

## **Performance management and well-being: A close look at the changing nature of the UK higher education workplace**

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# Performance management and well-being: A close look at the changing nature of the UK Higher Education workplace

The relationship between human resource management and well-being has received a significant amount of research attention; however, results are still contested. Our study addresses this phenomenon in the Higher Education sector. We specifically investigate the association between performance management and the perceived well-being of academic staff. Our research finds that the application of a *directive performance management* approach, underpinned by agency theory ideas as evidenced by a high reliance on performance measures and targets, is negatively related to academics' well-being (i.e., the more it is used, the worse people feel). In contrast, an *enabling performance management* approach, based on the learnings of stewardship theory, emphasising staff involvement, communication and development, is positively related to academics' well-being. We also find the positive relationship between enabling practices and well-being is mediated by how academics experience their work (i.e., their perceptions of job demands, job control and management support). These results indicate that current trends to intensify the use of directive performance management can have consequences on the energy and health of academics, which may influence their motivation and willingness to stay in the profession. This research suggests that an enabling approach to managing performance in this context, may have more positive effects.

**Keywords:** Performance management, well-being, academia, human resource management, employee work experiences, PLS-SEM.

## Introduction

Well-being at work plays a central role, not just for employees, but also for organizations, the economy and society at large (Black, 2008; Danna & Griffin, 1999; Jeffrey, Mahony, Michaelson, & Abdallah, 2014; NICE, 2015). However, despite a growing body of research, debates continue to focus on measurement issues, lack of construct definition for well-being and lack of consensus on the relationship between well-being, Human Resource Management (HRM) and firm performance (Edgar,

Geare, Halhjem, Reese, & Thoresen, 2015; Guest, 2002; Oppenauer & Van De Voorde, 2016; Peccei, 2004; Van De Voorde, Paauwe, & Van Veldhoven, 2012). The literature has paid attention to the organizational practices that may explain different levels of well-being (Danna & Griffin, 1999), suggesting that HRM practices appear to be critical to explain how employees feel (Appelbaum, 2002). However, despite the increased attention to this topic (Peccei, 2004), research on how and to what extent HRM practices relate to well-being is still inconclusive (Van De Voorde et al., 2012).

The lack of consensus in this body of research indicates the continuing need to gain greater insight into the relationships at play. Our research aims to contribute to the current debate on the relationship between HRM and employee well-being, building on previous work (e.g., Danna & Griffin, 1999; Guest, 2002; Peccei, 2004) and, specifically, following Van de Voorde et al.'s (2012) recommendations to further our knowledge in this area. We examine how one single HRM practice, performance management, relates to well-being. Our decision to study performance management is primarily motivated by the renewed attention to this practice in the literature (Buckingham & Goodall, 2015; Cappelli & Tavis, 2016) and the existence of previous conflicting evidence (e.g., Guest, 2002). For instance, existing research has found that performance management, which is the HRM practice that “deals with the challenge organizations face in defining, measuring and stimulating employee performance” (Den Hartog, Boselie, & Paauwe, 2004, p. 556), can be beneficial (Fan et al., 2014; Fletcher & Williams, 1996; Van De Voorde, 2010), detrimental (Decramer et al., 2015; Guest, 2002) or unrelated to employee well-being (Guest, 2001, 2002).

To examine the relationship between performance management and well-being, we draw on insights from agency theory (Eisenhardt, 1989; Fama, 1980; Jensen & Meckling, 1976) and stewardship theory (Davis, Schoorman, & Donaldson, 1997;

Hernandez, 2012). To minimise contextual effects (Guest, 2001, 2002; Van De Voorde et al., 2012), we conduct our research in a specific context, the UK Higher Education sector, which has undergone significant change in terms of how performance is managed (Deem, 1998; Deem & Brehony, 2005). We empirically rely on data extracted from two nation-wide surveys. We examine how the different performance management approaches adopted by UK universities relate to the aggregated level of well-being perceived by their academic staff.

## **Literature and hypotheses**

### ***Well-being and Human Resource Management***

“Work-related well-being concerns the evaluations employees make about their working life experiences” (Xanthopoulou, Bakker, & Ilies, 2012, p. 1053). An employee who is satisfied with his/her job and feels good whilst doing it (i.e., his/her positive emotions are more frequent than his/her negative emotions) is considered to have high well-being at work (Bakker & Oerlemans, 2011). Previous literature has identified individual factors that can influence employee well-being (Sonnentag & Ilies, 2011). For instance, various dispositional traits such as self-esteem (Brockner, 1988) or levels of neuroticism (Nelson, Cooper, & Jackson, 1995) have been found to be associated with well-being in the workplace. There is a lack of an agreed definition of well-being, but there is some consensus that it includes the presence of positive feelings, emotions and thoughts about life, happiness, satisfaction, meaning, and the absence of negative aspects such as stress, anxiety and depression (Bakker & Oerlemans, 2011; Diener & Seligman, 2004; Ryan & Deci, 2001; Ryff & Keyes, 1995; Xanthopoulou et al., 2012).

The literature has paid attention to the organizational practices that may explain different levels of well-being (Danna & Griffin, 1999). Among them, HRM practices appear to be critical to individual well-being (Appelbaum, 2002). A number of HRM researchers have attempted to assess how and to what extent HRM practices relate to well-being with inconclusive results (Van De Voorde et al., 2012). Most studies find that there is an association between HRM practices and well-being; however, the nature of this relationship varies depending on the idiosyncratic characteristics of the HRM practices studied and the form of well-being measured (Guest, 2002; Oppenauer & Van De Voorde, 2016; Peccei, Van de Voorde, & Van Veldhoven, 2013).

Examining the relationship between HRM and well-being, Guest (1997, 2001, 2002) found that the association between HRM and well-being was well established in the literature, but the amount and nature of HRM practices were likely to have a distinct effect on well-being. He also identified that the context in which the research was conducted (either private or public sector) appeared to influence the way in which HRM practices related to how people thought and felt about their life at work.

At a theoretical level, Peccei (2004) proposed an explanatory model of the impact of HRM practices on employee well-being. His framework explicates the connections between employee outcomes as a consequence of work experiences, which are impacted by the HRM practices in place within the organizational context. The model suggests that HRM practices are related to perceived employee work experiences such as job demands, job control and management support. These in turn influence employee well-being as evidenced in levels of job satisfaction and stress. Peccei (2004) acknowledges that his framework does not include the full range of processes and/or work experiences that potentially influence well-being, but provides the basis for an HRM–well-being research agenda.

