Do employee attitudes in High Performing Companies in Ireland differ from non-High Performing Companies?

Ronan Kelly
x15006689

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School of Business, National College of Ireland

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Abstract

The aim of this research was to see if employee attitudes in High Performing Companies in Ireland differ from those of individuals employed in Non-High Performing Companies. The study was hypothesised from real-world based observations, from the researcher's point of view. After reading numerous articles it was found that there was very little research on the Irish market on this topic and a number of variables influenced employee attitudes around the world and different results were found these variables were tested. Previous research found that gender and age had a significant difference on attitudes and the High Performance Work Systems (HPWS') implemented by these companies positively and negatively influenced employee attitudes. 130 participant's based in Ireland's High Performing Companies across a range of industries and departments took part in the Likert-scale based study which measured their attitudes towards different variables e.g. stress, fatigue, training, rewards and work autonomy.

Significant differences were found between the two types of companies in this study, however a limitation in this research was the grossly uneven distribution of participants working in the two groups and further research should focus on this. Other significant differences were found between males & females and also between different age bands. The differences across the age bands could be explained by the influx of millennials in the workplace and how their attitudes and requirements need to be considered by companies. However, there were no differences found between the different industries and departments examined in this study. Future research should take a qualitative approach to each of the different variables in this study to get a more in-depth insight into employee attitudes towards different HPWS'.

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Submission of Thesis and Dissertation

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Introduction - Chapter 1

Since the turn of the millennium the number of large, American multinational companies (MNC's) who base their European, Middle Eastern and African (EMEA) operations out of Ireland, predominately Dublin has increased and more are coming. The list of major firms operating in the Republic includes Intel, Boston Scientific, Dell, Pfizer, Google, Hewlett Packard, Facebook and Johnson and Johnson (McDonald, 2015). The figures from the American Chamber of Commerce in Ireland go back to 1990 and show corporations continued to cross the Atlantic even during the dark years of the recent recession (McDonald, 2015). According to the US Chamber of Commerce (2016) the combined output of US companies in Ireland exceeds $80 billion per annum; they have invested over $277 billion over the last twenty-six years and employee over 140,000 people. Figure 1 shows the increase investment, in US $ billions, from US based companies in Ireland (Quinlan, 2016).

Figure 1.1
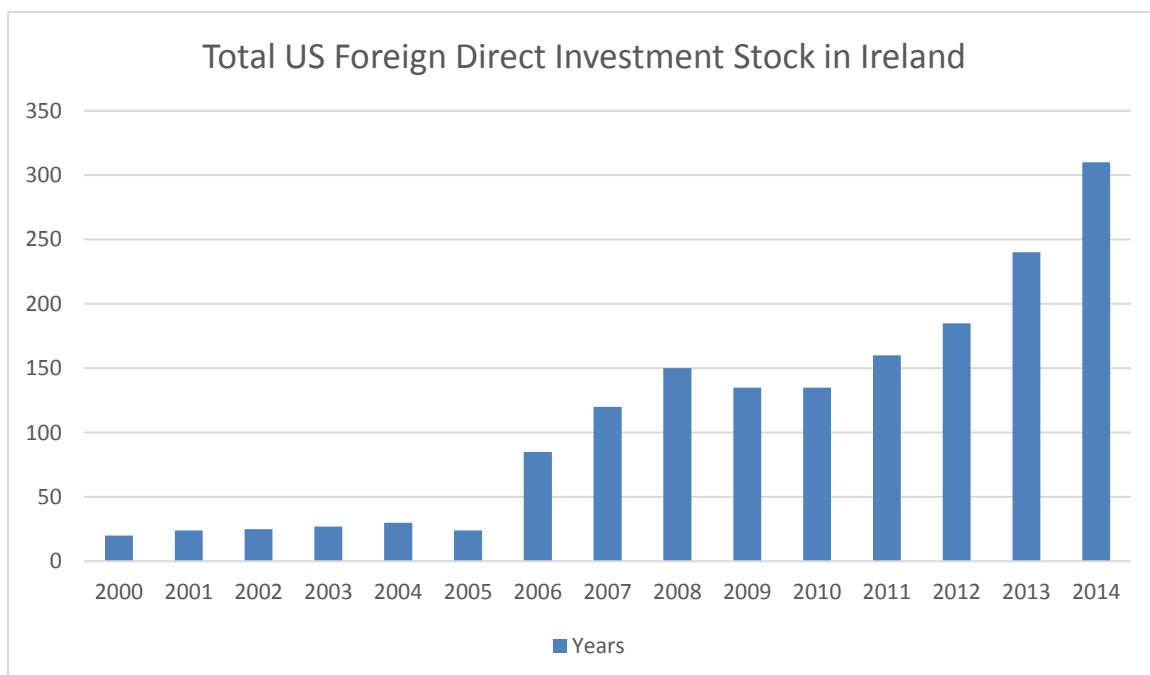
The vast majority of these companies can be categorised as "High Performing Companies" (HPC's) which can be characterised by having "quality of work-life programs, employee suggestion and involvement programs, team based work, competitive compensation and other similar programs and practices" (Pichlar et al., 2014, p. 693). The idea of a HPC was initially thought of by Lawler (1986) who theorised that companies can get the best out of their

human capital by enriching the job experience, organizing the workforce into self-managed teams and profit sharing. Pfeffer (1998, p. 104) stated that "Organizing people into self-managed teams is a critical component of virtually all high-performance management systems. Subsequent research which will be covered later in the literature review will support these claims. Robbins & Judge (2015) found that employers who involve employees in decision making processes are the most empowering managers and this feeling is reciprocated by employees who value managers that value their opinion. Robbins & Judge (2015) also found that employees are more satisfied with the people they work with and what their job consists of. However, High Performance Work Systems (HPWS') have drawn the attention of countless researchers across the world and there is a considerable number of definitions and terminology used to describe different factors, yet the underlying theory remains weak (Wood & de Menezes, 2011). This is surprising considering Pfeffer (1998) identified sixteen traits which were shortlisted to seven which are discussed in this research.

There are two variations of HPC'; the first, focuses on high commitment practices which cause employees to become more engaged in the business without changing the job design (Boxall & Macky, 2009). The other focus' on high involvement management which focus' on the redesign of the job and enhance employees by empowering them. However, both sides are not without their individual difficulties, some of which will be discussed in detail in this literature and will also be used to justify the proposed study.

As well as Pfeffer's (1998) work which identified the traits in HPC's, Robbins & Judge (2015) identified that previous researchers have focused on three types of employee attitudes; cognition, affect and behavioural. All of which may be influenced differently depending on which HPWS is being implemented. This piece of research will focus on all three; this is a recurring limitation of the research outlined in the literature review as they do not address which category their studies fall into. Perhaps the researchers were not aware of these three categories at the time of their research.

The emphasis to date has been on how high performance work systems increase job satisfaction by improving aspects traditionally associated with enriched jobs, such as autonomy, skill utilization, and development (Wood & de Menezes, 2011, p. 1589). Pfeffer (1998, p. 104) stated that "membership in self-directed teams positively affected employee job satisfaction". This statement suggests that each HPWS cannot function alone and companies should implement multiple traits to get the best results. A case study by Pfeffer

(1998, p. 112) showed that by implementing self-managed teams there was a positive impact on quality and productivity, but when bonuses based on team performance were also introduced productivity and quality improved again. In his conclusions Pfeffer (1998) mentions that implementing a trait on its own may have little to no effect on the company.

Guthrie (2001) identifies similar practices in HPWS' which make them attractive places to work which can have a knock on effect of increased commitment, reduce turnover and support employee retention. However, research by de Menezes & Wood (2006) found that there was no association between enriched jobs or high involvement in the UK. A similar result was found by Barnard & Rodgers (2000) whose research focused on a population in Singapore. This outcome raises questions around national culture, as conflicts with previous research by (Pichlar et al., 2014; Qiao et al., 2009) whose findings will be discussed at a later stage in this literature review. More recent research by Robbins & Judge (2015) examined the relationship between attitudes and behaviour. Other research by Irshad & Naz (2011) highlighted the importance of employee satisfaction and how it is related to performance and employee turnover. This is reflected in the research by Robbins & Judge (2015) who found that high levels of job satisfaction have a positive correlation with job characteristics and low levels of job satisfaction have a negative correlation with job characteristics. Fromm (2015) touched on the subject of age and how there are more millennials coming into the workforce. Employers need to understand their needs and be prepared to implement HPWS to meet their requirements.

As the phenomenon of HPC's continues to influence the Irish labour market, more and more companies are adapting the traits of these companies. Research by Pfeffer (1998) has suggested a number of traits that companies can utilise to becoming a HPC.

These traits are:

- Employment Security – Companies aim to keep their staff for a long time
- Selective Hiring – having a clearly defined recruitment and selection process
- Self-managed Teams and Decentralisation as Basic Elements of Organisational Design – Self-managed teams are more sufficient and promote an inclusive culture
- High Compensation Contingent on Organisational Performance – pay related performance and other bonus'
- Training – Offer developmental opportunities to training e.g. study leave

- Reduction of Status Differences
- Sharing Information – Clearly defined communication from Senior Management

These traits range from the internal and external labour markets i.e. the availability of highly educated and skilled workforce, training, developmental opportunities available to the workforce, employee involvement, how involved employees are in the business, and self-managed teams of individuals who are able to work effectively as a team who contribute to the overall goals of the business. All of these traits are based on the employer-employee relationship and how one cannot survive without the other. Pfeffer (1998) found that when self-managed teams were implemented in a manufacturing plant there was a 38% reduction in the defect rate and productivity was increased by 20%, this shows that when a team environment is encouraged people are more productive and the drop in the defect rate may be a result in employees changing their attitudes towards engagement and job satisfaction. Team-based organisations also are largely successful in having all of the people in the firm feel accountable and responsible for the operation and success of the enterprise, not just a few people in senior management positions (Pfeffer, 1998, p. 105). A second company which implemented teams also found that there was a 15.4% increase in sales, however, both of these cases have their limitations as they are from the late 1990's and the researcher does not discuss the methodology involved. Wood & de Menezes (2011, p. 1590) stated that "Overall, such effects may increase workers' pride in their work contribution to the success of the organization, reinforcing feelings of contentment and enthusiasm". This commodification of the traits highlighted in the literature review should in theory be mutually beneficial from employers and employees alike. However, research which will be covered in the literature review of this proposal has highlighted a number of potential issues that have risen and cause problems for companies.

