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Positive Workplaces – Positive People? Factors contributing to positive individual and workplace outcomes

Year of lodgement: 2025

Faculty of Business, Economics and Law, School of Management

A thesis submitted to Auckland University of Technology in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor used artificial intelligence tools or generative artificial intelligence tools (unless it is clearly stated, and referenced, along with the purpose of use), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Also, I declare that I am the principal author of the jointly authored manuscripts listed below and have engaged in the initial conceptualisation of the research, development of the research idea, research design, data collection, analysis, initial writing up, journal article submission, and journal revise and resubmits where applicable. All data analysis and results were confirmed by my supervisors. The co-author/s, who are my Primary and Secondary Supervisors, have assisted in the development of the research idea, research design, clarification of analysis, editing, commenting on drafts and assisting with the review process. The agreed percentage contribution or each manuscript is given at the end of each reference/title of manuscript in parentheses, in the same order as the authors are listed below.

Sarah McCallum Dated: 31st March 2025

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Associate Professor Barbara Myers

Chief Supervisor

Professor Jarrod Haar

Secondary Supervisor

Following is the list of all five paper/manuscripts undertaken for this thesis:

Paper 1:

McCallum, S., Haar, J., & Myers, B. (2023). Enhancing the employee experience: Exploring a global positive climate to influence key employee outcomes. *Evidence-Based HRM: A Global Forum for Empirical Scholarship*, https://doi.org/10.1108/EBHRM-03-2022-0070 (McCallum 80/Haar 15/Myers 5).

Regarding the specific extent and nature of my contribution to this manuscript, I completed the initial conceptualisation of the paper, development of the research idea, design, data collection, analysis, initial writing up, journal article submission, and journal revise and resubmits where applicable. All data analysis and results were confirmed by the Secondary Supervisor (Professor Jarrod Haar). The co-author/s, who are my Primary and Secondary Supervisors, have assisted in the development of the research idea, research design, clarification of analysis, editing, commenting on drafts and assisting with the review process.

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Chapter Number:	**Chapter Four**
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Haar	**Conception and design of the project or output; Acquisition of research data where the acquisition has required significant intellectual judgement, planning, design, or input; Contribution of knowledge, where justified, including Indigenous knowledge; Analysis or interpretation of research data; Drafting significant parts of the research output or critically revising it so as to contribute to its quality and interpretation.**
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Paper 2:

Enhancing the employee experience: Influencing employee behaviors and attitudes through a global positive climate (McCallum 80/Haar 15/Myers 5).

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Paper 3:

A new social exchange theoretical approach to organizational climates: A qualitative approach to understand what employees want (McCallum 80/ Myers 10/ Haar 10).

Regarding the specific extent and nature of my contribution to this manuscript, I completed the initial conceptualisation of the paper, development of the research idea, design, data collection, analysis, initial writing up, journal article submission, and journal revise and resubmits where applicable. All data analysis and results were confirmed by the Primary Supervisor (Associate Professor Barbara Myers) and the Secondary Supervisor (Professor Jarrod Haar). The co-author/s, who are my Primary and Secondary Supervisors, have assisted in the development of the research idea, research design, clarification of analysis, editing, commenting on drafts and assisting with the review process.

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Paper 4:

What do employees really want from their workplace: A qualitative study focusing on HR practices (McCallum 85/Haar 15).

Regarding the specific extent and nature of my contribution to this manuscript, I completed the initial conceptualisation of the paper, development of the research idea, design, data collection, analysis, initial writing up, journal article submission, and journal revise and resubmits where applicable. All data analysis and results were confirmed by the Secondary Supervisor (Professor Jarrod Haar). The co-author/s, who is my Secondary Supervisor, has assisted in the development of the research idea, research design, clarification of analysis, editing, commenting on drafts and assisting with the review process.

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Paper 5:

Worth the investment? Using reflective practice to explore Leadership Development Programs (McCallum 80/Myers 10/Haar 10).

Regarding the specific extent and nature of my contribution to this manuscript, I completed the initial conceptualisation of the paper, development of the research idea, design, data collection, analysis, initial writing up, journal article submission, and journal revise and resubmits where applicable. All data analysis and results were confirmed by the Primary Supervisor (Barbara Myers) and the Secondary Supervisor (Professor Jarrod Haar). The co-authors, who are my supervisors, have assisted in the development of the research idea, research design, clarification of analysis, editing, commenting on drafts and assisting with the review process.

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Full ethics approval was granted by AUTEC for this study on 18 November 2021 (AUT 21/426 Wellbeing@Work: Positive Workplaces – Positive People? Factors contributing to positive individual and workplace outcomes).

Abstract

This thesis is comprised of five related, but distinct, studies contributing to the field of positive psychology and positive organizational behavior knowledge and theory. Positive psychology is well known, and it has an offering that supports individual flourishing as well as organization flourishing, the focus being what is good and right in our world, as well as on an individual's strengths. More specifically this thesis focuses on available positive improvements within organizations for increasingly beneficial organizational and individual outcomes. This thesis contemplates and gives evidence for the benefits of focusing on positive climate and psychological constructs in our workplaces (Papers 1 and 2) and then offers possible strategies to create increasingly positive workplace environments (Papers 3 to 5). Strategies to improve our workplaces are important as globally we face many challenges and disruption such as geo-political and environmental challenges, technology challenges and constant change, which have an impact on our workplaces.

Within this thesis, I conducted five separate studies (papers) using a mixed methods approach (Plano Clark, 2016). Paper 1 (n=1007) and Paper 2 (n=872 employees experiencing change) included New Zealand employees of all types across a range of industries from different organizations. These first two studies use quantitative data to show the potential positive outcomes from an overall global positive climate model made up of inclusion, wellbeing support, psychosocial safety, worthy work, and organizational mindfulness. Paper 3 (n=435) and Paper 4 (n= 245) used qualitative data on employee comments to understand what employees see as the important themes or activities organizations could undertake to improve both the organizational climate or culture to aid positive organizational behavior (Paper 3) and their human resource practices (Paper 4). Finally, Paper 5 seeks to align with the positive organizational behavior literature and explore the potential of an intervention. Paper 5 considers the possibility of practically developing positive workplaces, and uses a reflective practice approach, to both explore and reflect on the positive psychology intervention of a leadership development program (LDP). The premise being that HR interventions or LDPs primary objective is to develop leaders so they can contribute to developing global positive climates and work environments.

Overall, the thesis findings provide evidence that positive psychology theory is worth considering as a framework to develop organizations and encourages organizations to focus on (and examine) their workplace cultures and environments to consider possible improvements. Also, the thesis offers a deeper understanding of the opportunities that positive workplace factors may bring towards enhancing work behaviors and work outcomes, including performance. It also highlights an area of positive organization behavior and creating more 'positive workplaces' as a future possibility as well as confirming their benefits and positing that positive psychology and positive organizational behavior are worth practicing; and that there are abundant opportunities to enhance the employee experience.

CHAPTER ONE: Introduction

Positive psychology and the benefits from positivity, such as 'thinking positive', have been recognised since the time of ancient Greek philosophy in the West and to Confucius and Lao-Tsu in the East (Peterson, 2006). Peterson (2006) notes that these ancient philosophers questioned the following: what is the good life? Is virtue its own reward? What does it mean to be happy? Is it possible to pursue happiness directly or is it a byproduct of other pursuits? What roles are played by other people and society as a whole? More recently, but still centuries and millennia ago, religious leaders (e.g., Jesus, the Buddha, Mohammed), and Thomas Aquinas, among others, posed deep questions about the meaning of the good life and its attainment (Peterson, 2006). For researchers, positive psychology is the scientific study of what is right in life. It considers emotions, strengths, processes, conditions, and relationships that foster optimal flourishing of people, groups, and institutions (Waters et al., 2022). For example, the Pygmalion effect, is a type of self-fulling prophecy involving a group or person acting in accordance with the expectations of another where high expectations lead to improved performance and people's moods, and notes that expectations can influence other behaviors (Kierein & Gold, 2000). Positive psychology adopts a strength-based generative and prosocial view of human capacities (Waters et al., 2022). Previously, psychology has had a sole preoccupation with psychopathology, scientific study of mental disorder, the negative and dysfunctional. Current positive psychology philosophy focuses attention on how positivity and practical actions, for example such as a gratitude practice or a continued focus on building our strengths, will make a difference in our lives and the lives of others (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000), the fathers of modern-day positive psychology challenged the emphasis, basis and status quo towards negative psychology philosophy and conceptualised modern day positive psychology, arguing positive psychology can help us understand ourselves and others as well as being able to support humans to live a more peaceful and contented life. They further argued that positive psychology has the potential to enable humans to find a sense of inner peace and support individuals to accept their thoughts and live with themselves (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Situated in the present day and considering the current extreme and challenging global context, i.e., the meta-crisis described as interconnected crises including climate

change, countries ravaged by war zones, economic hardship, the 2020 global pandemic and geopolitical and technological disruptions (Ernst & Young, 2023; World Economic Forum, 2023), humans more than ever need to be supported at work to do their best. This thesis asks: *does positive psychology philosophy have the potential to support humans at work and support workplaces when dealing with the current global realities that affect the global population and if so, what are the practical applications to ensure a positive employee experience and other positive organizational outcomes including performance*. Here we consider the potential benefits of positive psychology in the workplace and offer practical insights that may provide useful suggestions around supporting humans at work.

Background and Context

Peterson (2006) gives an overview of positive psychology in his book *A Primer in Positive Psychology*, and more relevant here for this thesis is the discussion regarding the 'good workplace' and the psychological significance of the work that we do. He argues the work that individuals/we do often defines who they/we are, as it consumes more than one third of the average adult's waking hours and provides the answer to one of the most important individual identities. Work in its broadest sense must also be placed in its historical and cultural context. The meaning of work to an individual varies according to societal conditions. During a recession or depression, workers are simply grateful to be employed; during prosperous times, workers are less satisfied and more willing (because they are more able) to explore alternates to their current jobs (Peterson, 2006). Peterson (2006) argues that a 'good workplace' would treat employees as individuals and not 'just a pair of hands' and ensure a human connection and concern for their employees as well as their families. Furthermore, he argues that organizations ought to place people in jobs that allow them to do their best and promote staff who are honest, good listeners and treat customers as individuals. Finally, Peterson stresses that organizations must honour their commitments to both employees and customers.

Positive psychology might have secrets to share that support us managing our mental health through these meta crises and more so within organizations and workplaces (Waters et al., 2022). As the world of work continues to change, for example, as ChatGPT and other AI tools become more common within workplaces, job roles are in flux and new work types are constantly evolving (Gartner, 2023; Brougham & Haar, 2024). Heightened disruption is becoming more of the status quo and

organizations working with disruption as an advantage rather than a threat will be able to make the most of the evolving environments. Both academia and industry recognise the impact of the current workplace environments on employees and performance, and, as this thesis will argue, there is an opportunity to focus on positive aspects such as personal and professional growth and a positive emotional journey for both leaders and employees, contributing to the future success of individuals and organizations. Waters et al. (2022) argue that individuals can endure high levels of distress e.g., during pandemic and war and yet still experience positive mental health, feel healthy, function well and do good.

In fact, in 2021 the University of Oxford and Ernst & Young (2021) teamed up to complete their transformation and disruption study and argue that leaders need to recognise their own inner emotional journeys, positive or negative, as being impactful on their followers. Using disruption as a vehicle to become familiar with their inner worlds, they are able to make an investment in self-transformation and will be better able to support and lead employees through change (University of Oxford & Ernst & Young, 2021). Other authors such as Kellerman and Seligman (2023) also discuss how individuals can thrive at work considering current challenges such as the meta-crisis, automation and AI, globalisation and down-sizing. The authors argue that, in spite of this urgent inescapable reality, individuals should be able to not only survive but thrive when leaders cultivate a positive workplace that fosters connection and meaning and see that positive workplace environments are part of our solution to thriving in our uncertain world (Kellerman & Seligman, 2023).

This thesis focuses on determining the benefits of positive psychology practices within the workplace and offers practical insights that may enhance success. Firstly, the thesis considers which positive organizational climates are most important for positive behaviors, attitudes and workplace outcomes. As well as whether the influence of these climates differs if the focus is positive workplace outcomes or well-being outcomes. Secondly, this thesis considers the best ways to improve organization climates and a related factor (specifically human resource practices) and offers possible strategies for climate, environment and human resource practice improvement. The thesis concludes by exploring an intervention based on positive psychology to understand how individuals and organizations might develop positive leaders and positive environments. The current global work context and competitive labour market warring for quality talent amongst other things, has led employees to desire more positive

workplace environments as well as employee self-development and growth, which obviously has reciprocal benefits for both the employee and employer. Many organizations complete workplace interventions focused on leadership development or other personal growth aspects with the hope of developing their managers and employees. Although the intention is noble, the literature confirming the effectiveness of people interventions and their return on investment to the organization is scarce (Leroy et al., 2023) As leaders contribute to climate perceptions and the overall impact on the employees, leadership development and climate perceptions are important.

This research uses two major theoretical frameworks: (1) Social Exchange Theory (SET), which captures the way people respond (felt obligations) to more positive support; and (2) the Conservation of Resources Theory (COR), which reflects how people use, gain, and lose resources. The research comprises five studies representing five Papers (AUT's PhD Pathway 2). Papers 1 and 2 gathered quantitative data around the various climates, and individual factors, to determine the influence on job, behavior, and well-being outcomes. The research has focused on a selection of positive workplace factors, and their relationships to individual factors and then ultimately how these factors interact with each other to create positive outcomes (Papers 1 and 2). The factors have positive outcomes for both individuals and organizations. Thus, determining these linkages will strengthen the understanding of how organizations can enhance their performance via building and maintaining positive work environments which contribute to enhancing individual resources or factors. Aligned with the Positive Organizational Behavior (POB) Scholarship, these individual factors are potentially able to be increased by other methods, for example, employee selection and training.

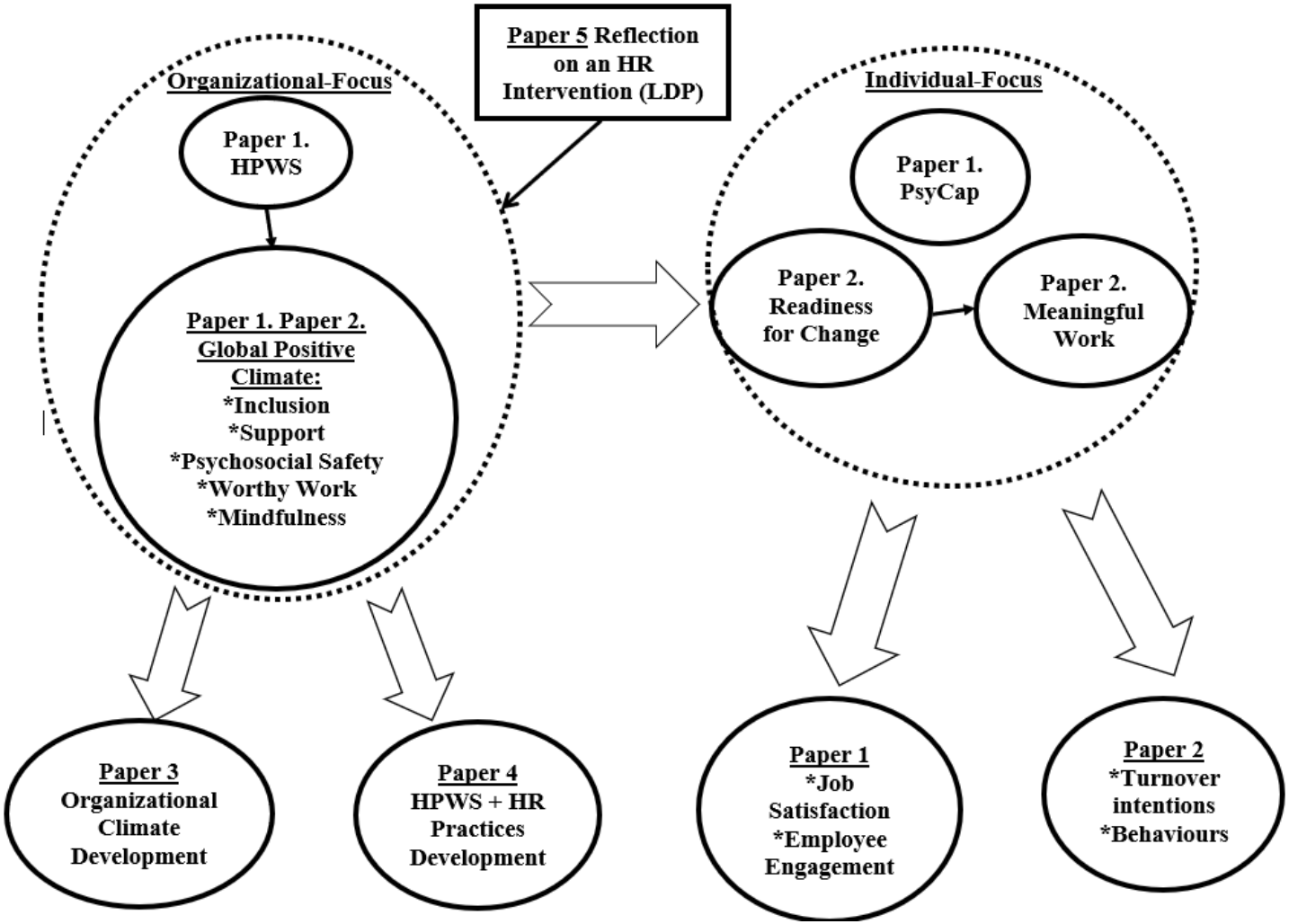
Papers 3 and 4 build on the findings of Papers 1 and 2 (specifically an organizational climate based on POB), with Paper 4 specifically targeting exploring which human resource practices are currently most important to employees due to positive directions from Paper 1. Thus, Paper 3 gathered practical insights into positive organizational climates and Paper 4 gathered practical insights into human resource practices, with both studies having a focus on potential improvements to climates and human resource practices. Papers 1, 2, 3 and 4 all provided direction and informed Study 5, which using a reflective practice methodology has focused on exploring and reflecting on a positive psychology intervention (Paper 5). The intervention was a leadership development program focused on increasing

leadership effectiveness. Using reflective practice, I reflect on and explore the leadership development program and its potential to develop leaders and subsequently the organization. Overall, the first two papers confirm that positive workplaces are worth investing in, and the final three papers offers practical insights as to how organizations and leaders might go about this.

It is hoped that findings from these studies will be useful to develop strategies to support organizations to perform better and ensure improved work and personal outcomes for their employees. Below is a summary of the research. It is anticipated that the factors below will contribute positively to the employee experience and performance (e.g., employee well-being and engagement, attendance, and organizational citizenship behaviors) and employee wellbeing. Ultimately, these factors should contribute positively to overall organizational performance.

Figure 1. Overall Study Model

The following study model provides an overview of the research:



In summary this thesis is made up of five Papers:

- **Paper 1**. Influence of climate factors and individual factors (including interactions) towards job outcomes. This study uses a positive organizational behavior approach and conservation of resources theory to explore a global positive climate (GPC) encompassing five climates: perceived organizational support, psychosocial safety climate, organizational mindfulness, worthy work, and inclusion climate. The GPC is used to predict employee engagement and job satisfaction, with psychological capital (PsyCap) as a mediator. Beyond this, high performance work systems (HPWS) are included as a moderator of GPC to test the potential way HR Practices might interact with positive climates to achieve superior outcomes. There was broad support for the model.
- **Paper 2**. Influence of climate factors and individual factors (including interactions) towards employee attitudes and behavior outcomes. This sample focuses on employees experiencing some form of workplace change. This study explores a global positive climate (GPC) encompassing five climates: perceived organizational support, psychosocial safety climate, organizational mindfulness, worthy work, and inclusion climate. The GPC is used to predict turnover intentions and organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs), with meaningful work as a mediator. Beyond this, Readiness for Change (RFC) is included as a moderator of GPC and ultimately a moderated mediation model is tested. There was broad support for the model.
- **Paper 3**. Practical climate insights (qualitative data) were collected to determine the most important organizational climate/s and opportunities to improve and enhance them. A suite of common themes emerged from the data, providing useful insights for practitioners to consider and implement to improve organizational climates. Further, it provides evidence of the benefits of creating a positive organizational climate for both employers and employees. Data was collected in the context of a volatile and changing labour market and issues around the global pandemic. Findings highlight new learnings on how to develop and embed positive organizational climates from an employee perspective. The data collection reflected respondent ideas around what their organization could do to improve their organizational cultures. The

themes were (1) well-being, (2) personal growth, (3) positive leadership, and (4) inclusion. The study provided insights into developing organizational climates in New Zealand.

- **Paper 4.** Practical climate insights (qualitative data) were collected to determine the most important Human Resource practices and opportunities to improve and enhance these practices. The findings provide useful insights for HR practitioners to consider as opportunities for positive organizational improvements relating to HPWS. Themes identified were (1) fundamental HR practices, (2) recruitment and retention practices, (3) training and development, and (4) emerging HR practices. The insights fill an 'employee voice' gap in the literature, regarding opportunities for improvements to current HR practices which likely can enhance and improve organizations. The study provided insights into developing HR Practices in New Zealand.
- **Paper 5.** Using the information from Studies 1, 2 and especially Studies 3 and 4, using reflective practice, I reflected on and explored a leadership development intervention to understand our ability to improve and enhance organizational climates via HR interventions. This study explores reflections of a leadership development program (LDP) and the possible effect on leadership development. These findings provide useful theoretical insights for researchers and practitioners to consider and potentially implement in order to improve LDPs and/or HR interventions and the successful outcomes of these interventions. While support for the intervention was mixed, the study did raise issues around evidence and future research implications.

Research Question(s)

Overall, the thesis, through the five studies, explores the following research questions:

1. What role does organizational climate play on positive individual factors and workplace outcomes? What climates are important to create a positive organizational behavior climate? And what effect does the level of HR practices provided play?
2. In the New Zealand context, is there a dominant organizational climate/s that shape/s positive employee perceptions (psychological capital, meaningful work, and readiness for change)?

3. Do positive workplaces (climate) and positive people (psychological) have a cumulative (interaction) effect on important employee job outcomes (specifically job satisfaction, work engagement, job performance, employee retention of top talent) and wellbeing (mental health, job burnout)?
4. Can organizational climate be enhanced? How?
5. Can evidence be found to show that leadership effectiveness can be developed using a positive psychology approach?

Summary

- Chapter 1, this current chapter highlights the importance of positive workplaces. and briefly discusses what the broad literature around this topic focusses on. The chapter also sets out the approach and structure of the thesis along with the key contributions to theory and practice.
- Chapter 2 firstly focuses on gaps in the literature and then concludes with an introduction of theory and key theoretical approaches and other related constructs.
- Chapter 3 overviews the methodologies and samples used in each of the Papers (Chapters Four to Eight).
- Chapters 4 and 5 (Papers 1 and 2) explore the possibility of a global positive climate and outcomes. These chapters are followed by Chapters 6 and 7 (qualitative Papers 3 and 4) which examine the possible approaches to create positive workplaces explored in Papers 1 and 2. Chapter 8 (Paper 5) reflects on a positive HR intervention and the success of this intervention.
- Finally, to conclude, Chapter 9 provides a general discussion and highlights the overall contributions of the thesis along with implications, limitations, and future research directions.

CHAPTER TWO: Literature Review and Theoretical Approaches

This chapter overviews the current literature. Firstly, it discusses the principal foundation Positive Organizational Behavior (POB) scholarship and then the associated gaps in the research. Secondly, it gives a background to the theoretical approaches that the thesis has utilized, built on, and contributes to, following with an overview of the constructs that may be used to build global positive climates. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the possible positive outcomes of these constructs being developed and maintained within environments and workplaces. The strategy used to find literature for this thesis was via a search using scientific databases (e.g., ProQuest, Google Scholar etc.). As the thesis progressed, new literature was included where applicable in this literature chapter as well as individual Papers and this included the literature around methodology and theoretical approaches.

The POB scholarship provides a principal foundation to this study and is the study of positively orientated human resources' strengths and psychological capabilities that can be measured, developed, and effectively managed for performance improvement in today's workplace (Avey et al., 2010). POB does have some tenets that must be met. First, it must be based on theory, and second, must focus on state- like as opposed to trait-like individual characteristics. Third, studied constructs must be open to development, and have some form of performance impact. The present study uses Social Exchange Theory (SET) and Conservation of Resources Theory (COR) as the theoretical foundations to assess the positive psychology effects.

Gaps in the research

The literature is rich with studies exploring organizational climates and the effect on employee outcomes (e.g., Wallace et al., 2016) but seldom do these studies focus on multiple climates simultaneously (for an exception see Wang & Hsieh, 2013). For example, most studies on perceived organizational support (POS) are focused solely upon that construct as the climate (or organizational) level of focus (see Kurtessis et al., 2017). Further, there are meta-analyses around High-Performance Work Systems (HPWS) influencing outcomes (e.g., Combs et al., 2006) but few studies explore HPWS in combination with organizational climates. Theoretically, both these examples (POS,

HPWS) represent distinct constructs but are positionally quite related. Indeed, in their meta-analysis, Kurtessis et al. (2017) found links between favourable human resource practices and POS, although HPWS are not specifically addressed. Furthermore, some studies address organizational factors but then exclude individual factors or vice versa and it is the exception that includes both (e.g., Luthans et al., 2008). While the organizational factors are dominant in the literature, especially POS (Eisenberger, et al., 1986), psycho-social climate (Dollard & Bakker, 2010) and high-performance work systems (e.g., Combs et al., 2006), there has been much less attention given to other climates, especially those with strong links to positive psychology. This includes organizational mindfulness (e.g., Ray et al., 2011) and climates focusing on worth and purpose (e.g., Lips-Wiersma et al., 2020). The argument in this research is these less popular climates may provide unique insights to employee outcomes currently unknown.

Theoretically, organizational climate dimensions such as POS and HPWS are linked to social exchange theory or SET (Blau, 1964). Reciprocation is an aid that reinforces giving by the originator, and individuals will seek to reciprocate in ways that their effort will be noticed by the originator (Blau, 1964). Hence, organizations provide positive climates such as around worth and purpose (see Lips-Wiersma et al., 2020) and this psychologically encourages employees to reciprocate with enhanced work attitudes and behaviors (see Haar & Spell, 2004). To address the gaps between organizational and individual factors being explored, the present study also explores individual factors of psychological capital, readiness for change, and meaningful work. These factors align well with the positive psychology approach to understanding employees (e.g., Luthans, 2002; Meena et al., 2023). Again, while studies have explored these individual level factors towards employee outcomes (e.g., Avey et al., 2011) the addition of organizational-level factors has been modest (e.g., Luthans, et al., 2008). Indeed, combinations of organizational factors with combinations of individual factors represents a large gap in the literature, and one this research seeks to explore. This thesis explores organizational and individual factors, as well as a path model regarding these factors ultimately predicting positive employee behavior (job performance and retention) and other positive employee experience outcomes such as well-being, work engagement, and job satisfaction. These make up the focus of Paper 1 and Paper 2.

Furthermore, as there are fewer studies around improving organizational climate and human resource practices, this thesis aims to lessen the gap between theory and practice by using employee feedback to determine potential solutions around improving the emerging culture and human resource practices. Again, there are a limited number of studies confirming the effectiveness of organizational interventions, and even fewer of these have focused on positive interventions specifically. Due to the opportunities positive psychology climate factors present, along with the evidence and benefits shown in Papers 1 and 2, this thesis argues that there would be benefit in working towards a global positive climate, but the question offered up by Papers 1 and 2 is: how are these climates created within our workplaces? Papers 3 and 4 offer opportunities and practical implications for possible culture and human resource management improvements that might be implemented by human resource professionals and leaders. Once these improvements have been identified as they have been in Papers 3 and 4, Paper 5 explores if these interventions are effective, Paper Five contributes to understanding if, and how, interventions may contribute to making a real positive impact on organizational culture and outcomes.

Theoretical Approaches

Next, I provide a brief explanation and introduction to the theoretical approaches used in the thesis.

Social Exchange theory (SET)

Social exchange theory (SET) originated within the field of social psychology and focuses on a basis of social exchange within a relationship. The theory agrees with the old wise saying 'one good turn deserves another' or another way to describe this is the energy that is invested into a relationship will be, theoretically, reciprocated by the receiver. Blau (1964) argued the premise being that reciprocation is an aid that reinforces giving by an instigator and individuals will naturally seek to reciprocate in ways that their effort will be noticed by the instigator (Blau, 1964). SET is based on the norm of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960), when the employer and employee apply the norm of reciprocity to their relationship, favourable treatment from either party is then reciprocated which leads to beneficial outcomes for both parties (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). When an

organization treats an employee well, theoretically the employee will feel an obligation to reciprocate – for example they may go the extra mile, perhaps they would improve their performance, and say positive things about their employer. Haar and Spell (2004) refer to this as a felt obligation, where employees are psychologically prompted to respond positively to positive employer actions. However, the same applies if employees perceive their wellbeing is of no concern to the organization, they are likely to put less effort into their jobs, complain, and pursue other opportunities outside the organization. Thus, this explains why forms of organizational climate can lead to employees reciprocating with enhanced outcomes (e.g., Kurtessis et al., 2017). SET is well utilized in the climate literature for understanding why employees reciprocate positively to a beneficial climate (e.g., POS, Kurtessis et al., 2017). SET is explored further in Papers 1, 2, 3 and 4.

Conservation of Resources theory (COR)

The COR theory explores a human response to managing stress and the motivation to beneficially manage resources in order to minimise and manage stress. This may mean maintaining, gaining, or losing resources. The theory was proposed by Hobfoll (2001) and defined resources as "objects, personal characteristics, conditions, or energies that are valued in their own right, or that are valued because they act as conduits to the achievement or protection of valued resources" (p. 339). In relation to organizations and workplace relevance according to the COR theory, positive organizational climates may provide employees with enhanced resources to enable them to better perform and manage their wellbeing. The COR theory discusses the resource caravan approach, which suggests that "both the interrelationship between resources and how environments and contexts create fertile or infertile ground for creation, maintenance, and limitation of resources" (Hobfoll et al., 2018, p. 107). Hence, exploring organizational climates in combination with individual factors is encouraged as there is a drive to understand resources, not individually, but in relation to other resources and factors (Hobfoll, 2011; Hobfoll et al., 2018). Theoretically COR enables us to look at multiple factors and their contribution from other factors or resources, for example a psychosocial safety climate is a work environment resource that employees are able to draw from, enabling higher work engagement. Those employees with higher psychological capital also have a stronger reservoir of resources to draw

on (Ghafoor & Haar, 2021), leading to increased readiness for change and more resources to draw on which leads to higher work engagement. The COR theory is explored further in Paper 2.

The next section outlines the various climates and work, and individual factors used in the thesis – specifically Paper 1 and Paper 2. See those Papers for more detail.

Climate Dimensions

Climate Level Factors

This section details the literature on the five positive climates used in this thesis to develop what is called the global positive climate: Inclusion Climate, Perceived Organization Support (POS), Psychosocial Safety Climate (PSC), Worthy Work and Organizational Mindfulness as detailed below:

Inclusion Climate

Within the context of fair treatment to all employees and the positive outcomes of this treatment, there is growing attention towards equality and inclusion in the workplace with respect to differences in gender, age, culture, and religion (Fine & Sojo, 2019). Inclusion has theoretical origins in the field of social psychology. Shore et al. (2011) discuss inclusion as humans identifying with in-groups and out-groups. They argue that it is an individual's acceptance and their sense of connection with others that prevents isolation and exclusion in the workplace. Their definition of inclusion is "the degree to which an employee perceives that they are an esteemed member of the work group through experiencing treatment that satisfies their needs for belonging and uniqueness" (Shore et al., 2011, p.1265). The authors go on to review and discuss seven definitions of inclusion and find two common themes: belongingness and uniqueness. This tension between belongingness and uniqueness is an underlying theme in the inclusion literature. This approach to inclusion has been used to base other inclusion related climates including perceived cultural inclusion (Haar & Brougham, 2022) and team-based inclusion climate (Chung et al., 2020).

Providing support for all employees is essential, given both the high level of cultural diversity within workplaces globally (Findler, et al., 2007) and the benefits of good diversity management (Ely & Thomas, 2001, Park et al., 2023). There is a lack of empirical support towards inclusion in

organizational research (Gip et al., 2024; Ryan & Kossek, 2008; Shore et al., 2011). This research will include an inclusion climate construct which we define as relating to the way organizations openly acknowledge employees' cultural backgrounds, values, and beliefs. Importantly, inclusion has strong theoretical alignment with SET (Shore et al., 2011). Organizations are able to show support for inclusion through promoting difference, and demonstrating understanding, tolerance, and support for cultural needs and obligations (Shore et al., 2011). An inclusion climate has many positive individual and organizational outcomes including job satisfaction, organizational commitment, task effectiveness, job performance, well-being, psychological safety, retention, engagement, and creativity (Mor Barak, et al., 2016; Shore et al., 2011).

Perceived Organizational Support (POS)

Perceived organizational support (POS) has developed and evolved from a range of psychological theories, some of which include ideals such as social exchange, fairness and social justice. Just as SET describes, individuals will seek to reciprocate in ways that their effort will be noticed by the originator (Blau, 1964; Gouldner, 1960), thus, POS is a beneficial construct for organizations with many positive outcomes, as the more an employee feels supported from an organization the more beneficial behaviors the employee will enact. POS is an individual's developed beliefs "concerning the extent to which they believe their organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being" (Eisenberger et al., 1986, p. 501). POS is usually associated with an organizational culture that values fairness, supervisor support, organizational rewards, and favourable job conditions (Eisenberger et al., 1986). The greater the employee's perception that their organization cares about their wellbeing, the more significant the return for the organization. POS has the ability to influence and impact many positive organizational outcomes such as increased positive employee perceptions, commitment and mood, motivations, engagement, performance, reduced absenteeism and turnover intention (Liao, et al., 2009; Riggle, et al., 2009; Saks, 2006; Sulea, et al., 2012), and meta-analytic support (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002; Kurtessis et al., 2017).

Psychosocial Safety Climate (PSC)

Psychosocial safety climate (PSC) is defined by Dollard and Bakker (2010) as the nature and the perception of senior management's protection of worker psychological health and safety and freedom from psychological and social risk or harm in the workplace. PSC is influenced by senior management and may include policies, practices and procedures for the protection of workers psychological health and safety (Dollard & Bakker, 2010; Hall, et al., 2010). PSC is an 'upstream', macro level factor which is also related to important factors 'downstream' including psychological job demands and worker engagement (Dollard & Bakker, 2010; Hall et al., 2010). Some suggest using PSC as a lead indicator of workplace bullying and harassment, job resources, psychological health, and employee engagement (Idris, et al., 2014).

Under COR theory, PSC represents access to job resources. Thus, low, or high PSC represents access to low or high levels of resources around supervisor support, procedural justice and so on (Law et al., 2011). Higher levels of PSC relate to lower emotional demands at work, and lower PSC related to high emotional demands at work. A high PSC environment shows the commitment to prevention of work stress and promotion of psychological health. Involvement and participation at all levels of the organization is crucial for stress prevention; and psychological health is at least on equal footing with production goals (Hall et al., 2010). Researchers consider that understanding organizational context, specifically the PSC enables us to predict work conditions (emotional demands) and psychological health outcomes (emotional exhaustion and depression) in employees. Research shows support for positive PSC impacting positive psychological outcomes (Bergheim et al., 2013; Hystad et al., 2014; Idris et al., 2014; Law et al., 2011).

Worthy Work

People search daily for purpose and meaning. Organizations would do well to consider how they can co-create purpose and meaning for individuals that work for them. Now more than ever organizations must put emphasis on renewed focus and decision making that considers people, the planet, and prosperity, and at the forefront consider profit with purpose models (Stahl et al., 2020). Lips-Wiersma

et al. (2020) define Worthy Work (WW) as not only arising when one is subjectively attached to the outcome of one's work, but also in order for one's work to be meaningful it has to have an independent value to society. Ciulla (2012) suggests a set of objective criteria for WW as "jobs in which people help others, alleviate suffering, eliminate difficult, dangerous or tedious toil, make someone healthier and happier, aesthetically or intellectually enrich people or improve the environment in which we live. All work that is worthy does at least one of these things in some big or small way" (p. 127).

Organizations may focus on profit and neglect the stakeholder aspect; however, organizations exist to support the communities in which they operate, and leaders need to ensure this happens (Stahl et al., 2020). Lips-Wiersma et al. (2020) and Steger and Dik (2009) both found WW and purpose to be positively related to meaningful work dimensions and outcomes. In addition, research conducted by Leal et al. (2015) focuses on how employee's perceptions of taking care of their discretionary responsibilities towards communities and the environment may make employees happier and psychologically stronger. The authors found that employees with increased positive perceptions of those responsibilities develop increased PsyCap and have a stronger sense of more meaningful work.

Organizational Mindfulness

Organizational mindfulness is the last climate used in the present study. Organizational mindfulness is considered to be a "state of mind or mode of practice that permits questioning of expectations, knowledge, and adequacy of routines in complex and not fully predictable social technologies and physical settings" (Jordan et al., 2009, p. 468). Organizational mindfulness does not exclude or oppose the idea of routines but may in fact build upon routine action. Ray et al. (2011) posits five main organizational processes that are found within mindful organizations: a pre-occupation with failure, a reluctance to simplify interpretations, sensitivity to operations, a commitment to resilience and a deference to expertise. Vogus and Sutcliffe (2012) consider organizational mindfulness as the extent to which an organization captures discriminatory detail about emerging threats and creates a capability to act in response to these details. Leaders that use the five mindfulness processes themselves are able to create cultures that encourage rich thinking and capacity for action. Organizational mindfulness is a top-down process, creates the context for thinking and action on the front line and like 'culture' it is a

relatively enduring property of an organization (Vogus & Sutcliffe, 2012). Mindful organizations have unique and adaptive processes and behaviors, avoid accidents, actively seek to know what they don't know, learn from mistakes, pay attention to detail and maintain the capacity to act (Lee & Liu, 2024). Given the influence of mindfulness to wellbeing outcomes noted above, this climate might be especially relevant for employee wellbeing outcomes.

Additional Organizational Factor

High-Performance Work Systems (HPWS)

HPWS are defined as "systems of human resource (HR) practices designed to enhance employees' skills, commitment, and productivity" (Datta, et al., 2005, p. 135). These practices may include recruitment, learning and development, remuneration and benefits practices for example. Research supports the 'bundle' effect (meaning HRM practices linked together) as having a stronger effect on outcomes rather than individual HRM practices in isolation (Dyer & Reeves, 1995; Combs et al., 2006). HPWS have also been defined as "the systematic use of mutually reinforcing human resource management (HRM) practices which have an emphasis on selecting the 'right' employees, developing their skills, organizing work so that employees have the discretion to solve problems creatively" (Harley, et al., 2007, pp. 608-9). I use the term HPWS although I acknowledge there are other potential terminologies used in the broad HPWS or HR practices literature (Boxall & Macky, 2014), such as high-involvement work processes (e.g., Lawler, 1986) or high-commitment practices (Boxall & Macky, 2009).

