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**The influence of HRM and leadership on employee well-being:
Interactions, contexts, and conceptual issues.**

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List of abbreviations

HRM	Human resource management
HPHRM	High-performance human resource management
HPWS	High-performance work system
WBHRM	Well-being-oriented HRM
TL	Transformational leadership
AMO-framework	Ability, motivation, opportunities-Framework
JD-R model	Job demands-resources model
WLB	Work-life-balance
SDT	Self-determination theory
OVB	Omitted variable bias
IT	Information technology
ICT	Information and communication technology
DISC-model	Demand-induced strain compensation model
MCFA	Multilevel confirmatory factor analysis
PLS-SEM	Partial least squares structural equation modeling
ML-estimation	Maximum likelihood estimation
rWG(j)	Within-group agreement
ICC	Intraclass correlation
SD	Standard deviation
PPP	Posterior predictive p-value
Coeff. B	Regression coefficient
Conf. interv.	Confidence intervall
AVE	Average variance extracted
CR	Composite reliability
HTMT	Heterotrait-monotrait criterion
VIF	Variance inflation factor
R ² adj	Adjusted explained variance
RMSE	Root mean squared errors
MAE	Mean absolute error
CAIC	Consistent akaike information criterion
AIC3	Akaike information criterion with factor three
DIC	Deviance information criterion

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1 Synopsis

1.1 Introduction and research debates

Increasing job demands in rapidly changing work environments pose a threat to employee well-being (C. Cooper & Dewe, 2008). Since employee well-being is linked to organizational success due to higher employee commitment, work engagement, and organizational citizenship behavior (Wright & Huang, 2012), as well as organizational costs due to absenteeism and turnover, organizations have increasingly begun to focus their interest on how to address employee well-being (Guest, 2017).

Well-being in the context of work can be described as the quality of an employee's experience and functioning at work (Warr, 1987). It consists of three core dimensions: happiness (psychological), health (physical), and relationship (social) well-being (Grant et al., 2007). Happiness well-being describes employees' subjective experience and functioning, health well-being refers to employees' physical health and feelings of stress and strain, and relationship well-being describes employees' perceived quality of their social interactions.

Research on how organizations can address employee well-being has identified human resource management (HRM) and leadership as highly influential determinants within the work context (e.g. Inceoglu et al., 2018; Peccei & Van De Voorde, 2019b). In terms of HRM, organizations address employee attitudes and behaviors through a set of combined, interrelated HRM practices, referred to as HRM systems (Jiang, Lepak, Hu, & Baer, 2012). The majority of research has used exchange- and resource-based theories, such as the social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), the job demands-resources model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007), self-determination theory (Deci et al., 2017), and conservation of resources theory (Hobfoll, 1989), to link HRM systems to employee outcomes. According to social-exchange theories, based on the norm of reciprocity, HRM practices send signals that the organization cares about its

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employees, which is reciprocated by the employees in the form of positive attitudes and behaviors toward their jobs. Resource-based theories argue that HRM provides resources that can enhance employees' self-motivation by satisfying the basic psychological needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness. Thus, resources can help employees to cope with job demands, and achieve work goals, both of which are related to employees' well-being at work. Leaders address the well-being of their subordinates through a set of behaviors that can be referred to as leadership styles. As with HRM, research on the relationship between leadership and employee well-being primarily relies on similar exchange- and resource-based theories, as leaders also send signals of support through their behaviors and provide resources that enable employees to develop, cope with job demands, achieve work goals and satisfy basic psychological needs (Harms et al., 2017; Inceoglu et al., 2018).

Due to the diversity of leadership styles and HRM systems and their possible relationships with different aspects of employee well-being, the existing research in these fields is still inconclusive. In terms of leadership, traditional leadership styles such as task-oriented leadership or passive leadership styles, such as management by exception or laissez-faire leadership have received little research attention (Inceoglu et al., 2018). In contrast, the majority of research has examined the effects of change-oriented leadership styles, such as transformational, charismatic, or inspirational leadership, and relational leadership styles such as participative, or empowering leadership, and found mainly positive effects on employees' happiness well-being in terms of job satisfaction (Inceoglu et al., 2018), work engagement and commitment (Carasco-Saul et al., 2015; Yahaya & Ebrahim, 2016), employees' health well-being in terms of stress and strain (Harms et al., 2017), and social well-being in terms of trust and social climate (Inceoglu et al., 2018). Similarly, in terms of HRM, the relationship between traditional control-oriented HRM systems (high-compliance work systems) and employee well-being has been little studied, with mixed results (e.g. Xia et al., 2020). In contrast, research on more commitment-focused HRM systems, such as high-involvement, high-commitment or

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high-performance HRM mainly show positive effects on employees' happiness (Boon & Kalshoven, 2014; García-Chas et al., 2016), health (Teo & Waters, 2002) and social well-being (B. Cooper et al., 2019; Van De Voorde et al., 2012). However, despite the achievements in these fields to date, there are still important ongoing debates that limit a deeper understanding of the relationship between HRM, leadership, and employee well-being and call for further research in order to gain a more detailed picture.

