, together with ‘age’, accounts for **4.26%** of variation in **OCB**. Worth noting is that this is more than three percent lower than that explained by FLM policy enactment, highlighting the explanatory value of FLM policy enactment. Irrespective, the regression analysis supports a relationship between FLM Leadership behavioural type and OCB, with the regression equation predicting with high probability (p-value <0.001) that **OCB values change by 0.118** for each incremental change in FLM leadership behaviour. The adjusted R-squared value of **7.44%** for the regression model of FLM leadership behaviour, control variation and turnover intention is slightly higher than that explained by policy enactment (approximately 1% difference). The regression model predicts a highly probable effect (p-value <0.001) of reducing **turnover intention** value by **0.245** for every increment increase in **FLM leadership behavioural types**.
Regressing **FLM Leadership behavioural type** onto the dependent variable of **commitment** reveals a significant positive relationship (p-value <0.001, beta value 0.264). Excluding control variables, as none met criteria for significance in the sample, the FLM leadership model accounts for over 11 percent of variation in commitment values (adjusted R-squared value of 11.8%). The two-digit magnitude of the adjusted r-squared is higher than most other models in the study, however it is in keeping with expectation for this model. A similar study conducted by Purcell and Hutchinson (2007) found a 16% change in R-squared (not adjusted) on adding FLM Leadership behavioural type to a regression model for commitment. It is also not surprising that the unadjusted r-squared value of 12% is lower than that found by Purcell and Hutchinson (2007), as the approach for selection of terms in the current analysis is more conservative than other studies. The current study advocates the inclusion only of significant terms (p-value <0.05) in the final regression model. As outlined earlier, over-fitting models may produce higher r-squared values at the expense of probability of replication in the broader population (Babyak, 2004).

Variation in **self-rated performance** values are explained by changes in control variables of gender, union membership and years with FLM, as well as FLM leadership behaviour. The adjusted R-squared value of 10.94% includes all four variables. Prior to adding FLM leadership behaviour, a viable regression model revealed 6% of variation is explained by control variables. The result suggests that the addition of **FLM Leadership behavioural type** accounts for a further 4.94% of variation in self-rated performance. The regression equation reveals a beta value of 0.101 at a significance level of p-value <0.05 for **FLM leadership behaviour**.

**H3a-H3d FLM Agency Behavioural Types**

Three of the four FLM agency behaviour hypotheses are supported in the regression analysis, namely H3b, H3c and H3d. H3a, the hypothesised relationship between Agency behavioural types and OCB is inconclusive. Correlation analysis suggests a positive relationship between FLM authority behaviour and OCB and regression pointed to a significant relationship. However, the regression model did not meet the assumptions required to interpret results. Problems of hetroscedasticity and unusual distribution of standardised residuals, combined with
an inflated R-squared value make it difficult to validate the resulting model (Ryan and Joiner, 1994; Babyak, 2004). For the remaining three hypotheses, regression analysis is acceptable.

The direct effect of FLM agency behaviour appears to be negative for both turnover intention and commitment. Both FLM agency behaviour factors have significant relationships with turnover intention. FLM autonomy behaviour (i.e. the extent to which it appears that the organisation gives the FLM discretion in their role) is found to have a co-efficient value of 0.025, significant at p-value < 0.05. The result indicates that it is probable that the more discretion perceived to be given by the organisation to the FLM, the higher the intention of the employee to leave the organisation. FLM authority has a similar impact with both a larger co-efficient value of 0.053 and a lower p-value at <0.001. Again, it appears that the perceived authority given to the FLM increases the turnover intention of employees, if only slightly. The finding is interesting, especially when considered in parallel with a negative significant relationship with commitment. Both, FLM autonomy and FLM authority have a significant relationship at p-value <0.001 with beta values of -0.139 and -0.261, respectively. Both employee outcomes indicate that as the FLM agency behaviour increases, it is probable that commitment to the organisation reduces and intention to leave increases. On review of H3d, FLM authority behaviour is found to have a significant positive effect on variation in self-rated performance. FLM authority behaviour has a beta value of 0.169, and p-value <0.001. Combined with control variables this model accounts for 7.96% variation in self-rated performance. As indicated earlier, with 6% of variation explained by control variables, FLM agency may explain a further 1.96% in self-rated performance.

H4a-H4d FLM Coaching Behavioural Types
Regression analysis of FLM Coaching behavioural type included two factors ‘managerial-focus coaching’ and ‘employee-voice coaching’, along with control variables for each model. A significant model reveals that, combined with ‘age’, ‘employee-voice coaching’ has a significance level of p-value <0.001, with an adjusted $R^2$ value of 7.65%. The regression equation predicts with high probability that as ‘employee-voice coaching’ behaviour increases by one increment, OCB will increase by 0.173 (or three standard deviations). Similarly, turnover intention is predicted to reduce by 0.21, as ‘employee-voice coaching’ increases by one
increment. This effect is also significant at a **p-value of less than 0.001.** Combined with control variables this model accounts for **6.69%** of variation observed in **turnover intention.**

A significant model is observed for hypothesis H4d, which investigates the relationship between coaching and self-rated performance outcomes, where ‘managerial-focus coaching’ behaviour accounts for an additional **1.93%**, beyond the impact of control variables, out of a total **adjusted R-squared value of 7.93%**. ‘Managerial-focus coaching’ includes items concerned with feedback on performance, which is interesting in the context of **self-rated performance**. It is found to be significant in the regression model at a **p-value of <0.05**, and a beta value of **0.109**. As with FLM policy enactment factors earlier, high correlation co-efficients between the lower order factors makes it difficult to separate the specific FLM coaching behaviours of the greatest significance or effect. It is determined that FLM Coaching behavioural type has a significant direct effect with three of four employee outcomes, irrespective of the distinction between ‘managerial-focus’ and ‘employee-voice’ coaching.

**Qualitative Evidence**

Qualitative evidence regarding the direct effect of FLM behavioural type showed mix support for a relationship between FLM behavioural type and employee outcomes. In relation to impact of FLM behaviour on Turnover Intention, FLM 114 echoed employees’ comments relating to the FLM’s ability to impact movement within the company, rather than the impact on a decision to leave:

“If a person wasn’t getting on with you, you might say do you want to move?”

When asked about giving effort at work beyond the core job, for example helping a new person, one employee revealed:
“I think that’s more based on someone’s personality. Maybe a good supervisor (FLM) will see beyond that and recognise this and will put the person with someone who is friendly...”

The statement provides a viewpoint on the complex interactions at play in discretionary effort between an employee’s personality, the FLM’s response or adaption of the work environment to match personalities and the perception that a FLM who successfully does so, is perceived by employees to be ‘good’. The statement also illustrates the variety of FLM behavioural type involved in discretionary activities. FLM Coaching behavioural type is relevant in terms of an individual focus of development, i.e. “recognise” personality strengths of being “friendly”. FLM agency behaviour comes to the forefront also, in so far as, the FLM is perceived to have discretion to pair (i.e. “will put the person”) new and existing employees how they wish. Lastly, the resulting classification of the FLM as “good” might be an example of Perceived Supervisory Support, discussed further in the next chapter.

6.7 Conclusion

Chapter 6 presents the findings of the data analysis activity related to FLM behavioural types, and corresponding tests with a series of variables and factors. Relationships between relevant factors in the study, along with qualitative evidence are presented to illuminate the case-study. Specific hypothesis testing is conducted using regression analysis and findings are presented (See Table 6.7.1 for a summary). The initial analysis finds support for the construct of FLM behaviour as a key contributor in the HRM-Performance literature. While the behaviours help understanding of the ‘how’ of the performance relationship, the next chapter delves further into the quantitative analysis to explore the possible mechanisms of relationships by means of organisational support theory.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>OCB (a)</th>
<th>Turnover Intention (b)</th>
<th>Commitment (c)</th>
<th>Self-rated Performance (d)</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H1</td>
<td><strong>FLM Policy Enactment Behaviour</strong></td>
<td>H1a Supported</td>
<td>H1b Supported</td>
<td>H1c Supported</td>
<td>H1d Not supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H2</td>
<td><strong>FLM Agency Behaviour</strong></td>
<td>H2a Inconclusive</td>
<td>H2b Supported</td>
<td>H2c Supported</td>
<td>H2d Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3</td>
<td><strong>FLM Leadership Behaviour</strong></td>
<td>H3aSupported</td>
<td>H3b Supported</td>
<td>H3c Supported</td>
<td>H3d Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H4</td>
<td><strong>FLM Coaching Behaviour</strong></td>
<td>H4a Supported</td>
<td>H4b Supported</td>
<td>H4c Not supported</td>
<td>H4d Supported</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.7.1: Final Hypotheses Results H1a-H4d  (Supported/Not Supported and Comments)
7.1 Introduction

Chapter six explored the relationships between FLM behavioural types and employee outcomes. Focused on the ‘how’ of the FLM impact on employee behaviours and attitudes, it provided evidence into the types of FLM behavioural type observed by employees, and how that might impact their perceptions of their own commitment, effort and performance. Attention is now turned to discover ‘why’ such relationships might emerge. Chapter 7 explores the more difficult dynamic issue of reciprocity in the FLM and employee relationship. Specifically, the mechanisms of the relationships are investigated using the construct of organisational and supervisory support. Commencing with a review of empirical findings regarding the mechanisms of exchange theory included in the study, descriptive and correlation is presented. The descriptive review is followed by a review of the mediation analysis conducted to advance the (i) and (ii) parts of hypotheses (See Figure 7.1.1) below.

![Image of the Realm of Front Line Management and the Realm of the Worker]

Figure 7.1.1: Summary Multi-Level Exploratory Model
7.2 Perceived Organisational Support Empirical Findings

Perceived Organisational Support is one of the constructs included in the zone of reciprocity variables (See Fig. 7.7.1). It seeks to capture employee perception of support received from the organisation. It includes items in the scale relating to the extent to which the organisation cares about employee opinions, values, goals and well-being. In the final data set, 515 responses for all items are loaded onto a single factor, POS. As outlined in Table 7.2.1, analysis reveals employees’ perception is on average between neutral and modest levels of organisational support from Medco (μ= 3.68, σ= 0.689). The mean and standard deviation are comparable with previous studies (Eisenberger et al, 2002), albeit with slightly lower standard deviation, as expected in a single case-study organisation. Evidence from qualitative interviews revealed examples of organisational support, including alignment with career goals and aspirations (i.e. where the employee wants to go in future):

“… very strong support so far. It’s from the people within the organisation… other supervisors… other support functions… I can always go and talk to and say this is where I want to go and ask ‘have you any insight’... I know when I was thinking of going back to college... people would advise me... ” (Focus Group 3)

However, organisational support was perceived to be lacking in key areas, referring to the career development websites and portals provided by the organisation, they perceived:

“… as regards infrastructure provided by the organisation... there is still a lot to be done” (Focus Group 3).
Importantly, the evidence suggests that organisational support is not limited to the interpersonal experiences or the role of agency, but also the structures and systems in place designed to regulate the employment relationship in Medco.

**Table 7.2.1: Descriptive Statistics for Zone of Reciprocity Variables**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptive Statistics - Zone of Reciprocity Variables</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>St Dev</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PSS</td>
<td>511</td>
<td>3.82</td>
<td>0.734</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POS</td>
<td>515</td>
<td>3.68</td>
<td>0.689</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived State of Indebteness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On review of the correlation analysis, POS is found to have significant correlations with four of the control variables (See Table 7.2.2). Overall the size of the relationships is small. **POS** tends to reduce slightly when reported by employees in Tijuana facility (-0.105 at significance level of p<0.05). POS also appears to reduce, with greater probability and impact, with membership of union and increasing employment tenure at -0.160 and -0.185, respectively (both significant at p<0.001). Conversely, as education level increases, POS tends also to be higher (0.094 at p<0.05).

**Table 7.2.2: POS Significant Correlations with Control Variables**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POS Significant Correlations with Control Variables</th>
<th>Facility</th>
<th>Union Membership</th>
<th>Education Level</th>
<th>Employment Tenure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>POS</td>
<td>(0.105)*</td>
<td>(0.160)***</td>
<td>0.094*</td>
<td>(0.185)***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As expected per social exchange theory, POS has a significant correlation with all FLM behavioural type, with the exception of one of the FLM agency factors “FLM Autonomy” (See Table 7.2.2). Commenting first on the exception, FLM autonomy behaviour queries the extent to which employees feel the FLM runs things the way he / she wants. The absence of a significant correlation suggests that employee perception of organisational support is independent of the
autonomy a FLM demonstrates. This resonates with a system versus agency perspective of control and regulation. If one considers FLM autonomy as the absence of organisational direction, supporting structures or guidance for the FLM, then the finding is not beyond rationalisation. One obvious explanation is that employee responses about missing support or a perceived absent force is likely to be highly variable and inconsistent. This finding highlights the idiosyncrasies of the complex employment relationship in reality. Interestingly, the other FLM agency behaviour factor is both significantly and negatively associated with POS, with a relatively sizable effect. The study finds that POS tends to reduce as FLM authority behaviour increases at a correlation coefficient value of \(-0.424\) (\(p\)-value<0.001). FLM authority behaviour relates to the extent to which the organisation is perceived to give responsibility and delegated power to the FLM. In other words, employees who see the organisation as providing their FLM with authority are less likely to believe the organisation cares about them. Stated in the opposite direction (as causality is not known), the less an employee perceives an organisation to care about them, the higher their perception of the authority given to the FLM by the organisation. This is possibly, and alternatively, related to the use or abuse of FLM positional power (French & Raven, 1959) whereby the employee perceives authority as an controlling style of management. One explanation of the inverse relationship to POS might be that such employees perceive the organisation has seconded their duty of care unsuccessfully to the FLM.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POS Significant Correlations with FLM Behaviours</th>
<th>POS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FLM Autonomy Behaviour</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FLM Authority Behaviour</td>
<td>(0.424)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee-Voice Coaching</td>
<td>(0.528)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FLM Managerial-Focused Coaching</td>
<td>(0.474)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FLM Leadership Behaviour</td>
<td>(0.482)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involvement-based Enactment</td>
<td>(0.345)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control-based Enactment</td>
<td>(0.181)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment-based Enactment</td>
<td>(0.304)***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7.2.3: POS Correlations with FLM behavioural type (*= \(p<0.05\), **=\(p<0.01\), ***\(p<0.001\))

All other correlations between FLM behavioural type and POS are found to be significant at a \(p\)-value of less than 0.001, and positive. As the frequency of FLM Policy Enactment Behavioural
Type increases, the strength of agreement for POS also does so (albeit to varying degrees with involvement-based enactment most sizable at 0.345, followed by commitment-based enactment and control-based enactment (0.304 and 0.181, respectively). In addition, FLM Leadership behavioural type tends to increase with POS at a greater effect size of 0.482. However, it is the coaching behaviours that appear to most correlate to perceptions of organisational support with both employee-voice coaching and managerial-focus coaching displaying values of 0.528 and 0.424, respectively. The more an employee agrees with experiences of FLM coaching, the more they tend to believe the organisation cares about them. Of course, directional causality is not established and therefore, perhaps believing an organisation cares about them actually changes employee perception of FLM performance discussions to be coaching rather than disciplinary in intent.

### 7.3 Perceived Supervisory Support Empirical Findings

The zone of reciprocity includes a second construct, namely Perceived Supervisory Support (PSS). PSS seeks to capture employee perception of the support received from their FLM. It is a similar scale to the POS, with an emphasis on the source of support being from the FLM. In other words, items query employees’ perception of how much ‘their FLM’ cares for their well-being, opinions and goals. Table 7.3.1 reveals a total data set of n= 511 available for the PSS factor. Mean responses are between neutral and agreement, with slightly more variation than observed in POS (μ= 3.82, σ= 0.734). This is not unexpected given there are multiple FLMs included in the study. Interestingly, the descriptive data raises a question regarding the difference between POS and PSS. PSS appears to have a slightly higher mean and so a t-test and ANOVA test are conducted to see if the difference is statistically significant. Both tests revealed a significant difference between the results, indicating that employees are more likely to perceive their FLM as supportive, than the organisation. Table 7.3.1 estimates the mean for PSS to be higher than POS by 0.1333 on average, within a 95% confidence boundary of 0.046 and 0.2212 for the true difference. Assuming the norm of reciprocity to be true (Gouldner, 1960), this finding supports the expectation that the FLM is positioned to have an important impact on employee behaviours and outcomes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>T-Test Statistics - PSS and POS results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T-test value (H0 = difference is zero)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estimate for difference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P-value</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Correlation analysis reveals **PSS** is significantly associated with six control variables at varying degrees of probability (**p-value range >0.00 and <0.05**). The largest of the relationships is with **facility**, where converse to POS, employees in Tijuana tend to have higher PSS scores (**0.248**) (shown in table 7.3.2). Three other control variables are positively associated with PSS, namely **Nationality (0.189), Working Hours (0.143) and Union Membership (0.092)**. Negative correlations are found with **education level (-0.151) and employment contract (-0.156)**. It is important to consider these control variables in hypotheses testing for mediation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PSS Significant Correlations with Control Variables</th>
<th>Facility</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Union Membership</th>
<th>Education Level</th>
<th>Working Hours</th>
<th>Employment Contract</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PSS</td>
<td>0.248***</td>
<td>0.189***</td>
<td>0.092*</td>
<td>(0.151)***</td>
<td>0.143***</td>
<td>(0.156)***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7.3.2: Descriptive Statistics for Zone of Reciprocity Variables (**p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001**)

Perceived Supervisory Support (PSS) is correlated to at least one factor representing each of the four FLM behavioural types (Table 7.3.3). In relation to FLM agency behaviour, PSS is found to have a significant negative correlation to **FLM authority (-0.376)**. In other words, the more the employee perceives the FLM to be acting on the authority of the organisation, or using their positional power, the lower the PSS score tends to be. This is not unexpected, as support received from the FLM, as an authority figure, may be perceived by the employee to be in fact organisational support. Such nuances in the employment relationship are important to consider in interpreting both mediation and causality.