Stahl et al. (2020) also consider the links between HPWS and worthy or meaningful work, and there is a natural link as internal HRM fosters employee commitment to and engages with worthy work activities and opportunities. HPWS have been found to relate positively to many work outcomes such as climate perception, productivity, meaningful work, increased motivation and engagement, well-being, reduced burnout, quality of life, job satisfaction, organizational performance, reduced turnover, performance outcomes and financial success (Bartram, et al., 2012; Bowen & Ostroff, 2004; Boxall & Macky, 2014; Collins & Clark, 2003; Combs et al., 2006; Delaney & Huselid, 1996; Fan et al., 2014; Gelade & Ivery, 2003; Huselid, 1995; Huselid et al., 1997; Kehoe & Wright, 2010; Ketkar & Sett, 2009;

Macky & Boxall, 2008; Shen, et al., 2014; Haar & Harris, 2023). This study sees HPWS as a key core organizational factor to explore in relation to other climates and individual factors.

Individual Factors

The next section details the literature on the three individual factors examined: Psychological Capital (PsyCap), Meaningful Work and Readiness for Change (RFC) as detailed below:

Psychological Capital (PsyCap)

PsyCap is made up of four positive constructs, which together are more powerful than the sum of their parts: hope, efficacy, resilience, and optimism. Hope is defined by Snyder et al. (1991) as "a positive motivational state based on an interactively (a) derived sense of successfulness (b) agency (goal-directed energy) and (c) pathways (planning to meet goals)" (p. 287). Stajkovic and Luthans (1998) define self-efficacy as an "individual's belief in their abilities to mobilize the motivation, cognitive resources, and courses of action needed to successfully execute a specific task within a given context" (p.66). Luthans (2002) defined resilience as the ''positive psychological capacity to rebound, to 'bounce back' from adversity, uncertainty, conflict, failure, or even positive change, progress and increased responsibility" (p. 702). Optimism is defined as "people expect good things to happen to them" (Snyder & Lopez, 2009, p. 231). PsyCap is an important pool of psychological resources (i.e., hope, confidence, resilience, optimism) from which employees can draw in times of challenge and within the context of COR theory, we use PsyCap as a psychological resource and it specifically can act as a 'psychological reservoir' (Ghafoor & Haar, 2021), whereby high PsyCap refers to individuals with an abundance of resource to draw on.

In the meta-analysis by Avey et al. (2011), they analysed data from 51 samples and 12,567 employees, and found PsyCap positively correlated to job satisfaction, well-being, commitment, reduced turnover, higher tolerance for stress and anxiety, combating negative emotions or reactions. Evidence shows that PsyCap has a positive influence on desired outcomes such as managing organizational readiness for change and acceptance, leadership outcomes, engagement, customer satisfaction, and business excellence (Bonner, 2016; Cunningham et al., 2002; Eby et al., 2000; Hsu et

al., 2014; Lizar et al., 2014; Loghman et al., 2024; Paek et al., 2015; Roche et al., 2014; Thompson et al., 2015; Zhen et al., 2024).

Meaningful Work

There are many definitions of Meaningful within the literature such as being able to see or comprehend the relationship of ones' contribution to a larger purpose (Sarros, et al., 2002). A teacher might see their role of teaching ten-year-old students as 'shaping the future of society', thus they can see a much broader focus of their work beyond their immediate tasks. Shuck et al. (2011) defined meaningful work as "job and other workplace characteristics that facilitate the attainment or maintenance of one or more dimensions of meaning" (p. 510), while Spreitzer (1995) defined it as "meaning is the value of a work goal or purpose, judged in relation to an individual's own ideals or standards, Spreiter's definition and 3-item measure has been used within this thesis. Meaning involves a fit between the requirements of a work role and beliefs, values, and behaviors" (p. 1443). Maynard et al. (2012) defined meaningful work as "the fit between one's work goals and beliefs or values; in other words, it is an individual's extent of caring about a task" (p. 1235). Work that serves others and makes a difference can help to make work feel meaningful (Lips-Wiersma & Morris, 2009). Work relationships can also contribute to meaningful work (Harpaz & Fu, 2002). Meaningful work has been found to relate positively to motivation and personal growth, work satisfaction, employee engagement, job performance (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009; May, et al., 2004; Scroggins, 2008; Shuck, et al., 2011; Wrzesniewski, et al., 1997; Lips-Wiersma et al., 2023). Ghafoor and Haar (2019) used COR theory to show that meaningful work acted as a resource under the COR theory and had a positive influence on creativity behaviors.

Readiness for Change (RFC)

Change is a dynamic but constant factor in organizational life (Brazzale et al., 2021). Emery and Trist (1965) discussed dynamic forces influencing change as constant, including strategy developed from culture and history, a deepening dependence on economic and other facets of society (legislation and regulation) and an increasing reliance on research and development. Vakola (2013) argued "rather than creating readiness each time the organization attempts to implement change, readiness could be

perceived and 'invested' in as a constant state, which is conceived as a core competency to cope with continuous changing external, as well as internal, conditions" (p. 103). Armenakis et al. (1993) state that "readiness for change may act to pre-empt the likelihood of resistance to change, increasing the likelihood for change efforts to be more effective" (p. 682). Holt and Vardamn (2013) posit expanding our conceptualisation of readiness to move beyond single change instances and considering that we are instead in a constant state of ongoing complex interactions, multiple changes are occurring within organizations simultaneously and ongoing.

Organizations and strategy are constantly reviewed and improved, and there are often multiple changes happening at once (Choi & Ruona, 2011). This is supported by recent research conducted by Brazzale et al. (2021), which found that employee perceptions of change refer to it as being constant rather than intermittent (and that data was pre-COVID-19). Indeed, within the current global pandemic caused by COVID-19, we have organizational change at unprecedented levels. While the perception may be that readiness for change has become even more topical with the 2020 pandemic events, researchers found that employee perceptions of change were commonplace before the pandemic disruptions during 2020. Organizational members may be actively involved in multiple change initiatives which are episodic or intermittent in nature (e.g., work process change) or incremental, emergent, and continuous (e.g., culture change (Weick & Quinn, 1999). In order to create ideal positive organizational climates in the midst of constant change, organizational should start with HPWS as foundational best policies, procedures, and processes, as these all contribute to employee perception of the climate. Once a positive organizational climate is established, leaders are able to predict or influence individual factors such as PsyCap and Readiness for Change.

Positive Outcomes

The present thesis explores a number of positive outcomes. It is expected that a range of positive outcomes will be influenced through combinations of the above global positive climate, organization and individual factors. These outcomes include but are not limited to employee engagement and performance, talent retention and employee well-being, an intentional all-encompassing positive employee experience as well as many benefits to the organization. For example, Nielsen et al. (2017)

see HPWS as being crucial to promoting organizational performance through a positive influence on employee well-being, from a mutual gains' perspective enhancing job satisfaction. Avey et al. (2010) suggest taking a positive approach to organizational behavior is more than just considering employees as a means to the desired ends of higher organizational productivity. In order to make a truly valuable contribution to the field and the mission of positive organizational behavior, the authors further suggest that organizations must also include the pursuit of happiness, health and betterment as viable goals or ends in themselves (Avey et al., 2010).

It is expected the Global Positive Climate (GPC) will influence a range of positive outcomes; specifically, Paper One focuses on the positive outcomes of job satisfaction and employee engagement. Weiss (2002) defined job satisfaction as "a positive (or negative) evaluative judgment one makes about one's job or job situation" (p.175), while Shuck et al. (2017) define employee engagement "as an active, work-related positive psychological state" (p.954), with cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions. Paper two focuses on the GPC influencing positive employee attitudes and behaviors, specifically lower turnover intentions and higher OCBs. Studies have identified the high costs of employee turnover (see Bret Becton et al., 2009; Tillman et al., 2018), making it an important factor to test. OCBs are valuable employee behaviors because they enhance organizational success by freeing up resources, make an organization a more attractive place to work, and enhance an organization's ability to adapt to environmental changes (Podsakoff et al, 2000). Thus, organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs) are valuable and desirable in organizations because they shape performance (Lowery & Krilowicz, 1996).

Researchers in Occupational Health and Health Psychology demonstrate well-being is impacted by psychological capital (Paper 1) (Avey et al., 2011), with researchers showing that job performance is highest when employees report high scores on both psychological capital and job satisfaction (Paper 1) (Luthans et al., 2008; Luthans & Yossef, 2007). Many researchers have found positive health outcomes as a positive outcome of positive readiness for change (Paper 2) (Oreg et al., 2011; Ferrie, et al., 1995) as well as the opposite. For example, negative attitudes to change can have a negative impact on an employee's well-being and lead to lower job satisfaction and higher turnover intentions, job burnout, stress, and depression (Wenberg & Banas, 2000; Armenakis & Bedian, 1999; Cunningham et

al., 2002; Law et al., 2011). My research aims to demonstrate that organizations have ample opportunities to consciously improve climate factors, invest in individuals to increase their personal resources, and reap the rewards of positive outcomes including performance goals and positive employee experience outcomes. Overall, the outcomes used in this research include job satisfaction, employee engagement (Paper 1), turnover intentions and organizational citizenship behaviors (Paper 2).

Summary

Building positive workplaces and considering the inclusion of the above factors for the stated outcomes may be attractive in theory, but practically to ensure the execution of multiple climates simultaneously needs strategic thought and effort to ensure beneficial implementation can be especially challenging. Papers 1 and 2 seek to provide evidence for why leaders may be interested in building these workplaces, Papers 3 and 4 explore how organizations and their leaders can build these workplaces and where to focus and discusses what employees want and are looking to develop within their workplaces and culture. Paper 5 considers the challenges of exploring a POB intervention with a view to evaluating current human resource practice and interventions to consider strengths, challenges and a return on investment. Finally, throughout the thesis there is a need to be cognisant of placing too much focus on improvements that benefit employees without an adequate return (or social exchange) from employees back to the organization (e.g., higher productivity). The premise remains that there ought to be a fair and reciprocal exchange of energy between employee and employer. It is important to note that positive workplaces are unable to be cultivated in isolation without social exchange from both parties. In order to develop a positive workplace as well as sustained business success, a connection must exist between a positive employee experience and high performance. Positive workplaces are not built when there is a lack of employee performance, nor should they be built to compensate for a lack of employee performance, instead as of equal value to performance, i.e., where a performance climate already exists.

CHAPTER THREE: Thesis Methodology

This chapter overviews the methodologies used in Papers 1 to 5 (Chapters 4-8). This encompasses an outline of the various samples, the process of analysis, and the overall limitations and potential issues associated with these methodologies. However, a more detailed discussion is covered in each Paper. This thesis draws on a mixed-methods approach, ensuring a combination of research breadth and depth; exploring theoretical models, as well as more practical implications, scholars emphasize the distinct strengths of these two approaches and argue that when addressing complex research problems, they are considered as complementary (Plano Clark, 2016). The overall purpose and central premise of mixed methods is that the use of quantitative and qualitative approaches in combination may provide a better understanding of research problems and complex phenomena than either approach alone (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007; Plano Clark, 2016). This mixed method approach accommodates the complexities of human behavior and positive psychology applied in real world settings (Plano Clark, 2016).

This study takes a quantitative approach to test theorical relationships at scale for Papers 1 and 2, a qualitative approach to understand what employees value for Papers 3 and 4, and a reflective approach to explore practical perspectives for Paper 5. Moreover, Appendix 4 identifies where each of the empirical Papers has been presented at conferences and reviews that were received to develop and improve these papers. Appendix 4 also notes which Paper has been published, which Papers have a revise and resubmit, and which Papers are currently out under review.

Rationale for Thesis Design

This thesis was completed by manuscripts (papers) and the following points justify the overall research design:

Papers 1 and 2 (quantitative)

One of the key foci of this research is to examine the influence of a climate construct based on positive psychology, towards providing evidence that a positive organizational climate might enhance employee

outcomes. I chose to explore multiple climates due to this being identified as a major gap in the climate literature, to test if they could conceptually be classified as a Global Positive Climate (GPC), made up of five dependent but likely related climates. The two empirical Papers (Papers 1 and 2, Chapters 4-5) are designed to focus on this positive psychology climate construct (in combination) and empirically test the influence of this climate predictor on job outcomes including employee engagement and job satisfaction, as well as turnover intentions and organizational citizenship behaviors. Papers 1 and 2 also include employee attitudes of psychological capital (Paper 1) and readiness for change and meaningful work (Paper 2).

Papers 3, 4 and 5 (qualitative)

Building on the insights gathered in Papers 1 and 2, the subsequent Papers focused on examining practical climate insights using qualitative data to determine the most important organizational climate/s and opportunities to improve and enhance them (Paper 3) as well as the most important Human Resource practices and opportunities to improve and enhance them (Paper 4). The rationale was that there is potentially a wide range of responses to answer questions around improving and enhancing organizational climate and human resource practices, which necessitates the collection of qualitative data collection and analysis. The qualitative papers (Papers 3 and 4, Chapters 6 and 7) are designed to focus on relevant and current key themes in greater depth and analyse these from an employee point of view rather than using already established constructs. Paper 5 (Chapter 8) uses a reflections approach to draw understanding from a positive psychology training intervention.

The overall focus of the thesis has been to examine the possible beneficial effects of positive psychology within workplaces, using a range of research methods. Quantitative methods are used in Papers 1 and 2 where the overall global positive climate (GPC) measures themselves are confirmed and then the benefits on outcomes are empirically supported. Papers 3 and 4 set out to understand from an employee's perspective what might be needed in workplace environments to build increasingly positive workplaces and human resource practices, thus qualitative data methods have been employed to capture

these insights. Finally, for Paper 5, reflective practice has been used to confirm findings and recommendations are made for future research.

Table 1. Thesis Methodology Overview

Paper	Methodological Approach	Sample Provider	Sample Size	Analysis
1	Quantitative survey. Employee data to test a statistical model.	Cint.	N=1007. Cross sectional study.	Moderated Mediation
2	Quantitative survey. Employee data to test a statistical model.	Cint.	N=872. Cross sectional study.	Moderated Mediation
3	Quantitative survey. Employee data to elicit qualitative comments on organizational climate.	Cint.	N=500. N=479 responses received, N=435 usable.	Interpretative Phenomenological Analytic
4	Quantitative survey. Employee data to elicit qualitative comments on HR Practices.	Cint.	N=300. N=222 usable responses received.	Interpretative Phenomenological Analytic
5	Reflections on a LDP intervention (see Paper 5 for details).	Researcher reflections	29 participants in the LDP. Followed over time.	Reflective practice

Methodological details

Paper 1: A quantitative survey, n=1007, of New Zealand workers across a wide range of occupations and industries, using representative data of the New Zealand workforce (e.g., see Haar, 2023). This Paper found global positive climate to be significantly related to psychological capital, employee engagement and job satisfaction. Beyond this, high performance work systems (HPWS) are included as a moderator of GPC to test the potential way HR practices might interact with positive climates to achieve superior outcomes. Ultimately, a moderated mediation model was tested using PROCESS in SPSS.

Paper 2: A quantitative survey, n=872, of New Zealand workers undergoing any form of change at work was collected. This was a sample of New Zealand workers across a wide range of occupations and industries, using representative data (e.g., see Haar, 2023). This Paper found global positive climate to be significantly and beneficially related to meaningful work, turnover intentions (lower), and OCBs (higher). Meaningful work was also found to predict these behaviors, and partially mediates the influence of GPC, although it remained significant. The moderator (readiness for change) was also found to play a key role. Ultimately, a moderated mediation model was tested using PROCESS in SPSS.

Paper 3: This was part of a quantitative survey of New Zealand workers across a wide range of occupations and industries, using representative data (e.g., see Haar, 2023) and was targeted qualitative questions around organizational climate development. Ultimately, n=435 New Zealand employee's qualitative comments were captured to understand climate improvement opportunities. This Paper provides much needed empirical evidence of the benefits of creating a positive organizational climate for both employers and employees and how this might be achieved. Findings highlight new learnings on how to develop and embed positive organizational climates from an employee perspective.

Paper 4: This was part of another quantitative survey of New Zealand workers across a wide range of occupations and industries, using representative data (e.g., see Haar, 2023) and was targeted towards

drawing our perceptions and comments around the development of human resource practices. It is distinct from Paper 3 data. Ultimately, n=222 New Zealand employee's qualitative comments were captured. This Paper focused on Human Resource practices to enhance the employee experience. Data was collected in the context of a volatile and changing labour market and issues around the global pandemic. The findings provide useful insights for HR practitioners to consider as opportunities for positive organizational improvements relating to HPWS, with several themes identified. The insights fill an 'employee voice' gap in the literature, regarding opportunities for improvements to current HR practices which likely can enhance and improve organizations.

Paper 5: Reflective practice was used to explore the effectiveness of a leadership development program (LDP), more specifically using the DATA reflective practice model (Peters, 2009). The DATA model is a framework which requires the researcher or practitioner to move through four distinct stages i.e. Describe; Analyze; Theorize and Act (make recommendations) in order to understand and evaluate an experience or an initiative such as a LDP. Reflections from each of the nine phases of the LDP were explored using the four step DATA method to make sense of the program and to answer the research questions. The lead author was present but not engaged in all four of the LDP modules, the final presentation session and management session. The perceptions and reflections of the lead author were collated and then analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). There was a total of 9 reflection opportunities during the course of the LDP. Once the initial themes were elicited from each phase, these were then collated across all the phases and discussed with the second author. Next, the thematic analysis of the reflections was independently checked by the third author. This process also involved checking in with the LDP literature (e.g., Holt et al., 2018; Vitello-Cicciu et al., 2014) to consider if and where the themes resonated with commentary in the extant literature.

Samples

Data for the thesis Papers 1 to 4 were collected in New Zealand in late 2021 and early 2022 using multiple Cint survey panels. The provider offers access to a large database of potential New Zealand

respondents who are invited to participate if they meet specific qualifiers (for more details see Haar, 2021). For each sample, the qualifiers were:

(1) being in paid employment;

(2) being aged 18 years and over; and

(3) working a minimum 20 hours/week.

These were selected – especially the 20 hours per week minimum, to ensure that participants worked a sufficient proportion of time in their organization to enable them to provide insights. Cint data provides representative samples of the New Zealand workforce and includes a broad spread by age, gender, and geography, as well as a range of industries and occupations.

For each study, recommendations for online panel surveys were followed (see Bernerth et al., 2021). These are utilised to ensure the quality of the online survey data is adequate. The two-step process was:

(1) screening respondent time (removing survey responses that are too slow/fast – typically those below or above 30% of the median times), and

(2) using an instructed response item to screen out respondents (e.g., "For this question, answer disagree only") – with an incorrect answer seeing respondents removed.

Both these requirements were utilized across all surveys.

Finally, I note that meta-analytic evidence (Walter *et al.,* 2019) shows that data from panels versus traditional methods (e.g., postal survey) don't significantly differ. As such, data by a panel provider was used because it was relatively fast and efficient (although high cost) and this was a pragmatic choice given the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic was still being felt in New Zealand workplaces.

Limitations

Single time self-reported nature (Papers 1 to 4)

The single-time self-reported nature of the data from Papers 1 to 4 raises potential for common method bias (CMB), with Podsakoff et al. (2003) advocating several post-hoc remedies, such as the Harman's One-Factor Test as a useful post-hoc test. In the quantitative surveys (Papers 1 and 2), an unrotated

factor analysis was conducted in both samples, with the explained variance being less than a third in both studies, which is below the 50% threshold (Podsakoff et al., 2003). This alleviates some concerns. More importantly, Evans (1985) showed CMB was much less likely in the presence of moderation effects, and significant moderation effects were found in both Paper 1 and Paper 2, as well as additional support for moderated mediation effects. Combined, these moderation effects in both Papers 1 and 2 further alleviate concerns that CMB was an issue. However, it is acknowledged that separating outcomes over time might have been a useful remedy (see Podsakoff et al., 2003), although this brings in additional issues around time, cost, and reduced sample size. Overall, the studies have large and varied samples in Papers 1 and 2, and sizeable samples and diversity in Papers 3 and 4. Together, they reflect a diverse range of professions and industries, aiding confidence in generalizing the findings. Finally, Paper 5 used multiple waves of data and different sources of data to navigate CMB issues.

Qualitative data (Papers 3, 4 and 5)

There were two types of qualitative data collection. Papers 3 and 4 are tapping into an existing survey and asking questions that elicited qualitative responses; therefore, the author was unable to probe further to understand the depth of the participants' answers. Thus, there was a limitation around the detail, and context of the comments. For example, there is no opportunity to delve deeper into interesting comments as an interview would allow. Future research may include in-depth interviews or other qualitative data collection methods on climates to ascertain depth and give further context and richness to this topic. The focus of papers 3 and 4 were to capture a broad range of comments on organizational climate development (Paper 3) and human resource practice development (Paper 4) to bolster confidence in the qualitative comments, which does differ from typical qualitative interviews in the number of respondents. Ultimately, this is a trade-off between quantity and quality.

Paper 5 uses reflective practice which has the potential to be used as a general management research tool and also as a framework to ensure on the job learning (Kirkham, 1997). It has strengths in that it is a process that can be used in real time as a situation unfolds as well as retrospectively and it also can be used when reflecting on an event that has gone well or failed (Smith et al., 2015). Although

it is fit for purpose for an evaluation and broad-brush process of understanding and assessment, it does lack empirical measurement and associated evidence and confidence. Adding such data to future LDP evaluations would be complementary to the current research. As noted earlier, this approach was a pragmatic solution to the choices of the LPD assessor and senior management to not be directly interviewed in the intervention, although they agreed for me to be present in all nine phases and reflect on their comments and actions.

Chapter Conclusions

This chapter has briefly outlined the methodology for the thesis and rationale for the study design, taking a mixed methods approach, ensuring a combination of research breadth and depth, and outlines both quantitative and qualitative methods used within the thesis. The overall purpose and central premise of mixed methods is that the use of quantitative and qualitative approaches in combination may provide a better understanding of research problems and complex phenomena such as human behavior than either approach in isolation (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007; Plano Clark, 2016). The chapter then goes on to briefly explain the methodology for Papers 1-5 included in this thesis (Chapters 4-8). A more fulsome explanation of each methodology can be found within each Paper. The chapter also included a summary table outlining the various methodology overviews of all the Papers. Finally, it goes into further detail regarding the sample sizes, the limitations of the methodologies, for example, data set, data analysis, and how these limitations are countered using different methodological techniques.

The next five chapters (Chapters 4-8) each present an individual Paper that investigates the importance of positive work climates and how to potentially create these climates. The final Paper uses reflective practice to explore and evaluate how a Leadership Development Program (LDP) creates a positive climate for leaders to grow and develop in the workplace. This thesis then concludes with an overall discussion of the research study and implications with a final conclusions chapter completing the thesis.

CHAPTER FOUR: PAPER 1. Enhancing the employee experience: Exploring a global positive climate to influence key employee outcomes

Preface

The first objective was to test the possibility of a global positive climate and its subsequent effect on positive employee outcomes. Consequently, Paper 1 explores the global positive climate which is made up of five positive climate factors and is in theory considered to be a possible overall positive climate. This climate scale is also used in Paper 2. The interest and rationale of Paper 1 is that it first tests the possibility that it may be worth building positive climates (and through that, workplaces), and if so, then can provide supporters of positive psychology specific direction around shaping climates. Paper 1 includes human resource practices as a moderator, psychological capital as a mediator – which aligns well with positive organizational behavior – and focuses on outcomes of job satisfaction and employee engagement. Ultimately, a moderated mediation model is tested.

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PAPER 1. Enhancing the employee experience: Exploring a global positive climate to influence key employee outcomes

Purpose – Organizational climates reflect employee perceptions of the way organizational culture is actualized and most studies explore one or two climates only. The present study uses a positive organizational behavior approach and conservation of resources theory to explore a global positive climate (GPC) encompassing five climates: perceive organizational support, psychosocial safety climate, organizational mindfulness, worthy work, and inclusion climate. The GPC is used to predict employee engagement and job satisfaction, with psychological capital (PsyCap) as a mediator. Beyond this, high performance work systems (HPWS) are included as a moderator of GPC to test the potential way HR Practices might interact with positive climates to achieve superior outcomes.

Design/methodology/approach – A large sample (n=1007) of New Zealand workers across a wide range of occupations and industries. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) of the data was used and moderated mediation tests were conducted.

Findings – GPC is significantly related to PsyCap, employee engagement and job satisfaction, and while PsyCap also predicts the outcomes, and has some mediation effects on GPC influence, GPC remains significant. HPWS is significantly related to PsyCap only and interacts with GPC leading to the highest PsyCap and employee engagement. Significant moderated mediation effects are found, with the indirect effect of GPC increasing as HPWS increase.

Research limitations/implications – This research is important because it provides empirical evidence around a GPC and shows how organizations and HRM managers can enhance key employee attitudes through building a strong climate and providing important HR practices.

Originality/value – Beyond unique effects from GPC, the findings provide useful theoretical insights towards conservation of resources theory.

Keywords: global positive climate; psychological capital; job satisfaction; employee engagement; high performance work systems; moderated mediation.

Introduction

Organizations face global threats from the Covid-19 pandemic, low unemployment, and high turnover rates, and these ultimately challenge the ways of working and organizational power distribution shifting in favour of employee over employer preferences. Luthans (2002) suggested positive organizational behavior (POB) offers potential solutions for organizations seeking to meet changing employee demands. A positive organizational climate (POC) may be key to enhancing employee's positive perceptions of their workplaces and ultimately shaping key positive employee outcomes (here job satisfaction and employee engagement). POCs are an important determinant of organizational outcomes and central to most models of organizational behavior (Rogg *et al.,* 2000). These chosen employee outcomes are linked to higher job performance (Judge *et al.,* 2001) and superior firm performance (Harter *et al.,* 2002).

Climates are important as they are a collective perception of the work environment and attempt to understand how employees experience their organizations. The concept of organizational climate has inspired many descriptions and operationalization's (Patterson *et al.,* 2005; Schneider *et al.,* 2013). The literature is replete with studies exploring organizational climate towards employee outcomes (e.g., Wallace *et al.,* 2016) but seldom do studies focus on multiple climates simultaneously (for exceptions see Wang and Hsieh, 2013; Rogg *et al.,* 2000). Several organizational factors dominate the literature, especially perceived organizational support (POS, Eisenberger *et al.,* 1986), and psychosocial safety climate (PSC, Dollard and Bakker, 2010). However, other climates have received much less attention. This includes organizational mindfulness (e.g., Ray *et al.,* 2011) and worthy work (e.g., Lips-Wiersma *et al.,* 2020). This paper argues that combined, these climates may provide useful insights to employee outcomes.

To capture POB, the present study offers the concept of a Global Positive Climate (GPC) using five different positively orientated climates: POS, PSC, Worthy Work, Inclusion Climate, and Organizational Mindfulness. We offer the GPC as a global climate option that highlights and supports organizations under POB, which offers a holistic positive climate as an enhancer of the overall employee

experience. We use Conservation of Resources (COR) theory to understand how GPC can shape positive employee attitudes, arguing positive climates provide additional resources to make employee work experiences better. For example, organizations that provide positive climates around worth and purpose (see Lips-Wiersma *et al.,* 2020) provide resources that employees can expend to enhance their work attitudes.

Aligned with POB, Psychological Capital (PsyCap) is included as a theoretically driven mediator, because PsyCap represents a positive psychological approach to understanding employees (see Luthans *et al.,* 2007a). PsyCap enjoys meta-analytic support towards employee outcomes (Avey *et al.,* 2011), but the role of PsyCap in combination with organizational climates has seldom been explored (for an exception see Luthans *et al.,* 2008). Finally, HR practices have been found to link with organizational climate (e.g., *Rogg et al.,* 2000) and thus high-performance work systems (HPWS) are included as a moderator due to its established benefit (e.g., Combs *et al.,* 2006). HPWS are explored in combination with PGC. Our POB approach means organizations should include the pursuit of happiness, health, and betterment as viable goals instead of focusing solely on employee productivity (Avey *et al.,* 2011).

Overall, the paper makes three contributions. First, we confirm the psychometric properties of GPC and explore GPC as a key contributor to positive employee outcomes. Second, the paper explores HPWS as a key enhancement and reinforcement of GPC which strengthen its effects. Third, including PsyCap as a mediator provides insight into how a POB climate enhances the individual, with this development subsequently delivering positive employee outcomes. Our study model is show in Figure 1.

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Insert Figure 1 about here

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POB and COR Theory

POB lends an overarching foundation to this study, as POB is the study of positively orientated human resources strengths and psychological capabilities that can be measured, developed, and effectively managed for performance improvement (Avey *et al.,* 2011). POB has some tenants that must be met: (1) it must be theory based, (2) must focus on state-like as opposed to trait-like individual characteristics, (3) studied constructs must be open to development, and (4), it must have some form of performance impact.

COR theory is an integrated model of stress which examines resources, and the way people maintain, gain, or lose resources. Hobfoll (2001) defined resources as "objects, personal characteristics, conditions, or energies that are valued in their own right, or that are valued because they act as conduits to the achievement or protection of valued resources" (p.339). Under COR theory, organizational climates may provide employees with enhanced resources to enable them to perform better (see Ghafoor and Haar, 2020). Theoretically, COR theory explains why PsyCap influences employee outcomes (see Ghafoor and Haar, 2021). Here, high PsyCap is an employee resource and high PSC results in greater resources being available to employees via their work climate. COR theory includes the *resource caravan approach*, which suggests that "both the interrelationship between resources and how environments and contexts create fertile or infertile ground for creation, maintenance, and limitation of resources" (Hobfoll *et al.,* 2018, p.107).

Theoretically, there is a drive to understand resources not just at the individual level but in relation to other levels especially work environments (i.e., GPC). Hence, exploring organizational climates in combination with individual factors is encouraged (Hobfoll, 2011; Hobfoll *et al.,* 2018). Theoretically, COR enables us to look at multiple factors and their contribution from other factors, for example GPC reflects a work environment providing multiple resources that employees are able to draw from, enabling higher satisfaction and engagement. Employees with high psychological capital have what has been called a resource reservoir (Ghafoor and Haar, 2020) to draw on, which in combination with high GPC should enhance employee outcomes.

GPC

We draw initial inspiration from the work of Rogg *et al.* (2000) who explored climates in combination. Here, we build our GPC under the tenants of POB theory and briefly detail each component.

POS. POS reflects an employee's global belief "concerning the extent to which they believe their organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being" (Eisenberger *et al.,* 1986, p.501). POS is usually associated with an organizational culture that values fairness, supervisor support, organizational rewards, and favourable job conditions (Eisenberger *et al.,*1986). POS can influence and impact many positive outcomes with meta-analyses supporting a positive link to job satisfaction (Kurtessis *et al.,* 2017) although engagement as an outcome has not made any meta-analyses. Recent studies show COR theory is a good fit to POS (e.g., Haar and Brougham, 2020). There are individual studies linking POS with engagement (e.g., Saks, 2006). Overall, the positive links between POS and employee outcomes suggest POS is a strong foundation to GPC.

PSC. PSC is defined by Dollard and Bakker (2010) as the nature and the perception of senior management's protection of worker psychological health and safety and freedom from psychological and social risk or harm in the workplace. Unlike POS which reflects employee's global perception of their organizations, PSC targets perceptions towards senior management and include policies, practices, and procedures, and specifically towards the protection of workers psychological health and safety (Dollard and Bakker, 2010; Hall *et al.,* 2010). PSC is an 'upstream', macro level factor which is also related to important factors 'downstream' including psychological job demands and worker engagement (Dollard and Bakker, 2010; Hall *et al.,* 2010). Some suggest using PSC as a lead indicator of good workplaces (low bullying and harassment), which also aids employee engagement (Idris *et al.,* 2014). PSC aligns with COR theory because PSC represents access to job resources (Law *et al.,* 2011). Research shows PSC is positively related to both job satisfaction and engagement (Richards *et al.,* 2014). PSC has a distinct focus compared to POS and should complement it.

Worthy Work. People search daily for purpose and meaning, and organizations have been encouraged to consider profit with purpose models (Stahl *et al.,* 2020). Lips-Wiersma *et al.* (2020) defined Worthy

Work (WW) as not only arising when one is subjectively attached to the outcome of one's work, but also in order for one's work to be meaningful it has to have an independent value to society. WW is conceptually distinct from Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) because WW asks for what purpose should organizations exist, and CSR asks how organizations do less harm and greater good. Ciulla (2012) suggests a set of objective criteria for WW as "jobs which people help others, alleviate suffering, eliminate difficult, dangerous or tedious toil, make someone healthier and happier, aesthetically or intellectually enrich people or improve the environment in which we live. All work that is worthy does at least one of these things in some big or small way" (p.127). Under COR theory, WW provides additional resources to workers (i.e., purpose, meaning) and these should lead to higher job attitudes. Lips-Wiersma *et al.* (2020) and Steger and Dik (2009) both found WW and purpose to be positively related to meaningful work dimensions and outcomes. We include WW as a component of GPC because it is quite distinct and focuses upon a dimension (doing worthy work) that differs markedly from POS and PSC.

Inclusion

An inclusion climate refers to "the degree to which an employee perceives that they are an esteemed member of the work group through experiencing treatment that satisfies their needs for belonging and uniqueness" (Shore *et al.,* 2011, p.1265). Indeed, there is growing attention globally towards equality and inclusion in the workplace with respect to gender, age, culture, religion, and ethnicity (Fine and Sojo, 2019; Haar and Brougham, 2021). Haar and Brougham (2021) found perceived cultural inclusion influenced employee outcomes. Shore *et al.* (2011) identifies belonging and uniqueness as the core elements of inclusion, where employees want to belong but want their unique characteristics recognized. Providing support for all employees is essential, given both the high level of cultural diversity within workplaces globally (Findler *et al.,* 2007) and the benefits of good diversity management (Ely and Thomas, 2001). Despite earlier critiques noting that inclusion lacks empirical support (Shore *et al.,* 2011), employee evidence is growing of its positive influence of employee outcomes (Chung *et al.,*

2020; Haar and Brougham, 2021). Again, inclusion climate provides a different focus beyond the other climates explored, with its focus on a sense of belonging and uniqueness.

Organizational Mindfulness

Our final climate focuses on mindfulness, which has been defined as "enhanced attention to and awareness of current experiences or present reality" (Brown and Ryan, 2003, p.823). Mindfulness has been tied to positive psychological and physiological well-being (Avey *et al.,* 2008; Roche, Haar, and Luthans, 2014) and claims to provide greater non-judgmental awareness of one's internal and external environment (Avey *et al.,* 2008). Mindfulness aligns well with positive psychology (Gregoire and Lachance, 2015). Organizational mindfulness is a "state of mind or mode of practice that permits questioning of expectations, knowledge, and adequacy of routines in complex and not fully predictable social technologies and physical settings" (Jordan *et al.,* 2009, p.468). Vogus and Sutcliffe (2012) consider organizational mindfulness as the extent which an organization captures discriminatory detail about emerging threats and creates a capability to act in response to these details.

Ray *et al.* (2011) posits five main organizational processes found within mindful organizations: a pre-occupation with failure, a reluctance to simplify interpretations, sensitivity to operations, a commitment to resilience and a difference to expertise. A climate reflecting these five mindfulness processes should encourage rich thinking and capacity for action. Organizational mindfulness creates context by signalling what the organization expects, rewards, and supports. Ray *et al.* (2011) found mindful organizations induce a rich awareness of discriminatory detail and capacity for action. Mindful organizations have unique and adaptive processes and behaviors, avoid accidents, actively seek to know what they don't know, learn from mistakes, pay attention to detail and maintain the capacity to act (Ray *et al.,* 2011). We selected an organizational mindfulness climate because this reflects a unique approach, which might add value to the influence of GPC on employee outcomes.

GPC Summary

Overall, we suggest the five climates individually are usefully aligned with POB. They can be developed and effectively managed (Avey *et al.,* 2011). We explore them in combination because this

reflects a more realistic workplace experience for employees – with such approaches having empirical support (Wang and Hsieh, 2013; Rogg *et al.,* 2000).

Hypotheses

It is expected the GPC will influence a range of positive outcomes, and the present study focuses on job satisfaction and employee engagement. Weiss (2002) defined job satisfaction as "a positive (or negative) evaluative judgment one makes about one's job or job situation" (p.175), while Shuck *et al.* (2017) defines employee engagement "as an active, work-related positive psychological state" (p.954), with cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions. Under COR theory, we expect GPC to be positively related to both job satisfaction and employee engagement. Here, such a climate provides employees with multiple resources which they can tap into to enhance their job attitudes. We noted in each section how these climates individually have been found to shape engagement and job satisfaction. In combination, we suggest GPC reflects a vast body of potential resources to enable them to maximize their work experience. This leads to our first Hypothesis.

Hypothesis 1: GPC will be positively related to (a) job satisfaction and (b) employee engagement.

PsyCap

PsyCap is made up of four positive constructs, the whole more powerful than the sum of its parts. These constructs are hope, efficacy, resilience, and optimism. *Hope* is defined as "a positive motivational state based on an interactively (a) derived sense of successfulness (b) agency (goal-directed energy) and (c) pathways (planning to meet goals)" (Snyder *et al.,* 1991, p.287). *Efficacy* reflects and employees belief in their ability to succeed in specific situations (Bandura, 1997), while *resilience* reflects the "positive psychological capacity to rebound, to 'bounce back' from adversity, uncertainty, conflict, failure, or even positive change, progress and increased responsibility" (Luthans, 2022, p.702). Finally, Snyder and Lopez (2009) define *optimism* as "people expect good things to happen to them" (p.231), with optimists considering that adverse events are temporary and things are likely to get better (Luthans *et al.,* 2007a).

Using COR theory, we argue PsyCap is a psychological resource and specifically a *psychological reservoir* (Ghafoor and Haar, 2021), which reflects an important pool of psychological resources (i.e., hope, efficacy, resilience, optimism) from which employees can draw in times of challenge. Evidence shows that PsyCap has a positive influence on engagement (Bonner, 2016; Joo and Lee, 2017). Further, the meta-analysis by Avey *et al.* (2011) using 51 samples, found PsyCap positively correlated to job satisfaction although engagement has not been included. Kwok *et al.* (2015) found PsyCap mediated the effect of support on job satisfaction and Park *et al.* (2017) found PsyCap influenced engagement, mediating the effects of positive leadership. Finally, Luthans *et al.* (2008) found the positive effect of a positive climate on job performance was mediated by PsyCap, and we expect a similar effect here. Overall, we expect GPC to influence PsyCap, and employees with high PsyCap to report superior job attitudes because they have additional resources under COR theory to expend on their job. Ultimately, this will mediate the beneficial effects of GPC. We hypothesize the following.

Hypothesis 2: GPC will be positively related to PsyCap.

Hypothesis 3: PsyCap will be positively related to (a) job satisfaction and (b) employee engagement.

Hypothesis 4: PsyCap will mediate the influence of GPC on (a) job satisfaction and (b) employee engagement.

HPWS

Finally, Rogg et al. (2000) showed that HR practices can play a role with shaping outcomes with organizational climates, and so here they are included as a moderator. Strategic human resource management (HRM) focuses on HRM practices that are vital to improving organizational performance outcomes (Combs *et al.,* 2006). HPWS are defined as "systems of human resource (HR) practices designed to enhance employees' skills, commitment, and productivity" (Datta *et al.,* 2005, p.135). HPWS aid performance by increasing employee's knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) and empowering employees to leverage their KSAs for organizational benefit, and at the same time motivating them to do so (Combs *et al.,* 2006). Meta-analysis has shown the 'bundle' effect (HRM practices linked together) has a stronger effect than individual HRM practices (Combs *et al.,* 2006).

Overall HPWS have been found to relate positively to organizational performance (Combs *et al.,* 2006), and work outcomes like engagement and job satisfaction (Haar *et al.,* 2021). Overall, COR theory encourages workplace context (here HPWS), and we expect them to directly influence PsyCap, job satisfaction and employee engagement. Further, under COR theory and the resource caravan approach, these additional resources (for example accessing training and development) enable enhanced job attitudes to be formed because workers have an abundance of additional (and distinct) resources. Thus, HPWS are expected to interact with GPC leading to superior employee outcomes because employees have a plethora of potential resources when both GPC and HPWS are high. Studies have explored the moderating role of HPWS with other factors (e.g., with work-life balance, Haar and Harris, 2021), and the combination has been especially beneficial. We posit the following.