First, since both HRM and leadership operate in organizational settings, their effectiveness depends on a range of external and internal factors, which limits the generalizability of findings (Aycan, 2005; Oc, 2018). However, due to researchers' intention to generate universal insights, it is regularly criticized that the influence of contexts on known phenomena and relationships is often underrepresented, which has led to calls for more research on contextual and situational factors influencing HRM (Beer et al., 2015) and leadership (Antonakis et al., 2004). The consideration of contextual factors is also particularly important from a methodological point of view, as the omission of theoretically important contextual variables can lead to endogeneity bias (Antonakis et al., 2010; Hill et al., 2021), which obscures the true effects of either HRM or leadership. In the field of HRM, this has mainly been discussed in terms of external contingencies or boundary conditions of HRM, such as international, economic, socio-political and cultural contexts or internal contexts, such as organizational structure, which have been found to influence the effectiveness of HRM (e.g. Dewettinck & Remue, 2011; Pudelko, 2006). The contextual factors of leadership have been studied in various literatures such as substitutes for leadership (Kerr & Jermier, 1978), contextual leadership (Oc, 2018), contingency models of leadership (Fiedler, 1978) and implicit leadership theories (Epitropaki & Martin, 2004). In a review of these literatures, Oc (2018) summarized the factors of national culture, institutional forces, gender composition of groups, the economic conditions of countries and organizations, and crises, as well as characteristics of the task, team and organization to affect leadership outcomes.

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Although internal organizational settings have been identified among these influencing factors for HRM and leadership, the idea that both, HRM and leadership themselves are strong factors in the context of each other is quite new and has not been addressed much. Because HRM and leadership target the same employee outcomes and are based on similar theories in their mechanisms of influence, they are likely to impact each other's effectiveness (Leroy et al., 2018). Based on this idea, a relatively new stream of research has begun to investigate the extent to which the effects of HRM and leadership are interdependent. So far, these studies have been rather unsystematic and have also lacked conceptual clarity about the different forms of theoretically possible interactions. This has resulted in inconsistent findings with either positive (e.g. Ehrnrooth et al., 2021; McClean & Collins, 2019), negative (e.g. Chuang et al., 2016; Hauff et al., 2022; Jiang et al., 2015), or non-existent (Ehrnrooth et al., 2021; McClean & Collins, 2019) interactions between different HRM systems and leadership styles. Therefore, in order to expand our understanding of the contextual interdependencies of leadership and HRM, it is necessary to further extend and develop the existing theorization of the joint roles of leadership and HRM.

Second, in addition to the contextual factors of HRM and leadership described above, both are also influenced by recent and new ongoing changes in society that represent new and as yet little explored contextual factors of each. One of these changes is the rapid spread of teleworking as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Since working from home can threaten employees' well-being, for example in terms of social isolation or blurring of work and leisure (Beckel & Fisher, 2022), HRM and leadership are faced with the task of addressing employees' well-being under these changed working conditions. Although there is research on the effects of HRM and leadership on teleworker well-being (Nayani et al., 2018), there is none that considers the joint effects of HRM and leadership in this context. Therefore, in order to advance understanding on the relationship between HRM, leadership, and employee well-being under

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specific conditions, it is necessary to expand research on new and specific contextual factors such as teleworking.

Third, debates about the impact of HRM and leadership on employee well-being are also accompanied by conceptual issues. To draw conclusions from research, valid theoretical concepts and measurement instruments are needed to predict a particular construct. One debate, therefore, deals with how HRM and leadership should be conceptualized and measured in research on their effects on employee well-being. To date, researchers in both fields have argued that employee well-being has been largely neglected in favor of employee performance (Guest, 2017; Inceoglu et al., 2018) and thus has often been studied only as a secondary outcome or mediator to explain the relationship between HRM, leadership and performance (Montano et al., 2017; Peccei & Van De Voorde, 2019b). Therefore, most studies have used change-oriented leadership styles, usually transformational leadership (TL) or the high-performance work system (HPWS), which is designed to increase employees' abilities, motivations, and opportunities to perform (Appelbaum et al., 2000), to link HRM and leadership with employee well-being. In most cases, these studies build on theories derived from past research on the relationship between HRM, leadership and performance, rather than a well-being specific rationale (Peccei & Van De Voorde, 2019b; van Knippenberg & Sitkin, 2013). This raises the question of whether HRM and leadership concepts that are specifically designed to address employee well-being as the primary outcome of interest are better predictors of employee well-being.