In a more recent systematic review of the HRM–well-being literature, Van de Voorde et al.(2012) unpacked this relationship and identified a few reasons that may explain the inconsistencies previously identified. Firstly, Van de Voorde et al. (2012) find that researchers often adopt a “mutual gains” theoretical perspective (cf., Guest, 2002) (i.e., they base their research on the premise that HRM is beneficial for both employees and organizations) or a “conflicting outcomes” perspective (cf., Legge, 1995; Ramsay, Scholarios, & Harley, 2000)(i.e., they argue that HRM is beneficial for organizations, but harmful for employees). Each contrasting perspective often leads to a particular choice of the form of well-being investigated, which in turn affects the results obtained. For instance, most of the existing research investigating the HRM “mutual gains” perspective tends to assess well-being in terms of happiness and/or the quality of interpersonal relationships, finding positive results (e.g., Appelbaum, 2002), but “ignoring the negative effects of HRM practices on employee health” (Van De Voorde et al., 2012, p. 402). Hence, Van de Voorde et al. (2012) argue that a more balanced approach combining the “mutual gains” and the “conflicting outcomes” perspectives as well as assessing well-being in its various forms may lead to more robust insights about the HRM–well-being link.

Secondly, Van de Voorde et al. (2012) insist that most studies analyse HRM practices as a set without carefully identifying the dynamic and differential relationships that specific practices may have on well-being. This approach is understandable as conventional knowledge suggests that HRM practices do not operate in isolation (Macduffie, 1995). However, Van de Voorde et al. (2012) contend that it is not sufficient and the relationship between HRM and well-being may be further elucidated by examining not only the aggregate effects of HRM practices, but also the differential effects produced by single HRM practices. Finally, they highlight, as other scholars

previously found (e.g., Guest, 2001, 2002), that various research design choices (e.g., level of analysis, context) can have a significant impact on results, suggesting that researchers need to carefully consider this factor when interpreting or conducting studies to understand the competing hypotheses on the HRM–well-being relationship (Van De Voorde et al., 2012). To address the lack of consensus in this body of research, Van De Voorde et al. (2012) differentiate three forms of well-being: *happiness well-being* (i.e., subjective experiences and functioning at work such as satisfaction and commitment); *health-related well-being* (as indexed by stressors such as workload, strain, and burnout); and *relationship well-being* (i.e., the interactions and quality of relationships between employees such as co-operation or bullying, and between employees and supervisors/organization as indicated by perceived organizational support). They argue that this distinction will add clarity and consistency by facilitating the interpretation and synthesis of research in this area.

The work of Guest (2001, 2002), Peccei (2004) and Van de Voorde et al. (2012) has paved the way for a better understanding of this important phenomenon. Among other issues, they have identified that more attention must be paid to the well-being effect of single HRM practices; that future research would benefit from adopting a more balanced approach combining the “mutual gains” and “conflicting outcomes” views of HRM; and that new research in this area needs to include the diverse forms in which well-being can be assessed (e.g., happiness, health and interpersonal relationships). Following their advice and with the purpose of contributing to the current debate on the HRM–well-being link, we now examine previous research on performance management, as one core practice of HRM (Den Hartog et al., 2004).

### ***Performance management: theoretical underpinnings***

Performance management has been described as the process of defining, measuring, evaluating and rewarding people's performance in an organization (Den Hartog et al., 2004). This view of performance management tends to be associated with a managerialism philosophy (Deem & Brehony, 2005; Deem, Hillyard, & Reed, 2007; Townley, 1997), which reflects a particular logic implying beliefs about the overall purpose of organizations (understood in terms of financial success) and human behaviour (believed to be rational and self-interested). As suggested by Gruening (2001), this logic has its roots in scientific management (Taylor, 1911) and is inherently related to the assumptions and predictions of agency theory (Eisenhardt, 1989; Jensen & Meckling, 1976).

Agency theory (Eisenhardt, 1989; Jensen & Meckling, 1976) assumes that employees behave as *agents* performing self-interested, risk-averse and effort-averse actions. It presupposes that the overall goal of the organization is to maximise its profits which are observable and measurable (Fama, 1980); and that the satisfaction of individuals' self-interests, mainly through money, enhances their well-being (Sen, 2002). The theory implies that social relations may be harmful as they can result in deviations (e.g., unions, nepotism, insider trading) (Rocha & Ghoshal, 2006). Based on these assumptions, agency theory predicts that in the absence of control, employees will behave opportunistically (i.e., they may prioritise their personal objectives over those of the organization), creating an alignment problem (Eisenhardt, 1989; Jensen & Meckling, 1976). For example, employees may avoid sharing important information for power accumulation purposes or they may make strategic decisions that benefit their income rather than the overall financial performance of the organization.

To address the alignment problem, agency theorists (Eisenhardt, 1989; Fama, 1980; Jensen & Meckling, 1976) propose a normative approach that involves the use of



two types of formal control practices that can curb (although never eliminate) opportunistic behaviours, increase motivation (interpreted in terms of increased effort), and ensure performance. These control practices are: performance monitoring (e.g., including the use and review of performance measures and targets) and performance-related compensation (e.g., bonuses) (Eisenhardt, 1989; Fama, 1980; Jensen & Meckling, 1976). These practices resemble the practices that HRM research focuses on when investigating performance management issues in organisations (see for example Aguinis & Pierce, 2008; Den Hartog et al., 2004). Following previous research in the area (Franco-Santos, Rivera, & Bourne, 2014), we refer to these type of practices as *directive performance management* practices.

There are, however, alternative views on managing people's performance (Bouskila-Yam & Kluger, 2011; DeNisi & Pritchard, 2006; McKenna, Richardson, & Manroop, 2011). Some researchers (Franco-Santos et al., 2014; Frey, Homberg, & Osterloh, 2013; Segal & Lehrer, 2012; Weibel, Rost, & Osterloh, 2009) suggest that the traditional view of performance management as conceived in HRM (Aguinis & Pierce, 2008; Den Hartog et al., 2004) does not fully reflect the practices that may enhance individual motivation and performance when a non-financial organizational purpose is presumed and human behaviour is not assumed to be opportunistic. These researchers (e.g., Franco-Santos et al., 2014; Segal & Lehrer, 2012) draw their ideas from insights extracted from stewardship theory research (Davis, Frankforter, Vollrath, & Hill, 2007; Davis et al., 1997; Hernandez, 2012).