Hypothesis 5: HPWS will be positively related to (a) PsyCap, (b) job satisfaction and (c) employee engagement.

Hypothesis 6: HPWS will interact with GPC towards (a) PsyCap, (b) job satisfaction and (c) employee engagement, leading to highest outcomes when GPC and HPWS are high.

Finally, we utilize COR theory to explore HPWS as a boundary condition. COR theory and the resource caravan approach suggests context plays a key role and here we explore GPC and HPWS, while also considering Ghafoor and Haar's (2021) argument around PsyCap being a resource reservoir, although here it is included as a mediator. We argue the indirect effect of GPC on job satisfaction and employee engagement, via PsyCap as a mediator, will vary by the strength of HPWS. The moderated mediation approach is becoming more common (e.g., Haar *et al.,* 2021; Vinayak *et al.,* 2021; Ghafoor and Haar, 2021). We suggest that as HPWS increase in strength the indirect effect of GPC will increase, reflecting the combination of contextual resources alongside the resource reservoir of the employee. This leads to our final hypothesis.

Hypothesis 7: The indirect effect of GPC on (a) job satisfaction and (b) employee engagement, through PsyCap (mediator), will strengthen as HPWS also strengthen (moderated mediation).

Methods

Participants and sample

Data were collected in NZ in late 2021 using a Cint survey panel, who provide access to a large database of potential NZ respondents who are invited to participate if they meet specific qualifiers (for more details see Haar, 2021). The qualifiers in the present study were: (1) being in paid employment; (2) being aged 18 years and over; and (3) working a minimum 20 hours/week. Cint data provides representative samples of the New Zealand workforce and includes a broad geographical spread, as well as a range of industries and occupations. Bernerth *et al.* (2021) provided recommendations for online panel surveys: (1) screening respondent time (removing survey responses that are too slow/fast) and (2) using an instructed response item to screen out respondents (e.g., "For this question, answer disagree only") – with an incorrect answer seeing respondents removed. Finally, meta-analytic evidence (Walter *et al.,* 2019) shows that data from panels versus traditional methods (e.g., postal survey) don't significantly differ.

In total, n=1007 respondents completed the survey in full. Respondents were more likely to be male (55.0%), be New Zealand European (64.8%), and married/defacto (69.7%). Average age was 38.0 years (SD=11.1), and average tenure was 5.2 years (SD=5.7). By sector, the majority of respondents came from the private sector (64.7%), followed by the public sector (31.1%), and not-for-profit sector (4.2%). By education, 18.3% had a high school qualification only, followed by 28.1% with a technical/polytechnic qualification, 36.7% a university degree, and 16.9% a postgraduate qualification.

Measures

All measures were coded 1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree except where noted.

GPC was captured using five established measures which we detail presently, following the approach of Rogg *et al.* (2001) who included several dimensions. We focus on these five climates because they all align well with POB theory. Items and reliabilities are shown in Table 1. *POS* was measured using items from Eisenberger *et al.* (1986), specifically the short POS measure (Rhoades *et al.,* 2001). Studies have adequately used shorter versions of POS (e.g., Haar and Brougham, 2020). *PSC* was measured using the 4-item scale by Dollard and Bakker (2010). *Worthy Work* was measured using the five-item

scale by Lips-Wiersma *et al.* (2020). *Inclusion Climate* was based on the eight-item scale by Chung *et al.* (2020). The original scale is at the group-level, and the present study changed the focus to the organization-level. The dimensionality of the new inclusion climate was confirmed via Confirmatory Factor Analysis using AMOS (v. 28). We confirmed the higher-order construct with two dimensions (*Belonging* and *Uniqueness*), and this was a good fit to the data: $\chi 2(df)=127.0(19)$, CFI=.97, RMSEA=.08 and SRMR=.03. An alternative CFA was tested – with the items representing a single factor – and was a significantly poorer fit to the data: $\Delta\chi 2(df)=46.5(1)$, $p< .001$. *Organizational Mindfulness* was measured based on the 15-item scale by Ray *et al.* (2011). We confirmed the higher-order construct with the five dimensions, and this was a good fit to the data: $\chi 2(df)=345.4(89)$, CFI=.95, RMSEA=.05 and SRMR=.04. An alternative CFA was tested – with the items representing a single factor – and this was a significantly poorer fit to the data: $\Delta\chi 2(df)=34.9(1)$, $p< .001$. Finally, we confirmed the nature of the five distinct climate measures into a single GPC using CFA and testing a higher order construct. Overall, this was a good fit to the data: $\chi 2(df)=1866.7(591)$, CFI=.93, RMSEA=.05 and SRMR=.04 (α=.96). An alternative CFA was tested – with the items representing a single factor – and this was a significantly poorer fit to the data: $\Delta\chi 2(df)=631.1(3)$, $p< .001$.

Job Satisfaction was measured using three items by Judge *et al.* (2005) and a sample item is "I find real enjoyment in my work" (α=.86). This measure has been well-validated (Haar *et al.,* 2014).

Employee Engagement was measured using nine items by Shuck *et al.* (2017). Sample items are "I am really focused when I am working" (cognitive engagement), "Working at my organization has a great deal of personal meaning to me" (emotional engagement) and "I often go above what is expected of me to help my team be successful" (behavioral engagement). As per the literature (e.g., Gosh *et al.,* 2019), these items were summed for an overall employee engagement measure (α= .87). We confirmed the higher-order construct of a three-dimensional engagement measure: $\chi 2(df)145.5(26)$, CFI=.97, RMSEA=.07 and SRMR=.04. An alternative CFA was tested – with the items representing a single factor – and this was a significantly poorer fit to the data: $\Delta\chi 2(df)=361.3(1)$, $p< .001$.

PsyCap was measured with the 12-item PsyCap Questionnaire (PCQ-12) by Luthans *et al.* (2007a), coded 1=strongly disagree, 6= strongly agree. Sample items across the four dimensions are "I can think of many ways to reach my current work goals" (Hope), "I feel confident contributing to discussions about the company's strategy" (Efficacy), "I can get through difficult times at work because I've experienced difficulty before" (Resilience), and "I'm optimistic about what will happen to me in the future as it pertains to work" (Optimism). This scale is well validated (e.g., see Luthans *et al.,* 2007b) and we follow Roche *et al.* (2014) and confirmed the four-dimensional nature of PsyCap with CFA in AMOS: $\chi 2(df)=235.3(53)$, CFI=.97, RMSEA=.06 and SRMR=.04 (α=.91). It was a significantly better fit to the data than a single-dimensional factor: $\Delta\chi 2(df)=436.6(1)$, $p< .001$.

High Performance Work Systems (HPWS) was measured with 15 items by Lepak and Snell (2002). The construct focuses on five dimensions with three-items in each: *performance* (e.g., "Performance appraisals emphasize employee learning"), *compensation* (e.g., "compensation/rewards for employees provide incentives for new ideas"), *recruitment and selection* (e.g., "The recruitment/selection process places priority on their potential to learn (e.g., aptitude)"), *training* (e.g., "Our training activities for employees are continuous"), and *job design* (e.g., "My work includes a wide variety of tasks"). The typical approach in the literature is followed where these are summed to generate a single factor (e.g., Datta *et al.,* 2005; Haar and Harris, 2021). Such an approach to HPWS aligns with meta-analytic evidence (Combs *et al.,* 2006), that showed HPWS constructs were stronger rather than single or sub-dimensions of HR practices. We follow Haar and Harris (2021) and confirmed the five-dimensional nature of HPWS with CFA in AMOS: $\chi 2(df)=306.7(89)$, CFI=.97, RMSEA=.05 and SRMR=.04 (α=.92). It was a significantly better fit to the data than a single-dimensional factor: $\Delta\chi 2(df)=497.5(1)$, $p< .001$.

Control variables. Drawing on meta-analytic studies of climates (e.g., Kurtessis *et al.,* 2017; Arora *et al.,* 2012), we control for Age (in years), Tenure (years), and Education (1=high school, 2=technical qualification, 3=university degree, 4=postgraduate). Finally, Robertson and Seneviratne (1995)

conducted a meta-analysis and reported some public sector differences, and thus Public Sector was controlled for (1=public, 0=private and not-for=profit).

Measurement Model

A global CFA was conducted in AMOS and showed all the measures (including higher-order constructs) were a good fit to the data: $\chi 2(df)=5219.3(1879)$, CFI=.91, RMSEA=.040 and SRMR=.05.

Analysis

Relationships were tested using PROCESS 4.0 (in SPSS v. 28), using model 8 (moderated mediation), with two models: job satisfaction and employee engagement, with control variables entered in Step 1, PSC as the IV, PsyCap as the mediator, and HPWS as the moderator. The products were mean centred. For mediation effects (including moderated mediation) we confirmed effects using bootstrapping (5,000 times) and model 4 was used to calculate indirect effects.

Results

Descriptive statistics for the study variables are shown in Table 1.

Insert Table 1 about here

Table 1 shows that GPC is significantly correlated with PsyCap (r= .67, p<.001), HPWS (r= .85, p<.001), job satisfaction (r= .67 p< .001), and employee engagement (r= .53, p<.001). PsyCap is significantly correlated with HPWS (r= .61, p<.001), job satisfaction (r= .62, p<.001), and employee engagement (r= .63, p<.001). HPWS is significantly correlated with job satisfaction (r= .58, p<.001), and employee engagement (r= .48, p<.001). Finally, employee engagement is significantly correlated with job satisfaction (r= .59, p<.001), age (r= .07, p=.029) and education (r= .07, p=021).

Results of the moderated mediation analysis towards job satisfaction is presented in Figure 2 and towards employee engagement in Figure 3.

Insert Figures 2 and 3 about here

The results show that GPC is significantly related to job satisfaction (β= .90(.03), p<.0001 [LL= .84, UL= .96]), employee engagement (β= .49(.02), p<.0001 [LL= .44, UL= .53]), and PsyCap (β= .68(.05), p<.0001 [LL= .57, UL= .78]), supporting Hypotheses 1a, 1b, and 2. Furthermore, PsyCap is significantly related to job satisfaction (β= .36(.03), p<.0001 [LL= .29, UL= .43]) and employee engagement (β= .35(.03), p<.0001 [LL= .30, UL= .40]), supporting Hypotheses 3a and 3b. When PsyCap is included in the models it partially mediates the effect of GPC on job satisfaction, with the direct effect dropping (to β= .65(.06), p<.0001 [LL= .52, UL= .77]) and similarly with employee engagement (dropping to β= .23(.05), p<.0001 [LL= .14, UL= .32]). In both models, GPC remained a significant predictor and having a significant indirect effect. These effects provide some support Hypotheses 4a and 4b.

Regarding the moderator, HPWS had a significant direct effect on PsyCap (β= .19(.05), p=.0002 [LL= .08, UL= .28]) but not towards job satisfaction or employee engagement (both p>.05). Significant interaction effects were found between GPC and HPWS towards PsyCap (β= .15(.03), p<.0001 [LL= .09, UL= .21]) and employee engagement (β= .12(.02), p<.0001 [LL= .08, UL= .17]), but not job satisfaction (p>.05). These findings provide support for Hypotheses 5a only, as well as 6a and 6c. We graph the interactions to illustrate effects in Figures 4 and 5.

Insert Figures 4 and 5 about here

The interaction effects are similar so are discussed together. At low levels of GPC, there is little difference in PsyCap or employee engagement at all levels of HPWS. At high levels of GPC, all respondents report significantly higher PsyCap and employee engagement. However, those also with high HPWS report significantly higher outcomes, supporting hypothesis 6.

Finally, the index of moderated mediation is significant for both job satisfaction (index= .05(.02), p=.0080 [LL= .02, UL= .10]) and employee engagement (index= .05(.02), p=.0059 [LL= .01,

UL= .10]). Interpreting the significant index (Hayes, 2018) means that the indirect effect of GPC on job satisfaction and employee engagement – through PsyCap as the mediator – differs by HPWS. We present the graphed moderated mediation effects to illustrate these in Figures 6 and 7.

Insert Figures 6 and 7 about here

Figures 6 and 7 show similar moderated mediation effects, so are group them together. The approach of Wayne *et al.* (2017) is followed regarding probing conditional indirect effects by examining the magnitude and significance of the indirect effect of GPC on job satisfaction/employee engagement through PsyCap at -2SD/Mean/+2SD of HPWS. The analysis shows respondents reporting low HPWS (-2SD) the effect of GPC is significant and positive on job satisfaction (β= .21(.03), p<.0001 [LLCI= .14, ULCI= .28]) and employee engagement (β = .20(.03), p<.0001 [LLCI= .14, ULCI= .27]). Respondents reporting Mean HPWS report a significant, positive, and stronger indirect effect on job satisfaction (β= .24(.03), p<.0001 [LLCI= .18, ULCI= .32]) and employee engagement (β = .23(.03), p<.0001 [LLCI= .18, ULCI= .31]), and stronger again at high HPWS (+2SD) towards job satisfaction (β= .28(.04), p<.0001 [LLCI= .21, ULCI= .37]) and employee engagement (β = .28(.04), p<.0001 [LLCI= .20, ULCI= .35]). For both job satisfaction and employee engagement the indirect effect is significant across the full 95% confidence intervals and show the indirect effect of GPC becomes stronger as HPWS are more developed. These effects support Hypothesis 7a and 7b.

Overall, the models are significant for PsyCap (F=124.3, p<.0001), job satisfaction (F=131.4, p<.0001) and employee engagement (F=99.1, p<.0001), and account for sizeable amounts of variance towards PsyCap (47%), job satisfaction (51%) and employee engagement (44%).

Discussion

The nature of work has radically changed in the last few years and many countries report workforce challenges have been exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic. For example, the New Zealand unemployment rate is currently one of the lowest on record (Robertson and Sepuloni, 2021). Given the

changing power dynamic shifts from employer to employees, a POB approach (Luthans, 2002) was used here to frame how a positive organizational climate might be used to provide needed resources to employees to enable them to achieve a superior employee experience. There is clear evidence of the importance of organizational climate on multiple outcomes (Schneider *et al.,* 2013), including job attitudes (Wallace *et al.,* 2016). However, a critique of the organizational climate literature that this study addresses, is that despite the literature examining several different climate descriptions (Patterson *et al.,* 2005), researchers typically focus on one climate alone.

Here, we explored a suite of positive organizational climates with distinct focuses that broadly align with POB around employee wellbeing (POS), psychosocial safety (PSC), belonging and uniqueness (inclusion), targeting employee purpose and worth (WW) and mindfulness, with its own specific POB links (Roche *et al.,* 2014). Combined, we contribute to POB by showing that employee perceptions of climate are distinct but related. We show that researchers can create a GPC that captures all these distinct yet related positive climates and that together, they play a vital role in shaping employee outcomes. Theoretically, this aligns with COR theory and shows that resource gained via GPC and HPWS build the resource reservoir of employees (PsyCap) which ultimately enable employees to be more engaged and satisfied. There was also an enhancement benefit towards employee engagement. Overall, this supports COR theory around the resource caravan approach, which encourages researchers to consider resource sources in combination including the workplace context (Hobfoll *et al.,* 2018). Here we included HPWS and show that employees with the highest PsyCap were those working in high GPC and high HPWS, reflecting a resource reservoir (Ghafoor and Haar, 2020) which employees can draw on to achieve superior job attitudes. Examining climate and HPWS in combination is important because the few studies that have considered this combination found them related (e.g., Rogg *et al.,* 2000). Here, we tested and found that <u>together</u> they are better able to provide employees with maximum resources.

Beyond the interaction effects between GPC and HPWS, we also include PsyCap as a mediator and ultimately tested PsyCap as a boundary condition towards job satisfaction and employee engagement. Aligned with the meta-analysis (Avey *et al.,* 2011), PsyCap influenced job satisfaction and

add to the literature by finding similar positive effects towards employee engagement. Next, we explored the boundary condition of HPWS because such analyses can provide unique insights and aid an understanding of complex relationships (Haar and Harris, 2021). The findings were that while GPC has a direct effect on both outcomes (with PsyCap included as a mediator), it has a significant indirect effect, and this strengthens as HPWS get stronger. Thus, an organization with high GPC but weak HR practices can intensify this beneficial effect through consolidating their HR systems. These findings consolidate the resource caravan approach (Hobfoll *et al.,* 2018) and provide useful implications, which we address next.

HRM Implications

The first HRM implication is the importance for organizations to build a strong positive work climate. This is likely to be achieved in several ways and acknowledging the plethora of climates (see Patterson *et al.,* 2005; Schneider *et al.,* 2013), we demonstrate the importance of collectively building the climates towards a GPC. However, our findings show the importance of building robust HRM systems in combination, and thus climate and HR practices should be recognized as being complementary. Given the links to performance from job satisfaction and engagement (e.g., Judge *et al.,* 2001; Harter *et al.,* 2002), building a positive climate and linking HR practices is a sound way that organizations can aid their employees to have the psychological resources to achieve their best at work. The data from this large New Zealand sample shows GPC at above average levels (M=3.65, SD=.68), but clearly a sizeable group report their climate needs improvement. Organizations are encouraged to examine their own climate data (or conduct such analysis) to ensure they are making positive contributions to their workforce.

Researchers are encouraged to conduct further tests of GPC and include other important work factors, such as employee behaviors. Further replication with HPWS or other moderators, especially considering boundary conditions, would be worthwhile. This would enable potentially complex relationships to be better understood. Clearly, the five climates in our GPC could have additional

climates added or substituted, and longitudinal research looking at the way organizations develop and enhance their GPC would align well with POB theory.

Limitations

The single-time self-reported nature of our data raises potential for common method bias (CMB), with Podsakoff *et al.* (2003) advocating the Harman's One-Factor Test as a useful post-hoc test. Our unrotated factor analysis explained less than a third of the variance, which is below the 50% threshold. Finally, Evans (1985) showed CMB was much less likely in the presence of moderation effects, and we found two out of three significant moderation effects, as well as supporting both moderated mediation effects. Overall, our large and varied sample included a diverse range of professions and industries, aiding confidence in generalizing the findings.

Conclusion

The current study showed the importance of organizational climate and focused on a GPC that was found to play a key role in building employee resources via PsyCap and aiding their job satisfaction and employee engagement. Importantly, we found that HPWS played an important role – directly enhancing PsyCap but acting as a boundary condition that enhanced GPC to maximize the benefits on employee outcomes. We encourage organizations to consider climate alongside HRM practices and see them as working in tandem rather than being separate.

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Table 2. Paper 1. Table 1. Global Positive Climate Items

Perceived Organizational Support (POS) (α=.85)
1. My organization values my contribution to its well-being
2. My organization really cares about my well-being
3. My organization cares about my general satisfaction at work
4. My organization takes pride in my accomplishments at work

Psychosocial Safety Climate (PSC) (α=.76)
1. Senior management show support for stress prevention through involvement and commitment
2. Participation and consultation in occupational health and safety issues occurs with employees, unions, and occupational health and safety representatives
3. In practice, the prevention of stress involves all layers of the organization
4. My contributions to resolving occupational health and safety concerns in the organization are listened to

Worthy Work (α=.83)
1. Overall, I work for an ethical organization
2. Our product or service creates a better life for current and future generations
3. Our organization implements programs to contribute to a better environment and/or community
4. Our organization can be relied on to uphold my best interest
5. Our organization has a good reputation as an employer

Inclusion Climate (α=.91)
Belonging:
1. All employees are treated as a valued member of this organization
2. I belong in my organization
3. I believe that my organization is where I am meant to be
4. I feel that people really care about me in my organization

Uniqueness:
5. Employees can bring aspects of themselves to work that other organization employees don't have in common with them
6. My organization listens to employees even when their views are dissimilar
7. In my workplace, employees are comfortable expressing opinions that diverge from others
8. In my workplace, employees can share perspectives on work issues that different from others

Organizational Mindfulness Climate (α=.90)
Preoccupation With Failure:
1. Often update procedures after experiencing a problem
2. Employees are inclined to report mistakes that have significant consequences even if nobody notices
3. Employees are rewarded if they spot problems, mistakes, errors, or failures

Reluctance to Simplify Information:
4. Employees listen carefully to each other; it is rare that anyone's view is dismissed
5. Employees are not shot down for surfacing information that could interrupt operations
6. Employees feel free to bring up problems and tough issues to managers

Sensitivity to Operations:
7. Should problems occur, someone with the authority to act is always accessible and available, especially to staff on the front lines
8. Employees are always looking for feedback about things that aren't going right
9. Managers constantly monitor workloads to determine the need for additional resources

Commitment to Resilience:

10. Encourages challenging ‘stretch’ assignments
11. There is concern with building the competence and the response repertoires of employees
12. Employees, generally, learn from their mistakes

Deference to Expertise:

13. If something unexpected occurs, the most highly qualified people, regardless of rank, make the decisions
14. Managers value expertise and experience over hierarchical rank
15. If something out of the ordinary happens, managers know who has the expertise to respond

All responses coded 1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree

Table 3. Paper 1. Table 2. Correlations and Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Age	38.0	11.1	--							
2. Tenure	5.23	5.73	.11**	--						
3. Education	2.52	.98	.03	-.03	--					
4. GPC	3.65	.68	-.04	-.02	.06	--				
5. PsyCap	4.52	.78	.01	-.04	.05	.67**	--			
6. HPWS	3.55	.70	-.09**	-.04	.07	.85**	.61**	--		
7. Job Satisfaction	3.65	.90	.02	.01	.03	.67**	.62**	.58**	--	
8. Employee Engagement	3.87	.61	.07*	-.02	.07*	.53**	.63**	.48**	.59**	--

N=1007 *p<.05, ‡p<.01

Figure 2. Paper 1. Figure 1. Study Model

Figure 1. Study Model

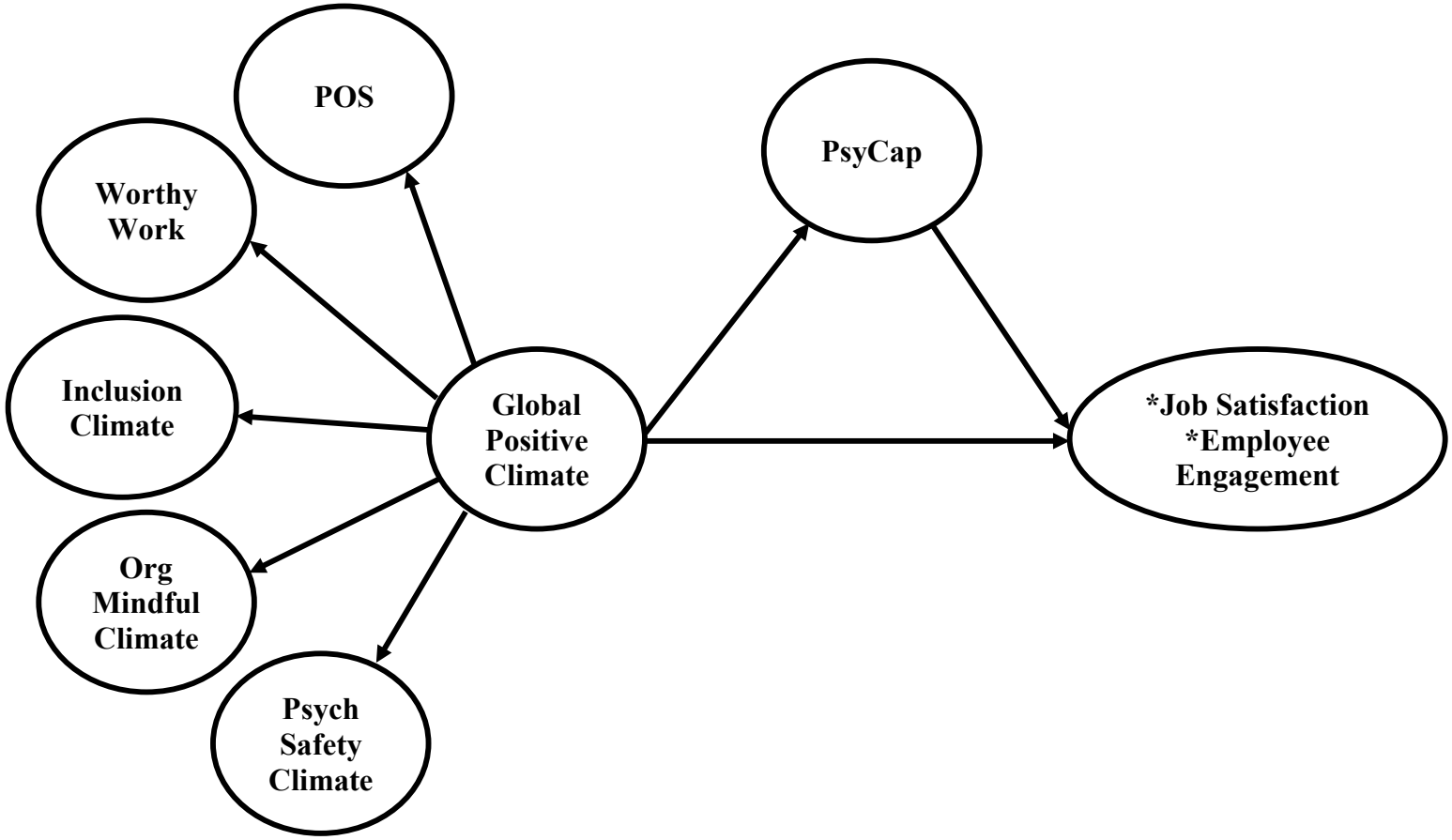

Figure 3. Paper 1. Figure 2. Study Findings towards Job Satisfaction

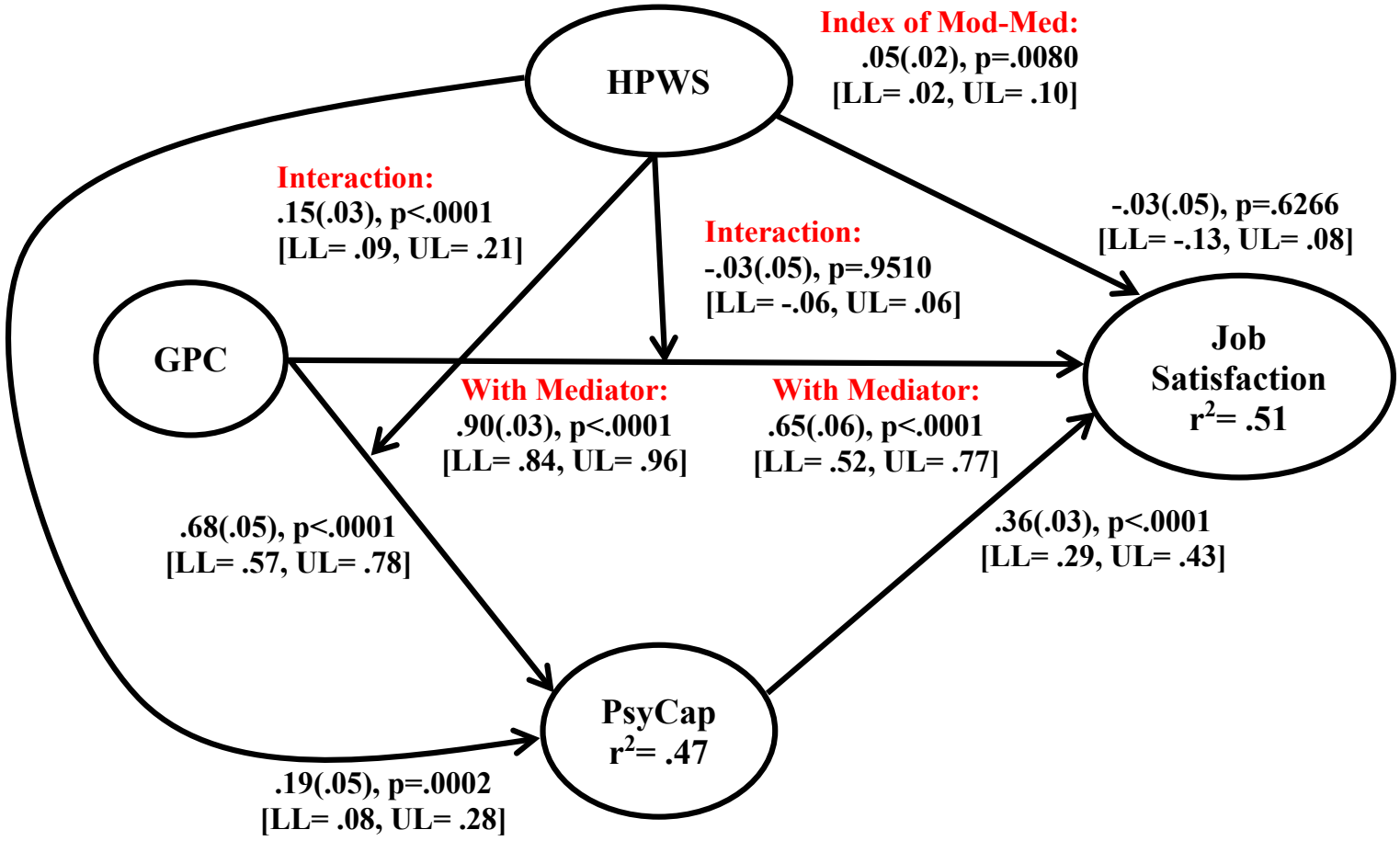

Figure 4. Paper 1. Figure 3. Study Findings towards Employee Engagement

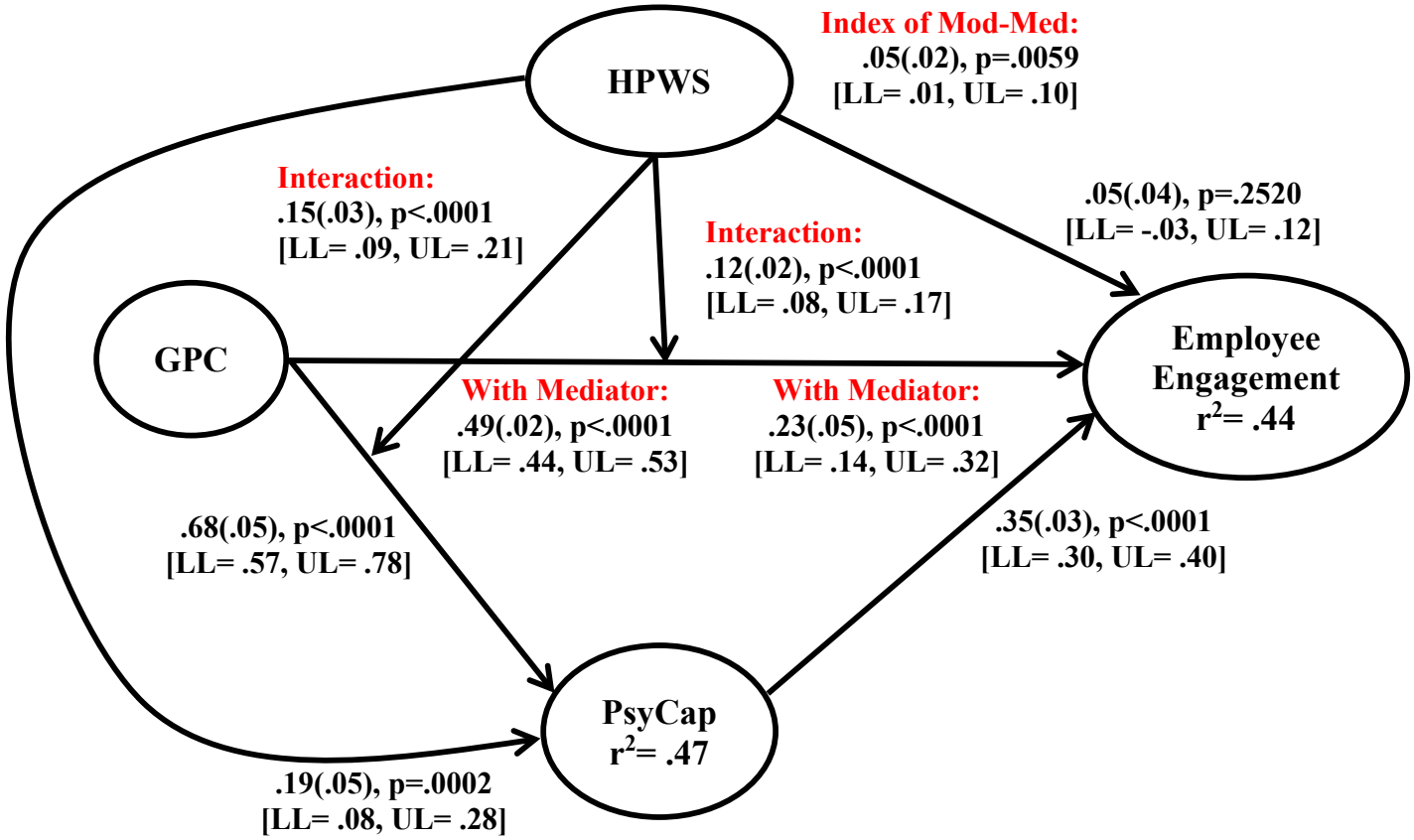

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Figure 5. Paper 1. Figure 4. Interaction between GPC and HPWS towards PsyCap

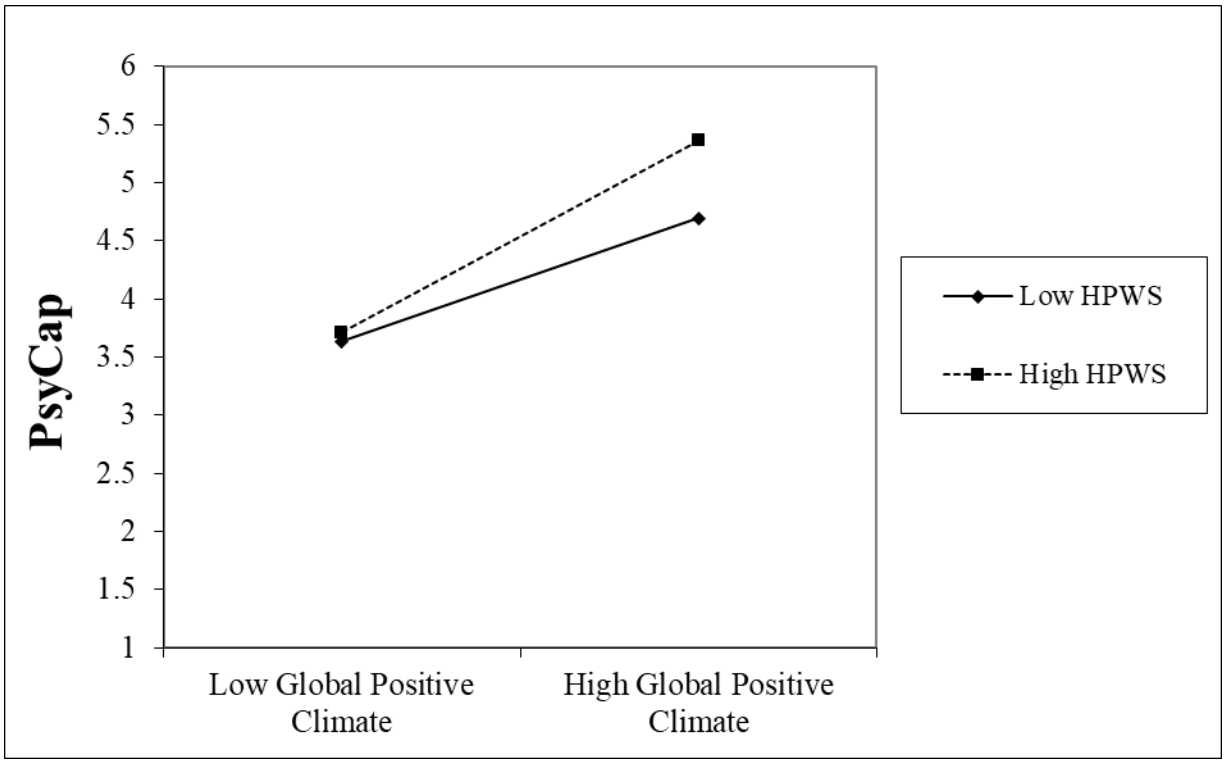


Figure 6. Paper 1. Figure 5. Interaction between GPC and HPWS towards Employee Engagement

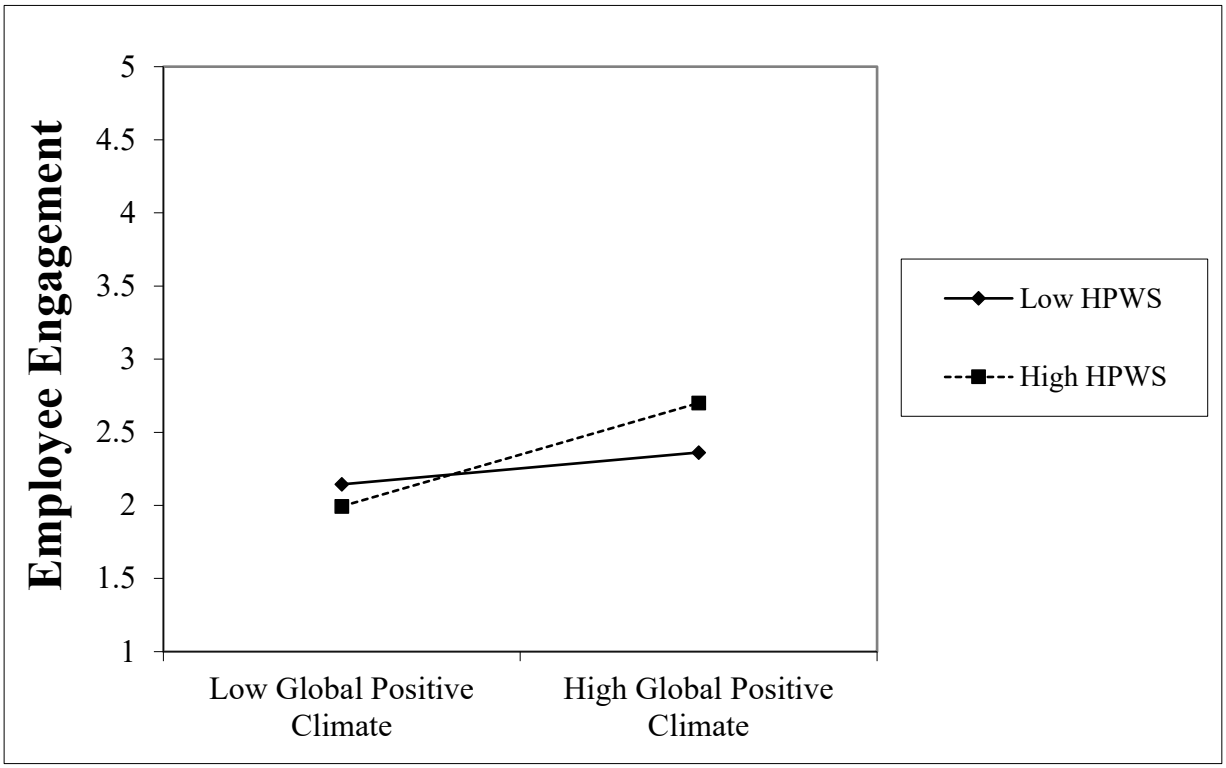


Figure 7. Paper 1. Figure 6. Indirect Effects of GPC on Job Satisfaction through PsyCap conditional on HPWS

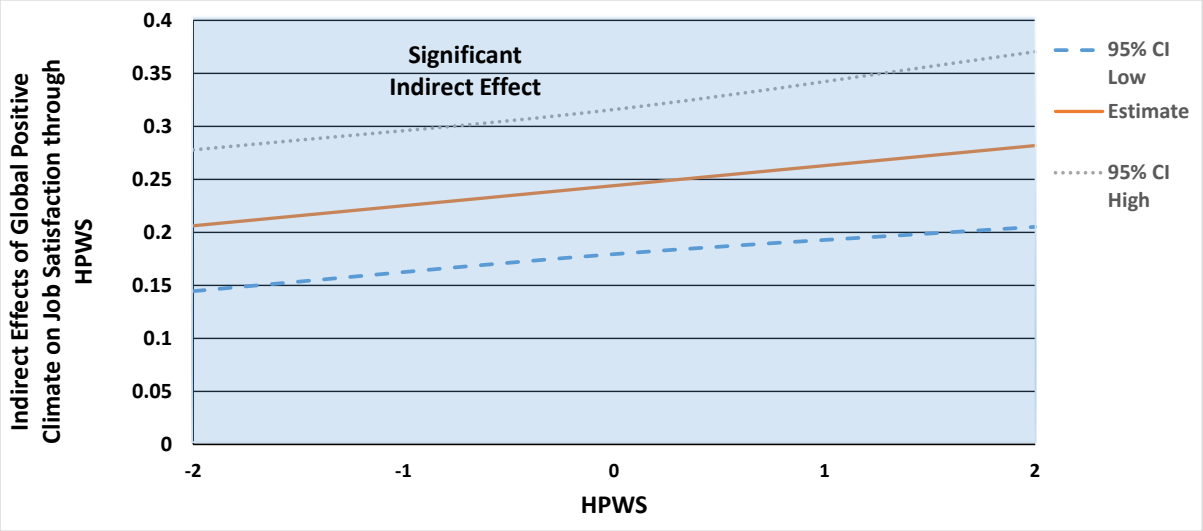
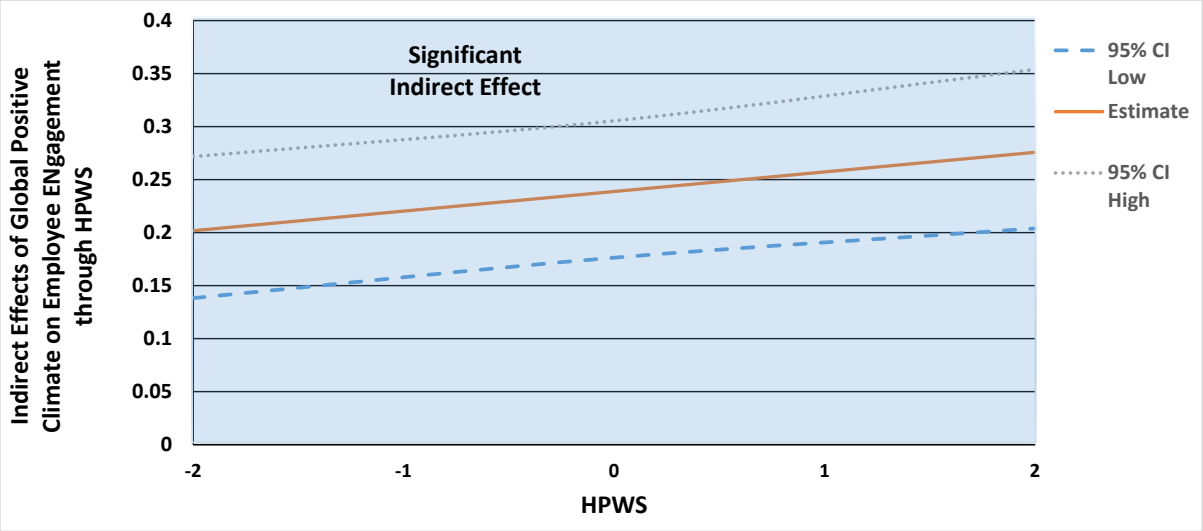


Figure 8. Paper1. Figure 7. Indirect Effects of GPC on Employee Engagement through PsyCap conditional on HPWS



CHAPTER FIVE: PAPER 2. Enhancing the employee experience: Influencing employee behaviors through a global positive climate

Paper 2 is a follow up on Paper 1. Again, Paper 2 aims to achieve the objective of testing the possibility of an overall global positive climate and effect on positive employee outcomes, this time exploring outcomes of turnover intentions and OCBs. Paper 2 also has a different context beyond the standard workforce focus of Paper 1 in that it explores New Zealand employees currently undergoing and experiencing workplace change. Paper 2 therefore includes readiness for change (RFC) as a moderator and meaningful work (MFW) as a mediator. Again, this paper gives evidence of the benefits of a global positive climate and posits why these climates or environments are worth cultivating within organizations. Similar to Paper 1, Paper 2 tests a moderated mediation model.