In terms of leadership, following the criticism that established leadership concepts, such as transformational leadership, are "too vague about specific health-related actions of leaders" (Franke et al., 2014, p. 140), scholars have introduced different "healthy leadership" models such as health-promoting leadership (Eriksson et al., 2011) or health-oriented leadership (Franke & Felfe, 2011). Despite criticisms regarding their distinctiveness, their effects on

employee well-being have been extensively researched (for reviews, see Rudolph et al., 2020; Stuber et al., 2021). Studies have also shown that health-promoting leadership and health-oriented leadership have additional incremental variance in employee well-being beyond that of transformational leadership (Franke et al., 2014; Vincent, 2012).

For HRM the research situation is less clear. There is an ongoing debate about whether the performance-oriented HPWS also enhances employee well-being (i.e. mutual gains) or whether it contributes to performance at the expense of employee well-being (i.e. conflicting outcomes) (Peccei & Van De Voorde, 2019b). To date, the literature has found more evidence for the mutual-gains perspective. However, when focusing on employee well-being as the main outcome of interest, it becomes unclear, whether the HPWS, with its lack of well-being-specific practices, is still a good predictor of employee well-being. Guest (2017) has developed a well-being-oriented HRM system (WBHRM) based on the literature on the antecedents of well-being in the work context. However, in contrast to research on the effects of “healthy leadership”, the system has not been empirically compared with the HPWS. Since HPWS and WBHRM represent two seemingly opposing HRM strategies, this question is fundamental to HRM research and practice to gain a more detailed understanding of the relationship between HRM and well-being.

In summary, the aim of this thesis is to advance the understanding on the relationship between HRM, leadership and employee well-being, by addressing and contributing towards each of these three debates described above. We have conducted three empirical studies to provide evidence within these debates.

1.2 Research agenda and methodological approach

In **Study 1**, we address the first debate, which calls for clarification and theorization of the joint effects of leadership and HRM on employee well-being. To do so, we adopt a multilevel

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perspective on Leroy et al.'s (2018) ideas on the value-based effects of HPWS and TL to answer the following research questions. 1) *Are the relative main effects of TL and HPWS systematically different with respect to individual-level outcomes compared to team-level outcomes?* 2) *Do TL and HPWS systematically influence (moderate) each other's relationships with individual- and team-level outcomes?* Regarding question 1, we argue for level-specific differences in their relative main effects based on differences in the inputs and foci of HPWS and TL (Fischer et al., 2017). Based on arguments for the stronger values-based motivational focus of HPWS on employee self-enhancement as opposed to the stronger values-based motivational focus of TL on team self-transcendence, we hypothesize that HPWS will have a relatively stronger effect on individual-level variables, while TL will have a relatively stronger effect on collective-level outcomes. Furthermore, to answer research question 2, based on these motivational value-based effects, we extend the conceptualization of Leroy et al. (2018) by distinguishing between two types of main effects (aligned vs. distinctive) and the two main forms of interaction (synergistic vs. weakening) to theorize four mechanisms of interaction: supplementary fit vs. redundancy and complementary fit vs. misfit/contradiction. Based on these, we hypothesize that the specific joint effects of HPWS and TL are most strongly based on the level-specific complementary fit of their *value diversity*, resulting in synergistic forms of interaction both with respect to both individual- and team-level outcomes.

Study 1 uses self-report data from 730 employees in 99 teams working in a retail chain in Europe at 12 different company sites. Data was collected at two time points and analyzed using Bayesian multilevel confirmatory factor analysis (MCFA) and multilevel path analysis including interaction effects based on robust maximum likelihood estimation. The multilevel analyses were conducted using a latent variable deconstruction approach in Mplus.

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In **Study 2**, we also address the first debate by examining the joint effects of HRM and leadership on teleworker well-being. In addition, Study 2 addresses the second debate, which describes the need to conduct research on the effectiveness of HRM and leadership in changing work environments that pose new threats to employee well-being. Specifically, Study 2 examines, how HRM and leadership can address the new and sudden threats to employee well-being, that came with the widespread implementation of telework during the COVID-19 pandemic (Evanoff et al., 2020). Based on these situation-specific demands, we develop telework-oriented HRM and leadership frameworks to test their relationship with teleworkers' happiness, health, and social well-being. We also examine their specific functionalities for different dimensions of employee well-being and test for their conditional effects. We expect teleworkers' feelings of strain and social isolation to mediate the relationship between telework-oriented HRM and leadership and teleworkers' happiness well-being. We also expect that telework-oriented HRM and leadership will have synergistic effects.

In Study 2, 280 German employees were surveyed via an online questionnaire at two time points. The model, which includes reflective and formative second-order constructs as well as moderation and multiple mediation effects, is analyzed using partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM).

