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Submissions

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ARC 2020

The CIPD Applied Research Conference (ARC) is an annual meeting place for academic researchers and practitioners working in people management, employment policy and related fields. It holds a unique place in bringing together these two communities to hear about cutting edge research in HR and discuss how it can be applied in practice. ARC is an interdisciplinary conference that covers a wide range of aspects of people management, employment, learning and development and organisational development. In all research papers presented, we set out to discuss the practical application of insights to organisational life and labour markets.

This conference proceedings contains the accepted submissions for the ARC 2020 research posters and papers. The papers are grouped into 15 thematic streams and are presented in the order in which they appear in the programme.

ARC 2020 is hosted by the Dublin City University Business School, 22-23 January. The programme detail is available here. For more information on ARC, visit www.cipd.co.uk/arc

Poster presentations

Skills development from learner to practitioner

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Overview

As there is greater focus on work ready Graduates, this research looks to investigate if this is in fact the case. The latest edition of what do graduates do? reveals a graduate labour market in relatively good health. Of the 254,495 UK-domiciled first-degree graduates who responded to the survey: 74.3% of graduates were in employment six months after graduating, although not necessarily graduate employment. With the recent publication of the CIPD Profession map – the knowledge, skills and behaviours required by human resource (HR) professionals, there is an opportunity to revisit how work ready our graduates are and the role of CPD modules that are embedded into HRM programmers at two Scottish HEIs.

Research focus, rationale and questions

This research is particularly important as in an increasingly competitive and volatile graduate employment market it is vital that students are equipped with skills that enable them to amplify their potential for a successful career. The focus of this research is aimed at meeting the needs of both students and employers. It is anticipated that both parties have an important part to play in the research and its outcomes.

Despite clear consensus in government and HE about the importance of graduate employability, there remain considerable differences in both opinion and approach to developing students' skills. Most HE institutions provide careers services to support graduates in gaining employment, but such services in isolation may not address the more complex issue of enhancing employability (Harris, 2001). Employability is about much more than the acquisition of a first job and relates to a broader set of achievements that enhance students' capability to operate self- sufficiently within the labour market (Hillage and Pollard, 1998, p.2). There are clear connections here to lifelong learning and continued personal development.

This research aims to consider the benefits and outcomes of peppering this throughout the undergraduate curriculum or containing it within one module. A comparison will be drawn between the University of the West of Scotland and the University of Stirling's undergraduate Human Resource Management programmes and the impact of how and where graduate skills are embedded on Undergraduate HR programmes.

Research methods

There are three stages to the research:

Stage one is the collection of Secondary data, primarily from the Destinations of Leavers of Higher Education (or DLHE) Survey. This data set is extensive and having been running for 50 years it covers within the EU and those who receive any kind if qualification from public universities.

Stage two is the undertaking of primary data collection: Interviews. The research approach is an Inductive approach, with observations the starting point, in this case, recorded thematic interviews. Utilising this approach, the researchers are looking for patterns from the responses to the themes (Beiske, 2007). The qualitative data gathered will enable the topic to be explored and reported by examining the meanings of the social phenomenon.

Stage three is the undertaking of surveys with employers of HRM graduates. This 3-stage approach provides a triangulation of research findings.

Findings

In progress.

Practical implications

With the increasing need of work ready graduates across all sectors. There is a practical importance to the research across various stakeholders. There is firstly there are the current students who are working towards graduation and employment. There is a need to ensure they can attain skills, behaviours and knowledge which translates into being a successful practitioner. What is their perception of graduate and employability? Have they developed their own personal brand and what is? From there they can be classified as Alumina but there is a need to continue to track those practitioner skills. There is the University as stakeholder which must ensure that there are both formal and informal opportunities that students can engage with across all levels and provide mechanisms to apply these skills. Finally, there are the implications of employers, what role they should play in this, how relationships can be built between all three stakeholders. This research seeks to provide answers to this within the context of Human Resource Management.

Leveraging and sustaining global talent in the home country: Why/how do skilled migrants connect and contribute to business in their countries of origin?

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Overview

This conceptual research (poster) explores skilled migrants' enduring and new home-country business ties/networks through three theoretical lenses: Bourdieu's Theory of Practice (Bourdieu 1977; 1990), Intelligent career theory (Arthur et al. 1995) and structuration theory (Giddens 1984).

The authors present a framework developed from a detailed review of International Business / HRM literature outlining host/home country influences and home-country implications of skilled

migration. The emphasis is on the possible outcomes of (economic, social, cultural and symbolic) capital flows at micro, meso and macro levels in the home country.

Research focus, rationale and questions

The individual is at the centre of the study, reflecting, from an intelligent career capital theoretical perspective (Arthur et al. 1995), the knowing-why, how and whom of home-country ties/connections. Knowing-why refers to skilled migrants' unique socio-cultural roots/traits/values and individual motivations for pursuing an international career. Knowing-how and knowing-whom encompass migrants' skill deployment/mobilisation and the creation/maintenance of networks that tie skill migrants to their home countries. By focusing on individual skilled migrants' motivations/reasons for engaging in home-country relationships and their 'fluid' identities (their identification with host and home countries) this study can help provide a 'bigger picture' view of the skills/experiences/networks acquired by migrants and their value to institutions in both host and home countries.

The research (sub)questions are:

- Why do skilled migrants engage in transnational relationships (business/socio-economic) between their home and host countries (what encourages them to do so)?

This question aims to identify the factors motivating skilled migrants to foster/maintain connections with the home country. These factors may be structures promoting diasporic relationships and/or individual agency and motivations of the skilled migrant.

- How do skilled migrants mobilise their micro-level social & career capital flows (knowing whom/how) between home and host countries?

Giving an *Overview* of the richness and variety of ways skilled migrants are involved in diverse home-host country capital flows over time, and the outcomes of the same at micro, meso and macro levels.

- How do host-home country contextual factors (push/pull motivations, identity/identification, home country diaspora recognition, etc) affect skilled migrants' home/host country engagement over time and space?

Research methods

This is a conceptual paper following a pragmatic pluralist approach to the literature review - exploring opportunities for thematic connection between different disciplines (Watson 1997; Locke et al. 2008). This poster depicts scholarly interest in return migration, transnationalism, brain circulation (Saxenian 2002; Kerr et al. 2016; Chand 2019) and talent/capital flows (Carr et al. 2005; Khilji et al. 2015; Tung 2016) between host and home countries; highlighting the long-term strategic potential of skilled-migrants for international business and IHRM – leveraging migrants' international experience, connections/networks, and soft skills acquired by living abroad and interacting with other cultures (Crowley-Henry et al. 2018).

For this research we adopt a holistic view of capital, to include economic, social, cultural and symbolic capital (Bourdieu 1977; 1990). Capital flows comprise any resources, abilities, experiences, social networks/connections (physical and virtual) that skilled migrants deploy across international and organisational settings (Zikic 2015; Crowley-Henry et al. 2018).

Findings

Through migration, host countries receive a healthy influx of human talent, while home countries can lose out on these human resources that are essential for economic development (De Haas 2012; Clemens 2016; Chand 2019). The global mobility of skilled professionals, who help countries/institutions bridge demographic and skill gaps (Kerr et al. 2016), has generated a global market for talent (Khilji et al. 2015; Kerr et al. 2016; Tung 2016).

Instead of the traditional brain drain/brain gain dichotomy (Docquier and Lodigiani 2010; Docquier and Rapoport 2012) explored in the extant literature, the emphasis is recently on brain circulation (Saxenian 2002), transnationalism (Levitt and Schiller 2004; De Haas 2012; Kerr et al. 2016), return migration and capital/talent flows, albeit at a macro (Carr et al. 2005; Khilji et al. 2015) and meso (Tung 2016) levels. This 'win-win' view of brain circulation recognises the benefits the maintenance of home-country networks/relationships can have for the migrants and their host and home countries alike (Saxenian 2002; Chand 2019).

From a micro point of view, the usefulness – for home-country business relationships – of the transnational networks skilled migrants develop/maintain (Stoyanov et al. 2018; Chand 2019) and the global talent flows resulting from these connections (Carr et al. 2005; Kerr et al. 2016) has been an under-explored topic in the business/management literature.

We argue that exploring skilled migrants' home country ties/networks, the strength and the outcomes of the same will give us insights at individual (micro) level, organisational/institutional (meso) level and national/country/policy (macro) level. By being mobile, skilled migrants can pursue the advancement of their own careers while at the macro level helping 'host' countries bridge particular skills or demographic gaps. The utilisation of diaspora home-country networks to re-route skilled migrants' expertise/know-how back to home-country institutions – regardless of whether their return is for short periods of time or more permanent – contributes to making the skilled migrant experience a win-win situation.

Practical implications

The world of work is changing. Cross-functional and international expertise (being able to navigate cultural nuances), collaboration and a participative culture (engagement), self-management and flexibility are 'in-demand' skills/competencies nowadays. This new working environment is particularly suited to skilled migrants' life/work trajectory. Leveraging skilled migrants' (economic, cultural, social, symbolic) capital (Bourdieu 1977; Bourdieu 1990) flows – in other words, their 'migration-specific cultural capital' (Erel 2010) – is of value at both micro/individual (career strategy) and meso (SHRM/Global talent management) levels.

At a micro level, this study has implications for individual career strategy and career management regarding skilled migrants' motivations (knowing why) to establish/nurture/maintain transnational ties, and how these individuals deploy skills/capabilities (knowing how) and networks (knowing whom) to progress their careers in their host country while keeping (or not) their home country connections.

In practical terms, insights gained at individual level point to the promotion and development of new ways of working and organising at meso level. Institutions fill skill/demographic gaps by leveraging skilled migrants' networks (Tung, 2016), cementing ties and connections internationally. Further exploration is needed to be able to discern world-wide (macro) policy implications of skilled migration/brain circulation/talent flows, as highlighted by recent research on Irish (Humphries et al. 2018) and African (Chand 2019) healthcare professionals' migration/retention/return.

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The experience and role of entrepreneurial passion among tech founders during the founding stage of their venture

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Overview

The Tech and Digital sectors form an increasingly important part of the UK economy. One of the main factors determining the success of entrepreneurs is how they persevere and remain motivated during the early start-up phase on their venture, when challenges, setbacks and frustrations are common. James will outline the results of his completed field research and talk about his ongoing PhD research into how Tech entrepreneurs experience motivation and passion during the start-up stages of their venture, including how it helps them learn and achieve their goals.

Research focus, rationale and questions

One of the critical factors determining the success of entrepreneurs is how they persevere and remain motivated during the early start up and growth phase of their venture, when challenges, setbacks, failures and frustrations are common. A related area to entrepreneurial motivation is entrepreneurial passion (EP). Although there is a lack of agreement regarding how this construct should be defined, one of the best definitions is offered by Cardon et al. (2009). They define it as 'consciously accessible intense positive feelings experienced by engagement in entrepreneurial activities associated with roles that are meaningful and salient to the self-identity of the entrepreneur.' (p.517).

This has become deeply embedded in the folklore and practice of entrepreneurship but remains poorly researched. It is widely believed that successful entrepreneurs generally love the work they do; they feel joy in the process of creation.

The main research questions to be examined are:

1. How does the psychological experience (including motivation and energy) evolve over time for Tech entrepreneurs during the start-up stage of their venture?

2. What role do Tech entrepreneurs perceive their social networks (incl. friends, family, business partners, etc.) play in shaping their psychological journey during the start-up process?

3. In what ways do motivation and energy shape Tech entrepreneurs' personal accounts of their perseverance and success?

Research methods

The research is qualitative and longitudinal in nature, as there is no research of this nature that looks in-depth at the subjective experiences of entrepreneurs and the role motivation plays in their journey. With the help of Tech Nation, 30 early stage Tech and Digital entrepreneurs will be sourced to participate in the study. Three semi-structured interviews will be conducted with each over a year-long period.

Participants will also be asked to complete a survey-based journal to provide additional data about participants' experiences and reflections to supplement the interview data.

A strong emphasis will be placed on within case Narrative Analysis to explore unique and evolving subjective experiences over the year. To explore possible themes in the data across all participants, cross-case Template Analysis will be conducted, using NVivo software, after each round of interviews as well as at the end of the interview process on the whole data set.

Findings

My main PhD research is still in process, however, the research findings from my initial field research with 14 Tech entrepreneurs were as follows:

1. Digital entrepreneurs are diverse personalities and follow very different paths to grow their venture and achieve success. Although there are similar high points and challenges, the way entrepreneurs make sense of these, how they approach them and what they take from these experiences differs significantly. They also create value by bringing diverse strengths, skills and experiences to their work – there is no one template or set of traits for a successful digital entrepreneur.

2. Their measures of success differ markedly, although some common themes do arise around longer-term happiness and control over their destiny as well as seeing the business grow and thrive (measured primarily by profitable sales growth and customer feedback).

3. There are definitely some common themes in terms of qualities respondents believe are important for digital entrepreneurs, the most important of which are drive and determination, rapid learning and a real sense of passion for what they are doing. However, the digital entrepreneurs' success is shaped by a complex array of environmental, personal and family/social factors. Serendipity also appears to impact on the success of digital entrepreneurs, at least according to some experienced respondents.

Practical implications

Entrepreneurial enterprises in the Tech and Digital sectors form an increasingly important part of the UK economy. According to Tech Nation's 2018 report, arguably the most authoritative guide to the state of the UK's digital tech ecosystem, the tech digital sector is now worth nearly £184 billion to the UK economy, up from £170 billion in 2016. The sector also grew at a rate of 2.6 times faster than the rest of the economy based on turnover growth figures (Ismail, 2018). In terms of global competitiveness, it was ranked in the top three countries for total capital invested in digital tech companies from September 2016 to August 2017, behind only the US and China (Tech Nation, 2018). In summary, the Tech Digital sector is an increasingly important contributor to not only our economic development and prosperity, but also our societal growth and evolution.

It is therefore crucial to understand the factors underpinning the success of these entrepreneurs and the ventures they start, particularly the role that passion and motivation plays in the early stages of venture start-up and growth, together with psychological and external factors that enable and undermine their passion and motivation during this critical time.

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Closing the gap between firm business strategy and Human Resource management with job characteristics: A longitudinal multi-source study

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Overview

We investigate how human resource management (HRM) practices should be aligned with firm business strategies. Drawing upon the economic organization structure theory and job design theory, we propose job characteristics as the key mediating variable through which HRM practices should adapt to firm strategies. We surveyed top executives and human resource managers respectively within organizations twice over ten years and test our hypotheses resulting in a sample size of 187 organization respondents. The empirical results from the causal mediation analysis are largely consistent with the prediction. Implications of the results for theoretical and practical strategic HRM are addressed.

Research focus, rationale and questions

Correctly aligning HRM practices to various business strategies is the key to strategy implementation (e.g. Balkin & Gomez-Mejia, 1990; Becker & Huselid, 2006; Colbert, 2004; Delery & Doty, 1996; Lepak & Shaw, 2008; Snell & Dean, 1992; Wright, Dunford, & Snell, 2001; Wright, McMahan, & McWilliams, 1994). However, there is a sparse of research explaining the concrete strategic management process from the firm level strategies to the business function level of HRM practices (Podolsky, 2018). To address this lacuna, this study attempts to investigate the mediating mechanisms between firm strategies and the decisions of adopting various HRM practices. To this end, we respond to the call of integrating job design in the research of strategic HRM (Becker & Huselid, 2010) by proposing that two job characteristics, job complexity and task variety, as the key mediators. Our theoretical framework is based on two theories: economic organization structure theory (Ben-Ner, Montias, Neuberger, 1993) and job design theory (e.g., Hackman & Oldham, 1975, 1976; Loher, Noe, Moeller, Fitzgerald, 1985; Sadler-Smith, El-Kot, & Leat, 2003).

To test our proposed framework comprehensively, we include four typologies of business strategies: focus/differentiation/cost-leadership strategies (Porter, 1985), prospector (i.e. new products for new markets)/defender strategies (i.e. existing products for existing markets; Miles, Snow, Meyer, & Coleman, 1978), diversification strategies and internationalization strategies. These typologies were chosen because they are the most well studied strategies in the literature and commonly used in practice.

A Mediating Model of Firm Strategies and HRM Practices:

Business Strategies -> Job Characteristics -> HRM practices

Research methods

To test the mediating mechanism, we use a two-wave longitudinal dataset of Minnesota-based firms for which we obtained survey-based information about firm strategies from CEOs and diversification strategies from Dun & Bradstreet database, HRM practices from HR executives, pay information from the State of Minnesota, and job characteristics from HR executives.

Here we employed the approach of Causal Mediation Analysis proposed by Imai, Keele, and Tingley (2010), mainly because the dependent variables of the current study, HRM practices are binary. (Hicks & Tingley, 2011; Imai et al., 2010; Pearl, 2012).

To fit the panel data, the random effects probit model is used, because logit model is not compatible with the sensitivity analysis of the Causal Mediation Analysis (Imai et al., 2010) and fixed effects probit model will render biased estimates due to the incidental parameter problem thus we cannot use fixed effects logit models or fixed effect probit models.

Findings

Hypothesis 1a: Employers pursuing focus, differentiation and cost-leadership strategies provide employer-sponsored training in a decreasing order.

Hypothesis 1b: The positive relation between focus strategies and employer-sponsored training is mediated by job complexity.

Hypothesis 2a: Employers pursuing prospector strategies provide more employer-sponsored training than employers pursuing defender strategies.

Hypothesis 2b: The positive relation between prospector strategies and employer-sponsored training is mediated by the job complexity.

Hypotheses 1 and 2 were both supported.

Hypothesis 3: Diversification strategies are positively related to job rotation and skill-based pay. Task variety mediates this relationship.

Hypothesis 3 was partially supported.

Hypothesis 4: Internationalization strategies are positively related to job rotation and skill-based pay. Task variety mediates this relationship.

Hypothesis 4 concerns internationalization strategy's effects on job rotation via task variety. As shown in the table, the hypothesis is not supported.

Hypothesis 5a: Employers pursuing focus strategies, differentiation and cost-leadership strategies provide extra pay and monitor employee job satisfaction in a decreasing order.

Hypothesis 5b: The positive relations between focus strategies and pay level or job satisfaction monitoring are mediated by the job complexity.

Hypotheses 5 were mostly supported.

Hypothesis 6a: Employers pursuing prospector strategies provide higher pay level and monitor employee job satisfaction more than those pursing defender strategies.

Hypothesis 6b: The positive relation between prospector strategy and pay level or monitoring of employee job satisfaction is mediated by job complexity.

Hypotheses 6 were partially supported.

Practical implications

Theoretical Implications

The current study responds to the void of examination of the relationship between HRM practices and the implementation of the firm's strategy in the strategic human resource management literature (Becker & Huselid, 2006; Greer, Lusch, & Hitt, 2017).

The findings of the current study also complement the main thesis underlying the concept of 'strategic work modeling' proposed by Podolsky's conceptual framework (2018): the core tasks decided by firm strategies are the key to closing the gap between strategic management and HRM. We took further step and propose that the abstracted job characteristics of the core tasks influence the adoptions of various HRM practices.

Finally, the current study contributes to the literature of strategic management. Most of the strategic management literature has been focusing on strategy formulation instead of strategy implementation. But in practice, strategy implementation is the most difficult part (Barrows, 2014). The current study provides a way of understanding how to implement strategy from the firm level strategies to the level of core employees in terms of HRM practices.

Practical Implications

This study has a number of practical implications for HR professionals. First, for HR professionals to be strategic partners with high level executives, it requires the awareness of the organization's standing on various firm business strategy paradigms. The current study finds multiple types of strategy to be relevant: focus/differentiation/cost-leadership, prospector/defender, diversification strategies. Second, the key finding of the study suggests that for business strategies to be successfully implemented, HR managers' analyses of the characteristics of the core strategic activities are indispensable in aligning HRM practices to business strategies. In addition, the importance of analysing the influence of business strategies via job characteristics should come to mind when deciding HRM practice investment, especially for a few HRM practices examined in this study: employer-sponsored training, job rotation, skill-based pay, periodic employee attitude survey, and pay level. Third, the decision of different HRM practices should consider different job characteristics and the different types of business strategies. For example, the study finds that, for the HRM practices of skill-based pay and job rotation, task variety and diversification strategy is more relevant than job complexity and other types of strategies such as prospector/defender strategies.