This paper has been presented at the following refereed conference:

McCallum, S., Haar, J., & Myers, B. (2022). Influencing employee behaviors through a global positive climate. *11th Aotearoa New Zealand Organisational Psychology & Organisational Behavior Conference*, Wellington, New Zealand, 25 November 2022.

This paper is currently under review and has a revise and resubmit:

McCallum, S., Haar, J., & Myers, B. (under review). Enhancing the employee experience: Influencing employee behaviors through a global positive climate. *Asia Pacific Journal of Human Resources*.

PAPER 2. Enhancing the employee experience: Influencing employee behaviors through a global positive climate

Purpose: Organizational climates reflect employee perceptions of the way organizational culture is actualized and most studies explore one climate only. The present study explores a global positive climate (GPC) encompassing five climates: perceived organizational support, psychosocial safety climate, organizational mindfulness, worthy work, and inclusion climate. The GPC is used to predict turnover intentions and organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs), with meaningful work as a mediator. Beyond this, Readiness for Change (RFC) is included as a moderator of GPC and ultimately a moderated mediation model is tested.

Methodology: This paper employs a quantitative study. A large sample (n=872) of New Zealand workers undergoing any form of change at work was collected.

Findings: The results show both GPC and RFC are significantly and beneficially related to meaningful work, turnover intentions, and OCBs. Meaningful work also predicts behaviors, and partially mediates the influence of GPC, although it remained significant. Interaction effects support RFC as key to achieving superior behaviors with GPC and moderated mediation effects shows indirect effects from GPC growing as RFC increases.

Implications: The findings provide useful theoretical insights towards social exchange theory and positive organizational behavior, especially around capturing a global positive climate. It also highlights the complex nature of relationships towards shaping employee behaviors.

Originality: The study provides important insights into capturing a broad positive climate with the moderation and moderated mediation moderated mediation effects providing new insights.

Keywords: global positive climate; turnover intentions; organizational citizen behaviors; readiness for change.

Paper type: Research paper

Introduction

The Great Resignation (Cook, 2021) is the term currently being used to describe the organizational turnover phenomena happening around the world. People are either choosing to leave their roles for new roles or just not returning to work in the same capacity as before the pandemic. Hence, employees are making work life changes, spurred on by current and post COVID environments (e.g., Hahang, Bayraktar, & Jiménez, 2022). Consequently, retention and reducing turnover are high on organizational agendas, and organizational climates that provide positive support and increase employee's readiness for change (RFC) may offer a key to retention. Importantly, employee turnover influences firm performance (Park & Shaw, 2013) making it of critical importance. Beyond retention another perennial issue for organizations is employee behaviors. Organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs) are employee discretionary behaviors – not directly or explicitly recognised by the formal reward system – but that in aggregate promotes effective functioning of the organization (Organ, 1988). Again, OCBs are linked to superior firm performance (Podsakoff et al., 2009). The present study examines these two critical employee behaviors due to their importance on firm performance.

The present study argues that organizational climates that provide positive support may offer a key to retention and performance. Organizational climates have been operationalized in many ways (Patterson et al., 2005) and refer to "the shared perceptions of and the meaning attached to the policies, practices, and procedures employees experience and the behaviors they observe getting rewarded" (Schneider et al., 2013, p. 362). Organization climates are an important determinant of organizational outcomes and central organizational behavior models (Rogg et al., 2001). Despite a literature replete with studies finding employee outcomes are shaped by organizational climate (e.g., Wallace, et al. 2016), only a few studies focus on multiple climates simultaneously (e.g., Abu Bakar & Connaughton, 2019; Ghauri & Rosendo-Rios, 2016; Wang & Hsieh, 2013; Rogg et al., 2001). This study uses positive organizational behavior (POB) theory to rationalize a global positive climate (GPC) encompassing five climates: perceived organizational support (POS, Eisenberger, et al., 1986), psychosocial safety climate (PSC, Dollard & Bakker, 2010), organizational mindfulness (Ray et al., 2011), worthy work (Lips-

Wiersma et al., 2020), and inclusion climate (Chung et al., 2020). GPC is a global climate that highlights organizations offering an overall holistic positive climate as an enhancer of the overall employee experience, and we use Social Exchange Theory (SET, Blau, 1964) to understand its effects as this is a common theory to understand how work shapes behaviors (e.g., Baeza, Gonzalez, Chapa, & Rodriguez, 2022).

Beyond the direct effects of GPC to employee behaviors, we include meaningful work as a mediator, which Spreitzer (1995) defined as "the value of a work goal or purpose, judged in relation to an individual's own ideals or standards. Meaning involves a fit between the requirements of a work role and beliefs, values, and behaviors" (p. 1443). Thus, GPC should influence meaningful work, which consequently, shapes employee behaviors. Further, given organizational change has existed since the beginning of modern work (Emery & Trist, 1965) and occurs commonly even before Covid-19 (Brazzale et al., 2021), we focus on employee readiness towards change (e.g., Lee, Becker, & Nobre, 2012). We sample employees experiencing some change at work and include Readiness for Change (RFC), which Stevens (2013) defined as an ongoing process, both "continuous and recursive… occurring throughout the larger context of the given change implementation" (p. 334). We argue employees with greater readiness will respond more positively in their behaviors and react more strongly under SET and thus include it as a moderator.

Overall, the paper makes three contributions. Firstly, it explores GPC and shows it plays a key role in shaping positive employee behaviors. Secondly, meaningful work is found to also play a key role and aids our understanding of the process of how GPC influences behavior. Finally, the effects of RFC both directly and in combination with GPC highlight the importance of RFC in the change study context and acting as a boundary condition (moderated mediation) further provides unique insights. Our study model is shown in Figure 1.

Insert Figure 1 about here

Theoretical Approach: SET

With SET, employees reciprocate with superior attitudes and behaviors in response to positive treatment from their employer (Blau, 1964). This is because when employers engage in valued actions, it creates felt obligations in employees to respond (Haar & Spell, 2004). Importantly, this reciprocation behavior is vital because it reinforces the giving by the originator (Blau, 1964). Thus, positive employee behaviors acknowledge the efforts of the organization (e.g., providing a high GPC). This subsequently encourages the organization to continue this support and potentially extend it over time. Basically, employees reciprocate to highlight their commitment and obligation to the employer (Haar & Spell, 2004). Fundamental to SET is the norm of reciprocity (Gouldner 1960), which Haar and Spell (2009) state "is a cultural universal based on give and take, which leads to the mutual reinforcement by two parties of each other's actions" (p. 1829). This captures the mutual reinforcement by two parties of each other's actions under SET.

Under the norm of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960), the recipient of an employer benefit – here the employee within a high GPC – becomes "morally obligated to recompense the donor" (Haar & Spell, 2004, p. 1041). While employees can choose to ignore the actions of their employer, the psychological pressure to react positively to positive employer actions is strong and well supported empirically (e.g., Kurtessis et al., 2017). When both employee and employer apply the norm of reciprocity to their relationship, favourable treatment from either party is then reciprocated to the other leading to beneficial outcomes for both parties (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). There is strong empirical support showing an organization that treats their employees well, are more likely to encourage employees (through felt obligations) to reciprocate, and thus engage in superior behaviors – higher OCBs and lower turnover (see Kurtessis et al., 2017).

GPC

As noted above, few studies explore multiple climates, despite employees potentially being exposed to multiple climates (Patterson et al., 2005; Schneider et al., 2013). We follow the work of Rogg et al.

(2001) who examined multiple climates and drew them together as a higher order construct. Our GPC is made up of five existing climates which are briefly detailed.

POS. POS is defined as "employees develop a general perception concerning the extent to which the organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being" (Kurtessis et al., 2017, p. 1855). POS can influence and impact many positive outcomes with meta-analyses supporting a beneficial link to behaviors including absenteeism, turnover intentions, and OCBs (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002; Kurtessis et al., 2017). Thus, POS taps into the extra effort that employees may give to an organization in return for strong support. POS aligns strongly with SET, with employee exchange ideology enhancing the effectiveness of POS (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). For example, if an employee perceives their employer as going the extra mile for them (high POS), they will reciprocate to highlight their commitment through more positive job attitudes and behaviors (Haar & Spell, 2004).

PSC. PSC reflects senior leaders' commitment and prioritisation, organizational communication and participation, in relation to employee psychological health (Idris et al., 2014; Hall et al., 2010). A PSC climate is demonstrated through commitment to stress prevention, prioritising psychological health and safety over productivity goals (Hall et al, 2010). Hence, the protection of workers psychological health and safety occurs via senior management through policies, practices, and procedures (Dollard & Bakker, 2010; Hall, et al., 2010). Researchers consider that understanding organizational context, specifically the PSC enables us to predict employee outcomes, and there is empirical support towards behaviors including turnover intentions (Bentley et al., 2021). Huyghebaert et al. (2018) stated "one could thus argue that when senior management prioritizes employee well-being through effective policies and procedures (i.e., high PSC), favourable conditions are created for employee retention" (p. 113). Such reactions to senior management action are a good reflection of SET.

Worthy Work. Lips-Wiersma et al. (2020) defined Worthy Work (WW) as occurring when an employee is subjectively attached to their work outcomes but also view their work as having an independent value to society. The focus on WW is due to calls that organizations must put greater emphasis on decision making that considers people, planet, and prosperity, such that business models consider both profit with

purpose (Stahl, et al., 2020). Ciulla (2012) suggests a set of objective criteria for WW as "jobs which people help others, alleviate suffering, eliminate difficult, dangerous or tedious toil, make someone healthier and happier, aesthetically or intellectually enrich people or improve the environment in which we live. All work that is worthy does at least one of these things in some big or small way" (p. 127). A WW approach means employees understand who they are, what their work and their organization is about, and their unique contribution, which generates purpose and meaning in work (Steger & Dik, 2009). WW aligns well with SET, as it encourages felt obligations because an organizational focus on creating WW should lead to increased positive work behaviors. Lips-Wiersma et al. (2020) and Steger and Dik (2009) both found WW and purpose to be positively related to meaningful work dimensions and outcomes. We include WW as a component of GPC because it is quite distinct and focuses upon a unique dimension (doing worthy work) that differs markedly from wellbeing (POS) and psychological health and safety (PSC).

Inclusion. Within the context of fair treatment to all and the positive outcomes of this treatment, there is growing attention towards equality and inclusion in the workplace with respect to differences in gender, age, culture, and religion (Fine & Sojo, 2019, Haar & Brougham, 2021). An inclusion climate refers to "the degree to which an employee perceives that they are an esteemed member of the work group through experiencing treatment that satisfies their needs for belonging and uniqueness" (Shore et al., 2011, p. 1265). Importantly, inclusion also has strong theoretical alignment with SET (Shore et al., 2011). Haar and Brougham (2021) used SET to explain how perceived cultural inclusion influenced employee outcomes. Shore et al., (2011) identifies belonging and uniqueness as the core elements of inclusion, where employees want to belong but want their unique characteristics recognized. Despite earlier critiques noting that inclusion lacks empirical support (Shore et al., 2011), employee evidence is growing (e.g., Chung et al., 2020; Haar & Brougham, 2021; Mor Barak et al., 2016). Beneficial outcomes associated with an inclusion climate include OCBs and turnover intentions (Mor Barak, et al., 2016; Haar & Brougham, 2021). The addition of an inclusion climate provides a distinct focus beyond the other climates explored, with its focus on a sense of belonging and uniqueness.

Organizational Mindfulness. The final climate focuses on organizational mindfulness, which is at the organizational level, defined as a "state of mind or mode of practice that permits questioning of expectations, knowledge, and adequacy of routines in complex and not fully predictable social technologies and physical settings" (Jordan, et al., 2009, p. 468). Vogus and Sutcliffe (2012) consider organizational mindfulness as the extent which an organization captures discriminatory detail about emerging threats and creates a capability to act in response to these details. Ray et al. (2011) posits five main organizational processes found within mindful organizations: a pre-occupation with failure, a reluctance to simplify interpretations, sensitivity to operations, a commitment to resilience and a difference to expertise. A climate reflecting these five mindfulness processes should encourage rich thinking and capacity for action. Mindful organizations have unique and adaptive processes and behaviors, avoid accidents, actively seek to know what they don't know, learn from mistakes, pay attention to detail and maintain the capacity to act (Ray et al., 2011). Organizational mindfulness was selected because this reflects a unique approach, and has less supportive empirical insights, but also the mindfulness approach aligns well with POB (Roche, Haar & Luthans, 2014).

Hypotheses

Under SET, it is expected the GPC will beneficially influence employee behaviors, specifically lower turnover intentions and higher OCBs. Studies have identified the costs of employee turnover (see Bret Becton et al., 2009; Tillman et al., 2018), making it an important factor to test. OCBs are valuable employee behaviors because they enhance organizational success by freeing up resources, makes and organization a more attractive place to work, and enhances an organization's ability to adapt to environmental changes (Podsakoff et al, 2000). Thus, OCBs are valuable and desirable in organizations because they shape performance (Lowery & Krilowicz, 1996), although we acknowledge some argue that OCBs are less desirable in more 'Taylorist' workplaces (Hunt, 2002).

With GPC, employees will recognize the value of the myriad forms of support they receive, either towards their overall wellbeing (POS), belongingness and uniqueness (inclusion), or psychological health and safety from senior management (PSC). Further, recognition that their

workplace provides work that is meaningful (WW) and the unique working context of a mindful organization (e.g., pre-occupation with failure, sensitivity to operations etc.) are all expected to trigger felt obligations (Haar & Spell, 2004) under SET theory. Hence, employees will respond to strong GPC with reduced turnover intentions and enhanced OCBs. This leads to our first Hypothesis.

Hypothesis 1: GPC will be (a) negatively related to turnover intentions and (b) positively related to OCBs.

Mediating Effects of Meaningful Work

Maynard, Gilson, and Mathieu (2012) defined meaningful work as "the fit between one's work goals and beliefs or values; in other words, it is an individual's extent of caring about a task" (p. 1235). The perceived 'fit' between an individual's self-concept and their role and experience of the role will lead to greater experience of meaning in work (May et al., 2004; Lips-Wiersma et al., 2020). Shuck et al. (2011) noted that meaningful work relates to "job and other workplace characteristics that facilitate the attainment or maintenance of one or more dimensions of meaning" (p. 510). Further, Dolan and Raich (2009) argued that meaningful work is key great transformation in business and society. Here, we argue that GPC will positively shape meaning work because it reflects greater commitment, support, and focus from the organization, which encourages employees to reciprocate with stronger meaning. Indeed, evidence shows that climates can positively shape meaningful work (e.g., Bhatnagar & Aggarwal, 2020; Lamm et al. 2015). Work that serves others and makes a difference can help to make work feel meaningful (Lips-Wiersma & Morris, 2009), and WW is positively related to meaningful work (Lips-Wiersma et al., 2020). In their meta-analysis, Allan et al. (2019) found meaningful work was positively related to OCBs and negatively related to turnover intentions and we expect these effects to hold here. Similarly, Lamm et al. (2015) found empowerment (which includes meaningful work as a dimension) mediated the influence of climate on turnover intentions and OCBs, and we expect the same here.

Hypothesis 2: GPC will be positively related to meaningful work.

Hypothesis 3: Meaningful work will be negatively related to (a) turnover intentions and positively related to (b) OCBs

Hypothesis 4: Meaningful work will mediate the influence of GPC on (a) turnover intentions and (b) OCBs.

Readiness for Change

Change is a dynamic but constant factor in organizational life (Brazzale et al., 2021), and Vakola (2013) argued "rather than creating readiness each time the organization attempts to implement change, readiness could be perceived and 'invested' in as a constant state, which is conceived as a core competency to cope with continuous changing external, as well as internal, conditions" (p. 103). Armenakis et al. (1993) state that "readiness for change may act to pre-empt the likelihood of resistance to change, increasing the likelihood for change efforts to be more effective" (p. 682). Indeed, there is growing attention to the importance of readiness for change (e.g., Shrivastava, Pazzaglia, Sonpar, & McLoughlin, 2022). Subsequently, Holt and Vardman (2013) posit expanding our conceptualisation of readiness to move beyond single change instances and considering that we are instead in a constant state of ongoing complex interactions, multiple changes are occurring within organizations simultaneously and ongoing. This aligns with Brazzale et al. (2021), which found that employee perceptions of change are more likely seen as being constant rather than intermittent. Indeed, within the current global pandemic caused by Covid-19, we have organizational change at unprecedented levels. While perception may be that readiness for change has become even more topical with the recent 2020 Pandemic events, researchers found that employee perceptions of change was commonplace before pandemic disruptions during 2020.

Bouckenooghe et al. (2009) found RFC was related beneficially to employee attitudes and behaviors. Under SET, higher readiness for change reflects a commitment to accept change and be positive about the change, and thus higher RFC reflects a stronger exchange relationship which should lead to lower turnover intentions. Indeed, change perceptions have been found to be negatively related to turnover intentions (Neves, 2009; Madsen et al., 2005) and positively towards employee behaviors (Adil, 2016). Chih et al. (2012) found RFC was positively related to OCBs and we expect similar direct effects here. Further, we argue that RFC primes the employee to respond more beneficially when the

climate is positive (i.e., high GPC) and thus we also expect RFC to moderate GPC and be more beneficial towards turnover intentions and OCBs. The RFC literature often focuses on interaction effects towards RFC, although a few studies have explored interactions effects with RFC such as with self-efficacy (Rahi et al., 2021). Huang (2015) found multiple interaction effects with a construct the opposite of RTC (resistance instead of readiness), but the effects align with the hypothesis here. Employees with high RFC are more likely to react positively to a positive climate and thus report superior effects. Therefore, we posit the following:

Hypothesis 5: RFC will be positively related to (a) meaningful work and (b) OCBs.

Hypothesis 6: RFC will be negatively related to turnover intentions.

Hypothesis 7: RFC will interact with GPC towards (a) meaningful work, (b) turnover intentions and (c) OCBs, leading to beneficial effects when both are high.

Finally, the potential moderation effect of RFC on the mediation effects of meaningful work between GPC and outcomes is also explored. Studies of moderated mediation are becoming more popular (e.g., Mach & Baruch, 2015) and have been explored with organizational climates (e.g., Haar & Brougham, 2021). Here, we argue the indirect effect of GPC on employee behaviors, through meaningful work as the mediator, will fluctuate based on RFC. Under SET, we suggest the beneficial influence of GPC will be further enhanced by RFC, and thus the indirect effect of GPC will strengthen as RFC strengthens. This reflects the additive effects of strong SET factors, where employees are more likely to reciprocate in the context of high RFC. This leads to our final hypothesis.

Hypothesis 8: The indirect effect of GPC on employee behaviors through meaningful work (mediator), will be enhanced as RFC also strengthen (moderated mediation).

Methods

Participants and sample

Data were collected in NZ in late 2021 using a Cint survey panel. Typical of such providers, they have a large database of potential respondents in New Zealand (for more details see Haar, 2021). This type of survey panel data is an appropriate alternative to more traditional methods of collecting survey data

such as postal surveys. Indeed Walter et al. (2019) compared panel data collection with some of the more traditional methods with meta-analysis and did not find any significant differences. The present study included three qualifiers: (1) aged 18+ years; (2) in paid employment at least 20 hours/week, and (3) be undergoing some type of change in the workplace. Recommendations from Bernerth *et al.* (2021) were followed including screening our respondents too slow or too fast and including an instructed response item (e.g., "For this question, answer agree only"). Those who do fail this last test are dropped from the survey.

In total, n=872 respondents fit the criteria and completed the survey. Respondents were more likely to be male (54.4%), be New Zealand European (67.4%) or Māori (18.3%). On average, respondents worked 38.3 hours/week (SD=9.6), were 38.1 years of age (SD=11.3) and had tenure of 5.3 years (SD=5.9). By sector, 62.7% were employed in the private sector, 32.7% in the public sector, and 4.6% in the not-for-profit sector. By education, 54.9% held a university degree at a minimum. Respondents came from a broad range of occupations. General managers, farmers, and hospitality, HR Managers, media professionals, construction, automotive and food workers as well as nurses, office managers and administrators.

Measures

All measures were coded 1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree except where noted.

GPC was captured using five established climate measures. We focus on these five climates because they all align well with POB theory. *POS* was measured using 4-items from the short POS measure (Eisenberger et al., 1986), and shorter scales are common (e.g., Haar and Brougham, 2022). A sample item is "The organization values my contribution to its well-being" (α=.85). *PSC* was measured using the 4-item scale by Dollard and Bakker (2010), sample item "Senior management show support for stress prevention through involvement and commitment" (α=76). *Worthy Work* was measured using the five-item scale by Lips-Wiersma et al. (2020), sample item "Our product or service creates a better life for current and future generations" (α=.83). *Inclusion Climate* was based on Chung et al. (2020), although the focus is at the climate-level here not the group-level. We confirmed the higher-order

construct with two dimensions of 4-items each (*Belonging*, sample item "All employees are treated as a valued member of this organization" and *Uniqueness*, sample item "My organization listens to employees even when their views are dissimilar"), via Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) using AMOS (v. 28). This was a good fit to the data: $\chi 2(df)=133.9(19)$, CFI=.97, RMSEA=.08 and SRMR=.03 (α=.91). An alternative, single factor construct, was a significantly poorer fit to the data: $\Delta\chi 2(df)=43.6(1)$, $p< .001$. *Organizational Mindfulness* was measured based on the 15-item scale by Ray et al. (2011), although modified towards general organizations. The higher-order construct with the five dimensions was confirmed by CFA, and this was a good fit to the data: $\chi 2(df)=323.4(89)$, CFI=.95, RMSEA=.06 and SRMR=.04. An alternative single factor construct was a significantly poorer fit to the data: $\Delta\chi 2(df)=28.3(1)$, $p< .001$. Finally, we confirmed the nature of these five related but distinct climate measures into a single GPC using CFA testing a higher order construct. Overall, this was a good fit to the data: $\chi 2(df)=1845.4(591)$, CFI=.92, RMSEA=.05 and SRMR=.05 (α=.96). An alternative CFA was tested – with the items representing a single factor – and this was a significantly poorer fit to the data: $\Delta\chi 2(df)=611.9(3)$, $p< .001$.

Turnover Intentions was measured with the four-items by Kelloway, Gottlieb, and Barham (1999). A sample item is "I don't plan to be at my organization much longer" (α= .92).

OCBs were measured using 4-items from Lee and Allen's (2002) OCB organizational measure, coded 1=never, 5=always. Questions followed the stem *Please indicate how often you engage in the following behaviors*. A sample scale item "Attend functions that are not required but that help the organizational image" (α= .80).

MFW was measured using three items by Spreitzer (1995), a sample item is "The work I do on this job is very important to me" (α= .86).

RFC was measured using the nine items by Bouckenooghe et al. (2009). Sample items across the three dimensions are "I want to devote myself to the process of change" (*Intentional Readiness*), "Plans for future improvement will not come to much" (reverse coded) (*Cognitive Readiness*), and "I experience the change as a positive process" (*Emotional Readiness*). We confirmed the higher-order construct with

three dimensions by CFA and this was an excellent fit to the data: $\chi 2(df)=150.6(26)$, CFI=.96, RMSEA=.07 and SRMR=.06 (α=.83). An alternative, single factor construct, was a significantly poorer fit to the data: $\Delta\chi 2(df)=720.9(1)$, $p< .001$.

Controls. Drawing on climate meta-analysis (e.g., Kurtessis et al., 2017), we control for Tenure (years). Further, given our focus on change, we follow Brazzale et al. (2021) and control for Amount of Change (coded 1=minor, 2=modest, 3=moderate, 4=major).

Measurement model

A CFA was conducted on all measures using AMOS including higher-order constructs. Overall, this was a good fit to the data: $\chi 2(df)=4025.3(1470)$, CFI=.90, RMSEA=.05 and SRMR=.06.

Test of Common Method Bias

Podsakoff *et al.* (2003) raises potential issues around common method bias (CMB) from single source data. We conducted statistical tests to explore CMB. We conducted a Latent Common Method Factor test on our CMB, and this produced a $\chi 2$ difference that was non-significant, supporting no CMB (Collier, 2020). Next, we followed suggestions by Podsakoff *et al.* (2003) and conducted the Harman's One-Factor Test. Our unrotated factor analysis explained 33% of the variance, which is below the 50% threshold. We conducted a third post-hoc test, the Lindell and Whitney test, which is a partial correlation controlling for an unrelated construct. If the strength of the correlations does not change then method bias is not seen as problematic. We controlled for education (1=high school, 2=technical college, 3=university degree, 4=postgraduate qualification) and no change on the strength of correlations was found. Combined, these three tests suggest that CMB is not problematic in the present study.

Analysis

Relationships were tested using PROCESS 4.0 (in SPSS v. 28), using model 8 (moderated mediation), with turnover intentions and OCBs as the dependent variables. Control variables are entered in Step 1, PSC as the IV, meaningful work as the mediator, and RFC as the moderator. The products were mean centred. For mediation effects (including moderated mediation) we confirmed effects using bootstrapping (5,000 times) and model 4 was used to calculate indirect effects.

Results

Descriptive statistics for the study variables are shown in Table 1.

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Insert Table 1 about here

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Table 1 shows that GPC is significantly correlated with rate of change (r= -.08, p= .027), MFW (r= .51, p<.001), RFT (r= .50, p< .001), turnover intentions (r= -.20, p<.001), and OCBs (r= .48, p< .001). MFW is significantly correlated with RFC (r= .42, p<.001), turnover intentions (r= -.20, p<.001), and OCBs (r= .40, p<.001). RFC is significantly correlated with turnover intentions (r= .19, p<.001), and OCBs (r= .51, p<.001). Finally, turnover intentions are significantly correlated with OCBs (r= .09, p= .011).

Results of the moderated mediation analysis towards behaviors is presented in Table 2.

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Insert Table 2 about here

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The top model shows GPC is significantly related to MFW (β= .51(.04), p< .0001 [LL= .43, UL= .59]), as is RFC β= .33(.05), p< .0001 [LL= .23, UL= .42]). Further, RFC interacts significantly with GPC towards MFW β= -.12(.06), p= .0398 [LL= .02, UL= .11]). The model is significant (p< .0001) and accounts for moderate amounts of variance (31%). Table 2 also shows that GPC is significantly related to turnover intentions (β= -.73(.06), p< .0001 [LL= -.85, UL= -.61]), and OCBs (β= .41(.04), p< .0001 [LL= .33, UL= .48]). Furthermore, MFW is significantly related to turnover intentions (β= -.35(.05), p< .0001 [LL= -.45, UL= -.25]) and OCBs (β= .41(.04), p< .0001 [LL= .33, UL= .48]). The inclusion of MFW in the models partially mediates the effect of GPC on turnover intentions, with the direct effect dropping (β= -.51(.06), p< .0001 [LL= -.64, UL= -.38]), and similarly dropping with OCBs (β= .35(.04), p< .0001 [LL= .27, UL= .44]). In both models, GPC remained a significant predictor and had a significant indirect effect. Overall, these effects provide support for Hypotheses 1 to 4.

Regarding the moderator, RFC had a significant direct effect on turnover intentions (β= 1.04(.07), p< .0001 [LL= .90, UL= 1.18]) and OCBs (β= .46(.05), p< .0001 [LL= .37, UL= .55]). Significant interaction effects were found between GPC and RFC towards turnover intentions (β= .44(.08), p< .0001 [LL= .28, UL= .60]) and OCBs (β= .12(.05), p= .0288 [LL= .01, UL= .23]). These findings provide support for Hypotheses 5 and 7 but not Hypothesis 6 as RFC was positively related to turnover and not negatively as expected. Both models are significant (p< .0001) and accounts for moderate amounts of variance (28% turnover intentions and 36% for OCBs). We graph the interactions to illustrate effects in Figures 2-4.

Insert Figures 2-4 about here

Figure 2 shows the interaction effects towards MFW and shows that at low levels of GPC, there is a significant difference in MFW, with much higher levels when RFC is high than low. At high GPC, the overall levels of MFW are higher, and the beneficial effects of high RFC remain, with the highest MFW at high levels of GPC and RFC. The simple slope tests show the slopes are significant for high RFC (gradient= .511, t= 12.773, p< .0001) and low RFC (gradient= .394, t= 5.364, p< .0001). This supports Hypothesis 7a.

Figure 3 shows the interaction effects towards turnover intentions. At low levels of GPC, there is a significant difference in turnover intentions, with significantly higher levels when RFC is high than low. At high GPC, there is a significant drop in turnover intentions but only for respondents with low RFC. Those with high RFC retain high levels of turnover intentions. The simple slope tests show the slopes are significant for low RFC (gradient= -.509, t= -7.955, p< .0001) but not high RFC (gradient= -.069, t= -0.630, p= .5291). Here, high RFC does not intensify the reduction in turnover intentions, failing to support Hypothesis 7b.

Figure 4 shows the interaction effects towards OCBs and shows that at low levels of GPC, there is a significant difference in OCBs, with much higher levels when RFC is high than low. At high GPC,

the overall levels of OCBs are higher, and the beneficial effects of high RFC remain, with the highest OCBs at high levels of GPC and RFC. The simple slope tests show the slopes are significant for high RFC (gradient= .473, t= 6.629, p< .0001) and low RFC (gradient= .355, t= 8.360, p< .0001). This supports Hypothesis 7c.

Finally, the index of moderated mediation is significant for both turnover intentions (index= .04(.02), p=.0241 [LL= .00, UL= .08]) and OCBs (index= -.01(.00), p=.0494 [LL= -.03, UL= -.00]). Hayes (2018) suggests these significant moderated mediation effects means that the indirect effect of GPC on employee's behaviors, with MFW as the mediator, differs by RFC. Graphed moderated mediation effects are shown in Figures 5 and 6.

Insert Figures 5 and 6 about here

Figure 5 show similar moderated mediation effects towards turnover intentions, and we follow the approach of Wayne et al. (2017) regarding probing conditional indirect effects of GPC through MFW at -2SD/Mean/+2SD of RFC. The analysis shows respondents reporting low RFC (-2SD) the effect of GPC is significant and negative on turnover intentions (β= -.20(.04), p< .0001 [LLCI= -.28, ULCI= -.13]) and at Mean RFC the effect is still significant (β= -.18(.03), p< .0001 [LLCI= -.25, ULCI= -.11]) and similarly so at high RFC (+2SD) (β= -.16(.03), p< .0001 [LLCI= -.23, ULCI= -.09]). Towards OCBs, respondents reporting low RFC (-2SD) the effect of GPC is significant and positive (β= .07(.02), p= .0014 [LLCI= .03, ULCI= .12]) and similarly so at Mean RFC (β= .06(.02), p= .0012 [LLCI= .02, ULCI= .11]) and similarly so at high RFC (+2SD) (β= .06(.03), p= .0016 [LLCI= .02, ULCI= .09]). For both behaviors, the indirect effect is significant across the full 95% confidence intervals and shows the indirect effect of GPC becomes weaker as RFC becomes stronger. These effects are counter to Hypothesis 8a and 8b.

Discussion

The nature of work has radically changed over the last few years and many countries report workforce challenges and changes – exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic – with many organizations being required to re-orientate to the 'new normal'. Change and new ways of working have been happening at a rapid pace, for example, the New Zealand unemployment rate is currently one of the lowest on record (Robersson & Sepuloni, 2021), and The Great Resignation (Cook, 2021; Smith, 2022) is the term currently being used to describe the organizational turnover phenomena happening around the world including New Zealand. Fundamentally, employees appear to be making work life changes, spurred on by current and post Covid-19 environments. This also means there will be many individuals joining new organizations for the first time and most importantly will require an organizational climate that welcomes and embraces new employees.

Here, we explored a suite of positive organizational climates with distinct focuses that aligns with POB around five positive organizational dimensions targeting psychosocial safety (PSC), belonging and uniqueness (inclusion), and employee wellbeing (POS), as well as exploring purpose and worth (WW) and mindful organizations, with mindfulness having its own specific POB links (Roche *et al.,* 2014). Combined, we show that organizations can create a GPC that captures all these distinct yet related positive climates, and that together, they play a vital role in shaping employee behaviors. Theoretically, this aligns with SET, the premise being that when both employee and employer apply the norm of reciprocity to their relationship, favourable treatment from either party is then reciprocated to the other leading to beneficial outcomes for both parties (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002).

Given the present study's focus on change, we also included RFC to capture the way that an employee can be ready, or not, for change, and explored the way this played out both directly and in combination with GPC. Indeed, we found that the GPC and RFC are both positively related to MFW, interacting significantly as expected, with the highest level of MFW being found when GPC and RFC are both high. This highlights a high RFC individual is attuned to the actions of employers (via SET)

and thus reciprocate strongly when GPC is high. However, interesting effects were found towards turnover intentions. First, while GPC is negatively related to turnover as expected, RFC was positive and the interaction with GPC was dominated by RFC. Those with high RFC were only slightly less likely to consider leaving at high GPC and still at high levels (see Figure 3), while high GPC was most effective in further reducing turnover intentions for the low RFC group. One possible explanation could be that within the context of The Great Resignation, RFC signals just that employees willing to embrace change, and this includes at the expense of leaving their current job. The effects towards OCBs were as expected, with greater OCBs reported at high GPC and high RFC. So, RFC is positively related to OCBs and interactions beneficially, with GPC leading to greater OCBs. Thus, GPC is universally beneficial to MFW and work behaviors (OCBs and retention), but RFC is beneficial to MFW and OCBs and detrimental to turnover, encouraging such behaviors. Here, we suggest this is due to the context of The Great Resignation and the availability of numerous jobs.

The influence of RFC continues as a boundary condition for GPC on behaviors through MFW. It was expected that as employee RFC changed the indirect effect of GPC and would strengthen but the opposite effect was found, for both turnover intentions and OCBs. This is especially useful in the context of OCBs where otherwise RFC is beneficial. It simply shows that the indirect effect of GPC through MFW towards turnover intentions and OCBs is conditional on RFC and this limits the strength of GPC as RFC becomes stronger. The objective of moderated mediation is to tease apart potentially unique influences and better understand the indirect effects of the positive climate, and our analysis supported the arguments for conducting moderated mediation. Further, we also note that we controlled for amount of change, and this was significantly related to both MFW and OCBs. This positive effect is important in the context of our study setting, which has a setting of ongoing change. First, it shows that constant change is beneficial and leads to positive outcomes, providing unique insights and extending the arguments of Brazzale et al. (2021) around the commonality of organizational change. Second, it shows that the direct, mediation, and moderation effects of GPC, RFC and MFW still occur while controlling

for the context of amount of change. This does support the inclusion of amount of change in future change-based studies.