In **Study 3**, we address the third debate, which focuses on the conceptualization of HRM and leadership in research on their relationship to employee well-being. Specifically, with regard to HRM, Study 3 examines whether a well-being-specific HRM system is a better predictor of employee well-being than the performance-oriented HPWS. This is based on the idea that the HPWS, due to its lack of well-being specific theorization, may not be able to predict aspects of employee well-being that are not related to performance, nor may it be a good reflection of organizational reality. To compare both systems, we operationalize a WBHRM based on the work of Guest (2017), which builds on literature on the antecedents of employee well-being,

and contrast it with the HPWS, which is operationalized based on the practices proposed by Jiang, Lepak, Hu, and Baer (2012) within the AMO-framework. We expect a stronger relationship between WBHRM and employee happiness and health well-being.

Study 3 is based on data from 1.510 employees who completed an online questionnaire at two different times. We used two separate SEM models and compared them based on differences in regression coefficients, predictive power, and model fit criteria using PLS Predict and the finite mixture PLS procedure (FIMIX-PLS).

1.3 General discussion

The studies described above aim to address the previously identified research debates that limit our understanding of the relationship between HRM, leadership and employee well-being. We have described the need to consider the contextual factors of HRM and leadership in their relationship to employee well-being, specifically identifying the contextual influence of each on the other as well as their joint effectiveness in novel work environments. Finally, we described conceptual difficulties in the measurement of HRM that threaten the validity of findings in research on its relationship with employee well-being. In this way, each study contributes to the overall question of how HRM and leadership affect employee well-being.

Study 1 contributes to the examination of the interdependencies of HRM and leadership in their relationship to employee well-being. By providing a multilevel perspective on the independent values-based effects of HPWS and TL, and by examining the relative importance of their main effects on individual- and team-level outcomes, Study 1 provides insights into the unique functionalities of HPWS and TL for employee well-being. Furthermore, by extending and developing the theorization of the conditional effects of HRM and leadership, Study 1 offers a novel integrated conceptualization and theoretical framework for the level-specific interactions of HRM and leadership in general. In particular, Study 1 contributes to research on the

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relationship between HRM, leadership and employee well-being by not only examining the joint effects of HPWS and TL, but more fundamentally by providing a new theoretical conceptualization that could guide future research in this field to take a more systematic approach. In addition, Study 1 highlights the methodological implications of omitting either HRM, leadership, or their interaction which calls into question the robustness of the findings of previous independent research on each of them (Boon et al., 2019; Hoch et al., 2018). In summary, Study 1 takes an important step toward understanding the joint influence of HRM and leadership on employee well-being and the mechanisms behind it.

Study 2 contributes to the first and second debate. First, by examining the joint effects of telework-oriented HRM and leadership on teleworker well-being, Study 2 provides evidence for the growing field of research on the joint effects of HRM and leadership. In particular, Study 2 adds evidence on a combination of a newly developed HRM system and a leadership style that has not been studied before. By examining the joint effects of this highly context-specific combination, Study 2 also contributes to research on the joint effects of HRM and leadership under specific conditions. Second, it contributes to the literature on the effectiveness of HRM and leadership in new work environments. By examining the relationships between a telework-oriented HRM and leadership with different dimensions of teleworker well-being, Study 2 answers the question of how HRM and leadership might affect teleworker well-being in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and provides detailed insights into the specific functionalities of HRM and leadership for employee well-being in this situation. More broadly, based on the idea that telework-oriented HRM and leadership were developed from the demands of the specific situation, Study 2 also provides guidance on how HRM and leadership may need to be adapted to be able to address specific threats to employee well-being in various unforeseen situations. These findings advance the theoretical understanding of the utility of the JD-R framework for identifying situation-specific resources that HRM and leaders need to provide to maintain employee well-being. In addition, Study 2 addresses research on the

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multidimensionality of employee well-being by providing insights into the relationships between different aspects of employee well-being and their individual relationships with HRM and leadership (Grant et al., 2007; Guerci et al., 2022). Thus, in summary, Study 2 contributes to the overall understanding of the relationship between HRM, leadership, and employee well-being in specific situational contexts.