Stewardship theory (Davis et al., 1997) is often seen as an alternative to agency theory. It assumes that employees can behave as *stewards* rather than *agents*. Specifically, stewardship theory assumes that “individuals hold a covenantal relationship with their organizations that represents a moral commitment and binds both

parties to work toward a common goal, without taking advantage of each other” (Hernandez, 2012, p. 173). Stewardship theory also postulates that organizational goals are more than the sum of every individual’s goals; and that for their achievement the social interaction and relationship-centred collaboration of employees is paramount (Hernandez, 2012). Based on these assumptions, stewardship theorists (Davis et al., 2007, 1997, Hernandez, 2008, 2012) suggest that the use of control practices (referring to what we have called *directive performance management*) is unnecessary and can be counterproductive. When people are considered stewards, there is no misalignment between their interest and those of the organization (the problem of “opportunism” does not exist). Instead, stewardship researchers argue that organizations need to adopt enabling practices that generate the conditions needed to maintain and enhance stewardship behaviours. These behaviours are thought to advance the well-being of individuals as well as the long-term well-being of their organizations and communities (Davis et al., 2007; Hernandez, 2012).

In particular, stewardship researchers (e.g., Hernandez, 2012; Segal & Lehrer, 2012) propose the use of practices such as: high employee involvement or participation practices, the provision of the necessary resources needed to do a job well, two-way communication, opportunities for learning and development, and fair and valuable rewards to enhance motivation and facilitate the delivery of the organizational mission whatever that might be. Because the underlying rationale for these practices is the enabling of performance rather than its control (Franco-Santos et al., 2014), they are referred to as *enabling performance management* practices.

This debate within the performance management literature may impact the current evidence base attempting to relate HRM and well-being, as previous research has tended to overlook the fact that HRM practices are designed with specific beliefs

about human behaviour and organisational purposes in mind (Arthur, 1994; Walton, 1985). These beliefs and purposes may or may not be validated in the contexts in which the HRM practices are applied with subsequent effects on how employees experience them. For instance, organisations endorsing the ideals and assumptions of agency theory (Eisenhardt, 1989; Jensen & Meckling, 1976) may promote the use of calculative or transaction-based HRM practices (e.g., performance-related pay), which emphasize quantifiable exchanges between employers and employees (e.g., Arthur, 1994; Gooderham, Parry, & Ringdal, 2008; Tsui, Pearce, Porter, & Tripoli, 1997). Alternatively, organisations may encourage the use of enabling, collaborative or commitment-based HRM practices (e.g., strategy briefings, continuous development, empowerment) guided by the ideas and assumptions encapsulated in stewardship theory (Davis et al., 1997; Hernandez, 2012) with the aim to foster mutual employer-employee interests (Arthur, 1994; Gooderham et al., 2008; Tsui et al., 1997). Considering the importance that these different beliefs about human behaviour have for HRM and the extent to which these beliefs correspond (or not) to observable reality may help to shed further light on the HRM-well-being link.

We now turn our attention to the context of our research: the UK Higher Education sector. We explain the changing nature of the managerial philosophy in the university workplace, which has led to an increase in the application of directive performance management practices (sometimes at the expense of the traditional collegial and cooperative means to enable performance). We also highlight the importance of the well-being of academics for the fulfilment of their scholarly mission, the outcomes of universities and their contributions to society as a whole.

### ***The changing nature of the university workplace and the well-being of academics***

Universities have been subject to a number of challenges over the past 20 years, including ideological shifts in their function, changing values and norms (Ter Bogt & Scapens, 2012; Townley, 1997). The introduction of New Managerialism Philosophy (NMP) principles has permeated the higher education context (Deem, 1998; Deem & Brehony, 2005; Shore & Wright, 1999; Townley, 1997). This has been a major driving force that has increased the focus on financial targets, performance and business-oriented actions of universities (Lynch, 2015; Shore, 2008; Shore & Wright, 1999). The emphasis on efficiency, strategic vision, entrepreneurialism and responsiveness to commercial drivers within academic institutions (Breakwell & Tytherleigh, 2010) has given rise to the adoption of performance metrics and a range of performance evaluations (Decramer, Smolders, & Vanderstraeten, 2012; Ter Bogt & Scapens, 2012), which would have been unthinkable in other periods (Shore & Wright, 1999). Over time, NMP has led to the introduction of *agency-theory* type practices within a largely *stewardship-theory* type context (Deem & Brehony, 2005). This shift has challenged some of the fundamental principles throughout academia, giving rise to different dynamics in the management of institutions within the Higher Education sector. The most evident features of NMP within the sector include “the funding environment, academic work and workloads [...] greater internal and external surveillance of performance of academics and an increase in the proportion of managers” (Deem & Brehony, 2005, p. 225) many of whom are manager-academics. Such changes have impacted the notions of professional autonomy, scholarship and discretion, which have always been at the heart of academia (Deem et al., 2007).

Researchers have recently suggested that leaders of universities appear to have shifted their attention towards control, costs and financial targets (Lynch, 2015; Morrish

& Sauntson, 2016; Shore, 2008). The freedom and autonomy commonly associated with academic careers is counterbalanced by the demands of the multiple roles that academics are required to fulfil (Hyde, Clarke, & Drennan, 2013). Academic staff are now increasingly required to display individual responsibility, self-sufficiency, market orientation, efficiency and competitiveness to meet the requirement of quantified quality; and this is in addition to continued pursuit of the academic goals of knowledge generation, access to education and public good (Blackmore, 2009). Individuals are tasked to achieve this through scholarly expertise and institutional reputation and status, which are key to academic success and essential for promotion (Benschop & Brouns, 2003).

In the UK, Kok, Douglas, McClelland and Bryde (2010) indicate the perceived tensions created by NPM within traditional and new universities. They highlight that traditional universities appear to be the most affected in terms of an erosion of collegiality and quality orientation in favour of cost-effectiveness and corporate orientations. For academic staff, this heralds a number of challenges to well-being due to the nature of the role (Marshall & Morris, 2015). These include ambiguity of roles, increasing workloads, lack of clarity in the link between behaviour and rewards, increased monitoring and the institution of an “audit culture” (Shore, 2008, p. 278; Shore & Wright, 1999; Strathern, 1997). In fact, Kinman & Court (2010) found that within UK universities a number of psychosocial hazards such as job demands, control, support from colleagues, and role clarity were exceeding recommended levels advised by the UK Health and Safety Executive.