Implications

The first implication is the importance for organizations to build a strong positive work climate. Given the links to organizational performance from turnover intentions and OCBs (e.g., Lowery & Krilowicz, 1996; Podsakoff et al., 2009; Park & Shaw, 2013), building a positive climate is key. This is likely to be achieved in several ways and acknowledging the plethora of climates (see Patterson *et al.,* 2005; Schneider *et al.,* 2013), we demonstrate the importance of collectively building the climates towards a GPC. Organizations could shape their GPC by focusing on various elements: wellbeing (POS), psychosocial safety (PSC), belonging and uniqueness (inclusion), purpose and worth (WW) and being mindful. The data from this large New Zealand sample shows GPC at above average levels (M=3.64, SD=.67), but clearly a sizeable group report their climate as modest, and thus there is room for improvement. Organizations are encouraged to examine their own climate data (or conduct such analysis) to ensure they are making positive contributions to their workforce.

The results also highlight that the common occurrence of change does appear ubiquitous (Brazzale et al., 2021) and in this context, RFC plays a key role. Understanding, shaping, and encouraging RFC might be broadly beneficial for organizations, although our findings around how they positively shape turnover intentions is a potential issue. However, it might simply reflect the current workforce dynamics around job opportunities. The key here might be around enhancing employee reactions to change and making it a positive ubiquitous aspect of everyday organizational life.

Implications for researchers include conducting further tests of GPC and exploring other important work factors, such as other behaviors (e.g., creativity), or key work attitudes like job satisfaction. Further replication with RFC would be worthwhile and is encouraged, as is testing other moderators, especially in the context of boundary conditions. This would enable potentially complex relationships to be better understood. Clearly, the five climates in our GPC could have additional

climates added or substituted, and longitudinal research looking at the way organizations develop and enhance their GPC would align well with POB theory.

Limitations

The single-time self-reported nature of our data raises potential for common method bias (CMB), with Further, Haar *et al.* (2014) contends that conducting CFA and especially alternative CFA models can identify issues around CMB, and the alternative models tested here were all a poorer fit. Finally, Evans (1985) showed CMB was much less likely in the presence of moderation effects, and several significant moderation effects were found, including moderated mediation effects. Overall, our large and varied sample included a diverse range of professions and industries, aiding confidence in generalizing the findings.

Conclusion

The current study showed the importance of organizational climate and focused on a GPC that was found to play a key role manging positive employee behaviors by reducing turnover intentions and increasing OCBs. Importantly, we found that RFC played a significant role in combination, directly effecting employee MFW and behaviors, interacting with GPC, as well as acting as a boundary condition that enhanced GPC to maximize the benefits on OCBs, although with less influence on turnover intentions for those with high RFC. The findings encourage organizations to consider the climate alongside RFC, to secure positive employee behavioral outcomes.

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Table 4. Paper 2. Table 1. Correlations and Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Tenure	5.32	5.93	--						
2. Rate of Change	2.06	1.02	-.01	--					
3. GPC	3.64	.67	-.02	-.08*	--				
4. MFW	3.79	.83	.00	.05	.51**	--			
5. RFC	3.59	.59	-.06	-.04	.50**	.42**	--		
6. Turnover Intentions	3.02	1.18	-.05	.07*	-.20**	-.20**	.19**	--	
7. OCBs	3.42	.82	-.05	.10**	.48**	.40**	.51**	.09*	--

N=872 *p<.05, **p<.01

Table 5. Paper 2. Table 2. Moderated Mediation Results towards Behaviors

Variables	**MFW**		
	β(SE)	Confidence Intervals	p-value
Controls:			
Tenure	.00(.00)	LL= -.00, UL= .01	p= .2954
Rate of Change	.07(.02)	LL= .02, UL= .11	p= .0046
Direct Effects:			
GPC	.51(.04)	LL= .43, UL= .59	p< .0001
Moderators:			
RFC	.33(.05)	LL= .23, UL= .42	p< .0001
2-Way Interaction:			
GPC x RFC	-.12(.06)	LL= .02, UL= .11	p= .0398
Total R^2	.31 (F=76.3333, p< .0001)		

Variables	**Turnover Intentions**		
	β(SE)	Confidence Intervals	p-value
Controls:			
Tenure	-.01(.01)	LL= -.02, UL= .00	p= .2264
Rate of Change	.05(.03)	LL= -.01, UL= .12	p= .1238
Direct Effects:			
GPC	-.73(.06)	LL= -.85, UL= -.61	p< .0001
Mediator:			
MFW	-.35(.05)	LL= -.45, UL= -.25	p< .0001
GPC (after mediator)	-.51(.06)	LL= -.64, UL= -.38	p< .0001
Moderators:			
RFC	1.04(.07)	LL= .90, UL= 1.18	p< .0001
2-Way Interaction:			
GPC x RFC	.44(.08)	LL= .28, UL= .60	p< .0001
Index of Moderated Mediation	.04(.02)	LL= .00, UL= .08	p= .0241
Total R^2	.28 (F=55.4306, p< .0001)		

Variables	**OCBs**		
	β(SE)	Confidence Intervals	p-value
Controls:			
Tenure	-.00(.00)	LL= -.01, UL= .00	p= .2852
Rate of Change	.08(.02)	LL= .04, UL= .13	p= .0002
Direct Effects:			
GPC	.41(.04)	LL= .33, UL= .48	p< .0001
Mediator:			
MFW	.12(.03)	LL= .06, UL= .19	p= .0001
GPC (after mediator)	.35(.04)	LL= .27, UL= .44	p< .0001
Moderators:			
RFC	.46(.05)	LL= .37, UL= .55	p< .0001
2-Way Interaction:			
GPC x RFC	.12(.05)	LL= .01, UL= .23	p= .0288
Index of Moderated Mediation	-.01(.00)	LL= -.03, UL= -.00	p= .0494
Total R^2	.36 (F=80.1115, p< .0001)		

Figure 9. Paper 2. Figure 1. Study Model

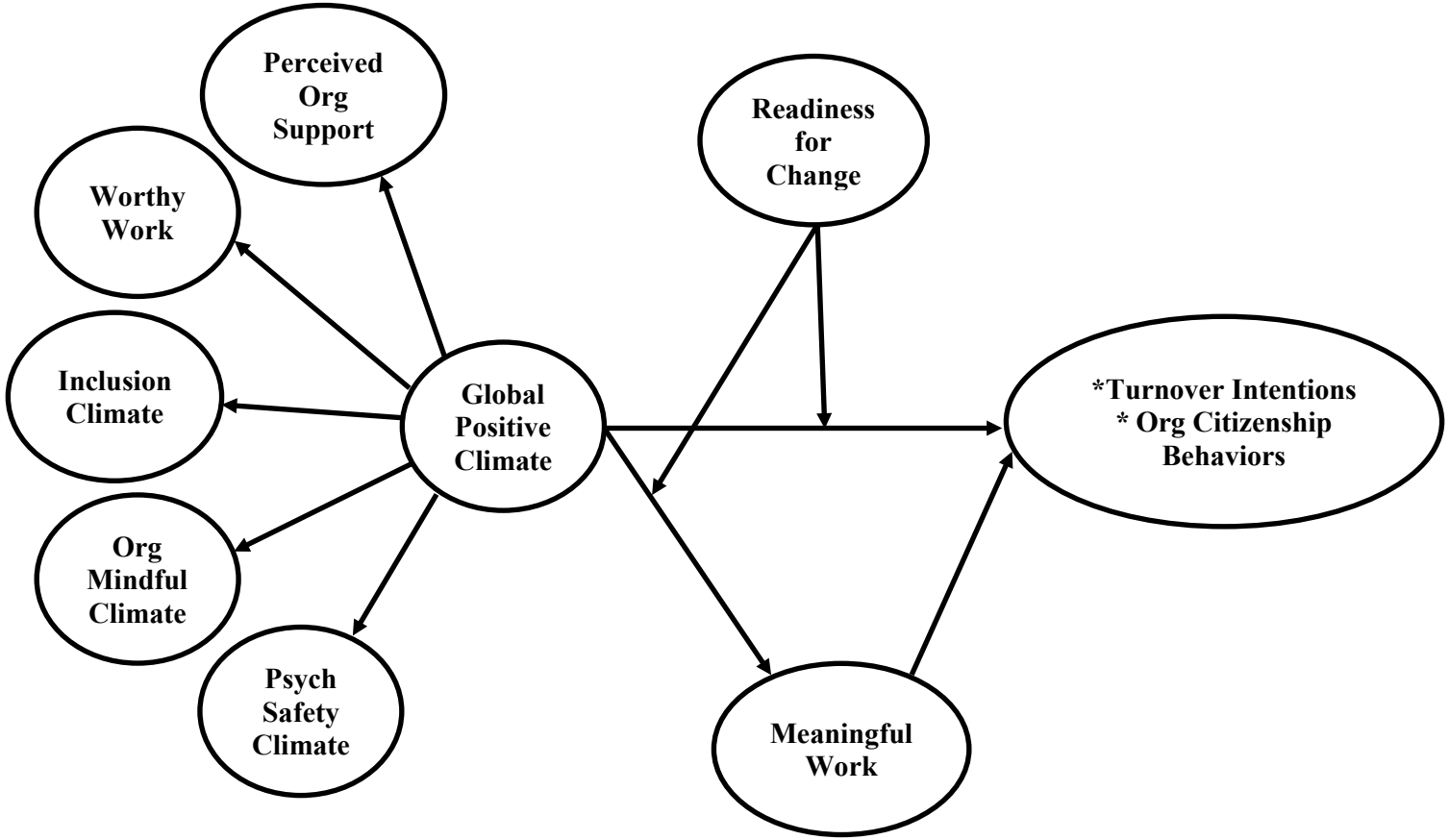


Figure 10. Paper 2. Figure 2. Interaction between GPC and RFC towards MFW

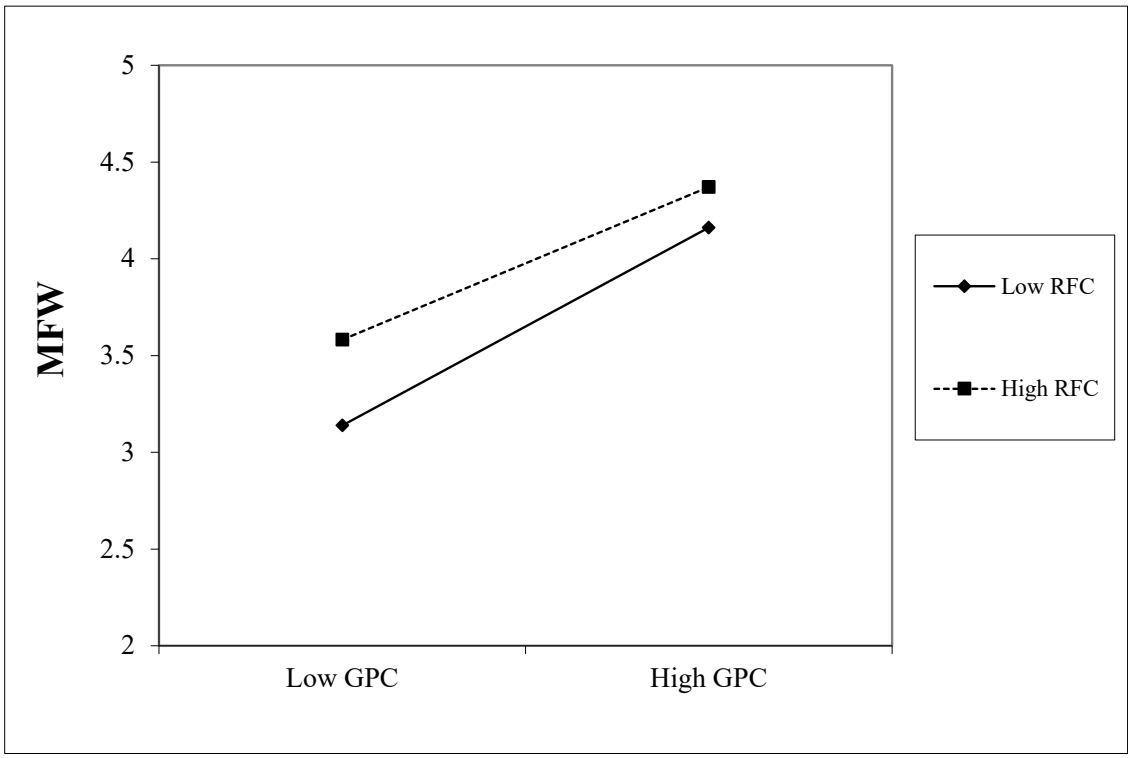


Figure 11. Paper 2. Figure 3. Interaction between GPC and RFC towards Turnover Intentions

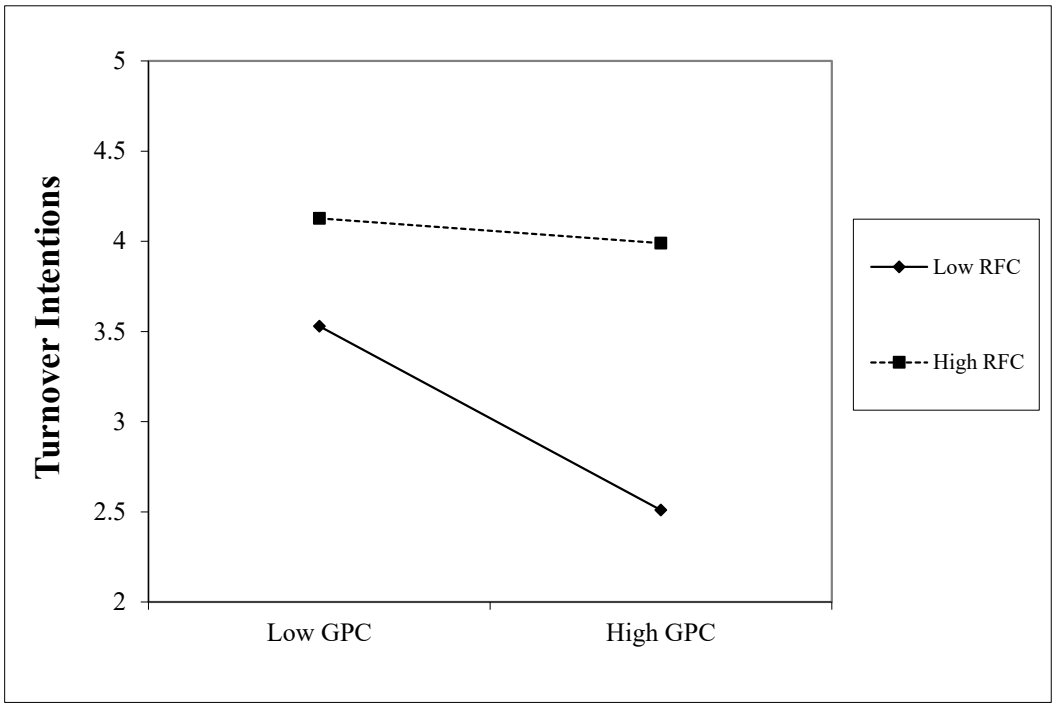


Figure 12. Paper 2. Figure 4. Interaction between GPC and RFC towards OCBs

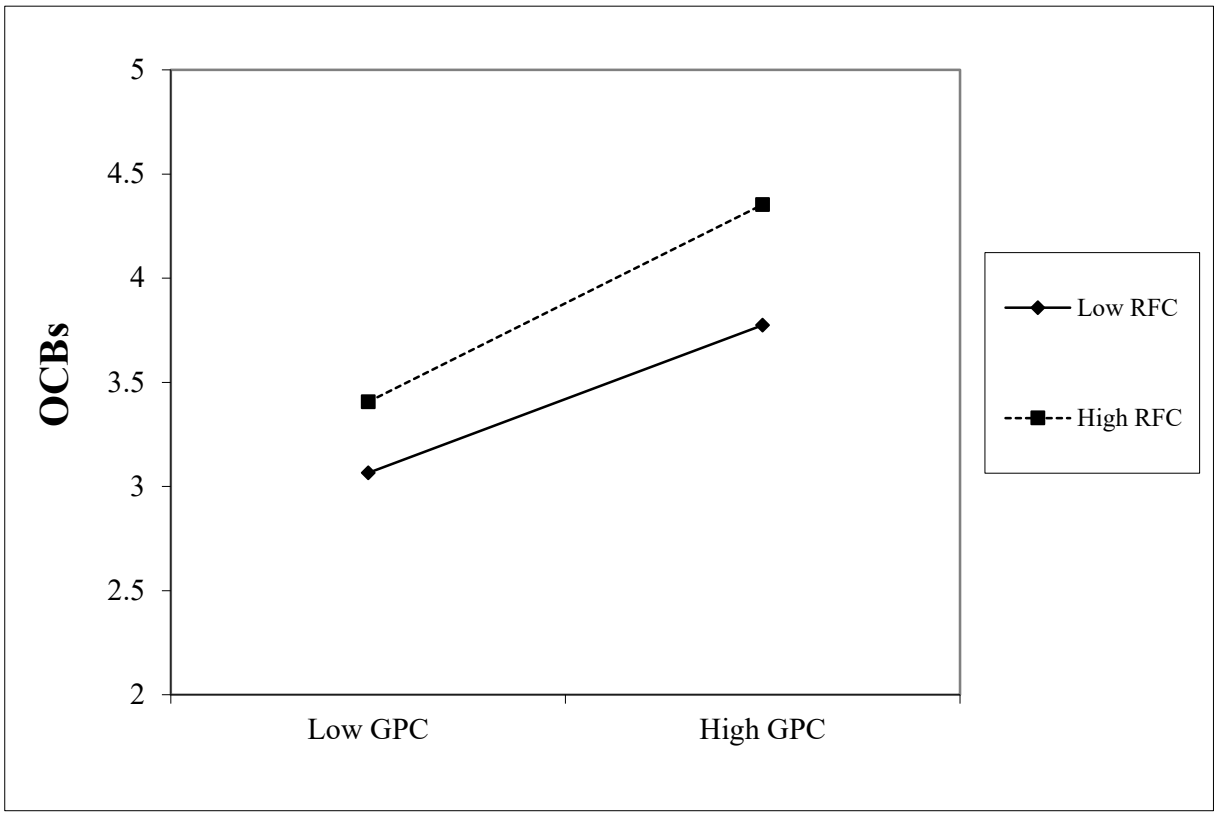


Figure 13. Paper 2. Figure 5. Indirect Effects of GPC on Turnover Intentions through MFW conditional on RFC

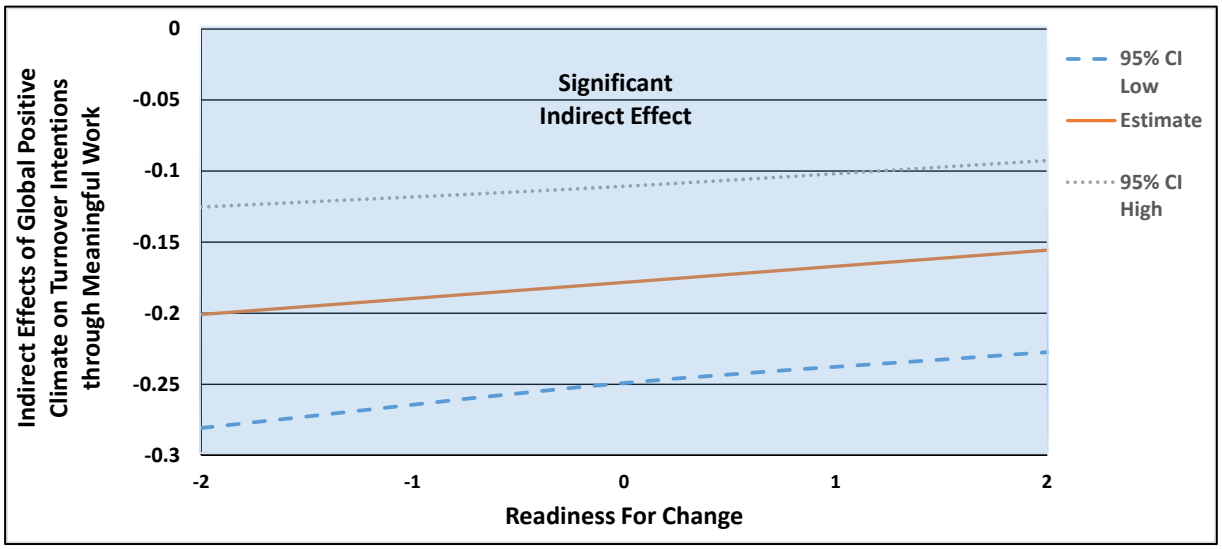
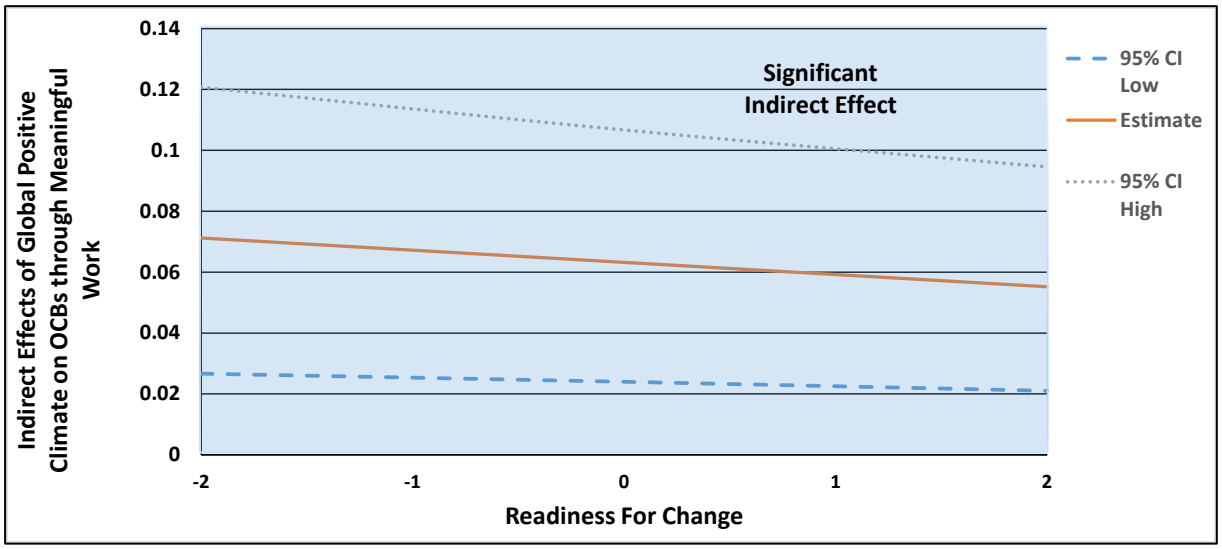


Figure 14. Paper 2. Figure 6. Indirect Effects of GPC on OCBs through MFW conditional on RFC



CHAPTER SIX: PAPER 3. A new social exchange theoretical approach to organizational climates: A qualitative approach to understand what employees want

Preface

The previous two papers have theoretically established that a global positive climate (GPC) may have benefits to both the organization and employees. Paper 3 builds off these insights and seeks to explore and capture practical climate insights using qualitative data to determine from an employee's point of view, the potentially most important organizational climate/s and opportunities to improve and enhance them. Fundamentally, Paper 3 sets out to examine, this time from an employee's point of view, how we might go about practically cultivating these positive climates within an organization.

This paper is currently under review:

McCallum, S., Myers B., & Haar, J. (under review). A new social exchange theoretical approach to organizational climates: A qualitative approach to understand what employees want. *New Zealand Journal of Employment Relations*.

PAPER 3. A new social exchange theoretical approach to organizational climates: A qualitative approach to understand what employees want

Purpose: This study explores employee qualitative comments around organizational climates, exploring the employee's viewpoint around what is needed from organizations to increase key work outcomes like job satisfaction, productivity, and retention. We apply a new theoretical approach to social exchange theory.

Methodology: This study collected and analyzed 435 New Zealand employee's open-ended questions (qualitative comments) around understand climate improvement opportunities. These comments were then grouped into common themes to offer a broad range of possible organization improvements or focus areas for leaders, HR practitioners, and researchers.

Findings: We apply these to the new theoretical approach towards social exchange theory. A suite of common themes emerged from the data, providing useful insights for practitioners to consider and implement to improve organizational climates. Further, it provides evidence of the benefits of creating a positive organizational climate for both employers and employees. Data was collected in the context of a volatile and changing labor market and issues around the global pandemic. Findings highlight new learnings on how to develop and embed positive organizational climates from an employee perspective.

Contributions: The paper provides unique insights into employee expectations around how organizations can improve their organizational culture in times of change and uncertainty. The application to a new theoretical model of social exchange theory also creates new knowledge.

Keywords: *organizational climates; social exchange theory; qualitative; improving culture.*

Paper type: Research paper.

Introduction

The world of work in New Zealand and globally has changed. The global pandemic has been a shockwave that has led to monumental change, not least the growth in hybrid work (Dale, 2022; Müller, et al. 2023). One result of these changes has been employee desires around better and more positive workplace environments, which can have reciprocal benefits for both the employee and employer (e.g., McCallum et al., 2023). The current work environment includes a strong 'war for talent', with New Zealand (our study setting) experiencing the lowest unemployment rate on record (Robertson & Sepuloni, 2021; Statistics New Zealand, 2022). Globally, the term 'The Great Resignation' has been used (Cook, 2021; Liu-Lastres et al., 2023; Wilkinson & Haar, 2023) to describe the continued high employee turnover around the world. It appears the employment relationship 'power balance' has continued to shift towards the employee over the employer. However, the present study seeks to answer the current unknown around how organizations have responded to employee demands (or not).

The literature shows that organizational climates play important roles in shaping work outcomes. Schneider et al. (2013) defines organizational climates as "the shared perceptions of and the meaning attached to the policies, practices, and procedures employees experience and the behaviors they observe getting rewarded" (p. 362). However, one challenge is that organizational climates are typically operationalized in many distinct ways (Patterson et al., 2005). Despite broad support for organizational climates shaping work outcomes (e.g., Wallace, et al. 2016; Zagenczyk, et al. 2021), most studies explore a single organizational climate only. Indeed, only a handful of studies explore multiple climates simultaneously (see McCallum et al., 2023; Kao, 2017; Rogg et al., 2001). This study draws on Social Exchange Theory (SET) (Blau, 1964) to understand the mechanism by how a positive climate can positively shape work behaviors (e.g., Sungu et al., 2019; McCallum et al., 2023).

This paper specifically considers employee opinions around how their workplace climate could be improved, providing researchers the opportunity to understand what type of organizational culture improvements are desired and encouraged by employees. This is important for both theoretical and practical reasons. We suggest that understanding the key themes identified by workers can provide organizations and researchers with much needed insights on the building blocks to develop more positive workplaces, and under SET, enhanced work outcomes. This is especially relevant for organizational

leaders and HR practitioners as they consider how to provide a more positive workplace for their employees in the new context of workplace challenges and unpredictability (e.g., pandemics).

Theoretical Approaches

Luthans et al. (2008) argues that organizations are the foundations for developing workers including higher performance (Gruman & Budworth, 2022). Luthans and Avolio (2009) assert business leaders must develop and maintain organizational environments that create a mutuality of beneficial outcomes, via organizational processes, such as supportive climates, HR practices, etc., that drive positive outcomes (Donaldson & Ko, 2010). A popular organizational theory to capture such effects is SET, which is often used in understanding climate research (e.g., Kurtessis et al., 2017; Jung& Takeuchi, 2019). SET explains that employees reciprocate with superior attitudes and behaviors in response to positive treatment from their employer, based on mutual reciprocity (Blau, 1964). This works because when employers engage in valued actions, it creates felt obligations in employees to respond (Haar & Spell, 2004). This reciprocation behavior is vital because it then reinforces the cycle of 'giving' between parties. For example, an organization that offers popular workplace practices but fails to illicit felt obligations (Haar & Spell, 2004) from their workforce, would likely 'dial back' the practices because there is no evidence of reciprocity by workers. Thus, positive employee attitudes and behaviors beget more via reciprocation.

Fundamental to SET is the norm of reciprocity (Gouldner 1960), which Haar and Spell (2009) state "is a cultural universal based on give and take, which leads to the mutual reinforcement by two parties of each other's actions" (p. 1829). Cropanzano et al. (2017) extends current thinking on SET and suggests the consideration to both hedonic value and activity. The activity axis refers to "the extent to which an entity actively exhibits the behavior in question" (Cropanzano et al., 2017, p. 497) and has two poles: (1) exhibit, and (2) withhold. This creates a quadrant model with employees perceiving their organization (our focus here) as *administering desirable behavior* (desirable hedonic value and active exhibit) versus *withhold undesirable behavior* (desirable hedonic value but inactive exhibit). The other two quadrants are *administering undesirable behavior* (undesirable hedonic value and active exhibit) and *withhold desirable behavior* (undesirable hedonic value but inactive exhibit). We apply this framework across potential climates representing the four quadrants of their model and offer examples.

On the left-hand side of the quadrant are actions that are desirable. The top left quadrant might represent a climate that is supportive, such as perceived organizational support (Kurtessis et al., 2017) and thus is a desirable value for employees which is actively engaged by an organization. Cropanzano et al. (2017) theorize this might lead to more organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs). Underneath this quadrant represents an entity that is actively withholding an undesirable behavior (and thus has a desirable value). For example, a firm that might offer a climate that is purposeful around reducing workplace bullying and discrimination. The model suggests such actions should lead to fewer counterproductive work behaviors (CWBs).

On the right-hand side of the quadrant are those actions that are undesirable. The top square represents active engagement in the undesired value, such as a climate that encourages abusive supervision. Cropanzano et al. (2017) theorize these actions should lead to more CWBs. Finally, the bottom right quadrant is the opposite of the top right quadrant, with firms withdrawing active interest in supporting an undesirable effect, and this might represent a firm creating a low POS climate, that is expected to result in fewer OCBs. In the present study we not only ask employees about their perceptions of their organization's climate but look to apply findings to the quadrant SET model (Cropanzano et al., 2017). We know that there is meta-analytic evidence from POS showing that employees do react to the psychological pressure of positive employer actions (e.g., Kurtessis et al., 2017), which is represented by the high value high activity quadrant. However, trying to overlay other responses to the model will aid the empirical evidence of the Cropanzano et al. (2017) theoretical model. When both employee and employer apply the norm of reciprocity to their relationship, favorable treatment from either party is then reciprocated to the other leading to beneficial outcomes for both parties (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). However, we know less about whether employees might actively suggest a climate that is valuable but has organization activity around withholding, such as a low abusive supervision climate.

Research Question

The key research question in this study focuses on organizational climate and *what employees feel their organization can do better to aid their workplace experience*. For example, various climates identified in the literature, including POS (Kurtessis et al., 2017; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002), a

climate focused on worthy work (Lips-Wiersma et al., 2020), or a climate of inclusion (Chung et al., 2020; Haar & Brougham, 2022). Overall, we seek to understand the nature of how employees see the way their organization can improve their work experience and how these might align with the new theoretical SET model (Cropanzano et al., 2017).

Methods

Participants and Sample

Data was collected in NZ in late 2021 using a Cint survey panel, which provides access to a large database of potential NZ respondents who are invited to participate if they meet specific qualifiers (see Wilkinson & Haar, 2023). The qualifiers in the present study were: (1) being in paid employment; (2) being aged 18 years and over; and (3) working a minimum 20 hours/week. Cint data provides representative samples of the New Zealand workforce and includes a broad geographical spread, as well as a range of industries and occupations. Bernerth et al. (2021) provided recommendations for online panel surveys: (1) screening respondent time (removing survey responses that are too slow/fast) and (2) using an instructed response item to screen out respondents (e.g., "For this question, answer disagree only"), with an incorrect answer seeing respondents removed. Finally, meta-analytic evidence (Walter *et al.,* 2019) shows that data from panels versus traditional methods (e.g., postal survey) do not significantly differ.

The survey asked respondents how to improve their organizational culture. While academics place a distinction between organizational culture and climate, we pilot tested with a dozen employees and found confusion between these terms. Thus, for simplicity, the term 'organizational culture' was used, being the easiest way to not complicate the question for employees. From 500 respondents, 479 respondent comments were received, and a further 44 comments were not usable due to a lack of detail or not relating specifically to the question. Overall, a total of 435 qualitative comments were used for this study. Overall, gender was well spread with males (50.1%) and females (49.4%) being the majority, with a small number of gender diverse (0.5%). Mostly New Zealand European (64.1%), married/defacto (66.2%), and with an average age 35-to-40-year age bracket. Respondents worked an average 37.9 hours per week (SD=9.96), and had average tenure was 4.85 years (SD=5.1). By sector, the private sector was the largest (60.9%), followed by the public sector (34.5%), and not-for-profit sector (4.6%). By

education, 18.4% had a high school qualification only, followed by 25.1% with a technical/polytechnic qualification, 37.2% a university degree, and 19.3% a postgraduate qualification.

Analysis

The qualitative comments responding to our question *Please suggest (and detail) 1-2 things your organisation could do to improve its culture?* Responses were analysed using interpretative phenomenological analytic (IPA) techniques (e.g., Hennekam et al., 2020). This analytical technique enables an exploration of answers regarding the way participants make sense of their working experiences and is appropriate for complex or novel topics (Haar & Martin, 2022). This method is especially useful for capturing the depth of an employee's experience around their organizational climate (Willig, 2001; Haines et al., 2012), while similarly aiding how participants make sense of that experience (Smith, 2004). We follow Haar et al. (2019), we conducted a two-stage process of analysis: (1) the first and third authors conducted a thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), whereby responses were organized into appropriate organizational climate themes; (2) an in-depth thematic analysis was conducted where themes were cross referenced back to the respondent comments and verified by the second author. The process also looked to the organizational climate literatures (e.g., McCallum et al., 2023; Kao, 2017; Rogg et al., 2001; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002; Lips-Wiersma et al., 2020; Chung et al., 2020) to ensure the themes were connected to the literature. Finally, we used external experts as a validation of our interpretation and findings. We recruited three HR Managers (separately via virtual meetings) to ensure the validity and interpretability of the identified themes. These experts provided valuable validation and offered interpretation and agreement of our analysis.

Findings

Overall, four overarching themes relating to organizational climate/s and how they could be improved were identified in the responses and considered how the responses might align with Cropanzano et al. (2017) theoretical SET quadrant model. The data collection reflected respondent ideas around what their organization could do to improve their organizational cultures. The themes were: (1) well-being, (2) personal growth, (3) positive leadership, and (4) inclusion. Each of these is discussed below.

The first theme around **well-being**, aligns with Cropanzano et al. (2017) theoretical model behavior that would be allocated to the top left quadrant exhibiting *administering desirable behavior*

(desirable hedonic value and active exhibit) that is supportive towards promoting employee well-being, however many of the participant comments reflected behaviors from the left hand side of the model (administering undesirable behaviors), that included statements around basic health and safety practices, for example, "*More well-being screening to ensure workers are not overworked or working under less optimal mental health conditions"* and some of these comments were very specific, including workplace bullying (e.g., Ahmad et al., 2021), for example "*crack down on bullying"*. Workload issues were raised here as well, with a typical response being *"This organization is growing, and it will need to look at the workload it is putting on employees, so they are not stressed about doing a good job"*. Indeed, related to this, many commented strongly on the need to have better work-life balance (e.g., Haar, 2013), with examples being *"You get a sense of not having your personal life and well-being cared for", "Work life and home life should be separate and respected",* and *"Dedicated time off ensuring everyone is taking a break".* These are all captured under various aspects of psychosocial and/or psychological safety climates, and other various well-being initiatives, for example *"Suggestion schemes, with emphasis on health & wellbeing invest in employee fitness encourage more work life balance encourage staff to take accrued leave and switch off from work"*.

Again, health and safety and well-being were identified as a fundamental organizational practice before anything else can be added to the culture. This aligns well with notions of POS (Kurtessis et al., 2017; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). For example, *"[more] mental well-being and support", "They could care about what we are feeling more and let us take more or longer breaks, that would make the work less stressful and difficult",* and *"Care about employee wellbeing over profit because happier employee will work harder and be more loyal".* These are all useful examples which talk to the conceptualization of POS (Kurtessis et al., 2017; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002), and the way it triggers reciprocation of support (e.g., the reference to loyalty above). It must be acknowledged however that this theme may also be attributed to the on-going global pandemic context and reflection over this time that looking after employees mental and physical health has become a number one priority. The comments reflect more of lower right quadrant display of behavior *withholding undesirable behavior* (desirable hedonic value but inactive exhibit) and as such, the participants here are calling for organizations to display positive caring and supportive behaviors.

The next theme that emerged from the data we have called **personal growth**. This theme was apparent in the comments around training, learning and development, and reflects employees desire for the opportunity to grow and develop, to make the most of their time at work by engaging in purposeful or meaningful work. This theme of personal growth emerged as an important issue to the participants. and is a theme that may benefit from further exploration in organizational settings to understand the true value, effectiveness, and positive outcomes of the construct. Personal growth in its most positive form again relates directly to a request for organizations to display *administering desirable behavior* (desirable hedonic value and active exhibit) from the left top quadrant of Cropanzano et al. (2017) theoretical model, but the relevant comments including "*my organisation can ensure that the quality is rooted in their culture by internalising quality at the personal level and encouraging employees to practice quality in all activities of life"* and having a focus on *"growing people's confidence"* don't confirm these actions are currently happening but more so are suggestions of what actions could happen. Participants felt it that it would be beneficial to also have opportunities to grow as people both professionally and personally while they are fulfilling their work roles. Participants stated that when organizations are committed to a climate of growth, development and learning, this helps individuals feel as though they are also developing within their roles. Examples include, *"The company is a well-balanced team it provides help and initiative growing people's confidence. I think we do well with most things really,….that allows growth within", "A better way to manage is to 'give' the crew a task they enjoy or new training in exchange for 'taking' part of their shift in a task they don't enjoy. Not only does this breed a healthy crew/manager relationship it also spreads the training out faster and quicker and encourages better work in the un-picked task as the crew is excited to learn a new thing or be on a different station instead of same ugly task all night"*, *"One thing they could do is actively encourage people to work out of their comfort zone trying new tasks and gaining new skills",* and wanting *"more group professional development as this ensures unity and continuity of practice".* Clearly the respondents saw personal growth as a component of work tasks warrants more organizational attention. Organizations may consider the opportunities for meaningful learning and growth while employees go about their work, roles that have personal growth or learning incorporated may eventually be seen as more desirable to employees.

The third theme was **positive leadership**, which included a wide range of comments around leadership styles with a strong positive focus, including leaders being present and having or good communication skills. Positive leadership clearly emphasises the expectations of the behaviors from leaders that would be behaviors from the top left quadrant *administering desirable behavior* (desirable hedonic value and active exhibit). Leaders and their behaviors are seen as important to improving overall cultures and comments relating this theme included the need to have basic common courtesies such as listening, openness, honest feedback, caring about people and holding people to account as well as giving honest feedback to poor performers. For example, leaders "*being more considerate on how their employees feel and try to improve the work environment to accommodate for what we are feeling",* "*There's a lack of communication and respect between management and employees",* and *"Any form of acknowledgement or even a thanks".* These comments perhaps also relates to the bottom left-hand quadrant of Cropanzano et al. (2017) theoretical model, employees more so are seeing leaders *withhold desirable behavior* (undesirable hedonic value but inactive exhibit). such as consideration and communication. Also, leaders being present in person was important to participants to improve organizational culture. The leadership literature is extensive and while organizational leadership is critical to organizational success (Hoch et al., 2018), the focus on specific 'positive' leadership behaviors is somewhat new. For example, leadership communication has been highlighted to increase meaningful work, work-life balance, engagement, and job satisfaction (Harmin, 2016; Mishra et al., 2014). While the importance of leadership is not new to this discourse, this finding does emphasize the importance of visibility and being present as a leader as well as the influence and impact that positive leadership has on the followers. The participant comments consistently reflected an absence of basic leadership practices, for example, *when a problem arises or if we need guidance in a particular area our boss is very slow to communicate. He normally takes two days to even respond. There have also been times where he hasn't replied at all even though we have a work group chat for 'communicating'. I must add that we all know when he has 'seen' messages as our group chat tells us"*, and "*It would be uplifting to have a GM who is seen around the place instead of seldom being there. Throughout all the lockdowns not even a packet of biscuits was popped in the staff room*". Participant concerns with the lack of basic leadership practices and the lack of effective communication was a constant line of

feedback. For example, *"The management is so out of touch with its staff and lines of communication. We are just numbers, (any) suggestions to be made are their way or the highway"*, and *"When trying to change anything it would be good if they listened to the workers who do the work and ask for their input as to how things run and if the new idea could work".* The data was collected in the context of the global pandemic, and it is possible that this demonstrates the effect of remote working and leaders focusing on running business operations, rather than on employees. Leaders may reflect on this moving forward when considering new ways of working that have emerged within the pandemic context and addressing the issues raised in this research study.