Study 3 contributes to the third debate on the conceptualization of HRM and leadership in research on their relationship to employee well-being. By theoretically and statistically comparing the WBHRM with the HPWS, Study 3 answers the important question of how to conceptualize an HRM system in order to best predict employee well-being. This contributes to the question of whether a well-being-oriented HRM system, which is specifically designed to target employee well-being, is a better predictor of employee well-being than a performance-oriented HRM system. The theoretical and statistical comparison tests the well-being-oriented framework developed by Guest (2017), which he proposed as an alternative approach. By examining not only the models' explanatory, but also predictive power by generating in- and out-of-sample predictions within the PLS-SEM approach for both models, Study 3 addresses a major shortcoming of the majority of previous HRM literature (Sarstedt & Danks, 2022). Further, by examining the effects of individual HRM practices and dimensions within both systems within formative measurement models, Study 3 also adds valuable insights into which HRM practices in particular contribute the most to the systems' relationship with employee well-being. In addition, because the HPWS lacks well-being-oriented theory and practices, this analysis also examines the possible presence of omitted variable bias in the HPWS, challenging previous research on the impact of different HRM practices on employee well-being without accounting for well-being-specific practices. Finally, by linking both systems to employees' happiness and health well-being, Study 3 addresses a debate about possible trade-off effects between different well-being dimensions (Guerci et al., 2022). Thus, Study 3 provides new insights to the general discussion on the measurement of HRM systems, where there is a lack

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of clarity about which practices should be part of an HRM system and whether this decision should depend on the outcome of interest (see Boon et al. (2019)). In summary, Study 3 has fundamental implications for how research on the relationship between HRM and employee well-being should be conducted, providing a more nuanced understanding of how HRM relates to different aspects of employee well-being.

All three studies described above provide new and important insights and advance the understanding of the relationship between HRM, leadership, and employee well-being. In the following, I will discuss the overall contribution of this thesis within the larger field of research, as well as limitations and avenues for further research.

Due to the economic and ethical importance of employee well-being, the thesis addresses a topic that is becoming increasingly relevant for organizations and has therefore also led to calls for more research into the relationship between HRM, leadership and well-being (Guest, 2017; Inceoglu et al., 2018). All three studies highlight the importance of HRM and leadership for the well-being of employees and confirm previous findings on their fundamental resource- and exchange-based mechanisms of action. Overall, all analyses show positive relationships between different HRM systems, leadership styles, and several indicators of employees' happiness, health and social well-being.

However, all of the studies also question the universality of the effects of HRM and leadership on employee well-being by emphasizing the importance of context. Because HRM and leadership address similar outcomes through related mechanisms within an organizational environment that is itself dependent on a variety of economic and social factors, the context in which both operate is a key factor in their effectiveness. This applies to the interdependence of HRM and leadership, their effects under specific situational conditions, and the conceptual consideration of theoretically relevant HRM practices in predicting employee well-being. All three studies argue that the consideration of these potential influencing factors is crucial for a

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more nuanced understanding of the relationship between HRM, leadership, and employee well-being. Therewith, this thesis also questions previous research in both fields that describes universal effects of HRM and leadership on employee wellbeing without taking these contextual factors into account.

This addresses a current and increasingly important debate on the issue of endogeneity, which describes the risk of biased model estimates in the case of model misspecification, omitted paths and variables, or systematic error in the measurement of constructs (Hill et al., 2021). Since failure to account for the threat of endogeneity in nonexperimental designs raises serious questions about the validity of claims derived from these analyses, the importance of the topic has received increasing attention. The causes of endogeneity can be described in terms of omitted variable, simultaneity, measurement error, and selection (Hill et al., 2021). This thesis specifically addresses endogeneity in terms of omitted variable bias (OVB), which occurs when a variable not included in the model is related to the predictor and the criterion. In Study 1, HRM and leadership are variables that are usually highly correlated, and each is also related to employee well-being. In Study 2, the situational influence of teleworking during the COVID-19 pandemic affects how organizations implement HRM and leadership on the one hand, and the well-being of employees in this situation on the other, representing a macro example of OVB (Hill et al., 2021). In Study 3, well-being-oriented HRM practices are related to other HRM practices within the HRM system and are also theoretically relevant to employee well-being. Considering each of these theoretically important variables sheds new light on the true effects of HRM and leadership on employee well-being. Thus, while future research should also address the other sources of endogeneity, this thesis makes an overall contribution within this field of research.

Next, this thesis also addresses questions about the validity and applicability of theoretical HRM and leadership concepts and their measurement in general (Banks et al., 2018; Boon et

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al., 2019). Since the goal of research is to derive transferable implications for practice, it is important that the constructs studied are based on theoretical foundations that are able to represent organizational realities. This leads to the question of which HRM practices and which leadership behaviors are appropriate for predicting specific employee outcomes. In terms of HRM, even if there is broad agreement that HRM should be understood as a set of interrelated HRM practices within a system (Jiang, Lepak, Han, et al., 2012), it is still unclear how these HRM systems should be conceptualized. Despite for early calls for more conformity (Lepak et al., 2006), a review by Boon et al. (2019) shows that HRM concepts have instead become increasingly broad, with a lack of conceptual clarity and agreement on what practices should be included in an HRM system. This includes issues such as whether an HRM system should be general or targeted to a specific outcome, how to conceptualize complementarities or synergies between HRM practices, and how to measure these practices (Boon et al., 2019; Hauff, 2021). In terms of leadership, the issue of construct conceptualization is often discussed in the context of the proliferation of leadership styles. As with HRM, the growing number of leadership constructs has been accompanied by skepticism about their theoretical and empirical distinctiveness from existing approaches, and thus their value in advancing our understanding of leadership behavior and processes (Banks et al., 2018; Hoch et al., 2018; Shaffer et al., 2016). Furthermore, from a measurement perspective, researchers have criticized that instruments often fail to reliably represent the theoretical dimensionality of a leadership construct, indicating a disconnect between theory and empirical evidence (van Knippenberg & Sitkin, 2013).