Literature Review - Chapter 2

 People have many different attitudes and it is believed that there are thousands of them (Robbins & Judge, 2015). Landis, et al., (2015, p. 38) highlight how a person's emotions translate into attitudes and how effectively employees are able to do tasks related to their jobs. High performing companies (HPC's) like Facebook, Google, Airbnb, LinkedIn and Hubspot have a number of traits in common and are often rated highly in Forbes' top 500 magazine as best places to work (Dill, 2015). This is because they meet the psychological requirements of their staff and have the financial backing to implement a range of perks. The traits which define HPC's from non-HPC's are also known as High Performance Work systems (HPWS) which cover a wide range of systems and strategies that can be used by a company. These companies often invest a lot of resources into their Human Resource Management (HRM) strategies which allows them to remain competitive and plan for the future. The aim of Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) is for the company to achieve its business objectives by implementing multiple aspects of its resources and allow it to stay competitive by reducing cost and increasing profit. Companies can do this by matching turnover and long-term employee commitment Batt (2002). By doing this, employers can help reduce turnover by making themselves looking like a more attractive employer. However, Drummond and Stone (2007) found that turnover can be a cost in companies that use HPWS' because they are losing staff and are not changing their internal systems and procedures to improve the working environment, thus it is in the company's best interest to implement the right strategies otherwise they are wasting time and resources.

"Research has shown that HPWS' in and of themselves may be a source of competitive advantage" (Pichlar et al., 2014, p. 695) since they provide criteria on a range of areas; turnover, customer satisfaction and productivity (Batt, 2002; & Batt & Calvin, 2011). This is a constant finding over a period of time as Pfeffer (1998, p. 106) stated that "The savings and increased speed and flexibility of the AES team-based approach are clear and constitute an important source of the firm's competitive advantage, making them more profitable and potentially attractive to candidates and customers when compared to their competitors". This shows that HWPS are not a new thing and should not be a surprise to employers. More recently Browning et al., (2009) also found that HPC's which engage in HPWS' are able to remain competitive which is important in an ever growing market at national and international levels. Browning et al., (2009) found that some of the aspects of SHRM that

HPC's used are; recruitment, training and development, communication and team work, these traits were also identified as being present in most HPC's by Pfeffer (1998). These core traits can define a company's image and make them attractive to work for, therefore senior management need to carefully decide which HPWS to use otherwise they may negatively impact their brand. Pfeffer (1998, p. 112) stated that "virtually all descriptions of high performance management practices emphasize training". It was found by Pfeffer (1998) that US firms in Europe provide the least amount of training opportunities to its employees which is very surprising considering that is what attracts people to these companies. However, this research is outdated and it will be interesting to see if these results have changed when the analysis is done on American companies operating in Ireland. If they have not changed, they are not changing and constantly improving their practices and also could be negatively influencing their employee's attitudes, which is something all businesses should be doing to remain competitive. Hansson (2007) examined 5824 organisations across the world, including Ireland, and found that the cost of training outweighs the cost of staff turnover. But Hansson (2007) does not discuss the types of training which are been used as they depend on company specific factors. Further findings by Hansson (2007) found that only 48.2% of Irish staff in the private sector receive training and it is not clear whether these would be classed as HPCs or not.

Overall, there is limited recent research on training strategies and methods in HPC's across the world and even less in the European region. This limitation will be addressed in this piece of research by surveying employee attitudes on their training opportunities and continuous professional development. Browning, et al., (2009) also found that HPC's who show high levels of awareness towards the traits of HPWS' and are also more aware of how vital the role played by strategic HRM is to ensure sustainable levels of competition are maintained. It was also found by Browning, et al., (2009, p. 756) that larger companies are more effective at implementing HR strategies when compared to smaller companies who have a more ad-hoc approach to HR. This could be explained by larger companies having a larger, and therefore, more structured HR practices as well as financial backing to invest in the likes of training and development.

"The effective management of people can produce substantially enhanced economic performance" Pfeffer (1998, p. 96). Pfeffer (1998), who was briefly mentioned earlier in the introduction, conducted a cross sectional study on theory, research and observational studies on high performance and highlighted seven traits, all of which have been researched over the

last two decades. Pfeffer's research (1998) originally identified sixteen practices; this was shortlisted to seven as the others were centred around the implementation of the process' and not employee attitudes.

Recruitment and the overall HR function is vital according to Pfeffer (1998) whose research, though outdated by two decades, is still core to all recruitment processes. By understanding, constantly updating and developing a recruitment strategy companies are able to attract the right candidates that fit their organizational goals; e.g. do they hire people with little to no experience but have strong personality and show a certain skill which is vital to a company's strategy or do they hire someone who is highly educated and has a lot of experience from a similar company; "companies like Southwest prefer to hire individuals without previous industry experience. Many also prefer to hire at entry level. "Obtaining individuals who are eager to prove themselves and who don't know what can't be done" (Pfeffer, 1998, p. 102). For example, Singapore Airlines, a very customer focused airline, has a very defined recruitment process where candidates must pass two rounds of interview, some of which are conducted by senior management and then pass a written test, all to test their customer service skills. "From the initial pool of candidates only 10% are shortlisted and 2% (1 out of 50) are selected" (Pfeffer, 1998, p. 100). IT giant, Google was known for having a long-winded and complicated recruitment process which was deemed to be under delivering and has since been streamlined into an affect process is an example of how companies need to adapt and change accordingly. However, some recruitment processes, in their lengthy approach, can turn candidates away and in today's employee market candidates may be interviewing with more than one company.

There is a considerable amount of conflicting research on HPWS'; job satisfaction (Macky & Boxall, 2008; Messersmith et al., 2011; Pfeffer, 1998 & Robbins & Judge, 2015) who found that HPWS' have a mostly positive impact on job satisfaction and that employees are often happy to be more productive because they know they are helping to ensure a result that benefits them having a long-term job and career (Pfeffer, 1998, p. 98). However, the findings on employee well-being by Boxall & Macky (2014) shows conflicting evidence on how HPWS' can have a positive or negative impact on employee well-being and turnover (Pichlar et al., 2014). Pichlar et al., (2014) found that there are a number of variables which influence turnover. This could be explained by the types of HPWS' which are being used, this is something which future researchers should examine. Some of these traits will be discussed in detail with other pieces of research throughout this literature review. However, it is important

to consider that a company's culture will have a large influence on its employee's attitudes and the HPWS' that are implemented (Pichlar et al., 2014). Pichlar et al., (2014) argues that culture and HPWS' should and should not be kept separate. Both are very important and should interact with eachother as one can influence the other. Takeuchi et al., (2009) argue that organizational climate or culture can increase job satisfaction through HPWS' if the company culture creates an area of concern on the employees' well-being.

Organisational culture is a key variable in relation to turnover and it is important for companies to consider this (Pichlar et al., 2014, p. 694). By knowing and defining its culture a company can look at their processes to ensure they are recruiting the right individuals who will "fit" into their business and stay with the company, by doing this they will reduce their turnover. Some companies may have great HPWS' but they do not fit the company culture and is causing staff to "burnout" and leave the business. There is conflicting research on the relationship between turnover and HPWS'. Contrary to the research by Pichlar et al., (2014) which conducted a survey on 171 Human Resource (HR) professionals across various organisations in different industries in the Chicago area of the USA and found that women are more likely to stay with a company which uses HPWS' effectively. Contrastingly, Qiao et al., (2009) found in China that men are more likely to stay with a company longer. This is to be expected because when a company operates throughout the globe social and cultural variations will have an influence and need to be considered. However, national culture and attitudes may have influenced these results as one study is in the US and the other is in China. The research by Pichlar et al., (2014) on the relationship between organizational culture and turnover is limited as it has a relatively small study population of individuals who are in the same line of work and is limited to a small region the USA. It was found that turnover is more prevalent in amongst males when compared to females but it is unclear why this is, this limitation will be touched on in this piece of research. The size of the test population and the ratio of males to females may have influenced these results. There is also limited research on the impact a company's culture has on its employees, this is a limitation in the literature which will not be looked at in this research as this paper is focusing on employee attitudes not culture.

The method used by Pichlar et al., (2014) is unclear whether they used a true random sample, it states that "we drew a random sample of 500 organizations listed from a list of Chicago-area businesses" (Pichlar et al., 2014, p. 698). This could have been a convienance sample and the researchers fail to explore differences, if any, across different industries which

justifies one of the hypothesis in this study. The research by Pichlar et al., (2014) which looked at turnover but not the attitiudes of employee's which may contribute to the causes of turnover. A further limitation of this piece of work is that it focused on HR professionals only and did not look at other departments and professions within HWPS'.

Research by Boxall & Macky (2014) looked at employee's attitudes in the workplace in New Zealand and found that there are differences across a range of variables. Further to this Combs et al., (2006) suggested that the type industry and Gallie et al., (1998) suggested that the attitudes may differ depending on the department in the work place both of which will be addressed in this study. The study by Pichlar et al., (2014) focused on the factors that are important to high perfomance in organizations and suggested that future work should be done on demographics across both genders and at employees as opposed to HR professionals at varying levels of seniority across the business, based on these recommedations this piece of research will look at employee attitudes and use gender as a variable. Green (2006) supports the claim that seniority in the workplace does not make an employee immune to job related stress. (Boxall & Macky, 2014, p. 977) stated that "No matter where a person's job is located in the occupational spectrum, exessive pressure can undermine their well-bring while greater autonomy, and supportive processes, can enhance it". There is a fine line between un-leashing a person's true potential by implmenting HPWS' and HPWS' being counter productive and determental to a persons well-being and increasing stress levels as shown by (Boxall & Macky, 2014, 2008; Pichlar, et al., 2014 & Ramsey, et al., 2000).