Finally, the last theme is **inclusion** and reflects participants need to have a positive feeling of belonging in the work environment. Participants want to *feel* good, and that they belong and are connected at work. Comments relating to this theme focussed on being included, fairness, and treating people how you want to be treated. This theme links to notions of positive leadership and caring, connections with others, (formally and informally) again all found in Cropanzano et al. (2017) top left quadrant (*administering desirable behavior*). Participants considered time spent team building would be worthwhile. We have conceptualized this theme as diversity and inclusion, which captures a rare comment on having a positive climate: *"We have very diverse culture, and I don't think we need to improve anything as everyone is very accepting of everything". Although my organisation includes people of all genders, races, and sexuality's, they could get a better inclusion to people's religions. It's good that they don't mention it at all, but they do need to include people".* These examples do not cover all aspects of what constitutes a positive climate such as belonging, but as with other comments, Participants provided good examples of how the climate of inclusion might be improved. For example, *"It's very much a boy's club. So, if they got rid of that culture that'll be good"* and *"It is very difficult to progress unless you have similar interests to many of the managers".* Overall, humans need for connection and belonging is fundamental, yet this research suggests that we have also lost many of these interactions in the workplace over the period of the global pandemic. Going forward, participants offered several suggestions. For example, "*team building, because it's such an awesome culture that we have, it would make things so much better if we invested in some team building. While everyone mostly works nicely together, there hasn't been a whole heap of time dedicated to building those colleague*

relationships", "Offer more time for teams to meet so we can plan together, and all be on the same page", and *"Conduct seminars, get together after-hours activities or party to encourage people to socialize with each other".* Employees see that getting back together in person, connecting, and being social away from the day to day of work is important to improving organizational cultures. Again, the comments reflect on the right side of the Cropanzano et al. (2017) model rather than being explicitly what the organizations are doing positively. Overall, all areas of the data show more of a undesirable dimension of social exchange actually happening, but participants give aspirational examples of what organizations could do to move their actions and behaviors into the upper left quadrant or more desirable examples of behaviors and positive social exchange (Cropanzano et al. 2017).

Discussion

The present study sought to capture employee desires around how their organizations could enhance their workplace cultures. Using Social Exchange theory as a theoretical framework and Cropanzano et al. (2017) theoretical model to further expand on the dimensions of social exchange the themes were placed within the Cropanzano et al. (2017) quadrants to further define behavior and participants expectations going forward. Firstly, a clear and dominant theme emerged around enhancing employee well-being. Work well-being reflects the overall quality of an employee's experience and functioning at work (Grant et al., 2007; Warr, 1987). This holistic definition is drawn from a range of literatures (e.g., healthcare, psychology etc.), which touch on three core dimensions of well-being: psychological, physical, and social. Psychological well-being is related to both work and personal life outcomes, performance at work and successful relationships. Superior mental and physical health and longevity have been found to correlate with happiness and positivity levels. Thus, psychological well-being leads to desired outcomes in work and life (Avey et al., 2010). Physical well-being captures physical indicators of health or illness and is typically explored through subjective feelings of health such as job burnout (see Haar & O'Kane, 2022). Social well-being is reflected in interpersonal and social relationships (Guest, 2017), such as family satisfaction.

Avey et al., (2010) go on to discuss that to reap the full benefits of positive organizational behavior outcomes, organizations need to do more than just considering employees as resources to achieved

outcomes such as higher organizational productivity. To make a truly valuable contribution to the field and the mission of positive organizational behavior, organizations must also include the pursuit of happiness, health and betterment for employees and the communities that they serve as viable goals or ends in themselves (Avey et al., 2010). However, only a small number of participant responses reflected that well-being is valued by their Managers in their workplaces or that there were actions being taken to develop organizational well-being. Comments particularly focused on what organizations could or shouldn't do to increase the well-being contribution for employees and in this regard the behaviors firmly reflected less desirable social exchanges and actions, the right side of the Cropanzano et al. (2017) theoretical model.

Mostly participants said how wellbeing could be better, that they were currently experiencing stress or pressure, lacking a work-life balance (e.g., Haar, 2013), and desired an increased focus or awareness of employee well-being. Overall, and importantly, only few participants appeared to be experiencing major issues relating to well-being at work and this could be rectified by increasing the displayed positive social exchange behaviors. Most participants believed that their organizations had only minor challenges to overcome to improve employee well-being. That said, participants comments suggest that an awareness of well-being and conversely workplace stressors (e.g., lack of work-life balance) as a good place for organizations to focus on.

Personal growth has long been recognised as a key to positive human development which links aligns with positive psychology. Van Woerkom and Meyers (2019) see personal growth as not only an individual need but an important requirement for organizational success this is also confirmed by Kellerman and Seligman (2023). However, workplace interventions aimed at stimulating the personal growth of employees is still scarce (Van Woerkom & Meyers, 2019). This provides opportunities to further explore in an organizational setting. We suggest personal growth as a possible key employee and organizational benefit that has flow on effects into other areas of their life such as well-being, engagement, and positive life change. Currently most organizational development processes are based on a deficit model (Van Woerkom et al., 2006) in which a person's weaknesses are seen as their greatest opportunity for development. With an organizational orientation to personal growth, organizations benefit because employees who are proactive about their personal development are better equipped to

stay healthy, vital, and productive in the face of highly demanding environment. For example, Joo et al. (2020) found employees who focused on personal growth and took personal development initiatives in the workplace reported stronger career success. They also suggested personal growth is an under-explored factor in organizational research and encouraged additional focus on individuals and organizations.

This theme of personal growth suggests that, in the current pandemic work environment and context, employees seem to be continuing thinking about developing their skills and themselves. Hence, they are especially interested in working in an environment that promotes personal and professional growth and development. One possible reason for this is that again within the pandemic work context, businesses have been more focused on business operations rather than having a direct focus on developing their employees, thus development initiatives have fallen by the wayside. It could also mean with the move to working from home there has been a reduction in opportunities for coaching or mentoring resulting in a loss of valued 'in-person' contact. While a small number of comments from the research study reported that organizations were still doing well in this area, more comments highlighted the need for organizations to invest in developing their employees and by default improving the organizational culture.

The next theme was around positive leadership, representing the process of interaction with followers (Hoch et al., 2018). Leadership is vital to vision communication, providing a sense of purpose and collective mission, and motivating employees through setting high-performance expectations and creating a sense of emotional attachment to the organization (Men, 2014). Jo and Shim (2005) note the importance of trust between leaders and followers, while supportive leadership (including supportive and effective communication) has been found to be linked to positive follower attitudes and self-confidence (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002), as well as shaping feelings of self-efficacy which in turn positively influences employee performance (Banai & Reisel, 2007; Men & Stacks, 2014). Effective leadership can reflect employee perceptions of openness, consistency, transparency, truthfulness, and accountability in their leaders (Men & Stacks, 2014). This social exchange between leaders and followers and the intricacies of exhibiting or withholding behaviors to strengthen the manger and

employee social exchange relationship has also been explored via the quadrants with the Cropanzano et al. (2017) theoretical model.

In this study participants seemingly call for a back-to-basics approach in organizational leadership. The pandemic context, working from home and a reduction in leadership presence and face-to-face interactions has led to employees seeing leadership basics as being an important element missing from their present work cultures. This theme identified that participants want to be thought of and appreciated by their leaders, with the comments making it clear that it would be appropriate for leaders to further consider if they have been visibly present and in person enough, to exhibit behaviors that cultivate connections, enabling leaders to make an impact on their employees, especially for those working remotely or in a virtual working context.

The final theme focused on inclusion. Within the context of fair treatment to all and the positive outcomes of this treatment, there is growing awareness of the importance of inclusion in the workplace with respect to differences in gender, age, culture, and religion (Fine & Sojo, 2019, Haar & Brougham, 2022). An inclusion climate refers to "the degree to which an employee perceives that they are an esteemed member of the work group through experiencing treatment that satisfies their needs for belonging and uniqueness" (Shore et al., 2011, p. 1265). Importantly, inclusion also has strong theoretical alignment with the social exchange theory (SET) (Shore et al., 2011), this has been empirically supported (see Haar & Brougham, 2022). Shore et al. (2011) identifies belonging and uniqueness as the core elements of inclusion, where employees want to belong but want their unique characteristics recognized.

The participant comments in the present study made clear that employees saw having a diverse culture or employee group was important, but this also required being included and generating the feeling of belonging. This aligns well with the literature (Shore et al., 2011; Haar & Brougham, 2022). Participant feedback in the present study endorses the need for more connection and inclusion, especially in the context of remote working. A need for a more back to basics approach was suggested with activities like team building and more social events being identified as important even in a virtual context if necessary.

Some of the participant comments attested to organizations doing quite well in this respect but overall, it was felt that organizations need to do more to enhance inclusion. Basic behavior and common courtesy were seen to be lacking and connections among employees were viewed as tenuous. This perception may also be shaped by remote working and being unable to socialise in person and reflect the challenges of the global pandemic (e.g., Haar & O'Kane, 2022). However, the issues can be readily addressed. This theme highlights that in order to have a sense of inclusion and belonging, the organization must make an effort to create and embed meaningful social connections regardless of the external context at the time.

Overall, the four main themes identified in the present study reflect a suite of 'what employees want', and these themes come together as emerging and contemporary relevant to the current context of organizational climate research, especially given some themes (e.g., personal growth and inclusion) have been acknowledged as requiring more empirical research. The current situational context of the 2020 pandemic and 'The Great Resignation' **(**Cook, 2021; Wilkinson & Haar, 2023) have no doubt contributed to and shaped participants reflections on how to improve their organizational culture. The theme of well-being (e.g., Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2022) highlights how crucial and prioritized well-being is viewed by participants. This likely reflects the global pandemic because employees want to be well at work first and foremost. Other themes like personal growth and inclusion are also identified by participants to be important but somewhat underdeveloped when considering relevant organizational practices in New Zealand businesses. While they are important yet emerging themes within positive organizational behavior, we suggest further exploration especially in the New Zealand organizational context as theoretically it is suggested that both can also contribute to the literature on organizational effectiveness (Van Woerkom & Meyers, 2019; Haar & Brougham, 2022). Finally, the positive leadership theme is no surprise, reflecting the importance of leadership, including its role as a determinant of organizational climate (e.g., Kurtessis et al., 2017). There is abundant leadership literature including meta-analyses showing positive leadership styles effectiveness (Hoch et al., 2018). Positive leadership sits alongside well-being as something all organizations ought to consider investing in, and this study builds on this message.

Implications

The first implication is for organizations to focus on improving their organizations culture and associated climates, to further develop their workplace settings and offerings to ensure employees are making the most of their time with the organization. The findings from this research stress that New Zealand workers see areas for improvement around well-being provisions, effective leadership, better inclusion, and enhancing personal growth opportunities to benefit both employee and employer. A good first step might be to do a climate audit and determine what is needed, especially for larger-sized organizations. Given most entities have 20 or fewer employees in New Zealand (Haar et al., 2022), it might be more appropriate for the business owner or person with human resource responsibilities to hold focus groups to tap into understanding areas of the organization that need development.

Implications for researchers include conducting further qualitative investigations into the themes or delving deeper into the data by completing employee interviews. Researchers may also explore the positive psychology practices in a range of workplaces in a case study approach in order to better understand how these practices influence work outcomes.

Regarding the four key themes, there were some well-established climate factors, such as perceived organizational support (POS) for well-being, and multiple different positive leadership behaviors, that can be empirically tested. However, some themes emerged that have not been well tested yet within organizational environments (such as personal growth and inclusion). There is an opportunity for deeper investigation to be completed such as organizational interventions to further test the effectiveness of the four key themes offered here as well as their interactions. Finally, researchers might explore conducting intervention studies to determine if they can successfully build organizational climates that facilitate employer and employee reciprocity and privilege a culture of personal growth and wellbeing

Limitations

As this is qualitative data retrieved from an online survey. So, while numerically there is no issue around number of respondents (over 400), there is a limitation around the depth, detail, and context of the comments. For example, there is no opportunity to delve deeper into interesting comments as you would have in an interview. We encourage in-depth interviews or other qualitative data collection methods on climates to ascertain depth and give further context and richness to this topic.

Conclusion

This paper offers emerging evidence around contemporary positive organization climate themes, as an opportunity for organizations to understand how to improve their climates. This study provides insights and possibilities available to organizations around continuing to develop and improve their climates at the same time as increasing positive organizational behavior outcomes. The themes offered here also provide insights for researchers to extend the focus on positive organizational climates.

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CHAPTER SEVEN: PAPER 4. What do employees really want from their workplace: A qualitative study focusing on HR Practices

Preface

Papers 1 and 2 provided empirical evidence supporting benefits of a positive climate to work attitudes and behaviors. Paper 3 builds off these insights and seeks to explore and capture practical climate insights using qualitative data to determine, from an employee's point of view, the potentially most important organizational climate/s and opportunities to improve and enhance them. Similarly, Paper 4 builds further on the employee voice and now focuses on what employees want from their human resource practices; what practices are most needed and desired by employees, ultimately in order to enhance their employee experience and employee outcomes. Fundamentally, Paper 4 sets out to examine, this time from an employee's point of view, how we might go about practically offering and cultivating human resource practices that benefit a positive psychology approach within organizations.

This paper is currently under review and has a revise and resubmit:

McCallum, S. & Haar, J. (under review). What do employees really want from their workplace: A qualitative study focusing on HR Practices. *Employee Relations*: *The International Journal.*

PAPER 4. What do employees really want from their workplace: A qualitative study focusing on HR Practices

This study explores employee qualitative comments around how to improve organizations via Human Resource (HR) practices and High-Performance Work Systems (HPWS). The paper offers an account of employee's viewpoint around what HR practice improvements are required to ultimately enhance employee outcomes using comments from 222 employees. These focus on the role of their organization providing HR practices to enhance the employee experience. Comments were analyzed and grouped into common themes to offer a suite of possible organization improvements or focus areas for leaders and HR practitioners. The findings identified four themes: (1) fundamental HR practices, (2) recruitment and retention practices, (3) training and development, and (4) emerging HR practices. The insights fill an 'employee voice' gap in the literature, regarding opportunities for improvements to current HR practices which likely can enhance and improve organizations.

Keywords: *human resource practices; positive psychology; qualitative; improving culture; high-performance work systems.*

Introduction

Due to the global pandemic, the world of work has changed. The Covid pandemic has been a shockwave that has led to monumental change, not least a growth in hybrid work (Tebbutt, 2022) and attention to essential versus non-essential workers through the pandemic (Haar & O'Kane, 2022). Kellerman and Seligman (2023) also discuss how humans can thrive at work considering current challenges such as automation and AI, globalisation, down-sizing. Those authors suggest employee thriving can be achieved by cultivating a workplace that fosters connection and meaning, viewing that a positive workplace environment may make up part of the solution to our uncertain world (Kellerman & Seligman, 2023). Indeed, McCallum et al. (2023) found a global positive climate was positively related to job satisfaction and employee engagement – key predictors of job performance.

We argue here in this paper that Human Resource (HR) practices maybe a good place to start to create more positive workplaces. As these practices have been proven to have reciprocal benefits for both employee and employer (Combs *et al.,* 2006; Haar *et al.,* 2021, 2022). In 2021 and 2022, the world was gripped in an unprecedented 'war for talent', with many countries, including New Zealand – the setting of the present study – experiencing the lowest unemployment rate on record (Robertson & Sepuloni, 2021; Statistics New Zealand, 2022). Global commentary has coined this 'The Great Resignation' (Cook, 2021; Smith, 2022), describing the continued high employee turnover globally. There is strong empirical support that HR practices play a key role in employee retention (Combs *et al.,* 2006; Zhai & Tian, 2019). We suggest this unusual power imbalance where employees currently hold greater power over the employer, might be addressed through HR practices. However, this remains largely unknown and is the focus of this study.

Theoretically, this study uses Social Exchange Theory (SET) (Blau, 1964) to understand the potential mechanism by how HR practices can have a positive influence on organizations, and enhance employee attitudes and behaviors (e.g., Baeza *et al.,* 2022; Haar & Spell, 2004). This paper specifically considers how employee work experiences can be improved via HR practices and HPWS. Datta *et al.* (2005) defined HPWS as "systems of human resource (HR) practices designed to enhance employees' skills, commitment, and productivity" (p. 135), while Haar and Harris (2023) stated HPWS are "a collection of useful and important HR practices" (p. 73). These HR practices can enhance an organization through

providing unique benefits such as hiring the best employees (via superior recruitment and selection practices) and upskilling workers via training and development, and then provide top motivation via compensation and performance practices (see Haar & Harris, 2023; Haar *et al.,* 2022). This is especially relevant to organizational leaders and HR practitioners to consider how to continue to provide a more positive workplace for their people in the current challenging contexts (e.g., COVID-19, Great Resignation, automation, globalization etc.). Employees need to be treated fairly, supported consistently, and well managed in these volatile times. HPWS may provide the processes that will enable organizations to achieve this.

Theoretical Approaches

Organizations that focus on developing their people through positive psychology theory have the potential to make a positive difference to workers and workplaces. This study suggests workplaces supporting their people to reach their full potential will potentially reap the rewards (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). The literature has already called for an effort to refocus on the value of under-represented positive psychological resources in the field of organizational behavior and human resource management (see Luthans, 2002). However, there are complexities to creating a workplace environment where the primary objective is to foster positive attitudes, employee engagement and ultimately business success, HPWS is one aspect may allow organizations to do just that. Business leaders must take responsibility for developing and maintaining HPWS and environments that are as attractive and beneficial as possible.

A useful and popular organizational theory to understand how HPWS influence individual and firm outcomes is SET, which is often used in understanding climate research (e.g., Kurtessis *et al.,* 2017). SET explains that employees reciprocate with superior attitudes and behaviors in response to positive treatment from their employer, based on mutual reciprocity (Blau, 1964). This works because when employers engage in valued actions, it creates felt obligations in employees to respond (Haar & Spell, 2004). Thus, positive treatment through superior HPWS encourages – but does not guarantee – employees to reciprocate with better attitudes and behaviors.

Importantly, this reciprocation in enhanced attitudes and behavior is vital because it then reinforces the giving and further giving by the originator (Blau, 1964). For example, an organization that

offers popular workplace practices and support but fails to illicit felt obligations (Haar & Spell, 2004) from their employees, would likely 'dial back' the practices being offered, because there is no reciprocity being undertaken by workers, and thus no benefit for the employer. Thus, positive employee attitudes and behaviors acknowledge the efforts of the organization and leads to reciprocation in kind. This subsequently encourages the organization to continue this support and potentially extend the offerings over time (e.g., providing greater HR practices). Employees reciprocate to highlight their commitment and obligation to the employer (Haar & Spell, 2004). Fundamental to SET is the norm of reciprocity (Gouldner 1960), which Haar and Spell (2009) state "is a cultural universal based on give and take, which leads to the mutual reinforcement by two parties of each other's actions" (p. 1829). This captures the mutual reinforcement by two parties of each other's actions under SET. Thus, SET is based on relationships and reactions to offerings.

Importantly, in the field of organizational climates, Rogg *et al.* (2001) found HR practices can play a role with shaping organizational climates. Strategic HR focuses on HR practices that are vital to improving organizational performance outcomes (Combs *et al.,* 2006). HPWS aid performance by increasing employee's knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) and empowering employees to leverage their KSAs for organizational benefit, and at the same time motivating them to do so (Combs *et al.,* 2006). Indeed, HPWS are linked to important employee outcomes including creativity behaviors and job satisfaction (Haar *et al.,* 2021). Further, HPWS have been found to correlate strongly and positively to a global positive climate (see McCallum *et al.,* 2023). Finally, we argue that asking employees about the way HR practices might be improved or enhanced in their organization reflects a social exchange under SET. Thus, we might expect those employees seeing little value in their firms HR practices offering limited commentary and feedback – in effect, they feel no 'felt obligation' (Haar & Spell, 2004) to offer improvements or suggestions. Those that do are in effect reflecting not only on their organization but also engaging in SET and reciprocity.

Research Question

Our key research question focuses on improving their workplace climate via organizational HR practices and *what employees feel their organization can do better to aid their workplace experience via HR practices*. While various climates are identified in the literature that might be applicable, including a climate

focused on worthy work (Lips-Wiersma *et al.,* 2020), or inclusion (Chung *et al.,* 2020; Haar & Brougham, 2022), here we focus specifically on HR practices. Indeed, Rogg *et al.* (2001) showed that HR practices can be key to climate development. For example, it might be that via HR practices (e.g., training), firms are able to develop a climate of cultural inclusion, representing the "way organizations openly acknowledge employees' cultural backgrounds, values, and beliefs" (Haar & Brougham, 2022, p. 626). However, this paper specifically looks at the comments relating to the improvement opportunities for organizations via their HR practices only. Overall, we seek to understand the nature of how employees see the way HR practices are currently offered by their organizations and how these have the potential to improve employee's work experience.

Methods

Participants and sample

A Cint survey panel was used at the end of 2021 to collect data. Cint is a provider with a large database of potential respondents globally including New Zealand. Cint panel provides data that is broadly representative of the New Zealand workforce including gender, geography, and industries. Potential participants are invited to complete the survey if they meet specific qualifiers (for Haar, 2021, more details) and in the present study these were: (1) being in paid employment at least 20 hours/week; and (2) being aged 18 years and over. We followed recommendations (see Bernerth *et al.,* 2021) and screened for respondent time (removing those respondents who completed the survey wither too fast or too slow, as well as using an instructed response item. This requires a specific response, such as "for this question, answer strongly agree only". Those that comply continue while those who fail the test and removed from the survey and their data is not collected. This method of data collection has grown in popularity (e.g., Haar, 2021; Haar *et al.,* 2022).

Overall, a total of 222 employee qualitative comments were gathered for this study. Respondents by gender were male (50.2%), female (48.9%), and gender diverse (0.9%). By ethnicity, the largest group were Pākehā (65.2%), followed by Māori (17.6%), and Asians (16.3%). Average age was 38 years (SD=10.1), with average tenure of 4.5 years (SD=5.0). By sector, most respondents came from the private

sector (67.4%), followed by the public sector (28.5%), with a small percentage (4.1%) from the not-for-profit sector.

Analysis

The qualitative comments responding to the following question: *Please suggest (and detail) 1-2 things your organization could do to improve its culture?* Responses were analysed using interpretative phenomenological analytic (IPA) techniques. This analytical technique enables an exploration of answers regarding the way participants make sense of their working experiences. It is useful for complex or novel topics (Ruru *et al.,* 2017; Haar *et al.,* 2019). This method is especially useful for capturing the depth of an employee's experience around their organizational climate (Willig, 2001), while similarly aiding how participants make sense of that experience (Smith, 2004). Drawing on Haar *et al.* (2019) we conducted a two-stage process of analysis. Initially, the first and third authors conducted a thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), whereby responses were organized into appropriate organizational climate themes. Next, an in-depth thematic analysis was conducted where themes were cross referenced back to the transcript responses and verified by the second author. The process also looked to the organizational climate literatures (e.g., Wang & Hsieh, 2013; Rogg *et al.,* 2001; Eisenberger *et al.,* 1986; Lips-Wiersma *et al.,* 2020; Chung *et al.,* 2020) to ensure the themes were connected to the literature. Finally, we conducted a brief check of our these by presenting our initial findings to three HR Managers (via virtual meetings). The aim was to see if the themes made sense to HR managers and to ensure the validity and interpretability of the identified themes.

Findings

Overall, the data has been categorized the data into four most popular or key re-occurring themes, reflecting:

1. HR fundamentals,
2. recruitment and retention,
3. training and development, and
4. other emerging HR themes.

The first three themes align broadly with existing HR practice and HPWS literatures, but the last theme has not been conceptualized in more recent HPWS literature. These more emerging HR practices may link to

the context of the data collection during the pandemic which accelerated flexible working practices, the use of technology to get work done, and the need for social connection and opportunities for team interactions. This is discussed in detail below.

Theme 1: *HR Fundamentals*

One of the most common reoccurring themes were the need for fundamental HR practices and these comments related to anything from simply having a HR resource (e.g., personnel), to basic HR practices and more hygiene factors, such as fair pay, appropriate time for breaks, and workload management. Hygiene factors were first defined via Herzberg's two factor theory of motivation (1959) not as motivating factors but instead factors that if are non-existent they will instead de-motivate employees. These factors may include poor environments, difficult relationships with peers or not being paid a market wage. Examples of associated comments are: *"Reduce the non-existent balance between work and life", "reduce the stress by hiring more staff pay properly and fairly",* and *"improve remuneration, improve welfare, and increase employee's professional well-being",* and *"*[provide] *better pay and more work hours".* Having a dedicated HR Person was seen as a positive way to improve workplace culture. For example, *"have an HR to report to so team members are not having to place concerns directly to their manager who may be the person you are concerned about"*, "*My god where to begin! A proper HR department", "Have an actual HR department and take complaints seriously",* and "*Having someone in charge of HR, listening to both sides of the stories, reducing misunderstanding between organizations and employees and Mangers being held to account for their actions"*.

In summary, the first theme highlights the importance of having an HR department or at least a dedicated HR person to manage employee concerns and issues. While this might seem an obvious fundamental element of HPWS, this is not often explored within the literature (e.g., Combs *et al.,* 2006; Haar & Harris, 2023).

Theme 2: *Recruitment and Retention*

The next HPWS theme identified around the development and improvement of culture was processes such as robust talent identification and recruitment practices. Examples included "*To not pre-appoint senior*

managers, and then 'perform' a recruitment process", "Promote from within with the best person for the job rather than relying on favouritism, stop having managers do busywork to appear like they're doing their job", and "*Make the process of promotion easier by creating roles for people who have outgrown their current role*". Another example around recruitment was "*Having more efficient hiring practises – to be fully staffed", and "When hiring have more emphasis on attitude rather than qualifications"*.

Beyond recruitment, there was also a focus on candidate selection. For example, one respondent noted their organization needed to "*stand by their internal talent program and promote from internally when the have the candidate with the right skills instead of going external".* Similarly, another respondent noted "*Make the talent program actually mean something",* and finally, "*Our company is very large (over 1,000 employees covering 3 countries) but is privately owned by a family and hence family come first regarding promotion etc. While this is accepted as fair, to some employees it is not fair, meaning neither the best or most qualified person is promoted. I am not sure the resolution to this problem!"*.

In summary, the second theme aligns well with the HPWS literature around the importance of recruitment and selection practices (e.g., Datta *et al.,* 2005; Haar & Harris, 2023).

Theme 3: *Training and Development*

Learning and development opportunities at work are also seen as important to improving culture. Comments relating to this theme included aspects of coaching and mentoring as being important to shaping workplace culture. Examples from respondents included "*Upskill staff mentoring and development plan for staff", "providing more staff training. We had a communication strategy day, and it was very beneficial".* Another respondent noted how the lack of communication can leave an employee feeling lost in their role. This respondent stated:

> *I work independently for an NGO and get paid part-time. I am a support worker. I have never received any information or literature of any kind or been encouraged to look at the website to see what else they do. I was very surprised to find out how big and wide we reach! I think information like that should be given and maybe offer workshops or course incentives. I have no qualifications or experience of courses in the support worker field – despite it being my job.*

Other comments highlighted the importance of providing mentoring, with the following examples. "*My organization could improve the training program by using a buddy system with more experienced workers and they could improve the working environment by adding more posters and plants"* and "*they could provide all-around training, so everything is standardised. Managers could learn to manage complaints instead of trying to send out cupcakes to fix issues - this doesn't help!".* A more detail example was provided by the following respondent:

> *Providing internal training and staff thinking. Let employees learn the company's rules and regulations and conduct corporate culture training and education. They can tell some inspirational stories and illustrations. Regularly let employees compare their behaviors according to the content of corporate culture to judge whether they meet the requirements of the enterprise and how to improve and write a summary of their thoughts.*

In summary, the third theme also reflects well with the HPWS literature around the importance of HR practices targeting training and development (e.g., Datta *et al.,* 2005; Haar *et al.,* 2021, 2022).

Theme 4: *Emerging HR Practices*

The final theme explored issues that have been less articulated and conceptualized in the HPWS literature. Thus, this theme reflects more of an emerging aspect of HR practice relating to flexible work, the work environment, tools, or technology to do good work, while balancing these flexible work opportunities within person human connections such team building or social events. It is likely these themes reflect the context in which the data was collected during the end of 2021 while the COVID-19 pandemic remained as a core workplace issue. Between 2020 and 2021, new ways of working were accelerated and in person social connection seems to have become even more important to organizational climate.

Examples of the theme were "*Update work equipment to improve work efficiency",* and "*We should be encouraged to work from anywhere, and not be mandated to spend at least two days physically in the office".* Other suggestions were simple such as "*maybe offer more space for staff recreation"* and "*have music playing in the background at work"*. A more complex comment was made by the following respondent:

Suggest work from home as much as possible. Encourage group dinner and group meet ups every three months, *given the pandemic and more frequent remote working I think our organizations culture has kept up with lots of interactive meetings and team games/challenges virtually.*

Organizations were also highly commended as affecting positive culture through their flexible working, as having done well in this space, "*Given the pandemic and more frequent remote working I think our organizations culture has kept up with lots of interactive meetings and team games/challenges virtually*". Indeed, flexible work and hybrid work were very much desired as part of improving a workplace place culture and existing ways of working. However, there appears to be a need to balance flexible working within personal connections for example team building and social events are also very much desired by employees. This balance provides a timely reminder for organizations to be focus and potential future challenges around hybrid work.

In summary, the last theme adds to the HPWS literature and brings into alignment the existing literature around remote working and working from home (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007; Martin & MacDonnell, 2012) and suggests this might align well with HPWS.

Discussion

The present study sought to capture employee insights on how their organizations could enhance their workplace cultures and environments via HR practices. A clear and dominant theme emerged around the importance of establishing a baseline of fundamental HR practices, then once these are in place, organizations might then take steps to enhance and build their HR practices and various aspects of the HR system. This aligns with the strategic HR approach of HPWS (see Combs *et al.,* 2006), where HPWS are viewed as being vital to improving organizational performance and associated outcomes like retention. HR practices when viewed systematically and designed appropriately can direct, guide, organize, and enhance workforce behaviors (e.g., Haar *et al.,* 2021, 2022). When these HR practices are grouped strategically, as HPWS, they reflect "the systematic use of mutually reinforcing human resource management (HRM) practices which have an emphasis on selecting the 'right' employees, developing their skills, organizing work so that employees have the discretion to solve problems creatively" (Harley *et al.,* 2007, pp. 608-9).

Overall, the study respondents showed they understood the importance of HR practices achieving these goals, and how a combination of strategic HR practice use highlights an effective component of the workplace is realized through HR practices. Across the literature, HPWS are linked to superior organizational performance (Combs *et al.,* 2006), as well as employee benefits including higher job satisfaction, reduced turnover, and higher productivity, which ultimately shapes organizational performance (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004; Collins & Clark, 2003; Combs et al., 2006; Delaney & Huselid, 1996; Huselid, 1995; Kehoe & Wright, 2010; Ketkar & Sett, 2009).

The present study highlights how HPWS are viewed by employees as key to helping shape their work climates, reinforcing the findings of Rogg *et al.* (2001). Further, through HPWS, the psychological states of employees are influenced, specifically their work motivation and job satisfaction (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004; Gelade & Ivery, 2003). Thus, HPWS can play a critical role in employee climate perceptions, as climate is widely defined as the perception of formal and informal organizational policies, practices, and procedures (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004). HR practices have the potential to send 'messages' to employees and be viewed as a symbolic or signalling function to make sense of the work situation as well as define personal psychological meaning (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004). Therefore, it is expected that those employees who perceive their organizational as providing superior HPWS (than competitors) will be better engaged, more satisfied, higher performers, and more likely to stay which is of importance in the current context of the 'great resignation'.

The importance of robust HPWS is also reinforced in this study as when employees are asked for just one thing that would improve their culture, they specifically mention human resource systems, fair pay, breaks, but also fair and organised recruitment and talent systems and processes, and the opportunity to develop themselves while at work. In the context of the changing world of work, changing flexible work and technology are seen as key contributors to enhancing organization culture. To further contextualize the benefits associated with HPWS, HPWS have been found to positively influence employee wellbeing including lowering job burnout and insomnia (Haar & Harris, 2023; Fan *et al.,* 2014). Bartram *et al.* (2012) suggest HPWS give workers enough resources (time, control) to reduce and minimise the detrimental effects of their work, ultimately enhancing their wellbeing. Support was found for this within the comment

data with fundamental HR practices being required such as taking time out for breaks and managing workload. This aligns with the importance of greater work-life balance (Haar & Harris, 2023).

We found within the data that employees also see the importance of strong HR practices/HPWS, even as simple as having an HR person within the organization, employees see this as one thing that would making a difference to organization culture. These comments speak to the importance of representation amongst the HR function, with an HR person being viewed as an impartial representative, distinct from management. Employees see the HR role as potentially a meditator, ensuring organizational managers are working towards the same organization goals rather than pushing any personal agendas that may exist (and there was support for such agendas). An HR person is seen as a gatekeeper to ensure good business practices, a person the employees are able to trust and rely on, as well as being seen as an important person to uphold positive culture or other organization processes. Processes such as recruitment, performance management and pay and benefits, employees see would benefit from an impartial voice or resource to ensure fairness and consistency across the organization.

It seems the employee perception is that the HR practitioner may be an important key to unlocking business performance and success. However, we caution the needed to over-rely on this resource as the panacea to 'all' organization issues. The HR practitioner as a generalist is seen as having the ability to turn their hand to many components associated with HPWS. HR people may also be seen as the coaches or able to develop people to reach their full potential, at the same time, supporting managers to acknowledge when people are doing well and reward and then build frameworks to recognise people for this. The HR practitioner is also seen as being able to manage poor performance and enforcing consequences for this, continuously moderating the work environment, and ensuring a good place for all. This paper reinforces this point as an HR person or HR system (via HPWS) is seen as one of the most crucial ways to improve organizational culture, 'what employees want' regarding HR practices, the value employees place on solid and robust HR systems and why they are crucial for positive climate perceptions.

If we were to take a step back to reinvent HR or make sure HR is working to benefit both the organization and the employee, we firstly would consider HR environment factors fundamentally what will make for a better environment, including fair pay, appropriate breaks from work, and workload management (Herzberg, *et al.,* 1959; Zhu, *et al.*, 2020). These may all contribute to employee well-being

or hygiene factors (Herzberg, *et al*., 1959; Zhu, *et al.*, 2020). Once employees have these fundamental needs in place, they cite fair recruitment practices and talent management, such as the right quantity and quality of labour in the right places and learning and development opportunities which leads on to developing employees to the right standard, training and investing in personal development. These are all aspects of HPWS and equally important on their own as they are with the bundle effect working together to offer organizations superior benefits from HPWS (Combs *et al.,* 2006).

Further, despite an established focus on remote working and working from home (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007; Martin & MacDonnell, 2012), all studies and prior meta-analyses and review articles are based on low levels of these options. Working from home has dramatically increased since COVID-19 (Smite *et al.,* 2023). The growth in flexible work practices, the use of technology and tools, and the ability for employees to connect and/or interaction with others appears to be seen as an important and new workplace HR offering. The paradox of these comments is that employees want to be able to work flexibility but also desire social connection and team building time. Clearly, more research is needed to understand the balance between freedom and connection, and how best to obtain and retain the optimal balance and outcomes into the future.

In summary, the HPWS literature consistently shows the linkages between HPWS and organizational performance and retention (Combs *et al.,* 2006) and supports HPWS influencing individual factors (job satisfaction, work-life balance, engagement, meaningful work) that will also benefit the employee (Haar & Harris, 2023; Haar *et al.,* 2020, 2021). HR practitioners will find strategic HPWS as a strong enabler to employee engagement and potentially an important contributor to supporting overall organizational climate. The research here contributes to the growing evidence of the positive effects strategic HRM can have on an organization and supports encouraging HR practitioners to continuously improve the already established HPWS within their workplaces. It also provides insights into understand new changes in employee expectations around HPWS.

Implications

The first implication is the importance for organizations to focus on improving their HR practitioners, systems, and practices, to further evolve their workplace settings and offerings to ensure employees can see

and benefit from the many outcomes solid HR practice provides an organization. The findings here stress that New Zealand workers see core areas for improvement around their HR systems, and also of high importance to ensure both the organization and the employee are able to get the most out of their relationship and time together. A good first step might be to do human resource systems audit and determine what is needed, or what could be improved on, especially for larger-sized organizations. Given most entities have 20 percent or fewer employees in New Zealand (Haar *et al.,* 2022), it might be easier form the business owner or person with human resource responsibilities to hold focus groups to tap into understanding areas of the organization that need development.

HR practitioners and organizational leaders may do well to consider the sequencing of building HPWS, and not try to do everything at once. This is because there are many components to a robust HPWS and theoretically (SET), building upon initial success and employee reciprocation is a positive way to seek to provide more support (i.e., more complex HR practices). Initially an HR person or HPWS system at low maturity would benefit an organization rather than none at all. Once an HR system is in place, the organization is able to focus and improve on different aspects of the system and use these areas as key building blocks to further develop their HPWS. Once these systems have been actualized organizations would be best of focus on other emerging trends, how to ensure the best balance between flexible work and in person connection, this will ensure continuation of evolution in this space. Clearly, HR practices focusing on working from home are likely to be timely.

Implications for researchers include conducting further qualitative and quantitative studies into HPWS and especially the emerging theme around flexible work and working from home practices. Delving deeper into context by completing interviews with employees and teams and managers, perhaps also exploring changes in attitudes and behaviors is encouraged. There is an opportunity for deeper investigation to be completed such as organizational interventions to further test the effectiveness of HR practices or HPWS offered here. Finally, conducting quantitative study of HPWS that include flexible work practices would cement the findings identified here.

Limitations

As this is qualitative data retrieved from an online survey. So, while numerically there is no issue around number of respondents (over 200), there is a limitation around the depth, detail, and context of the comments. For example, there is no opportunity to delve deeper into interesting comments as you would have in an interview (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). We encourage in-depth interviews or other qualitative data collection methods to further clarify and extend the initial themes identified here. This is especially so towards working from home experiences to give further context and richness to this topic to aid HR managers to best implement HR practices that fully support working from home.