All three studies address the question of how to conceptualize HRM and leadership for predicting employee well-being. First, Study 1 provides arguments for the importance of distinguishing between different theoretical conceptualizations of HRM and leadership when considering their joint effects. By finding level-specific differences in the unique values-based effects of HPWS and TL on employee well-being, Study 1 suggests that different combinations

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of HRM and leadership concepts may have quite different unique effects on employee well-being. Furthermore, by theorizing different forms of interactions between HRM and leadership based on alignments and differences in their values-based effects, it becomes clear that their conditional effects are also highly dependent on the conceptualizations of HRM and leadership and their respective underlying theoretical approaches. Thus, although Study 1 does not find strong support for interactions between HPWS and TL on employee well-being, it does propose different theoretical mechanisms of interaction that may be applicable to different combinations of HRM systems and leadership styles. Therefore, in order to advance the understanding of the joint effects of HRM and leadership, it is important to pay close attention to their theoretical conceptualization and how they are measured in order to advance the understanding of different forms of interaction between different approaches.

Study 2 shows that general conceptualizations of HRM and leadership may not be universally applicable, but depend on the specific situation in which they operate. Since employee well-being depends on the demands that employees experience, organizations need to adapt their actions to meet the needs of employees in specific situations. Thus, organizations may use very specific HRM and leadership approaches depending on situational influences. Research that examines the effect of general HRM and leadership approaches on employee well-being without considering the situational context runs the risk of producing flawed results that cannot be transferred to practice. By providing conceptualizations of telework-specific HRM and leadership approaches based on situational demands, Study 2 shows how situation-specific adaptations of HRM and leadership can target teleworker well-being in that situation. Thus, in line with the demand-induced strain compensation (DISC) model, Study 2 provides arguments for the theoretical conceptualization of HRM and leadership in specific situations, arguing that each situation may require an individualized consideration of HRM and leadership actions appropriate for that situation.

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Study 3 addresses the question of how to conceptualize an HRM system that is capable of predicting employee well-being. By conceptualizing a well-being-oriented HRM system based on outcome-specific theory, Study 3 provides evidence for the benefits of such a system for predicting employee well-being. In doing so, Study 3 addresses the debate as to whether a general or a targeted HRM system is more suitable for predicting a specific outcome (Boon et al., 2019), thereby advancing the understanding of the relationship between HRM and employee well-being in particular.

In addition, by using a formative-formative second-order measurement model within PLS-SEM, Studies 2 and 3 address questions of how to conceptualize combinations of HRM practices and leadership behaviors within a system or style. Thus, although the studies do not solve the problem of how to model interactive relationships at the indicator level, they do use conceptualizations of HRM and leadership that are able to provide insights into how different practices and behaviors contribute to the latent HRM and leadership constructs and their relationships with employee well-being.

Methodologically, the thesis builds on a broad data base and different analytical approaches. While Studies 2 and 3 collected data on employees from different companies, industries and socio-economic backgrounds, the data set of Study 1 consists of employees working at different locations within a single company. A total of 2.520 employees participated in the three studies. All of the studies included a time lag between the measurement of the independent and dependent measures in order to reduce the occurrence of transient occasion factors that lead to problems with common method variance (e.g. Podsakoff et al., 2003). Analytically, the procedures used in the studies allowed deep insights to be gained from the data. PLS-SEM was particularly useful for modeling formative higher-order constructs that best reflect the idea of HRM systems (Hauff, 2021). Compared to covariance-based SEM, it also allowed us to determine the importance of individual indicators within their constructs in predicting employee

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well-being, which is particularly useful for deriving implications for organizational practice. In Study 3, PLS-SEM enabled us to generate both, in-sample and out-of-sample predictions of our models, allowing us to examine not only the explanatory but also the predictive power of the models, which addresses a major shortcoming of most of the HRM literature (Sarstedt & Danks, 2022). The use of bootstrapping samples of regression coefficients and fit criteria allowed us to test the significance of their differences across models. Furthermore, by employing multilevel analysis on HRM and leadership in Study 1, we address the scarce research on the multilevel effects of both (Peccei & Van De Voorde, 2019a; Yammarino et al., 2005). By using bayes and maximum likelihood estimation within a latent variable deconstruction approach in Mplus we were able to separate the within- and between-group variance of the independent and dependent variables without introducing bias, which is an advantage over traditional multilevel modeling (Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2017). Finally, multilevel confirmatory factor analysis allowed us to assess the reliability of our measures without introducing bias (Geldhof et al., 2014).