Both factors in the FLM Coaching behavioural type are found to be positively and significantly correlated to PSS. **Employee-voice coaching** has a significant correlation of **0.711** with **PSS**. **FLM Managerial-focus coaching** is found to have a correlation co-efficient of **0.689**. **FLM Leadership behavioural type** is most strongly correlated with PSS, at **0.718**. Also, of particular interest in the study of HRM, the sample revealed a positive correlation with both **involvement-**
based enactment and commitment-based enactment (0.324 and 0.267, respectively). This indicates that as the frequency of FLM policy enactment increases, so does the perception of supervisor support. However, while correlation is indicative of a relationship worth further investigation, causality cannot be confirmed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PSS Significant Correlations with FLM Behaviours</th>
<th>PSS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FLM Autonomy Behaviour</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FLM Authority Behaviour</td>
<td>(0.376)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee-Voice Coaching</td>
<td>0.711***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FLM Managerial-Focused Coaching</td>
<td>0.689***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FLM Leadership Behaviour</td>
<td>0.718***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involvement-based Enactment</td>
<td>0.324***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control-based Enactment</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment-based Enactment</td>
<td>0.267***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7.3.3: PSS Correlations with FLM behavioural type (*= p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001)

During the qualitative data collection, examples of supervisor support came from both the employee focus groups and the FLM interviews. Employee examples included FLM willingness to help with a problem in work where an employee may not have the skillset required.

“He (The FLM) saw that he had strengths that I didn’t have and I had strengths that he didn’t have... if there was something that I was struggling with, we would sit down and work through it together.”

Another employee gave an example of the absence of support where they felt the annual performance review discussion was not supportive of their individual development.

“I think they may leave it (the performance review discussion) to the very last minute, until the deadline date. I found them to be a very general review and they use certain lines and they are very general and not very personal.”

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FLM examples included asking about the person’s well being when there appeared to be a drop in performance at work, “the first thing I’ll always ask is everything ok?” (FLM) Also, some FLMs are concerned with their availability and approachability to employees as outlined in the quotes below:

“I’m very approachable... if there is a problem they (employees) know they can approach me” (FLM)

“I like to go around... see the reaction on their face, you get an insight into how they are thinking... Are they getting fed up of it...” (FLM)

Perceived supervisory support emerges as an important concept in understanding the role of the FLM. The study revealed evidence of the existence and absence of support.

7.4 Mediation Analysis for PSS and POS

Testing for mediation is a means of investigating the mechanisms of relevance as to why there may be a FLM impact in the HRM-Performance relationship. Various tests have been used for mediation. Historically, the most common of these is the Baron and Kenny (1986, 1998) mediation approach. However, recent studies suggest Baron and Kenny is no longer the best approach as advancements in statistics are made (Hayes, 2009). The difficulties with the Baron and Kenny method were discussed and explained in the methodology chapter. The current recommended approach is to apply a bootstrapping technique to estimate (Hayes, 2009). Reasons for this are elaborated on in Chapter 4. The mediation effect (known as an indirect effect) is a product of two direct relationships, namely ab, where ‘a’ is the direct effect between the independent variable (i.e. FLM behavioural type) and the mediating variable (i.e. PSS or POS) and ‘b’ is the direct effect
between the dependent variable (i.e. OCB) and the mediating variable (PSS or POS). Hayes (2009:412) explains that “bootstrap generates an empirical representation of the sampling distribution of the indirect effect by treating the obtained sample of size, n, as a representation of the population in miniature, one that is repeatedly resampled during analysis as a means of mimicking the original sampling process”. By resampling from the original dataset (n=613), a new estimate of the direct effects $a$ and $b$, and consequently $ab$, is calculated. The process is repeated $k=1000$ times in the current study (Hayes, 2009). To process 1000 tests, a macro in Minitab is developed specifically by this study (See Appendix…). It should be noted that previous macros have been written and made available for SPSS and SAS (Hayes, 2009). The macro enabled the efficient compilation of 1000 data points for each effect based on the recommended percentile bootstrapping technique outlined by Hayes, 2009 (See Appendix 7). Results are presented in Table 7.4.1 below. The table outlines the 95% CI for the indirect effect and an estimate of the average size of the indirect effect. Each of these are now discussed in relation to the research model and hypotheses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mediation Path Model</th>
<th>Estimated $ab$ indirect effect</th>
<th>95% CI Lower Boundary</th>
<th>95% CI Upper Boundary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Estimate of Mean</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FLM Policy Enactment Behaviour</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment-based Enactment-POS-OCB</td>
<td>0.0276</td>
<td>0.00301</td>
<td>0.05438</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involvement-based Enactment-POS-OCB</td>
<td>0.0308</td>
<td>0.00982</td>
<td>0.05543</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment-based Enactment-PSS-OCB</td>
<td>0.0406</td>
<td>0.01935</td>
<td>0.06668</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involvement-based Enactment-PSS-OCB</td>
<td>0.0552</td>
<td>0.03241</td>
<td>0.07996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FLM Leadership Behaviour</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FLM Leadership Behaviour - POS - OCB</td>
<td>0.1109</td>
<td>0.07079</td>
<td>0.15298</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FLM Leadership Behaviour - PSS - OCB</td>
<td>0.1359</td>
<td>0.08411</td>
<td>0.19002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FLM Agency Behaviour</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authority Behaviour- POS - OCB</td>
<td>-0.0382</td>
<td>-0.06333</td>
<td>-0.01601</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy - POS- OCB</td>
<td>-0.0106</td>
<td>-0.02200</td>
<td>-0.00254</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authority Behaviour- PSS - OCB</td>
<td>-0.0367</td>
<td>-0.05780</td>
<td>-0.01845</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy - PSS- OCB</td>
<td>-0.0811</td>
<td>-0.12063</td>
<td>-0.04541</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FLM Coaching Behaviour</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee-voice Coaching-POS-OCB</td>
<td>0.1161</td>
<td>0.07659</td>
<td>0.16219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managerial-focus Coaching-PSS-OCB</td>
<td>0.0600</td>
<td>0.03087</td>
<td>0.09344</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee-voice Coaching-PSS-OCB</td>
<td>0.1216</td>
<td>0.07765</td>
<td>0.16710</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7.4.1: Mediation (Indirect) Effect using Percentile Bootstrapping Technique

*Mediation Analysis for FLM Policy Enactment H1a (i) – H1a (ii)*

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Mediation analysis for FLM Policy Enactment reveals support for H1a (i) and H1a (ii). The study finds that both POS and PSS mediate the relationship between FLM Policy Enactment Behavioural Type and OCB. Specifically, for POS, the bootstrapping methodology suggests the indirect effect is within **0.003 and 0.054** 95% CI bounds for **Commitment-based enactment**, and **0.009 and 0.055** for **Involvement-based enactment**. The result may be interpreted as the likelihood of no mediation effect is very low and so it is possible to reject the null hypothesis that the true effect is zero (Hayes, 2009). Similarly, zero is outside of the 95% CI bounds for PSS for both **Commitment-based enactment (0.019, 0.066)** and **Involvement-based enactment (0.032, 0.079)**. Explanation as to why PSS and POS serve as a mediator for FLM Policy Enactment and OCB emerges in the qualitative studies.

One employee describes how the recognition and communication policy enactment offer motivational support by way of feeling appreciated.

“*Yes it’s about motivation really... and unless you are communicating with your people you are not going to (motivate them)... If it is done well, it is nice to get the feeling of appreciation. It is nice to have a bit of motivation...*”

Another employee captures the underlying tension related to policy enactment in the employment relationship:

“*... you do expect certain leeway in certain situations. If you have six good workers working as a team together and they hit target maybe an hour earlier, they might say to us go out there and have a cup of tea. People will respect that later on again. If you don’t show any leeway you won’t get it and that’s where you have your future issues*”.
In response to a question about discretionary effort on behalf of the employee, one focus group participant explained that greater effort comes from how their FLM makes them feel. They identify that if they feel “there is value” in what they are doing, where the relationship exists to be “recognised and encouraged” and the opportunity for job enrichment through participating “in additional projects”, then they feel supported. They specifically attribute this support to the FLM, namely PSS.

“I was involved in steering committees and focus groups before... I don’t think I would have been involved if it wasn’t for my supervisor”

One interpretation from this example is that the extent to which an employee feels supported in terms of personal value, recognition, encouragement and development affects their attitudes and behaviours at work. A FLM similarly explains why PSS may mediate the relationship between Policy Enactment Behavioural Type and employee outcomes, explaining that referring employees with ‘an issue’ with the HR department might be perceived as FLM support:

(An employee might) “tell you about something “I’ve an issue” you try and get them the support, maybe see the nurse or somebody to talk to in HR or it might be just a child-minding thing or they are just not happy at the moment. You try and support them as much as you can and you find that if you help them out they won’t forget it, they will help you out again in the future”.

Mediation Analysis for FLM Agency Type Behaviours H2a (i) – H2a (iii)

Although H2a is not directly supported in the study (see previous chapter), it may be true that there is an indirect relationship between OCB and FLM Agency behavioural types (Hayes, 2009). Previous methods required a significant direct effect to confirm mediation (Baron and Kenny, 1998), however this is no longer considered necessary. Contemporary statistical opinion argues that the presence of a significant direct effect between the independent variable and the dependent variable is no longer considered a pre-requisite. Responding the precise query regarding the presence of a mediation effect, without a direct effect, Hayes (2016) claims:
“This is not only possible, but it is probably much more common than people realize. Modern thinking about mediation analysis does not impose the requirement that there be evidence of a simple association between X and Y in order to estimate and test hypotheses about indirect effects.”

As per table above (Table 7.4.1), the estimated 95% CI for **FLM Agency behaviour** does not include zero. For **POS** the estimated true effect is negative, between -0.063 and -0.016. This occurs because the sign for the ‘a’ direct effect, i.e. the relationship between agency behaviour and POS is negative. Employees who report higher perceived FLM agency behaviour tend to report lower POS scores. The negative sign in ‘b’ is carried into the mediation effect in the product of ab. The sign does not change the mediation analysis. For **PSS** the 95% confidence boundaries are -0.057 and -0.018. Therefore, H2a (i) and H2a (ii) are supported. The result indicates support for an indirect effect of both PSS and POS on the relationship between FLM agency behaviour and OCB.

An example of why FLM agency behaviour may be negatively related to OCB, emerges in a focus group. One employee highlights that they feel motivation comes from their peers rather than the FLM.

“I don’t think it’s the front line manager I think it’s the people around you and the lead more so than the front line manager. I don’t know how the rest of you feel. The front line manager would not motivate me to do extra pieces”.

A different perspective emerged in one FLM interview, whereby a perception of support from employees for “a supervisor” or towards the FLM role is outlined.
“Other people would want to do what they can for you as a supervisor they would not like to see you short” FLM114

Mediation Analysis for FLM Leadership behavioural types H3a (i) – H3a (iii)
FLM Leadership behavioural type is concerned with the perception employees have in relation to the general people management approach of the FLM. Testing of H3a revealed support for a direct effect between FLM Leadership behavioural type and OCB in Chapter 6. Following the application of the bootstrapping technique to test for a mediating role of POS and PSS in that relationship, H3a (i) and H3a (ii) are also supported. Specifically, the percentile bootstrap technique demonstrated a 95% CI lower and upper bound of 0.070, 0.152 for POS, and 0.084, 0.190 for PSS. In other words, the null hypotheses that there is no mediation effect can be rejected.

One employee in focus group discussion relating to OCB articulates why they perceive the FLM Leadership behavioural type to affect employee outcomes. The employee relates FLM behavioural type to the working environment.

“The behaviour oozes off the FLM and creates that environment and everyone rows in with that”

Another employee highlights their expectation of FLM Leadership behavioural type in terms of respect and role fulfilment. The mediating effect of reciprocation and support emerges as they suggest that feelings of respect and role fulfilment are observed through reciprocation, outlining FLMs ‘have to do their part too’.

“It’s about mutual respect. They know their role and we know our role and we’ll do our part it in but they have to do their part too”
Mediation Analysis for FLM Coaching behavioural type H4a (i) – H4a (ii)

FLM Coaching behavioural type loaded on two factors (See Chapter 5), namely managerial-focus coaching and employee-voice coaching. Both factors are included in the mediation analysis. Findings reveal support for H4a (i) and H4a (ii), demonstrating that no mediation effect for POS and PSS is unlikely, as zero lies outside the 95% CI. The mediation effect for POS is estimated at 0.076, 0.162 bounds for 95% CI. Two PSS 95% CI bounds are calculated at 0.030, 0.093 for managerial-focus coaching and 0.077, 0.167 for employee-voice coaching.

Qualitative evidence explains why employees may perceive FLM Coaching behavioural type as a source of POS / PSS. The employee describes feeling “lucky” to have FLMs who “love your input”,

And some supervisors (FLMs) are very involved and are very positive and they love your input. Do you know? At the minute we are quite lucky.

In addition, during response to questions regarding PSS, one employee explained why they perceive the FLM coaching behaviours and associated support, to impact employee outcomes.

“If you’re working around people with that behaviour, you’re willing and you are happy in the workplace. You are striving for the best for that person, you feel like you’re helping so I’m helping... if the supervisor is not (helping) then you pull away more... and the company isn’t getting the benefit.”

An important observation regarding this quote is the notion of mutual support, or the reciprocation of effort, if “you’re helping, so I’m helping”. Also, the imagery of the
alternative being the employee will “pull away more”, suggests a potential employee outcome of moving in the opposite direction of “helping”.

7.5 Exploratory Reciprocity Items: Perceived State of Indebtedness

Survey items including the words “owe” and “payback” are included in the study to explore the opportunity of a scale relating to reciprocity. The scale for the perceived state of indebtedness failed to meet the internal validity and eigenvalues required for the study, as outlined in Chapter 5. Therefore, quantitative testing is not performed. Qualitative feedback offers some understanding as to why the scale did not meet expectation, while also providing some evidence of a phenomenon worthy of further investigation. The following section of dialogue provides a window into the state of indebtedness experienced by employees. The employee starts by highlighting the expectation that in response to a FLM request for “whatever” additional effort, employees “try” to meet the request.

“I think though it is your supervisor (FLM) - if they ask you today to do “whatever” we’re going to try and get your “whatever” done. “

Narrowing the example to a request for additional units, the employee expands to explain that the reason for the additional effort is out of “respect”

“If they wanted an extra five or ten pieces (units of output from a production line) you will try to get it through to accommodate your supervisor (FLM) out of respect”.

Particularly relevant to the norm of reciprocity, the employee explains the nature of the ‘respect’ is a mutual one. There is an inherent belief, trust or assumption that the effort will be repaid in some way in the future.

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“It’s mutual respect. You’ll probably get it back in another way again”

Interestingly, the employee does not consider this to be a feeling of indebtedness or owing.

“I would still never feel like we owe them”

This finding explains perhaps why the scale did not meet the internal validity necessary for the study. The words of indebtedness and owing are not associated with the reciprocal relationship that the study seeks to understand. Further understanding of the conscious dynamics of a reciprocal relationship may be required for scale development.