As a result, it is unclear which HPWS' may put more pressure on an individual. Macky and Boxall (2008) found that there is a correlation between job related stress and HPWS', this research reflects the findings of Stanton et al., (2001) who found a correlation between work-related stress and the perception of threat in the workplace. Macky and Boxall (2008) addressed how the involvement process', on-boarding, training and integration to the business, found in HPWS' can affect an employee's well-being. For example, the US based low budget airline "Southwest Airlines" uses profit sharing as an incentive for its employees thus creating buy-in, giving the employees an opportunity to become more involved and have their say in the business. It also demonstrates how clear communication from the top down is vital to a company meeting its strategic objectives. Using the national population survey Macky and Boxall (2008) addressed job satisfaction, fatigue, stress and work-life balance of 1016 individuals which consisted of 50.3% males with an average age of 46.87 years old and an average working life of 6 years in their current position and 56% of the participants were

professionals or managers and found that experiences of autonomy and participation in decision-making had positive or neutral effect. However, it is not clear how busy these participants were which may influence their responses. Contrastingly to the work by Pichlar et al., (2014) there was no significant difference between males and females, this could be a result of the ratio of male and female participants in the study, which in itself, is a limitation.

It was found that work overload and pressure has a negative impact on job satisfaction, stress, fatigue and work-life balance. It was found that women indicate a worse work-life balance than men which is a stark contrast to the previously stated findings of Pichlar et al., (2014). But it is consistent with previous work by Van Veldhoven et al., (2002) who found similar results in a large sample of the Dutch workforce, perhaps national culture in the USA differs from those in Europe. If the findings of this study have a significant difference between the two genders, there may be some truth to that national culture has an influence on attitudes. However, one may expect similar results in the American multinational companies located in Europe since their management and HPWS' should reflect those in the USA but the legislation may differ, for example in Ireland and the UK there are pieces of legislation around the maximum working time an employee can do and the minimum amount of annual leave that must be given. The findings of Macky and Boxall (2008) are supported by Ramsey et al., (2000) which suggests that HPWS' can lessen the quality of the work-life balance and increase job related stress.

The research by Boxall & Macky (2014) on work intensification and employee well being is not without its limitations; for example, the the previous research cited in this literature review the experiment design has a number of weakness'. Firstly, it is a cross-sectional study and future research should be longtitudinal and the results can be influenced by a particpant's general wellbeing on the day they took part in the study. A strength is that the researchers focused on hours worked and whether employee's felt pressured to work overtime or continue their days work at home, this is supported by Gallie et al., (1998) whose research found that employees working over 48 hours per week report a higher level of work strain.

There are many factors that may influence an employee's attitude towards their job, e.g. stagnation, poor management, unfulfilling job satisfaction etc. Robbins & Judge (2015) identified a number of these traits and stressed how they can influence an employee's attitudes, both positively and negatively. By rewarding individuals appropriately companies can retain their staff. However, in modern Ireland there is a trend in the labour market of

people wanting a better work-life balance. This "feminisation" of the workplace can be described as an "emphasis on teamwork, empathy, work-life balance and nurturing relationships" Jackson, et al., (2014) of the workplace is forcing HPC's to become more flexible to try to meet the employee's work-life balance needs, "to seek employment relationships that offer more competitive compensation, opportunities for advancement, and work-life balance" Soares et al., (2009). Research by Michielsens et al., (2013) shows that women are more receptive and can benefit more from involvement and other characteristics of HPWS'. This may be because the numbers of women in the workplace is constantly growing and they are becoming more career driven and want get into senior positions.

However, certain companies, like Google and Facebook, have brought in amenities like gyms and laundry facilities to motivate employees to work longer hours as they do not need to go elsewhere to do certain chores since they are all under the same roof. This in theory is a good idea as employees can have more time to do work, but in some circumstances the company expects the individual to do more overtime which can lead to high turnover of staff and stress for the employee. Pfeffer (1998) identified that organisations only retain people who are performing well in their role and as part of the team. Research by Croucher et al., (2011) found that there is a high turnover rate in Europe, however this research is limited as it does not state whether this rate is a general statistic or a comparison to another large demographic. Guthrie (2001) found that turnover is very costly to a business that expends a lot of resources to create a HPC. By investigating the dataset, the researchers discovered that some companies have tailored employees' remuneration packages and as a result are meeting the work-life balance of their employees. However, the researchers work is limited to a certain extent as it is purely quantitative and looks at Europe as a whole. Similar to Pichlar, et al., (2014) this research only focuses on turnover and fails to address employee's attitudes. The researchers point out that the work is limited as it is a cross section of the population and not longitudinal (Browning et al., 2009, p. 616). The proposed piece of literature will solely look at Ireland and focus on a number of attitudes towards stress/fatigue; rewards, information, work autonomy, communication and training held by employees towards the company that they work for.

Pfeffer (1998, p. 109) highlighted that remuneration packages were a vital attribute to HPC's and can take part in a range of different forms including; gain sharing, profit sharing, stock ownership, pay for skill or various team or individual incentives. The low cost airline "Southwest Airlines" in North America has a profit sharing scheme which has developed

buy-in from the staff. Further work by O'Halloran (2011) examined performance pay related schemes and how they influence staff turnover. A poor relationship was found between types of performance pay and turnover. However, previous research (Green & Heywood, 2008; Heywood & Wei, 2006) found a correlation between job satisfaction and individualised performance related payment schemes.

The topic of employee participation, how involved and engaged an employee is with the business, is one of the most widely used interventions to influence performance and has been researched since the early 2000's (Humphrey et al., 2007; Parker et al., 2001), participation is one of the traits highlighted by Pfeffer (1998). However, research by Wood et al., (2012) found that there is a strong correlation between High Involvement Management (HIM), which is a corner stone of HPC's operations, and a negative impact on anxiety and work satisfaction levels in workers. The researchers carried out a quantitative study; they interviewed 2295 managers at senior level and 22,451 employees across all industries in the public and private sectors. They used the UK Employment Relations Survey 2004 to conduct the survey. The research design is very robust, with a very large population and a reliable and valid survey was used, it would be expected that recreating the experiment would produce similar results. The researchers found a significant difference between job design and increased job satisfaction.

However, it was also found that HIM is counterproductive as it increases stress levels and a higher level of dissatisfaction was found in the results but to what point is unknown. The researchers state that "HIM may move individuals closer to any critical tipping point in their anxiety, so their health and performance may be affected or they may leave the organization" (Wood, et al., 2012, p. 456). The research, like Browning et al., (2009), was limited as it was a cross section of the industries. A further limitation of the work by Wood et al., (2012) is that it focused on all industries in the public and private sectors in the UK. The findings by Messersmith, et al., (2011) who conducted research on the Welsh public sector found that department-level HPWS' were associated with job satisfaction, commitment and gave a sense of empowerment, all of which are traits found in most HPC's. Both of these pieces of research are limited as they focus on the UK and Wales only, this piece of research will look at Ireland only.

There is a considerable amount of existing research outlined in this literature review between HPWS' and employee involvement and the results are very mixed (Wood & de Menezes, 2011). There are arguments that claim that HPWS' are vital to a company's success and there are arguments that claim that HPWS' are counterproductive and cause more problems such as fatigue, stress and a poor work-life balance.

To date, researchers have not looked at attitudes of employees within HPC's that use HPWS' across multiple industries in Ireland. The existing research has also failed to create a baseline in companies which do not implement HPWS' to create a comparison for companies which do use HPWS'. The focus has been on individual factors such as;

- Turnover (Pichlar, et al., 2014 & Robbins & Judge, 2015)
- Gender ((Michielsens, et al., 2013 & Pichlar et al., 2014)
- Pay (Heywood & Wei, 2006; O'Halloran, 2011; Green & Heywood, 2008)
- Age (Irshad & Naz, 2011)
- Well-being (Boxall & Macky, 2014; Gallie, et al., 1998; Ramsey, et al., 2000; Stanton, et al., 2001).

The proposed piece of research will focus on a range of factors amongst professionals in Ireland's HPC's. The hypotheses for this study have been drawn from the limitations and recommendations of the existing research and will be defined in the next chapter.

Research question - Chapter 3

3.1 Aims & Objectives

The aims and objectives of this research is too explore whether the perception of working in a HPC in Ireland meets the reality of working in one of these companies. This will be investigated using the hypothesises outlined below. These hypothesises have been selected because there is little to no research conducted in Ireland.

3.2 Hypothesis one

There will be a significant difference between the attitudes of people working in high performing companies when compared to the attitudes of those not working in a high performing company. This hypothesis is to create a comparison between HPC's and Non-HPC's, to date there is very limited research on this topic and by comparing the two the results may show an insight into which HPWS is most effective according to the employees. Due to the lack of existing research it is hard to say if there will be a difference between HPC's and Non-HPCs.

3.3 Hypothesis two

There will be a significant difference between the attitudes of employees depending on their gender. As stated in the literature there is conflicting research on the attitudes of men and women in HPC's. The data should show if the attitudes of men and women in HPC's differ. Based on the research there should be a difference between the two genders.

3.4 Hypothesis three

There will be a significant difference between the attitudes of employees based on their age. Age, as a variable has shown interesting results but it has not been examined in Ireland in the context of HPC's. Depending on the population size and bearing in mind the existing research, there should be a difference across the age brackets. There could be a number of explanations for this which will be discussed in the discussion (Chapter 6).

3.5 Hypothesis four

There will be a significant difference between the attitudes of employees depending on which department they work in. As some departments are perceived to be more intense e.g. accounts/finance/sales when compared to others e.g. HR/marketing it will be interesting to see if there is a difference in the attitudes between the employees in these areas of the business.

3.6 Hypothesis five

There will be a significant difference between the attitudes of employees depending on which industry they work in. Similar to hypothesis four, which also has little to know research on it, led the researcher to thinking that there may be a difference between different industries now that the economy is starting to pick up again.

Method - Chapter 4

4.1 Pilot study

To ensure validity and reliability of the questionnaire a pilot test was implemented (For results of the tests of validity and reliability see section 4.7). In the pilot study 10 participants were asked to read through the survey and make sure that it was understandable and that the questions were clear. Literature by Connelly (2008) suggests that the number of participants in a pilot study should be 10% of the main study. Further research by Hill (1998) suggests that there should be 10-30 participants in a pilot test for a survey-based study. At the end of the pilot study, participants had an opportunity to give their feedback on a feedback sheet (see appendix III). For the pilot study participants were also contacted using a variety of social networks and convenience sampling was also used.