Staff well-being has been shown to be consistently and continuously impacted by changes in the Higher Education sector (Kinman & Court, 2010; Kinman, Jones, & Kinman, 2006; Kinman & Wray, 2013, 2015). In particular, working hours, workload,

the management of change, level of autonomy, managerial support and work relationships appear negatively impacted (Kinman & Court, 2010; Kinman & Wray, 2015). These aspects challenge well-being in the academic work context with consequences not only for the performance of individuals and universities but also for the performance of the sector as a whole and, by extension due to their criticality, for the economy and society at large (Merton, 1996a). The people implications of such changes are according to Holbeche (2012) both urgent and important and, she argues, require a strategic HRM approach within the HE sector.

### **Theoretical framework and hypotheses**

#### ***The relationship between performance management and the well-being of academics***

The changing nature of the academic context prompted by NMP reflects an ideological shift from a *stewardship-theory* type philosophy to an *agency-theory* type one, as suggested by Deem & Brehony (2005). In line with this shift UK universities have experienced a significant transformation characterised by the increasing adoption of directive performance management practices (e.g., Broad, Goddard, & Von Alberti, 2007; Ter Bogt & Scapens, 2012; Townley, 1997; Willmott, 1995). There is evidence showing that most UK universities are currently measuring and evaluating the performance of their academic staff (Agyemang & Broadbent, 2015; Lynch, 2015; McCormack, Propper, & Smith, 2014; Morrish & Sauntson, 2016). The adoption of performance-related compensation in UK universities, however, is still in its infancy (Franco-Santos, 2015, 2016); although plans are on their way to further develop and implement these practices (Diamond, 2015; HEA & GENIE, 2009; THE, 2015; UCEA, 2015).

Previous research has found that the ideological shift towards managerialism and the proliferation of directive performance management practices is having a profound effect on UK universities in general and on academics in particular (Barry, Chandler, & Clark, 2001; Parker & Jary, 1995). Directive performance management practices are underpinned by a set of assumptions that appear to be at odds with the context of universities (Franco-Santos et al., 2014; Osterloh, Wollersheim, Ringelhan & Welp, 2015; Ter Bogt & Scapens, 2012). On the one hand, directive performance management assumes that the end goal of organizations is straightforward and uniform: to maximise financial results (Eisenhardt, 1989; Jensen & Meckling, 1976). However, universities pursue multiple and highly complex goals, such as the pursuit of excellent research and education, that are primarily non-financial (cf. Barry et al., 2001; Diamond, 2015).

On the other hand, directive performance management is based on the belief that working individuals behave as agents (i.e., exerting self-interested, effort-averse and risk-averse behaviours). However, as Hernandez (2012) and Merton (1996a) suggest, people going into academia are more likely to behave as stewards of knowledge and education in line with the aims of universities, rather than as agents in search of personal financial gains<sup>2</sup>. The academic profession has been considered a vocation, where individuals are motivated by vocational drivers (e.g., Dobrow, 2004; Willmott,

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<sup>2</sup> Stewardship theorists (e.g., Davis et al., 1997; Hernandez, 2012) do not explicitly negate the existence of self-interest as a motivational drive. It can be implied from their work that their interpretation of motivation is similar to that of Rocha & Goshal (2006) who suggests that motivation has two dimensions: the objective dimension of “what” motivates individuals (intrinsic, extrinsic) and the subjective dimension referring to “whose interest” is taken into account (self-interests, others’ interests).

1995). In this context, expected rewards are largely intrinsic (e.g., sense of autonomy, community, meaningfulness and development or progress (cf. Deci & Ryan, 2000) and/or non-financial (e.g., reputation), rather than financial (Merton, 1996b; Willmott, 1995). Moreover, academics are meant to be risk-takers (as opposed to risk-averse) and willing to go the extra-mile in order to contribute to their fields of knowledge and society (Kallio & Kallio, 2012; Kallio, Kallio, Tienari, & Hyvonen, 2016; Stevens, 2003). Consequently, the assumptions underlying directive performance management practices appear contradictory to the way people behave in academic roles and the non-financial goals pursued by Higher Education institutions. Thus, they may be seen to be at odds in the context of UK universities (Franco-Santos et al., 2014; Parker & Jary, 1995; Ter Bogt & Scapens, 2012; Willmott, 1995).

When the assumptions underlying the design of performance management systems are potentially at odds with the philosophy of the sector, the practices developed based on those assumptions may not be fit-for-purpose. The mismatch between the adopted practices and the needs and expectations of the individuals subject to those practices is likely to result in conflicting situations and tensions with potential negative consequences (Ferraro, Pfeffer, & Sutton, 2005; Ghoshal & Moran, 1996). For instance, recent data extracted from Finish universities suggest that the adoption of directive performance management practices such as performance measurement and targets in universities is perceived by academics as inappropriate and out of context, which in turn creates intense feelings of discontent among faculty (Kallio & Kallio, 2012; Kallio et al., 2016). Furthermore, the values of internal competition, individualism and control implied in directive performance management practices are likely to clash with the values of collaboration, collegiality and academic freedom that are associated with academic work (Deem, 1998; Deem & Brehony, 2005; Morrish &



Sauntson, 2016; Willmott, 1995). A state of conflict in values creates a psychological tension, which previous research has associated with a reduced sense of well-being (Burroughs & Rindfleisch, 2002).

The maintenance or further adoption of enabling performance management practices, however, are likely to have a positive association with the well-being of academics, as the assumptions and practices comprised in this particular performance management approach are more in line with the context of educational institutions (Hernandez, 2012; Segal & Lehrer, 2012). Drawing on the above rationale, we posit the following two hypotheses relating performance management to the well-being of academic staff.

*Hypothesis 1:* Directive performance management practices will be negatively associated with well-being at work for academics

*Hypothesis 2:* Enabling performance management practices will be positively associated with well-being at work for academics

### ***The mediating role of work experiences***

Peccei (2004) suggests that well-being can be better explained by individual's experiences of work, which in turn are related to the type of HRM practices applied by the organization. In line with his logic, we expect that the different forms of performance management practices will have a distinct impact on academics' experiences of work which will then lead to either higher or lower perceived well-being.

Extant literature suggests that the Higher Education environment is particularly challenging for employees' well-being (e.g., Kinman et al., 2006) with workload demands and stress relating to workplace interpersonal relationships higher than among other occupations (Kinman & Court, 2010). In particular, workloads are perceived to be increasingly less manageable, while social support is being eroded with, for example

increased levels of bullying being reported (Kinman et al., 2006). Based on this logic, we expect that:

*Hypothesis 3:* The relationship between performance management practices and well-being will be mediated by academic's experiences of work

The overall conceptual model of this research is depicted in Figure 1.