7.6 Zone of Reciprocity Summary

The study finds evidence that both POS and PSS are mediating variables in the relationship between FLM behavioural type and employee outcomes, OCB. Figures 7.6.1, 7.6.2, 7.6.3, and 7.6.4 below summarise the effect sizes per hypotheses (See Table 7.4.1. above for more details). Where multiple factors are included in the analysis (e.g. authority and autonomy agency behaviours), only the strongest effect is included in each figure. In the case of the relationship between both FLM Policy Enactment Behavioural Type (H1a) and OCB, as well as FLM Agency Behaviour (H2a) and OCB, the size of the indirect effects are relatively small for POS (second and third decimal places), when compared to PSS (first and second decimal places).
Employees’ perception of organisational support has a very small impact on the relationship between these FLM behavioural type and employee discretionary effort. It appears that the mediating impact of PSS is larger. Perceptions of supervisory support have a larger mediating impact on the relationship between FLM policy enactment behaviours and employee OCB, as well as FLM agency behaviours and OCB.
Figure 7.6.2: H2a (i) and H2a (ii) Mediation Effect Size Estimates

Investigating the mediation effects relating to OCB, as related to FLM Leadership behavioural type and FLM coaching behaviour, the findings are comparable for both PSS and POS. In the case of FLM Leadership behaviour, perceptions of organisational support have a similar size effect as perceptions of supervisory support, albeit with the 95% CI boundary of PSS being slightly larger (Figure 7.6.3). FLM Coaching behavioural type relationships to OCB are mediated with similar size effect by both POS and PSS. In other words, perceptions of organisational support and supervisory support are of similar quantitative importance in understanding and influencing the relationship between FLM coaching behaviours and OCB.
Of all four FLM behavioural type tested, the mediating impact of PSS is highest in the relationship between FLM Leadership behavioural type and OCB (Figure 7.6.3). However, it is the relationship between FLM Coaching behavioural type and OCB that reveals the largest mediating effect of POS (Figure 7.6.4). The study finds that POS and PSS are important as distinct factors in understanding and influencing relationships between FLM behavioural type and OCB.
7.7 Conclusion

Chapter 7 presents the study findings in relation to factors associated with SET (Blau, 1964) and organisational support theory (Eisenberger et al, 2002). Relationships between relevant factors in the study, along with qualitative evidence are presented to advance the research question. Specific hypothesis testing is conducted using advanced mediation testing techniques (Hayes, 2009) and regression analysis. A summary of findings in relation to the research model are presented below (See Table 7.7.1 for summary). The analysis finds support for the constructs POS and PSS as mediating variables. Quantitatively, the chapter reveals possible mechanisms of relationships by means of organisational support theory. This, combined with qualitative discoveries, provides new understanding for discussion on why the FLM impacts the relationship between HRM and employee attitudes and behaviours. The discussion progresses in Chapter 9. However, firstly, the next chapter seeks to further the understanding of the FLM construct by way of a deep dive on FLMs included in the study.
### Table 7.7.1: Summary of Mediation Hypotheses and Results (H1a(i)-H4a(ii))

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis</th>
<th>Relationship between FLM Behaviour and OCB is mediated by POS (i)</th>
<th>Relationship between FLM Behaviour and OCB is mediated by PSS (ii)</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H1a Policy Enactment</td>
<td>Supported</td>
<td>Supported</td>
<td>After controlling Biographical factors. (Involvement-based Enactment and Commitment-based Enactment only)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H2a Agency</td>
<td>Supported</td>
<td>Supported</td>
<td>After controlling for Biographical factors (Both Authority and Autonomy Behaviours).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3a Leadership</td>
<td>Supported</td>
<td>Supported</td>
<td>After controlling for Biographical factors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H4a Coaching</td>
<td>Supported</td>
<td>Supported</td>
<td>After controlling for POS/PSS and Biographical factors. (For POS, Employee-based Coaching only. For PSS both.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
EXPLORATORY FINDINGS: WHO IS THE FLM?

8.1 Introduction

The focus of Chapter 8 is to introduce an exploratory composite model analysis (Chan, 1998), aggregating individual employee responses into groups. The groups are defined by the FLM name documented on the survey, by the respondent employee. The aggregation is based on collective responses for FLM behavioural type within a single FLM group. In other words, the employees who work for the same FLM will have their responses analysed together as one group. In parallel, qualitative analysis is drawn from interviews conducted with a sample of FLMs. Adopting a novel approach, employee quantitative results, pertaining to a single FLM, are paired with the corresponding FLM experiential accounts to inform a deeper understanding of the FLM role. The chapter seeks to advance the FLM construct through an investigational review of perceived individual FLM behavioural type, accompanied by qualitative evidence into their daily role and behaviours. Prior to individual FLM analysis, a macro level perspective is first explored. The focus of exploration at the macro level is to understand if differences can be detected between different FLMs in the study.

8.2 Exploring the FLM Group Level relationships

The group level perspective emerged within the pilot study as a finding worthy of further investigation. During the pilot study, a pattern of differences in employee responses across FLM groups was detected. The study responded by enabling the aggregation of FLM group level data by adding an identifier factor to the survey. Multi-level sophistication is highlighted by Guest (2011) as the most recent phase of HRM theoretical development, accredited to early
introductions by Ostroff and Bowen (2000). The two-levels of interest to the current study are individual employee and FLM group. The identifier provides the name of the FLM that the employee would have referenced during completion of the survey. It should be noted that on data entry, all names were coded to FLM numbers to protect identities. A separate file contains the coded name and number. The exploratory analysis combines employee responses by FLM number in order to provide a higher level construct namely FLM Group. Any FLM groups with less than five respondent employees were removed from analysis to ensure a minimum variability. Chan (1998) describes various approaches to multi-level models, claiming that the direct consensus composition is probably the most popular. The study follows Chan’s (1998) recommended approach to developing the FLM Group as a direct consensus composite model. Firstly, the original ‘lower-level’ employee responses and the new ‘higher-level’ FLM group construct are defined and added to the research model (Figure 8.2.1).

Figure 8.2.1: Summary Research Model: Multi-Level Exploratory

To measure the significance of within-group consensus, ANOVA tests are run to detect differences in the mean and variance of employee attitudes and behaviours by FLM Group.
Residuals (statistical information regarding the fit of the data) are examined to ensure the assumptions for the ANOVA test are acceptable prior to a review of results. Table 8.2.1 presents the results. There are two figures of importance in the ANOVA results. Firstly, a p-value of <0.05 is required to reject the null hypotheses of equal variances across FLM groups. Secondly, the R-squared adjusted figure provides a percentage of the variation in the dependent variable (outcome factors) explained by FLM group, where 1.0 equates to 100% of the variation being explained. For information purposes, two further data points are referenced in Table 8.2.1, namely the minimum and maximum FLM group mean value for each factor. The range of mean value provides a practical relevance to any difference detected.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FLM Group</th>
<th>Max. Mean Value</th>
<th>Min. Mean Value</th>
<th>Rsq Adjusted</th>
<th>P-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PSS</td>
<td>4.46</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>0.244</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POS</td>
<td>4.21</td>
<td>2.92</td>
<td>0.069</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turnover Intention</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OCB</td>
<td>4.45</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>0.0368</td>
<td>0.031</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-rated Performance</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.161</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8.2.1: ANOVA Test for equal variances between FLM groups

As outlined in Table 8.2.1 above, a p-value of below 0.05 is recorded for three factors, namely PSS (p-value = 0.000), POS (p-value= 0.001) and OCB (p-value=0.031). Therefore, it is concluded that FLM group level is found to significantly explain differences in PSS, POS and OCB results. **Self-rated performance** is not found to be significantly different by FLM group (p-value = 0.161). No data is provided for Commitment and Turnover Intention as neither model met the assumptions required for the test. One explanation of a failure to meet assumptions may be related to other influencing variables (e.g. control variables) that are difficult to isolate in the ANOVA test. Of the results presented, the values for PSS are of particular note. Almost 25% of the variation in PSS (Adjusted R-squared = 0.244) is explained by differences in FLM group, with a range of individual FLM group mean values of 2.75 – 4.46. In other words, the mean and variance of PSS score changes from one FLM group
to another. Practically, it can be said that employees who experienced the lowest scoring FLM, held on average a neutral, if even slightly negative, perspective regarding FLM support. While employees who experienced the highest scoring FLM revealed, on average, that they felt supported by their FLM, with moderate to strong agreement. Likewise, similar conclusions can be drawn for both POS and OCB, albeit with a smaller overall impact of the FLM role (i.e. the adjusted R-squared for POS is 0.06 and OCB is 0.03). The range of between-group variation observed for OCB is smallest, with the lowest scoring FLM average reporting neutral OCB ($\mu=3.28$) and the maximum being moderate to strong agreement with OCB items ($\mu=4.45$). Critically, the study finds evidence that who the FLM is can, at least partially, determine whether an employee has a negative or positive perception of support, as well as affecting the extent of OCB. The next section delves into four sample FLM groups for further understanding as to what differences may exist between FLMs, and what we can learn about individual FLM behavioural type.

### 8.3 Who is the FLM, and what are their experiences of the role?

Previous chapters have focused on the FLM construct in terms of broad employee perceptions of FLM behavioural type and their relationship to perceived outcomes. The quantitative analysis and findings revealed patterns and trends regarding FLM behavioural type that were conceptually and operationally independent of the specific individual FLM involved. Chapter 8 views the same empirical data from a different plain. Taking the perspective of an individual FLM, the data is observed in terms of the workgroup responses reported regarding one single FLM, as well as the interview data from that particular FLM. It is envisaged that deeper understanding regarding the FLM role may emerge by observing the paired data sets of the FLM and respective employees. To that end, the chapter advances the fourth research objective, specifically; to discover insights regarding the influence of perceived FLM behavioural type on the relationship between HPWS and employee attitudes and behaviours. The following section presents individualised FLM findings regarding employee survey responses and interview feedback. However, firstly, an aggregate picture of the FLMs is presented.

Figure 8.3.1 below reveals the mean score for each of the four interviewed FLMs as rated by their respective employees. Each row represents a factor included in the study. The scale is
EXPLORATORY INSIGHT: WHO IS THE FLM?

represented by boundaries of 1 and 5. Each FLM mean score is plotted on the scale with a circle that is labelled with the FLM Work-group identifier or number. Where clusters exist, (a group of circles near each other on the scale), the pattern may be interpreted that the employee experience of the factor is not largely affected by their FLM. Likewise, space between the FLM work-group scores may suggest that employees attitude, perception and behaviours are affected by which FLM work-group they belong.

Figure 8.3.1 Mean employee responses by FLM Work-group for the sample of interviewed FLMs.
Observing the data from the perspective of FLM114

FLM 114 is an Irish male with 12 years tenure at Medco. Based on eveningshift, he completed a third level certificate qualification, many years ago, in the field of engineering. Each day, FLM114 arrives before the employees to ensure he is prepared.

“I like to be in before everyone else to get a feel of what is going on so when people come in I am prepared”.

He describes the area that he works as different to some manufacturing lines due to the nature of the work, explaining:

“there would be a lot of movement where people are trained across a lot of different worksteps - so for that reason there would be a lot of conversations on the issues they are experiencing”.

Describing himself as “very hands on”, he is results driven. He explains that he is “very dedicated to meeting targets at the end of the shift”. He is cognisant of the employee as an individual person; outlining his conversations may include “sussing out how they (the employees) are and how their mood is”. He describes looking for cues that might indicate employees are “getting fed up of it and maybe you need to get them cross-trained in another area”. Spending the day motivating staff to learn new skills, do overtime, move worksteps, complete the production units required, FLM114 describes a disappointment when the effort is not enough,

“at the end of the day I would be disappointed and frustrated when I don’t meet the targets”.

He sums up those days in his experience of the FLM role as “you try and do your best”.

The employees in his workgroup reported the following perception of his FLM behavioural type:
Table 8.3.1: FLM114 Mean Score for each Factor

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FACTOR</th>
<th>MEAN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commitment-based Enactment</td>
<td>1.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control-based Enactment</td>
<td>1.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involvement-based Enactment</td>
<td>2.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FLM Leadership Behaviour</td>
<td>3.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managerial-Focus Coaching</td>
<td>3.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee-Voice Coaching</td>
<td>3.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FLM Agency Behaviour</td>
<td>2.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSS</td>
<td>3.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POS</td>
<td>3.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>4.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OCB</td>
<td>3.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turnover Intention</td>
<td>1.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-rated Comparative Performance</td>
<td>3.82</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As can be seen from Table 8.3.1 above, the mean score for the perceived behaviours of FLM114 vary between factors. Based on the average score of 19 employee respondents, FLM Leadership behavioural type is easily identified as the highest scoring FLM behaviour ($\mu=3.88$). This is followed in descending order by Coaching, Agency and Policy Enactment. As a moderate to strong leader and coach, FLM114 sees strong commitment scores ($\mu=4.35$), and moderate self-rated performance ($\mu=3.82$), OCB ($\mu=3.80$) and turnover intention ($\mu=1.61$) scores among employees.

Extracts from FLM114 that help elaborate on the FLM Behavioural Typology

The following extract from the interview with FLM114 revealed that there can be challenges in following HR policy as an FLM. In addition, the statement reveals a question of procedural fairness that an FLM might receive in terms of employee treatment versus other employees.
“Everyone (FLMs) might have a different way of applying them (policies). For example, someone might come and say ‘how come that person down there can get the day off, and I can’t get the day off? There is a general policy there on absence, and you are supposed to follow that procedure. There are kind of guidelines there – you can’t follow them to the letter all of the time”

Despite challenges of policy implementation, the agency factor emerges as the FLM reveals that he may be perceived by employees as representing the organisation in terms of implementing policy. The statement reveals the contrasting role of the FLM as being seen to “implement policy” and yet having difficulty in following them “to the letter of the law”

“I suppose they see me as one that has to implement the company policies. I always say to people this is a medical device company. This is a quality issue - we cannot take shortcuts with quality... we have to follow the procedure”.

In terms of the FLM approach to his daily work, and the place where he brings policy to life (Purcell et al, 2003), the following extract outlines how the FLM perceives his general leadership behaviour to be. He highlights his preference is having a presence at the point of production.

“I would be on the line with the people all the time. I like to see where the problems are, trying to see where there might be potential areas for downtime or anything like that. Probably doing some firefighting as well at times. I don’t like going away to meetings and stuff like that. I just like to be there the whole time.”

While not using the term specifically, FLM114 reveals the individual support he perceives as part of his role. The tone of the topic during the interview was positive towards employees, which may be interpreted as coaching behaviours in terms of personal support and development. However, likewise, the topic may be reveals the problem of managerial motivation with the focus on ‘showing empathy’ as a means of generating perceived support for motivational purposes.
“... show them a bit of empathy at the time or just (to say) I see where you are coming from and I will do as much as I can for you. Now sometimes you’ll say I can’t guarantee this is going to happen... but don’t be worrying about it for the moment. It might not be as bad as you think”.

Observing the data from the perspective of FLM107
FLM 107 is an Irish male who works on dayshift. He is currently pursuing third level education and has 16 years tenure with Medco. FLM 107 describes his daily approach as “open” and “approachable”. He describes feeling that most people who work with him will develop a trusting relationship with him. He references his working area as a special manufacturing system where there are specific programmes to facilitate employee involvement. In his daily work, he describes attending “problem solving sessions” with employees. He describes his role at these meetings to

“back off to let them (front line employees) to do the work, to come up with their own problems and their own fixes and to be simply there to provide guidance”.

He articulates that it is not possible to be there for every meeting. He describes the role of providing guidance as “coaching”. Highlighting the challenge of this approach, he says:

“that when you explain it (coaching) to someone, it can seem quite easy - but then it can be quite daunting when you are doing it (coaching) for the first few times”

In addition to coaching, he also articulates an employee response role in his daily work.

“I have also offered support in terms of some people have come to me with personal issues and stuff like that. There is an EAP (Employee Assistance Programme) service in Medco that you would always offer up to people”.

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Employees in his workgroup report his behaviours as outlined in Table 8.3.2 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commitment-based Enactment</td>
<td>2.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control-based Enactment</td>
<td>1.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involvement-based Enactment</td>
<td>3.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FLM Leadership Behaviour</td>
<td>4.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managerial-Focus Coaching</td>
<td>4.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee-Voice Coaching</td>
<td>4.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FLM Agency Behaviour</td>
<td>2.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSS</td>
<td>4.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POS</td>
<td>4.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>4.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OCB</td>
<td>3.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turnover Intention</td>
<td>1.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-rated Comparative Performance</td>
<td>3.20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8.3.2: FLM107 Mean Score for each Factor

As can be seen from Table 8.3.2 above, the mean scores of FLM107 have some differences for behavioural factors. Based on the average score of 20 employee respondents, FLM Leadership behavioural type is narrowly identified as the highest scoring FLM behaviour ($\mu=4.55$). This is closely followed by coaching scores of $4.28$ and $4.01$, for managerial-focus and employee-voice coaching respectively. Agency and Policy Enactment behaviours are not as prominent, according to aggregate employee responses. As a strong leader and strong coach, FLM107 sees very strong commitment scores ($\mu=4.57$), and moderate self-rated performance ($\mu=3.2$), OCB ($\mu=3.87$) and turnover intention ($\mu=1.54$) scores among employees.

*Extracts from FLM107 that help elaborate on the FLM Behavioural Typology*

FLM 107 recalls a specific policy change in which the FLM role was engaged to communicate the change. In this case, the FLM was not involved in the policy decision, but was involved in the enactment of the change for employees. The insight provided here is the FLM perception that the line manager can relay the information in a more positive and credible way than HR. It
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also highlights that there is no expectation that employees would have seen or known the HR personnel.

“... I would be good at is relaying information in a positive kind of way, explaining the situation as to why it might be happening trying to give the background as to why it might be happening. And also because of... trusting me, they (employees) believe what I am saying is the real reason why these changes are coming in. They would probably believe me quicker than someone from HR who they may not know or have not seen them before.'

FLM 107 articulates the challenge of perceived authority without the information rights expected with it. He references a challenge in relation to changes in production targets, and highlights the need to have other functional expertise and personnel present at meetings to articulate that need to employees. As an agent of the organisation, the FLM identifies the need for greater communication to combat what he experienced as being “drip fed information” in the contrasting employee role.

“When I was an operator (front line employee) I used to go to meetings with our supervisor (FLM), you felt like you were only being drip fed information that somebody wanted you to have...