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Informing the future workplace, preparing for the future workforce: Connecting work values and expectations with predicted changes in employment relationships

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Overview

Technology and future of work influences are forcing Human Resource (HR) professionals to tackle radical changes in how work is organized, resourced and performed. However, little is known about the future workforce who will be tasked with performing in this new context. This research will connect predicted changes in employment, with the work values and expectations of pre entrants to the labour market. Using the psychological contract, this study explores what HR professionals can offer and evaluates the expectations, likely behaviours and competencies of incoming workers. Literature reviewed in advance of a mixed methods data gathering exercise is presented.

Research focus, rationale and questions

Research Question: How do the work values and expectations of pre-experience labour market entrants reconcile with organisational requirements and obligations related to the future of work?

The future of work (FOW) and what that will look like remains an open question. Global statistics reveal transitions from traditional career paths, with 77 million freelancers confirmed in the United States, Europe and India (Matthews, 2018). An EU survey found that 80% of British and 67% of EU respondents had access to flexible working conditions. Amidst this upheaval, new specialisms, ways of working and priorities have emerged giving rise to important questions regarding what good quality work is and what forces are shaping employment relationships (CIPD, 2018). Studies suggest there is a need to integrate changing macro level employment models with meso level people management processes in order to address micro level shifts in generational career values, such as leisure and extrinsic values increasing while social and intrinsic values decrease (Deloitte, 2018; Twenge et al., 2010).

This study examines what labour market pre entrants and HR professionals desire from future employment relationships. Contextual and influencing forces such as predictive scenarios highlighted in practitioner and EU reports will be incorporated. By connecting what future workers value and expect with what current HR professionals experience and anticipate, a more informed representation of contemporary employment relationships may be painted. This will enable a more

realistic theorisation and operationalisation of future psychological contracts (PC). This poster highlights the importance of understanding potential changes presented by future PCs.

Research methods

1. Pilot Phase (Ongoing)

Objective: To inform the direction of the research

- Pilot survey to test scales

- Exploratory interviews with leading HR professionals and pre-entrants to the labour market

 2. Quantitative Phase (December 2019)

A survey of labour market pre entrants and HR professionals

Objective: To gather data on multi-stakeholder values and expectations

Potential survey scales:

- The Psychological Contract (Rousseau, 1990; 2000) - Pre entrants to the labour market and HR professionals

- Work Values Scale (Twenge et al., 2010) – Pre entrants to the labour market

 3. Qualitative Phase (April 2020)

Presentation of and reflection on survey results through in-depth interviews with HR professionals and labour market pre entrants respectively.

Objective: To gain deeper understanding of trends revealed in previous phases to construct a diverse, comparative yet integrated view of potential opportunities and challenges for HR professionals in contemporary and future employment relationships.

Findings

The PC is an attractive framework for reflecting the implicit unvoiced needs of the contemporary worker. It incorporates both the economic and social aspects of the employment experience including the acknowledgment that unspecified and implicit values and expectations exist alongside legal explicit agreements. Effective management of PCs involves identifying and enacting the HRM practices to optimise PC alignment and minimise breaches. Lack of insight into the PCs and attributes of future employment relationships leaves potential for serious misalignments. On the other hand, perceived fulfilment and alignment of PCs enhances work engagement, affective commitment, mental health, motivation (CIPD, 2018a) and reduces turnover intentions among employees (Parzefal & Hakanen, 2010).

This study will document empirically the expectations of labour market pre entrants and organisational actors in the FOW context. Indeed, potential mismatches may be present based on initial results of the pilot phase which surveyed the career anchors and work values of 400 undergraduate business students at Maynooth University in 2019 revealing that over 70% of participants ranked 'A high income' one of the most important factors in choosing a job. It also appears there is a correlation across survey scales that both extrinsic and intrinsic factors were top responses. Rather than a traditional cluster of either intrinsic or extrinsic motivations as evidenced in literature, both seem relatively important with implications for HR planning such as talent attraction, retention and rewards packages.

Further, a pilot focus group with ten key business leaders discussing the FOW, in 2018, centred on flexible working options and younger workers' desire for support and affirmation. Literature points to potential for misalignment, for example, communication and collaboration skills are deemed essential to the effective navigation of future workplaces while technology is radically changing how the future workforce communicates.

Practical implications

A functional and aligned PC is known to be central to effective working culture and to achieving the discretionary effort fundamental for optimal organisational performance. However, creating this alignment is dependent on both parties having a clear understanding of what the other party want to provide and what they desire in return. Currently, despite significant changes in the world of work and attributes of the next generation, very little is known about the (mis)alignment of expectations and desires of future parties to the employment relationship. These findings will yield invaluable insight for HR professionals.

In particular, this poster presentation will empower the HRM profession by:

Synthesizing and evaluating current literature on changes related to the employment context, such as, novel competencies and soft skills required, PC evolution and generational issues in the workplace.

The poster will also present the practical importance and implications of future data gathering by:

- Identifying the work values and expectations of the next generation of workers in the context of the FOW and specifically future employment relationships.

- Identifying anticipations and expectations of current leaders and HR managers for the FOW and specifically future employment relationships.

- Reconceptualising the PC to adapt to the constraints and opportunities presented by contemporary and future employment relationships.

- Providing the HRM community with a tool to better understand and optimise the future workforce and enhance the FOW for all.

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2A | Work flexibility and intensity

Still Working Harder

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Overview

High levels of work intensity have been shown to be deleterious to workers' health and well-being. We document and study the factors underlying the long period of work intensification that took place in Britain between 2001 and 2017, using data from the Skills and Employment Surveys. We find evidence of effort-biased technological and organisational change, as well as effects from learning requirements and from the growth of self-employment. There is little or no association between work intensification and falling union recognition. Overall, work intensification is consistent with declining job quality in Britain's workplaces over this period.

Research focus, rationale and questions

High levels of work intensity have been shown to be deleterious to workers' health and well-being.

Research methods

Statistical analysis of data collected by the authors in the Skills and Employment Surveys.

Findings

We find evidence of effort-biased technological and organisational change, as well as effects from learning requirements and from the growth of self-employment. There is little or no association between work intensification and falling union recognition. Overall, work intensification is consistent with declining job quality in Britain's workplaces over this period.

Practical implications

Getting people to work harder is inherently self-limiting as a growth strategy, unlike investing in their human capabilities, technology and capital. Yet, there is a long way to go before that state is reached: there is large variance in the work intensity index, and there remains a minority with quite low work intensity. Thus, there remains scope for continued work intensification in the coming years, and a corresponding need for policy-makers and researchers concerned with work-related health and well-being to monitor this important dimension of job quality.

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How flexible are Britain's workplaces? New survey data on the provision of flexible working arrangements and parental leave

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Overview

The provision of flexible working is often seen as an important route through which individuals may be encouraged to stay in work for longer. In this research, we explore the use of flexible working arrangements by older workers. We also consider partners' perceptions of job pressures, finding that older workers with greater influence over their working day were less likely to find their partner or family were fed up with the pressures of their job. In contrast, there was no significant association with the number of hours worked. Furthermore, this greater control appears particularly important for those individuals working beyond typical retirement age.

Research focus, rationale and questions

The policy environment around flexible working and support for working parents has changed rapidly in recent years. The right to request flexible working has been extended, and parents have been given the right to shared parental leave. A bill currently before Parliament would require employers to make all job roles flexible by default, unless there is a sound business case to the contrary. Alongside these developments, government and other stakeholders have exhorted employers to increase the provision of flexible working and parental leave through initiatives such as the Flexible Working Taskforce.

It has been apparent that many leading employers have, over the same period, sought to increase their provision of flexible working arrangements, e.g. in areas such as graduate recruitment. However, it is less apparent how the attitudes and practices of medium-sized and small employers (who make up the majority of all businesses) have been changing, and how widespread good practice is once one moves beyond the 'blue-chip' companies which dominate the headlines.

We will provide up-to-date evidence on employer practice in the areas of flexible working and parental leave, obtained via a nationally representative survey of British workplaces commissioned by the Department for Business Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS).

Research methods

The survey was conducted among a nationally-representative sample of around 2,500 workplaces with five or more employees in Great Britain. The population for the survey included all industry sectors and employers from both the private and public sectors. The sample was drawn from the Inter-Departmental Business Register (IDBR), which is held and maintained by the Office for National Statistics (ONS); the IDBR is widely acknowledged to be the most comprehensive register of businesses available. Interviews were conducted between September 2018 and February 2019 with the most senior manager at the workplace responsible for human resource issues.

Findings

We are unable to report findings from the survey at this stage, as our report to BEIS is awaiting publication in the Autumn of 2019. However, the report covers the following topics:

- Managers' attitudes to the provision of work-life balance practices and flexible working arrangements

- Managers' awareness of changes in employment rights around flexible working and parental leave

- Workplace provision and take-up of flexible working arrangements

- Provision of extra-statutory maternity and paternity benefits

- Take up of shared parental leave

- Provision of special paid leave for caring emergencies

- Provision of bereavement leave

- Managers' views on the impact of flexible working and parental leave provisions on employee motivation, commitment and productivity.

We will report on the current practice and attitudes of employers. Comparisons will also be made with the predecessor to the new survey (the 2013 Survey of Employers' Work-Life Balance Practices) in order to identify whether types of provision are becoming more or less common, and the extent to which employers' attitudes towards flexible working and parental leave are changing.

Practical implications

The survey findings are of practical importance and relevance for a number of reasons. First, they provide a range of stakeholders (policy makers, employers and employee representatives) with up-to-date information on employer practice and attitudes around flexible working and parental leave, enabling them to identify the prevalence of good practice and also to identify those areas of the business population where provision is lacking and further leverage may be needed. Second, they provide an indication of the direction and speed of travel in the provision of flexible working and parental leave, so that stakeholders can gauge whether the opportunities offered to employees in these areas are really changing as dramatically as some news stories might suggest. And third, they provide employers with a means of benchmarking their own provision against common practice in their industry sector, thereby helping them to shape their offer and remain competitive in the labour market.

Drivers of and barriers to flexible working and work-life balance in the building services sector: a mixed methods case study

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Overview

Changing workplace demographics such as more women, duel earning households, an aging workforce, the rise of one parent families, and digitally savvy millennials mean that contemporary workplaces have become more diverse. Moreover, societal, attitudinal and lifestyle trends continue to evolve, with flexible working practices and work-life balance high on political, organisational and individual agendas. This mixed-methods research draws on a case study of a large building services company to explore the extent of application of flexible working practices within complex organisational contexts where deep rooted and historically embedded workplace cultures often prevail. The study highlights implications for future practice.

Research focus, rationale and questions

While there is much rhetoric in the discourse surrounding flexible working and work-life balance, there is also evidence that investing in flexible working practices can reduce absenteeism (Menezes and Kelliher, 2011) and enhance recruitment and retention practices. However, the implementation of flexible working often fails to address attitudinal barriers often ensconced in deep-rooted and historic cultural norms, within traditionally male dominated organisations (Lewis & Roper, 2009). In particular, leaders' and managers' perceptions and attitudes are often viewed as being key inhibitors of flexible working (CIPD, 2016). The development of a flexible working culture therefore requires buy in from the top to address this challenge (Putnam et al., 2014), with mutual

trust arguably being the pillar of its success (Galea et al., 2014). Without considering these factors, organisations risk being exposed to unintended consequences including the flexibility stigma, which is described as the negative impact of going against the 'ideal-worker' culture (Cech and Blair-Loy, 2014, p.87). The ideal worker is a traditional and gendered view of work and home where the worker's life centres on his work while someone else takes care of his home and personal needs (Williams et al., 2013). These attitudes often continue to endure within male dominated industries that foster traditional working practices.

The purpose of this project was to examine, from employer and employee perspectives, the flexible working needs and aspirations, alongside the attitudinal and cultural barriers present within a large and well-established building services company.

Research methods

A mixed-methods case study was utilised comprising three distinct phases. First, phase 1 comprised a documentary analysis of organisational and archival data such as reviewing employee exit questionnaires, absence data and flexible working policies and procedures. Next, phase 2 comprised administration of a quantitative survey to all office-based employees, with 158 participants completing this in full (50.1% response rate). Its purpose was to test key a priori themes from an earlier literature review. Survey data also captured three sample frames to be used within phase 3. Finally, phase 3 comprised six in-depth, on-to-one interviews with 2 flexible workers, 2 non-flexible workers and 2 managers of flexible workers. The purpose of phase 3 was to deepen our understanding of emergent themes through exploring individuals' own lived experiences (Collis and Hussey, 2014). Descriptive statistics were analysed using SPSS and interview data were analysed thematically, following the guidance of Braun and Clarke (2006).

Findings

Exit survey data from 39 leavers revealed that the most common reasons for leaving included: desire for better work-life balance, family/personal reasons, and better working hours. Interview participants also signalled that they would consider leaving for a competitor, even compromise on salary, if the same job was offered with flexibility. Current lack of flexibility was signalled as an inhibiting factor. For example, 61 survey respondents reported having taken sick days to deal with family situations, and interview participants within the 'non-flexible worker' category referred to a 'flexibility stigma' (Williams et al., 2013), expressing a preference to mask emergency family situations with sickness absence. Recruiting managers also commented on having lost good candidates through the inability to offer flexibility, commenting that the 8am start, in particular, had been a deterrent to candidates with childcare responsibilities.

Overall, while the notion of flexible working was viewed positively, there was evidence of an enduring flexibility stigma. Comparisons were drawn between working flexibly and perceptions of job commitment. Interviewees described the workplace culture as an '8-5 culture' with a 'live to work' philosophy, which holds strong ties with the 'ideal worker' concept (Cech and Blair-Loy, 2014, p.87). Against a backdrop of changing workforce demographics and diversity, the findings reinforce the growing business case for flexible working practices (Menezes and Kelliher, 2011), while also highlighting the cultural challenge associated with its implementation. They point to the need for senior leadership and line management commitment to enable flexible working to be viewed by employees as a realistic option.

Practical implications

Our findings indicate that flexible working practices have potential to increase diversity and leverage competitive advantage when recruiting and retaining talent within a traditionally male dominated industry bound by strong cultural norms. By enabling employees to more effectively balance work and home commitments, the common stressors, which often trigger longer term absence, can be mitigated. However, the findings suggest that organisations which have deep rooted, traditional ideas of working cannot simply re-design the workplace and offer flexible

working practices without some degree of attitudinal and cultural transformation. It is imperative, therefore, that strategic buy-in is achieved from the top and that training is given to managers before any trials or roll outs are considered. Line managers, in particular, have a key role to play in both enabling a culture of flexibility, and in helping to reduce the stigma associated with flexible working (Williams et al., 2013). The HR function also has a central role to play in enabling and promoting flexible working and in the sustainable implementation of flexible working policy and practices. In developing a supportive culture, organisations may consider embarking upon a positive culture campaign, which could include, for example, internal champions, case studies and positive communication surrounding flexible working and work-life balance, aimed at breaking down historic, traditional and deep-rooted barriers.

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2B | Gender Equality

Are women doing it for themselves? Gender segregation and the gender wage gap

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Overview

We contribute to the literature on gender segregation and the gender wage gap (GWG) using linked employer-employee data for Britain. We find that the size of the GWG among non-managerial employees within a workplace declines with the increasing share of women in managerial positions. In workplaces where most managers are female, the GWG virtually disappears. We present further evidence indicating that one mechanism through which female managers alter the distribution of rewards is via the operation of discretionary performance-pay schemes. Our findings are consistent with a scenario in which female managers reallocate limited resources from men to women.

Research focus, rationale and questions

Women now outperform men in educational attainment and have largely closed the gap in labour market experience, yet a GWG persists across much of the developed world. As policy makers and firms search for effective solutions, studies have examined the possible 'trickle down' effects of growing female representation at company board level, sometimes stimulated by quotas (e.g. Bertrand et al, 2014). However, few studies have examined the effect of female representation at lower levels of management.

There are competing expectations of how this might affect the GWG within firms. One the one hand, an increasing representation of women among workplace decision-makers may help to challenge direct gender-based discrimination; in addition, it may change gender norms at the workplace, thereby reducing indirect discrimination in wage setting, promotions or access to flexible work schedules. In either case, an increasing share of female managers can be expected to have positive spill-overs, reducing the GWG among female non-managers. On the other hand, there may be negative spill-overs if those women who achieve career success in a male-dominated environment block other women from advancing (the 'queen bee' syndrome - Staines et al, 1974) or are less favourable judges of women's work (Bagues and Esteve-Volart, 2010).

Research methods

We use nationally representative linked employer-employee data for Britain in 2004 and 2011 in the Workplace Employment Relations Surveys (WERS) (DBIS, 2015). We describe the gender share in workplaces and occupations within those workplaces then estimate their association with the size of the GWG by interacting those female share variables with a gender dummy. We estimate ordinary least squares (OLS) regressions for log hourly wages, supplemented by workplace fixed effects models that net out unobserved fixed traits of workplaces that might be linked to both gender composition and worker wages. We supplement these cross-sectional analyses with a panel analysis for a random subsample of workplaces in the 2004 survey to show that within workplace change in gender composition also is linked to the change in the size of the GWG. We also use an instrumental variables approach to demonstrate that the association between the share of female managers and the GWG is plausibly causal.

Findings

Using linked employer-employee data for Britain in 2004 and 2011 which, when weighted, is nationally representative of all employees in workplaces with 5 or more employees, we estimate a raw GWG of around 20%. We show that the GWG falls markedly as the share of female managers' rises, an effect that was more pronounced in 2011 than it was in 2004. Indeed, in workplaces where the vast majority of managers are female the GWG virtually disappears.

Our results are robust to the inclusion of workplace fixed effects and persist in first-difference models (both of which are designed to control for unobserved workplace characteristics). The results are also robust to the use of an instrumental variables strategy designed to control for possible endogeneity (reverse causality) between the share of female managers and workplace wages.

We present further evidence indicating that one mechanism through which female managers alter the size of the GWG is via the operation of discretionary performance-pay schemes. The share of female managers at the workplace has little bearing on wages in the absence of performance-related pay. However, when performance pay schemes operate, an increasing share of female managers is associated with decreasing male wages and increasing female wages. These findings are consistent with a scenario in which managers use local discretion over pay to reallocate limited resources in favour of employees of the same sex.

Practical implications

These findings suggest a stronger presence of women in managerial positions can help tackle the GWG. They further indicate that one way in which it may do so is by altering the processes or norms that govern individualized pay awards. The findings are thus of relevance to those seeking to identify potential levers to reduce the GWG at the firm level, suggesting that actions to further weaken the glass ceiling will have positive spill-overs for those women lower down the occupational hierarchy. Policy makers and other actors may then be tempted to conclude that one way to close the GWG is to enforce increases in the share female in managerial roles through quotas. But this may not follow. If share female effects are heterogeneous across workplaces we might find that the share female in management might have different effects for those with currently low shares. Certainly, the current empirical literature on board-level quotas cautions against simple policy responses since the studies find few positive spill-overs on the work experiences of other women within the firm (Maida and Weber, 2019). Attention should therefore also be placed on reducing the opportunities for unequal treatment that may be presented when local managers have discretion over the distribution of rewards via individual performance pay schemes.

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The tech sector in the UK: on a road to greater inequality?

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Rory Donnelly

Overview

Only 17% of IT professionals in the UK are female and despite a series of initiatives the profession is still faced with a diminishing number of female candidates in its supply pipeline. Labour market changes brought about by the so-called 'fourth industrial revolution' may mean that females are not only locked out of a key source of highly paid tech work, but that their access to other jobs will deteriorate as increasing proportion of future jobs will require technical skills and knowledge (World Economic Forum, 2016). We draw on empirical data from 57 female IT professionals to examine the prospects for improving female representation in tech jobs and what HRM can do.