Conclusion

This paper offers both current and considers emerging contemporary HR practices and themes, as an opportunity to improve organizational climates, and further provides consideration regarding the practical actions available to organizational leaders and HR Managers. This study provides insights and possibilities available to organizations around continuing to improve and evolve their climates at the same time increasing positive organizational behavior outcomes. The themes offered here also provide insights for researchers to extend the focus on positive organizational climates through HPWS. HR practice or HWPS is not a new theme, but this paper reinforces the importance of having these people, frameworks, and practices within the organization in order to enhance organization cultures and subsequently employee behaviors.

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CHAPTER EIGHT: PAPER 5. Worth the investment? Using reflective practice to explore Leadership Development Programs

Preface

Finally, Paper 5 is a culmination of the past four papers. Specifically, I have provided evidence that a global positive climate may have benefits to the organization and employees (Papers 1 and 2) and discussed the more practical implications as to how we may build these positive climates within an organization (Papers 3 and 4). Consequently, Paper 5 reflects on and explores a common human resource intervention (with a positive psychology focus): a leadership development program. Paper 5 seeks to understand if it is possible to enhance abilities and skills of leaders within organizations through such an intervention, and if so, how we might go about these enhancements. Based on positive psychology theory, it is posited that investing in leaders would increase the chances of their contributions back to positive climates and work environments.

This paper has been presented at the following refereed conference:

McCallum, S., & Haar, J. M. (2023). Challenges measuring a leadership development program: Insights for researchers. *12th Aotearoa New Zealand Organisational Psychology & Organisational Behavior Conference*, Auckland, New Zealand, 24 November 2023.

This paper is currently under review and has a revise and resubmit:

McCallum, S., Myers, B., & Haar, J. (under review). Worth the investment? Using reflective practice to explore Leadership Development Programs. *New Zealand Journal of Human Resources*.

Worth the investment? Using reflective practice to explore Leadership Development Programs

A leadership development program (LDP) is often utilized to enhance leaders through developing their skills and abilities. However, evidence of the efficacy of such programs is notoriously under-represented. This article uses a reflective practice methodology to explore the potential effectiveness of a LDP and posits how it may be conducted using a positive psychology framework. A reflective practice approach was used to highlight insights from a LDP conducted across multiple waves of time and from multiple sources (leader participants, leaders' followers, and leaders' managers). This article reflects on the potential challenges HR managers and researchers may face when attempting to explore, assess and evaluate a LDP. Overall, this reflective practice study highlights the potential benefits and challenges of a LDP and highlights issues for organizations and researchers to be aware of.

Keywords: *positive psychology; workplace intervention; leadership development program; effectiveness; reflection.*

INTRODUCTION

The world of work continues to change at remarkable speed. Organisations grapple with major issues such as the 2020 global pandemic, international political and economic instability and the introduction of sophisticated AI (McCallum et al., 2024). Such change means leadership development is high on the organisational agenda. Parallel to leader issues within current work contexts (Roche et al., 2014), employees continue to demand more positive workplace environments and continued career development (Gartner, 2023). Leaders' behaviors and actions contribute to building positive work climates (Ten Brummelhuis et al., 2014), just as climate also plays a key role in workers' attitudes and behaviors and other positive workplace outcomes (McCallum et al., 2024). Consequently, organizations and Human Resources (HR) managers may support workplace development programs with the hope of developing their leaders for the potential flow-on effects benefiting their employees and teams, and ultimately influencing performance.

However, the evidence of these positive outcomes is not extensively documented. Some argue that leadership is especially important in shaping organisational climates (İşçi et al., 2015), which in turn influences key employee outcomes (e.g., McCallum et al., 2024). Leader Development Programs (LDPs) (Smith et al., 2015) are used widely by organisations and HR Managers to improve leaders' effectiveness, which can be a significant investment, estimated at billions of dollars every year (Yemiscigil et al, 2023), despite typically failing to enhance knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Critically, LDPs often fail to demonstrate a positive return on investment (Hughes et al., 2018), and while vital, the evidence supporting the effectiveness of LDPs remains limited (Leroy, et al., 2023).

In their meta-analysis, Avolio et al. (2009) considered the question *do leadership interventions have the intended impact and if so to what degree?* Across 200 studies, they reported that leadership interventions produced only a 66% probability of achieving a positive outcome, arguing developmental interventions have more possibility of success than pure training interventions. This present study seeks to provide insights around how best to evaluate a LDP. Drawing on reflective practice which involves identifying an individual's accomplishments within a situation or context in order to look forward and improve themselves and their wellbeing (Ng, 2017), an LDP evaluation was conducted. The LDP within this study was four one-day workshops including actors (participants, facilitators, and participant

managers). The learnings from the reflections are outlined in this article to aid organisations and researchers to consider how they might better assess the effectiveness of LDPs in the future.

THEORETICAL APPROACHES

Positive psychology calls us to turn our attention to what is right and good about people and focus our attention on developing or enhancing these aspects (Waters et al., 2022). Donaldson et al. (2019) define work positive psychology interventions (PPI) as interventions that utilise the theory and scholarship of positive work and organisations to design and/or implement the intervention under consideration. PPIs are defined as intentional activities (training, coaching etc.) based on the cultivation of valued subjective experiences, building on positive individual traits, as well as the development of positive institutional initiatives such as a leadership development program (Van Woerkom, 2021). However, research confirming the effectiveness of PPIs is limited (Van Woerkom & Meyers, 2019), with Van Woerkom (2021) suggesting PPI effects are likely modest. This paper suggests these modest effects might reflect the common use of one-off interventions rather than structurally integrated PPIs.

A meta-analysis by Donaldson et al. (2019) considering the benefits of PPIs, identifying workplace interventions as having a significant but small positive effect on improving work outcomes. In-person group interventions were most effective compared to individual and online interventions, resulting in positive work outcomes. Finally, Carr et al. (2021) also conducted a meta-analysis of PPIs, to investigate if wellbeing enhancement was achieved by drawing on positive psychology theory. This meta-analysis examined clinical and non-clinical interventions and confirmed a small to medium positive effect on wellbeing, strengths, depression, anxiety and stress from both interventions.

Applied to the present study, a PPI was selected by an organisation intending to develop leadership skills. While Van Woerkom (2021) warns that one-off interventions may not have a lasting impact, the LDP which is the focus of this present study, is the first step in potentially a long-term LDP for the organisation. Thus, testing its efficacy is part of their long-term plan. Finally, Van Woerkom (2021) stated learner characteristics are a key in ensuring the successful transfer of training. The mode of the intervention, called the *transfer of training method*, is vital, with Blume et al. (2010) arguing that successful training is influenced by three factors, (1) learner characteristics, (2) intervention design and delivery, and (3) the work environment. It is suggested that this transfer of training intervention is possibly

the most successful method of training intervention (Van Woerkom, 2021). We now explore these three factors in detail and consider the research questions.

It is important to consider the role that learner characteristics might play in the efficacy of the LDP. For example, do some leaders display greater motivation or resistance for the LDP? This provides potential insights around the role that learner characteristics may play in supporting LDP development. Holt et al. (2018) draws on 'five principles' to ensure the intervention has been configured as suitably: (1) LDP efforts being linked to organisational purpose, values and behaviors, (2) leaders having the chance to practice implementing the desired behavior's, (3) desired behaviors are connected to their jobs, (4) self-assessment opportunities and feedback from multiple sources, and (5) opportunities for one-on-one coaching throughout the program and ongoing. The LDP selected was designed to introduce leadership frameworks that would influence a common language and behaviors across the organisation.

Finally, Blume et al. (2010) note the importance of the work environment to learning. Work environment factors include a transfer climate, social support from supervisors and peers, and the constraints or opportunities for performing learned behaviors on the job. That meta-analysis by Blume et al (2010) indicated that transfer climate had the highest relative relationship, closely followed by support. Further analysis revealed that supervisor support had a stronger relationship with transfer than did peer support, although those correlations are also based on small sample sizes. Overall, it is likely a positive organisational climate can facilitate and enhance a LDP. This leads to our central research questions of the effectiveness of the LDP in developing leaders, and the overall alignment with positive psychology.

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE METHODOLOGY

Reflection can be defined as "to think, meditate or ponder", and is a philosophical understanding of how we gain knowledge through experience (Wain, 2007). Reflection is an in-depth view of events, whereby the reflector reviews a situation and attempts to work out what happened, what they felt or thought about it, who or what influenced particular actions, and how they would respond if it happened again (Smith et al, 2015; Ng, 2017). Thus, reflection is an in-depth and retrospective process of analysis rather than an immediate interpretation and might take multiple reflections and time to gain clearer insights (Smith et al, 2015). Reflection heightens self-awareness and allows practitioners to see things clearly and guide individual practice (Kirkham, 1997).

Franks (2016) defines self-reflection as a method that requires the researchers to observe ourselves "and describe and reflect upon these observations as possible moments of innovation and learning" (p. 40) rather than reflection on a practice or experience. Overall, to evaluate the LDP experiences and processes, it was felt that reflective practice was an appropriate methodology (Kolb, 1984). A reflections approach was selected for this study as it can be used as framework for thinking through one's practice or experience, or as an approach for conducting an evaluation, and in this case an evaluation of a LDP (Smith et al., 2015). This methodology allows for reflections both during and after the process including the context and situation as well as the perceived success (or otherwise) of the LDP. Reflections were carried out initially by the first author and then co-authors, and in the context of this article the reflections were conducted during the LDP and retrospectively (Kolb, 1984; Smith et al, 2015).

METHOD

This study draws on reflective practice to better understand a LDP that involved 29 leaders from one manufacturing organisation (with 450 employees). The LDP had a group cohort focus, with all LDP participants completing the in-person sessions at the same time. The LDP comprised of four one-day workshops and further detail about the LDP is outlined in a following section. This article draws on the work of Peters (2009) and more specifically the Describe, Analyse, Theorise, and Act (DATA) reflective practice model: *D* focuses on (D)escribing what is happening in practice, the *A* refers to (A)nalysing the current state of practice (why is this happening), the *T* concentrates on a practice-oriented form of (T)heorising, and finally, the *A* focuses on the specifics of an action plan to improve the intervention (Smith et al., 2015). The DATA model provides a practical and transparent framework for reflective practice that evaluators can readily understand and apply.

Reflections from all LDP phases were explored using the four step DATA method to make sense of the program and answer the research questions. The lead author was present but not engaged in all four of the LDP modules, the final presentation session, and management session. Notes were taken during the activities which became the basis of reflections. Ultimately, the perceptions and reflections of the lead author were collated and then analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The first reflection opportunity (#1) was the first LDP module, and #2 was a debrief, where the LDP participants shared their comments and insights with managers. Reflections #3-5 were the remaining LDP modules, and #6 was

another LDP participant sharing session, this time after the last workshop. Phase #7 was the participant presentations regarding learnings from the entire program (one month after LDP completion), and #8 was a session with the senior leadership team (managers of the participants), who discussed their perceptions around how effective the LDP was. The final phase (#9) was listening to the facilitator's comments regarding participant engagement, development and possible improvements to the program. Analysis of reflections covered all 9 phases and then this was thematically analysed. This process also involved consulting the LDP literature (e.g., Holt et al., 2018) to consider where the themes resonated with the extant literature.

IMPLEMENTING REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

This next section uses the reflective practice model (see Peters, 2009) to explore the research questions via four subheadings (DATA) as outlined in the earlier.

D. Describe the LDP (Data)

The LDP included four one-day workshops and focused on the pillars of a leader's role: (1) mind-set and self-reflection, (2) coaching and leading teams, (3) health and safety, and (4) continuous improvement. The modules were delivered approximately one month apart, so that participants could return to their workplaces and integrate their learnings into practice. This was seen as a core component of the LDP.

The Positive Psychology Intervention (PPI) was designed as per best practice within the literature (Holt et al., 2018), taking into account factors such as (1) LDP efforts being linked to organisational purpose, values and behaviors, (2) leaders having the chance to practise implementing desired behaviors, (3) desired behaviors connected directly to leaders' roles, (4) self-assessment opportunities and feedback from multiple sources, and (5) opportunities for one-on-one coaching throughout the program and ongoing.

The LDP participants included new, experienced and potential leaders. Of the 29 participants 76% were male which reflects the organisational demographics, and were geographically spread across New Zealand, but came together in-person for the LDP. The facilitator leading the LDP confirmed that the program was an off-the-shelf product from a provider that offers a wide range of organisational LDPs nationally. However the organisation reviewed all of the content and ran a pilot beforehand with the senior leaders to ensure suitability with organisational needs. The senior leaders re-designed the final two modules (health and safety and continuous improvement), ensuring the material was relevant to their organisation.

A. Analyse the data (dAta)

The LDP was analyzed drawing on Blume et al.'s (2010) framework of key factors contributing to successful transfer of training: (1) learner characteristics, (2) intervention design and delivery, and (3) the work environment.

Learner characteristics

When analysing the reflections on leadership development three groups of LDP participants learner characteristics emerged. Two of these groups demonstrated positive development, although both groups were not without challenges. The third group demonstrated very limited growth. The first group of LDP participants appeared to have developed new knowledge and skills and, in this regard, the LDP seemed to be effective. These LDP participants were enthusiastic and shared examples of how they were given opportunities to develop and demonstrate their LDP capabilities within the program. They suggested they felt more engaged, open minded, empowered, and had developed a range of useful skills such as communication. These LDP participants felt valued by the organisation in being selected for the LDP and their development appeared obvious in the final presentation (phase #7).

A second group demonstrated the development of the above participants but in addition they continued to work on their development post LDP participation. Overall, for this group the LDP appeared to be highly effective but was the smallest sized group. These leaders were continuing to develop their sense of self-awareness post LDP and completing their own reflections regarding their learnings (as part of the LDP). They seemed to be leaders that had developed themselves in a more autonomous way than other groups. They were leaders that were able to deeply reflect on their development and this was particularly evident in their final presentations. Indeed, these performers also received recognition and positive feedback from their own managers. It appeared this group had increased self-awareness as they were able to identify new problems or challenges, they had not previously been aware of or had previously avoided. They appeared to be more confident and capable of applying their new skills in the workplace. This group was also highly self-reflective. Some implemented new positive psychology initiatives (e.g., expressing gratitude) while another started to explore what they might need to change about themselves to improve their team culture.

The third group seemed to have experienced a limited impact from the LDP. In the final presentation, these participants didn't acknowledge increased development and self-awareness, they lacked enthusiasm and engagement and signalled limited application of the new skills across the training modules. During the presentation post LDP some participants questioned why they needed to complete the program in the first place, commenting that they were already familiar with the content. It was evident that they did not display positive learner characteristics and in fact, lacked motivation for the LDP. This may be due to some participants having completed leadership development programs in the past and felt as though they had 'heard it all before' rather than being open to the experience the full benefit of completing the LDP.

Intervention design and delivery

While the LDP appeared to be robust overall, the LDP intervention design and delivery model is another area for consideration. On a positive note, senior management were happy with the content and the opportunity to amend content in a couple of the modules. Participant reflections highlighted the value of the relationships they made with each other, although these relationships did not continue formally for many participants post LDP. While this does support the LDPs focus on increased self-awareness of participant's behaviors and the possible impact on others, it is another area where the LDP appears to be limited. While coaching and relationships were part of the LDP, it was noticeable that they were not an explicit part of conversation and reflections in the workplace implementation phase post LDP.

Work environment

Finally, the work environment appeared to play an important part in successful training transfer. LDP participants needed to have an opportunity to apply their knowledge in the program through exercises and role plays but also in their real workspaces. However, this was a challenging aspect for many participants who were unable to identify opportunities to practice their new skills or appeared to lack the confidence to try. While senior leaders and the program facilitator saw these occasions as important to the LDP they also recognised in retrospect that there were limited opportunities to do this. Senior managers acknowledged that they needed to work on this and create more opportunities in future.

In summary reflections on the LDP across the three components of successful training transfer (Blume et al, 2010), suggest that in this regard, learner characteristics and the work environment were key for the LDP. While the design of the LDP intervention is also important and may benefit from some

structural changes, any changes are inextricably linked with learner characteristics and the work environment. LDP success is dependent on recruiting appropriate participants with requisite learner characteristics and having a work environment that is supportive, which appears key for LDP success.

T. Theorize. Discuss and theorize (daTa)

This study explores the effectiveness of a LDP via reflective practice. This section discusses reflections in relation to the extant literature with a focus on identifying the strengths of the LDP as well as the challenges and explores potential areas of change in the LDP to improve efficacy. The purpose of a LDP is to develop positive leadership within an organisation, representing a vital exchange between leader and followers to share the organisational vision, provide a sense of purpose, and motivate employees through setting high-performance expectations (Men et al., 2020). The LDP in this study was focus on developing participants to be more effective team leaders. Specifically, upskilling leaders through becoming aware of their own mindset and gaining the knowledge and capability to improve.

LDP effectiveness

The main research question sought to understand how effective the LDP was overall. Drawing on Blume et al. (2010), the reflections on this study were that both learner characteristics and the work environment had a higher impact on LDP effectiveness, seemingly more so than design and delivery. Although, all components are synergistic. The learner characteristics were important, with some participants demonstrating greater development than others. In their meta-analysis of LDPs self-awareness as a learner characteristic has been identified as being important (Eurich et al., 2017), although they suggest only 10-15% of LDP participants become truly self-aware. These findings are consistent with our reflections in that only one group (the smallest) demonstrated this high level of self-awareness. Leadership development is often positioned as positive for the organisation and for employees. However, it is important to distinguish what training and development works for who, and recognizing that some participants will not be adequately committed to the LDP.

Consequently, organizations need to consider carefully selecting those who are more likely to benefit themselves and the organization from participating in a LDP (Arnulf et al., 2016). While focusing on self-awareness might be a useful start, the organization and senior leaders might consider what other specific learner characteristics and methods of selection would be appropriate for inclusion in the program.

Van Woerkom (2021) established that supervisory and peer support are important post LDP. In a meta-analysis on training and the work environment, Hughes et al. (2018) argued that peer support in training plays a significant role in predicting training transfer into the work environment. In the present study, it was found that although participants could see the benefits of being able to implement their learnings in the work environment, many were unable to due to the lack of opportunity. Therefore, the effectiveness of practice back on the job is largely untested and likely assumed.

Support from senior leaders is thought to enhance the transfer of skills back in the workplace (Van Woerkom, 2021) and while there was an implied commitment to this, in retrospect the senior managers acknowledged that this did not happen. Indeed, the commitment to this transfer of training reflected more rhetoric rather than reality. Indeed, there appeared to be an assumption that unstructured experiential learning in the work environment automatically results in capability development. However, there was no clear evidence of such benefits for all participants from the LDP. We suggest that while the actual LDP modules were successful overall in imparting knowledge, more work needs to be done. Opportunity to apply new knowledge and competencies was a challenging aspect for many participants who were unable to identify such opportunities.

Workplace set-up towards training transfer is critical to the success of the LDP (Blume et al., 2010) and the need for more organizational support has been identified. Yet the participants' feedback presentations were mostly silent on the unique context and nature of their individual leadership roles and the work behaviors and skills they were planning to implement. The lack of formal feedback methods embedded in the post LDP module delivery stage needs to be included in future. In conclusion, the LDP did result in a transfer of learnings back into leaders work roles but not universally.

This reflective practice study also notes the 'absences and silences' across the spectrum of reflections, that inevitably stymy criticality (Dupuis et al., 2022). For example, how individuals were selected for the program and what learner characteristics (if any) and other criteria were identified as important for LDP participation. This was not explicitly articulated by managers or participants apart from commenting that the program did not suit some participants. We suggest the LDP be re-conceptualised on a continuum, in that three distinct but carefully structured and integrated LDP stages be developed and formalised, drawing on a PPI framework (Holt et al, 2018). Further, in this instance the three stages of the

LDP lack integration and clarity and the pre- and post-stages appear underdeveloped. Future iterations of the LDP need to integrate a more formal post-LDP delivery structure that complements and extends the LDP module delivery stage and embeds PPI principles in a more transparent and accountable way. This will provide a clearer and more consistent pathway for leadership development and embed a positive psychology philosophy in leadership development. Overall, the LDP does have the potential to improve, and we reinforce the earlier suggestion that the LDP 'pre' and 'post' stages be more formally developed and integrated to a greater extent. The LDP module delivery will then more directly speak to the unique career and organisational focus of each participant. Additionally, the post LDP stage overseen by appropriate management and peer involvement will support this development through specific leadership tasks and practices.

A consistent theme in the LDP literature and practitioner discussions, is the challenge of evaluating leadership development interventions. In a 25-year review of literature on leadership development Day et al. (2014) discussed evaluation methods, both quantitative and qualitative, and suggested that job performance and performance over time is not the most appropriate measure, citing the importance of context on an individual's leadership development journey. It is difficult to find a nuanced and detailed evaluation of LDP success with the literature, and this is also highlighted in the extant literature (see Leroy et al., 2023) including a lack of appropriate instruments for measurement. Larsson (2017) studied LDP effectiveness and argued that the LDP only had a 'favourable' influence. Although leadership development is a burgeoning global industry (Ryan et al, 2023) with organisations committing over $60 billion annually (Yemiscigil et al, 2023). LDPs continue to flourish as an organization solution to development to such an extent that Beer et al. (2016) refer to the phenomenon as "the great training robbery" (p. 51). Typically, studies of LDPs often fail to test the effectiveness of the program, in terms of producing measurable changes over time in participants knowledge, skills, abilities, competence and effectiveness in leadership (Rogg et al., 2001). Leroy et al. (2023) concurs, stating the majority of LDPs are unable to show evidence of "producing significant, enduring changes in participants' individual capacities or collective outcomes" (p. 2), suggesting the LDP industry "settle for positive reactions to the program or evidence of knowledge gained" (p. 2). These authors also noted that LDPs are unlikely to be linked to changes in participants' career trajectories or effects on followers and teams.

Although other studies examining organisational outcomes have found support for LDPs, with Douglas et al. (2022) finding LDPs have a positive impact on internal and external organisational outcomes, individual skill development, and organisational effectiveness. The study drew on qualitative data i.e. individual perceptions, but the lack of quantitative data meant that a Return on Investment approach (ROI) (as discussed by Avolio et al., 2010) was not possible. There is considerable debate in the literature on how to evaluate or measure the success or otherwise of leadership development (Day et al., 2014) and this has become more of a conundrum given the move away from LDPs focussing on specific skills and practices to the messiness and mundanity and of "everyday leadership development" and practice (Kjaergaard & Meier, 2022, p. 385). A reflections approach was selected for this article as it can be used as framework for thinking through one's practice or experience, or as an approach for conducting an evaluation, and in this case an evaluation of a LDP (Smith et al, 2015).

The reflective practice methodology underpinning this study allows for reflections both during and after the process on the context and situation as well as the success (or otherwise) of the LDP. The flexibility of this approach which supports reflections 'in action' and 'on action' enables a researcher to gain an incremental overview rather than a perspective at one point in time that other methods may privilege. Reflective practice captures the unfolding points of development, growth, change and challenge in program content and participant performance (Kirkham, 1997) enabling the author to engage in a more nuanced research process and consider the ebb and flow of organisational and individual context (Day et al, 2014).

The reflective approach undertaken here was careful to ensure that transparency and consistency was embedded into the design and practice of reflection (Smith et al, 2015). Looking to the work of Kolb (1984), models of reflective practice which embraced a cycle of reflection were explored (see Wain, 2017). However, when reading the work of Peters (2009) and the DATA approach (describe, analyze, theorize and act), we believed that the four-step reflective practice process brought a high degree of structure and consistency to the research study and embedded the process with the desired level of research rigour. Another element of rigour within the field of reflective practice was added with the involvement of the co-authors who reflected on the reflections (as outlined in the methodology) at various points in the research.

In drawing this discussion to a conclusion, we argue that reflective practice also has the potential to be used as a management research tool and is a relatively versatile framework to ensure on the job

learning and development. Reflective practice is a process that can be used in real time as a situation unfolds, and it can be used retrospectively to reflect on an event. Reflection is not studied as a hidden, mental process, but instead as a visible practice directed at past, present, or future objects and calls for an organisational culture that values continuous discovery and experimentation (Tikkamäki & Hilden, 2014). Indeed, leaders that implemented their own reflective practice during the LDP seemed to be more successful in developing themselves over those leaders that did not implement reflective practice. The present study adds to the limited examples of reflective practice being used beneficially in organisational contexts including HR (e.g., Walger et al., 2016).

A contribution from this study was that reflective practice was identified as a possibility for narrowing the gap between action and reflection in management practice, which in turn may increase the effectiveness of strategic decisions. Walger et al. (2016) argue that for managers, reflection facilitates an effective decision-making process, increases self-knowledge, contributes to the processes of individual and organisational learning, and improves managers' global overview of their organisations. Those authors also confirm that reflective practice may improve strategic decisions by reducing the gap in managerial practice between action and reflection. According to Schön (1983), professionals who are recognized as most competent have acquired a central core of 'artistry', on which they can rely in situations of uncertainty and when they are forced to make decisions. Vince and Reynolds (2004) also agree that reflection should be an essential part of the day-to-day life of managers and integrated into workplace structures. In effect, being reflective is not a technique, learned and sometimes applied, but part of what it means to be a manager (Vince & Reynolds, 2004).

However reflective practice does have limitations and challenges. Tikkamäki and Hilden (2014) highlight the role of management control in creating the organizational 'structural drivers' for reflective practice that may include the time and space to practice reflection. In general, the organisation of the work itself should enable and encourage reflectivity. Also, Robertson, et al. (2021) found in their study that some participants initially found reflecting uncomfortable but showed courage by persevering. Participants had to learn how to reflect and set aside time for it, while valuing support and guidance from their action learning facilitator. We suggest the present study illustrates that reflective practice is also a valid lens to

draw on to evaluate a broad range of management and leadership initiatives, bring both rigour and nuance (Tikkamäki & Hilden, 2014) to research.

A. Actions, recommendations to improve the LDP (datA)

The following actions are recommended focus areas that would support HR Managers and leaders and those with the objective of increasing the effectiveness and impact of their LDPs. These actions are grounded in a positive psychology perspective and recommended as focus areas as to fully develop LDPs. These actions include, promoting leadership strengths, wellbeing, resilience, and growth in organisational team leaders. Below is a general framework of how these recommendations can be structured and integrated into a formal three stage leadership development program: pre-LDP selection and preparation (stage 1), LDP delivery (stage 2) and post-LDP implementation (stage 3). Following this is a brief outline of areas for future research relevant to this study of LDPs and LDPs in general.

Stage 1. Pre-LDP design, selection and preparation

1. Strengthen learner selection and readiness

Action: HR Managers are encouraged to implement a structured pre-LDP selection process that assesses participants' readiness and motivation to develop leadership skills including a positive psychology approach.

Rationale: The research highlights that positive psychology emphasises the benefits of leveraging personal strengths to improve leadership effectiveness. Research has shown that when leaders operate from their strengths, they exhibit higher levels of engagement, productivity, and wellbeing. HR might enhance the LDP success by selecting participants based on their alignment with the organisation's values and readiness for growth. HR selection methods might include interviews, strengths testing (utilising a strengths-based assessment tool, as an integral component of the LDP), or other psychometric testing. Another consideration for HR is that the learner has discussed and confirmed their career aspirations for development via career development planning initiatives. Finally, if some learners have already previously completed a LDP this should also be considered to determine if an advanced program is required. HR managers are encouraged to assess the experience of potential LDP participants.

2. Cultivate a strengths-based, growth mindset culture

Action: HR Managers are encouraged to integrate a strengths-based, growth mindset framework across all three stages of the LDP to facilitate resilience and continuous improvement. Establish this approach in stage 1.

Rationale: Embedding a growth mindset in the HR processes of selection and preparation stages, where challenges are seen as opportunities to develop, will encourage participants to continually stretch beyond their current abilities in stage 2 and stage 3.

3. Develop methods for evaluating LDP effectiveness

Action: HR Managers should create a formal process for evaluating/measuring the effectiveness of all stages of the LDP using both qualitative and quantitative metrics where appropriate. This is likely to provide HR with important evidence to support a further roll-out of LDPs if required.

Rationale: The study suggests that measuring leadership development post-LDP was underdeveloped, limiting the ability of HR to assess the impact and long-term impact/success of LDPs. Key performance indicators are vital for HR and developing indicators that monitor both behavioral and psychological changes in participants and that these measures should be developed before the commencement of the program in the pre-LDP design phase and discussed with potential participants. For example, surveys, 360-degree feedback, and self-assessments at regular intervals will enable HR to achieve a more robust evaluation of growth in leadership skills, wellbeing, and self-awareness. Other measures of effectiveness that might be worth capturing may include follower turnover of participating leaders for the past last year and continue to measure for the future year post the LDP. These are HR indicators that will be available to HR departments (albeit in larger sized organisations). Another opportunity would be to capture data using a follower's survey capturing changes in leaders' behaviors and their influence on follower retention, engagement, and performance. Indeed, this extends beyond LDPs to other workplace interventions run by HR.

Stage 2. LDP delivery

4. Integrate learner reflective practice and self-awareness development

Action: HR should embed an ongoing reflective practice throughout the LDP to foster self-awareness and continuous growth.

Rationale: Self-awareness was a key factor in leadership development, with highly self-reflective and aware participants demonstrating more growth. Reflective practice helps leaders understand their behaviors, challenges, and progress.

5. Enhance coaching and feedback systems

Action: HR should provide or facilitate ongoing, structured coaching to reinforce positive leadership behaviors both during stage 2 and 3 of the LDP.

Rationale: The lack of consistent coaching and feedback was identified as a gap in the existing LDP. HR might play a key role in encouraging and assigning coaching, which when rooted in positive psychology principles, can play a key role in supporting leaders as they practice and embed new behaviors.

Stage 3. Post-LDP implementation

6. Embed continuous support for post-LDP skill application

Action: HR should develop a formal post-LDP stage that provides structured support for applying new skills in the workplace.

Rationale: The study identified the challenge participants faced in applying newly acquired skills in their work environment due to a lack of opportunities and support. To ensure effective transfer of learning, continued formal post-LDP support is essential for HR, as well as immediate managers, to ensure an environment suited to learning transfer is cultivated.

7. Action methods for evaluating LDP effectiveness

Action: HR should ensure the effectiveness of leadership interventions and programs are assessed using the previously designed and planned metrics as identified in stage 1. HR analytics can be a powerful tool, but this can require purposeful design.

Rationale: The study suggests that assessing/measuring leadership development post-LDP was underdeveloped, limiting the ability to assess long-term impact. This is an important challenge for HR to meet. It is suggested that key performance indicators are developed that monitor both behavioral and psychological changes in participants.

Summary

The above seven evidence-based actions and recommendations for HR and HR Managers, drawing on positive psychology to enhance this leadership development program, also may offer insights towards LDP

development more generally. These recommendations focus on integrating criteria-based program selection and participation, strength-based leadership, fostering continuous reflection and self-awareness, providing structured post-program support and career development and comprehensive evaluation. By implementing these actionable steps, the HR Manager or department can ensure the LDP will not only improve leadership capacity but also promote the wellbeing and resilience of participants. Finally, there is the suggestion that HR Managers and leaders would become increasingly aware of the allure and promise that LDP industry makes but may lack confirmation of delivery impact. As well, HR Managers and leaders would also consider becoming more critical of expensive LDP programs and keep in mind the value and impact of the associated important components, such as participant characteristics, program design and work environment, as a greater awareness and critical mindset would benefit the overall LDP success.

Future Research

Below are three key areas for future research with these recommendations based on gaps in positive psychology and LDP literature, that were highlighted in this reflective practice-based research study. These aspects of LDPs appear to be under-researched or under-theorized areas in the context of this LDP study and are also relevant to enhancing leadership development programs in general (LDPs):

1. The role of self-awareness in leadership growth

Research Focus: Explore the relationship between self-awareness and leadership development, especially within different types of leaders (e.g., new vs. experienced leaders).

Rationale: Self-awareness was highlighted as a critical factor for leadership growth. Further understanding of how self-awareness influences leadership styles and effectiveness can improve LDPs.

2. Integrating growth mindset and resilience training into LDPs

Research Focus: Study how integrating a growth mindset and resilience-building practices within LDPs can enhance leadership development.

Rationale: Growth mindset and resilience are foundational in positive psychology but are not fully integrated or measured within LDPs. The study shows potential for these concepts to be integrated into the program, thus more research is needed to better understand their impact.

3. Positive psychology and leadership in diverse cultural and organisational contexts

Research Focus: Examine how positive psychology-based leadership development practices apply across different cultural and organisational contexts.

Rationale: Positive psychology interventions often reflect the values and behaviors of the organisation in which they are implemented. However, the study notes that contextual factors (including cultural) may limit the transferability of PPI-based leadership skills.

These three future research areas highlight some important gaps in the application of positive psychology to leadership development as identified in this study. Exploring these under-researched areas will not only deepen our understanding of how PPI work but will also enable the design of a more effective, context-sensitive, and individualised LDP that supports sustainable leadership development and practice.

CONCLUSION

This article highlights the challenges in exploring and evaluating LDP success. Although there was evidence of the LDP being effective in developing a number of leaders within a cohort, the LDP success across the entire cohort was unable to be confirmed. The research also confirms that positive psychology interventions do offer a starting point when considering the design and delivery of leadership development programs. This study provides insights and possibilities for organizations focused on developing or improving their LDPs and/or other organizational development interventions that draw on positive psychology theory. The insights offered here also provide directions to explore more fully the benefits (or otherwise) of LDPs and the potential positive effects such interventions may have on leaders, followers, and organizations.

Reflective practice is acknowledged as an appropriate methodology for the evaluation of the LDP in this research study. However, there are a range of evaluation and measurement approaches by HR that may be complementary or more appropriate in different situations or contexts. In this study the reflective practice process was informed by a specific model of reflection (DATA) and the insights and perspectives of other authors, bringing transparency and consistency to the process. Reflective practice appears to be potentially an important management tool for leaders, managers and workers alike. We suggest that it may also have useful outcomes if implemented in general management contexts to explore and confirm success

of HR interventions as well as being a helpful tool for HR practitioners to effectively explore and address a range of issues within the workplace.

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CHAPTER NINE: Discussion, Contribution, Implications and Conclusion

This chapter concludes the thesis by discussing overall contributions, implications and limitations, and highlights areas for future research. To avoid repetition, this chapter covers all areas in broad terms as the specific findings, discussion and limitations specific to each paper have been all covered in more depth through the actual Papers 1 – 5 (Chapters 4 - 8).

Summary of Thesis

This research aimed to highlight the importance and benefits of positive workplaces including, firstly, providing empirical evidence of how such workplaces influence work attitudes and behaviors (Papers 1 and 2). The thesis then considers how these workplaces changes might be achieved (Papers 3 and 4), and explores the possibility of introducing an intervention that would potentially impact organization climate by developing leaders (paper 5). Chapter 1 began by introducing the research, background of the topic and why it matters, and confirms the thesis structure and the research questions. Chapter 2 introduced the theoretical approaches used within the thesis, highlighting potential gaps in the literature, and concluded with a comprehensive literature review. Chapter 3 overviewed the thesis methodologies and provided details on the sample of each of the studies used in each of the Papers (Chapters 4 – 8).

Chapters 4 and 5 (Papers 1 and 2) focused on exploring the possibility and benefits of a global positive climate (GPC), the potential beneficial outcomes of these climates and ultimately, the impacts on an organization's environment. Chapters 6 and 7 (Papers 3 and 4) focused on an employee's perspective and examined the possible approaches to creating and maintaining positive climates and workplaces (Paper 3) and then more specifically, a suite of human resource systems (Paper 4). These two papers also considered practical approaches to implementing these environments, improving human resource systems and the potential consequences and benefits of developing these workplaces. Finally, Chapter 8 (Paper 5) reflected on the possibility and benefits of introducing these interventions and evaluated the success (or otherwise) of a leadership development (HR) intervention and the impact the intervention had on its participants, and the organization.

In summary:

- Paper 1 – considered the influence of multiple climate factors (specifically, perceived organizational support, psychosocial safety climate, organizational mindfulness, worthy work, and inclusion) as a way to capture a positive psychological climate. This was called a Global Positive Climate (GPC). In addition, an individual dispositional factor was used (psychological capital), which was included as a mediator towards job outcomes of employee engagement and job satisfaction. Finally, to adequately capture the context of organizational factors, high-performance work systems (HPWS) were included as a moderator of GPC and ultimately moderation and moderated mediation effects were supported. Paper 1 was thus a quantitative research paper.
- Paper 2 – again considered the influence of climate factors of GPC (again using perceived organizational support, a psychosocial safety climate, organizational mindfulness, worthy work, and inclusion) and had the contextual factor of the sample being under a state of change. As such, readiness for change was used as a moderator to provide insight to determine whether employees who were more ready for change were better able to benefit from a PGC. In addition to key positive psychology attitudes, meaningful work was included as a mediator, and again, a moderated mediation model was run towards two key employee behaviors: turnover intentions and organizational citizenship behaviors. As with Paper 1, Paper 2 was a quantitative paper.
- Paper 3 – focused on understanding employee thoughts and assessments of organizational climates and how they could be better developed. Thus, Paper 3 provides practical climate insights (using qualitative data) to determine the most important organizational climate/s from an employee perspective and importantly, opportunities to improve and enhance these climates. The themes that the employees identified as most important to them were (1) well-being, (2) personal growth, (3) positive leadership, and (4) inclusion. Paper 3 builds off the importance of a GPC and ultimately provides insights into understanding what organizations might do to enhance such a factor in their workplace.
- Paper 4 – focused on understanding employee thoughts and assessments of organizational human resource practices and how they could be better developed. Thus, Paper 4 provides practical climate insights (using qualitative data) to determine the most important human resource practices and identifies and discusses opportunities to improve and enhance these practices. Significant themes

identified as contributing to improved human resource practices were (1) fundamental HR practices, (2) recruitment and retention practices, (3) training and development, and (4) emerging HR practices. The insights address an 'employee voice' gap in the literature, regarding opportunities for improvements to current human resource practices which likely can enhance and improve organizations.

- Paper 5 – embraces positive psychology and ultimately became a reflective paper, to explore the success, challenges, and issues of an organization leadership development program intervention (LDP). Paper 5 offers practical insights for researchers and human resource practitioners and draws on criticisms in the literature that LDPs are dominated by a lack of robust testing. Ultimately, and concluding the PhD thesis, Paper 5 draws on a reflective qualitative framework and considers the ability of organizations to improve and enhance organizational climates via HR interventions.

Thesis Contributions

Overall, this thesis was underpinned by a positive psychology perspective. Positive psychology focuses on what is already good and right in this world, individuals' strengths rather than weaknesses, and within this thesis, using a positive psychology lens, I have firstly examined there might be benefits for organizations and individual employees when developing a global positive climate, work environment, and then subsequently provided a practical understanding of potential climate and HR improvement focus areas or themes. Within the final Paper, I reflect on a leadership development intervention to determine how leaders and HR professionals may ensure their interventions are beneficial to improving the organisation, environment and climate, as well as ensuring the intervention delivers on expected outcomes.

Using positive psychology philosophy as a foundation and a starting point, this thesis contributes to POB and scholarship, through the design and execution of five research studies. This has been done by primarily focusing on the potential positive aspects of work climates. Firstly, in Paper 1, an overall global positive climate was designed (through the combination of five existing positive climates) and developing this global positive climate ensured there was a focus on development and building on what was already good or positive about the climate. That is, the strengths within climates. Interestingly, the five climates are

all highly correlated with each other, so while champions of some constructs (e.g., PSC by Hall et al., 2010) might suggest their climate is key, the data from both Papers 1 and 2 show that organizations might be able to develop the suite of climates that make up GPC through targeting one dimension only, making the development and/or improvement of a GPC perhaps much easier than otherwise expected. This makes an interesting and useful contribution to the literature of organizational climates and especially studies considering multiple climates.