... (Now as FLM, I have) started bringing planning people (Supply Chain personnel) to our meetings to let people know what was going on in the field. I wouldn’t know exactly what was going on in the field so let somebody, in the know, explain to them exactly what is happening in this market... It is a very believable story then rather than me just saying I want twenty more pieces (production units) next week”

FLM 107 claims a relationship between the longer term effects of Leadership behavioural type and employee discretionary effort. He articulates that employees “will give that bit extra” when they are engaged in what they are doing and why they are doing it.
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“You can go down to a happy workforce. If I go down beating a big stick there is only so much effort that person is going to give. Yes you will get a reaction from that stick but that stick will have to come out tomorrow and the next day and every time that you are not there. But if you can get the person engaged into what they are doing and why they are doing it and what the benefits are for them. Not just for me and not just for Medco, for job sustainability or whatever the bigger picture is. People know that kind of stuff chances are they will give that bit extra”.

FLM 107 articulates why he likes to spend time working with employees on problem solving to develop their capability where he perceives benefits for: the employees’ value at Medco; Medco’s quality results; and, his own reputation as the FLM responsible for quality. This statement is underpinned by a capitalist assumption of ‘greater good’ in company performance, which may not be always considered beneficial to human kind, according to alternative paradigms.

‘It’s for the benefit of myself, the company, the person involved. If you look at the operator’s (employee’s) point of view they are going to learn a skillset which is valuable to them in their time with Medco, for the company itself we are going to get the benefit also. The company is going to get the benefit of that persons learning and of whatever improvements of the group. And as a supervisor of a group then whatever improvements are being made, whether it be reload (Scrap) rates, complaints (Quality) or whatever it might be, it’s a good reflection on me”.

The qualitative data reveals that ‘Who the FLM is’ contains contradictions and complex nuances that are evident in underlying assumptions, exercise of positional power and the difficult separation of truly caring and supporting employee welfare from purely motivational aspects associated with perceived support.

Observing the data from the perspective of FLM108

FLM 108 is a female FLM who works on dayshift. She completed third level education and has many years experience at Medco. FLM 108 focuses on having a presence in the work area, outlining “I am present, I am visible.” She values being visible, as she considers her role to be “a point of contact for a lot of things, for a lot of people”.

FLM108 has some strong views
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regarding the devolution of HRM to the line, and observes a lack of HR physical presence with employees. Priding herself on getting people the information that they need, she finds the automated HR helpdesk to be a daily barrier to that. Giving an example of a response to an employee request for learning and development support, she outlines that the employee felt it “was no good to him”, explaining that:

“after putting them onto the HR site (website) or the learning and development site (website), he (the employee) said that was no good to him, he needed someone to sit down with and speak to”.

In addition to HR queries, FLM107 outlines other parts to her daily role in responding to quality problems, managing time and attendance, supporting employee continuous improvement in Medco’s problem solving sessions, and enforcing procedures. She highlights challenges of people management regarding personality differences and the management of “older men with a chip on their shoulder”. However, she perceives that irrespective of differences, perceived fairness is important.

“You have to treat everyone the same. Would I choose to be friends with those people outside of work? No”.

Summing up the role of the FLM in her experience, she believes people recognise the structure of supervision, claiming

“we all have to conform to certain standards, rules and regulations. It is my job to enforce them, but they (employees) are paid to abide by them”.

Employees who work in her group report the following behaviours, as outlined in Table 8.3.3.
Table 8.3.3: FLM108 Mean Score for each Factor

In Table 8.3.3 above, the mean scores for FLM108 are presented. Based on the average score of 7 employee respondents, FLM Leadership behavioural type is identified as the highest scoring FLM behaviour ($\mu=4.89$). This is closely followed by involvement-based enactment and employee-voice coaching scores of 4.60 and 4.26, respectively. Agency behaviours are neutral on average, according to aggregate employee responses. As a strong leader and enactor of employee participation through both involvement policies and employee-voice coaching, FLM107 sees strong commitment scores ($\mu=4.14$), and moderate self-rated performance ($\mu=3.58$), OCB ($\mu=3.86$) and turnover intention ($\mu=1.52$) scores among employees.

Extracts from FLM107 that help elaborate on the FLM Behavioural Typology

FLM 108 provides insight into the challenges of HR devolution to the line, claiming that the replacement of HR personnel with technology is creating a “faceless HR”. This perspective reveals an interaction between HR department technological advancements and the FLM policy enactment type behaviours.
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“If somebody is looking for something got to do with maternity leave or something policy wise. The employees would feel that the HR website is not accessible, or they can’t go into HR (the HR department) anymore. It is, what would do they call it a “faceless HR website”.

The FLM data revealed frustration with the HR service and an inability to influence it. Once again, the dynamic of perceived position of influence without power to affect policy changes is central to understanding the FLM role. The expectation of organisational authority is highlighted by FLM108 as she describes everyone as adults who understand “the structure of supervision”. However, she also uncovers that FLMs demonstrate agency behaviour, in terms of representing the organisational identity and message regarding Medco’s overall business purpose:

“I just want everyone to know that what we (employees at Medco) are doing, ends up in someone (a patient who received a Medco implantable medical device)”.

Qualitative data from FLM108 uncovered some challenges in personalities and consequences of power imbalance in terms of disciplinary rights of the FLM. FLM 108 expects that on the whole employees perceive the FLM Leadership behavioural type in the same way, with the exception of those with whom she has had issues. She offers insight regarding the natural change in the relationship following, a disciplinary meeting, for example.

“On the whole... (employees) would perceive me the same way. Maybe the ones who I have had issues with probably (not)... because my relationship with them would be slightly different, because if I had to counsel someone (first stage disciplinary meeting in Medco policy) or they did not agree with what I had to say... they would see me as harder and that’s natural.”

What is interesting is that the tone and topic of the FLM 108 interview are not wholly aligned with the survey feedback. This uncovers the challenges of measuring social dynamic phenomena with a survey tool.

Observing the data from the perspective of FLM109

FLM 109 is an Irish male, below the age of 35, who was recently promoted to FLM from a direct line employee role. He has four years employment tenure with Medco and recently
completed a third level qualification. He describes three priorities in his daily work. Firstly, he sees one part of his FLM role is to make sure that employees “have everything they need to produce” units. Secondly, he sees a role to ensure he looks after the day-to-day wages, administration of clocking for accurate attendance records, and being there if any employees have problems. And finally, he portrays a communication role regarding employees’ understanding of the “way the business is going” and “keeping them involved” in that. In terms of devolution of HRM to the line, FLM109 perceives that he needs to

“have a general idea what (HR policy) is there and if someone came with a query about them, you need to know where to get them”.

In relation to policy enactment, he suggests a dislike for implementing policy from the point of view of employee discipline. He highlights that these one-to-one discussions occur “maybe more than I (FLM109) would like”. Perhaps his reluctance for implementing time and attendance policies, relates to his perspective regarding people and work.

“overall I would have a faith in people. Most people want to come in and want to get on with their days work. They don’t want any hassle in that regard of being late”.

He feels that “everyone who comes in here has a skillset outside of making the product”, and he sees an opportunity in understanding “how can we use that to better the company”. Employees who work in his group report the following behaviours, as outlined in Table 8.2.4.
Table 8.3.4: FLM109 Mean Score for each Factor

In Table 8.3.4 above, the mean scores for FLM109 outline variation across the behavioural factors. Based on the average score of 7 employee respondents, FLM Leadership behavioural type is identified as the highest scoring FLM behaviour ($\mu=4.44$). This is followed in descending order by Coaching, Policy Enactment and Agency behaviours. As a strong leader FLM109 sees strong commitment scores ($\mu=4.00$), and moderate self-rated performance ($\mu=3.60$), OCB ($\mu=3.63$) and turnover intention ($\mu=2.03$) scores among employees. As the FLM was recently promoted prior to the survey, it is interesting to observe the moderate PSS score versus qualitative description of a very supportive FLM intention. One explanation of this might be a time-lag in relationship building, to move from transactional exchanges to those of trust and support.

Extracts from FLM109 that help elaborate on the FLM Behavioural Typology

FLM109 provides data regarding the role of the union representative in the enactment of HRM, explaining:
“You look at union reps on the floor who would know them (HR policies) verbatim and are very aware of what they are and are not entitled to”.

The data reveals the other potential players affecting the reciprocal relationships between employees and organisational entities and agents. FLM109 highlights an area of organisational agency that is beyond authority and autonomy to a representation of the organisational ethos and identity.

“I think that if you... help them (employees) understand more what we (Medco employees) are trying to do here, is a bigger identity than one (production) cell or one workstep or a (production) line”

The FLM discretion relating to leadership approach is outlined by FLM109, in his description of choosing an approach towards employees, and expected consequences of that:

“... there are a number of ways you could go. You could down with a dictatorship - this is the way it is, this is the way it has to be. However, I think for the long term and for myself and the business, you need people to trust you. You need people to work with you as opposed to being against them”.

FLM109 gives an example of the personal development aspect of coaching, specifically the individual employee-voice being heard in terms of their “interests” and “skillsets” in the process. An example of a reciprocal exchange here may be observed by the employee offering special skills (in this case, CAD drawing) to the FLM. However, as the employee does not receive additional pay for such skills, this example could also be observed as a manifestation of a power imbalance leading to additional effort exerted by employees.
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“someone that has an interest... (there is) one (employee) who does CAD drawings, so if I am doing an A3 (a Medco improvement project) that requires you to design something, he will willingly do CAD drawings for me. He gets really engaged in that”

The above section provides examples and data from the FLM interviews that explore who the FLM is and how behaviours manifest in their role. The exploratory nature of the section enabled a synthesis of data and examples in the context of paradigms and theory outlined in the earlier literature review. This section contributes to knowledge of the FLM role by way of data and examples, as well as new methodological techniques in terms of the application of direct consensus composite modelling (Chan, 1998) to pair collective employee responses with individual FLM perspectives.

8.4 Summary

Four key findings emerge from Chapter 8 exploratory analysis, specifically:

1. There is a detectable difference in employee attitudes and behaviours between FLM groups;
2. There is variation in what FLMs perceive the role of the FLM to be, even in the context of a HPWS;
3. Devolution of HRM to the line raises questions regarding the role of the HR function, the role of the union representative and alignment of HR policies to the daily work of the FLM; and,
4. Organisational identity is a motivational and alignment mechanism utilised by FLMs that requires further exploration.

The findings are expanded on to provide rationale and implications for research. Firstly, and most importantly, the statistical tests detected a difference among FLM groups in terms of employee attitudes and behaviours. The sample size of FLMs included in the analysis was $n=38$, which provided the statistical tools with sufficient information to detect a difference.
However, when we extract four individual FLMs to review their scores, the difference is more difficult to detect, in terms of decimal place changes in scores. The study provides evidence that each individual FLM may impact the organisational outcomes differently, but recommends further development of constructs and measurement scales to have better resolution at individual level to understand the mechanisms involved. One option is to sample at the outliers or extremes (Lewin, 1990) whereby interviews would be held with the FLMs whom are furthest apart on factor scores. However, this is both logistically challenging, and at best a short-term workaround for a resolution gap, rather than a longer-term improvement in scales for other studies to build on.

A second key finding relates to the FLM working day. Each FLM, while ultimately their work might be similar, perceives what is important in their day very differently. It appears that there is ambiguity or variation in how an FLM should measure their success. Two of the four FLMs interviewed refer to the notion that they can choose between an authoritarian approach (for example “stick” and “dictatorship”) and a participative approach (for example “trust”, “engaged” and “bigger picture”). If this is the case, it would appear that FLMs are currently deemed successful on the outcome (for example, production targets achieved per FLM114 interview), rather than the means or approach. Variation in perceptions of what the role of the FLM should be represents an opportunity for organisations pursuing HPWS to improve HR policy enactment. A third key finding from the exploratory analysis is that the devolution of HRM to the line raises questions in terms of the role of the union representative, the presence or absence of the HR function and the role of HRM department in aligning policies with the needs of the FLM. Exploring the FLM group level impact of HRM devolution may be an avenue of further research.

Finally, the exploratory analysis revealed commentary by FLMs relating to organisational identity, and the importance of alignment with the organisational mission or vision, which is patient care and medical device quality in the case of Medco. The scales included in the FLM behavioural construct did not measure this aspect of the FLM behaviour specifically, but it may be an opportunity for further study.
8.5 Conclusion

During the research methodology development for the study, a pilot investigation revealed an opportunity to take a multi-level research approach to uncover the \textit{how} and \textit{why} of the FLM role, in the context of HPWS. In response, the study included a group identifier variable with an exploratory intent. Chapter 8 reveals the findings of this exploratory work, demonstrating that the signals detected in the pilot, are replicated in the main study, albeit with lesser resolution for stylistic differences among FLMs. In addition, the chapter explores both quantitatively and qualitatively the differences that may exist among FLMs. The exploratory analysis contributes significantly to the study, by both informing the research question and identifying further research opportunities.
CHAPTER 9

DISCUSSION

9.1 Introduction

Building on the findings in previous chapters, Chapter 9 presents a discussion to advance theory relating to the role of the FLM in the HRM-Performance link. To avoid a sequential discussion, and the regurgitation of hypotheses and findings, this chapter attempts to look laterally across the thesis to synthesise the key issues, debates and insights available in the study to both answer the research question and make for a distinctive contribution to knowledge. Informed by the literature review, the methodology, and the empirical findings, the discussion highlights perspectives, paradigms and questions that may advance theory in the field. The chapter argues that the FLM is critical to understanding the HR-Performance Link, presented as both the ‘master and victim’ of a HRM ideology. It contends that SET is a valuable conduit to build knowledge in the field, albeit with complimentary insight from other explanatory theories, specifically the sociological richness of labour process analysis and its attendant unpacking of contemporary capitalist modes of accumulation. In addition, the chapter critiques current approach to research in this area, highlighting some key limitations in current methodological approaches. Finally, it highlights potential implications for practice, perceiving the FLM as a critical agent who at times think they have power and authority, when their legitimacy is often misguided and peppered with grand illusions of being part of ‘management’, yet they are still ambiguous and often regarded as below management by their superiors. While the truth to such complexity probably depends on whom you ask in the organisational hierarchy, and when you ask them, the role of the FLM is nevertheless a key foci of organisational performance analysis, both positive and negative, depending on the nuances of certain behavioural styles and employee-supervisor dynamics.
As outlined at the beginning of the study, the research question (See Figure 9.1.1) is concerned with both the ‘how’ and ‘why’ of an FLM impact on the link between HPWS and employee attitudes and behaviours. Previous studies (Purcell and Hutchinson, 2007; Harney and Jordan, 2008; Vermeeren, 2014) provide indicative support for the FLM role as a contributory variable in the puzzle of the ‘black box of HRM’. However, to date there remains a dearth of literature and research on the antecedents, dynamics and nuances of such FLM roles.

**Primary Research Question:**

*How and why does the FLM role impact the link between HPWS and employee attitudes and behaviours?*

**Figure 9.1.1: Primary Research Question**

The gap in understanding the how and why of HPWS, prevents progress in understanding the contribution of HRM to business performance (Guest, 2011; Townsend et al, 2013). It also creates difficulty in resolving key debates in the field, such as examinations regarding ‘best practice’ or ‘best fit’ (Purcell, 1999) and ‘high commitment’ or ‘work intensification’ (Walton, 1985; Godard 2004). The study seeks to contribute to the area by advancing understanding of how the FLM role might affect HRM enactment in organisations, and secondly, by investigating why it occurs through the potential explanatory mechanisms of SET. Challenges to the advancement of the research question include ambiguity in the FLM construct (Hales, 2005; Vermeeren 2014), what FLMs might actually do, who they are, the theoretical grounding of the subject, and variations in the definition of HPWS (Guest, 2011), debate on the measures of performance, what discretionary effort means and its euphemism as form of surplus value extraction (Gerhart et al, 2000; Godard, 2014; Guest, 2011), along with the methodological debates saturating the field (Purcell, 1999; Marchington and Wilkinson, 2003; Wall and Wood, 2005; Paauwe, 2009). The following sections reveal the progress of this study towards the specific research question and objectives, commencing with a review of the ‘how’ question.

9.2 Contributing to ‘*how*’ FLMs may impact employee attitudes and behaviours in the context of HPWS
The study queries the ‘how’ of the FLM impact on HPWS by developing a behaviour-based FLM construct. Chapter 2 outlined some of the traditional difficulties with FLM construct definition, including variation in FLM organisational titles (Hales, 2005), organic evolution of role (Child and Partridge, 1982) versus intentional design of the HR system, and limited empirical research regarding the FLM (Purcell and Hutchinson, 2007; Vermeeren, 2014). The study proposed to overcome such difficulty by conceptualising the FLM in terms of the behaviours experienced and perceived by employees. The rationale for this includes the devolution of HRM to the line (Renwick, 2003), suggesting the ‘enactment’ of HRM policy manifests as FLM behaviour. Also, previous HPWS research concludes that employees derive improved business performance from improved commitment and discretionary effort (Purcell et al, 2003; Purcell and Hutchinson, 2007; Guest, 2011). Consequently, to understand how an FLM might impact performance, their roles must be considered from the employee perspective. In order to operationalise the construct, 4 behavioural types were devised: Policy Enactment Behavioural Type, Leadership Behavioural Type, Agency Behavioural Type, and finally Coaching Behavioural Type. The four behavioural types are somewhat simplified from within current literature on the people-performance link, although they do allow for greater analytical specificity. The empirical findings in Chapters 5 and 6 then provided evidence concerning how the FLM role may impact employee attitudes and behaviours (e.g. OCB, commitment, turnover intention, performance).