Research focus, rationale and questions

Despite a series of liberal initiatives (Jewson and Mason, 1986) women's representation in tech jobs would appear to be ebbing away at each stage of the computing pipeline (Kemp et al, 2018; Tech Partnership, 2016). If women's representation does not increase in the near future, the likelihood is that men's domination of the sector will become intractable. Consequently, IT is at a crucial juncture with respect to the aim of generating business benefits from diversity and delivering gender equality (Fox, 2016; McCallum, 2017).

Women's lack of representation in technology is also likely to have social, economic and political consequences. Economists argue that many jobs may become lost to automation and the value of technical skills and abilities will continues to increase (Frey and Osborne, 2017; Phan et al, 2017).

It is important to enrich and enhance our understanding of this issue by taking account of the micro-level views of female tech employees themselves on the reasons for women's underrepresentation and how this can be tackled. Thus, this paper examines the position of women in IT and the views of female IT professionals on how to redress horizontal and vertical imbalances. We examine how the women experience their careers as technically-skilled female IT professionals and what they feel are the prospects for gender equality within their field. We take account of the way in which their position as females within a heavily male-dominated industry impacts on their ability to make change.

Research methods

Original primary data were collected through in-depth interviews with 58 female tech employees working for a range of employers. The women were technically skilled and most of them worked or had worked in heavily male dominated teams. The interviews focused on how the women experienced the sector as female employees and their views on how female representation could be improved. The interviews were recorded and transcribed. The data were then uploaded into Nvivo and analysed using a coding framework developed for the study. The coded text was progressively analysed and used to develop insights into the extent to which the women considered gender parity could be improved and how the relational power between men and women within tech roles influences the likely outcomes.

Findings

It is not only the lack of women in the industry that is impacting on gender equality, but also the way in which the women are being subsumed within the industry and encouraged into less technical hybrid roles. In addition, their lack of representation means that the structural and relational power between males and females within the industry is unlikely to be effectively tackled by this current generation of female IT professionals.

The changes the women felt able to make were relatively marginal as their sheer lack of numbers (and lack of females in the occupational pipeline) weakened their positions as they advocated for their companies to take on more gender equality initiatives and actions. Many of the women learned to take individualised strategies and actions to navigate their own careers in male-dominated IT but found it more difficult to have any widespread impact on the gender norms and expectations of their workplaces more generally.

The women were actively involved in initiatives to encourage more women into the industry but felt that there was a general lack of engagement between the profession and young women at key stages when they were forming their ideas about careers. They felt that more needed to be done to make the significance and importance of IT work clearer to address future societal challenges. Some women, especially those who had been in the industry for some time, recognised the issue as worsening rather than improving, as IT continued to consolidate its image as a male profession. More work is needed from government and HR practitioners to encourage more females into IT to maintain female employment prospects now and in the forthcoming fourth industrial revolution.

Practical implications

Existing findings combined with the original insight offered by this research point to the possibility that male dominance of IT in the UK has tipped beyond a level that can be substantively recovered. 'Waves of optimism' and the launch of fresh initiatives set within a liberal laissez faire context have failed to deliver substantive progress (Roan and Whitehouse, 2007). Women working within the industry lack the power and the influence to make substantive change and to help to create a profession that genuinely welcomes women and values female contributors as equals. The lack of females is taken by many of their male colleagues as evidence that the job is less suitable for women and so even those who excel in IT roles are underestimated or considered anomalies.

We highlight the need for greater rebalancing within a profession whose import to the economy and role as a key source of high paying jobs will continue to grow. Greater HRM interventions and incentives are required to encourage more women into the industry to achieve the critical mass needed for female technical workers to become more of a norm. Governments intervention is required to facilitate female entry into IT in significant numbers as it is only through mass entry in the industry can gender norms dictating the place of female IT workers and placing limits on their achievements be tackled so that the IT profession becomes a more hospitable place for female employees.

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Women in…: discussing the contribution of internal and external women's networks to equality in engineering

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Overview

Currently in the UK there are at least 23 external women's networks for engineers while, although there are no precise statistics, most engineering companies tend to have an internal women's network. Drawing upon 48 semi-structured interviews with female engineers across sectors and seniority levels, this study aims at offering a better understanding of how women's networks, internal and external, contribute to equality in engineering. The results indicate that these networks, through building a sense of solidarity, encourage women engineers to challenge dominant discourses and seek and employ different and more inclusive ways of being an engineer/ leading in engineering.

Research focus, rationale and questions

Women's networks, internal (i.e. in-company) and external (i.e. inter-organisational), are formally set up and publicly visible and are argued to offer both instrumental and psychosocial support, especially for women in male-dominated sectors (Durbin, 2015), such as engineering. Women's networks tend to offer a 'safe space' for sharing common challenges and experiences, personal and professional training tailored for the needs of the women involved, 'inspirational' talks as well as access to role models and mentoring schemes (Durbin, 2015; Singh, et al., 2006).

Nevertheless, the value of women's networks has been repeatedly contested as they appear to lack power due to their formality (Durbin, 2015) and the fact that they are not always taken seriously (Singh et al., 2006). Internal women's networks are argued that they tend to focus on implementing strategies which address only the symptoms of discrimination (e.g. individual career development, isolation), instead of the roots of the problem (Dennissen et al., 2018; Pini, Brown and Ryan, 2004) as they do not truly challenge the status quo and patriarchy (Bierema, 2005).

However, there is no empirical study in the author's knowledge, exploring if, and if yes how, internal and external women's networks contribute to gender equality in engineering. More specifically, the paper, adopting a poststructuralist feminist (Weedon, 1997) lens, will explore the reasons why women engineers participate in or leave women's networks and whether these networks contribute towards gender equality in the industry (and if yes how).

Research methods

Taking into consideration that 'individuals' experiences of work are subjective' (Tomlinson, 2007, p. 287) a qualitative approach was deemed the most appropriate. Specifically, the author conducted semi-structured interviews. The participants (48 in total) were all active in external and internal networks (if their company had one). The majority of women worked in the UK (44) (1 in the U.S.A. and 2 in Australia) and specifically in Construction (31) although other industries were represented (4 in Gas & Oil, 2 in the Army, 1 in Nuclear, 3 in Aviation, 3 in Electronic/Software engineering etc.). In terms of ethnicity, the majority of the participants were White (44) and only 4 were from

BME background and in terms of seniority, there were 10 early career, 24 mid-career, 12 senior (up to Directors). The interviews were analysed thematically and the coding followed loosely grounded theory (Corbin and Strauss, 2008).

Findings

In contrast to the prevailing 'neoliberal' feminism which perceives the solution to gender inequality as dependent on individual action (Rottenberg, 2018), was that women's networks, both internal and external, encouraged a sense of affective solidarity (Hemmings, 2002). The female engineers interviewed said that through sharing common experiences and even their frustration and anger were motivated to help each other and change the dominant professional culture and models of leadership in engineering. Through their discussions with other women they realized that 'things can be done differently' and collectively tried to challenge the dominant discourse and model of leadership in engineering. Also, both types of women's networks appeared to contribute to blocking the 'leaky pipeline', which in itself is a step towards equality. This was done again through a feeling of 'sisterhood' and through exposure to role models that raised aspirations, encouraged a 'can do' attitude, and through fostering a feeling of belonging. This sense of solidarity was further enhanced by the fact that as opposed to other studies (e.g. Durbin, 2015), senior women participated in internal and external networks to act as role models and help younger women. In regards to internal networks specifically, contrary to Dennissen et al.'s (2018) study (which examined a variety of internal diversity networks), female engineers participated mostly for organizational change/ activism and not for individual career progression. All the participants stated that it was important for them to build a community and address inequality within their organization and under-representation of women in engineering in the industry.

Practical implications

Implications for research

More research, potentially quantitative, should be conducted in order to examine in further depth the impact of women's networks on organisational policies and practice. Also, it would be interesting to do a comparative study between different professions (e.g. finance and engineering) in order to examine the impact of the professional culture on how the discourse and behaviours are shaped within women's networks.

Implications for practice

What emerged through the interviews was that women felt that women's networks were not taken seriously by colleagues, senior management and their organisations. Also, they often felt let down by the HR as their requests were rarely met and quite often HR practitioners were more worried not to 'upset' the male majority rather than address inequality. Therefore, the implications for HR practitioners are quite straightforward: HR should support and respond to the requests of internal women's networks. Also, many women complained that their organisations were either discarding the importance of or not even financing the attendance of 'women in…' events as they considered them as less important. However, taking into consideration the impact of these networks on retention and even attraction of talent, HR practitioners could help raising awareness of the benefits of these events and encourage male engineers to attend and support them. Last but not least, all the women highlighted the need to change the way we view engineering and leadership in engineering. This finding has clear implications for recruitment strategies but most importantly for revisiting the criteria for career progression.

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2C | Employee involvement and voice

Choosing development in chaos: practices for raising job satisfaction

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Overview

The current rate of change is perhaps unprecedented. Shifting national boundaries, enormous mergers and acquisitions, in addition to an uncertain economy likely the individual feeling less than capable of crafting their own path through the change. The modern worker must be equipped to not only survive but thrive in the chaos. Dynamic, globally-equipped, and adaptive employees are critical in the current context. This study compared 2870 individuals across 40 nations to identify the practices they used and their relationship to job satisfaction. The authors conclude with practical steps for raising job satisfaction across diverse global regions.

Research focus, rationale and questions

This study explored the extent to which the independent variable of Career Development Practices (i.e., reflect and plan, build your network, build your brand, stretch yourself, know yourself, adapt to change) help employees agentically be more satisfied in their jobs. The dependent variable by which success was inferred was job satisfaction.   Organizational support was modeled as moderating the relationship between Career Development Practices (CDPs) and job satisfaction. Thus, the purpose of this study was to investigate the following hypotheses.

Hypothesis 1: There will be a significant, positive relationship between the CDPs (individually and as a whole) and job satisfaction.

Hypothesis 2: The CDPs that are the best predictors of job satisfaction will vary by global region.

Research methods

This study included de-identified archival data to investigate the extent of the predictive relationship between the independent variable of CDPs and the dependent variable of job satisfaction as well as the extent to which organizational support moderated this relationship. Results are further contrasted by global region.

A career development survey called the CareerPulse™ was completed by 2870 respondents from 73 different nations and 13 different client organizations of Career Innovation (CI). This tool was a part of CI's larger Career Portal on-line platform (The Career Innovation Company, 2016). The average age was 39 and 47% were female. Job positions included senior leaders (16%), managers (23%), and individual contributors (60%). Upon completion of the CareerPulse™ inventory, participants were given feedback on their survey results. This included information regarding their strengths, areas for growth, and practical steps for developing their skills in each of the career adaptive practice areas.

Findings

The analyses followed several steps. First, the data was cleaned and tested for assumptions. Second, an EFA was conducted to verify the factor structure of the 6 CDPs. Modification was needed when different dimensions emerged, the new factors were used for subsequent analyses. Third, the relationship between CDPs and job satisfaction was tested. Lastly, the responses were grouped by global region. From these groupings, a relative weights analysis was performed to measure the most salient CDPs in region-specific groupings.

In regards to the first hypothesis, a strong relationship was proposed between the CDPs and job satisfaction, but the extent of that effect was greater than anticipated ($R2 = .46$). In practical terms, this means almost half of the variance in job satisfaction can be explained with controllable (Bandura, 2006), learnable (Dweck, 2006) behaviours.

Second, each global region was tested separately using Relative Weights Analysis. The first anomaly among these comparisons was in China and the Middle East's higher RWA score in planning for development. The second anomaly uncovered out was found in the Caribbean's surprisingly low score in the same area of planning for development. As the global regions were grouped with consideration for Hofstede's (2010) cultural dimensions, the researcher returned to this framework to find an explanation in the described anomalies.

Practical implications

The purpose of this this study was to investigate the impact of personal agency and self-regulation, operationalized as CDPs, on job satisfaction as moderated by organizational support and to compare those findings across global regions. The results of this investigation indicate that CDPs do in fact account for a significant and meaningful variance in job satisfaction. The researcher did find global differences in the potency of the CDPs.

A final analysis was conducted to identify the specific items across all of the scales that were most strongly related to career satisfaction. For individuals, the top actions included taking time to recharge, finding people who will challenge one to think in new ways, and surrounding oneself with people who can provide relational support. For organizations, the top actions included helping employees to see future career opportunities within the organization, ensuring that managers take time to talk to employees about their careers, and providing feedback to employees about potential new roles in the company.

In conclusion, this study enriches the existing literature by: (a) introducing a push in the job satisfaction conversation towards personal agency in the workplace, (b) suggesting the role of organizational support in regard to job satisfaction may not play as strong a role as originally thought, and (c) uncovering global differences in the potency of agentic practices. Perhaps, developmental power lies in the hands of the individual to navigate the changing world.

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2D | Critical Thinking and Evidence in HR practice

How do HR analytics practitioners talk about their roles? Analysing analytics-based roles through discourse

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Overview

Discourses about the transformational impact of human resource analytics permeate industry and academic conversations based on the assertion that technological innovations afford organisations with an unprecedented ability to capture, generate and deploy analytically informed insights when making decisions about their workforce (e.g. Bock, 2015; Green, 2017; Guenole et al., 2017). In this paper, we contribute to a new and significant area of study by highlighting the complexity and ambiguity encompassing the value of analytics and analytics-based roles. Our findings, derived from interviews with analytics practitioners, draw attention to the different ways that analytics are used to inform HR and business-related decisions.

Research focus, rationale and questions

HR analytics is widely described as a transformative 'must have' capability (Angrave et al., 2016). Yet a recent journal special issue on this topic was on the theme of 'why aren't we there yet' capturing the widespread perception that HR is limited in its use of analytics, and that HR analytics activities focus on basic reporting of data rather than using predictive analytics for strategic, value

adding purposes (Minbaeva, 2017). However, there is limited evidence on this subject beyond a normative literature seeking to explain how HR analytics should be done. In this context, the key contribution of this paper to give voice to the experiences of HR analytics practitioners. Our study asks the question how do HR Analytics practitioners describe their role within the context of their organisation?

Research methods

Semi-structured interviews ranging from 20 minutes to an hour in length were carried out with 20 HR analytics (HRA) practitioners, predominantly HR analytics functional leaders, who were sampled purposively using principles of theoretical sampling from a wider group of HR analytics practitioners who participated in a survey of HR analytics maturity conducted by a management consultancy. Participants came from a broad range of organisations in a diverse group of industries. The majority of participants were UK based, but some participants were located in mainland Europe and the USA. Data were analysed drawing on a discourse analysis-based methodology (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997).

Findings

The process of data analysis identified three key subject positions: (1) The use of HR-based analytics within the HR function (HR/HR); (2) use of HR-analytics for HR-based projects (HR/Projects); and (3) the use of Analytics to focus on the contribution of people factors to business performance (HR/business). HRA practitioners were mainly focused on basic reporting activities. The interesting question given the dominant normative discourse around HR analytics, which stresses the importance of achieving strategic impact and using advanced data science techniques is why HR/HR HRAs were in this subject position. Many interview subjects demonstrated and awareness of an attempts to follow the strictures of the normative discourse, but they struggled to get strategic clarity about what they should be focusing on to add value to the business from senior stakeholders. They also reported limited use of the metrics, dashboards and reporting tools that they produced from the wider HR community.

Practical implications

It is very difficult for HR analytics functions to progress without clear strategic direction from senior stakeholders. Outside of the technology and finance industries, such strategic clarity is rare. Therefore, organisations looking to develop HR analytics capabilities need leadership that can provide such strategic clarity. Further research is needed into how and why firms acquire the strategic capabilities that allow them to be data driven in their approach to people management.

HR professionals make only limited use of HR analytics tools. This has been framed as a failing on the part of the HR profession (Angrave et al., 2016), but while this is certainly true to some extent, it is also not clear whether the tools, metrics and methods based on HRIS and other HR tech products really address the analytical needs and activities of HR professionals and people managers. Research into the decisions HR professionals make in the course of their jobs and the ways in which they go about making decisions could provide insight into how HR analytics can be developed more effectively.

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2E | Professionalism and Employee Relations

The impact of The General Data Protection Regulation on the role of Human Resources

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Overview

Previous literature emphasises the negative effects of The General Data Protection Regulation on the human resources role and influence (Leech, 2017; Ismail, 2017; HR Grapevine, 2017; Bridgewater 2017) but there was no empirical evidence to substantiate this claim, as it has only recently been implemented (May 2018). This study aimed to explore whether the need for the implementation of GDPR may represent an opportunity to strengthen the HR role and for HR to become a more strategic partner.

Research focus, rationale and questions

In recent years, data analytics has empowered HR professionals to become key strategic partners within organisations. These advanced tools allow easy data access and transfer of information to co-ordinate resource planning and allocation of strategic resources. With this power, however, comes greater responsibility, and a company's HR team plays an important role in ensuring that data is held in a secure and confidential manner (Biro, 2016) as, 'the single biggest draw for the cybercriminal is personal data' (Jolly, 2017 n.p). On review of the literature it was found that focus on GDPR implementation is mainly from an IT/computer systems perspective, with the most important aspect of compliance being 'access control' (Tankard, 2016; Koops & Leenes, 2014). Limited research has been conducted on the impact of GDPR on the role of HR. That which has focuses on the challenges of increased workload, financial cost and the risk of heavy organisational fines for non-compliance (Ismail, 2017; HR Grapevine, 2017; RTE, 2018).

This poses the following research question.

What is the impact of the GDPR on the role of Human Resource (HR) professionals?

1. To identify key changes in the existing policies, procedures and processes required to comply with GDPR regulations.
2. To assess whether those changes have a positive impact and/or negative impact on the role and influence of HR managers.
3. To determine under which conditions GDPR implementation is more likely to have a positive effect on HR.

Research methods

As the research was exploratory in nature this study employed a qualitative approach to meet the study's objectives. The primary method for collecting qualitative data was through the conduction of semi-structured interviews. The objective of this approach was to gain a deep understanding of the interviewees' perspectives. An interview schedule was designed in advance which focused on

the themes explored in the literature review and the research objectives. In an effort to avoid closed answers (Saunders et al., 2009), a pilot interview with a professional HR colleague was conducted in advance of the interviews which resulted in a slight change to phrasing of the questions being asked.

The sample group of individuals came from organisations of different sizes, ownership and sectors. In addition, seven non-HR employees with significant GDPR implementation responsibility across these sample organisations were also interviewed so that a balanced view could be presented

Findings

Post initial literature review, the initial conceptual model identified potential outcomes of the GDPR implementation process as increased HR legitimacy, increased organisational performance and development of technology. However, the findings did not show this. Throughout our interviews and irrespective of organisational context, participants did not highlight increased organisational performance as a desired or achieved outcome of the GDPR implementation process but rather protection of the organisational brand. The findings also indicate that GDPR has not resulted in an increase in HR legitimacy within organisations. However, the findings did suggest that where adequate resourcing for HR had been provided, and there was evidence of cultural and leadership support which was aligned to the corporate objectives of GDPR compliance, HR would play a much bigger role in embedding these new policies and procedures into the culture going forward as predicated by one participate who stated 'People interact with processes and technology, not the other way around. As the information deficit has been closed and the question is raised who is gonna run this as "Business as usual"', I predict there is going to be a very important role for HR in this piece.'

Practical implications

Potential interested parties for this research may include HR practitioners, GDPR project managers, OD specialists and senior board members who are implementing GDPR initiatives or creating a data cultural awareness programme.