4.2 Main Study

Participants for the main part of the study were recruited using social media sites e.g. Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. Of the 400 people contacted using these methods only 130 participants fully completed the study. There were 81 (62.3%) males and 49 (37.7%) females in the study. Participants who did not fully complete the survey were excluded from the analysis as their responses would not be comparable to those who had completed the study. Only the Irish-based offices of the chosen companies were chosen to be approached for the study. The companies in Ireland employ between 40 and 2000 people in Ireland. Companies were selected as HPC's if they use the HPWS defined by Pfeffer (1998). Non-HPC's were also selected as a test population for a comparison was also required.

The age parameters for this study were set between 18-65 years of age because all working professionals are in this category. For the purpose of the research, interns/students on work experience will not be considered as they are not full-time employees and their attitudes may differ from those of who are in full-time employment. Also, from an ethical point of view participants under the age of 18 would have required parental consent to take part in the study.

4.3 Questionnaire - demographics

The questionnaire is comprised of two parts; the first gathering demographics e.g. age, gender, time in current company, are they on a contract or permanent employee, the sector that the company works in and the department that the participant works in. These factors will be used as part of the descriptive statistics and may indicate the outcome of the inferential statistics.

4.4 Questionnaire – attitude measurements

The second part of the test was used to measure participants' attitudes towards work. Questions were based on a Likert-like scale of 1-7, scores were measured from 1 representing "Strongly disagree", 2 represented "disagree", 3 represented "slightly disagree", 4 represented "undecided", 5 represented "slightly agree", 6 represented "agree" and 7 represented "strongly agree". "Likert scales are used to measure the direction and force of attitudes on a three, five or seven-point scale" (Quinlan, 2011, p. 327). A Likert scale was used in this study as it allowed participants to measure their attitudes by how much they agreed/disagreed with it. Similar scales like Huselid's (1995) "Employee skills and organizational structures", "Britain's Workplace Employment Relations Survey of 2004" (WERS2004) and the "national population survey" have been used in similar studies; (Boxal & Macky, 2014; Guthrie, 2001; Pichlar et al., 2014; Wood et al., 2012). Job related stress was measured using a Likert-like scale similar to the scale used by Boxall and Macky (2014) and Stanton et al., (2001). Fatigue in the workplace will be measured on a similar scale and will replicate the scale used by Beehr, et al., (1976). On all of the Likert scales higher responses will indicate how the participant is feeling towards the attitude being investigated.

4.5 Parametric V Non-Parametric tests

Due to the interval, measuring responses on a scale, based nature of the Likert scales in this study parametric statistics will be used to analyse the hypothesis which are comparing groups e.g. Gender and comparing HPC too Non-HPC's. The Mann-Whitney U test will be used for

a hypothesis with two groups and the Kruskal-Wallis test will be used for hypothesises with three or more groups e.g. industries, departments and number of years with the company (Pallant, 2001). The Shapiro-Wilkes analysis will also be carried out to test for significant deviations from the normality

4.6 Independent and dependant variables

For the entire hypothesis there must be an influencing, Independent Variable, (IV) and affecting, Dependant Variable, (DV) and it is the relationship between these two types of variables which is being measured. The IV's are the pieces of data which are grouped together e.g. gender, age, industry and department which the participants work in. The DV's are the test scores which the IV's are being compared against (Pallant, 2001).

4.7 Reliability & Validity

The reliability and validity, the trustworthiness and credibility of a repeated test, was determined using a Cronbach's Alpha test which tests the alpha coefficient and results in a value between 0 and 1, a value over .7 is deemed valid and reliable (Saunders, et al., 2012). This means that the study can produce stable and consist results and that the survey is relevant to the hypothesis that the researcher is trying to support.

Table 4.7.1 showing reliability statistics for all scales, for full results see appendix IV.

Scale:	Cronbach's Alpha	No. of Items
Question 8 – Stress & Fatigue	.807	17
Question 9 – Work Autonomy, Rewards & Information	.947	26
Question 10 – Trust, training & support	.933	21

4.8 Procedure

For the pilot and the main studies, participants who agreed to take part in the study were given an online link via Facebook, email and LinkedIn to the questionnaires on "Survey Monkey" which was left open for a period of one week, allowing participant's time to take part in the study. From reading the material covered in the literature review, (Macky & Boxall, 2008; Messersmith, et al., 2011; Pichlar, et al., 2014 & Qiao, et al., 2009), the author decided it best to take a quantitative approach to the study. This was because survey based studies are generally quantitative as the results are more generalizable when compared to qualitative methods which are usually more detailed. If the study focused solely on a certain variable e.g. fatigue or stress the researcher could use focus groups and/or interviews to gather information from a smaller test population. Before starting the questionnaire, the participants were given an information sheet (see appendix I) which detailed the aims of the research and they were also given a consent form which they were required to tick if they wished to take part in the study. If they do not do so they cannot fill out the questionnaire. All participants in the study were only required to fill out the questionnaire once. Surveys were done anonymously to allow participants to answer honestly. Once completed, the participants received a debriefing form which thanked them for their time to fill out the questionnaire. As part of the debriefing form participants were given contact details of the researcher and the supervisor should they wish to withdraw their data by a certain date. To do this, participants can identify their data by giving the researcher a reference number that was given to them when the start the questionnaire.

4.9 Data Analysis

The participant data was exported from "Survey Monkey" to Microsoft Excel and onto the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), where participant answers were coded into a language which SPSS can interpret in order to analyse the data. Once coded, the researcher was able to conduct descriptive and inferential statistics on the data – see results section (Chapter 5).

4.10 Strengths and Weaknesses

The only potential issue is that people who are approached online to take part may not respond. Due to the cross-sectional design of the study the participants' mood on the day and how busy they are may play a factor in their responses. This is why the questionnaire was left open for a few days to allow time for participants to take their time doing the study. A further limitation is that the participants in the focus group for the pilot study and the participants answering the questionnaire may not be fully truthful and may give the answers that the feel the researcher wants to hear which will negatively influence the results. As part of the briefing form participants will be asked to answer all questions as truthfully as possible but do not have answer all questions if they wish.

Results – Chapter 5

Of the 400 people contacted for the study only 130 participants fully completed the survey. The other 270 only partially filled out the questionnaire and have been excluded for the results because their results could potentially influence the results and not make them generalizable. The outcomes of the findings will be discussed in the discussion section (Chapter 6).

5.1 Hypothesis one – HPC v Non-HPC

Hypothesis one stated that "there will be a significant difference between the attitudes of people working in high performing companies when compared to the attitudes of those not working in a high performing company". If a significant difference is found the null hypothesis will be rejected and the alternative hypothesis will be supported. The probability (P) value of 0.05 is statistically significantly different.

A Shapiro-Wilkes test (see table 5.1.1) was a carried out and shows that significant deviations from the normality (W - HPC V Non-HPC =.235, df = 130, p=.000). This test is used to determine the normality where the null hypothesis assumes no relationship between the variables (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

Table 5.1.1

Tests of Normality

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
HPCVNONHPC	.540	130	.000	.235	130	.000

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

After confirming any normality violations, a Man-Whitney U test was carried out for this hypothesis, a Man-Whitney U test examines differences in the mean of both IV's, and a P. value of 0.237 was found. There were 123 responses from employees in HPC's and 7 from employees in Non-HPC's. Therefore, there is a significant difference between the attitudes of employees in HPC's and Non-HPC's. However, the small test population for the Non-HPC

group is a limitation for this study and will be discussed in the discussion section (see chapter 5). For the descriptive statistics for this hypothesis see appendix V.

5.2 Hypothesis two - Gender

Hypothesis two stated that "that there will be a significant difference between the attitudes of employees depending on their gender". If a significant difference is found the null hypothesis will be rejected and the alternative hypothesis will be supported. There were 81 (62.3%) males and 49 (37.7%) females in the study (N=130).

A Shapiro-Wilkes test (see table 5.2.1) was a carried out and shows that significant deviations from the normality (W – Gender =.614, df = 130, p=.000).

Table 5.2.1

Tests of Normality

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Gender	.404	130	.000	.614	130	.000

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Table 5.2.2 Shows frequency of Males Versus Females

Gender

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	81	62.3	62.3	62.3
	Female	49	37.7	37.7	100.0
	Total	130	100.0	100.0	

A Man-Whitney U test was carried out for this hypothesis and a P. value of 0.253 was found. Therefore, there is a significant difference between the attitudes of male and females. For the descriptive statistics for this hypothesis see appendix VI.

5.3 Hypothesis three - Age

Of the 130 participants their ages were put into the following categories: 18-20 years old (0%), 21-29 years old (54.6%), 30-39 years old (19.2%), 40-49 years old (15.4%) 50-59 years old (4.6%) and 60+ years old (6.2%). The M value (average) was 2.88 which is the 21-29 years old bracket.

A Shapiro-Wilkes test (see table 5.3.1) was a carried out and shows that significant deviations from the normality (W − Age =.72, df = 130, p=.000).