The empirical findings show that the FLM plays a key role in the HR-Performance link, specifically in how the FLM behavioural types directly and indirectly impact employee attitudes and behaviours, which in turn may influence performance outcomes. Building on the work of Dawson (1991), the findings reveal how the FLM role impacts performance outcomes as FLMs behave as both ‘masters’ and ‘victims’ of the HRM project as a distinct managerial philosophy and approach (which places a presumed premium on assuming all employee actions and efforts have to be measured as somehow performance enhancing for the organisation, often regardless or irrespective of the workers’ needs and wants). As ‘masters’ FLMs were found to influence the employees’ experience of this ideological HRM discourse, in both positive and negative
ways. Even more compelling, as ‘victims’ of a HRM ideology, FLMs encountered policies which also constrained employee effort at the point of production.

As ‘masters’ of the HRM policies, an FLM can choose to ‘direct his or her attention’ how they please (Truss, 2001). Evidence of this is apparent in the variation in frequency of HRM Policy Enactment discovered in the quantitative findings. Described more comprehensively in Chapters 5 and 6, the study found that within a single case-study organisation, employees experience the full range of frequency of some HRM policies, from daily to never. Thus the FLM, as an agent of the employer with certain degrees of (perceived positional) power and legitimacy, can impact policy enactment. In addition, this finding did not just apply within the case-study site, but also within the FLM group itself. This evidence builds on the findings of previous studies in the area (Purcell and Hutchinson, 2007; Vermeeren, 2014). For each FLM, employees reported different extremes of the policy enactment behavioural type. Employee evidence verified this finding, showing that FLMs had discretion in how they applied HRM polices at shop floor level. Importantly, some FLM interviewees explained that they applied policies differently, depending on the performance and circumstance of the individual. For example, one FLM quoted in Chapter 8 described the need for variation in response to personal circumstances:

“you cannot follow policy to the letter of the law... trying to be human” (FLM Interview)

The findings show that a degree of managerial prerogative for the delivery of HRM is enacted at the point of production. As ‘masters’ of HRM, the FLM was shown to impact employee outcomes through what might be termed as their application capability: that is to say, which policies they chose to enact, how they chose to enact them, whom they will apply the policies to, and how frequently the FLM apply the given policies. The key implication here is the extent to which such ‘application capability’ infers a degree of power and authority over employee behaviours and how far such actions are legitimised or resisted. Consistent with social exchange
theory, the HRM-performance link is not always inevitably performance-enhancing but rather shaped by uneven and complex agency reciprocity underlying workplace relationships.

Further, the shadow-side of the devolution of HRM is the extent to which the FLM is a willing participant in these responsibilities, or is actually a ‘victim’ of a broader ideological discourse to which they, as local supervisors, have no actual direction. The variation in FLM policy enactment may also be interpreted as an uncertainty within what are dynamic social interactions, especially surrounding the finer nuances in how and when FLMs apply HRM policies. A corollary, therefore, is that the FLM can become a ‘victim’ of HR ideology seeking corporate performance gains that has been designed at a higher organisational level from its actual enactment. From this it can be poised that a HPWS model may reflect a functional abdication of enactment responsibility and, as the likes of Guest (2001, 2011) and Mckay and Boxall (2014) have cautioned, espousing HR as always performance-enhancing unearths a biased unitarist ontology. That is to say, the HRM department abstains from how policies are actually brought to life at the level that matters most: the shop floor and office interface. Furthermore, where variation occurs, this is not evidently as a result of a ‘master’ decision, but rather FLM enactment options are constrained with limited discretion (authority) about how to implement policies, with little or no guidance. Evidence of this emerged in qualitative data (Chapters 6 and 7), including commentary such as “the faceless HR department”. As one FLM commented:

“our hr policies?... I would struggle to give an example of how I would use them on a daily basis, apart from knowing they are there” (FLM Interview)

In addition, evidence emerged of helplessness, or little recourse to the HRM department, when faced with challenging employee situations:

“If a person wasn’t getting on with you, you might say do you want to move?” (FLM Interview)
The ‘master’ and ‘victim’ dichotomy emerges with some mechanisms of how the FLM behaviour affects employees’ perception of the HRM policies (Figure 9.2.1). However, this is only relevant to the research question to the extent that the perception impacts employee outcomes. Previous literature contends that the FLM role in the implementation of HRM practices could affect employee outcomes (Purcell and Hutchinson, 2007; Nishi and Wright, 2008; Harney and Jordan, 2008).

**Figure 9.2.1: Dichotomy of the FLM Role in HPWS**

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To that end, progress is further validated in the current study by the pattern of association discovered between perceived policy enactment and employee attitudes and behaviours. Both correlation analysis and regression analysis found support for a significant association between FLM policy enactment behavioural type and employee outcomes. Hypotheses 1a-1d specifically tested for a significant direct relationship between Policy Enactment Behavioural types (H1) and OCB (a), commitment (b), turnover intention (c) and self-rated performance (d). In the first three hypotheses, the relationship is found to be significant and positive in regression analysis. Factor analysis identified three distinct patterns of policy enactment, which on review of the items and theory, were labeled ‘commitment-based enactment’, ‘involvement-based enactment’ and ‘control-based enactment’. The latter included the more traditional policies around time keeping, attendance and discipline. Surprisingly, correlation analysis revealed increased frequency of ‘control-based enactment’ is positively correlated to commitment, OCB and self-rated comparative performance, albeit with smaller size effects that the ‘commitment-based enactment’. One possible explanation of this is offered by organisational justice theory (Greenberg, 1990), whereby control-based management actions shape procedural and distributive justice perceptions, which in turn can then impact employee outcomes (Heffernan and Dundon, 2016). Time-keeping, attendance and corrective action policies do not share the ambiguity associated with ‘softer’ HRM practices, which may lend to a transparency associated with fairness. Alternatively, the employee may separate the FLM enactment of control-based policies from the overall organisational intent, as examined within organisational identity theory (Van Dick et al, 2007). It would appear irrespective of type of policy applied, a relationship exists between perceptions of practices at the shop floor level and the attitudes and behaviours displayed by workers. Therefore, this study provides support for the people-performance relational model (Purcell & Hutchinson, 2007), as outlined in Chapter 2. The evidence shows that normative models predicting that HR policy positively improves organisational performance are far too simplistic and predicated on unrefined theorisation.

Of course, association does not confirm causation, and the direction of impact cannot be verified here but further discussion on why this relationship might occur is discussed later in the chapter. In terms of the perception of practices, the empirical findings are based on a measure of frequency of the HRM policy enactment behavioural types. Further insight and understanding may be garnished from measuring also the quality of policy enactment. In Chapter 6, employees
in one focus group described two very different experiences of the same policy enactment that shows frequency alone is not a sufficient indication of impact. The variation was located in the FLM response to a request for holiday leave, with some perceiving that a less lenient FLM might ask ‘why’ people wanted a day off, before granting the request.

Further insight is garnished in the current study regarding the perceived authority or autonomy of the FLM to enact policy, namely FLM agency behaviour. Eisenberger et al (2002:572) contend that in order to foster personal loyalty, “many supervisors may exaggerate their positive valuation of their subordinates and their role in obtaining benefits for subordinates”. The implication is that FLMs may portray themselves as occupying some over-grand or exaggerated position of authority and power over their subordinates, irrespective of their true position relating to HRM policies. The empirical findings reveal that the use (and abuse) of managerial prerogative prevails and remains a function of power underlying FLM agency capacity, some of which was reported in Chapters 7 and 8. The regression analysis (pertaining to hypotheses H3a-H3d) found a significant and negative correlation to all employee outcomes. In other words, the greater the FLM is perceived to exercise a degree of managerial prerogative and delegated authority of the organisation, the poorer the employee outcomes. In Chapter 8, some other FLMs used a language and discourse resonating with positional type power which could be seen as controlling or authoritarian to some extent.

These findings are interesting. Some previous studies have found that the greater the perceived status of the FLM in the organisation, the more likely the employee could perceive FLM behaviour as representing the organisation (Eisenberger et al, 2002), or possibly the use of excessive FLM authority that then begets mistrust and work alienation (Fox, 1974; Thompson and McHugh, 2003). On review however, the previous similar investigations included perceptions of the organisation’s valuation, and influence, of the FLM also. Other studies have failed to find a direct relationship between FLM agency behaviour and OCB (Van Dick et al, 2007). Further understanding is required regarding the construct of FLM agency behaviour, including the relevance of various sub-components of authority, autonomy, influence and valuation (Eisenberger et al, 2002).
Qualitative insight in the current study provides some explanation of how higher organisational status may negatively impact employee outcomes. Again, consistent with the explanatory utility of social exchange theory, there is an imbalance of power between employees and employer (sometimes the employer is viewed through the actions of the FLM). In this case, FLM agency behaviour can be seen by employees as exploitation which subsequently impacts the employees’ willingness to recognise the legitimacy of supervision. Workers felt aggrieved by power imbalances. For example, one employee reported that work and effort recognition is important but also emphasised “we are not children, we are not looking for sweets”. Other qualitative evidence showed an uneven dynamic; for instance that people accept the ‘structure of supervision’ and that “people have a job to do”. Nonetheless, the negative impact of perceived authority behaviour on employee outcomes further demonstrates how the devolution of HRM enactment to the line represents a fragile tension for the FLM role. Importantly, evidence of FLMs exercising what is known as ‘positional power’ (French and Raven, 1959) undermines employee support and commitment to HR policy objectives. That is to say, employees do not recognise policy enactment decisions as legitimate when rationalised exclusively on the hierarchical authority of an FLM. It is possible to argue that behind what appears to be a ‘master’ enactment of HR policy in the discourse of a HPWS model is, in reality, a FLM ‘victim’ role from a HRM ideology that espouses devolution of work and the restriction of real decision-making authority. This finding echoes Dawson concerns with organisational title versus true authority. Dawson argues there is “a major problem with identifying supervisors on the basis of their position within a hierarchical command structure is that it does not take into account the fact that the authority vested in an individual by his work group” (Dawson, 1991:40).

The dichotomous FLM role raises questions regarding the devolution of HRM. One issue identified is the role of the traditional HRM department after ‘devolution’. FLMs in the current study perceived the HRM department as “faceless”, operating through electronic websites and portals. The impact of this on HPWS-Performance link is not yet understood. Some studies are starting to recognise the question. For example, Bos-Nehles (2010) investigated and found that the greater support received from the HR professional, the greater the effectiveness of the FLM
enactment of HRM. Perhaps, the HPWS is missing a key process in terms of guidance for how the FLM should enact policies. A challenge is raised regarding the tenable role of the HRM department in maintaining relevant and current policies, without daily interactions with the individual nuances at the interface of employment relationships.

The current study found an example of the annual performance review being perceived by both FLM and employee as a “tick the box” exercise. The FLM alluded to disconnect in policy versus needs. The frequency of the formal performance appraisal was revealed to be disconnected from the frequency of performance management discussions at the point of production. The informal organisation (Truss 2001) is a possible construct by which the gap between policy and practice may be viewed. Alternatively, a critique of HPWS may view this as another example of HR policy rhetoric (Legge 2005). The important implication for practice, is to recognise a missing HRM process stage: that is, how and when FLMs are informed about the selection and enactment the right policy, for the right circumstances, at the best time for employee performance.

According to Guest (2011), the need for micro employee attention spans beyond practice to research also, highlighting that to date research has largely neglected theories of workers’ values, needs, motives and individual differences. From this perspective, the how of the FLM impact, in a HPWS context, is in their daily navigation or bypassing of generic HRM policies, to meet individual employee circumstances, with limited guidance from theory or practice (Townsend et al, 2013). It can be poised here that a ‘process’ view to involve FLMs in the development and updating of HRM practices is required to facilitate legitimate enactment through FLM role behaviours. It is possible to argue that how the FLM plays a role in shaping HPWS outcomes is via policy enactment options, manifesting as thinly veiled victims of HRM devolution, as well as power agents with varying levels of embeddedness in the processes to manage people at work.

In addition to HRM enactment, a number of studies have indicated that the people-management approach of FLMs is also critical to understanding the FLM impact. As outlined in Chapter 2,
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each FLM is perceived to have a leadership approach that affects employee perceptions of HRM. Purcell and Hutchinson (2007:16) contend that “employees perception of people management are not restricted to those written in the employment manual but cover wider aspects such as organisational climate and leadership behaviour” and, that “the way FLMs undertake their HR duties of selecting, appraising, developing, communicating, involving, etc, is inextricably linked to a wider set of what are increasingly called leadership behaviours, which aim to influence employee attitudes and behaviours in a given direction”.

The issue further relates to aspects of reciprocity and agency in the management of employment. Building on previous literature, the current study operationalised two behaviours relating to FLM approach, namely FLM Leadership Behavioural Type and FLM Coaching Behavioural Type, progressing this literature in response to calls for further study. For example, Kuvass and Dysvik (2010:150) call for further research “to investigate the moderating role of other measures of leadership behaviour… on the relationship between perceptions of HR practices and employee outcomes”. FLM Leadership behavioural type is investigated in hypotheses H2a-H2d. In all cases, as outlined in Chapter 6, FLM Leadership behavioural type is found to have a significant impact on employee outcomes. This finding is consistent with previous studies (Purcell and Hutchison, 2007; Gilbert et al, 2011). Some qualitative findings revealed insight regarding the mechanisms of how the leadership behaviour impacts employee outcomes includes: firstly, a desired image by the FLM; secondly, an interaction of personality between the FLM and employee; and, lastly, the history of relationship between the FLM and the employee. The latter two mirror LMX, where leadership is conceptualised in terms of the FLM (leader), the employee (follower) and the maturity of the FLM-employee relationship (Graen and Uhl-bein, 1995).

The workers’ evidence (focus groups) showed that employees have different relationships with different supervisors. One employee explained,

“you would never have just one perception of an FLM. I think people read things differently”. 

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FLMs also recognise the leader-member relationship dynamic, claiming

“maybe ones (employees) that I would have had issues with... my relationship with them would be different (FLM 108).”

This study provides further evidence to the argument that employee perception of HRM enactment is likely to be affected by FLMs as different behaviours. However, further inquiry is required to understand what amount of the effect is due to the FLM treating employees differently, and what amount is due to variation in employee perception and processing differences.

Returning to the first insight regarding FLM as leaders impacting the HRM-Performance link, the concept of FLM intention emerges. FLMs portrayed a sense of their own self-determined importance and expected control (perhaps ‘mastery’) as to how they manage people at work. While Purcell and Hutchinson (2007) include ‘intended’ practices in the people-performance relational model, this study uncovers a possible additional factor in terms of intended FLM approach. Responding to an open question on FLM behaviours, there was significant variation in responses. Responses from three distinct FLMs included “I'd be very hands-on...firefighting”; “I stay calm”; and, “I'm a point of contact for people”. Bar employees who they have 'had issues with', the FLMs, for the most part, believed that employees perceived their leadership approach as they intended. It appears that while the FLM may aims for a degree of consistency in their approach, and may even aim to align the enactment of HRM policy with their approach, the evidence points to a lack of overall uniformity according to employee perceptions. For example, one FLM described walking around to ask every employee, in person, each week, about overtime availability, despite knowing that there were some employees who always declined. The decision to apply the overtime policy in this way was aligned to a desire to be perceived as “hands on” and “fair”. In contrast and opposite to this hands-on approach, another FLM explained their desire to “back off” display what can be described as a more coaching type of approach:

“in most cases I try to back off, let them do the work, come up with their own problems, their own fixes... it's really a coaching role”.
FLM Coaching behavioural type measured in the study exposed two factors, named ‘managerial-based coaching’ and ‘employee voice coaching’. Items pertaining to involvement, development, suggestions and participation loaded onto “employee-voice coaching”, while performance reflection and feedback loaded onto managerial-based coaching. In previous studies, “employee-voice coaching behaviour” has been associated with transformational leaders. Rank et al (2009:467) argue that those FLMs develop “a degree of intellectual stimulation (encouraging followers to question old assumptions and adopt new approaches); individualise the employees’ experience (considering individual needs and providing personalised coaching) that enhances trust and confidence”. Examples of this emerged in the current study as one FLM describes ‘bringing an employee along” whereby you would see “more pride”, “more engagement” and “the employee would be more involved”. Hypotheses 4a-4d revealed a significant relationship between FLM coaching behavioural type and OCB, Turnover Intention and Self-rated Performance. However, of particular importance is that a significant relationship was not detected with commitment. This is unusual in relation to other studies, as FLM leadership behavioural type, including LMX, is theorised to impact commitment (Gilbert et al, 2011). Eisenberger et al (2010) highlight the importance in FLM leadership approach in terms of identification with the organisation, and consequential effects on employee well being, esteem, loyalty and commitment. What is interesting is that the mechanism of the FLM leadership impact appears to be determined not by the organisation, but rather by the FLM. More specifically, the general approach appears to be determined by FLM seeking to maintain some type of image associated with their beliefs around what constitutes ‘good’ people management, thereby reinforcing the potential significance of agency capacity of both managers and employees, reciprocity, and the power roles exercised by different FLM approaches.