However, this thesis does not claim to be able to conclusively resolve ongoing debates, but rather to contribute to their development. The studies leave room for individual future research not only within their respective topics, such as the joint effects of different combinations of HRM systems and leadership styles, the influence of different societal changes or the testing and comparison of different well-being-oriented HRM systems (see the future research sections of each study), but also in terms of further research across these debates. For example, examining the joint effects of a well-being-oriented HRM system in combination with a well-being-oriented leadership style in different situational contexts could provide new insights into the question of how HRM and leadership can influence employee well-being.

Furthermore, there is also a debate about whether contextual factors not only influence the effectiveness of HRM and leadership, but also have an impact on how they are implemented in the first place. In the field of HRM, for example, there is some evidence that HRM systems

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may be configurative rather than universal, depending on the economic value of the group of employees being addressed (Hauff et al., 2020). Also in terms of leadership, based on leader-member exchange theory, it has been found that leaders differentiate their behavior among their employees (e.g. Wu et al., 2010) and may even engage in different leadership behaviors at different times (Nielsen & Taris, 2019). As employee well-being is also likely to be treated differently depending on the group or individual characteristics, based on differences in economic importance or specific needs, future research should consider the differential effects of HRM and leadership in this regard.

Another emerging challenge for HRM and leadership is managing an increasingly diverse workforce in terms of age, skin color, gender, ethnic origin, religion and ideology, sexual orientation, and disability (Adams et al., 2020; Huang et al., 2019). While there is much research on the positive effects of diversity on organizational performance, such as increased creativity and innovation (Hundschell et al., 2022), there are negative effects of diversity on employee well-being as a result of discrimination, and lack of cohesion and integration (e.g. Boulet et al., 2023). In addition, depending on group affiliation, organizational demands may lead to very different threats to their well-being, for example as a result of the increased importance of job security among socially marginalized groups (Huang et al., 2019). Although there is little understanding of the underlying processes that lead to positive or negative outcomes of diversity, researchers have identified organizational inclusion and support as an important determinant of its effects (Jaiswal & Dyaram, 2020). Thus, although Study 3 considers diversity management as an important HRM practice for employee well-being, future research should further explore how HRM and leadership can work together to create inclusive working conditions that can enhance employee well-being in a diverse workforce.

Furthermore, all three studies theorize a direct relationship between HRM, leadership, and different dimensions of employee well-being. However, this neglects the presence of potential

intermediate variables that explain the relationship between these constructs. This reflects a general problem in both literatures, as the mechanisms through which leadership behaviors and HRM affect employee well-being have not been comprehensively studied and are not based on a commonly accepted conceptual framework (Inceoglu et al., 2018; Nielsen & Taris, 2019; Zhang et al., 2020). Moreover, in this thesis, HRM and leadership are considered to have both unique and interdependent effects on employee well-being. However, research has also found HRM (e.g. Demo et al., 2022; Para-González et al., 2018; Zhu et al., 2005) and leadership (e.g. Ismail et al., 2022) as mediators that explain each other's relationship with employee outcomes. Thus, future research should test mediating variables within the development of an overarching theoretical approach that specifically targets employee well-being.

Finally, because employee well-being can be understood not only as a stable characteristic that can be explained in terms of between-individual differences, but also as a dynamic state that fluctuates within an individual, researchers have called for more research on this within-individual variation (Ilies et al., 2015). Understanding intra-individual processes of employee well-being over time may provide scope for future research on the influence of HRM and leadership, which may have an as yet unexplored effect on these processes.

Despite the methodological qualities of the studies conducted, there are also limitations and avenues for future research from a methodological perspective. First, although all three studies are based on data from two different points in time, their designs are cross-sectional, which does not allow causal conclusions to be drawn. Because there is no consensus on how long it takes for HRM and leadership to have an effect on employee outcomes and how long this effect lasts, longitudinal studies and autoregressive models are needed to control for previous levels of organizational outcomes and to examine these long-term effects (Boon et al., 2019; Nielsen & Taris, 2019). In addition, randomized experiments or quasi-experiments could increase the validity of findings, allow for causal conclusions, and complement cross-sectional studies.