The first recommendation is based on the need for HR to develop credibility in the business. In research conducted by Rucci (1997), it was found that the worst-case scenario for HR survival is a department which does not promote change or understand the business. Therefore, it is recommended that in recruitment for HR positions, the skills competency matrix includes skillsets which demonstrate data protection and compliance knowledge. Secondly, It is recommended that prior to investment in technology, organisations utilise the services of a GDPR consultant, preferably with HR skillsets, to make an assessment of the needs of the organisation. In today's digital age it is almost inevitable that a business will be hacked at some stage. However, as highlighted during the research, in terms of cyber security, people are the first line of defence. Training, education and awareness of the protection of personal data is essential in creating a data protection culture. Finally, ensure a balance between having policies and procedures that outline the consequences of a data breach while at the same time ensuring that breaches are reported. If policies place emphasis only on the disciplinary actions which will occur in the event of any non-compliance, this may result in issues being hidden and have a detrimental impact on organisations, particularly their obligation to report a data breach within 72 hours.

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To comply or not to comply: The implications of being commercial in the application of employment law

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Overview

Contemporary HR role formulations have emphasised the importance of the commercial and strategic contribution made by HR practitioners. This paper focuses on the implications of 'being commercial' for how HR practitioners in private sector organisations in the UK make sense of and apply employment laws and reports interview data of HR practitioners and lawyers. Findings indicate an emphasis on the need to 'be commercial' when it comes to interpretation and application of employment law, with this commercial focus having implications for action taken, including deliberate non-compliance and the reportedly extensive use of settlement agreements to pay-off (ex)employees.

Research focus, rationale and questions

Despite HR practitioners playing a role in relation to employment laws (Markoulli et al, 2017) there has been scant attention in the HRM literature to how they approach those laws in practice. Arguably this may relate to a preoccupation with how HR practitioners contribute to 'commercial' objectives and organisational performance, the assumption that compliance is not optional (Cohen, 2015; Parkes and Davis, 2013), and is necessary for organisations to retain social legitimacy (Boxall and Purcell, 2016; Paauwe, 2004). While tension between the goal of organisational flexibility and cost-effective labour on one hand and the goal of social legitimacy on the other is well recognised (Boxall and Purcell, 2016; Paauwe and Boselie, 2007), how this tension is resolved in practice has remained unexplored.

The HRM literature focuses on what has been termed 'old neo-institutional' theory (Lewis et al, 2019), which presents laws as determinative of practice. In this paper we argue that this focus and the assumption of seamless transfer of employment law from the external environment into practice has led to limited theoretical discussion and research interest into the approach taken by HR practitioners. This study questions assumptions that compliance occurs and is straightforward and uses institutional logics and sensemaking perspectives to examine contextual influences that shape how HR practitioners make sense of employment laws and situations governed by them. This analysis offers a lens to illustrate how different spheres of influence, including state (laws) and corporate demands, may contradict and be in tension with one another.

Research methods

A qualitative methodology was adopted in order to explore the experiences, interpretations and perceptions of participants in relation to employment law and to connect these findings to institutional logics. Drawing on Edelman's (2004: 239) insight that both HR practitioners and legal advisers are "compliance professionals" that mediate laws into the organisation, semi-structured interviews were conducted with fifteen UK based senior HR practitioners from organisations of different sizes and industry sectors and specialist employment lawyers. Participants were purposively selected based upon their ability to help answer the research question. Data was analysed thematically with initial codes clustered around the central themes of HR practitioner work-identity, interpretation of employment law, the relevance of situational cues, and the action taken.

Findings

Findings indicate that the commercial framing of the HR role and function has consequences for the way in which the HR participants in this study constructed their identity and how they then interpreted and applied employment laws. Results indicate that participants were predominantly influenced by the goals, values and expectations of management (under a corporate logic), as opposed to a sense of being a professional expert with a degree of independence from the organisation. All but one participant (who had no formal HR training or qualifications) indicated a one-dimensional work-identity, concerned with their commercial credentials, provision of support to management and the efficient achievement of business objectives. Associated with this work-identity was a flexible approach to the interpretation of employment laws, which participants often viewed as ambiguous. One participant described employment laws as 'guidelines' for business, with another referring to how she has to 'tip the balance' so the business wins where employment laws contradict organisational objectives. The HR participants had a role in advising the business on the content of employment laws but would participate in and enable avoidance of those laws if that was perceived to be in the best interests of senior management and the organisation. The inability and lack of willingness by HR participants to ensure management compliance with internal procedures and employment laws appeared connected to the heavy use of settlement agreements to pay-off employees following non-compliance (particularly with dismissal laws), reported by all UK participants.

Practical implications

The implications of this study are three-fold. First, the application of institutional logics as a theoretical lens enables critical reflection on how HR practitioners make sense of and apply employment laws and illustrates the need for the influence of a corporate logic to be recognised when examining the application of these laws in practice. Second, findings contribute to the discussion around HR professional identity. The CIPD HR profession map was amended last year to include a greater emphasis on the ethical aspects of HR practice. However, these behaviours co-exist with an emphasis on HR practitioners as having 'commercial drive', a message that is reinforced in CIPD publications. There needs to be a more involved discussion about the tension that exists between these behaviours and the challenges practitioners may face in practice. Emphasis of a greater connection between being a 'professional' HR practitioner and a focus on

legal compliance and willingness to challenge may help address this imbalance. Third, at a policy level, the findings feed into debates regarding the use of non-disclosure agreements to silence (ex)employees and the role of HR practitioners in this respect (Women's Equality Committee (WEC), 2019). If a corporate logic is dominant in the UK, as suggested by participants in this study, then the consequences for non-compliance need to be sufficient to get the attention of senior management. The introduction of personal liability for non-compliance is one way of doing this.

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The secret is in the dirt, and how you handle it: Employer's liability for criminal records disclosures

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Overview

All businesses face challenges which, if not met appropriately, can result in financial and reputational damage. In this paper, I examine one such challenge – dealing with the criminal records history of employees and applicants for employment. Using case studies to carry out analysis of employers' recruitment and/or disciplinary records, policies and practices, the study discovered a number of areas in which employers were potentially vulnerable to legal action when dealing with criminal records disclosures. The study suggests some practical solutions through which employers can avoid or minimise their exposure to such actions.

Research focus, rationale and questions

All employers are faced with the challenge of protecting the interests of their business and their customers/clients whilst simultaneously being required to respect the rights of individuals in the recruitment and employment of workers. Failing to achieve the correct balance can be financially and reputationally damaging. Recent court cases have highlighted professional and judicial concerns about the practical application of the criminal records disclosure system operated by the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS), the mechanism designed to strike the correct balance between protecting the public and respecting the rights of those seeking employment. The focus of this research is on how employers gain access to and process data concerning the previous history of potential and existing employees and whether, by so doing, they are exposing themselves to financial risk. The study was carried out against the background of evidence of employers increasingly relying on data which is old, irrelevant or lacks substance as proof of wrongdoing, restrictive changes in data protection legislation and increased financial penalties for infringements, and the potential for employers' practices to discriminate against certain protected groups. Dealing with criminal records data incorrectly means that employers are likely to be faced with costly claims for compensation and/or financial penalties. The predicted crisis in recruitment following 'Brexit' means this exposure is set to increase. In this study, I attempt to answer the question of how best to balance competing interests and minimise the economic risk to employers.

Research methods

The research was carried out using desk-based case studies of public and private healthcare providers and local authority employers. These employers were selected as case studies because they employ large numbers of people, have high 'turnover' rates of staff, and are the employers most likely to have users of their services who would be regarded as 'vulnerable'. The relevant statutory provisions and case law were reviewed to establish the legislative framework in which the DBS operate and employers use disclosed information. Empirical evidence, in the form of publicly available policy, practice and recruitment/disciplinary documents, was gathered from the employers, along with the DBS's own records. These empirical data were analysed against the legislative framework to draw conclusions about the legality of existing policies and practices and the implications this has for employers.

Findings

The main findings of this research support the view that, in practice, employers do not achieve an appropriate balance between protecting what they see as the interests of their business and respecting the rights of individuals seeking work or already employed. There is minimal appreciation of likely infringements of individual rights and no awareness of the financial and reputational risks of such infractions. The case studies revealed that employers have policies and practices in place designed to deal with adverse disclosures, but these either do not meet the legal requirements or are applied in a way that opens up the possibility of legal action by disgruntled job applicants or former employees. The study produced evidence of employers seeking disclosures to which they were not lawfully entitled, either because an unnecessarily broad interpretation was placed on the purposes of the job or, more commonly, the level of disclosure sought was higher than that to which the employer was entitled. Analysis of the employers' policies and practices in using disclosed information provided evidence of potential for legal action on various grounds. The study found that there was either no, or only the most tenuous, connection between employers' policies and practices and the job involved, and there was no balancing contribution to the stated aims of protecting the wider interests of the business.

The findings of this study identified some common errors made by employers, which helped to formulate recommendations to avoid potentially damaging implementation of such mistakes in the future.

Practical implications

The practical importance of the research is to make employers aware of the potential economic impact on their businesses of failing to meet the challenge of seeking access to and using criminal

records data appropriately, and the fact that their current policies and practices are already exposing them to financial risk. Although the study did not attempt to evaluate the likely cost to employers, as this will depend on the particular facts of each case, awards of damages to individuals can run into tens of thousands of pounds and financial penalties for breaching data protection provisions can be higher still. Employers may also suffer the economic loss of depriving themselves of the valuable talents of individuals who would have been an asset to the business. The paper makes some recommendations for ways in which the criminal records disclosure system can be applied in practice to achieve a better balance between respect for individual rights and protection of those considered vulnerable. Although some suggestions will require legislative change and improved guidance from state agencies, there are more immediate ways in which employers can help to protect themselves from potentially costly mistakes. Such steps include changes to recruitment and disciplinary policies and practices, to involve more realistic assessments of the need to seek disclosure, and, where disclosure is necessary, of the relevance of the disclosed information to the work the individual is being asked to undertake.

3A | Well-being and burnout

The dark side of digitalisation? A diary study of the impact of digital technologies on work intensification, work-life balance and wellbeing

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Overview

New and advancing technologies challenge the requirements and possibilities for work practices and the ways in which people carry out their roles. Modern technologies and digitalisation have also led to an increase in autonomous and flexible working practices. However, while the flexibility associated with digital technologies is increasingly regarded by organisations and managers as 'a good thing', the corresponding impact on employees' work patterns, work-life balance and wellbeing is often neglected in theory and practice. Our research comprised a diary study of 41 participants and its purpose was to develop a better understanding of how digitalisation influences employees' day-to-day lives.

Research focus, rationale and questions

The business opportunities, employee autonomy and flexibility associated with modern digital technologies are increasingly regarded by organisations and managers as 'a good thing'. However, the corresponding impact on employees' work patterns, work-life balance and wellbeing is often neglected in theory and practice (Day et al., 2012). For many occupations, the traditional idea of a 9am-5pm job has become obsolete and the lines between one's work and home life are increasingly blurred (Gadeyne et al., 2018; Kubicek and Tement, 2016). Arguably, employer expectations (actual and perceived) around the availability of employees outwith 'normal' working hours, for example, through the use of mobile devices, make the process of recovery and psychological detachment from work challenging (Dettmers et al., 2016; Sonnentag, et al., 2017). For many employees, the need to respond to messages and e-mail as soon as possible means that they are likely to experience insufficient rest and recovery during non-work time (Barber and Santuzzi, 2015). Over time, this has the potential to impact negatively on employees' health outcomes, and may cumulatively lead to increased stress, fatigue and/or burnout (Derks and Bakker, 2014).

The purpose of our study was to develop a better understanding of how digital technologies currently influence and impact the day-to-day lives of employees. Our research was guided by the overarching research question: What is the impact of digital technologies on work intensification,

work-life balance and wellbeing? In addressing this question, four measures were incorporated: acceleration-intensification of work; workloads; ICT hassles/challenges; and expectations around availability (e.g. evenings and weekends).

Research methods

This paper forms part of a larger European study which examined the role of digital technologies in influencing work practices, work-life balance and wellbeing. The methodology comprised a self-reported diary study (Ohly et al., 2010) with participants who work at least 20 hour per week over at least four days per week. (Interns, students and those who are self-employed were excluded from the sample). Data collection comprised one initial questionnaire followed by three shorter questionnaires per day for one week. Participants were sent an e-mail link every time a questionnaire was due, which was each morning before starting work, each day after work, and each evening before going to bed. Our sample comprises all English-speaking participants (n=41) who completed, as a minimum, the welcome questionnaire and at least one full day incorporating all three daily questionnaires. Daily data were aggregated to obtain person means. Data were analysed using SPSS.

Findings

The study results concerning the four measures revealed the following: 1. Acceleration-intensification of work is positively associated with workload (0.520; p<0.10); positively associated with spending time reading and writing e-mails at work (0.459; p<0.10); negatively associated with vigour experienced in the evenings (-0.429; p<0.10); detaching from work in the evenings (-0.413; p<0.10) and evening relaxation (-0.489; p<0.10). 2. Workloads are positively associated with the percentage of time spent online during working hours (0.467; p<0.10) and negatively associated with detaching from work in the evenings (-0.488; p<0.10). 3. Greater ICT hassles/challenges are positively associated with time spent reading and writing e-mails (0.507; p<0.10) and evening exhaustion (0.475; p<0.10), and negatively associated with evening vigour (-0.460; p<0.10) and evening relaxation (-0.407; p<0.10). 4. Higher levels of expected employee/ICT availability is positively associated with the percentage of time spent online during working hours (0.505; p<0.10); higher average work-related evening use of smartphones (0.402; p<0.10), and higher evening contact by co-workers (0.414; p<0.10).

In summary, the statistical results highlight that employee perceptions of high work acceleration and intensification are influenced, at least in part, by the availability of digital technologies and subsequent expectations of employee availability out with normal working hours. In particular, employees are often unable to detach fully from work and relax in the evenings which, in turn, is likely to impact negatively on levels of evening exhaustion and vigour.

Practical implications

The results of the study suggest that while many organisations seek to utilise digital technologies to remain competitive and capitalise on business opportunities, the actual or perceived expectations associated with employee availability and the use of these technologies may potentially be impacting negatively on employees' work patterns, work-life balance and wellbeing. This finding is particularly important for organisational leaders and managers (Avolio et al., 2014). While the idea of more autonomous and flexible work practices facilitated by the use of modern digital technologies is most often regarded positively, our results tentatively suggest the need for care and attention to be afforded to the potentially negative impact, or unintended consequences, of digital technologies on employees' health outcomes (Dettmers et al., 2016).

Both senior leaders and line managers perhaps need to be more aware of how work is organised as well as how they role model and communicate expectations around the availability of employees outwith normal working hours (Barber and Santuzzi, 2015). They should also be cognisant of the importance of helping to ensure that employees have adequate recovery time and are able to detach psychologically during non-work time, for instance, through developing

appropriate work-life balance strategies. Human resource (HR) policies associated with flexible working practices and work-life balance are therefore of central importance in reducing work-home conflict and the likelihood of increased work intensification, stress and burnout through the impact of digital technologies (Derks and Bakker, 2014; Kubicek and Tement, 2016).

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Hanging on the telephone: emotional labour and burn out in the UK financial services sector

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Overview

Over thirty years have now passed since Hochschild's (1983) seminal text The Managed Heart. Building upon Goffman's (1959) exploration of how individuals present themselves to others, Hochschild coined the term 'emotional labour.' Drawing upon an empirical analysis of flight attendants (all female) and debt collectors (all male) she explored how emotion is controlled and commercialized as part of the labour process. This research considers how intensive emotional labour at CollectCo Limited (name anonymised for confidentiality purposes) one of the UK's largest financial services companies effects front line collection agents. It draws upon Hochschild's original analysis and provides a unique empirical analysis of emotional labour in financial services.

Research focus, rationale and questions

The focus of this research is to understand and explore how HRM interventions from both a policy and practice perspective might ameliorate mental health and well-being. It does so in a target driven corporate environment where the labour process is both tightly controlled and monitored. Here debt collection agents are heavily constrained in their own skills development and control over their own labour process (Braverman, 1974). This type of environment is regrettably a familiar one within many companies in the UK. Understanding the intersection between HR policy and good mental health has substantial societal benefits. Turnover and retention levels at CollectCo are high and above normal averages. There is a strong sentiment amongst employees that the working environment and pressures f debt collection has had a negative impact on their mental health. As part of the research the Management Board have asked for further research around the types of HRM activities that can augment mental health and well-being in the organisation. The following research questions are pertinent:

1. What type of HR interventions can improve mental health and well-being?

2. To what extent can HR policy, practice or procedure improve recruitment and retention in emotionally intensive occupations?

3. What role can and should HR Managers play in embedding positive mental health strategies at work?

Research methods

The research at CollectCo Limited commenced in March 2018 and is ongoing. A qualitative ethnographic approach has been adopted to understand the lived experience of 'front line' collection agents. Fourteen focus groups have been conducted so far with over 100 participants who predominantly work as collection agents and in call quality inspection. The first author is undertaking participant observation by working with collection agents, listening to their calls and participating in their everyday working lives and also their training. The research will continue for a further twelve months and will be conducted in other group companies and use the same qualitative ethnographic approach. The senior management team and HR function are all participating in the project.

Findings

The research is ongoing and hence at this juncture we are unable to specify our findings that arise from the empirical data. However, an indicative review of the substantial data obtained thus far suggests a strong correlation between high levels of emotional labour and burnout. Respondents and focus group participants have expressed a negative impact on their mental health in dealing with angry, often aggressive and abusive clients. In addition, many participants articulated a feeling that the 'deep acting' enunciated by Hochschild (1983) where collectors had to draw deeply upon their own emotions to empathise with clients was draining, and in some circumstances, damaging. It has also become apparent that gender plays a role here too; responses to the effects of emotional labour on mental health were gendered with disparity between male and female coping strategies and the support they required.

Practical implications

This research has significant and profound impact feeding into the current debates around work and mental health. Understanding how and when HRM interventions are necessary to improve mental health and well-being in emotionally intensive labour environments is extremely important. The UK's financial services sector is a large one and many employees experience burnout and negative impacts upon their mental health. This research throws light upon what HR Managers and practitioners can do to improve mental health. It also illustrates the role HR policy and practice can have in raising awareness of mental health issues and embedding a positive and supportive culture to promote well-being. For organisations it demonstrates how good HR practice can improve attrition rates and reduce recruitment costs.

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3B | Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Do career attitudes change shape across the life course?

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Overview

New career theorists argue that a protean career attitude equips individuals to navigate the changing career landscape of the 21st century. Hall (2004, 2018) raised questions of whether being protean is a trait or a state; is it learned through life events or is it inherent. This in-depth qualitative analysis of a small sample of workers aged 45+ applies the life course concept of turning points with the aim of exploring changes in career attitudes of older workers across working lives and offers some practical applications for shaping future organisational environments, policies and practices around career management.

Research focus, rationale and questions

It is argued that a protean attitude – where agency and personal values drive career decisions and direction rather than the organisation - equips people with the flexibility and ability to adapt and cope with the changing career landscapes of the 21st century. Hall (2004, 2018) raised questions

of whether being protean was a trait or a state and while he suspected the answer was both he posited that most people can become more protean through life events and career experiences.

With around 30% of the current UK workforce now 50 or over (usually seen as older workers), the economic necessity of extending working lives is widely recognised; as is the retention and engagement of older workers to maintain and increase talent pools within organisations. However, research finds that older workers are continuing to exit organisations if they are not provided with the right environment and opportunities (Desmette & Gaillard, 2008; Reeuwijk et al, 2013). Indeed, many older workers are extending their working life and developing their career further, but often by exiting organisations to find alternative paths or setting up their own businesses (Platman, 2003; Feldman, 2000; de Wind et al, 2016).

A clearer understanding of how and why protean attitudes change or develop as individuals progress through their careers is needed to provide insight that will enable organisations to engage more fully with older workers to further their careers, and to develop policies and cultures that support individuals in their career journeys; encouraging retention of older workers.

Research methods

Taking a life course approach, the concept of turning points was used to understand if and how protean attitudes of mature UK based managers changed during their career.