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## **Research methods**

### ***Research setting and sample***

Our study integrates data on the UK Higher Education sector from two different sources, so we can better address potential common method biases. One data set come from a larger research project focused on the relationship between performance management and well-being in UK universities (Franco-Santos et al., 2014); and a second data set from a research project developed by Kinman and Wray (2013) for the University and College Union (UCU) (the main trade union for UK academics) focusing on the work lives of academics. From the former research project, we have extracted data on perceptions of the performance management practices used by UK universities and well-being of academic staff. From the latter, we have obtained data pertaining to the quality of academics' working life.

For the survey on performance management and well-being in UK Higher Education institutions, a sampling frame of 3,650 employees working in the 162 UK universities was created. It included a stratified random sample of individuals based on publicly available data (e.g., full names, job details, email addresses). This survey was

developed and distributed online using Qualtrics software ([www.qualtrics.com](http://www.qualtrics.com)). In total, 1,342 survey responses were received. Given the debate on the boundaries of roles within Higher Education (Deem and Brehony, 2005), for the current study we have selected the responses of academic staff who self-defined as having no current managerial role (i.e., they were not heads of their departments, schools, faculties or university) to control for the potential impact of extra-role requirements related to administrative or leadership responsibilities on their work experiences (Franco-Santos et al., 2017). The final sample comprised 573 academics, working in 122 universities. The UCU survey comprised 6,456 responses from academic staff working in 147 universities. See Appendix A for detailed information about the respondents to both surveys.

Data from individual respondents were aggregated to produce a university mean. First, the data extracted from the performance management and well-being survey were aggregated. Then, the data extracted from Kinman and Wray (2013) survey were aggregated. Prior to aggregation, levels of the extent to which individuals' responses per university were interchangeable ( $ICC_1$ ), the reliability of the university means within the sample ( $ICC_2$ ), and the extent of consensus within each of the universities in our sample ( $r_{wg}$ ) (Klein & Kozlowski, 2000; Van Mierlo, Vermunt, & Rutte, 2009) were assessed and found acceptable. The combined sources generated a sample of 122 universities, which represents 75 per cent of the overall UK university sector.

### ***Measures***

*Directive performance management.* To assess this variable in the context of higher education institutions, a measure based on existing agency theory research was developed (Franco-Santos et al., 2014). In particular, agency theorists suggest two key management practices for aligning the interests of employees and organizations:

monitoring through performance measures and targets, and performance-contingent compensation (Eisenhardt, 1989; Jensen & Meckling, 1976). Based on this insight, a four-item seven-point Likert scale measuring the extent to which individuals perceived performance management practices being used in their universities was created. The scale ranged from 1 “strongly disagree” to 7 “strongly agree” (see Appendix B for the items). To assess the validity and reliability of this scale an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) using principal component extraction and varimax rotation was conducted. The EFA produced a one-factor solution; however, two items had loadings lower than 0.70 and were discarded from the data analyses. These were items relating to performance contingent compensation. An explanation for this result can be found in recent reports suggesting a very low and ad-hoc use of performance-related pay in the UK Higher Education sector (UCEA, 2015). Appendix B shows the factor loadings and Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  of 0.846.

*Enabling performance management.* To measure this variable, we reviewed the literature on stewardship theory (Davis et al., 2007, 1997; Hernandez, 2012) and extracted the key management practices suggested as appropriate for enabling stewardship behaviours (Franco-Santos et al., 2014). These management practices are: consultation (or participation), communication, resource provision, recognition of excellence and continuous learning, development and autonomy. Accordingly, we developed a seven-point Likert scale with six items ranging from 1 “strongly disagree” to 7 “strongly agree” (as shown in Appendix B). To analyse the validity and reliability of our measure we conducted an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) using principal component extraction and varimax rotation. The results of this analysis showed a one-factor solution, however one item had a loading lower than 0.70 and to improve the

quality of our measure it was discarded. The results of validity and reliability analysis (Cronbach's  $\alpha=0.903$ ) are shown in our Appendix B.

*Academics' work experiences.* To measure the perceptions of the work experiences of academic staff, a multidimensional or formative construct consisting of a set of 9 items assessing three indicators or subscales was used: perceived job demands, perceived job control and perceived management support (the full text of these subscales is in Appendix B). Three subscales were extracted from the UCU academic quality of life survey (Kinman & Wray, 2013) and are based on the UK Health and Safety Executive standard for assessing organizational related occupational stress risks (Cousins et al., 2004; Mackay, Cousins, Kelly, Lee, & McCaig, 2004). The construct is measured formatively rather than reflectively because, conceptually, a formative model seemed more appropriate following Hair, Hult et al. (2017). According to the guidelines provided by Hair, Hult et al. (2017), (1) the expected causal priority goes from the three indicators (perceived job demands, job control and management support) to the academics' work experiences construct; (2) our construct is a combination of indicators; (3) the indicators represent causes of the construct rather than consequences; (4) it is not necessarily true that if one indicator changes its ratings the others will also change their ratings; and (5) all the items are not mutually interchangeable. Each item was measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 "never" to 5 "always" (Cronbach's  $\alpha$  ranged from 0.864 to 0.949). As suggested by Becker et al. (2012), our measure of employee work experiences can be considered as a reflective-formative construct type II so we estimated it using the repeated indicator (mode A) approach as reported in our data analysis section.

*The well-being of academics*: Following Van De Voorde et al. (2012) who highlighted the importance of measuring various forms of well-being, we focussed on vitality and relational stress, which are indicators of *happiness well-being* and *relationship well-being* respectively. Vitality captures a positive dimension of well-being whereas relational stress captures a negative dimension (cf. Bakker & Oerlemans, 2011). Vitality has been defined as the sense of being alive, passionate, excited and having energy available (Porath, Spreitzer, Gibson, & Garnett, 2011; Spreitzer, Sutcliffe, Dutton, Sonenshein, & Grant, 2005). These are aspects of the well-being construct that have been shown to be particularly impacted in the context of academia (Kinman & Court, 2010; Kinman & Wray, 2013). We measured vitality using the four-item scale suggested by Spreitzer et al. (2005) and validated by Porath et al. (2012). This scale ranged from 1 “strongly disagree” to 7 “strongly agree” (see Appendix B).