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Furthermore, all three studies use quantitative research methods that rely solely on employee self-report data. Although employees' perceptions are most likely to predict their own attitudinal and behavioral outcomes (Beijer et al., 2021), this carries the risk of common method variance. Multi-source data as well as qualitative research could be helpful in gaining even deeper insights into the functioning of HRM and leadership for employee well-being and complement empirical findings.

Overall, this thesis contributes to the understanding of the relationship between HRM, leadership and employee well-being in general by adding new insights to different research debates within the field. In particular, our research highlights the importance of context, and adds insights into the joint effects of HRM and leadership, situational influences, as well as conceptual issues. The thesis thus represents an important step and basis for further research within this field.

Table 1. List of all study variables

Study	Independent variables	Dependent variables	Sample size	Design/ analysis
Study 1	HPWS TL	Work engagement Stress Turnover intention Serving climate (team-level) Service performance climate (team-level)	70 employees in 99 teams	MCFA stepwise latent variable (robust ML-estimation in Mplus)
Study 2	Telework-oriented HRM Telework-oriented leadership	Happiness well-being (work engagement, job satisfaction) Social isolation (mediator) Psychological strain (mediator)	262 teleworkers	PLS-SEM
Study 3	HPWS WBHRM	Happiness well-being (affective commitment, job satisfaction) Health well-being (psychological strain, health status)	1510 employees	PLS-SEM

2 Study 1: HPWS and TL – A multilevel perspective

The relative and interdependent influence of a high-performance work system and transformational leadership on individual and team outcomes – A multilevel perspective

Niklas Günther, Mats Ehrnrooth, Sven Hauff

Under review in: *International Journal of Human Resource Management*

Abstract

High-performance work systems (HPWS) and transformational leadership (TL) are dominant fundamental explanations of organizational behavior. Although both are assumed to have a strong influence on the same employee outcomes, research has only recently begun to theorize and study their simultaneous independent and joint effects. We extend this research, first, by adopting a multilevel perspective and arguing that their relative main effects differ depending on the level of analysis. Second, we develop the conceptualization of the interdependencies of leadership and human resource management (HRM) more generally, and argue for level-specific interaction effects of HPWS and TL. To test our hypotheses, we use data collected in two waves from 730 employees working in 99 teams. The results indicate that HPWS is more important for individual employee outcomes, exemplified by engagement, stress and turnover intention, while TL is more important for team functioning, exemplified by serving climate and service performance climate. We found only weak support for their interaction effects. Our study provides important theoretical and practical insights about the multilevel complementarity of the main effects of HPWS and TL, and the need to sharpen the theoretical arguments for interaction effects of leadership and HRM that have dominated past joint research on them.

3 Study 2: HRM, leadership and teleworker well-being

The joint role of HRM and leadership for teleworker well-being:

An analysis during the COVID-19 pandemic

Niklas Günther, Sven Hauff, Philip Gubernator

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Abstract

The sudden and extensive implementation of teleworking in the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic has threatened employees' well-being. Based on the challenges that particularly threatened such well-being in the beginning of the pandemic, we identify sets of telework-specific HRM practices and leadership behaviors, and examine their joint relationships with teleworkers' happiness well-being in terms of work engagement and job satisfaction. Thus, we also consider the mediating roles of social isolation (as an indicator of *social* well-being) and psychological strain (as an indicator of *health* well-being). We also expect that HRM and leadership should interact and reinforce each other. Our analyses are based on data from German teleworkers at two consecutive points in time. Our findings reveal differentiated and complementary effects of telework-oriented HRM and leadership. In particular, we identified the provision of health care to contribute most to telework-oriented HRM's relationship with social isolation and happiness well-being. Telework-oriented leadership mainly affected teleworkers' happiness well-being via strain by ensuring communication and information exchanges between teleworkers.

4 Study 3: HPHRM vs. WBHRM – A comparative analysis

High-performance HRM vs. Well-being-oriented HRM – A comparative analysis of alternative HRM systems for employee well-being

Niklas Günther, Sven Hauff

Under review in: *Human Resource Management*

Abstract

In a critique of traditional concepts of human resource management (HRM), which are designed to enhance performance rather than well-being (i.e., high-performance work system, HPWS), scholars have proposed well-being focused HRM systems (WBHRM). However, so far it is unclear whether these WBHRM are indeed a better predictor of employee well-being than the traditional HPWS. Therefore, we tested the relationship between WBHRM and employees' happiness and health well-being and compared its predictive power with that of the HPWS. Our analyses are based on data from 1510 employees at two consecutive survey dates. Our results show positive relationships between both HRM systems and employee well-being, as well as a significant but small advantage of WBHRM in predicting employee well-being. However, we also found shifts in the relative contribution of HRM practices between both models. This suggests that by failing to account for well-being-specific HRM practices within the HPWS, explained variance in employee well-being is misattributed to other HRM practices within the HPWS, obscuring their true relationship with employee well-being.

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