This thesis concentrated on offering empirical evidence and insights towards the benefits of positive workplaces towards enhancing the employee experience. Testing the benefits of a global positive climate (Papers 1 and 2) provided evidence that these climates and cultivating work positive environments offer increased beneficial outcomes for both employers and employees alike. Having examined only positive constructs within the global positive climate, means that offering employees these benefits and resources at work, will also contribute to supporting employees beyond their work lives. Due to the ever-changing nature of work, the importance of work in our societies, and the meaning humans derive from work, organizations do have a responsibility to provide tools for employees to live better lives, not only for use while at work but also to improve employees' lives outside of work. As the last few years have resulted in the constant unfolding of multi global crises (pandemic, climate change, geo-political tension and war) (Ernst & Young, 2023; World Economic Forum, 2023), positive and healthy workplaces continue to become even more relevant, and in demand. This thesis offers a potential solution and way forward for organizations as their support can be offered via positive climates and environments. This thesis argues positive psychology and the benefits that accrue from its practice, may offer potential solutions to navigating continued unprecedented global change and evolving work contexts.

I now look at the contributions from each Paper. Paper 1 explored the possibility an overall positive organizational climate with distinct focus that broadly aligns with POB, focusing on climates that assess employee wellbeing (POS), psychosocial safety (PSC), belonging and uniqueness (inclusion), targeting employee purpose and worthy work (WW) and mindfulness, each climate with its own specific POB links. As these climates are combined into one 'super' climate, the combination of the climates gives a more positive effect than individually. Paper 1 confirms that researchers can create a global positive climate (GPC) that captures all these distinct yet related positive climates together, and in totality, they play a vital

role in shaping employee outcomes. Theoretically, this aligns with conversations of resources (COR) theory and shows that resources gained via GPC and high-performance work systems (HPWS) build the resource reservoir of employees' psychological capital (PsyCap) which ultimately enables employees to be more engaged and satisfied. The analysis from Paper 1 also shows that for organizations, all five positive psychology inspired climates are likely to be highly related. As such, developing one climate is likely to aid employee perceptions around the remaining climates, perhaps making the shaping of a GPC easier than considering the development and enhancement of five separate climates at one time. This has important implications for practice which are further explored below.

In Paper 2, I extended the model from Paper 1, changing the mediator (but retaining a strong positive psychology link) and the moderators of the model used in Paper 1. Ultimately, I tested a wider range of outcomes (specifically work behaviors), and again, this Paper provided evidence that global positive climate (GPC) contributed to positive outcomes. Paper 2 included a focus on employees undergoing workplace change and included readiness for change (RFC) to capture the way that an employee can be ready, or not, for change, exploring the way this played out both directly and in combination with GPC. Indeed, it was found that the GPC and RFC are both positively related to meaningful work (MFW), interacting significantly as expected, with the highest level of MFW being found when GPC and RFC are both high. This highlights that a high RFC individual is attuned to the actions of employers (via social exchange theory, SET) and thus may reciprocate strongly when GPC is high. However, interesting effects were found towards turnover intentions. First, while GPC is negatively related to turnover as expected, RFC was positive and the interaction with GPC was dominated by RFC. Those with high RFC were only slightly less likely to consider leaving at high GPC, GPC was most effective in further reducing turnover intentions for the low RFC group. This highlights that a GPC might be limited towards turnover intentions for those who embrace and are ready for change – which is what changing jobs is likely to entail. This provides new insights into employee behaviors from RFC.

Paper 3 sought to capture employee desires around how their organizations could enhance their workplace cultures. Using Social Exchange theory as a theoretical framework and the Cropanzano et al. (2017) theoretical model to further expand on the dimensions of social exchange, the resulting themes were placed within the Cropanzano et al. (2017) quadrants to further define behavior and participants

expectations going forward. Overall, the four main themes found were (1) wellbeing, (2) personal growth, (3) positive leadership, and (4) inclusion. These were identified to reflect a suite of 'what employees want' within their workplace environments. These themes come together as emerging and contemporary, as well as relevant to the current context of organizational climate research, especially given some themes (e.g., personal growth and inclusion) have been acknowledged as requiring more empirical research. They also align well with the GPC from Papers 1 and 2. Indeed, the personal growth and positive leadership themes align strongly with POB. The current situational context of the 2020 pandemic and 'The Great Resignation' (Cook, 2021; Smith, 2022) have no doubt contributed to and shaped participants' reflections on how to improve their organizational culture. This will be discussed further in the limitations.

Paper 4 was similar to Paper 3 in seeking to capture employee insights on how their organizations could enhance their workplace cultures and environments, but this time focusing specifically on human resource (HR) practices. The findings provide useful insights for HR practitioners to consider as opportunities for positive organizational improvements relating to high-performance work systems (HPWS). The focus on HPWS within this Paper 4 also aligns well with Paper 1 which included HPWS as a moderator and showed it plays an important role in supporting a positive climate. Themes identified were (1) fundamental HR practices, (2) recruitment and retention practices, (3) training and development, and (4) emerging HR practices. Again, these themes align well with New Zealand based studies exploring HR practices (e.g., Haar & Harris, 2023; Haar et al., 2022). The insights from Paper 4 address an 'employee voice' gap in the literature, regarding opportunities for improvements to current HR practices which can likely enhance and improve organizations. The research here contributes to the growing evidence of the positive effects strategic HRM can have on an organization and supports the encouragement of HR practitioners to continuously improve the already established HPWS within their workplaces.

The final study, Paper 5 explored a leadership development program (LDP) and captured possible opportunities to advance the effectiveness of such programs. Paper 5 undertook a reflective practice approach to the LDP intervention to capture the reflections and insights of the researcher. Within the context of the thesis, Paper 5 explored whether one way to enhance and strengthen a GPC might be through leadership training. Although it remained challenging to determine the effectiveness of the program, the key question remains how to best measure LDPs, and how effective are they? On reflection, there was

qualitative confirmation of the participants developing a base line of leadership development, the most beneficial aspects of the program were connection, peer learning, and sharing stories e.g., being in the same room and hearing others talk about their experiences. Importantly, the LDP highlighted challenges for organizations around ensuring all participants were comfortable with a positive psychology approach, which clearly a cohort of participants were not. This fundamentally weakens the ability to provide overwhelming evidence of LDP success. Overall, this study identifies the challenges academics and practitioners (e.g., HR managers) may face when firstly developing an effective LDP and ensuring that the LDP will be managed appropriately for LDP effectiveness.

To summarise, the thesis begins by considering the role of and effect of organizational climate based on POB on individuals and workplace outcomes and poses the questions: *are positive climates worth investing in, and further developing within organizations?* The evidence directs us towards confirmation of a global positive climate being worthwhile and productive towards beneficial outcomes for the organization. Once positive climates have been established as beneficial, the subsequent Papers (specifically Papers 3 and 4) answer the question: *how do organizations create these positive based climates? What are the steps we need to take towards building these? What do employees see as important to improve their work culture (climates)?* These questions are the driver towards an exploration to understand what is the popular dominant climate that employees will positively respond to and desire to work in. Papers 3 and 4 offer practical insights to implementing an increased positive workplace.

The themes emerging in Papers 3 and 4 confirm benefits to individuals as well as increased and improved HPWS or human resources systems. A concern of this approach is that these benefits may seem to weigh too heavily in the employees' favour or perspective, and as SET denotes, there should be a reciprocal exchange and relationship between both employer and employee. Although it is clear in the previous Papers that providing positive environments will reap some rewards for employers and employees alike, it was argued that healthy workers are productive, and thus there are benefits for organizations in addressing the concerns and suggestions of their employees. Finally, this does lead into Paper 5, and the research question: *when creating these work climates and environments via positive HR interventions, are these interventions able to be developed and managed to ensure success?* In Paper 5, we see that, although employers may provide these opportunities and environments for employees, it is evident that not all

employees will appreciate nor take advantage of these opportunities. Nevertheless, the final thesis question encapsulated in Paper 5 asked was: *can climate be enhanced and is it able to be delivered and managed via interventions?* This final Paper 5 explored these questions and concepts and concludes by giving confirmation that further research is needed in order to confirm effectiveness and successful impact of HR interventions and leadership programs. The important contribution is much of the lack of evidence around LDP is through inability to capture data and evidence. Paper 5 showed that a portion of the cohort grew exceedingly well, although there were broadly equal pockets of participants with (a) modest gains, and (b) no gains, because they fundamentally did not like or appreciate the POB approach. This might remind organizations that getting the right mix of participants and programs is likely key to LDP success.

In summary these five Papers offer a contribution to the original research questions as well as the broader POB literature, especially on climates and how these can be developed. The thesis confirms, that indeed, organizational climate based on POB can play a key role on individual and workplace outcomes. Work climates that are focused on positive psychology tenants and POB may offer a framework towards increasingly well-rounded work environments. These workplaces are oriented towards supporting individuals, workplaces, and being more supportive to individuals. The thesis also confirms that climate development should be drawn from an organizational behavior lens, POB, using the broader philosophies and perspectives of POB rather than solely relying on a narrower HR theory and practice. Thus, POB theory and perspectives offers increased benefits and appears to have significant benefits to intentional organizational climate design. This thesis also offers practical insights to how we may go about improving workplaces, exploring what employees want from their workplaces, as well as reflecting on an intervention, to understand further how to practically implement positive improvements. The thesis also considers what leaders or HR professionals would need to be aware of to ensure their interventions are successful as well as ensuring their interventions will improve their workplace environment and climates.

Paper 1 and Paper 2 supplied evidence that a positive environment and positive individuals would indeed have a cumulative (interaction) effect on employee job outcomes, these Papers answer the following research questions 1, 2, and 3:

1. *What role does organizational climate play on positive individual factors and workplace outcomes? What climates are important beyond the level of HR practices provided?*

2. *In the New Zealand context, are there dominant organizational climate/s that shape positive employee perceptions (psychological capital, meaningful work, and readiness for change)?*
3. *Do positive workplaces (climate) and positive people (psychological) have a cumulative (interaction) effect on important employee work attitudes (specifically job satisfaction, and employee engagement) and work behaviors (specifically turnover intentions and OCBs*)?

Paper 3 confirmed that there are dominating climate 'culture' themes that employees are looking for within their workplaces, again confirming here that both traditional and contemporary themes are important, as well as the global positive climate constructs supporting both the individual and organizational development explored in Papers 1 and 2. The 'employee voice' captured in Papers 3 and 4 also show that employee respondents believe there is 'room for improvement' when it comes to organizational culture, but this thesis doesn't necessarily allow enough discussion for the practical implementation of these improvements, and this is an area for further research. Papers 3 and 4 answer research question 4:

4. *Can organizational climate be enhanced? How?*

I did however attempt to reflect on a single climate improvement via a leadership development program in Paper 5. However, for a relatively simple intervention it was complex and challenging to explore but, as discussed within Paper 5, there are many opportunities to further explore the success of these types of interventions within future research. From a practical perspective, it may not be possible to explore the effectiveness of all climate interventions implemented within an organization, as it takes forethought and time to implement effectiveness measures. Nevertheless, this thesis argues that we need to be more critical of organizational interventions and use intervention measures to ensure the interventions are performing successfully as planned. Paper 5 addressed research question 5:

5. *Can evidence be found to show that leadership effectiveness can be developed using a positive psychology approach?*

Overall, the intervention literature shows there is considerable evidence that interventions are generally difficult to confirm in their effectiveness. Indeed, interventions remain a 'black box' (Leroy et al., 2023), in terms of understanding what works and what doesn't work, and to determine what genuinely contributes

to human development of the workforce. In summary, the overall contribution of this thesis is that it provides evidence of the following:

1. A global positive climate can be captured and is beneficial.
2. Employee perspectives on opportunities to build and implement cultures may support performance and thriving at work. But this does require organizations and their leaders to respond to these ideas.
3. Regarding improving climates, the data suggests that organizations and leaders should draw on a broader organizational behavior perspective (rather than a HR only focus) and develop effective and measurable interventions.

Theoretical contributions

Overall, this thesis uses and builds on two of the current positive organizational behavior's theorical approaches: 1. Conservation of Resources theory (COR) in Papers 1 and 2, and Social Exchange theory (SET) in Papers 2, 3, 4, and 5. Combined, this thesis makes the following theoretical contributions. Overall, this thesis found support for the COR theory approach around the resource caravan approach, which encourages researchers to consider resource sources in combination including the workplace context (Hobfoll et al., 2018). Indeed, the five climates (perceived organizational support, psychosocial safety climate, organizational mindfulness, worthy work, and inclusion) making up the global positive climate (GPC) might be considered a resource caravan approach towards climates. Further contributing to COR theory, evidence was provided in Paper 1 that the organizational context – here HPWS –was also beneficial to employee outcomes, and in combination, the best outcomes were achieved. Indeed, as those employees working in high GPC and HPWS environments also had increased psychological capital, this reflects a positive resource reservoir (Ghafoor & Haar, 2020) whereby employees have sufficient resources to exceed at work. The GPC and HPWS contribute to the allowance of increased resources and employees that are able, may draw on their resource reservoir to achieve superior job attitudes. Examining the GPC climate and HPWS in combination is important because the few studies that have considered this combination found them related (e.g., Rogg et al., 2000). However the combination of GPC and HPWS, using a POB approach has largely been untested. Here, we tested and found that together they are better able to provide

employees with maximum resources. Thus, to better understand the influence of resources like climates and HR practices, it is important to consider them in combination – as Hobfoll et al. (2018) suggest. .

Papers 2, 3, 4, and 5 have been built on SET, with the premise being that individuals will respond and demonstrate reciprocity in a positive environment offered by their employer by offering their available energy and resources back towards the organization. In this regard a GPC ensures greater returns and increased positive outcomes. According to SET, it is expected the GPC will positively influence employee behaviors and attitudes. This was supported in Paper 1, whereby higher employee engagement and job satisfaction was supported from a GPC. Further, in Paper 2, lower turnover intentions, and higher organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs) were identified as responses to the benefit of a GPC. When organization leaders develop and maintain these environments for employees, SET suggests that this energy will be returned to the organization. The SET premise is the same for Papers 3 and 4, that by taking an employee view of current themes confirmed within these papers, the themes could be used to build further climate frameworks, which would make for an all-encompassing positive employee experience. There were common themes in Papers 3 and 4, some of the themes more traditional and some more contemporary, that employees see as enhancing their work environments. The themes were applied to Cropanzano et al.'s (2017) theoretical model to further expand on the dimensions of social exchange. This enabled me to further define behavior and participants' expectations going forward as well as evidence that further supported Cropanzano et al.'s (2017) theoretical model. While SET is a popular workplace theory for researchers, some of the theoretical nuances of Cropanzano et al.'s (2017) extension have remained under-explored, and Papers 3 and 4 help provide this much needed evidence.

The confirmation of these themes provided a credible framework for Paper 5 where I reflected on possible workplace improvements and these themes, particularly personal growth and positive leadership were applied to Paper 5. This study confirms that organizations do have the ability to implement such climates and improvements. An example drawn on in this paper, is when the organization offers an opportunity for training and development, being a reciprocal energy exchange. Theoretically, employees are expected to respond in kind when they value the benefit or practice being offered (Haar & Spell, 2004), although the non-guaranteed nature of SET and specifically the norm of reciprocity noted that some employees might choose not to respond to the opportunities for development. Indeed, other employees may

not have potential for development, no matter how much energy the employer gives them. In this regard, to ensure an intervention is worth investing in by the organization, an intervention should be able to be explored and confirmed for effectiveness. This should be obvious and confirmed before implementing it or scaling across the organization or deciding to make other improvements or initiatives to the intervention.

Paper 5 also builds on SET, as it confirms and gives evidence that energy exchange is not a given, which aligns with Gouldner (1960) who suggests that a social exchange is not a guarantee of mutual reciprocity and improved organizational outcomes. This type of nuanced finding within SET is seldom identified and explored. Thus, Paper 5 identifies and confirms that not all employees will respond in kind to energy or investment from their employer. Although SET is broadly useful as a theoretical framework, further research is needed to determine how organizations would determine which individual is motivated or has potential for development, what type of employee benefits from what training or development, and then with this information decide where is the best investment of time and energy. This suggests that LDPs might require a mix of the right program with the right people – a nuanced element that seemingly has not been looked at it detail in the extant literature nor by organizations. Many simply assume that running a LDP will benefit participants, but the evidence from Paper 5 is that this is more complex than typically assumed. The participants may also be assessed and confirmed for their potential and desire to learn. This will ensure that the investment by the employer is not wasted, and the energy exchange will be mutual. Thus Paper 5 reinforces that SET acknowledges the potential of a reciprocal energy exchange but there must be willingness on each side of the relationship to ensure an equal exchange.

Research Implications

This thesis gives support for future research into the broad area of benefits arising from positive psychology and positive organizational behavior initiatives. Specifically, I suggest more research to explore organizational climate initiatives that support positive culture design and development and individual employee strength and flourishing. It may be useful to develop further understanding of the overarching antecedents that contribute to positive organizational culture, more specifically what works for different types of work groups and job types. Initiatives and interventions that increase positive dispositional factors not only in the workplace but also that individuals can use in other areas of their lives to make improvements

may be useful. Researchers are encouraged to conduct further tests of GPC and include other important work factors, such as employee job performance. Further replication with HPWS or other moderators, especially considering boundary conditions, would be worthwhile. This would enable potentially complex relationships to be better understood. Continuing to explore these contemporary employees' experience themes would support organizations in their human resource and organizational development initiatives. Finally, further development of organizational intervention measures is crucial for practitioner and organization credibility. The HR industry and practice will only develop credibility by ensuring HR interventions draw on effective and robust measures and that HR practitioners are able to confirm the effectiveness of such interventions.

Moreover, implications for researchers include conducting further tests of GPC and exploring other important work factors, such as other behaviors (e.g., creativity behaviors, job crafting behaviors), or key work attitudes like organizational commitment. A future research aspect might be an intervention focused on building one of these climates, and then testing to see whether this similarly builds and contributes to the development of other climates. Although there is evidence for a positive climate and positive individual factors having an accumulative effect on beneficial outcomes, this thesis did not give evidence for a single climate construct building on another. For example, if an intervention builds the POS of an organization, do employees broadly notice these benefits and report higher worthy work and inclusion? Do organizations building POS subsequently led to greater PSC? These questions remain currently unanswered in the literature. Clearly, building on the present research may include adding or subtracting climates added to the 5-climate model in our GPC, and longitudinal research looking at the way organizations develop and enhance their GPC over time, would align well with positive organizational behavior theory. In particular the way that organizations might strengthen such climates is an important point to consider in future research.

Research implications, in particular from Papers 3 and 4, also include conducting further qualitative investigations into the themes stated here and gathering more in-depth data via employee interviews or focus group interviews of teams. Researchers may also explore the current existing positive psychology practices such as strengths development, gratitude practices, or an online training intervention to develop psychological capital in a range of workplaces as a case study approach, in order to better understand how

these practices influence work outcomes. As these themes were especially relevant during data collection with increased numbers of employees working from home due to the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic, researchers could consider 'working from home' and 'hybrid work options' to see if these help or hinder a GPC?

Finally, Paper 5 offers significant implications for researchers when attempting to explore leadership development program effectiveness. Overall, the findings provide useful practical insights for researchers planning to study organizational leadership development programs in the future, such as considering quantifiable effectiveness measures as well as qualitative exploration before starting a program, evaluating follower feedback on their leader development, reviewing the participants for development potential rather than a broad-brush approach where 'all possible leaders must attend'. Finally, further research is required to understand LDP implications for practitioners regarding the influence not only on individual development but impact on organizational productivity as this was not an area of research in this thesis.

Organizational (Practical) Implications

Firstly, an obvious practical implication is the importance that organizations need to place on building and maintaining strong positive work climates. This is likely to be achieved in several ways and acknowledging the plethora of climates (see Patterson et al., 2005; Schneider et al., 2013), in my research I have demonstrated the importance of collectively building the climates towards a global positive climate (GPC). Although, as noted above, these climates are highly inter-related, and building and improving one may benefit the other climates as perceived by employees. In order to do this, organizations are encouraged to examine their own climate data (or conduct such analysis) to ensure they are making positive contributions to their workforce. It might be that focusing on developing positive climates generally raises the overall perception of workplace climates for the betterment of organizations and their employees.

For example, the results, particularly in Paper 2, highlight that the common occurrence of change does indeed appear ubiquitous supporting Brazzale et al. (2021). In this context, readiness for change (RFC) appears to play a key role. Understanding, shaping, and encouraging RFC might be broadly beneficial for organizations, although my findings around how RFC positively shapes (increases) turnover intentions is a

potential issue. However, it might simply reflect the current workforce dynamics around job opportunities as the data was collected in 2021, during the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic. The job market in New Zealand has substantially changed since that time, in 2021 the unemployment rate was 3.2% and in this has increased to 4.8% as at date (see Statistics New Zealand, 2024). The key here might be around enhancing employee reactions to change and making it, as much as possible, a positive embedded aspect of everyday organizational life and offering increased career opportunities and challenges within organizations thus enhancing employee retention rates and reducing employee turnover.

The findings do show the importance of building robust HR systems in combination with climates, and thus climate and HR practices should be recognized as being complementary. To solely focus on HR practice without much thought to building climate or vice versa would be too narrow in scope and deprive the organization(s) of the enhanced benefits of a dual or multi climate approach. Given the links to performance from job satisfaction and engagement (e.g., Judge et al., 2001; Harter et al., 2002), building a positive climate and linking HR practices is a sound way that organizations can aid their employees to have the psychological resources to achieve their best at work. Organizations could shape their GPC by focusing on various climate elements: wellbeing (POS), psychosocial safety (PSC), belonging and uniqueness (inclusion), purpose and worth (WW) and being mindful. HR practitioners and organizational leaders may find it beneficial to consider the sequencing of building high-performance work systems (HPWSs), and not try to do everything at once. This is because there are many components to a robust HPWS and considering theoretical implications (SET) indicates that building upon initial success and employee reciprocation is a positive way to provide more support (i.e., more complex HR practices).

As Paper 4 points out, initially an HR person or HPWS system at low maturity would benefit an organization rather than none at all. Once an HR system is in place, the organization is able to focus and improve on different aspects of the system and use these areas as key building blocks to further develop their HPWS. Once these systems have been actualized, organizations would be best to focus on other emerging trends such as how to ensure the best balance between flexible work and in-person connection. This incremental approach will ensure continuation of development in this space. Finally, and to conclude, in order to ensure ongoing credibility within the profession, HR people and leaders may benefit by becoming more constructively critical of HR interventions. As suggested in Paper 5, this increased level of

criticality would contribute to ensuring increased effectiveness and benefits of these interventions and greater accountability for the deployment of resources. It has been assumed that improved leadership and LDPs have a positive effect on leadership effectiveness and ultimately organizational productivity, although this has not been confirmed within this thesis and remains a gap in the existing literature.

Implications Summary

Overall, in its entirety, this thesis offers implications for developing climate (culture), the employee experience and improved human resource practice. It confirms the present opportunities available to us to further contemplate the benefits of positive psychology within our workplaces. Papers 1 and 2 provide evidence of the benefits of focussing on the positive aspects or strengths of the workplace, whereas Papers 3 and 4 identify current and contemporary ideas of employees and focus on areas that would make for an increasingly positive workplace environment. But these initiatives are not to be undertaken without caution, as positive workplaces must exist within a contextual setting of a 'high-performing culture' and a pre-confirmed reciprocal environment that ensures investment from both the employer and employee. This context is important to ensure collective and individual performance and that both parties within the relationship (employer and employee) are 'doing the right thing' by the organization and each other. If this relationship and baseline exist as a starting point, then it may be worth considering, investing in, and focusing on building an increasingly positive workplace.

However, if this situational context doesn't exist, it should be the first priority to ensure this baseline context exists as no amount of generosity from the employer to make a workplace better will turn around poor performing environments. In fact, it may only encourage continued behaviors. Clear expectations of behaviors and that employees will do the right thing, attention to detail, and a non-acceptance of 'negative' behavior all must be present before an attempt is made towards investing in a positive climate or environment. This suggests that in the workplace an employee's agenda most likely reflects their own priorities, and if there is no established notion of reciprocity in the workplace, an employer may be taken advantage of by employees. It is important that boundaries are set and accepted, and that expectations of employers and employees are clear and accountable. Once this has been established as a baseline, an investment in developing positive environments is more likely to be successful.

Limitations

Lastly, when referring to limitations, I begin with a possible criticism of the global positive climate (GPC). There may be difficulty in accepting the possibility that multiple climates may be considered as a single construct. The practicalities of ensuring these multi-climates and specifically GPCs can be measured and developed appropriately in workplaces also requires further research. This is because each separate climate construct may be experienced from different sources e.g., top management or the organization (e.g., PSC), from the work itself (e.g., worthy work), or from their colleagues, including co-workers, supervisors, and subordinates. However, the GPC is intentionally designed as a multi-faceted climate and indeed is made up of multiple sources to ensure a truly positive work environment e.g., leadership, the work type and purpose and surrounding environment are all crucially important to ensure a total positive work environment. If just one of the climates is present, this may be to the detriment of other possible climates' benefit, combined multi-climate benefits or an accumulative effect. Finally, building on the above criticism, an additional limitation related to the GPC is that, as discussed previously, in practice, it may be also challenging to intentionally create a GPC or multi-climate environments. There may be unintended consequences of GPCs, e.g., costs to leaders' resources such as time in the climate creation and development. As such an outline as to how to create these climates has been clearly under-developed within this thesis. I next address limitations specific to the methodologies used.

Limitations of quantitative data

Papers 1 and 2, the single-time self-reported nature of this data raises potential for common method bias (CMB). However, Haar et al. (2014) contends that conducting confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and especially alternative CFA models can identify issues around CMB, and the alternative models tested here were all a poorer fit. Further, Evans (1985) showed CMB was much less likely in the presence of moderation effects, and several significant moderation effects were found, including moderated mediation effects, in both studies. Overall, both papers had large and varied samples, including a diverse range of professions and industries, aiding confidence in generalizing the findings. This provides confidence in the

measures. Of course, causality is not possible due to single-time data and thus relationships are expressed as per the literature.

Limitations of qualitative data

Papers 3 and 4 utilized data from an online survey. So, while numerically there is no issue around the number of respondents (over 200 employees for each paper), there is a limitation around the depth, detail, and context of the comments. For example, there is no opportunity to delve deeper into interesting comments as you would have in an interview (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). This was simply a trade-off of this data approach, and thus limits the depth of understanding while providing volume and breadth. One remedy is the encouragement of in-depth interviews or other qualitative data collection methods to further explore and clarify the initial themes identified here. However, both papers explore phenomena related to positive psychology that researchers often avoid: how can organizations enhance their climate and HR practices, and what specifically would employees want? This meets a very real need in the literature.

Further, there are specific limitations to Paper 5. Firstly, there is an acknowledgment of the methodological restrictions when using reflective practice, Although it is fit for purpose for an evaluation and broad-brush process of assessment, it lacks empirical measure and adding such data to future LDP evaluations would be complementary to the current research. Future exploration of such programs is encouraged to further explore quantitative effectiveness measures that are robust and return data on LDPs. While this was originally part of the plan for Paper 5, the realities of data collection and respondents' lack of salience with the topic appeared to confound these attempts. Indeed, participants were happy for me as the researcher to be present as they shared their comments with others rather than in a formal individual interview. This applied to the various groups involved in the LDP including the participants, trainer and senior management. Perhaps a larger study of leaders and their followers would be more beneficial including using quantitative data to test for change across the LDP including a substantive post LDP phase.

Conclusion

Using the philosophy of positive psychology and a focus on the good in life and developing strengths, including the use of positive organizational behavior constructs and subsequent outcomes as a goal, this thesis developed the concept of using an all-encompassing global positive climate (work culture and environment). This GPC was designed to combine multiple climates that use a positive perspective and has been found previously to play a key role in positive organizational and employee outcomes. The thesis utilized a sequential approach to exploring these theses via five papers. Firstly, this thesis provides evidence that these climates are beneficial for employees and thus worth considering (Papers 1 and 2). Next, in order to further understand and possibly develop the employee experience and using social exchange as the premise, this thesis asked employees what they really wanted from their workplaces to ensure improvement and understand what climate constructs and improvements mean in practice (Paper 3 explored climates broadly, while Paper 4 focused on HR practices). Both traditional and contemporary themes emerged from the data, offering a suite of opportunities for employers to consider possible climate and HR improvements and how they might go about developing such workplaces. Building on Conservation of Resource theory (Paper 1) and Social Exchange theory (Papers 2-5) confirms that organizational climates may provide employees with enhanced resources to enable them to perform better and at the same time there should be a reciprocal exchange of energy, and in the least, this thesis posits that employees should give back by way of performance to their employers before placing the expectation of employers to enhance their employee experience. Once this baseline of reciprocal relationships exists between the employer and the employee, we have the situational context ready for improvement. Paper 5, using a reflective lens, delved into exploring a positive intervention for effectiveness and possible enhancements to interventions to ensure increased effectiveness more generally. Paper 5 shares understanding of how leaders and HR professionals may implement interventions in their workplaces and what considerations are important to ensure the development of robust HR interventions that have a positive impact.

Overall, this thesis offers possibility as well as confirmation. Possibility that both positive psychology and positive organizational behavior is worth considering and practicing; the possibility that positive organizations and climates are worth pursuing, and that there are ample opportunities to enhance the employee experience. This thesis also confirms before the offer of a positive workplace, organizations

should be clear on the effectiveness of human development, human resource practice and delivery. Employee climate, and workplace environment enhancements and improvements all should be delivered congruently with the expectation and delivery of collective and individual performance.

CHAPTER TEN: References and Appendices

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Appendix A: Ethics Approval (AUT 21/426 Approved 18th November 2021, Wellbeing@Work: Positive Workplaces – Positive People? Factors contributing to positive individual and workplace outcomes).

Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC)

Auckland University of Technology
D-88, Private Bag 92006, Auckland 1142, NZ
T: +64 9 921 9999 ext. 8316
E: ethics@aut.ac.nz
www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics

18 November 2021

Jarrod Haar
Faculty of Business Economics and Law

Dear Jarrod

Re Ethics Application: **21/426 Wellbeing@Work: Positive Workplaces – Positive People? Factors contributing to positive individual and workplace outcomes.**

Thank you for providing evidence as requested, which satisfies the points raised by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC).

Your ethics application has been approved for three years until 18 November 2024.

Non-Standard Conditions of Approval

1. If you are doing the survey in Qualtrics please send through the final updated version of the full survey, but if using the CINT platform this is not necessary. We suggest that you do not need the second introductory section.

Non-standard conditions must be completed before commencing your study. Non-standard conditions do not need to be reviewed by AUTEC before commencing your study.

Standard Conditions of Approval

1. The research is to be undertaken in accordance with the Auckland University of Technology Code of Conduct for Research and as approved by AUTEC in this application.
2. A progress report is due annually on the anniversary of the approval date, using the EA2 form.
3. A final report is due at the expiration of the approval period, or, upon completion of project, using the EA3 form.
4. Any amendments to the project must be approved by AUTEC prior to being implemented. Amendments can be requested using the EA2 form.
5. Any serious or unexpected adverse events must be reported to AUTEC Secretariat as a matter of priority.
6. Any unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project should also be reported to the AUTEC Secretariat as a matter of priority.
7. It is your responsibility to ensure that the spelling and grammar of documents being provided to participants or external organisations is of a high standard and that all the dates on the documents are updated.
8. AUTEC grants ethical approval only. You are responsible for obtaining management approval for access for your research from any institution or organisation at which your research is being conducted and you need to meet all ethical, legal, public health, and locality obligations or requirements for the jurisdictions in which the research is being undertaken.

Please quote the application number and title on all future correspondence related to this project.

For any enquiries please contact ethics@aut.ac.nz. The forms mentioned above are available online through http://www.aut.ac.nz/research/researchethics

(This is a computer-generated letter for which no signature is required)

The AUTEC Secretariat
Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee

Cc: barbara.myers@aut.ac.nz

Appendix B: Tools - Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form (AUT 21/426 Approved 18th November 2021, Wellbeing@Work: Positive Workplaces – Positive People? Factors contributing to positive individual and workplace outcomes).

2021 Survey - Employee (Sarah) - TRIM

What is your current role?

▼ Not currently employed (0) ... Self-employed/Business owner (4)

Skip To: End of Survey If What is your current role? = Not currently employed

Skip To: End of Survey If What is your current role? = Self-employed/Business owner

Participant Information Sheet

Date Information Sheet Produced: 8 November 2021.

Project Title: Wellbeing@Work: Positive Workplaces – Positive People.

An Invitation. Kia ora. My name is Professor Jarrod Haar, and I am conducting a study of New Zealand employees and their work experiences. This involves completing the attached survey, which is expected to take most people 20-25 minutes to complete. Your participation in the research is completely voluntary. We are NOT collecting your personal name or workplace, so you will never be personally identified.

Research purpose and participation. This research will contribute to understanding ways that people achieve better work and wellbeing outcomes via their workplace cultures, and their individual characteristics. The findings of this research may be used for academic publications and presentations. A research student may also use some of the data for their thesis research and result in an advanced academic qualification. Your inviation comes because you are a CINT New Zealand panel member. To be included in this research you need to be in paid employment, over the age of 18, and working 20 hours per week (minimum). Completing the online questionnaire will be taken as consent to participate. Your participation in this research is voluntary (it is your choice) and whether or not you choose to participate will neither advantage nor disadvantage you. You are able to withdraw from the study at any time. If you choose to withdraw from the study by simply stopping your responses. Because you are anonymous, completed data cannot be removed because it will not be able to be identified.

Research, discomforts and benefits and costs. The questionnaire will take around 20-25 minutes to complete. You can choose to not answer any question and you are free to discontinue the survey at any time. This process should not pose any discomfort or risk to you. Responses will be added to several hundred other employees across New Zealand and be analysed at the aggregate level only. This research will contribute to understanding of the ways that employees achieve better work and wellbeing outcomes. The survey will require 20-25 minutes of the participant's time. Your responses are anonymous and confidential and thus no feedback is provided.

Research concerns. Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Lead Researcher, *Professor Jarrod Haar, jarrod.haar@aut.ac.nz, and (09) 921-9999 ext 5034*.

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTEC, *ethics@aut.ac.nz* , (+649) 921 9999 ext 6038.

Researcher Contact Details: Research Leader: Professor Jarrod Haar, jarrod.haar@aut.ac.nz, +64 9 921 9999 ext 5034.

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on *17 November 2021*, AUTEC Reference number *21/426 Wellbeing @Work*.

Total hours worked in the last week (including overtime) for all paid jobs/work:

▼ 20 hours or less (20) ... More than 80 hours (81)

Skip To: End of Survey If Total hours worked in the last week (including overtime) for all paid jobs/work: = 20 hours or less

Q60 Regarding the total hours worked above - how many hours are unpaid:

▼ Anything over a 40 hour/week (on salary) (1) ... 31 or more hours (31)

Q61
NZ Employee Study 2021

Dear employee,

Kia ora. My name is Professor Jarrod Haar. I am conducting a study (wellbeing@work) of New Zealand employees, especially in the current lockdown period. The survey focuses on your lived lived experience around work and working from home (if applicable). The following survey is expected to take most people 25-30 minutes to complete. Your participation in the research is completely voluntary and your name or workplace is not collected.

Please pay high attention to detail while completing the survey as you may be disqualified without incentives if you fail to do so. Please be aware there are no right or wrong answers to the questions asked – just click the response that corresponds closest to what you feel or agree/disagree with.
With thanks,
Professor Jarrod Haar (PhD) Auckland University of Technology , New Zealand To begin the survey, please click >> below

Appendix C: Samples of thematic analysis

Sample of Coding - Paper Three - A new social exchange theoretical approach to organizational climates: A qualitative approach to understand what employees want			
Question: Please suggest (and detail) 1-2 things your organisation could do to improve its culture?	**Preliminary theme identification**	**Perceived /Refining Theme**	**Final Chosen Theme**
Learning the work. If the owner knew how the work is done then they would put more things in place such as training, safety procedures, specific routines done in circumstances.	...put more things in place such as training, safety procedures, specific routines done in circumstances…	Health and Safety	Wellbeing
My organisation can be slightly blasé when it comes to health & safety, I would feel more comfortable if new employees particularly were given more training on equipment (for a Landscaping/Gardening business) before being sent off to use it.	...slightly blasé when it comes to health & safety, I would feel more comfortable if new employees particularly were given more training on equipment…	Importance of Health and Safety	Wellbeing
Managers need to act and respond to complaints, concerns etc. By not acting it can impact on all workers and cause immense stress, worry and unrest in a team.	...not acting it can impact on all workers and cause immense stress, worry and unrest in a team…	Psychosocial safety, well being	Wellbeing
more wellbeing screening to ensure workers are not overworked or working under less optimal mental health conditions	...wellbeing screening to ensure workers are not overworked or working under less optimal mental health conditions…	Mental health, health screening	Wellbeing

Sample of Coding - Paper Four - What do employees really want from their workplace: A qualitative study focusing on HR Practices			
Question: What employees feel their organization can do better to aid their workplace experience via HR practices.	**Preliminary theme identification**	**Perceived /Refining Theme**	**Final Chosen Theme**
It could do regular assessment on our work and give feedback based on it	…regular assessment and give feedback…	Giving feedback	HR Fundamentals
Reduce the no existing balance between work and life. Reduce the stress by hiring more staff pay properly and fairly	..balance between work and life. Reduce stress by hiring more staff pay properly and fairly…	HR Hygiene	HR Fundamentals
My god where to begin! A proper HR department	…proper HR department…	HR requirement	HR Fundamentals
HR to report to so team members are not having to place concerns directly to their manager who may be the person you are concerned about. Openly communicate with all team about updates not pass the message from open team member to another on new procedures in place. Hold Meetings or even send emails to update staff on what is happening. We had no communication over Covid lockdown and were expected to still work from the office as our company refused to follow the mandates of Level 4 and would not allow team to Work from home	….HR to report to … no communication	HR requirement	HR Fundamentals

Appendix D: Research outputs from thesis publications and presentations

The following includes all the conferences presentations and publications throughout the PhD period.

Publications

McCallum, S., Haar, J. and Myers, B. (2023). Enhancing the employee experience: exploring a global positive climate to influence key employee outcomes. Evidence-based HRM, Vol. ahead-of-print No. ahead-of-print. https://doi.org/10.1108/EBHRM-03-2022-0070

Conference Presentations

12th NZ Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior Conference (2023) at the Auckland University of Auckland presented research paper titled: Challenges measuring a leadership development program: Insights for researchers

11th NZ Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior Conference (2022) at Massey University, Wellington, presented research paper titled: Influencing employee behaviors through a global positive climate

Other Publications

Following are other papers (in-progress) related to thesis:

This paper is currently under review and has a revise and resubmit:

McCallum, S., Haar, J., & Myers, B. (under review). Enhancing the employee experience: Influencing employee behaviors through a global positive climate. *Asia Pacific Journal of Human Resources*.

These papers are currently under review:

McCallum, S. & Haar, J. (under review). A new social exchange theoretical approach to organizational climates: A qualitative approach to understand what employees want. *New Zealand Journal of Employment Relations*.

McCallum, S. & Haar, J. (under review). What do employees really want from their workplace: A qualitative study focusing on HR Practices. *Employee Relations*: *The International Journal.*

McCallum, S., Haar, J., & Myers, B. (under review). Using Reflective Practice to Consider the Effectiveness of a Leadership Development Program. *New Zealand Journal of Human Resources*.