A qualitative research method of life grids within semi-structured interviews was used. This method has been successfully used for retrospective interviewing and involves close co-participation in creating life grids which builds relationships quickly with the interviewees and facilitates rich, life history knowledge (Parry et al, 1999; Abbas et al, 2013). This approach also allows patterns, commonalities and differences to be highlighted and explored.

A small sample group (12) of UK based managers aged 45-68 allowed focus on in-depth analysis of life histories. The criteria for inclusion was being over 45 years of age (identified in some research as 'older workers') and being employed in a management role.

Findings

Turning points across the life history illustrated how attitudes changed as a result of events, transitions and changes in trajectory. This supports and extends findings that suggest life history and changes in working lives affect attitudes across the life span and offer more accurate predictions about future work behaviour(Schalk et al, 2010; Dingemans & Mohring, 2019), which in turn may offer greater understanding of where and what interventions can be made by organisations who seek to retain workers for longer. This project also answers calls for more qualitative research in this field by giving a voice to the older worker to gain a first-hand understanding of how and why work attitudes change, as well as an insight into later-life working and motivations surrounding intentions to continuing to work (Taylor et al, 2016)

Most of the participants in our sample had a traditional career attitude that changed over the life course, becoming more protean as a result of turning points. A minority of participants appeared to have maintained a protean attitude throughout their working life. A protean attitude, maintained or developed, contributed to a higher level of resilience and adaptability in dealing with turning points which supports arguments of Ibarra & Obadaru (2016) that a 'liminal muscle' may be a contributory factor in a protean attitude. Partially in line with Briscoe et al (2006), mobility preference wasn't high amongst those with a protean attitude in this study.

Practical implications

In most western economies it has been firmly established that the retention of older workers is of economic importance. With demographic changes, there is clear evidence that unless older workers are recruited and recruited, many organisations will have insufficient talent at the right levels to support growth. However, as the trend of early exit from the workforce continues, some

organisations are yet to identify and implement strategies that provide the right culture, environment and engagement model to recruit and retain these workers for longer.

An understanding of how protean attitudes develop over the life course, and an understanding of some of the main triggers or turning points that may be critical events as careers progress is required if organisations are to create the right environments and cultures to retain older workers for longer. A clearer understanding of how attitudes and motivations change across working lives also allows organisations to develop strategies for supporting later-life career management more effectively.

New careerists argue that a protean attitude is not only beneficial to the individual in their career but can also have the potential to influence wider changes in organisations and workplaces positively. This research contributes to careers literature by offering a clearer understanding of how protean attitudes develop as careers progress and the impact of turning points and transitions on individuals' protean attitudes. Focus on change across the life course for individuals at later stages of their career also contributes to an under-researched area within extended working lives.

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Grandparents at Work: The implications of unpaid childcare on employment of workers over 50

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Overview

This paper considers the implications of unpaid childcare on grandparents' employment and careers. In light of the increased economic and public policy imperatives to delay retirement and extend working lives, we investigate the ways in which provision of non-custodial grandparent care affects employment of the over-50s in the UK. Our qualitative study of 55 participants suggested that around half of the sample made some changes to their employment in order to accommodate the grandparental role. Their decision to either reduce their paid work, or completely leave the labour market was strongly influenced by their gender, social class and marital status.

Research focus, rationale and questions

Recently, baby boomers (people born between 1945 and 1964) have been portrayed as a problem generation (Phillipson, 2008); as a generation that benefitted from full employment, welfare state, accessible home ownership and free education. As a result, baby boomers are considered to be a privileged generation which is now increasingly a burden on younger generations, both as a centre of political power (Willets, 2010), and as the beneficiaries of pensions and healthcare paid for by the younger generations.

Such perspectives on baby boomers, however, seem to neglect the contributions and the activities of this generation in contemporary family lives, and particularly in relation to the increasingly common provision of unpaid childcare for their grandchildren (Wellard, 2011; Huskinson et al, 2016; Rutter and Evans, 2011). This is particularly relevant when considering the recent trends in Great Britain, which suggest that adults become grandparents in their mid-fifties (Leopold and Scopek, 2015). In this sense, the provision of grandparental childcare may have implications for grandparents' own careers and financial circumstances in later life.

In light of this, we consider one main question: What are the implications of grandparents' unpaid childcare provision on their career decisions? This question is of high practical relevance for organisations in light of the challenges brought forward by the demographic trends, and the increased policy interest in extending working lives of workers over 50 years of age.

Research methods

To explore the research questions, we conducted 55 interviews with baby boomer-aged grandparents in Sussex and Edinburgh, all of whom provide unpaid childcare regularly for one or more grandchildren. Purposive sampling ensured we achieved a diverse sample in terms of childcare responsibilities, household composition, household income, and employment status.

During the interviews, participants discussed a range of topics to contextualise their childcare more broadly in their lives. Grandparents were asked to describe the nature and the extent of childcare they provide, and the reasons for doing so. Furthermore, they were asked about the impact childcare had on their lives. Data was transcribed and analysed thematically (Seale, Gobo, Gubrium and Silverman, 2007), and was coded for key themes using NVivo 11 software toolkit.

Findings

A striking finding from the study was that half of the sample group reported making some form of change to their employment in order to provide childcare for their grandchildren, with both grandmothers and grandfathers seeking to increase the time available for childcare. Some grandparents used flexible work options to provide childcare when needed, while at the same time retaining employment. Others reduced their work hours or the number of workdays. The data suggests that some grandparents were prepared and willing to reduce their own income in order to provide free childcare for their grandchildren and thus enable their adult children to pursue paid work. Some grandparents chose to leave the labour market altogether in order to provide unpaid childcare.

Our findings suggest that their decision to reduce the number of hours in work, or leave employment altogether was significantly affected by gender, social class and marital status. Only the grandparents who had financial stability were able to retire completely, with most participants needing to balance between their financial circumstances and the childcare needs. For those still in paid employment, working until and beyond State Pension age was a necessity. This was particularly the case with grandmothers who had previously taken time out of the labour market to care for their own children and were thus unable to build up adequate pension savings. Income from paid employment was even more necessary for divorced grandmothers, who were financially less secure.

Practical implications

The implications of this research are two-fold. The findings suggest that baby boomers, while considered to be selfish and a burden to younger generations, seem to be an important source of informal family support. Their provision of free childcare for grandchildren allows their adult children not only to save on the increasingly high costs of formal childcare, but also provides flexibility to pursue wider employment opportunities. This situation, however, has significant implications for workers over 50; as our findings suggest that over 50% of the sample has made changes in their employment circumstances to accommodate to childcare needs. These findings are important as they indicate a picture at odds with policy assumptions that over-50s want to extend their (paid) working lives and simply need to be made aware of the opportunities, or indeed that they may be forced to work longer to accumulate better pensions. Our findings contribute to a body of evidence that advocates caution to this over-simplistic view. In reality, the picture is more complex – older workers are making decisions not just in light of their own needs, circumstances and aspirations, but often as part of extended family units and complex domestic contexts. If employers are to meet their own and government targets for increased older worker employment (one million more over-50s by 2022, BITC, 2017), they need to be aware of the nuances of this labour market and to ensure an appropriate balance between individuals' familial obligations and personal aspirations, and organisational HR requirements.

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3C | Job Crafting and Employee Experience

Shaping positive work experiences: relational support and workplace relationships in disruptive times

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Overview

This paper presents results of a collaboration between United Hospitals Bristol NHS Foundation Trust (UHB) clinicians and research for Henley Business School's Henley Forum (HF) of practitioners representing mostly public sector organisations, into supporting engagement and wellbeing in challenging environments. Using the Staff Participation Engagement and Communication app (SPEaC-Happy) to diary day-to-day workplace relationships, followed by in-depth interviews, we outline the original development of SPEaC-Happy, the collaboration, app adaptation for this research and progress to date. It finishes with implications for practice from interrelated findings of the original application and current research, completing a virtuous circle of research informing practice.

Research focus, rationale and questions

The collaboration draws on the concepts of engagement and support to understand the emotional element reflecting Kahn's (1990) definition with distinct components of cognitive, emotional and physical engagement underpinned by the psychological conditions of meaningfulness, psychological safety and availability. These contribute to a relational context for engagement (Kahn & Heaphy, 2014) mirrored in UHB as perceived organisational support (The Kings Fund,2012).

Increased incidence of poor mental health and wellbeing from increasing uncertainty and burnout in workplaces has led to research interest in the importance of relationships and positive organisational cultures. Personal disengagement, seen by Kahn (1990) as withdrawal and alienation, Schaufeli et al, (2002) and Bakker, (2017) as poor wellbeing, exhaustion and burnout, opposite to work engagement building on job-demands and personal resources models and Sonnentag et al's (2008) work spillover. The recent interest in the role of workplace relationships uses related concepts with Kahn and Heaphy's (2014) relational context, Sias et al's, (2012) mutual concern and Cronin's (2014) friendship.

The original rationale for developing SPEaC-Happy came from evidence that NHS organisations deliver better patient experience and quality care with high levels of engagement, staff satisfaction and involvement in decision-making. The focus of the collaboration was to understand further the success of SPEaC Happy in contributing to increasing engagement and wellbeing levels and the role of workplace relationships. Both projects are set in a context of unprecedented change, constrained resources and overstretched staff, the NHS with widespread staff shortages and government departments with unparalleled workloads in the run up to Brexit.

Research methods

The current HF study is focussed on understanding the role of workplace relationships in engagement and wellbeing and therefore uses qualitative methods. Experience Sampling Methodology (ESM) through the adapted SPEaC-Happy app (Frampton et al, 2017) was used on smartphones or laptops to diary interactions with work colleagues over a period of 2 to 4 weeks. Using the app built on Conner & Barrett's (2012:5) three different 'selves': the 'experiencing self' reacting to their core affect network; the 'remembering self' consolidating learning, captured reflections, and the 'believing self', maintaining identities over time, came from interviews after diarying. Questions focussed on Kahn's (1990) conditions for engagement – meaningfulness, psychological safety and availability and the different relationships used definitions built from Kram and Isabella's (1985) peer relationship framework expressed here as co-worker, colleague and close colleague. Three organisations taking part are drawn from the government sector and a fourth ex-government, all Henley Forum members.

Findings

The research phase started mid-June 2019 and continues until January 2020 so findings reported here are indicative after early results from the first organisation studied corroborates experiences from the SPEaC-Happy app since 2017. At the time of writing a government department's team of 40 have contributed diary entries and half a sample of 12 have been interviewed. Two similar organisations start in early September with another in discussion. Data has yet to be fully coded and analysed.

Already parallels with the UHB study are emerging particularly with positive comments about team working and the supportive role of team members ranking highest, whilst on the negative side resource related comments featured strongly. The different focus of the workplace relationships research has demonstrated more positive emotional mood responses reflecting the warmth generated by connecting with others, whereas SPEaC-Happy experience reports equal positive and negative responses. The same issues of leadership, communication, and being heard/valued are reflected in both projects. The importance of relationships, trust, confidentiality and supporting each other comes out strongly in these public sector organisations where shared values underpinning meaningful work are a key motivator, expressed as caring for patients or public service.

Diary entries demonstrated the importance of feeling connected and belonging, especially when working remotely, which the interviews reinforced, as close relationships with colleagues sharing values and being interested in their perspective contributed to wellbeing in challenging situations. This reflected staff feeling their voice had been heard through management responses to original SPEaC-Happy comments in acute NHS trusts.

Practical implications

The use of SPEaC-Happy in one NHS trust demonstrated improvement in retention with results in one department staff turnover improving by 4.1% and reduction in sickness of 1.7% equating to well over £250,000 savings in agency staff plus improved staff engagement (Internal Trust evaluation). This has also been recognised by the CQC as an innovative way to engage staff,

A key contribution of the HF study using the SPEaC-Happy methodology gave people reflective space to download their emotions, register their discontent or share positive feelings in confidence

knowing they would be heard, just as those interviewed might share them with close colleagues in a psychologically safe environment. Supportive relationships appear to be founded in shared values, trust and being able to share and be vulnerable in confidence. These relationships develop over time, enable people to see the bigger picture and feel part of something meaningful.

Implications for practice include providing the environment for supportive relationships to develop particularly in a disruptive context requiring good leaders to facilitate opportunities for people to work together through face-to-face activities such as problem-solving and team development supported by shared values and regular communication. The SPEaC Happy app demonstrates the potential of technology to provide feedback opportunities be heard and visibly responded to in rapid time. For UHB the app represents the care giving that staff give patients by reinforcing feelings of belonginess, enabling feeling part of a team performing meaningful work, while the HF study demonstrates similar conclusions on belonging deriving from workplace relationships.

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Internal Trust evaluation data details available on request.

3D | Recruitment and Career Development

Probationer police officers' career priorities: Change, stability and implications for police HRM practices

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Overview

There is currently a drive to recruit 20,000 new police officers in England and Wales. Understanding what police officers want from their careers is critical to achieving this objective, to feed into the recruitment of new officers but also, importantly, to motivate and retain them once in post. We used data from 101 police officers to examine officers' career priorities shortly after joining and again two years later. Statistically significant differences were observed after two years as a police officer in career priorities, work values and perception of policing as a 'career for life'. Implications of these findings for police HRM practices are discussed.

Research focus, rationale and questions

In England and Wales there is currently considerable political momentum behind a campaign to recruit 20,000 police officers over the next three years and, in doing so, return police numbers to levels last seen in 2009 (Home Office, 2019). Human Resource Management (HRM) practices are critical to achieving this objective; not only in initially recruiting new officers, but also to motivate and retain these officers once they are in post. To ensure that HRM practices to recruit, retain and motivate capable and committed police officers are fit for purpose it is vital to understand what officers actually want out of their policing careers (e.g. Howes and Goodman-Delahunty, 2015; Raganella and White, 2004). It is moreover important to understand if and how these priorities may change over time, to ensure that a career in policing remains attractive to new officers not only when they join, but also as they progress through their service.

To this end, an up-to-date awareness of what officers want from their careers is needed, particularly as the drive to recruit 20,000 officers is taking place against a background of wide-ranging reforms to police recruitment, training and remuneration (e.g. National Police Chiefs' Council, 2019). In this paper we therefore investigate officers' career priorities, work values priorities and perceptions of policing as a 'career for life', and how they change during the first two years of service.

Research methods

Officers were surveyed within six months of joining the police ("T1") and were asked about their career and work value priorities using the measures outlined below. Respondents participated in a follow-up survey two years later ("T2"), which included the same items as the T1 survey. By June 2019, T1 and T2 paired data were obtained from 101 respondents. The constructs assessed within the survey were:

Career priorities measured using 15 items from Schein (1990) to determine the priority given to autonomy, technical expertise, promotion, public service, and work-life balance within their career.

Work values priorities measured using six items from Raganella and White (2004), to determine the priority respondents gave to extrinsic (e.g. job benefits and status) and intrinsic (e.g. community service and interesting work) work values within the work they did.

Perceptions of policing as a 'career for life' measured using four items based on Rodrigues et al.'s (2015) occupational boundary strength scale.

Findings

Analysis of descriptive statistics showed that on average at both Time One and Time Two technical expertise in policing were most highly prioritised by respondents. Similarly, respondents rated intrinsic work values more highly than extrinsic work values (although at T2 this difference was negligible). Importantly, paired samples t-tests showed that respondents' priorities after two years were often significantly different to their priorities on joining the police. Promotion and public service were both significantly less of a priority at T2 than at T1 (although for public service, in particular, this decreased from a very high level). On the other hand, autonomy and work-life balance were significantly more of a priority for respondents at T2 than at T1.

There was also a change in the extent to which respondents saw extrinsic and intrinsic work values as priorities at T2 compared to T1. Respondents rated extrinsic work values as significantly higher priorities at T2 than at T1. Conversely, intrinsic work values were rated as significantly lower priorities at T2 compared to T1. Finally, respondents were significantly less likely to see policing as a 'career for life' at T2 compared to T1.

These findings reflect top-level data from the first 12 months of an ongoing research project. More detailed analysis, and a further six months of data, will be available to present in January 2020.

Practical implications

As one might expect, our analysis showed that police officers gave a high priority to public service within the work they did and within their longer-term career priorities. Notably however we also found that achieving a high level of technical expertise in policing was highly prioritised by respondents both shortly after joining the police and after two years as a police officer. This was, in fact, the only career priority we looked at that did not change significantly during the two-year period; and thus, could be a useful and impactful part of any future recruitment campaign to encourage more officers to join the police.

This is particularly the case given that, for the most part, our research found that even after just two years in the police service, police officers' priorities were significantly different to when they joined the police. Set against a backdrop of extensive police workforce reform in England and Wales, these findings highlight the importance of recognising changes in career priorities when designed and implementing police HRM systems. For instance, in proposed reforms to police officers' reward package (National Police Chiefs Council, 2019) or in changes to career progression structures (College of Policing, 2019).

Perhaps most worrying in the context of a drive to recruit tens of thousands of new officers to the police service is the observation that officers were significantly less likely to view policing as a "career for life" after two years in the job. Whilst worrying, it may not necessarily be surprising, given our observation that officers' priorities can change over even a relatively short period of time. Moreover, we know from other research that the recent reductions in workforce capacity has had a negative impact upon the welfare of police officers (Houdmont and Elliott-Davies, 2017). It is unlikely that probationer officers will have been immune from this impact, and so broader workforce issues such as this may also have influenced respondents' decisions about whether or not to spend their entire career within the police service. Nonetheless, any campaign to substantially increase police officer numbers may achieve only limited success if these officers no longer see policing as a long-term career after several years of service.

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Recruitment and workforce development challenges in the low-status sectors with high labour demand – childcare work

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Overview

This paper presents key lessons on the relationship between satisfying staffing requirements in a growing sector and its professional status. It is based on the government policy-driven expansion of 20,000 jobs in the Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) sector in Scotland. A key barrier to effective recruitment and workforce development is the perceived low attractiveness of the sector due to low-pay, low professional status and undervaluation of skills. This is, arguably, partly underpinned by a lack of gender diversity. Improving diversity and the overall attractiveness of the ELC sector should be a focus of policy-makers and practitioners in the sector.

Research focus, rationale and questions

The research focuses on the Early Learning and Childcare (ELC), as an example of a growing sector with difficulties meeting staffing requirements, but that has mainly low-educational entry qualifications and is difficult to automate. The sector also significantly affects workers with childcare responsibilities across the entire economy. An important policy-driven expansion is currently being implemented in the Scottish ELC sector with an estimated 20,000 new jobs needed to deliver the increase in provision promised by the government. Hence the sector needs to recruit and retain a variety of diverse roles, including managerial and professional ones, as well as lower qualified entry-level childcare and support roles.

Key recruitment and retention challenges in the ELC relate mostly to low pay, low status and a lack of workforce diversity. In particular, three questions related to: 1) what is the nature of the relationship between opportunities emerging out of the sector's growth and the quality of jobs and pathways for career progression that the sector offers; 2) how do we reduce the lack of diversity,

especially when failing attempts to attract more men into the profession continue to perpetuate the stereotypical view of ELC jobs as unattractive and overwhelmingly female; 3) how can we alleviate the low status of the profession when resources per worker are unlikely to rise significantly.

The understandings based on the lessons from the Scottish ELC expansion could be considered by other sectors of economic activities with similar challenges to prevent ineffective recruitment campaigns and unsuccessful workforce development initiatives.

Research methods

This paper is based on the research findings of a largely qualitative study. It involved the collection of primary qualitative and secondary data on the Scottish ELC sector and its projected expansion. The primary qualitative data were collected through seven semi-structured exploratory interviews and three triple helix group meetings and workshops with a range of stakeholders currently participating, or interested, in the development of the ELC sector (including the Scottish Government, vocational training providers, local authorities, trades unions, skills councils, ELC providers and other social organisations). Secondary data was gathered from reports and projections published by the Scottish Government, Skills Panorama, UK Commission for Employment and Skills, Scottish Social Services Council and the Skills Development Scotland's Regional Skills Assessments and Skills Investment Plans. A thematic analysis approach was used to analyse primary qualitative data, which were supplemented by additional evidence from the secondary sources and existing literature.

