Employee Perceptions of Facades of Conformity Adoption Among Supervisors: The Relationship Between Perceptions, Employee Engagement, and Demographic Variables

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Master of Arts Degree in Human Resource Management

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Submitted to the National College of Ireland, August 2022

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Abstract:

This study investigates the relationship between employee perceptions of facades of conformity adoption in supervisors and employee work engagement. While considerable research has been done on the value of authenticity in the workplace, contextual standards and constructs like facades of conformity are often ignored (Cha *et al.*, 2019). Facades of conformity have many negative consequences for organizations and employees (Hewlin, 2009). Understanding how perceptions of facades of conformity impact employee engagement and which employees may be more susceptible to negative consequences, increases understanding of the facades of conformity construct as well as addresses limitations of authenticity research. A cross-sectional online survey of participants from a variety of industries was used to determine the relationship between facades of conformity, engagement, and minority status variables. Results showed there is a negative correlation between perceived facades of conformity adoption in supervisors and employee work engagement. Results also showed that characteristics such as gender, age, and minority status impact the relationship between perceived facades of conformity in supervisors and work engagement differently than self-reported facades of conformity have. These findings highlight a gap in facades of conformity research, the difference in effect of perceived facades of conformity, and the possible implications this could have on authenticity research, facades of conformity research, and practical HRM applications.

Keywords: Facades of Conformity, Work Engagement, Authenticity

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Degree for which thesis is submitted: Master of Arts Degree HRM (MAHRMNCI1)

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List of Abbreviations:

1. Facades of Conformity (FOC)
2. Human Resources (HR)
3. Human Resource Management (HRM)
4. Impression Management (IM)
5. Work Engagement (WE)
6. General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)
7. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)
8. Diversity and Inclusion (D&I)

Chapter 1: Introduction

Authenticity appears to be a magic prescription with endless benefits, however, much of the research on authenticity has focused on positive outcomes without considering contextual standards (Cha *et al.*, 2019; Emmerich and Rigotti, 2017; Opie and Freeman, 2017). Constructs of authenticity such as facades of conformity (FOC), which have negative outcomes, are often considered outside of the conversation (Cha *et al.*, 2019). For this reason, concerns about the ethics of promoting authenticity and the universality of its application have begun to emerge (Kifer *et al.*, 2013; Opie and Freeman, 2017). A fuller understanding of constructs like facades of conformity is necessary before an honest assessment of the value of authenticity can be made and human resource management (HRM) practices can be reviewed to ensure they reinforce attempts to cultivate authenticity and employee work engagement.

Authenticity has become a buzz word, with much attention being put toward cultivating workplace authenticity. The notion that one should be themselves at work and that organizations are open to and actively promoting this idea has gained huge popularity (Opie and Freeman, 2017). Imagine, we all could just be ourselves and reap all the amazing benefits that come with it. It does of course beg the question, why weren't we all bringing our true selves to work in the first place? Authenticity is the product of trust (Hsieh and Wang, 2015; Leroy, Palanski and Simons, 2012). People must trust that who they are is who the organization would like them to be, and there will be no negative consequences for bringing this version of themselves to work (Schmader and Sedikides, 2018). What if this just isn't the case? Surely there are types of people an organization would prefer to employ. What about those that don't fall into that category? Will they still be given the same chance? Will they have opportunities for advancement? FOC are adopted by those who don't believe they will (Hewlin, 2003;2009).

Organizations want people who fit, and people want to feel that they fit (Schmader and Sedikides, 2018; Opie and Freeman, 2017). FOC are adopted by people who recognize or fear they do not fit but want to feel or appear as though they belong (Hewlin, Kim and Song, 2016; Hewlin, 2009). According to Hewlin (2003), FOC is when an employee pretends to share the same beliefs and values as their organization although they conflict. FOC describe not just the behaviours associated with the compliance, but the interpersonal conflict that arises in doing so (Stormer and Devine, 2008; Hewlin, 2003). This relates directly back to the

authenticity argument. Why would someone pretend to hold beliefs or values in opposition to their own if they did not feel it would benefit them to do so? If individuals or organizations truly prefer people to be themselves, and if there are a plethora of advantages in doing so, what would be the benefit of pretending to be someone you are not?