Table 5.3.1

Tests of Normality

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Age	.316	130	.000	.742	130	.000

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Table 5.3.2 showing age distribution.
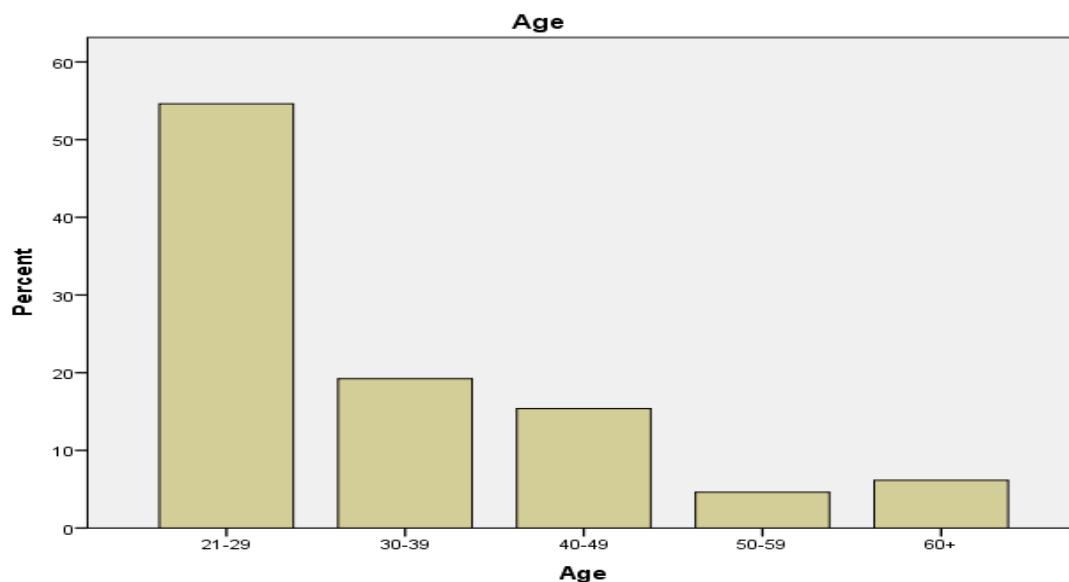
Hypothesis three stated "that there will be a significant difference between the attitudes of employees based on their age". If a significant difference is found the null hypothesis will be rejected and the alternative hypothesis will be supported. The probability (P) value of 0.05 is

statistically significantly different. A Kruskal-Wallis test was carried out for this test. Similar to a Mann-Whitney U test, a Kruskal Wallis test compares the mean of ages to determine any significant differences and a P. value of 0.26 was found. Therefore, there is a significant difference based on the ages of participants. For the descriptive statistics for this hypothesis see appendix VII.

5.4 Hypothesis four - Departments

Participants reported that they work in the following departments; Accounting (2.3%), Administration (12.3%), Customer Service (2.3%), Marketing (2.3%), Operations (4.6%), Human Resources (17.7%), Sales (5.5%), Finance (6.9%), IT (3.1%), Engineering (13.8%), Research & Development (2.3%), International (1.5%), Manufacturing (2.3%) and other (23.1%). A Shapiro-Wilkes test (see table 5.4.1) was a carried out and shows that significant deviations from the normality (W – Departments =.886, df = 130, p=.000).

Table 5.4.1

Tests of Normality

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Department	.162	130	.000	.886	130	.000

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction
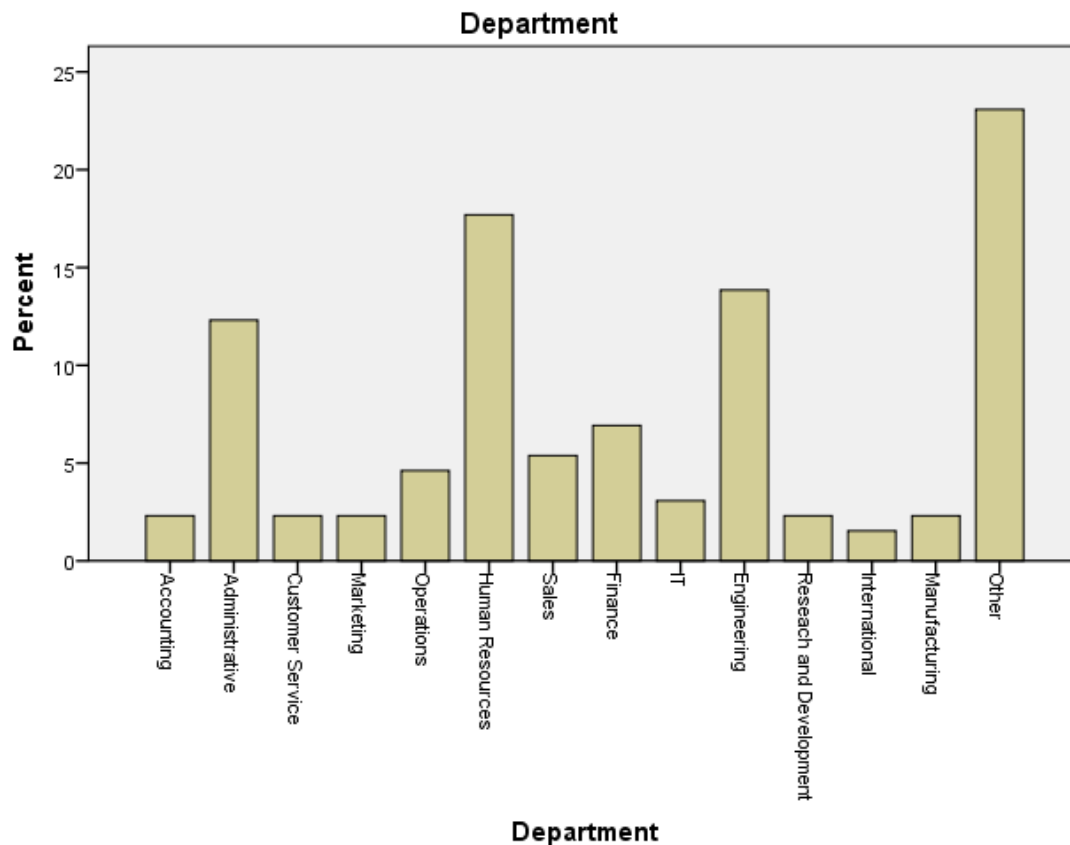
Table 5.4.2 showing department distribution.

Hypothesis four stated that there will be a significant difference between the attitudes of employees depending on which department they work in". If a significant difference is found the null hypothesis will be rejected and the alternative hypothesis will be supported. A Kruskal-Wallis test was carried out for this test and a P. value of 0.007 was found. Therefore, there is not a significant difference based on which department the participants work in. For the descriptive statistics for this hypothesis see appendix VIII.

5.5 Hypothesis five - Industry

Participants reported that they work in the following industries; Construction (36.9%), Technology (6.9%), Financial Services (12.3%), Consulting (5.4%), Education (3.8%), Manufacturing (2.3%), Pharmaceutical (13.1%), Banking (5.4%), Accounting (1.5%), Retail (4.6%), IT (1.5%) and other (6.2%).

Table 5.5.1 showing Industry distribution.
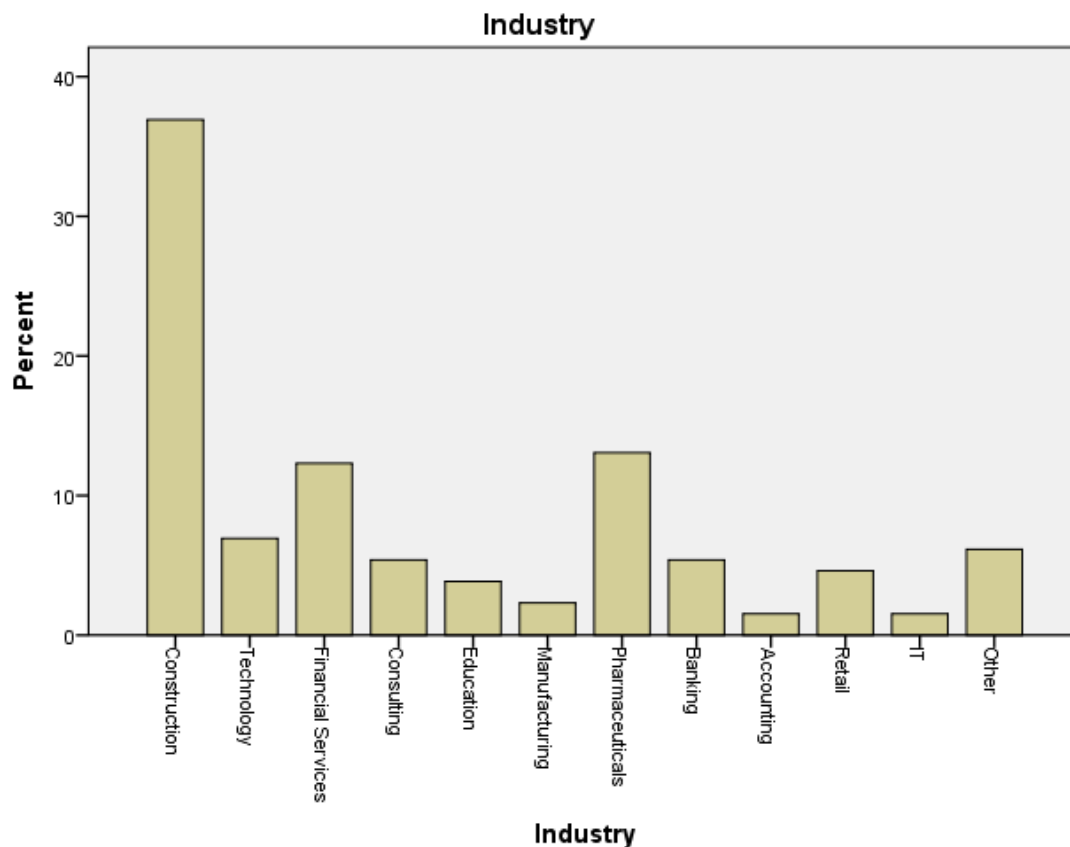
A Shapiro-Wilkes test (see table 5.5.2) was a carried out and shows that significant deviations from the normality (W − Industry =.788, df = 130, p=.000).

Table 5.5.2

Tests of Normality

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Industry	.216	130	.000	.788	130	.000

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

The hypothesis stated that "that there will be a significant difference between the attitudes of employees depending on which industry they work in". If a significant difference is found the null hypothesis will be rejected and the alternative hypothesis will be supported. A Kruskal-Wallis test was carried out for this test and a P. value of 0.001 was found. Therefore, there is

not a significant difference based on which industry the participants work in. For the descriptive statistics for this hypothesis see appendix IX.

Discussion – Chapter 6

In this chapter the researcher will discuss the findings and compare them to the existing literature outlined in the literature review to see if there are similarities or differences in the findings and try to explain why there may or may not be. The aim of this piece of research was to see if the attitudes of employees who work in High Performing Companies differ from those who do not work in High Performing Companies. This was done using five hypotheses (see chapter 3) which examined a range of variables which have been previously researched.