Findings

Our findings aligned with the evidence from the UK and elsewhere. Amongst key problems that emerged from the interviews and the triple helix groups with ELC stakeholders were recruitment and retention challenges related to the perceived low-status of the sector and its workers, lack of gender diversity, and skills, training and career information limitations. The perceived low-value and low-prestige of the ELC jobs, arguably, stemming partly from female overrepresentation and low pay, has a significant impact on recruitment, including people currently with or without required formal qualifications considering entering the sector.

The findings suggest a strong mutual dependency between recruitment and the sector's professional status. In order to uplift its prestige, an adequate, high-quality, diversified and committed workforce needs to be recruited, rewarded and retained. The sector requires people from a more diverse range of backgrounds including young freshly qualified workers, career changers, returners, older workers and men, who have attitudes, skills and aptitudes to pursue a career in ELC. To do this strategic effort is needed to consistently communicate the value of ELC work, the professional status of its workers as early-years educators, create better training and career paths, and to break away from the stereotypical view of the sector as female carers, with prejudices by users and staff against workforce diversity. Despite great financial constraints in the sector, changes are needed to current policies and practices which have not improved gender diversity or the overall attractiveness of the ELC sector for new entrants and career changers.

Practical implications

This paper considers how less attractive sectors with high labour demand and socio-economic potential, and lower likelihood of future automation, can benefit from rethinking approaches to recruiting and sector development. Based on the research findings from ELC sector, we suggest these new approaches should focus on improving work conditions and pay, training and wider career progression opportunities to improve the sectors' status and thus attract more diverse workers from across the labour market. Importantly, coordinated actions are required to consistently communicate the value of ELC work and workers to break away from the stereotypical view of the sector as a site of low-skilled work carried out be females. Issues such as reclassifying professionals as educational, rather than nursery workers, may help.

A strategic approach is needed to overcome the lack of diversity (gender but also age etc.), skills and the pay related challenges in low-status high labour demand sectors (e.g. through policies promoting skills and career development opportunities among existing employees and new recruits). This is important for the workforce, employers, recruiters, policy-makers and the wider economy for three reasons, (in addition to the impact on other sectors whose workers need good quality childcare services). Firstly, to effectively meet staffing requirements of existing expanding sectors. Secondly, to be prepared to effectively respond to often quick and radical adjustments in vocational education and training, as the changing world of work imposes new demands for skills, attributes and competencies. Thirdly, to offer jobs for people at risk of the labour market exclusion.

3E | HR Functions: L&D and Redundancies

The role of the learning and development function in enabling the workforce of the future

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Overview

The world of work is changing at a faster pace than ever before, driven by a combination of factors including changing demographics, growing impact of artificial intelligence, and the rise of the 'gig economy'. The learning and development profession has the opportunity to play a lead role in helping organisations adapt to these changes, by leading the development of the skills that will be needed in this new world of work. We draw on a study of learning and development leaders and senior executives, and key stakeholders at a policy level to explore the challenges facing learning and development (L&D) and propose some priorities that can ensure they deliver on this agenda.

Research focus, rationale and questions

The world of work is facing a period of transformational change. Key drivers of this evolution are the growing impact of artificial intelligence (AI), in the form of machine learning and robotics, which is reshaping how work is done. Research by McKinsey estimates that by 2030 approximately 15 percent of today's work activities will be automated and somewhere between 75 million and 375 million workers globally will need to shift occupational categories[i]. A more recent study by Bain and company predicted that automation may eliminate between 20 and 25 percent of jobs in a similar timeframe[ii]. Another trend is the shifting nature of employment. Respondents to Deloitte's Future of Work Survey predicted the usage of contractors, freelancers and gig workers would increase by 37, 33 and 28 per cent respectively by 2020[iii]. There is little doubt that both national employment policy and organisational practice are inadequately prepared for managing this cohort of employees.

These, and other, changes in the nature of work are shifting the needle for organisations in terms of their skills requirements, now and in the future. Meeting this challenge will be central to sustaining competitiveness, yet the lack of preparedness for the future of work is stark, with some 54 percent of respondents to Deloitte's survey acknowledge that they don't yet have the programmes in place to enable the skills of the future[iv]. Our research sets out to explore the emerging priorities for L&D as a function in enabling the workforce of the future and how the L&D role needs to evolve to meet these requirements.

[i]https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/future-of-organizations-and-work/what-the-future-of-work-will-mean-for-jobs-skills-and-wages

[ii]http://www.bain.com/publications/articles/labor-2030-the-collision-of-demographics-automation-and-inequality.aspx

[iii]https://www2.deloitte.com/insights/us/en/focus/human-capital-trends.html

[iv]https://www2.deloitte.com/insights/us/en/focus/human-capital-trends.html

Research methods

This research is being conducted over a 12-month period and is supported by the Irish Institute for Training and Development (IITD), funded by Skillnets Ireland. Following a comprehensive review of extant research in the area, a series of focus groups were conducted with CEOs and executives from stakeholder organisations ranging from professional bodies to educational institutions and policy makers. Finally, interviews were conducted with executives in over 20 leading organisations, most with a global footprint. In each case, interviews were conducted not only with the learning and development lead, but also with other senior executives representing a human resource (HR) and broader business perspective.

Findings

This study is a work in progress with data gathering scheduled for completion by October 2019, with a professional report on the topic is scheduled for submission to IITD by November 2019. A full paper will also be developed for journal submission, and this will be ready for presentation at the January conference

Practical implications

There is little doubt that firms are struggling to attract and retain the quality and quantity of talent required to deliver on their strategic plans. For example, 77 percent of HR leaders in Ireland identified a lack of availability of required key skills and capabilities as a key constraint on their business growth plans[i]. Thus, current talent strategies are ineffective and it is likely that organisations will need to develop and reinvent themselves continually to adapt to coming changes in the world of work. Workforce development and lifelong learning will need to be at the heart of this transformation. The learning and development profession is charged with developing and delivering a model of training excellence to meet the demands of this new world.

This study will identify the help understand the current capabilities of the L&D function and also the requirements of L&D in the future to enable the workforce of the future. Highlighting, key trends that are likely to have the most significant effects on work and employment in the future we will focus on the skills most required by the workplace of the future. We will provide concrete recommendations for how learning and development professionals can equip their organisations to survive and thrive in the very different world of work which will unfold in coming decades.

[i]https://www.pwc.ie/survey/2017-pwc-hrd-pulse-survey.html

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Don't shoot the messenger: The enigmatic impact of conveying bad news during redundancy situations

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Overview

The view that 'putting people at risk of redundancy is a horrible thing to do' is not an uncommon perception amongst redundancy envoys.

This paper highlights the significance of the psychological impact experienced by redundancy envoys during redundancy situations. Redundancy envoys for this purpose includes, directors, management, employee consultative representatives and HR professionals. Redundancy envoys are the individuals who normally assume responsibility for activities such as the strategy, planning, process, implementation, communication and consultations associated with redundancies.

Redundancy envoys describe the process of implementing redundancies as a rollercoaster of emotions, having to deal with a range of emotions, such as shock, horror, anger, sadness and guilt. This paper argues the importance for organisations to understand the idiosyncrasy of redundancy envoys with the aim to raise awareness of the importance of this role.

Research focus, rationale and questions

Redundancy is not a new phenomenon; however, it should be recognised that the scope and pace of redundancies have accelerated in recent years. (Baruch and Hind; 1999). In 2019 alone we are seeing large scale redundancies impacting several UK organisations to name a few; Ryanair with 900 jobs at risk (Sweney, 2019) , Karen Millen with 1100 job cuts (Butler and Jolly; 2019), William Hill with 12 000 jobs at risk, (Davies, 2019), The Sun with up to 600 job cuts (Sweney, 2019) British Gas owner Centrica announced 4000 job losses (Ambrose and Kollewe, 2019) and Jaguar Land Rover with up to 2000 job losses (Jolly and Davies, 2019).

Findings on the success of redundancy mostly demonstrates that headcount reduction as a method to improve organisational performance, productivity or cost competitiveness tend not to achieve these aims, highlighting a gap between actual results and intentions. (Henkoff, 1994; Cascio, 2013, Cascio, 1993; Brockner, Davy and Carter, 1985).

Ironically, Gandofli (2008), one of the leading authors in this field, argues that most companies that implement redundancies as a cost cutting exercise fail to reap economic success.

This paper proposed that the reason why companies mostly don't succeed to achieve their intended objectives, is due to the negative impact experienced by redundancy envoys. A better understanding of the negative psychological impact experienced can lead to better support mechanisms for redundancy envoys.

This paper presents empirical evidence that argues that the impact of implementing redundancies are profound, leading to serious negative implications for the redundancy envoy and subsequently, the organisation.

Research methods

The data for this paper was collected through action research where four iterations of redundancies took place within a private sector organisation. Through the process of action, research, various redundancy models were piloted to drive continuous improvement by mitigating the negative psychological impact for redundancy envoys.

The main source of data collection was through semi-structured interviews with a total of 36 interview respondents from various industries and organisations, comprising of 15 HR professionals, 17 managers and 4 employee representatives. From this group, 13 held director positions and 6 had dual disciplines, where a participant may, for example, be a manager and also fulfilling the role of an employee representative.

Additional sources of primary data collected included; ethnography through observation and diary keeping, 'lessons learned' sessions, employee committee consultative meetings, redundancy and change management workshops, workshop feedback questionnaires, management strategy workshops and director application interviews.

Findings

The data indicated that the psychological impact on redundancy envoys is significant. Redundancy envoys describe the impact as a 'rollercoaster of emotions' which is clearly evident in the findings where redundancy envoys spoke about their journeys with heartfelt emotion, shedding tears and being visibly shaken.

Evidence from this study indicated that through understanding the enigmatic impact on redundancy envoys, organisations can provide better support to mitigate the impact for the whole organisation. The pilot in the study resulted in the business improving its financial position by 21.7 % over a 4-year period, from loss to profit making whilst undergoing four redundancy programmes.

The data highlighted that this research project is one of the rare examples where a company can reap economic success through the implementation of redundancies, which is the exception to the rule in accordance with Gandolfi's findings (2008) that most firms adopting downsizing strategies do not reap economic and organisational benefits.

Redundancy envoys articulated experiencing a range of emotions including regret, sadness, anger, frustration and guilt with that the experience of guilt as one of the most destructive emotions that impacted on their psychological wellbeing.

Participants revealed that the negative impact on their wellbeing impacted their productivity and ability to function effectively which lead to emotional detachment from the organisation. This occurs often due to their perception that the people in charge have a disregard for their concerns (Gervais, 2004). When redundancy envoys emotionally detach themselves from the organisation, their effectiveness to lead and drive a programme of organisational change diminishes. With the right support, the opposite can be achieved.

Practical implications

A critical literature review indicated that there are very limited studies that specifically examine the idiosyncrasy and implications of the psychological impact for redundancy envoys. Most of the literature is approximately fifteen years old, with the most recent literature emerging from Ashman (2016; 2012) and Waraich and Bhardwaj (2011).

Although research in this field is limited, there is recognition in ad hoc areas of the importance of the role of the redundancy envoy and the significant impact they can have on the success of a redundancy programme through the following relations:

1. Redundancy envoys have different roles and experiences

2. They can positively influence victims and survivors

3. This can positively impact the success of the business

It is invaluable to understand the experiences of redundancy envoys as their experiences are different and distinct (Clair and Dufresne, 2004); they largely adopt more than one role, that of survivor and change agent (Dewitt, et al., 2003).

Frost (2003) describes redundancy envoys as unsung corporate heroes who try to limit the negative impact on victims during major change programmes.

There is no doubt that redundancy envoys are critical to the success of implementing redundancies to achieve it's intended aims, which is ultimately a profitable and sustainable business. In order to achieve this, organisations need to protect, support, train and develop redundancy envoys.

The research implications of this paper places organisations in a better position to focus on interventions to mitigate the negative psychological impact. Once we understand the impact in more detail, as HR professional and researchers we can progress with how we support organisations and redundancy envoys through the demanding process of implementing redundancies.

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4A | Well-being and Flexible Working

Encouraging employers to advertise jobs as flexible - a randomised controlled trial with a job site

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Overview

BIT ran a two-arm field randomised controlled trial with a large UK job site testing whether changes to the choice architecture of job advert templates can encourage employers to advertise more jobs with flexible working options. We found that employers exposed to the prompted choice page in the job listing template were 20% more likely to advertise their job with flexible working options (an increase of 7 percentage points, p<0.001), compared to the control group where 35% of job adverts offered flexibility. Looking at jobseeker response, we found that job adverts offering flexible working attracted 30% more applicants (p<0.05).

Research focus, rationale and questions

Our research focus was to test whether changes to the choice architecture of job ad templates can encourage employers to advertise jobs as flexible, either by increasing the number of flexible jobs and/or by increasing transparency about potential flexible working options at advertisement stage.

Our rationale was to help improve women's participation in the labour market. Flexible working can be key to enabling people with caring responsibilities to reconcile the competing demands of work and care. Women provide twice as much childcare as men (1) and are twice as likely to work flexibly (2). Boosting the supply of flexible jobs is therefore key to expanding the pool of jobs available for people with caring responsibilities, which we expect to disproportionately benefit

women at the current time. Making flexible working more widely available also has the potential to normalise flexible working for both women and men.

Despite the clear demand for flexible working arrangements, the number of available flexible jobs remains very low (3). As a consequence, some women can be discouraged from applying for jobs altogether, whilst others that do apply may face the daunting prospect of asking for flexibility during the recruitment process, which can trigger discrimination (4).

We investigated the following questions:

- Prompting employers to explicitly reference a role's flexibility (i.e. 'prompted choice') increases the number of jobs advertised as flexible compared to the current status quo;

- Jobs that are advertised as flexible attract more job seekers than ads that don't mention flexibility.

Research methods

We partnered with a job site to conduct a large field randomised controlled trial, involving more than 55,000 employers posting more than 200,000 job ads, eliciting over 5.5m job applications.

We ran a two-arm trial, testing the impact of the introduction of prompted choice into the job listing process compared to business-as-usual where there is no such prompt.

The primary outcome measure was whether the resultant job posting offered flexible working options. To measure the flexible working options offered on job adverts, we used a web scraping algorithm that identified a list of predefined terms indicating flexibility. To estimate the treatment effect, we used an OLS regression model, clustered at the employer level and controlling for job function. No other covariates relating to the employers or the job adverts were available to us.

Findings

Job adverts published by employers who were exposed to the prompted choice treatment were 20% (7 percentage points, $p<0.001$) more likely to offer their positions as flexible, compared to the control group without such a prompt. This was a sizeable increase on a baseline of 34.5%.

We ran exploratory analysis to measure the impact of the prompted choice on the offer of different kinds of flexible working arrangements. Exploratory analysis showed that the strongest effect was on an increased offer of flexitime (8.6 percentage points, $p<0.001$), but all types of flexible working were affected, including part time (2 percentage points, $p<0.001$).

Looking at jobseeker behaviour, using the increase in flexible working advertising resulting from our intervention (5), we found that flexible jobs attracted on average 30% ($p<0.05$) more applicants. Job adverts without flexible working options attracted 23 applicants on average, so we estimate that they would have received 30 had they included flexible working options.

Practical implications

This trial shows promising results whereby small changes to the choice architecture of job postings can encourage employers to advertise more jobs with flexible working options. It is possible to make it easy for employers to advertise jobs with flexibility if we take this approach. Furthermore, jobs advertised in this way tend to attract more jobseekers.

Our clear positive result (factoring in the study's limitations) is a new step in understanding how to increase the supply of flexible jobs in the UK, and possibly beyond. Making flexible working more widely available and offered from day one of a new job has the potential to help normalise flexible working for both women and men. By reducing the barriers for job applicants in asking for and justifying their need for flexible working arrangements, we may see a decoupling of flexible working arrangements as a working pattern which is mostly granted to or demanded by mothers (6). In turn, such working patterns may enable both women and men to thrive in roles that can better accommodate their wellbeing and their caring duties.

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A randomised control trial evaluating mental health training for line managers delivered face to face through e-learning

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Overview

As part of their strategy to address health and wellbeing within the sector, the Rail Safety Standards Board (RSSB) sought to identify the best topics to include in mental health training for line managers and the best mode of delivery. To rigorously test this, the Institute for Employment Studies (IES) conducted a randomised control trial (RCT) to compare the effectiveness of Mind's e-learning and face to face training. Both types of training resulted in significant improvements in knowledge and preparedness to take action on mental health compared to the control group, effects which were sustained 4-6 weeks following the training.

Research focus, rationale and questions

Line managers and supervisors are key targets for mental health awareness training as they arguably represent the 'frontline' of wellbeing management and act a gatekeeper to referrals or other pathways to support. Training can empower managers to approach mental health more effectively with the potential to impact positively on their direct reports. Managers are also in position to address or report work stressors that can compromise mental wellbeing.

On behalf of their members RSSB commissioned the IES to conduct a research project to find the best way to support the rail industry in providing mental health (MH) training for managers. RSSB was committed to delivering MH training to this audience, but there were knowledge gaps regarding the best training methods and the best topics to cover.

IES led an initial review of the available research evidence base to make recommendations about the main themes and topics that mental health training for line managers should cover. The mental health charity Mind then delivered training to this specification using two different methods, face to

face and e-learning. Outcomes of the training were compared against each other and also with a control group who had not received training (Part 2). Notably, as confirmed by the evidence review, this was the first research of its kind to compare mental health training for line managers across modalities, not only within the rail industry, but worldwide.

Research methods

Randomised control trial (RCT) methodology was used to compare the effects of face to face training and e-learning with no training. Nine rail companies from different areas of the sector took part in the study. A total of 212 participants were randomly allocated to groups within geographical clusters at intra-company level.

The face-to-face training was delivered by Mind at five geographical locations. Mind also provided on-line training. A baseline survey benchmarked awareness, knowledge, skills and behaviours around mental health. A post-training survey tested immediate impacts, and a follow-up survey was administered four to six weeks later to assess longer term impacts (118 participants provided data at all stages).

Twenty-four interviews were conducted with participants receiving training to assess the extent to which they had put their learning into action and to identify organisational barriers and facilitators.

Findings

There were no differences in the outcomes of face to face and e-learning. Analysis showed significant positive improvements in each compared to the control group.

Figure 1: Mapping of recommended topics for line manager training with factors identified in data analysis

Source: IES, 2019

Factor analysis was applied which identified four main areas of impact. As shown in Figure 1 the training led to the following changes that were sustained 4-6 weeks afterwards:

• a positive change in 'knowledge about mental health',

• a positive change in self-reported 'preparedness to take action (on mental health)',

An immediate, positive effect on 'confidence to talk about mental health' was not sustained. Similarly, positive changes in attitudes toward mental health were not sustained, suggesting a need for future organisational interventions to embed these aspects.

Qualitative data showed that both types of training were met with approval from most participants, sufficient for them to say they would recommend it to colleagues. Participants welcomed the line manager focus and felt that the involvement of Mind assured the quality of the training.

The vast majority of participants in both training groups were satisfied with the level of applicability to their industry. Other positive comments centred on its compatibility with 'being a good line manager' and having an open and authentic approach. Interviews confirmed widespread positive intentions to approach line management differently as a result of the training.

Practical implications

In utilising a randomised control design, regarded as a methodological 'gold standard', this study provides compelling evidence to support implementation of mental health training for line managers in rail and other safety-critical industries.

The research shows that both e-learning and face-to-face training are effective methods of delivery; this has practical implications for organisations considering the costs of such training. The findings will help employers to make an informed, evidence-based decision regarding the topics they should specify when procuring mental health training from suppliers. Moreover, in showing

impacts on knowledge, skills and behaviour this research provides a credible business case for line manager training in this area more generally.

The results suggest that further intervention is required to support people in having conversations about mental health and to change their attitudes and beliefs. IES is currently evaluating the utility of 'refresher training' in the same study sample.