To capture negative aspects of well-being, we assessed relational stress, adopting a four-item measure extracted from the UK Health and Safety Executive (Cousins et al., 2004; Mackay et al., 2004) and used by Kinman & Wray (2013) in their UCU academic quality of life survey. The relational stress scale aims to capture the extent to which academics perceive relational frictions at work, bullying or harassment (Mackay et al., 2004), which are indicators of relationship well-being. Each item was measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 “never” to 5 “always”. The validity and reliability of these two scales was examined via an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) using principal component extraction and varimax rotation. Exploratory data analysis suggested that both measures were valid and reliable as shown in Appendix B.

(Cronbach’s  $\alpha=0.883$  for vitality and  $.905$  for relational stress). It is important to note that one of the items in our relational stress measure had a factor loading lower than  $0.70$  and was discarded.

### ***Controlling for potential biases***

In order to minimise potential common method biases in our data, following the recommendations of Podsakoff et al. (2012) and Chang, Witteloostuijn and Eden (2010) we adopted ex-ante and ex-post remedies. Initially, our questionnaire was validated and pilot-tested, using as our sample, academics working in four faculties at a representative research-intensive UK university. Based on the feedback from our pilot survey we refined our questionnaire. Subsequently, we collected our survey data using a sampling frame of randomly selected individuals and an on-line survey developed using Qualtrics software. This type of data collection method improves the external validity of our sample and enables individuals to respond to our questions privately and anonymously, ensuring the confidentiality of the data. All respondents were advised that the survey data were being collected for research purposes only and that the appropriate ethical risk assessment had been performed. As suggested by Chang et al. (2010), these ex-ante remedies are critical to minimise data analysis issues, but they are not sufficient to avoid potential selection and common method biases. Together with ex-ante remedies, researchers have to perform ex-post remedies to enhance the validity of their study results (Chang et al., 2010).

On completion of data collection, survey data were tested for selection and common method biases. We compared the responses of early and late participants to test for selection biases. We tested the extent to which there were any differences in their means and these were not significantly different at 0.05, suggesting that selection biases were not a serious problem in our data. To test for common method variance we used the Harman's single-factor test (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). We conducted a principal component analysis with all the observed variables and the first un-rotated component explains less than 40 per cent of the variance. As a result,

based on this evidence, we do not expect common method variance to be an issue in our study.

### ***Data Analysis***

In line with the recommendation by Peccei (2004) for the application of multi-variate analysis to achieve an enhanced understanding of the relationships between the constructs under study, we conducted partial least-squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) (Hair et al., 2017; Hair, Sarstedt, Hopkins, & Kuppelwieser, 2014) to test our hypotheses. PLS is a statistical technique which aims to maximise the explained variance of the dependent variables under research (Fornell and Bookstein, 1982). It allows the testing of multiple hypotheses simultaneously and the outputs of PLS can be interpreted in a similar way to the outputs of ordinary least-squares regression in terms of path coefficients, significance levels and  $R^2$  values. We decided to use PLS-SEM over covariance-based (CB) SEM or multiple regression analysis due to the small size of our sample and the inclusion in our model of a formative measure (Hair et al., 2014). Under these circumstances, PLS-SEM tends to achieve a higher level of statistical power and may lead to less identification problems than other relevant statistical techniques (Jarvis, Mackenzie, Podsakoff, Mick, & Bearden, 2003). Our sample comprises respondents from 122 institutions, which exceeds the rules of thumb put forth by Barclay et al. (1995) suggesting that “the minimum sample size for a PLS-SEM model should be equal to the larger of the following: ten times the largest number of formative indicators used to measure one construct; or ten times the largest number of paths directed at a particular construct in the inner model” (Hair, Hult et al., 2017, p. 109).

PLS-SEM is conducted in three steps (Hair, Hult et al., 2017). First, a path model including items (i.e., observed variables), constructs (i.e., latent variables), and



their relationships is specified. In this path model, the model including the relationships connecting items and constructs is referred to as the outer model or measurement model. The model representing the connections among exogenous and endogenous constructs is known as the inner or structural model. Our model, due to the presence of a reflective-formative type II construct, is a hierarchical latent variable model and, as suggested by Becker et al. (2012) we used the repeated indicator approach to estimate it. Our mode of measurement on the higher-order construct (employee work experience) was ‘mode A’. The second step in PLS-SEM is to run its algorithm. We estimated our model using as the inner weighting scheme for the PLS-SEM algorithm the ‘path’ option. In a third step, the outer and inner models are evaluated. Our PLS-SEM analyses were conducted using the software SmartPLS 3.0 (Hair et al., 2017).

## **Results**

Our descriptive statistics and correlation analysis are presented in Table 1 and the results of our outer and inner models are described below and summarised in Figure 2.

-- PLEASE INSERT TABLE 1 HERE --

### ***Outer or measurement model***

As suggested by PLS-SEM researchers (Hair et al., 2017), we examined the acceptability of our outer model before testing our proposed hypotheses. Specifically, we evaluated the reliability and validity of our reflective constructs by, first reviewing the factor loadings of each of the items used to measure them. As shown in the Appendix B, all our factor loadings were greater than 0.70. These results indicate a high degree of individual item reliability as suggested by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994). We

then examined the reliability of our constructs by reviewing their composite reliability, which ranged from 0.916 (perceived job demands), to 0.904 (perceived job control) to 0.967 (perceived management support) exceeding the commonly accepted threshold of 0.70 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Next, we assessed the convergent and discriminant validity of our constructs. We used the outer loadings of each item and the average variance extracted (AVE) of each construct as indicators of convergent validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). As shown in the Appendix B, all our items have loadings greater than 0.70 and all our constructs have an AVE above the minimum threshold of 0.50 (i.e., they explain more than half of the variance of their indicators)(Hair et al., 2017). For analysing discriminant validity, we looked at whether the AVE value of each construct was higher than their squared correlations with all other constructs (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). This condition was also met as presented in Table 2. Based on the results of these analyses we can conclude that our reflective measures are both valid and reliable.

– PLEASE INSERT TABLE 2 HERE

To evaluate our formative construct of the work experiences of academics (which comprised three indicators: perceived job demands, job control and management support) we first assessed the level of collinearity among our indicators. We obtained tolerance values smaller than 0.20 and variance inflation factors (VIF) of 1.24, 1.28 and 1.147, which are all less than 5 suggesting that our construct does not seem to have collinearity issues (Hair, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2011). We then examined the relative and absolute contribution of the indicators to the construct by examining the size of the outer weights and conducting the bootstrapping procedure. We found that all the items’

outer weights and loadings were statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ). Hence, our data suggest that our formative construct exhibits satisfactory levels of quality.