Overall, the findings suggest that there is a difference in the attitudes of employees who work in HPC's when compared to those who do not work in HPC. Both gender and age showed the biggest significant differences while department and industry type showed no difference. Therefore, it can be said that both the gender and age of an employee can greatly influence their attitudes while the industry that their company operates in and the department which they work have little influence on their attitudes. There could be numerous explanations for these results; the explanations will be discussed in the following sections.

6.1 HPC v Non-HPC

The researcher expected to find a difference between these two groups because HPC's use HPWS to get the best out of their teams by empowering and rewarding them. Whereas in non-HPC's employees come in and just do the job, this can be very monotonous and have an effect on an employee's mental health. However, due to the limited sample size (N=7) for the Non-HPC group compared to 123 participants for the HPC group it would be very hard to justifiably generalise these findings to a wider population. Further research should be done on this topic and researchers should be aim to get a wider sample of non-HPC's. This may prove difficult as a lot more companies are starting to use HPWS. That aside, it is not a surprise that there is a difference as HPC's are usually bigger and have capital backing to introduce HPWS when compared to non-HPCs.

6.2 Gender

The ratio of males (N=81) to females (N=49) in the study may have influenced the results. Ideally the researcher wanted a 1:1 ratio to get a more generalizable result. However, a significant difference between male and female attitudes was found based on their attitudes. This reflects the existing research by Pichlar, et al., (2014) who found that there was a higher turnover rate amongst males and company culture had a greater influence on males in the USA. However, Croucher, et al., (2011); Guthrie, (2001) & Pichlar, et al., (2014) all had not considered why there is a difference between the genders and this study started to explore this. The findings also reflect those of Boxall & Macky (2009) and Qiao, et al., (2009) who found a significant difference between the two genders attitudes towards fatigue, stress and work-life balance which were some of the measures in this research. Van Veldhoven, et al., (2002) also found a difference between the attitudes of males and females in The Netherlands where females indicate a worse work-life balance. Perhaps there lies some truth in the claim that national culture also has an influence, both positive and negative depending on the country, on employee attitudes.

From this it could be assumed that the attitudes of males and females differ in HPC's which operate in Ireland and in the US. This finding is interesting and further researchers should take a qualitative approach to get an in-depth understanding of the attitudes of males and females. Perhaps it is something in the male psyche that makes them more likely to leave?

6.3 Age

The researcher was not surprised that there was a difference across the age range. A potential weakness in the study is that 54.6% of the participants were aged between 21-29 and thus the results may be more generalizable to this age group. The attitudes of people between 21-29 differed from the other ranges. This may be explained by this age group being in a different stage of their lives when compared to the older ranges. The younger groups may have less responsibilities in their lives e.g. mortgages; children etc. which may influence their attitude towards the likes of pay and job stability. Existing research by Fromm (2015 & Irshad & Naz, 2011) shows that the younger generation are more focused on involvement, progression and job satisfaction than their older colleagues, this was found in this piece of research and a lot

of IT companies in Ireland, which use HPWS, employee these individuals making this a key finding in this research. Future research should examine Generation X, Baby-Boomers and Millennials on a qualitative basis and hone in on their individual attitudes and answer why Millennials are becoming more aware and moving away from traditional work styles and how companies need to adapt to their employee needs and wants.

6.4 Department

It was very surprising to the researcher that there was no difference amongst the departments in this study. This hypothesis was based on the recommendations of Gallie, et al., (1998) who theorised that there may be a difference between departments and on the research of Pichlar, et al., (2014) who focused only on HR professionals whereas the current study focused on 12 departments. The researcher thought that the attitudes would differ as some departments could be perceived to be less busy than others. However, this could be explained logically as employees may only be aware of the stress in their role/department and to others looking in they may seem to be exceptionally busy when in reality they are not busy. Department was chosen as a variable because there is a perceived difference in attitudes based on the department an employee is in. For example, someone in a very target driven environment e.g. sales may feel that their work-life balance is being impacted by their job and that they are not being rewarded enough for their work when compared to some in a steadier role, in terms of its workload, e.g. administration. It was surprising that this was not the case and further qualitative research in the form of interviews which explore work-life balance, stress, fatigue etc. should be undertaken to see if there really is no difference between departments.

6.5 Industry

The researcher was very surprised that there was no difference amongst the different industries in this study. This hypothesis was developed from the recommendations of Combs, et al., (2006) who had suggested industry make influence attitudes and the limitations of Pichlar, et al., (2014) whose participants were from a range of industries but these were not used as a variable. The researcher thought that the attitudes would differ depending on the

industry because the influencing internal and external factors greatly differ from industry to industry. For example, the construction industry in Ireland has picked up significantly over the last 2-3 years which is putting more pressure on certain companies while other industries e.g. FMCG is very fast paced and employees have very strict deadlines to adhere to. Further research should be conducted on employees who perform the same role across a range of industries, by using the same job function other variables like departments have been removed and the results will show a direct comparison between the industries. This can be done using quantitative methods and once that is done researchers could take a qualitative approach to understand the individual attitudes towards fatigue, stress, work-life balance, pay etc.

6.6 Scales

The scales for this study were grouped in to the following categories:

- Fatigue & stress
- Work autonomy, rewards & information
- Trust, training and support

These measures were grouped in this way because in previous studies they showed strong correlations between them. For example, stress correlated with fatigue (Boxall & Macky, 2014, 2008; Pichlar, et al., 2014; Ramsey, et al., 2000 & Wood, et al., 2012) and training correlated with support (Boxall & Macky, 2008; Hansson, 2007) and it is for this reason that the survey was modified to include these. By doing so the researcher was able to gather more research on each measure.

The findings of this study support the previous findings fatigue (Boxall & Macky, 2014, 2008; Pichlar, et al., 2014; Ramsey, et al., 2000 & Wood, et al., 2012) on stress and fatigue in HPCs, participants reported that they felt that they had to work extra hours to get stay on track to meet a deadline and as a result their friends and families were not happy with the amount of time they were spending on work. Gallie (1998) found that participants who work more than 48 hours a week reported a higher level of work related stress when compared to participants who work less than 48 hours a week. A weakness in this study is that all of the participants work at least 38 hours a week and therefore no comparison could be made.

Further research should use the number of hours worked per week as a variable to see if there is a difference. It was also found that a lot of participants felt that they have too much work for one person to do. However, it is still unclear which HPWS are putting extra pressure on employees and further research should hone in on this.

When it comes to training, communication and general support the response rate was very positive which reflects the previous research by Macky & Boxall (2008) who found that integration process' like training and communication had a positive influence on employee well-being. Participants felt that they have sufficient training opportunities to grow their careers and also that they had sufficient support from their team and managers to help them if they get into difficulty with work. From this. It could be said that this sense of teamwork is a key factor in HPCs success.

In terms of rewards participants also felt that they were being rewarded fairly for their work. This reflects the research of Greenwood & Heywood (2008) and Heywood & Wei (2006) who found a strong correlation between job satisfaction and performance related payment schemes. Participants felt that if they did well their team and in the long run the company would prove more profitable and they would receive a bonus therefore this was an incentive to work harder. However, there is a fine line between working harder to get a bonus and suffering from stress and fatigue, further research should look at this in more detail.

The scales for this study were chosen based on the finds of (Boxall & Macky, (2014); Guthrie, (2001); Pichlar, et al., (2014); Stanton, et al., (2001) and Wood, et al., (2012) all of whom used likert-based scales in their research. The survey chosen was originally designed by Boxall & Macky (2014) and was chosen as it was most relevant to the aims of this study. The advantage of this is that since the survey had been used before it was most likely valid and reliable, which when the researcher carried out a Cronbach's alpha test it was (See chapter 4, part 4.7). Participant engagement was overall satisfactory, feedback from the pilot study was very positive. Participants in the pilot study reported the questionnaire was easy to understand and the aims of the study were clear. The researcher thought that some participants might find the survey was too long and would not take part in the study. This to some extent was the case where participants did not complete all of the questions on the scale. A second worry, which is in most studies, was that participants would not be fully honest in their answers, by enabling anonymous replies the researcher hoped to overcome this issue.

Further research should focus on each of the measures on their own and not as a group, this will allow researchers to explore, in detail, how employees think towards specific feelings and not just get an overall idea, which was the case in this study.

6.7 Strengths

Overall there are a number of strengths to this piece of research. Firstly, it supported previous research on some variables e.g. age and gender which is very interesting because now there is research to support a claim that the attitudes held by a males and females in HPC's that operate in the western world are similar regardless of the country since the findings were the same in Ireland and in the USA. It also identified number of new areas to investigate, does the industry a company operates in make much of a difference to the employee attitudes? Does the department make a difference? The answer to both of these appears to be no, but this is the first time industry and department have been examined in relation to employee attitudes and further research needs to be conducted on this area.

A second strength of the study is that it identified potential topics for further study; ages department and industrial differences. The terms "millennial", "baby boomer" and "generation Z" are used more frequently and as highlighted by Fromm (2015) by 3030 most of the workforce will be made up by millennials, therefore it is important for companies to start forward planning on how they are going to implement HPWS that attract, retain and ensure their top talent has a positive mind-set. Even from this study, which in the grand scheme of things had a small test population of 130 participants, it is clear that there are more millennials in the workplace and as time goes by they will start to have a more influential say on how business' conduct their operations.

6.8 Weaknesses

It would be wrong not to discuss the weaknesses of this research which have not been mentioned in the previous sections. Only five independent variables were examined in this study:

- HPC V Non-HPC
- Gender
- Age
- Department
- Industry

Five independent variables may be seen as a lot in some studies but it depth to which they investigate is key. In this case they only scratched the surface of employee attitudes in HPC's in Ireland. Further research should focus in on one of these variables and do an in-depth study into the three types of attitudes, cognition, affect and behavioural identified by Robbins & Judge (2015). This would give greater insight into the different variables which influence the attitudes of employees in HPC's. The current study only scratched the surface of the topic and it is clear from this research and the existing literature that there is the potential for a lot more work to be done on this exciting and very relevant subject in modern Ireland.