Authenticity research touts a long list of benefits to both person and organization for authentic behaviour. There is no shortage of studies showing how authentic leaders bring about change and create atmospheres of trust that enable parties to benefit from workplace authenticity (Ma, Sachdev and Gu, 2020; Chou, Fang and Yeh, 2019; Reis, Trullen and Story, 2016; Leroy *et al.*, 2012). Authenticity has been shown to benefit one's health as well as their career (Braun and Peus, 2018; Emmerich and Rigotti, 2017; Wood *et al.*, 2008). Leadership authenticity especially has been the target of extensive study given the impact it has on the employee/leader relationship and the overall organizational climate (Leroy *et al.*, 2012; Gardner, Fischer and Hunt, 2009; Roberts *et al.*, 2009; Fields, 2007; Gardner *et al.*, 2005). It would appear leaders hold the keys to promoting authenticity within an organization and creating the relationships and contexts in which the benefits from authenticity can be actualized (Ma *et al.*, 2020; Leroy *et al.*, 2012). Perhaps the greatest of these benefits is increased employee engagement.

Engaged employees bring higher commitment, performance, and energy to the job, and are less likely to leave (Saks, 2006; 2019). Although there are several theories that explain how or why authenticity cultivates engagement, they all include aspects of needs fulfilment that leadership authenticity helps to create. The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model, Self-Determination Theory (SDT), and Social Exchange Theory (SET), have all been used to demonstrate how the benefits of a positive leader-follower relationship and the resources it provides can increase employee work engagement (Ma *et al.*, 2020; Bakker and Schaufeli, 2008; Deci and Ryan, 2008; Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005). If authenticity cultivates engagement through systems of trust and relationships of reciprocity, how might it be undermined by the presence of inauthentic leadership?

According to authenticity research, the relationship between trust and follower perception of leader authenticity is a key component to developing follower authenticity and the benefits thereof (Leroy *et al.*, 2012; Fields, 2007). If employees perceive FOC in their supervisors, what impact might this have on this relationship? FOC as a social mobility tactic (Phillips, Williams and Kirkman, 2016) or FOC as a survival mechanism (Hewlin *et al.*,

2016; Hewlin, 2009) are likely to be interpreted as inauthenticity on the part of the supervisor, regardless of the motivation for their adoption. How might employees perceive FOC adoption among their leaders? What messages might this convey about their own opportunities to be authentic? If employees don't believe they have an opportunity to be themselves in their workplace, what impact might this have on their work engagement?

With few exceptions, authenticity research seems to look only at the benefits of authenticity and the circumstances under which it is cultivated, without considering inauthenticity and the conditions under which it finds its place in societal and organizational culture (Cha *et al.*, 2019). Inauthentic behaviours are often looked at separately as an opportunistic choice. Identity management (IM), emotional labor, hypocrisy, and FOC, are commonly not considered negative facets of authenticity, or what Cha *et al.* (2019) have labelled secondary constructs, but as different constructs altogether (Hewlin, 2009). More recently the merits of this categorization have been questioned (Hewlin *et al.*, 2020; Cha *et al.*, 2019). To truly understand authenticity, one must understand all the related constructs. How can a compelling argument for authenticity be made without first understanding what causes inauthenticity to be a preferred choice? If authenticity is cultivated by trust in one's environment (Schmader and Sedikides, 2018), couldn't it be inferred that inauthenticity is cultivated by the lack thereof?

Inauthenticity is not a preferred state (Schmader and Sedikides, 2018; Hewlin, Dumas and Burnett, 2017) so clearly something compels those who revert to inauthentic behaviour. Evidence suggests FOC are usually the product of marginalisation, insecurity, or personal characteristics that prevent people from being authentic in particular environments (Hewlin *et al.*, 2016; Hewlin, 2009). They are usually adopted to help one fit in and as a survival mechanism (Hewlin, 2003). If inauthenticity is often the safer choice, how authentic are workplace authenticity claims? What environmental cues govern decisions for some to adopt FOC while others enjoy the benefits of being authentic? Perhaps it is the knowledge that although authenticity offers a magnitude of benefits for some, it doesn't offer them to everyone.

Before the conversation about the validity of authenticity can evolve, more needs to be learned about secondary authenticity constructs. While some secondary constructs of authenticity have been explored more thoroughly, others such as FOC have not (Cha *et al.*, 2019). Although research on FOC is limited, it shows FOC have a negative relationship with

job satisfaction, commitment, and psychological and emotional well-being (Chou *et al.*, 2019; Hewlin *et al.*, 2017; Hewlin *et al.*, 2016), all of which are characteristics of work engagement (Saks, 2019). FOC have been shown to have a direct and negative impact on the engagement of individuals who adopt them (Hewlin *et al.*, 2017). If perceptions of façade adoption in supervisors can impact follower work engagement, and if that relationship is greater for minority employees, facades of conformity have far greater reach than previously established.