### *Inner or structural model*

The standardised path coefficients, significance levels and  $R^2$  statistics of our inner or structural model are presented in Table 3. To assess the statistical significance of our parameter estimates, we used a bootstrapping procedure (Chin, 1998). PLS-SEM models are evaluated on the basis of  $R^2$  values (Hair et al., 2017). Overall, our model has an  $R^2$  of 0.435 for relational stress and an  $R^2$  of 0.212 for vitality, which indicates an acceptable model fit (Hair et al., 2017). We also calculated Stone-Geisser's  $Q^2$  to be able to assess the predictive relevance of our inner model. We obtained  $Q^2$  values of 0.401 (relational stress) and 0.144 (vitality). Fornell and Bookstein (1982) suggest that  $Q^2$  values for an endogenous latent variable greater than 0 indicate that its explanatory variables have predictive relevance. Hence, our  $Q^2$  values suggest that our explanatory variables have predictive relevance. We now turn to the analysis of our hypotheses.

-- PLEASE INSERT TABLE 3 HERE --

Hypothesis 1 proposed that directive performance management is likely to be negatively associated with indices of the well-being of academics. According to our PLS-SEM model (Table 3), the use of directive performance management practices is positively associated with relational stress ( $\beta = 0.166$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) and negatively associated with perceived vitality ( $\beta = -0.302$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) with both relationships being statistically significant. Hence, Hypothesis 1 is supported. That is, the more academics perceive the use of directive performance management practices, the worse they feel as they experience more relational stress and less vitality.

Hypotheses 2 suggested that enabling performance management is likely to be positively associated with indices of the well-being of academics. According to our analysis (Table 3), the use of enabling performance management practices is negatively related to perceptions of relational stress ( $\beta=-0.040$ ,  $p>0.05$ ) and positively related to perceived vitality ( $\beta=0.453$ ,  $p<0.001$ ); however only the relationship between enabling performance management and perceived vitality is statistically significant. Therefore, our Hypotheses 2 is partially supported. The more academics perceive the use of enabling performance management practices, the more vitality they feel; but the use of enabling performance management practices does not appear to be related to the level of relational stress they experience.

Finally, Hypothesis 3 proposed that the relationship between performance management approaches and indices of the well-being of academics is mediated by work experiences (perceived job demands, perceived job control and perceived management support). Our model shows that work experiences have a mediating role in the relationship between performance management and well-being, but only for enabling performance management practices and when we assess well-being in terms of relational stress (see Table 3). In other words, the data suggest that enabling performance management is related to a positive experience of work ( $\beta=0.120$ ,  $p<0.05$ ), which in turn is related to low perceptions of relational stress for academics ( $\beta=0.645$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). The other relationships are not statistically significant. Hence, these results partially support Hypothesis 3.

## **Discussion**

The dawn of NMP within academic institutions (Deem, 1998; Deem & Brehony, 2005) has introduced a range of HRM practices that are impacting the way in which people feel about their life at work (Deem et al., 2007; Morrish & Sauntson, 2016). It has

created numerous pressures on performance at the organizational and at the individual level, and generated conditions with potential consequences for staff well-being. Unpacking the complex interrelationship of the variables within this context remains challenging. The current study makes three key contributions to the extant evidence base on the relationship between HRM practices, focusing on performance management, and well-being. Employing a combination of established and novel metrics for the measurement of two types of performance management approaches, assessments of work experience and subjective indices of happiness and relational well-being, we examine the interplay of these variables through the application of statistical modelling to better understand possible relationships.

Firstly, we extend previous HRM research by suggesting that the underlying assumptions of different HRM practices may explain why their relationship with well-being was previously found inconclusive. As suggested by Pfeffer and Sutton (2006) numerous, often hidden, assumptions (and internalised theories about what works and what does not work in organizations) underlie the mental models of senior leaders and inform the design of management practices (e.g., compensation and performance management). For example, in business, it is often assumed that employees are lazy or opportunistic so “offering incentive pay makes organizations perform better [...and...] holding people accountable results in fewer screw-ups” (Rigoglioso, 2005, p. 1). When these assumptions about human behaviour are founded, internalised theories are useful and expected results are likely to occur. For instance, in the context of transactional sales, numerous studies have found that sales individuals do tend to behave in a self-interested way so the design and use of bonus payments can enhance sales performance (Zoltners, Sinha, & Lorimer, 2012).

However, when assumptions about human behaviour are violated, that is, when they do not accurately mirror how people behave in a particular context, then internalised theories associated with these assumptions are likely to be impractical and practices designed following these theories may be counterproductive (i.e., the dysfunctional unexpected outcomes may outweigh the expected benefits). Our data show that, in the context of UK universities, the adoption of *directive performance management* practices, which originates in agency theory and its “homo economicus” assumptions (Eisenhardt, 1989; Jensen & Meckling, 1976), may be less beneficial for staff well-being than the adoption of *enabling performance management* practices, which are underpinned by stewardship theory suppositions (Davis et al., 1997; Hernandez, 2012) and better reflect an academic context. This finding reflects the insights of Pfeffer and Sutton (2006). Further research on the HRM – well-being relationship would benefit from a greater understanding of the assumptions and theories underlying the practices implemented and the perceived and enacted human behaviours. Discrepancies between espoused and enacted behaviours may explain potential unexpected impacts of HRM on well-being.

Our results highlighting the importance of the assumptions and internalised management theories underlining HRM are even more noteworthy if we relate them to the ideas put forward by Ferraro et al. (2005) and Ghoshal and Moran (1996). These scholars investigate how management theories can become self-fulfilling. They suggest that the design of management practices that are based on unrealistic assumptions and inappropriate theories is not only detrimental for organizations and their people because it can lead to unintended or unexpected consequences; it can also be hazardous because it has the potential to become self-fulfilling. In the context of our research, this insight means that the design of *directive performance management* practices, which implicitly

assume academics are self-interested, risk-averse and effort-averse is not only associated with low levels of well-being for academics; eventually (if not already), it may generate the exact opportunistic behaviours it assumes. Further research examining the potential shift in the perceptions and behaviours of academics over time, would be beneficial given their likely impact on the creation of future knowledge.

Secondly, building on Peccei (2004), we further unravel the paths that link HRM practices to well-being. By looking at the mediating role of work experiences in terms of perceptions of job demands, job control and management support, we provide some empirical evidence supporting Peccei's (2004) initial work. Employee work experiences appear to mediate the relationship between enabling performance management and relational stress. However, the results are not clear-cut for a directive performance management approach. Our choice of work experiences was limited to three aspects that map onto those proposed by Peccei (2004): perceived job demands, job control and management support. Our findings suggest that these work experiences may relate to indices of well-being that capture its negative aspects. Work experiences were negatively and significantly related to relational stress (an index of strain or conflict in working relationships). Explanation of the paths that relate performance management and the positive dimensions of well-being deserves further research, as none of the perceived work experiences seemed to have any influence on the positive measure of well-being used in this study (happiness well-being as indicated by vitality).