The study like those of Browning, et al., (2009) Boxall & Macky, (2014) Guthrie, (2001) & Wood & de Menezes, (2011) had a large enough sample for the purposes of the research but if the study was to be replicated the researcher suggests a larger sample be used. This sample should also aim to have an equal ratio of males and females. A further limitation, which is also the preiously stated studies, is that the study is cross-sectional in design and a more longitudinal study should be used as companies need to be constantly reviewing and updating their HPWS to stay on top of their market and beat the competition. By doing a longitudinal study researchers could monitor employee attitudes over an extended period of time and see how their attitudes change as the company introduces new or updated HPWS.

A high number of construction professionals (36%) took part in the study which may raise a number of questions as construction as an industry would not have traditionally been seen as a high performing industry and the image of builders might come to mind. In this study all of the construction participants were all office working as Quantity Surveyors, Project Managers

and in other departments e.g. HR or Marketing. The construction companies were all selected for the study as they use HPWS.

Not a weakness per se but still a limitation, this research focused on the employee's attitudes, further research should look at the employer attitudes towards the HWPS that they use to see if they are being utilized correctly. It would be interesting to see if there is a similarity between the employee and employer attitudes. If there is one could speculate that the company is performing and if there is not a similarity between the two, the company would need to examine its HPWS. However, this is just an observation and research needs to be conducted to support this claim.

The types of HPWS' identified by Pfeffer (1998) which were used to select companies to be approached for this study were not identified. Future research should focus on the types of HPWS' which are being implemented and see how they are influencing the employee's attitudes.

Conclusion – Chapter 7

It is clear that from this study which is supported by the previous research that there are differences the attitudes of employees in HPC's. For example, the attitudes of males differ from those of females and the attitudes of 21-29 years olds differ from 30-39 year olds. Companies need to understand their requirements in terms of what they are looking for in potential new hires and how they are going to retain them once they are hired. From this piece of research, and the research by Pichlar, et al., (Pichlar, et al., 2014; & Takeuchi, et al., 2009), there is a strong argument that the roles of company culture and HPWS are intertwined and they have an effect on each other. Therefore, an organisation needs to carefully choose which HPWS to use because some may not be suitable for the way in which a business is being run and this can influence employee attitudes and well-being.

However, due to the limitations outline in the discussion (see chapter 6). There is no clearly defined answering the question "Do the attitudes of employees working in High Performing Companies differ from those who do not work in High Performing Companies in Ireland". Yes, there are arguments for and against this debate but further research on specific variables and defined attitudes is required. This research addressed a gap in the literature and has shed some light to the differences in HPC's Ireland.

Recommendations

From a practical point of view employers need to be aware of a changing talent pool and understand what the ever-changing modern workforce is looking for, not just in terms of their role but also how they can become involved and grow within the business. As mentioned previously, Fromm (2015) stated that by 2030 most of the workforce will be made up by individuals who are currently millennials. The findings of this research, (see chapters 5 & 6, sections 5.3 and 6.3) support these claims and show that 54.6% of this study are aged between 21-29 and by 2030 these individuals will be in senior management positions. By preparing now, HPC's and non-HPC's can design, test, implement and amend HPWS procedures which meet the physical and psychological needs of its employees in a cost efficient and strategic manner. By planning ahead companies can retain their staff that want

to be in work and are well rewarded for it as well as stay ahead of their competitors by retaining their competitive advantage.

It would be hard, and highly unadvisable, for companies to implement different strategies for different people based on their needs. As found in this research and supported by the findings of Michielsens, et al., (2013) and Pichlar, et al., (2014) show that males and females react differently to their environment; males are more likely to leave and females are more open to the feminisation of the workplace. For example, implementing a system based on this would cause legal issues under the Employment Equality Acts 1998-2015 on the grounds of gender discrimination. Therefore, companies need to understand their culture and from this they can identify which HPWS' will work best in their organisation and then roll them out and clearly communicate to their employees why they are being done. The company needs to listen to the employees and make amendments if required as the needs of staff are constantly changing.

Personal reflection for CIPD

Overall, the researcher found this research challenging but enjoyable. Seeing it go from an idea, to reading the existing research to identify a gap in the research and then go about collecting, analysing and interpreting the data. With this foundation knowledge in HPWS' the researcher will comfortably be able to make sound recommendations regarding which systems to implement in his company and be able to make mutually beneficial, for the company and employees, recommendations to senior management.

The researcher is very pleased to have undertaken this piece of research for a few reasons. Firstly, he found out a lot about myself in my approach to doing such a project, he discovered that he is able to approach projects with a clearly-defined and laid out plan. But also be able to adapt to the situation when something unexpected happens and have a contingency plan ready to use. He is very glad that too able to balance this project with a full time job in a busy HR department and not allow one to negatively affect the other or take time away from each other. This is evident in his time management skills which have developed a huge amount over the last year.

The amount of existing literature gave a great insight into the many variables which are visible in the world of HPWS', only a small number of which were used in this study. With

continued research on this relevant topic in modern Ireland the researcher thinks that HR departments should keep a watchful eye on any developments which could improve their business.

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Appendices

Appendix I: Information Sheet

Study Title: Do employee attitudes in High Performing Companies in Ireland differ from non-High Performing Companies?

Invitation:

You are being invited to consider taking part in this research study. This project is being undertaken by Ronan Kelly and is being supervised by Austin Coughlin. This study is being conducted to gain a Masters in HRM from the National College of Ireland. Before you decide whether or not you wish to take part, it is important for you to understand why this research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read this information carefully and ask the researcher or supervisor if there is anything that is unclear or if you would like more information. Contact is through e-mail: Ronankelly1990@hotmail.com or mobile: 0857741669.

Do I have to take part?

Participation in this study is 100% voluntary, you are free to decide whether you wish to take part or not. If you do decide to take part, you will be asked to indicate your consent through completion of a short form. You are free to withdraw from this study at any time and without giving any reasons.

If I take part, what do I have to do?

Participants are asked to fill out an online survey which, using a Likert scale will measure employee attitudes using a range of different variables.

How will information about me be used and who will have access to it?

Participant data will be collected through a survey and analysed using SPSS. Use of this data will consist of a dissertation at the end of the research to obtain an MA in HRM. This data will not be used for future research studies. All data will be anonymized and stored in a locked office. All data will be retained for up to five years at which point all data will be shredded and disposed of. A copy of the research (dissertation) will be available in the NCI library.

What if there is a problem?

If you have a concern about any aspect of this study, you may wish to contact the researcher who will do their best to answer your questions. You should contact Ronan Kelly by phone; 0857741669 or email ronankelly1990@hotmail.com. You can also contact the supervisor of this study; Austin Coughlin.

Thank you.

Appendix II: Questionnaire

| Employee Attitudes in High Performing Organisations in Ireland |
| Demographic's |

2. What is your gender?

○ Female

○ Male

3. What is your age?

○ 18-20

○ 21-29

○ 30-39

○ 40-49

○ 50-59

○ 60 or older

4. What department do you work in?

○ Accounting

○ Administrative

○ Customer Service

○ Marketing

○ Operations

○ Human Resources

○ Sales

○ Finance

○ Legal

○ IT

○ Engineering

○ Product

○ Research & Development

○ International

○ Business Intelligence

○ Manufacturing

○ Public Relations

○ Other

5. What industry does your company belong to?

[dropdown select ▼]

6. Are you employed directly with the company or are you a contractor?

○ Directly employed with the company.

○ An agency contractor.

○ Other (please specify)

[text field]

7. How long have you worked at the company?

○ Less than 6 months

○ 6 months - 1 year

○ 1 - 2 years

○ 2-4 years

○ 5-9 years

○ More than 10 years

8. On a scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly agree) please rate the following statements regarding stress and fatigue.

- I am given enough time to do what is expected of me on the job
- It often seems like I have too much work for one person to do
- The performance standards on my job are too high
- I have too much work to do to do everything well
- The amount of work I am asked to do is fair
- I never seem to have enough time to get everything done
- I sometimes feel that other departments have less work to do
- I feel completely worn out at the end of each day
- I find it difficult to get up to go to work
- I become tired in a short time at work
- I often feel that my colleagues have more work to do than me
- To get ahead in my organisation, employees are expected to work more than their contracted weekly hours
- Employees are expected to do overtime or take home work at night or at weekends
- I often feel underappreciated when I strive to meet a deadline
- After work I come home feeling too tired to do things I'd like to
- My friends / family dislike how often I am preoccupied with my work while I am at home
- My work takes up time that I'd like to spend with my personal interests

9. On a scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly agree) please rate the following statements regarding work autonomy, rewards and information.

- I have sufficient authority to fulfil my job responsibilities
- I have enough input in deciding how to accomplish my work
- I am encouraged to participate in decisions that affect me
- I feel as if my opinion is taken into consideration when making a decision
- I have enough freedom over how I do my job
- I have enough authority to make decisions necessary to provide quality services to customers / clients
- For the most part, I am encouraged to participate in and make decisions that affect my day to day activities
- All in all, I am given enough authority to act and make decisions about my work
- Company policies and procedures are clearly communicated to employees
- Management gives sufficient notice to employees before making changes in policy and procedures
- Most of the time I have sufficient notice to decisions that affect my work
- Management takes time to explain to employees that reasoning behind critical decisions that are made
- Management appears adequately informed of the important issues relating to my work
- Management makes a sufficient effort to get the opinions and feelings of people where I work
- Management tends to stay informed of employee needs
- The channels of employee communication with top management are effective
- Top management communicates a clear organizational goal
- Management communicates clearly how each part of the organisation contributes to the organizational goal
- Employees work toward a common goal
- Management have an "open door" policy and I feel that I can approach them regarding any issues I am having in work
- My performance evaluations within the past few years have been helpful to me in my professional development
- There is a strong link between how well I perform my job and the likelihood of me receiving recognition and praise
- Generally, I feel this company rewards employees who make an extra effort
- I am satisfied with the amount of recognition I receive when I do a good job
- If I do my job well I am likely to be promoted
- There is a strong link between how well my team performs and the likelihood of me receiving a pay rise / bonus

10. On a scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly agree) please rate the following statements regarding trust, training and support.