FLM Leadership and Coaching behavioural types emerge as another mechanism of how an FLM may impact the HR-Performance link. Having built on experiences of previous studies, the study demonstrates a direct effect of leadership and coaching behaviour on employee outcomes. However, it is limited from outlining the specific type of interactions and relationships that harnesses employee outcomes. Further research could concern itself with the micro expressions
of FLM leadership and coaching behavioural types and the corresponding impact on employee’s perception of HRM enactment.

9.3 Contributing to ‘why’ FLMs may impact employee attitudes and behaviours in the context of HPWS

As outlined in Chapter 3, the illusion of a single causal mechanism, while attractive, was not expected to manifest in the study. The findings have revealed evidence of multiple motivational factors involved in the relationships between FLM behaviours and employee outcomes in the context of HPWS. Notwithstanding that, the study also found support for the utility value of adopting existing explanatory theories to advance the research question. To that end, Social Exchange Theory was found to provide relevant constructs from which a research model could be built for empirical study, as well as drawing on the richness of aspects from LPT in charting at times an uneven yet fluid dynamic to the reward-effort exchange within the context of FLM and HPWS. In short, examining FLM-worker relations in a so-called high-performance work environment does not remove embedded tensions and ambiguities associated with managing people at work. The following sections uncover the key findings relating to why the FLM role can have an impact in the HPWS context, commencing with contributions a macro level perspective.

Chapter 3 provided a review of potential explanatory theories, and positioned them in relation to the research question. Four key theories emerged from a review of the literature, which both independently and collectively theorise why the FLM role can have an impact on employee attitudes and behaviours in a HPWS context. Social Exchange Theory provides explanatory logic relating to the modes of reciprocity in the employment exchange. (Gouldner, 1960; Blau, 1964; Fox, 1974). Applied to the research question, this might translate to FLM enactment of HRM practices and leadership behaviours being perceived as favourable treatment and support, that creates a sense of reciprocity to the FLM. As the primary frame of reference for the study, Social Exchange Theory is expanded on further below. In summary, the study found both quantitative and qualitative support for the support mechanisms. Both POS and PSS were
found to mediate the relationships between FLM behaviours and employee OCB. In addition, focus groups revealed an awareness by employees of the support received. For example, one employee outlined, “there is a relationship there where you are recognised, encouraged and being moved into projects that might add value to you”. Another employee highlighted the reciprocal nature of the support, phrasing it simply as “you’re (the FLM is) helping so I’m helping”. Importantly, Labour Process Theory (Braverman, 1974; Thompson, 1983, 2011; Godard, 2004) shows that work intensification can be the produce and outcome of managerial enactment at times.

The labour process lens focuses on the dynamics of managerial control and extraction of value from employee’s effort in employment exchange. While the study did not examine the topic specifically, some supportive evidence emerges. Firstly, there was evidence in the quantitative study that some individual employees strongly disagreed with the notions of being committed to the organisation, of being willing to display extra-role behaviour. In the context of HPWS, it highlights the variation in employee experience, despite intentional HRM practices in place to support a high commitment environment. In addition, there was qualitative feedback where employees highlighted the power imbalance between management and employees. One employee explains that some FLMs might not always be approachable in terms of employee input,

“...you know they (FLMs) are in a defensive mode. So whatever you say they are going to be defensive they are going to react differently.”

Another highlights the lack of employee perogative in affecting the conditions of work,

“sometimes you can get stuck with a supervisor (FLM) and they might take something as criticism when you have an opinion”.

The relative acceptability of such conditions to an employee may be seen as signalling an unfair exchange, a violated psychological contract, or as other have articulated a lack of perceived procedural, interactive or distributive justice in the employment relationship. (Greenberg, 1990; Moorman, 1991; Colquitt, Wessen, Porter, Conlon and Ng, 2001). Arguably, a key premise here is that employees desire a fair employment exchange, and their perception of such can affect
their attitudes and behaviours. One of the five items in the FLM Leadership behaviour scale pertained to the fair treatment of employees. FLM Leadership is found to be significantly related to commitment, turnover intention, OCB and self-rated performance. Similarly, previous studies found evidence that perceptions of fairness, equity and justice can mediate the relationship between HRM practices and employment outcomes (Heffernan and Dundon, 2016).

In addition, the current study found that FLMs appear to recognise the value of perceived fairness, with one FLM highlighting in their leadership approach, “I try to be as fair as possible”. However, as revealed in Chapter 8, a stronger theme relating to leadership approach from the FLMs, and some employees, related to the motivational expectation of alignment to organisational vision and purpose. Located in literature in the space of organisational identity theory (Korsgaard, Meglino, Lester and Jeong (2010); Townsend et al (2012a), the current study found indicative support for a perceived motivational effect of alignment in organisational messaging. FLMs described qualitatively the importance of employees knowing that they represented an organisational policy that was important to the overall organisational success.

The idea of an identity among employees is discussed by FLMs. Sample FLM statements include,

“I always say to people this is a medical device company” and “I just want everyone to know that what we (employees at Medco) are doing, ends up in someone (a patient)”.

In addition, from an employee perspective, the idea of alignment to a vision or approach is highlighted by an employee claim that the FLM “creates that environment, and everyone rows in with that”. Further studies may wish to specifically investigate how the enactment of HRM policies could impact the identity of an FLM workgroup, and consequently attitudes and behaviours of employees. The macro level finding of the literature review, and subsequent emergent empirical findings, relate to the potential explanatory value of current theories of work and employment that the HRM field can exploit to further understanding of the ‘black box’. The subsequent sections highlights the application of one such theory, namely Social Exchange Theory, to further understanding of the role of the FLM in a HPWS context.

Social Exchange Theory proposes that where an individual does another a favour, there is an expectation of some future unspecified return (Blau, 1964, Fox 1974). The notion of such
implied obligation is cast as an explanatory mechanism for patterns of behaviour observed in many social systems. Central to the theory, is the ‘norm of reciprocity’ labelled by Gouldner (1960), which claims a universal expectation that people should help and not injure those who help them. The norm of reciprocity explains “we owe others certain things because of what they have previously done for us, because of the history of previous interaction we have had with them” (Gouldner, 1960:171). To operationalise the application of this reasoning to the research question, a lens of perceived support provided an indication of what employees perceive to have been previously done for them by the organisation, namely POS. Support theory contends that favourable POS will be positively related to employee discretionary behaviour (Blau, 1964; Coyle-Shapiro and Conway 2005; Conway and Coyle-Shapiro, 2012). POS captures an employee’s evaluation of the quality of organisational treatment. Eisenberger et al (2002:565) go further and relate this specifically to FLM, arguing that “just as employees form global perceptions concerning their valuation by the organisation, they develop general views concerning the degree to which supervisors value their contribution and care about their well-being”. They describe this phenomenon as Perceived Supervisor Support (PSS).

The study proposed that one reason the FLM impacts the relationship between HRM and employee outcomes is because they generate or reduce citizenship behaviour (OCB) in employees because employee perceive their behaviours as supportive (PSS), or not, through their enactment of HRM policies, and general people management approach. It also proposed, in the context of agency behaviours outlined earlier, that through their behaviours FLMs may affect perceptions of organisational support (POS) and subsequent OCB. The empirical analysis in the study finds support for the constructs POS and PSS as mediating variables. Correlation analysis indicated significant associations between FLM behaviours and, both, PSS & POS. In addition a t-test confirmed that in the study, employees perceived their FLM to be the greater source of support with the PSS estimated to have a higher mean than POS at a 95% confidence interval. However, while correlations are of indicative interest in terms of relationships, they can not confirm direction or causation.

A further refinement of the hypotheses in the research model developed an indirect relationship path regarding the mediating impact of both PSS and POS on the relationship between FLM behaviours and employee OCB. The study adopted the novel bootstrapping technique to test the
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indirect relationship of PSS and POS mediation paths. The primary hypotheses were supported, and the mediation paths found significant. In addition qualitative support for the motivational influence of perceived support emerged in the FLM interview,

“you try and support them as much as you can, and you find that if you help them out they won’t forget it, they will help you out again in the future”.

The statement indicates the future expectation of reciprocity associated with the provision of support. In addition, the opposite was found also, as one employee highlighted that if there is an absence of support (flexibility by the FLM) “that’s where you have your future issues”. Interestingly, the concept of a retribution for support withheld provides indicative support for a true discretionary element to the employee behaviours. In line with Fox (1974) description of discretionary behaviour, the finding supports an element of choice in the role, as that employees perceive that they could choose, as the occupant of the role, to cause some future issue for the FLM. The finding challenges labour process theory, that might claim, the power balance lies in favour of the FLM (Godard, 2004). However, the study also found some other power relationships, where employees did not credit the FLM with workplace motivational support, but rather their peer group. For example, one employee highlights “I don’t think it’s the front line manager I think it’s the people around you”. The finding supports previous studies (Truss 2001), whereby the informal organisation is found to play a role in the workplace structures.

In addition, the research model incorporated a multi-level perspective on the FLM role uncovered a significant relationship between FLM workgroup and PSS. 25% of the variation in PSS scores could be explained by which FLM the employee worked for. The findings supports earlier indications, by Purcell et al (2003) in their analysis of Tesco stores with distinct managers in place, that there is something unique to workgroup even in seemingly consistent HR systems and structures. Notwithstanding the explanatory utility of structural system effect to enforce policy and procedures, the role of agency capacity cannot be dismissed as a source of influence in trying unpack causal relationships and variables affecting human behaviours and work relationships. Further inquiry could seek to understand further what aspects of FLM behaviour distinguishes an FLM workgroup, in terms of perceived support, from that of the overall organisation.

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The findings reveal the utility of Social Exchange Theory and Labour Process analysis as a lens for investigating the role of the FLM. Indeed, it might be said that LPT has tended to favour conflict issues around worker mobilisations to capitalism and neglected to uncover supervisory managerial relations in finer detail. It contributes to the future application of social exchange theory as it introduces the dynamic of peer reciprocation in addition to POS and PSS. In parallel recognising the increasing complexities uncovered in the employment relationship through the exploratory case study investigation. The complexities are captured in the study in the variation of employee response, both quantitatively and qualitatively. The FLM role, manifesting in their behaviour towards employees, can result in the addition or withdrawl of employee discretionary effort mediated by individual perceptions, of which organisational and FLM support are key factors.

9.4 Conclusion

Chapter 9 discusses the literature and empirical evidence presented to advance the research question as to how and why the FLM may impact employee attitudes and behaviours in HPWS. Following a synthesis of existing literature, empirical findings and insights, and future opportunities for research, the research question is advanced towards conclusion. The key conclusion of the study is that the FLM impacts the relationship between HPWS and employee behaviours and attitudes in how their role as masters and victims of the HR policies manifests in their behaviour towards employees - and why that in turn leads to the addition or withdrawl of employee discretionary effort mediated by individual perceptions, of which organisational and FLM support are key factors. The next chapter locates the discussion in the context of a contribution to theory, methods and practices.
Chapter 10

10.1 Introduction

Having reached a point of reflection in the examination of how and why the FLM impacts the relationship between HPWS and employee attitudes and behaviours. Chapter 10 seeks to present the key conclusions of the study. In addition, it outlines what the study contributes to theory, to research methods and to practitioners. Limitations of the study are outlined, and the opportunity for further research is highlighted. Drawing on previous chapters, a summary of the advancements of the study emerge, revealing the next set of complexities and challenges to be addressed in the growing body of knowledge in the HRM literature. The study finds support for the proposed HRM research avenues of HR policy enactment (Guest, 2011) and specifically the role of the FLM in that (Purcell and Hutchinson, 2007; Townsend, 2013; Heffernan and Dundon, 2016).

10.2 Key Conclusions

The study set out to gain further understanding as to how and why the FLM may impact the HRM-Performance link. Following a thorough literature review and empirical case-study, the question is advanced to a new stage of inquiry. The key conclusion of the study is that the FLM impacts the relationship between HPWS and employee behaviours and attitudes in how their role as masters and victims of the HR policies manifests in their behaviour towards employees - and why that in turn leads to the addition or withdrawal of employee discretionary effort mediated by individual perceptions, of which organisational and FLM support are key factors. To reach
that conclusion, a number of investigation paths were pursued by way of research objectives, namely:

1. Explore perceived FLM behavioural type in a HPWS context

2. Examine associations between perceived FLM behavioural type and employee behaviours and attitudes in a HPWS context.

3. Investigate potential mediating influences of support theory contracts, on relationships between FLM behavioural type and employee discretionary effort in a HPWS context

4. Discover insights regarding the influence of perceived FLM behavioural type on the relationship between HPWS and employee attitudes and behaviours

Operationalised through a case-study approach, the four research objectives were translated into a series of hypotheses and data collection tools. A survey instrument and qualitative interviews were administered to gather data for the research objectives. The following section provides a brief summary of the research objectives, the empirical data and the subsequent findings.

**10.3 Summary Findings**

For the purposes of inquiry, the FLM behavioural construct is developed to advance understanding of the FLM role. Four FLM behavioural type of relevance emerged from a review of current literature, including policy enactment behaviour, leadership behaviour, agency behaviour and coaching behaviour. Previous empirical work guided an operationalisation of the FLM behaviour construct providing measurement scales for a structured employee questionnaire. In addition, concepts and theory informed a semi-structured qualitative discussion with both employees and FLMs. The administration of the data collection techniques in a HPWS case-study organisation informed each research objective, and ultimately the research question.
Explore perceived FLM behavioural type in a HPWS context

Perceived FLM behavioural type were explored in both quantitative and qualitative stages of the research methods and analysis. The study discovered, firstly, that the perception of FLM behavioural type, even when related to just a single FLM, varies significantly among employees. Data analysis uncovered sub-grouping of FLM behavioural type within the original four categories that provided greater definition of the construct. FLM Policy Enactment Behavioural Type loaded on to three lower order factors including: commitment-based policies (e.g. reward, performance management, training); control-based policies (e.g. corrective/disciplinary action); and, involvement-based policies (e.g. employee suggestion programmes). FLM agency behaviour is found to be perceived in terms of authority given to to the FLM by the organisation, as well as organisational support of the FLM to have autonomy in decision-making. FLM Coaching behavioural type evolved to two sub-factors, namely, managerial-focus coaching (primarily concerned with performance goals and feedback) and employee-voice coaching (based on perceptions of involvement, support for ideas and suggestions, and personal development).

The findings in relation to some FLM behavioural type were comparable with expectations of a HPWS environment. There was both quantitative and qualitative evidence of FLM behavioural type that would be typically assumed in high commitment models, and reported in studies of HRM devolution to line managers. Examples included FLM behavioural type regarding communication, performance management, employee development, and participation. However, data analysis also revealed examples of FLM behavioural type that might not readily support the rhetoric of high commitment HRM. Examples included: performance reviews observed as ‘tick the box’ exercises; high frequency of time and attendance or disciplinary discussions with FLM; perceptions of FLM abusing power by asking for too much personal information with regard to holiday leave entitlements; perceptions of abdication of HRM responsibility to the line; and perceptions of job rotation as a response to employees ‘getting fed up’ rather than skills development.
Examine associations between perceived FLM behavioural type and employee behaviours and attitudes in a HPWS context.

The FLM behavioural construct enabled a review of previous empirical studies, in terms of potential linkages, between FLM behavioural type and employee behaviours and attitudes. The literature informed the research strategy, which subsequently included four employee outcome variables in the study, namely: commitment; OCB; turnover intention; and, self-rated performance. The four outcome variables were examined during both quantitative and qualitative studies for associations with FLM behavioural type. A series of hypotheses were formed to test relationships between each FLMs behaviour and each outcome. Tests were performed using regression analysis with the following results. After controlling for biographical variables, the regression analysis reveals FLM Policy Enactment behaviours to be directly related to OCB, turnover intention, and commitment. A relationship is not supported between FLM policy enactment and self-rated Performance. Support is found for all hypotheses regarding a direct effect relationship between FLM Leadership behavioural type and the employee attitudes and behaviours. An example of the hypotheses testing reveals one regression model that predicts a highly probable effect of reducing turnover intention value with increases in perceived FLM leadership behaviour. Examination of the FLM behavioural type discovered a negative association between FLM agency behaviour and employee attitudes and behaviours. In otherwords, greater perceived FLM authority and autonomy is associated with lower employee commitment and higher intention to leave the organisation. The hypothesis test regarding FLM agency behaviour and OCB is inconclusive due to a failure to meet the assumptions for regression. However, later mediation analysis indicates a negative indirect relationship of significance here also. The last set of direct relationships examined included FLM Coaching behavioural type and all four employee outcomes. It was found that FLM Coaching behavioural type has a significant direct effect with three of the four employee attitudes and behaviours, namely turnover intention, OCB and self-rated performance. No significant direct effect was detected for commitment. Qualitative insight revealed mixed findings in relation to the direct effect of FLM behaviour on employee attitudes and behaviours. Firstly, employees on first glance typically deny a direct impact of the FLM on their behaviour at work. In contrast, however, the second finding is that experiential anecdotes and causal inferences made by
employees supports evidence of a relationship between FLM behavioural type and employee attitudes and behaviours.