Finally, these findings contribute to the debate over which among an array of interventions (such as Mental Health Aid or resilience training) employers should prioritise to bring about positive cultural and behavioural changes in the workplace. Further rigorous evaluations of different types of training are needed to enable employers to take a strategic approach to improving mental health of their employees.

4B | Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Large scale bias testing of police officers and police staff: what have we learned?

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Overview

The Harvard Implicit Association Test (IAT; Greenwald et al., 1998)) is claimed to measure our implicit (unconscious) social biases. Organisationally, one very practical barrier to getting the most benefit from bias testing staff is that access to group data has not been possible through the Harvard platform. This paper reports the results of 10 years of bias testing of over 3,000 police officers and support staff using a range of IATs, including Race, Gender and Disability, allowing comparisons to be made between different police forces, and across time in some instances. Results of that testing are presented.

Research focus, rationale and questions

In 1999 Sir William Macpherson's report into the murder of Stephen Lawrence referred to the UK police service as 'institutionally racist'. Since that time the police the service has expended much effort and resource in addressing policy, practice and officer attitudes around race. There has been progress, in areas such as representation of Black and Minority Ethnic (BaME) recruits, but it has been painfully slow. Twenty years on the service is still well short of representing the communities served. Some local forces are a long way from claiming full representation. BaME officers still face disparity in discipline and grievance procedures, and struggle to get specialisms or promotions. There are still incidents reaching the public domain of officers exhibiting biased attitudes around race, both on and off duty.

One possible explanation for the glacial speed of change has been implicit (unconscious) bias; that behaviour and decisions may be driven by automatic, intuitive mental associations developed as a result of officer experience, media exposure and internal/external cultural valences. Perhaps measuring these biases amongst police officers and police staff may explain why change has been hard to come by. Although the Harvard Implicit Association Test (IAT) has been seen as the metric of choice in measuring implicit biases, the test is not without critics and controversies (see Blanton and Jaccard, 2006).

Question: What are the levels of bias amongst police officer and staff and how do they compare in terms of types and levels of bias when compared to other sectors?

Research methods

We developed a new version of the IAT which sought to address the shortcomings highlighted by Hart Blanton and James Jaccard in their 2006 paper, notably a more reliable, behaviourally

anchored IAT with a framework of support for test takers (Jones, 2008, 2008a, 2009, 2009a, 2010). That test platform was developed between 2006 and 2009 and has been commercially used since that time across a number of sectors including policing, the law, academia, the NHS, local authorities and a number of industrial sectors. The test platform allows access to group level data, hitherto impossible outside the Harvard labs, to allow for group comparisons to be made.

Findings

Results indicate that police officers and police staff tend to have fewer staff with racial biases than most other sectors. Typically around one in five of those police staff tested had a race bias strong enough to affect behaviour and this was largely directed in favour of White people and against BaME people. There is however significant variation in the levels of bias between different police forces and roles with as few as one of twelve, and as many as one in three staff in some samples, having race bias strong enough to affect behaviour.

Some bespoke versions of the IAT, developed to examine bias within the discipline and grievance systems suggest that some groups, notable Asian people, Black people and men are implicitly viewed negatively by investigators who associate them with words such as predatory, incompetent and deceitful. This has the potential to skew the triaging and conduct of an investigation, and to lead to more severe punishments. Officers who are both BaME and male might suffer a double detriment should they be involved in complaint or disciplinary action.

There is some evidence in this study, albeit with small samples, but with data gathered across a two-year time period that bias levels are capable of being impacted. For example, longitudinal data from one large police service saw a downward shift in bias test results (lower bias) after testing and a training input.

Practical implications

Externally

As police officers and support staff exercise considerable external power over citizens (e.g. in stop search, arrest, prosecution and use of force), then any level of bias is unwelcome. It is likely to hinder the intention to deliver fair policing which is in line with the oath a of constable to: 'act with fairness, integrity, diligence and impartiality, and uphold fundamental human rights and accord equal respect to all people, according to law.' Implicit bias testing of frontline police officers and police staff has the potential to afford them insight to their own biases and develop methods to mitigate bias in their critical decision making. In recruiting it has the potential to identify applicants with the strongest bias levels for further scrutiny.

Internally

Some parts of the police service have undergone unconscious bias training, but for most forces it mainly consisted of just 15 minutes within a package of law-based materials on stop search. The Police service did consider the use of IATs in recruiting after racist recruits were discovered in their training centres in 2003. They concluded that the IAT was not a proven methodology, although it showed promise. It may be time to revisit that decision and to employ IAT in recruiting but also with key decision makers in recruiting, promotion and discipline.

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Avoiding unintended consequences of diversity initiatives: The importance of permeating organisational culture

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Overview

Despite documented benefits of workforce diversity, progress towards achieving it has been slow. Furthermore, recent typological theory identifies potential unintended consequences of diversity initiatives, including backfire and false progress. Growing realisation that the barriers to diversity in today's organisations are largely implicit and deep-rooted suggests that organisations need to address the motivational underpinnings of diversity (or lack of it), and the cultural factors which may trigger or maintain those beliefs and attitudes. This paper explores of the role of organisational culture in enhancing or impeding diversity in two case study organisations, considering how approaches might be adapted to improve effectiveness.

Research focus, rationale and questions

Despite the documented benefits of workforce diversity, progress towards achieving it has been slow, arguably having stagnated in relation to diversity (Dobbin & Kalev, 2016; Sealy, Doldor, & Vinnicombe, 2016; Grant Thornton, 2014; 2016). In addition, recent typological theory has identified potential unintended consequences produced by diversity initiatives, including backfire (negative diversity goal progress) and false progress (improved diversity metrics without true change) (Leslie, 2018).

Alongside this, there is growing realisation that the potential barriers to diversity in today's organisations are largely implicit, and deep-rooted, and therefore, that organisations need to consider and address the motivational underpinnings of diversity (or lack of it), and the cultural factors which may trigger or maintain the beliefs and attitudes that are impeding progress in many organisations. Organisational culture has been recognised as playing a particularly important role in sustaining implicit, cognitive biases, given the normative influence that culture has on attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours (Pless and Maak, 2004; Wallace and Pillans, 2016). Indeed, it is argued that the success of diversity programs is dependent on organizational situational factors such as culture, strategy, and operating environments (Jayne and Dipboye, 2004), and therefore such initiatives will have limited success unless concepts and actions around diversity are addressed systemically.

This paper aims to provide a deeper understanding of the role of organisational culture in enhancing or impeding diversity, and specifically, how interventions to promote diversity may need to be adapted to account for the contextual effects of organisational culture.

Research methods

Investigations were undertaken in two case study organisations (one large engineering and construction organisation, one large professional services firm) in which diversity programmes

were being implemented. A mixed-methods approach was taken to explore the nature of organisational culture, approaches towards, beliefs about, and attitudes towards diversity within that culture. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 49 employees (27 professional services firm employees and 22 engineering and construction organisation employees across a range of levels and roles) and focus groups with an additional 14 professional services employees. Interviews and focus groups were structured around the areas of the Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument (Cameron & Quinn, 2006), with additional questions included to explore relationships between espoused organisational values or initiatives and employees' own beliefs, assumptions and behaviours regarding diversity and inclusion. Analysis was undertaken of company documentation such as diversity policies, and a survey was also conducted within the engineering and construction firm.

Findings

In this paper I argue that to increase the effectiveness of diversity interventions, and reduce the risk of inadvertent consequences, greater dimensionality must be incorporated into diversity research and practice. Dimensionality must be enhanced along two axes:

1. Vertical dimensionality – The findings suggest that superficial efforts to promote diversity, which fail to translate into deeper organisational changes, are unlikely to be effective and may even be detrimental. For example, the organisation's policy stated the aim 'To attract, retain, support and develop a diverse workforce...', yet the reality articulated by employees was that "we do recruit a type, there is a X's type' and 'when they are recruiting, they want to make sure that you are a X's person and they don't want to recruit anybody that's going to be a pain in the a*** to work with.' In addition, individuals who don't reflect the articulated corporate values, '…partners who are stroppy, argumentative, talking down to people often come in because they bring lots of clients.'

2. Horizonal dimensionality – The findings highlight that a focus on minority groups can result in backlash, triggering counter-productive outcomes such as perceptions of positive discrimination and tokenism. Male and female engineers expressed reservations regarding gender targets in place: 'By putting more focus on, increasing percentage of women in the company, you're limiting the opportunity for men. The polar opposite form of sexism is achieved' and 'Many males have been told they won't be promoted this year as most promotions have been set aside for women.'

Practical implications

Much diversity research and practice focuses on minority groups populations in isolation, at the exclusion of majority group(s) and the broader organisational context, which are key enablers to the success of those initiatives. Critical to an inclusive culture is ensuring that both underrepresented and dominant groups are accounted for.

The findings support the argument that by approaching D&I from an organisational culture perspective, organisations increase the likelihood of success and reduce the risk of a gap between diversity discourse and reality. In addition, findings suggest that organisations which promote a diverse identity but fall short in practice will not only fail to achieve D&I, but also risk losing perceived legitimacy with employees.

Whilst gender targets may increase minority representation, they do not remove any implicit discrimination that may exist within a work environment. These findings reinforce the notion that the value of diversity will emerge only under the right conditions; simply convening heterogeneous individuals together is insufficient. Appointing women to perform in environments where stereotypes and other biases still prevail is not only likely to impede their performance (as a result of stereotype threat) but may also serve to reinforce biases and stereotypes of women as inferior in that context.

Leveraging the benefits of diversity is dependent on the collective impact of individual and organisational responses to difference. This paper supports calls for a more systemic approach to organisational diversity, and development of a more inclusive culture including efforts to address fundamental motivational and relational factors regarding diversity and inclusion.

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4C | Productivity in Microbusinesses

Getting to grips with productivity in microbusinesses: A collaborative approach

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Overview

Contemporary academic and policy interest in productivity neglects an important segment of the small firm population: micro-businesses (1-9 employees). Such firms are challenging to engage in

policy efforts to enhance business performance because their management processes and employment relationships are often diffused and informal. This paper reports on the first stage of a long-term ESRC-funded project – comprising academics and practitioners – that aims to boost productivity in microbusinesses. We examine the meaning of productivity from the perspective of microbusinesses owners and explore ways in which they can be supported to improve their firms' performance.

Research focus, rationale and questions

We focus on micro-businesses in three sectors: catering, retailing (two traditional low-wage sectors) and the creative sector (as a newer sector). Micro-businesses in these sectors have rarely been the focus of extant academic and policy attention on management and productivity. This is understandable given the much remarked upon 'informality' of microbusinesses, which constitutes a major challenge in establishing the combination of management and worker engagement practices that might promote productivity. The researchers' previous research shows that: there is often no sharp divide between owner and employee; work organisation is fluid and unstructured; and working hours are imprecisely recorded. These results suggest that productivity means different things even within one sector: some businesses actively strive to increase efficiency while others are satisfied with survival. Critically, the owner's personal preferences and motivations are of central importance.

The task of encouraging more productive practices is compounded by the reluctance of microbusiness owners to utilise external advice and support. Micro-businesses tend not to seek external advice and, even when received, it is rarely seen as helpful.

We address these challenges by discussing the meaning of productivity from the perspectives of business owners and outline the processes by which such firms have been enrolled into networks that may facilitate business improvement. Our research questions are:

1. What does productivity mean for micro-businesses in three sectors facing contrasting pressures?

2. How can microbusinesses be engaged on initiatives or networks to enhance performance?

3. What are the implications for human resource and business support intermediaries?

Research methods

The research design for our paper follows the principles of 'engaged scholarship', which is a 'participative form of research for obtaining the different perspective of key stakeholders … to understand a complex social problem' (van de Ven, 2007). This approach is reflected in the composition of the project team, which comprises researchers and practitioners with extensive links with firms in the three sectors.

First, we convened a meeting of the full project team, including researchers engaged on the project and practitioner partners. This meeting was vital because it highlighted widely differing perspectives on the meaning of productivity. Practitioners queried academic views. A key outcome was a collective decision to conduct focus groups with business owners. This in itself shows how engaged scholarship enhances impact and relevance.

Second, we conducted interviews with each of our practitioner partners to: a) understand the dynamics of the firms in the sector; b) discuss composition of the focus groups; c) enlist their participation as co-facilitators of the focus groups.

Finally, we staged four focus groups, each lasting around two hours, with microbusiness owners. We explored the meaning of productivity, motivations and ambitions, and experiences of business support. A researcher and practitioner co-facilitated each group.

Each of these three elements was an exercise in dialogical sensemaking, which is 'a way of making the lived experience of research participants sensible in collaborative

researcher−practitioner conversations by … exploring multiple meanings and imagining new possibilities for moving on' (Cunliffe and Scaratti, 2017).

Findings

Descriptions of productivity varied across and within sectors. Such accounts could be placed along a continuum from an internal to external focus. Participants with an internal focus defined productivity as something they could influence and control; those with an external focus felt more susceptible to the influence of outside factors. Most descriptions rested between the two extremes.

Motivations relating to productivity at work could be classified into two types: intrinsic, an energising behaviour that comes from within an individual; and extrinsic, behaviour that is driven by rewards such as money or praise. Goals were also acknowledged as important to help business owners monitor progress and achieve long term results.

Family played a part in the productivity debate. Participants hoped that in being productive they could act as a role model for their children and encourage them to one day accomplish the same. Likewise, participants spoke of being a source of inspiration to others in their community who they also referred to as family.

Participants shared mixed experiences of formal business support, these were mostly negative. Whilst a number reported a lack of capacity to engage with such services those who did described feeling disempowered, patronised and/or let down. Informal networks of support were often considered more effective as participants described the close ties they had developed with business owners from their community in the absence of formal business support. Such ties provided a good source of knowledge and opportunity.

Practical implications

The practical implications are threefold. First, the starting point of extant research and policy interventions – a measure of labour productivity based on output per employee – is inappropriate for microbusinesses. It is insufficiently sensitive to the context of the firm (notably in relation to the organisation of work), the nature of competitive conditions and personal preferences of owner-managers. A holistic understanding of the latter is critical in determining the nature of potential practitioner interventions.

Second, resource constrained micro-businesses of the kind in our study are unlikely to contemplate strategies of modernisation and productivity improvement without the active support of trusted intermediaries. Micro-business owners are linked to 'informal' networks or ecosystems that they rely on for guidance on the functioning of their enterprises. Formal business support institutions, like Chambers of Commerce or employer associations, are rarely part of such networks. But intermediaries like our practitioner partners are, and their position of trust means that are potentially usefully conduits to facilitate critical conversations on the modernisation of microbusinesses.

Finally, the enthusiastic participation of microbusiness owners offers a potential opportunity to human resource and business support intermediaries to work together to support customised interventions which are co-produced between business owners, trusted networks and more formal institutions (like the CIPD and ACAS).

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Employee engagement in micro-businesses: A forgotten piece in the productivity puzzle?

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Overview

This research addresses an important, yet neglected gap in the employee engagement literature: that of understanding how engagement is experienced and can be utilised to improve productivity within micro-businesses. By undertaking a systematic review of the current evidence base as well as a qualitative exploratory study into the meaning and relevance of employee engagement to micro-businesses, we make a first step in examining whether the concept of engagement may be the 'forgotten' piece in the productivity puzzle. This exercise also serves the practical objective of sensitising potential productivity-boosting interventions to the distinctiveness of engagement in micro-businesses.

Research focus, rationale and questions

Raising productivity levels has been a long-debated conundrum for policy makers and scholars. Despite micro-businesses, i.e. firms with fewer than 10 employees, representing a significant proportion of the UK economy (Roper & Hart, 2018), little is known about how they motivate and engage their workers in ways that drive productivity. Proponents of employee engagement argues that motivating employees to invest and express their emotional, cognitive, and physical energies (i.e., 'engagement') into their work helps to facilitate performance related outcomes (Bailey et al., 2017). Indeed, there is evidence that interventions developed from engagement theories can be effective (Knight et al., 2017). However, little attempt has been made to contextualise theoretical models of engagement nor to compare the experience of engagement across different organisational settings (Guest, 2014; Purcell, 2014). This makes it difficult to fully understand to what extent existing models of engagement can be applied to the micro-business context as well as the scope and weight of evidence that is relevant. Given that micro businesses often have diffuse and informal employment relationships and management processes (Ram & Edwards, 2010), it is likely that the experience of, and practices that facilitate, engagement are quite different and unique within the micro business context. Therefore, the aim of this research is to: a) review the existing literature on employee engagement to establish the scope and weight of current evidence that can be applied to micro-businesses; and b) to explore to what extent employee engagement is a meaningful concept for understanding productivity within micro-businesses.

Research methods

For the evidence review, the systematic approach recommended by Briner and Denyer (2012) was followed. Business Source Complete, International Bibliography for the Social Sciences, Web of Science, and Scopus were systematically searched for relevant, peer-reviewed studies. Search terms have been developed by the research team and refined in discussion with relevant scholars and through pilot tests. Three strings of search terms have been finalised, which focus on keywords within titles and abstracts. Quality and relevance criteria have been agreed for items to be taken forward for evaluation.

We have also conducted four focus groups with micro-business owners from the three particularly challenging sectors: catering, retailing and creatives. Micro-businesses in these sectors rarely feature in academic and policy discourse on engagement or productivity. Between 8 to 12 owners attended each focus group. We explored the meaning of engagement and its influence on productivity in microbusinesses.

Findings

This research is currently being undertaken and the findings will be ready to share in time for the conference. The findings of this research will serve as a critical case in producing a detailed understanding of engagement and its associated practices in micro-businesses, even in the most challenging circumstances. Further, we examine disadvantaged communities that manage and work in micro-businesses in the West Midlands to understand how engagement may be a concept that can be harnessed to boost productivity in such firms. We expect that the current empirical literature will have small number (10 to 20) rigorous and robust studies that have focused on micro-businesses, yet it is likely that many of these studies will apply general engagement models and will not provide much critical insight into the contextual productivity issues that micro-businesses face. Therefore we anticipate that the focus groups with local micro-businesses will complement the review findings by identifying key areas of understanding and application that need addressing. Emerging themes from the focus groups include the value of fulfilling work and task significance; importance of personal development and connection with one's work; and the influence of the business/entrepreneurial support environment in promoting or impeding engagement. These point towards a modification of general engagement models to acknowledge that engagement may have different foci (work, business owner, business itself) and a specified range of contextual factors when applied to micro-businesses.

Practical implications

This research will develop a more contextualised account of engagement and its associated practices that focuses on the issues facing micro-businesses. This is a notable contribution given critiques that engagement research tends to ignore or reduce the importance of contextual contingencies that may impact on the meaning and experience of engagement. Moreover, we know very little about how engagement is managed and experienced in micro-businesses, particularly with relation to productivity, and so those working on productivity issues will find insights from this research of value. Moreover, this research will advance a multidisciplinary perspective of engagement that also considers critical and sociological viewpoints, such that it harnesses a multi-foci conceptualisation of psychological engagement that recognises how workers can engage with their job, the business owner, and the business itself. The vast majority of engagement research has focused solely on engagement with one's work, yet some argue that one can also be engaged with one's team/business unit, with one's line manager, or with one's organisation. Therefore, this research will help to clarify and provide much needed insight into the differing foci that engagement can have within the micro-business context. Lastly, this research will provide a stronger link with practitioner and business development communities through its engagement with the local micro business networks in the West Midlands, and so narrow the so-called 'academic practitioner' gap in engagement research. These contributions will help practitioners to develop contextually-sensitive interventions for micro-businesses operating in challenging circumstances.

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4D | Skills and Talent Management

Skills for high-end front-line hospitality work engagement and retention

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Overview

This paper examines skill learning systems tailored for High-end Front-line Hospitality (HFLH). Examining this sector across Sweden and Ireland captures the differing institutional influences on skills. High-end front-line hospitality work has characteristics such as low-skill perception, non-standard-work times and continuous service coverage that might not be compatible with traditional skill systems (general, apprenticeship and vocational). Sector-specific systems are considered in relation to how they might impact the important HFLH outcomes of work engagement and employee retention. In conducting semi-structured interviews (n=40) across both countries, this research suggests potential best practice and innovative sector-specific mechanisms for this atypical type of work.