- If I got into difficulties in work, I know my workmates would try to help me out
- I can trust the people I work with to lend me a hand if I need it
- Most of my workmates can be relied on to do what they say when they say they will do it
- I have full confidence in the skill set of my workmates
- Most of my workmates would get on with their work without direct supervision
- I can rely on other workers not to make my job more difficult by careless work
- I am given a real opportunity to improve my skills at this company through education and training programmes
- I have sufficient job-related training
- I am satisfied with the number of training and development programmes available to me
- My supervisor has helped me acquire additional job-related training when I have needed it
- I receive ongoing training, which enables me to do my job better
- I am satisfied with the quality of training and development available to me
- The training and educational activities I have received have enabled me to perform my job more effectively
- Overall, I am satisfied with my training opportunities
- My manager really cares about my well-being
- My manager considers my goals and values
- My manager shows little concern for me
- My manager cares about my opinions
- My manager is willing to help if I need a favour
- Help is available from my manager when I have a problem
- My manager would forgive an honest mistake on my part
- If given the opportunity, my manager would take advantage of me

Pilot Study Feedback Sheet

Question 1

Is the phrasing of the question clear and easy to understand? Can you see any comprehension barriers or content issues? Please give feedback:

Question 2

Is the phrasing of the question clear and easy to understand? Can you see any comprehension barriers or content issues? Please give feedback:

Question 3

Is the phrasing of the question clear and easy to understand? Can you see any comprehension barriers or content issues? Please give feedback:

Question 4

Is the phrasing of the question clear and easy to understand? Can you see any comprehension barriers or content issues? Please give feedback:

Question 5

Is the phrasing of the question clear and easy to understand? Can you see any comprehension barriers or content issues? Please give feedback:

Question 6

Is the phrasing of the question clear and easy to understand? Can you see any comprehension barriers or content issues? Please give feedback:

Question 7

Is the phrasing of the question clear and easy to understand? Can you see any comprehension barriers or content issues? Please give feedback:

Question 8

Is the phrasing of the scale clear and easy to understand? Can you see any comprehension barriers or content issues? Please give feedback:

Question 9

Is the phrasing of the scale clear and easy to understand? Can you see any comprehension barriers or content issues? Please give feedback:

Question 10

Is the phrasing of the scale clear and easy to understand? Can you see any comprehension barriers or content issues? Please give feedback:

You are invited to provide any other additional comments relating to the Questionnaire

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Appendix IV: Cronbach alpha tests

Scale: Question 8 - Stress & Fatigue

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	130	100.0
	Excluded[a]	0	.0
	Total	130	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.807	17

Item Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Q81	4.95	1.857	130
Q82	4.35	1.846	130
Q83	3.30	1.870	130
Q84	3.55	1.743	130
Q85	4.53	1.860	130
Q86	3.50	1.735	130
Q87	4.07	2.024	130
Q88	4.06	1.850	130
Q89	3.03	1.721	130
Q810	3.17	1.453	130
Q811	3.38	1.511	130
Q812	4.75	1.913	130
Q813	4.67	1.986	130
Q814	4.16	1.804	130
Q815	4.86	1.549	130
Q816	3.62	1.958	130
Q817	4.14	1.999	130

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Q81	63.15	258.746	-.502	.851
Q82	63.75	191.865	.723	.775
Q83	64.79	202.584	.491	.791
Q84	64.54	197.940	.637	.782
Q85	63.56	235.597	-.120	.830
Q86	64.59	205.995	.466	.793
Q87	64.02	197.666	.535	.788
Q88	64.03	194.883	.657	.780
Q89	65.06	209.205	.403	.797
Q810	64.92	211.110	.450	.795
Q811	64.72	241.709	-.250	.830
Q812	63.34	195.528	.617	.782
Q813	63.42	206.479	.382	.799
Q814	63.93	195.801	.657	.780
Q815	63.23	207.714	.495	.792
Q816	64.47	191.352	.684	.777
Q817	63.95	195.006	.595	.783

Scale Statistics

Mean	Variance	Std. Deviation	N of Items
68.09	232.224	15.239	17

Scale: Question 9 - Work Autonomy, Rewards & Information

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	130	100.0
	Excluded[a]	0	.0
	Total	130	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.947	26

Item Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Q91	5.55	1.155	130
Q92	5.38	1.222	130
Q93	5.20	1.527	130
Q94	5.32	1.410	130
Q95	5.32	1.306	130
Q96	5.31	1.055	130
Q97	5.35	1.199	130
Q98	5.45	1.182	130
Q99	4.55	1.775	130
Q910	4.54	1.510	130
Q911	4.71	1.507	130
Q912	4.77	1.636	130
Q913	4.78	1.540	130
Q914	4.71	1.635	130
Q915	4.58	1.589	130
Q916	4.48	1.856	130
Q917	4.96	1.547	130
Q918	4.68	1.575	130
Q919	5.28	1.325	130
Q920	5.25	1.708	130
Q921	4.78	1.547	130
Q922	5.07	1.615	130
Q923	4.45	1.752	130
Q924	4.68	1.676	130
Q925	4.17	1.897	130
Q926	3.94	1.960	130

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Q91	121.68	671.845	.320	.948
Q92	121.85	663.738	.430	.947
Q93	122.04	648.688	.531	.946
Q94	121.92	649.737	.565	.945
Q95	121.92	651.560	.586	.945
Q96	121.93	674.344	.308	.948
Q97	121.89	663.244	.448	.946
Q98	121.79	652.988	.628	.945
Q99	122.69	636.308	.591	.945
Q910	122.70	637.653	.687	.944
Q911	122.53	638.360	.679	.944
Q912	122.47	636.933	.639	.945
Q913	122.45	634.219	.718	.944
Q914	122.53	622.608	.822	.942
Q915	122.66	621.481	.862	.942
Q916	122.76	620.958	.734	.943
Q917	122.28	633.442	.725	.944
Q918	122.55	641.722	.603	.945
Q919	121.95	663.409	.398	.947
Q920	121.99	620.054	.816	.942
Q921	122.46	648.638	.524	.946
Q922	122.17	632.250	.708	.944
Q923	122.79	631.050	.661	.944
Q924	122.56	623.814	.785	.943
Q925	123.07	627.290	.646	.945
Q926	123.30	631.467	.579	.946

Scale Statistics

Mean	Variance	Std. Deviation	N of Items
127.24	692.323	26.312	26

Scale: Question 10 - Trust, Training and Support

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	130	100.0
	Excluded[a]	0	.0
	Total	130	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.933	21

Item Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Q1001	5.86	1.351	130
Q1002	5.80	1.383	130
Q1003	5.58	1.413	130
Q1004	5.64	1.409	130
Q1005	5.81	1.409	130
Q1006	5.43	1.392	130
Q1007	5.12	1.523	130
Q1008	5.03	1.462	130
Q1009	4.68	1.624	130
Q1010	4.76	1.603	130
Q1011	4.49	1.676	130
Q1012	4.77	1.512	130
Q1013	4.76	1.424	130
Q1014	4.55	1.643	130
Q1015	5.08	1.798	130
Q1016	5.00	1.739	130
Q1017	2.58	1.751	130
Q1018	5.02	1.614	130
Q1019	5.33	1.501	130
Q1020	5.17	1.536	130
Q1021	5.45	1.425	130

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Q1001	100.04	411.944	.578	.930
Q1002	100.10	413.982	.525	.931
Q1003	100.32	407.349	.633	.929
Q1004	100.26	402.613	.723	.928
Q1005	100.09	416.751	.464	.932
Q1006	100.47	406.158	.666	.929
Q1007	100.78	400.868	.693	.928
Q1008	100.87	415.913	.459	.932
Q1009	101.22	395.426	.734	.927
Q1010	101.14	395.159	.749	.927
Q1011	101.41	401.344	.615	.930
Q1012	101.13	399.463	.723	.928
Q1013	101.14	406.461	.644	.929
Q1014	101.35	400.944	.635	.929
Q1015	100.82	386.023	.795	.926
Q1016	100.90	389.517	.771	.926
Q1017	103.32	479.616	-.485	.950
Q1018	100.88	386.258	.892	.924
Q1019	100.57	392.836	.846	.925
Q1020	100.73	389.377	.886	.925
Q1021	100.45	415.351	.483	.932

Scale Statistics

Mean	Variance	Std. Deviation	N of Items
105.90	445.455	21.106	21

Appendix V: Descriptive Statistics on HPC V Non-HPC

Statistics

HPCVNONHPC

N	Valid	130
	Missing	0
Mean		1.05
Std. Error of Mean		.020
Median		1.00
Mode		1
Std. Deviation		.227
Variance		.051
Skewness		4.000
Std. Error of Skewness		.212
Kurtosis		14.215
Std. Error of Kurtosis		.422
Range		1
Minimum		1
Maximum		2
Sum		137

Appendix VI: Descriptive Statistics on Gender

Statistics

Gender

N	Valid	130
	Missing	0
Mean		1.38
Std. Error of Mean		.043
Median		1.00
Mode		1
Std. Deviation		.486
Variance		.237
Skewness		.514
Std. Error of Skewness		.212
Kurtosis		-1.763
Std. Error of Kurtosis		.422
Range		1
Minimum		1
Maximum		2
Sum		179

Appendix VII Descriptive Statistics on Age

Statistics

Age

N	Valid	130
	Missing	0
Mean		2.88
Std. Error of Mean		.105
Median		2.00
Mode		2
Std. Deviation		1.198
Variance		1.436
Skewness		1.269
Std. Error of Skewness		.212
Kurtosis		.662
Std. Error of Kurtosis		.422
Range		4
Minimum		2
Maximum		6
Sum		375

Appendix VIII: Descriptive Statistics on Department

Statistics

Department

N	Valid	130
	Missing	0
Mean		9.52
Std. Error of Mean		.501
Median		8.00
Mode		18
Std. Deviation		5.716
Variance		32.670
Skewness		.326
Std. Error of Skewness		.212
Kurtosis		-1.221
Std. Error of Kurtosis		.422
Range		17
Minimum		1
Maximum		18
Sum		1238

Appendix IX: Descriptive Statistics on Industry

Statistics

Industry

N	Valid	130
	Missing	0
Mean		4.87
Std. Error of Mean		.412
Median		3.00
Mode		1
Std. Deviation		4.703
Variance		22.115
Skewness		1.209
Std. Error of Skewness		.212
Kurtosis		.328
Std. Error of Kurtosis		.422
Range		15
Minimum		1
Maximum		16
Sum		633