*Investigate potential mediating influences of support theory contracts on relationships between FLM behavioural type and employee discretionary effort in a HPWS context*

The third research objective pertained to understanding the mechanisms by which a FLM impact might occur. Following a review of relevant explanatory theories, the study selected Social Exchange Theory as the lens through which to examine why FLM behavioural type can impact employee attitudes and behaviours. Anchored in the concept of reciprocity, perceived support provides a mechanism for inquiry. As informed by previous studies, an indirect mediation path was hypothesised to best explain the relationship between FLM behavioural type, perceived support and reciprocated OCB. The mediation effect (known as an indirect effect) is a product of two direct relationships, namely \( \text{a} \), where ‘\( \text{a} \)’ is the direct effect between the independent variable (i.e. FLM behavioural type) and the mediating variable (i.e. PSS or POS) and ‘\( \text{b} \)’ is the direct effect between the mediating variable (PSS or POS) and the dependent variable (i.e. OCB). The study finds evidence that both POS and PSS are mediating variables in the relationship between FLM behavioural type and employee OCB. Qualitative insight supported the notion that employees respond to perceived support from FLMs, and the organisation, by giving something back again in the future. The expectation of such reciprocity was found in both FLM and employee feedback. However, it is also important to highlight that qualitative evidence indicated many potential explanatory mechanisms happening in tandem, highlighting that organisational support theory is unlikely to fully explain the dynamics of the FLM impact.

*Discover insights regarding the influence of perceived FLM behavioural type on the relationship between HPWS and employee attitudes and behaviours*

The fourth, and last, research objective captured the exploratory intent of the study. The study sought not only to test hypotheses as predicted in the research model, but also to allow new insights to emerge. Of the many insights discovered during the research process, two key findings are selected for further discussion. Firstly, the study revealed a dichotomy of experience in relation to the FLM role in a HPWS. Evidence of managerial perogative, authority and discretion in the enactment of policy, and in the general leadership approach,
portrays the FLM as a master in relation to HRM policies. However, variation in enactment experiences, and qualitative feedback, regarding the difficulty in applying static HRM policies to dynamic human interactions reveals an image that the FLM can also be a victim of the HRM policies. This dichotomy provides a new lens through which to investigate the FLM role in the black box of HRM.

Secondly, the study revealed quantitative evidence that employee attitudes and behaviours vary by FLM. Specifically, changes in FLM name are associated with changes in employee perceptions of support and OCB. This insight is key to understanding why HRM may impact performance. If an FLM, by their behaviours, can change the employee experience of the workplace at a macro group level, it might explain inconsistencies in the HRM-Performance link across studies and workgroups. In addition, employee level relationships and interactions may be difficult to detect within the context of a greater macro FLM influence. In some instances, mean differences in the range of 2 points on a 5 point scale were detected in the study. Multi-level HRM research (Ostroff and Bowen, 2000) may be required in future to progress a deep understanding of the HRM relationships to outcomes and performance.

In addition, the final objective is achieved by reviewing the insights of the study in terms of their respective contribution to theory, methods and practice. Also of importance are the new avenues of investigation unveiled by the study to guide further research. The remainder of the chapter summarises the study in these terms, commencing with a review of theoretical contribution.

10.4 Contribution to Theory

Calls for research in this area have come from empirical studies that have investigated the association between HRM and Performance and found a chasm in theory and understanding. Purcell et al (2003:02) put it simply: “we do not know why or how HR policies translate into performance”. The current study advances knowledge in relation to both how and why. It
achieves this by investigating constructs and relationships at the point of enactment of HR policies between FLMs and front line employees. The primary contributions of the study to theory may be summarised in four key points:

1. A behavioural FLM construct is developed based on extant literature, providing construct definition in a currently ambiguous area of theory
2. Supportive evidence of a relationship between FLM behavioural type, including HR Policy Enactment, and employee attitudes and behaviours is presented
3. Advanced mediation analysis provides evidentiary data that Social Exchange Theory is of explanatory value in understanding the FLM role in a HPWS context.
4. A multi-level research model presents evidence that employee attitudes and behaviours differ by FLM group

The ‘black box’ metaphor typically represents the unknown variables and interactions that bridge HR inputs with outputs in employee attitudes, behaviour and performance. The current study introduces three such variables; FLM behavioural type, PSS and POS; and provides evidence of their significance to both HR and employee attitudes and behaviours. The bridging interactions proposed in the study are built on Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964), which over numerous studies has demonstrated consistency in results (Eisenberger et al, 2010). The current study demonstrates that those interactions remain significant and offer explanatory value in the context of the black box of the HRM-Performance link. In addition evidence from a single source of employee survey feedback is triangulated with FLM interviews (Yin, 2003), overcoming previous challenges of single-respondent bias (Guest, 2011). The study also illuminates the enactment of HR practices by FLMs through descriptive examples provided by qualitative feedback, as well as recognising that enactment is one part of a broader FLM role. Locating policy enactment as one of many FLM behavioural type supports the findings of previous studies in the field (Renwick, 2003; Purcell and Hutchinson, 2007; Boxhall and Purcell, 2008; Townsend et al, 2012). Guest (2011) highlighted a challenge in understanding the gap between intended and enacted HR policies. The current study found significant variation in the data related to HR policy enactment by FLMs. The quantitative results supported by qualitative insight provide evidence of gaps between intended and implemented practices.
This echoes findings of previous studies (Wright and Nishi, 2006; Purcell and Hutchinson, 2007; Bos-Nehles, 2010). Taken together, the contributions to theory are significant. The FLM behavioural construct has provided a conduit for investigating people management and HR enactment from both a FLM and employee perspective. The behavioural focus enables an understanding of the how of a HRM-Performance relationship to emerge, as behaviours are by their nature a perceived human action. Of greater significance, a behavioural lens also provides opportunity to draw on theory from the breadth of social sciences, which in the current study became the norm of reciprocity, which advances understanding of the why.

10.5 Contribution to Research Methods

The study makes a number of contributions to research methods in the field of HRM, of which four are discussed here. Firstly, in terms of research strategy it contributes a breadth and depth synergy, by measuring phenomenon quantitatively across 613 participants, 50 FLM groups, in two countries and manufacturing sites, paired with deep inquiry regarding the specific experiences of relevant participants through interview format. The case-study approach, supported by large scale data collection, demonstrates the potential to blend methods to advance theory (Yin, 2003). Historically, the HRM field has been accused of being overly reliant on positivist research approaches, at the expense of theoretical advancement (Purcell, 1999; Guest, 2011). Statistical analysis, at best, can indicate or rule out evidence of relationship, i.e. correlation. However, it cannot derive the causal direction of any such correlation found. The current study overcomes this challenge by demonstrating the insight that can be achieved with a mixed methods case-study approach to theory-building (Mintzberg, 1979). Experiences of both FLMs and employees provide qualitative insight into the possible directional influences at play. Such data triangulation can provide “stronger substantiation of constructs” (Eisenhardt, 1989:537) and can improve the accuracy of judgements made regarding the evidence. It also overcomes the risk of single response bias, which is thought to be a problem in the field of HRM (Guest, 2011).
A second compelling contribution of the study to research methods is how it advances a new construct to understand the FLM impact in the context of HPWS, by moving from an ambiguous FLM role construct to specific, measurable and relevant FLM behavioural type. Previously, FLM studies experienced difficulty in research methods as FLM titles and roles were treated as interchangeable (Hales, 2005). However, the current study presents clarity in the FLM construct (Suddaby, 2010) by categorising four distinct FLM behavioural type and measurement scales to enable greater detection of the nuances of FLM variation. This will aid the operationalisation of further research studies in relation to the FLM.

A third and important methodological contribution of the study is the application of advanced statistical techniques to a recently challenged concept in social sciences (Preacher et al, 2007). Mediation analysis in extant literature followed, in the main, the Baron and Kenny (1998) model. However, recent advancements in statistical analysis and technology have revealed an improved method in ‘bootstrapping technique’ (Hayes, 2005). The current study presents a mechanism for completing the bootstrapping technique using Minitab software. Previously, macros to support bootstrapping in social sciences were widely available for SPSS and SAS, but not for Minitab (Hayes, 2015). The methodological contribution demonstrates the application of this technique in Minitab software, as well as the configuration of Minitab Macro code to facilitate a large $k$ sample in the bootstrapping process. The study validated the macro for suitability with input from the Minitab technical support desk, as well as running test cases on small sample sizes, adding to confidence in the approach.

The fourth noteworthy methodological contribution of the study is its advancement in terms of how to approach ‘hard to measure’ items (Purcell, 1999). The study achieves this in two-ways. Firstly, it delves deep into Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964) to provide confidence and support for measurement scales and items (Van Maanen et al, 2007). Taken in isolation, the scales maybe considered subjective, but supported by a strong theory of relationships and a qualitative data source, the scales and items are given both theoretical and contextual strength. Combining this with a robust factor analysis to re-position the items in relation to the theory, the approach can result in meaningful findings. Secondly, where theory is in early development, or there is an absence of literature relating to particular items, the current study adopted an
‘exploratory items’ research strand. The exploratory research path prevented the contamination of established scales and relationships by labelling items as exploratory in the methods chapter, providing a separate place for analysis in the findings chapters, and discussing them in the context of exploratory work. The approach taken is underpinned by the acknowledgement that exploratory items are acceptable within the context of their purpose. This enabled the inclusion of ‘hard to measure’ items (e.g. perceived indebtedness and FLM group indicator) with minimal impact on the testing of core hypotheses.

A lesser, but nonetheless notable, contribution to methodology lies in the analysis of the data. Three analytical approaches are used to review the same empirical data. Firstly the lens of direct relationships between FLM behavioural type and employee behaviours and attitudes is presented in Chapter 6. Secondly, Chapter 7 presents a perspective of mediation and indirect relationships (Hayes, 2005) within the empirical data. Lastly, the data is reviewed from the vantage point of the FLM group level (Chan, 1998) for deeper insight into the FLM role in Chapter 8. By reviewing the empirical data on multiple plains, a more comprehensive understanding of the FLM phenomenon can be achieved. For example, the same employee focus group quotation may have different meaning depending on the lens of observation. Using multiple lenses provides an opportunity to consider different meanings, as well as detect patterns of repeated findings. The culmination of this approach is the opportunity for a richer discussion, and hence greater value to theory building (Eisenhardt, 1989).

10.6 Contribution to Practice

The current study has significant practical implications. Firstly, in uncovering the how of the FLM role in HPWS, the study presents a dichotomy that organisations need to be cognisant of. As organisations devolve HRM practices to the line, the benefits of quicker decision-making time, better placed HRM responsibility and reduced operating costs for the HR function (Renwick, 2003) may be negated by a perceived lack of organisational support by employees, errors in the application of policies by FLMs and the withdrawal of employee discretionary effort that perceived lack of fairness (Greenberg, 1990; Heffernan and Dundon, 2016) can drive
from inconsistent policy enactment. Organisations may benefit from a critical review of HRM policies in terms of their potentially debilitating influence on FLM effectiveness.

A second, but important, finding of this study that relates to practice is the emergence of three distinct FLM policy enactment factors. Data analysis revealed clusters of practices that loaded on to distinct HRM approaches. The titles for the factors provided in the study included ‘commitment-based HRM’ practices, ‘control-based HRM’ practices and ‘involvement-based’ HRM practices. As organisations evolve their HRM model, the distinction in purpose and application of different practices may provide an avenue for increased employee commitment and discretionary effort. In the current study, involvement-based policies had the greatest overall impact on employee outcomes. In addition, consistent with the ‘best fit HRM’ school of thought (Purcell, 1999), organisations may need to consider the clusters of practices applied in relation to their overall business strategy. Medco, for example, could explore the purpose and contribution of control-based policies in the context of their investment in a commitment-based and involvement-based HPWS.

A third practical implication of the study is the provision of an observable FLM construct as a key part of the HRM system (Boselie et al, 2005). The study makes a significant contribution with regard to reducing ambiguity surrounding the FLM role. Often organisations concerned with employee experiences of work are limited to measuring employee outcomes by way of an attitudinal survey. The present study offers an opportunity to understand the management behaviours in parallel to the employee attitudes. Through observation of the FLM behavioural type in terms of trends and relationship to employee attitude data, the organisation can start to understand how its management approach affects the outcomes. Such knowledge enables informed decision-making on the type of FLM behavioural type the organisation would like to train, develop, recognise, promote and reward.

The final practical implication of note here is the value of understanding reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960) as a key lever in the employment relationship. By helping employees, Social Exchange Theory proposes that organisations can help their own results. The important mechanism of
emotional and work support by both the FLM and the broader organisation can be utilised as a source of motivation, perhaps even replacing more restrictive and costly approaches like performance-related pay.

10.7 Limitations of Research

The study is firstly limited within the boundaries of the constructs that it seeks to expose and measure, knowing that there are many possible antecedents excluded from discussion and empirical measurement. Another significant limitation of the study is the data collection in a single organisational setting. While the findings add to theoretical opportunity, further empirical evidence is required to explore the application in broader organisational and occupational environments. In addition, the cross-sectional nature of this study makes it impossible to observe trends and quantitatively establish causality.

Within the case-study, a survey instrument and questionnaire are chosen as data collection tools. The limitations of this technique include the inability to see additional relationships or relevant variables other than those included in the questionnaire, as well as concern for measurement error (Saunders et al, 2003). While the survey enabled sophisticated statistical analysis in terms of the regression and bootstrapping approach, they too have limitations. In performing general regression, it is important to be cognisant that the tool will provide the direction of causation. Bootstrapping itself has limitations versus the Baron and Kenny (1998) method, in that it is more time-consuming to apply and producing different statistical characteristic outputs each time it is performed (Preacher et al, 2007). The indirect effect sizes estimated in the study cannot be replicated with a bootstrapping technique. This makes study-to-study comparisons difficult.

A further debatable issue, if not empirical limitation, may lie in the assumptions that higher or enhanced employee discretionary effort is somehow a ‘good’ outcome. There is a contrasting perspective that improved performance and discretionary effort are no more than euphemisms
for the exploitative, dynamic of employment relations. Improved HPWS outcomes may ultimately “come to employees at the expense of stress, work intensification and job strain, the latter being a key explanatory factor in improved organisational performance” (Ramsay et al, 2000:505). This raises ethical and theoretical issues as to what is meant by performance and effort, and for whom is the improved outcome intended or designed. These remain contestable spaces and debates within a capitalist system of work. It is necessary, we argue, that these debates are acknowledged and incorporated where possible.

10.8 Recommendations for future research

There there are many opportunities for further research highlighted throughout the study. Three key implications for future research emerge as themes. Firstly, the study recognises the opportunity to improve the application of the research model in future research including further refinement of the FLM behaviour construct; improved construct definition and measurement regarding the state of reciprocity within a relationship; and, greater understanding of the support mechanisms that mediate FLM relationships with employee behaviours and attitudes.

Secondly, the study reveals significant opportunity in the field of HRM to utilise the bootstrapping technique for mediation analysis. This will improve the robustness of analysis, giving a more accurate account of the relationships. The current study provides practical example of the application of the relatively new bootstrapping technique to a study in the area of HRM and performance.

Finally, the current study raises some questions relating to future directions for the field of HRM. In the context of HPWS, a question is raised regarding the specific process of HR policy enactment. The current study provides a behavioural lens through which this topic may be further debated. Similarly, if policies are devolved to the line, what role does the HR function provide? Perhaps, the behaviours of the HR function may be an avenue of further investigation, to leverage the research model presented in the current study. Finally, FLM evidence suggests
the HR department have less of a presence in HR implementation, particularly with advancements in technology. Further investigation could examine changes in HR technology and its impact on the behaviours and perception of the HR function.