Thirdly, our research contributes to the debate on the performance "enabling" role of HRM (Paauwe, 2009, p. 138). In his review of the HRM-Performance literature, Paauwe (2009) suggests that performance is more likely to occur when organizations take care of their employees ensuring they are fairly treated and their well-being is considered. He argues that HRM "should be based not only upon [economic] added

value, but also moral values” (p. 138). The current study suggests that a directive approach focused on maximising performance influencing behaviour as prescribed by agency theory appears to counter academics’ well-being. This insight provides empirical support for the “one-sided economic added value” view of HRM (Paauwe, 2009, p. 138), which resonates with the “conflicting outcomes” perspective of HRM highlighted by other authors (Guest, 2001, 2002; Legge, 1995). Academic staff experiencing a more directive mode of management feel worse in terms of perceived relational stress and vitality. Enabling practices such as consultation, communication, adequate resources to achieve work, promotion and recognition of excellence and opportunities for learning, which are supported by a stewardship theory philosophy, appear to decrease relational stress and enhance perceived vitality. This finding provides empirical support for the “moral values” (Paauwe, 2009, p. 138) and “mutual gains” views of HRM (Guest, 1997).

In addition, this paper contributes to the stream of research on the university workplace, which highlights the need to recognise the well-being ‘gaps’ for academics relative to other occupations (Kinman and Wray, 2013; p. 34) and the need to address the well-being issues being experienced within the Higher Education sector. According to Holbeche (2012) people issues in universities, which are pervasive and ongoing, call for HRM to play a shaping role. She quotes examples of where HRM is responding to challenges, such as aligning HRM efforts with institutional vision, supporting internationalization, supporting research and innovation, acting as a change agent, culture change, developing agility and enhancing the student experience. One key lever for achieving this new role is the use of performance management, but Holbeche (2005) recognises that the value sets expected by NMP are likely to be at odds with the expectations and values of individual academics. This is where issues can arise, as



highlighted by the work of Smeenk, Eising, Teelken and Doorewaard (2006). Their study indicates how commitment in the academic context, can only be expected when employees' values match the organizational values as embodied in the academic identity. The current study has shown where values are dissonant, such as in the use of monitoring through performance measures and targets to the detriment of practices which foster involvement and a supportive work environment, this may have a detrimental impact on employee well-being. Holbeche (2005) advocates that the strategic role of HRM should embrace the development of 'fit for purpose performance management' (p. 40). We suggest more attention is needed to investigate what 'fit for purpose' performance management looks like in the academic context, as part of HRM policy and practice.

On a practical level, our work has implications for university leaders and HRM departments. As vocationally driven individuals, academics may primarily be motivated by intrinsic drivers (e.g., Dobrow, 2004). Such individuals can be considered to be autonomous and self-managed, valuing job satisfaction, identity, self-awareness, adaptability, and learning (Hall, 1976; Hall & Chandler, 2005). Their performance is often governed by standards, personal as well as institutional, and a drive to improve knowledge and work collegially. Therefore, for academics, a performance management system based on stewardship principles, which emphasises development and relational approaches, may be more facilitative of well-being than a directive system.

At a policy level, Deem and Brehony (2005) reflect that the context of higher education in the UK has embraced the ideology of new managerialism which according to Lynch (2010) has resulted in not just a change in language. The focus on key performance indicators within universities, she contends "directs attention to measured outputs rather than processes and inputs within education including those of nurturing

and caring” (p. 194). This defines human relationships in transactional terms rather than the capacity building purpose of public service. If we borrow insights from other academic fields (e.g., Zoltners et al., 2012) or from other service and knowledge-focused organizations such as Wells Fargo (Egan, 2016), Enron, Worldcom and others (Jensen, 2003; Stout, 2014) we can speculate that this output-focussed approach may have consequences not just for the well-being of academics but also for the well-being of other stakeholders like students, communities or society in general. This likely occurrence may require a policy level rethink as in other sectors (Financial Conduct Authority, 2015).

This study is not free from limitations. For instance, based on our theoretical background, we have selectively focused on a set of variables to include in our conceptual model. This aids control for two performance management philosophies (directive or enabling), three employee work experiences (perceived job demands, perceived job control and perceived management support) and two categories of well-being (happiness well-being assessed in term of vitality and relationship well-being assessed in terms of relational stress). This approach adds to the previous evidence base which has used these constructs (Peccei, 2004; Kinman *et al*, 2006; Van De Voorde *et al*, 2012). However, while facilitating our analysis, it leaves a range of other variables untested in terms of work experiences and well-being outcomes. Therefore, there is scope for the examination of the range of other variables at play, such as indices of work experience; job security, wage-effort and experience of change. Additionally, this paper focuses on two indices of well-being which although highlighted in current literature as pressing concerns within the context of academia, need to be extended to a more comprehensive range.

Given the contested nature of the constructs of well-being and performance and the nature of the HRM practices applied to encourage performance and promote well-being this field is in need of considerable concept clarification (Suddaby, 2010) to clearly delineate the definitional coherence, the scope and relational nature of the constructs under study. In addition, as suggested by Peccei (2004) there is a need to continue to apply multi-level analytical models to achieve an enhanced understanding of the relationships between the constructs under study.

## **Conclusions**

The study of HRM-performance and well-being is a field of enduring significance, given the continually evolving nature of the work context. To be able to sustain well-being, we first need to understand it better. This paper flags the difficulty and complexity of the topic while providing some insights into the potentially differential outcomes that may arise from alternative approaches to managing the performance of people. Our research suggests that, in the context of universities, the relationship between performance management and well-being is more complex than previously thought. Directive and enabling performance management practices exhibit distinctive effects on different dimensions of well-being. The more academics perceive the use of directive performance management practices such as performance measures and targets, the worse they feel in terms of stress and vitality. The more academics perceive the use of enabling performance management practices like greater consultation, communication, resources, excellence recognition and opportunities for development, the better they feel (via a direct effect on their vitality level and an indirect effect on their stress levels through enhanced work experiences). While we have elucidated some potential relationships and offer insights to future researchers, practitioners and policy makers, there is still much to discover.

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