Research focus, rationale and questions

Research Focus - High-End Front-line Hospitality Engagement and Retention

Work engagement (Schaufeli et al., 2006) is viewed as the most suitable outcome for these HFLH employees. It is considered particularly appropriate for HFLH, with its links to customer service, ambidextrous service (up-selling) and in possibly helping to mitigate the stressful demands of HFLH work (Britt et al., 2001). The second key driver of performance is employee retention because of the turnover culture within HFLH. This culture results in associated recruitment, supervision, and knowledge-base erosion costs (Iverson and Deery, 1997; Dawson et al., 2011).

Rationale – Skill Systems for High-End Front-line Hospitality

Hospitality, despite being central to many 'high skill' economies, is often loosely described as an industry with 'low skill' jobs (Baum, 2002). The argument that 'low-skill' services are more suited to general training has been argued by Martin and Knudsen (2010). This argument, however, omits the complex tacit knowledge required by emotional labour, where 'people skills' are greatly underestimated or not recognised as a skill (Hochschild, 1983; Hochschild, 1979). the effect on HFLH work engagement is complex. Research has indicated that, in the HFLH context, training may moderate the influence of job-demand on attitudinal constructs such as satisfaction (Chiang et al., 2014). Crouch et al. (2001) view vocational training's as static and lacking the flexibility required in dynamic service organisations.

Research Question – What skills might be suitable to generate work engagement and to employee retention among High-End Front-Line Hospitality Workers in Ireland and Sweden

Research methods

Semi-structured interviews were conducted. This involved over forty in-depth interviews across Ireland and Sweden encompassing front-line employees, front-line managers, trade unions, skill institutions and employer associations. Ireland and Sweden were chosen as differing skill landscapes to more fully capture the dynamics of institutional arrangements on skills with regard to this atypical sector. Here Ireland provides an example of liberal or market-based economy predominantly focused on general skills while Sweden provides a co-coordinative example where vocational training is prominent.

High-end hospitality organisations were identified across Sweden and Ireland and efforts at stratification geographically and by hospitality type (e.g. hotel, restaurant, bar and café) were employed to ensure a representative sample. High-end organisations were identified through both guide books (Michelin and White Guide) and four / five-star hotels across Ireland and Sweden. These qualitative findings were analysed using a combination of both manual coding and by using Nvivo software.

Findings

This section outlines innovative skill mechanisms that were identified that might lead to work engagement, and employee retention.

Travel – Encouragement and Facilitation

Interviewees, in particular employer interviewees, spoke of the "inspiration" acquired by such HFLH employees brought on frequent trips due to low cost travel and also the need for sunshine.

Psychological and Body language skills

These were explained by interviewees as "body-language skills", "emotional intelligence", and "how to read and understand customer and situations".

Validation Programmes

The use of validation programmes were found to be supported by either trade union mechanisms or within larger HFLH organisations. Interviews with the HFLH trade unions in Sweden revealed the recent developments in recognising skills that may have been acquired outside the national educational system.

Skill Suggestion schemes

With regard to work engagement and employee retention, a management interviewee in Sweden spoke of the need for inspirational meetings which will allow employees to "evolve" and feel like they are "moving forward". While they noted that, because they are part of a large hotel chain, there are mandatory e-learning mechanisms which are at the core of their 'on-the-job' learning.

Local Area Expertise

Apart from HFLH employee engagement and retention this was suggested to provide a resource to deliver guests a rounded customer-experience. This might have entailed complementary service offerings such as a café or bar nearby or sights of interest for tourists such as castles, libraries, walking routes, that might otherwise have been explored by HFLH employees.

Practical implications

Tourism is of strategic economic importance for many developed economies (Baum and Szivas, 2008) and policymakers need to refocus on the HFLH sector and creating an experience. HFLH must be promoted as a career along with skill development, skill recognition, career paths and progression options. In doing so, the tourism potential of increased repeat business, international visitors and customer spend can be realised.

There is the competitiveness of an economy's tourist offering to be maintained. This appears to be at odds with policy that might elevate HFLH as a more attractive sector for workers to develop

careers in. This is especially so when HFLH, by its nature, provides much-needed part-time employment which encompasses short-shift work (where long-term commitment is optional). Although the perception of the skill in this sector may be difficult to change in both contexts, other national examples such as France and Switzerland contain evidence that HFLH may indeed be perceived as a highly-esteemed vocation. Given that, within this research, many HFLH employee interviewees in Ireland cited recent luxury / 5-star hotel HFLH TV shows in Ireland and the U.K. as a source of identity, this evidence may provide building blocks for further efforts.

To entice young people into this industry, it requires a more appealing skill-set to both employers and prospective employees. In providing career development for HFLH employees, it might reduce the demands on middle management in larger organisations where they exist, whilst providing more meaningfulness and opportunity for HFLH employees.

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Spreading hospitality inwards: An empirical investigation of worker treatment in the hospitality sector in Ireland

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Overview

This research paper documents the findings of a comprehensive and unique project investigating the treatment of hospitality workers in Ireland. Drawing on a dual survey-interview method the

study explores aspects of worker treatment from employment rights, to experiences of bullying and harassment, to opportunities for voice etc. Drawing on employment relations theory generally, and Budd and Bhave's (2008) 'frames of reference' in particular, the project aims to provide evidence of worker treatment in hospitality, to use theoretical lenses to make sense of the data, ultimately informing policy and practice in this sector.

Research focus, rationale and questions

According to the Hospitality Skills Oversight Group report (2018), this sector contributes €5 billion to the Irish economy, through 18,400 enterprises, employing almost 180,000 workers. Food For Thought [an on-line resource for the hospitality sector and an 'official publication' of the Restaurant's Association of Ireland] identified 'staff recruitment and retention' as one of five top business challenges facing hospitality leaders in 2018. While there is an abundance of anecdotal evidence of hospitality being a challenging work environment, there is an absence of solid, empirical, independent evidence. This project aims to address that gap.

The Hospitality Sector has been the focus of considerable media attention recently, triggered by the proposal of a Protection of Employees (Tips) Bill 2017. This Bill aims to give workers a legal right to tips, service charges, and gratuities. In the ensuing political debates claims and counter-claims were made regarding the tipping culture specifically, and the treatment of workers in the hospitality sector more generally, based on very little evidence.

A government commissioned report on the need for tipping legislation, conducted by the Low Pay Commission in 2018, concluded that legal protections in this area were not needed, although the methodology of the report is arguably fundamentally flawed in that it excluded testimony from workers who would be most impacted by this protective legislation.

All of this provided the context and triggers for the research. The scant evidence that exists in Ireland on this issue is persuasive enough to indicate a need for a deeper, more comprehensive look at worker treatment in the sector that that is the primary aim of this project.

Research methods

The researchers designed a comprehensive on-line survey covering the experience of hospitality workers. The survey covered workers' profile (including training and qualifications), type of work and nature of contracts, HR practices, employment rights, opportunities for voice, and experience of ill-treatment (including bullying and harassment). The survey was anonymous and took an average of 18 mins to complete. It was distributed through social media channels such as LinkedIn and Facebook. Almost half of the 38 questions provided the facility for the respondent to elaborate which added depth to the statistical results. At time of writing there are 250 completed surveys and the link will remain open until end of July 2019.

The final question on the survey asked respondents to leave details if they were interested in being interviewed for the project. The purpose of the interviews is to obtain more depth on the lived experiences of hospitality workers using a semi-structured format. A small number of questions were designed based on themes emerging from the survey deemed by the researchers to warrant further exploration.

To date, over one third of respondents have stated a willingness to be interviewed. Interviews will be conducted by video call, recorded, transcribed and analysed using a thematic framework.

Findings

The emerging findings of the survey are stark and dramatic indicating a negative employment culture. Over 70% of respondents have worked in the Hospitality Sector for over three years and 66% were aged between 18-35 years. The female/male split was 60/40 and 57% described their contract status as 'permanent'.

Regarding employment rights, 12% were not paid the minimum wage, over 70% did not receive any premium for Sunday working, and 20% did not receive holiday pay. 43% did not receive a written statement of the terms of their employment on commencement and 53% are denied their legal entitlement of rest breaks.

Perhaps more concerning is the respondents experience of ill-treatment at work.

Over 76% of respondents reported experiencing verbal abuse, over 60% psychological abuse, and almost 15% experienced physical abuse [sometimes/often]. 63% had witnessed or experienced bullying and 53% harassment. Details were provided in each case.

Respondents were asked whether they reported incidents, to whom, and whether the situation improved as a result. They were asked for reasons of non-reporting, with the fear of losing job and/or a belief that nothing would be done, emerging as the most common responses.

Almost 50% felt they had no opportunity for voice at work. 22% are members of a trade union and reasons for not joining a union were provided.

Respondents provided details of training, opportunities for promotion, and benefits beyond basic pay, and distribution of tips. Finally, respondents provided detailed suggestions for how the sector could be improved as a place to work.

Practical implications

On completion, this research project will provide significant quantitative and qualitative data regarding the treatment of workers in the hospitality sector in Ireland. The authors believe this will begin to address an important evidence gap.

The survey and interviews give hospitality workers a voice that seems to be lacking and provides both their evidence of challenges that need to be addressed and their suggestions on how to do so.

The data emerging has the potential to inform policy and practice in the sector, ultimately to the benefit of both employers and employees. It is clear that hospitality contributes significantly to the Irish economy, which alongside the on-going decline of high street retail, continues to grow in importance.

It is also clear, from the sector itself that challenges exist regarding the recruitment and retention of employees.

Addressing some of the issues raised in this research will contribute to making hospitality a more favoured source of employment.

At time of submission this research project is on-going. The survey will close at the end of July. Interviews will then be conducted to obtain more in-depth information on the lived experience of hospitality workers. The percentage of respondents expressing a willingness to be interviewed poses challenges for the researchers in terms of time and resources but, in the spirit of providing a necessary voice, they are committed to interviewing all respondents who expressed a willingness.

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4E | Professionalism and Employee Relations

Do firms practice conflict management strategically? Survey evidence from the UK

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Overview

This paper analyses the practice of workplace conflict management in the UK. Drawing on a recent survey of private-sector employers, the paper will examine both the content of organisations' formal dispute resolution policies but also the extent to which a range of approaches are used in practice. Specifically, the paper will evaluate the extent of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) practices that are evident in British firms. The paper will go on to examine the linkages between organisations' approaches to conflict management and their broader HR strategy and determine whether there is any evidence for strategic conflict management in the UK.

Research focus, rationale and questions

Whilst the ubiquitous nature of conflict is well documented, the management of such conflict at the workplace level is still not clearly understood (Dix 2012). This gap in understanding of how conflict is addressed at an organisational level has led to an increased interest in conflict resolution both as a focus of academic research (Lipsky et al. 2012; Roche et al 2014), but also in policy development (BIS 2011). This paper will, therefore, seek to fill this gap by presenting survey evidence relating to the practice of conflict management in the UK. The paper will go on to evaluate whether these dispute resolution practices are aligned with broader HR strategies. Roche and Teague (2012) and Lipsky et al. (2017) note that despite the interest in strategic HRM, little attention has been paid to how it relates to the area of conflict management. Thus, this paper will analyse the prevalence of various progressive HR practices, including those designed to minimise conflict, to uncover the extent of strategic conflict management in the UK. The specific research questions that the paper will address are:

1. What is the extent of ADR amongst UK firms?

2. Is there a link between the use of ADR and progressive HR practices?

3. What factors (if any) are associated with the presence of strategic conflict management?

Research methods

The paper draws on evidence collected using the survey method. The survey, undertaken in 2018-19, is an extension of previous work undertaken in the Republic of Ireland in 2009 (Teague et al. 2012) and Wales in 2015 (Hann et al. 2016). The research instrument was developed in conjunction with Acas and was further defined and adapted through cognitive testing with a range of HR professionals. A sample frame of UK private-sector employers with more than 20 employers was derived using Companies House records. The questionnaire was addressed to the senior executive in the company who it was assumed would have responsibility for dealing with workplace conflict, where possible this executive was the HR specialist. The survey was distributed by post, with an option for electronic completion. Two postal reminders were issued and organisations also received a telephone call encouraging them to complete the survey. 670 valid responses were received.

Findings

At the time of writing only preliminary analysis has been undertaken but initial findings suggest that in relation to the first research question, the use of ADR is fairly widespread amongst British employers, but not the scale as in the US (Hann et al. 2016; Teague et al. 2012). The type and diffusion of these ADR practices is uneven, however. In general, internal practices that keep disputes 'in-house' are more common than those that involve external third-parties. With respect to the second research question, the survey reveals that some organisations have adopted pre-emptive practices designed to minimise the emergence of disputes in the first place. This could be taken as tentative evidence of a strategic approach being taken to workplace dispute resolution and will be examined further. Finally, the early results indicate that there are a number of variables associated with the use of ADR. Notably, these include organisation size and the presence of HR specialists within the organisation. In some cases, the presence of trade unions and other forms of worker voice are also found to be associated with certain conflict management practices. Thus, initial analysis of the survey suggests that whilst there is strong evidence of firms adopting innovative or alternative dispute resolution practices, there is, as yet, less support for the notion of strategic conflict management in the UK.

Practical implications

Conflict in the workplace is pervasive with estimates by the UK's Confederation of British Industry estimating that it costs the UK economy £33 billion per year (Everett 2017). The nature of such conflict can take a wide variety of forms and how such conflict manifests is changing over time, but what is clear is that the management of conflict is now a core part of the management of the employment relationship (Saundry and Dix 2014; Teague et al. 2012). ADR is the focus of much current attention as its interest-based approach often results in more effective outcomes, offering flexible and innovative solutions that aim to resolve issues as close to the source as possible (Ury, Brett and Goldberg 1993). Similarly, recent research that has examined the relationship between strategy and conflict management has focussed on how policies can be designed to improve organisational efficiency (Lipsky et al. 2017). Thus, this paper will increase our understanding of how British workplaces deal with workplace disputes and in so doing will add to the evidence base regarding effective conflict management and the associated organisational benefits.

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Welcome to the 21st Century: A study of workplace mediation

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Overview

This research is the first systematic review of workplace mediation conducted in Ireland and internationally. It maps the organisational field of workplace mediation at through the experience of 144 workplace mediators. Building on a limited number of empirical studies, the research traces the interconnectedness of antecedents, processes and outcomes. This study is the first to explore workplace mediation through a synthesised theoretical framework which builds on earlier models (Herrman et al, 2006; Wall & Dunne, 2012). It makes important findings in relation to the context, process, style and outcomes of workplace mediation in the 21stcentury (Brubaker et al., 2014).

Research focus, rationale and questions

There is an understanding of the general system of workplace conflict and dispute resolution in Ireland. What has been lacking is a clear picture of the overall field of workplace mediation and the role played by workplace mediators (Kenny, 2014). From my own experience as a mediator, workplace mediation has developed since its first mention in codes of practice in 2002. Many Irish workplaces incorporate the option of mediation for addressing workplace disputes. This study set out to build on previous international research (Van Gramberg, 2002-2008; Saundry & Wibberley, 2012; Lipsky et al., 2012; Bollen & Euwena, 2013; Stipanowich & Lamare, 2013). Research in Ireland indicated the use of external or internal experts in conflict management although it did not examine the extent to which mediation is used or the nature of workplace mediation (Teague, 2006; Teague & Thomas, 2008; Roche & Teague, 2011; Teague, Roche & Hann, 2012).

Given the state of theory in the field, no well formulated series of hypotheses could be tested. The focus, instead, was on deploying such theory as does exist to guide and synthesise the data. There were five major questions posed:

1. What are the antecedents to the use of workplace mediation in Ireland?

2. Who are the workplace mediators in Ireland?

3. What are the various styles and processes of workplace mediation in Ireland?

4. What are the outcomes of workplace mediation as assessed by mediators?

5. To what extent does workplace mediation affect the wider management of conflict in organisations?

Research methods

Using a mixed methods design, the research identified, for the first time, the active population of workplace mediators in Ireland. This involved working closely with the Mediators' Institute of Ireland (MII) and a variety of workplace sources to identify 444 people identifying as workplace mediators. The active population – those who had actually carried out a mediation – was found to be 241. Qualitative data were obtained from six focus groups, with 25 participants, seven interviews with internal mediation service coordinators and an officer of the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC). Quantitative data were obtained from a survey of 144 workplace mediators and analysed using SPSS. A range of documentary sources (68 in total) were also analysed as part of the research design. The mixed methods design then integrated the findings from each of the *Research methods* and explored similarities and differences between the four main groupings of mediators in the overall population.

Findings

The findings are consistent with the literature in a number of areas and advances knowledge in the emerging theoretical domain of workplace mediation in the following ways. As workplace mediation has developed to address more individual conflict issues inside organisations, the 'three-stage mediation process' identified in in the literature is more commonly a 'six-stage' process in practice. Workplace mediators in Ireland are 'general practitioners', often combining workplace mediation with a number of other professional activities, as well as 'stylistically eclectic' in their practice. The evolution of mediation use, from predominantly employer and trade union labour to more individual or group issues, could have led to significant variations in mediator style. However, the style in Ireland is evidenced by situational flexibility in terms of the range of issues workplace mediators address. Stylistic eclecticism is also the norm for all groups of mediators in the study – with mediators making judgements on style to use based on issues and goals of the participants. This may be attributed to the reality that: some mediators practice mediation outside the workplace context; many mediators have been trained by a small cadre of mediation trainers; and close to 3 in 4 mediators in the study are members of the MII. Three out of four workplace mediators adopt a short-term focus on process which achieves outcomes primarily relevant to participants in mediation. Only one in four workplace mediators engage in practices that influence long-term organisational outcomes such as changes in working environments or capacity-building in conflict resolution skills.

Practical implications

The research establishes how workplace mediation has evolved, in the context of Ireland, and why it evolved in that way. It has made the situationally dependent nature of mediator style and process clearer, and the focus on short-term outcomes more apparent. This provides greater clarity on the features and characteristics of current workplace mediation practice. This study has provided evidence that will inform mediators and human resources professionals in understanding workplace mediation and making informed decisions about future development of the field.

This research has shown that the stages in the interface between organisations and how workplace mediators interact before, during and after mediation are particularly relevant to the mediation process in individual issues which relate to interests and ongoing relationships in work. The study has established a gap in Ireland in terms of evaluation and feedback – particularly a systematic, longer-term feedback loop between mediators and organisations. Although the WRC and some internal mediation services record and report resolution rates there is little evidence of evaluation of the mediation process, mediator and outcomes from the experience of participants. Recognising the missing links in the mediation process, along with co-generation of what mediation is between the mediation profession and HR professionals can contribute to the more integrated use of workplace mediation.

The synthesised theoretical framework also provides opportunity for the systematic study of workplace mediation in other countries for comparative purposes – and for the study of mediation more generally so that similarities and differences can be more clearly identified and explored.

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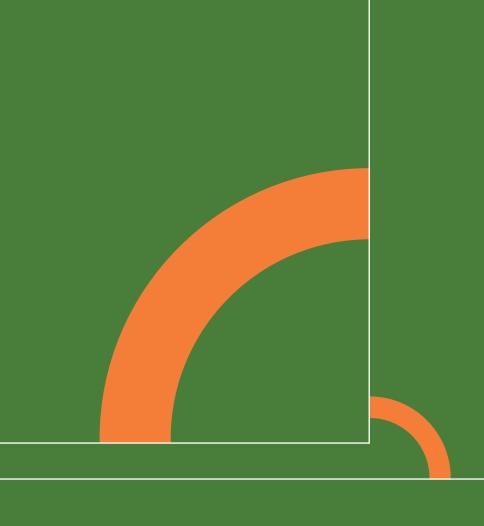
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