10.9 Conclusion

The study sought to further understanding as to how and why the FLM may impact the HRM-Performance link. Following a thorough literature review and empirical case-study, the question is advanced to a new stage of inquiry. The key conclusion of the study is that the FLM impacts the relationship between HPWS and employee behaviours and attitudes in how their role as masters and victims of the HR policies manifests in their behaviour towards employees - and why that in turn leads to the addition or withdrawl of employee discretionary effort mediated by individual perceptions, of which organisational and FLM support are key factors. New avenues of inquiry are introduced by this study including further refinement of the FLM behaviour construct; improved construct definition and measurement regarding the state of reciprocity within a relationship; and, greater understanding of the support mechanisms that mediate FLM relationships with employee attitudes and behaviours. In addition the HPWS context as a commitment based employment relationship may be challenged from a labour process theory perspective which opens further avenues for investigation. In terms of future research methods, the current study provides practical example of the application of the relatively new bootstrapping technique to statistical mediation analysis. Finally, practitioners may benefit from the current study in terms of examining clusters of HRM practices and a review of debilitating policy influences on the FLM behavioural type.
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CONCLUSION


CONCLUSION


Pfeffer, 1994


APPENDICES
## Appendix 1: Hypotheses List

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<tr>
<th>Labels</th>
<th>Text Explanation</th>
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<tr>
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<td>The relationship between Policy Enactment Behavioural Type and Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB) is mediated by Perceived Organisational Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H1a(ii)</td>
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<td>Leadership Behavioural Type is related to Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB)</td>
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<tr>
<td>H3a(i)</td>
<td>The relationship between Leadership Behavioural Type and Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB) is mediated by Perceived Organisational Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3a(ii)</td>
<td>The relationship between Leadership Behavioural Type and Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB) is mediated by Perceived Supervisory Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3b</td>
<td>Leadership Behavioural Type is related to Turnover Intention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3b(i)</td>
<td>The relationship between Leadership Behavioural Type and Turnover Intention is mediated by Perceived Organisational Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3b(ii)</td>
<td>The relationship between Leadership Behavioural Type and Turnover Intention is mediated by Perceived Supervisory Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3c</td>
<td>Leadership Behavioural Type is related to Organisational Commitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3c(i)</td>
<td>The relationship between Leadership Behavioural Type and Organisational Commitment is mediated by Perceived Organisational Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3c(ii)</td>
<td>The relationship between Leadership Behavioural Type and Organisational Commitment is mediated by Perceived Supervisory Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3d</td>
<td>Leadership Behavioural Type is related to Self-Rated Performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3d(i)</td>
<td>The relationship between Leadership Behavioural Type and Self-Rated Performance is mediated by Perceived Organisational Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3d(ii)</td>
<td>The relationship between Leadership Behavioural Type and Self-Rated Performance is mediated by Perceived Supervisory Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H4a</td>
<td>Coaching Behavioural Type is related to Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H4a(i)</td>
<td>The relationship between Coaching Behavioural Type and Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB) is mediated by Perceived Organisational Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H4a(ii)</td>
<td>The relationship between Coaching Behavioural Type and Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB) is mediated by Perceived Supervisory Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H4b</td>
<td>Coaching Behavioural Type is related to Turnover Intention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H4b(i)</td>
<td>The relationship between Coaching Behavioural Type and Turnover Intention is mediated by Perceived Organisational Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H4b(ii)</td>
<td>The relationship between Coaching Behavioural Type and Turnover Intention is mediated by Perceived Supervisory Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H4c</td>
<td>Coaching Behavioural Type is related to Organisational Commitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H4c(i)</td>
<td>The relationship between Coaching Behavioural Type and Organisational Commitment is mediated by Perceived Organisational Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H4c(ii)</td>
<td>The relationship between Coaching Behavioural Type and Organisational Commitment is mediated by Perceived Supervisory Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>H4d</td>
<td>Coaching Behavioural Type is related to Self-Rated Performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H4d(i)</td>
<td>The relationship between Coaching Behavioural Type and Self-Rated Performance is mediated by Perceived Organisational Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H4d(ii)</td>
<td>The relationship between Coaching Behavioural Type and Self-Rated Performance is mediated by Perceived Supervisory Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H5a</td>
<td>FLM Work-group is related to Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H5b</td>
<td>FLM Work-group is related to Turnover Intention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H5c</td>
<td>FLM Work-group is related to Organisational Commitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H5d</td>
<td>FLM Work-group is related to Self-Rated Performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H5(i)</td>
<td>FLM Work-group is mediated by Perceived Organisational Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H5(ii)</td>
<td>FLM Work-group is mediated by Perceived Supervisory Support</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 2: Employee Survey

Dear Survey Participant,

**Purpose:** I, Jennifer McDermott, am a part-time PhD candidate as well as a current employee of Medco. To support my part-time studies, selected Medco sites have given me permission to do some research at their operations. Thank you for agreeing to participate in this survey contributing to a study on the ‘role of front line management’.

**Confidentiality:** Your anonymity will be protected in the survey. No responses are reported individually. All results will be reported as part of aggregate analysis in groups [by manager and by site]. Your answers will be grouped with others.

**Survey:** This questionnaire has 5 sections and it should take approximately 12 minutes to complete. Remember there are no ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ answers. Your answers should be an honest account of your experience in the workplace.

PLEASE COMPLETE ALL SECTIONS, REPLACE IN ENVELOPE AND RETURN TO YOUR LOCAL SURVEY ADMINISTRATOR OR POST BACK TO JENNIFER MCDERMOTT, C/O MEDCO, GALWAY, IRELAND.

My sincere appreciation and gratitude!
Jennifer McDermott

---

### Section 1: Front Line Management Approach

**Important Information:** For the purposes of this survey, "Front Line Manager" relates to the person who you would consider your immediate ‘boss’ in the workplace. For example, they would approve your holiday/vacation time, you would contact them if you were unable to attend work, and they likely review your performance.

- **In the last 6 months, my front line manager has spent time with me (individually) on:**
  - Formal Performance Reviews/Appraisal
  - Training Opportunities
  - Career Development or Educational Opportunities
  - Recognition (Formal and Informal)
  - Rewards or Compensation/Benefits
  - Communication on department goals or targets
  - Disciplinary or corrective action
  - Time keeping and Attendance
  - Following up on employee ideas
  - Rewards or Compensation/Benefits
  - Problem-solving at my area of work

- **Rate your agreement with the following statements**
  - [ ] Strongly Agree
  - [ ] Agree
  - [ ] Neutral
  - [ ] Disagree
  - [ ] Strongly Disagree
  - [ ] Don’t know

  - My front line manager is good at keeping everyone up to date with proposed changes
  - My front line manager is good at providing everyone with a chance to comment on proposed changes
  - My front line manager is good at responding to suggestions from employees
  - My front line manager is good at dealing with problems at the workplace
  - My front line manager is good at treating employees fairly
  - My front line manager provides guidance regarding performance expectations
  - My front line manager helps me analyze my performance
  - My front line manager provides constructive feedback
## CONCLUSION

### Rate your agreement with the following statements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Don't know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20. My front line manager acts as a sounding board for me to develop my ideas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. My front line manager offers useful suggestions on how I can improve my performance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. My front line manager facilitates problem-solving</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. My front line manager encourages me to explore and try out alternatives</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. My front line manager limits my ability to develop and improve</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. My front line manager supports me taking on challenges</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Section 2: Relationships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Don't know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>26. My front line manager cares about my well being</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. My front line manager values my contributions to the organisation’s well being</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. My front line manager cares about my opinions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. My front line manager considers my goals and values</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. My front line manager is willing to help me when I need a special favour</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. My front line manager shows very little concern for me</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. I expect payback if I do my front line manager a favour</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33. Currently, I owe my front line manager nothing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34. At present, I owe my front line manager for all they do</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35. At present, my front line manager owes me for all I do</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Section 3: Organisational Factors

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** For this section, the term 'organisation' refers to the company as a whole.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Don't know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>36. My organisation cares about my well being</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37. My organisation values my contributions to its well being</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38. My organisation cares about my opinions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39. My organisation considers my goals and values</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>40. My organisation is willing to help me when I need a special favour</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41. My organisation shows very little concern for me</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42. I expect payback if I do a favour for this organisation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43. The organisation gives my front line manager the authority to try new things</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44. The organization supports decisions made by my front line manager</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>45. The organization allows my front line manager to run things the way he/she wants</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>46. The organisation gives my front line manager the freedom to determine how they treat me</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Section 4: Employee Outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Don't know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I feel proud to tell people who I work for</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel loyal to my company</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>I share the values of my company</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I will look for a new job in the next year</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I may quit my present job next year</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I may quit my job within the next three years</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>I often think about quitting my present job</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do not see much prospects for the future in this organization</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I help others who have returned to work after being absent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I willingly give my time to help others who have work-related problems</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I adjust my work schedule to accommodate other employees' requests for time off</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I go out of the way to make newer employees feel welcome in the work group</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I give up time to help others who have work or non-work problems</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I rarely assist others with their duties</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I achieve good quality when compared to my peers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have high productivity when compared to my peers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My work group are known as high performers when compared to other similar groups</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My work group achieve our performance targets</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Section 5: Background Information

**Frequent Question on Background:** Why do you need my personal background details for this study?

**Answer:** This information is not used to identify respondents, but it is essential to the success of the data analysis.

**Please answer all questions below**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Options</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is the name of your front line manager?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is your nationality?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which of the following age categories do you fall?</td>
<td>&lt;25 years</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-35 years</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-50 years</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;50 years</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is your gender?</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are you a union member?</td>
<td>Member</td>
<td>Non-member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How long have you reported to (worked for) your current front line manager?</td>
<td>Less than 1 year</td>
<td>1-5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How long have you been employed by this organization?</td>
<td>0-2 years</td>
<td>2-5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which of the following best describes your working hours?</td>
<td>Primary Education</td>
<td>Secondary/High School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which of the following best describes your employment contract?</td>
<td>Permanent</td>
<td>Temporary</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX #3

Appendix 3: Employee Focus Group Questionnaire

Introduction

- Purpose of Study
- Identity Protection & Confidentiality
- Use of recording device and transcription
- Willingness to Participate

Biographical Information

- Gender
- Age
- Tenure
- Employment Contract
- Nationality
- Education
- FLM name

(Documented on survey extract by each participant)

Questions to guide focus group discussion

1. Briefly describe your FLM’s leadership approach?
2. What is your experience of FLM involvement in HR Practices?
3. What is your experience of FLM in helping you to improve performance and solve problems at work?
4. What is your experience of support received from FLM?
5. What is your experience of support received from organization?
6. Do you think of the FLM represents the organization or does their own thing?
7. Do you think the FLM plays a role in what effort you decide to give to organization? Why (not)?
8. Do you think the FLM affects your willingness to stay with the company or to look for other work? Why (not)?
9. Do you think that the FLM affects your commitment to this company? Why (not)?
10. Do you feel like you owe your FLM for what they do for you? Why (not)?
11. Do you think all employees have the same perception of the FLM? Why (not)?
Appendix 4: Front Line Manager Questionnaire

Introduction

- Purpose of Study
- Identity Protection and Confidentiality
- Use of recording device and transcription
- Willingness to Participate

Biographical Information

- Gender
- Age
- Tenure
- Employment Contract
- Nationality
- Education

Questions to guide focus group discussion

1. Briefly describe your leadership approach?
2. What is your involvement in HR Practices?
3. Do you spend time helping employees to improve performance and solve problems at work?
4. Do you think you have a role in supporting employees? Why?
5. What is your experience of support employees receive from organisation? How is it different from what you do?
6. To what extent do you think you represent the organisation in your work? Why?
7. Do you think you impact what effort employees decide to give to organisation? Why (not)?
8. Do you think you affect employees’ willingness to stay with the company or to look for other work? Why (not)?
9. Do you think you affect employees’ commitment to this company? Why (not)?
10. Do you feel like you owe employees for what they do for you? Why (not)?
11. Do you feel like the employees owe you for all you do for them? Why (not)?
APPENDIX #5

Appendix 5: Example of Focus Group Transcript

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q</th>
<th>Why do you think that the supervisor ends up rushing the performance review? Have you any insight into that?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>I think that it might be to do with the workload. I think they may leave it to the very last minute, until the deadline date. I found them to be a very general review and they use certain lines and they are very general and not very personal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q</td>
<td>Ok and you think workload would be the reason?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>I am not sure but I know when people ask when is the review coming up they get the answer “I’ll get to it, I haven’t time this week”. I have to get to them by…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q</td>
<td>So you think it is workload</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Yes I would think so</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q</td>
<td>Do you have any other thoughts other than workload?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Not sure they see the value of it. They do a performance review but does that review come up if you are doing an interview. Is it something that is just there on file we have done a performance review box checked. They feel it part of the company policy to complete this.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 7: Bootstrapping Approach

This bootstrapping approach was used to code the following macro which was used in the study.

Each macro, once written, is run 1000 times to produce the direct effect data. This produces 1000 rows with a column for each effect. Using CALC function, the relevant columns were then multiplied together to produce ab effect. This ab effect is used to test for mediation.

```
#Hib (1) POS LB OCB 28th MTE
#samples 613 observations
Sample 613 'Survey No.' '-c Employment Contract' & 'Survey No.' '-c Employment Contract'
Replace.
Name c75 'COEFL2'
# performs regression for OCB and stores coefficients
GReg 'OCB' = 'FLM Leadership Behaviour' 'c Facility';
Constant;
Confidence 95.0;
Tolerance 1.0E-12;
Coding -1;
T equation;
Coefficient 'COEFL2'.
# transposes coefficients into a row
Transpose 'COEFL2';
Store c39 c40 c41 c42.
#Stacks coefficients for each run on top of one another
Stack c34 c39 c38.
Stack c35 c40 c35.
Stack c36 c41 c36.
Stack c37 c42 c37.

Name c39 'COEFL1'
# performs regression for OCB and stores coefficients
GReg 'OCB' = 'FLM Leadership Behaviour' 'c OCB';
Constant;
Confidence 95.0;
Tolerance 1.0E-12;
Coding -1;
T equation;
Coefficient 'COEFL1'.
# transposes coefficients into a row
Transpose 'COEFL1';
#Stacks coefficients for each run on top of one another
Store c39 c40 c41.
Stack c34 c39 c38.
Stack c35 c40 c35.
Stack c36 c41 c36.

#Name the coefficient columns
Name c91 'OCE-OCED1' c92 'OCB-OCED2' c93 'OCE-OCED2' c94 'PSS-OCED2' c95 'PSS-OCED3'
```

256
Appendix 8: Biographical Statistics for Survey Respondents

The following graphical analysis was used to analysis the demographic data. Through this analysis the characteristics of the sample population were understand.

Respondent Location

![Pie Chart of Galway/Tijuana](image)
Respondent Nationality

![Chart of Respondent Nationality](image)

Respondent Gender

![Pie Chart of Gender](image)
Respondent Union Membership

![Graph showing Respondent Union Membership by Facility](image)

Respondent Education Level

![Pie chart showing Respondent Level of Education](image)
Respondent Age Distribution

Respondent Length of Time Working for FLM
Respondent Length of Time Working for Medco

Respondent Working Hours (Full-time or Part-time)
Respondent Contract of Employment

- **Temporary**: 62, 10.1%
- **Agency**: 89, 14.5%
- **Permanent**: 453, 73.9%
- *****: 9, 1.5%
Appendix 9: Example of a Matrix Plot

The matrix plot presented below is an example of the graphical analysis used to accompany the internal reliability study on each factor scale. In this case, the scale is Commitment which has three factors Q46, Q47, Q48. The slope of the line indicates the relationship between the three items on the scale. The cronbach alpha statistic is calculated from this. Graphical analysis is used to understand the pattern and reasons related to the cronbach alpha result.
## Appendix #10: Scale Sources and Items

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Factors/Items</th>
<th>Sources</th>
<th>Cronbach Alpha</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Policy Enactment Behaviour| In the last 6 months, my front line manager has spent time with me (individually) on:  
  **Control-based Enactment**  
  Time-keeping & Attendance  
  Disciplinary /Corrective Action  
  **Commitment-based Enactment**  
  Formal Performance Appraisal  
  Training Opportunities  
  Career Development or Educational Opportunities  
  Recognition (Formal/Informal)  
  Rewards, Compensation/Benefits  
  **Involvement-based Enactment**  
  Following up on employee ideas  
  Problem-Solving at my area of work | Adapted from Huselid (1995), Applebaum et al (2000) (Wording refined for Research Context during pilot) | 0.8547 |
| Leadership Behaviour      | **5 Items**  
  My front line manager is good at keeping everyone up to date with proposed changes  
  My front line manager is good at providing everyone with a chance to comment on proposed changes  
  My front line manager is good at responding to suggestions from employees  
  My front line manager is good at dealing with problems at the workplace  
  My front line manager is good at treating employees fairly | Adapted from Purcell & Hutchinson (2007) | 0.8909 |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agency Behaviour</th>
<th><strong>FLM Authority Behaviour</strong></th>
<th>0.696</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The organisation gives my front line manager the authority to try new things</td>
<td>Adapted from Eisenberger et al (2002)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The organisation supports decisions made by my front line manager</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FLM Autonomy Behaviour</strong></td>
<td>The organisation allows my front line manager to run things the way he/she wants</td>
<td>0.808</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The organisation gives my front line manager the freedom to determine how they treat me</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaching Behaviour</td>
<td><strong>Employee Voice Coaching</strong></td>
<td>0.856</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>My front line manager acts as a sounding board for me to develop my ideas</td>
<td>Adapted from Heslin et al (2006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>My front line manager offers useful suggestions on how I can improve my performance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>My front line manager facilitates problem-solving</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>My front line manager encourages me to explore and try out alternatives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>My front line manager supports me taking on challenges</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Managerial Focused Coaching</strong></td>
<td>My front line manager provides guidance regarding performance expectation</td>
<td>0.868</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>My front line manager helps me analyse my performance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSS</td>
<td>My front line manager cares about my well being</td>
<td>Adapted from Eisenberger et al (2002)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>My front line manager values my contributions to the organisation's well being</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>My front line manager cares about my opinions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>My front line manager considers my goals and values</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>My front line manager is willing to help me when I need a special favour</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>My front line manager shows very little concern for me</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POS</td>
<td>My organisation cares about my well being</td>
<td>Adapted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Statement</td>
<td>Source</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>My organisation values my contributions to its well being</td>
<td>from Eisenberger et al (2002)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>My organisation cares about my opinions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>My organisation is willing to help me when I need a special favour</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>My organisation shows very little concern for me</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OCB</td>
<td>I help others who have returned to work after being absent.</td>
<td>Adapted from Coyle-Shapiro et al (2002)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I willingly give my time to help others who have work-related problems</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I adjust my work schedule to accommodate other employees’ requests for time off</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I go out of the way to make newer employees feel welcome in the work group</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I give up time to help others who have work or non-work problems</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I rarely assist others with their duties</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>I feel proud to tell people who I work for</td>
<td>Adapted from Purcell &amp; Hutchinson (2007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I feel loyal to my company</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I share the values of my company</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turnover Intention</td>
<td>I will look for a new job in the next year</td>
<td>Adapted from Kuvaas (2006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I may quit my present job next year</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I may quit my job within the next three years</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I often think about quitting my present job</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I do not see much prospects for the future in this organization</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>