Authenticity research has focused on experienced authenticity and internal outcomes, or perceived authenticity and external outcomes. The effects of externally perceived authenticity on internal outcomes have not been evaluated in this context (Cha *et al.*, 2019). If a negative correlation can be made between perceptions on FOC adoption in supervisors and employee engagement levels, significant value will be added to the argument that authenticity and authenticity outcomes are closely tied to constructs associated with inauthenticity like FOC. This research seeks to address these questions by examining the relationship between perceptions of FOC in supervisors and employee engagement. Research on FOC has focused on the impact FOC adoption has on the individual and the organization (Hewlin *et al.*, 2017, Hewlin *et al.*, 2016; Hewlin, 2009), but has not considered the possible impact perceived FOC could have on other employees. Given the impact perception of leadership authenticity has on the relationship between employee authenticity cultivation and employee engagement (Leroy *et al.*, 2012; Fields, 2007), it is reasonable to expect the perception of FOC adoption in supervisors would impact employee engagement levels.

The relationship between perceived FOC adoption in supervisors and employee minority status should also be explored. Although other factors like personal characteristics, work environments, and job insecurity also play a role, FOC are often adopted by those who hold minority status (Hewlin *et al.*, 2016; Hewlin, 2009). It is possible that navigating organizational cultures as a minority would create a different vantage point for that group. For instance, would having a minority status increase the chance of perceiving FOC in one's supervisor? Would familiarity with this behaviour make it more apparent? At the same time, would familiarity or an understanding of the nature of this behaviour change the impact it may have on outcomes such as engagement? For these reasons, perceived minority status will also be examined to determine if this variable impacts the degree to which FOC is perceived or the degree to which it affects engagement levels.

Investigating the potential reach of perceived FOC adoption in supervisors and the possibility that FOC adoption may negatively impact the engagement of others, especially minorities, will provide valuable insights to human resource (HR) practitioners. How might the practice of looking for employees that "fit" impact FOC adoption and, therefore, attempts to cultivate authenticity? What unintentional outcomes might come from well-intentioned HRM practices such as corporate social responsibility (CSR) and diversity and inclusion (D&I) campaigns, which attach values and beliefs to organizations? Greater understanding of the reach and impact of this construct would add to authenticity research (Cha *et al.*, 2019) as well as provide valuable insight into the impact HRM practices have on FOC creation. If FOC adoption is perceived by followers, and this is shown to have a negative effect on engagement, questions must be raised about the potential costs of these HRM practices.

This research analyses follower perceptions of FOC adoption among supervisors to determine if it has a negative impact on employee work engagement and examines the possibility that employees with minority status may interpret perceptions of FOC differently. It seeks to determine if FOC are perceived by employees to a significant degree and to test the validity of three hypotheses. The first is that there is a negative relationship between follower perception of FOC adoption in supervisors and follower work engagement. The second is that employees reporting a minority status will report a higher rate of perceived FOC in supervisors. The third is that the negative relationship between perceptions of FOC in supervisors and employee engagement will be greater for employees who report minority status.

After a review of current authenticity and FOC research, this research sets out to address gaps in FOC research with a cross-sectional online survey to evaluate the relationship between perceptions of façade adoption in supervisors, employee engagement, and minority status. The survey utilizes pre-established scales with established credibility. The Utrect Work Engagement Scale-9 measures employee work engagement (Shaufeli, Bakker and Salanova, 2006), and the Facades of Conformity Scale (Hewlin, 2009) measures perceived FOC in supervisors, however modifications have been made to the FOC scale to account for the difference of self-reported FOC and perceptions of FOC in one's supervisor. Survey data gathered on SurveyMonkey and analysed in IBM SPSS will be used to test the three hypotheses. The research concludes with an analysis of results and findings as well as a discussion about the implication of said findings, limitations of the study, and recommendations for future research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Numerous studies have been done on the value of workplace authenticity. Research shows authenticity offers several positive outcomes. It has been shown to lower stress and increase well-being, while increasing employee job satisfaction, work engagement, and organizational commitment. It leads to better performance and career outcomes (Cha *et al.*, 2019; Braun and Peus, 2018; Emmerich and Rigotti, 2017). Inauthenticity has been shown to hinder psychological and emotional well-being, decrease engagement, and reduce commitment and job satisfaction. (Cha *et al.*, 2019; Hewlin *et al.*, 2017; Opie and Freeman, 2017). Considering the research, it seems clear that authenticity is good, and inauthenticity is not. One might question why someone would choose to be inauthentic. This is where opinion on authenticity divides.

Research that focuses on authenticity highlights its benefits and often does not consider antecedents or contextual standards. Research that focuses on inauthenticity looks first at contextual standards and attempts to evaluate the conditions under which adoption of this behaviour takes place (Cha *et al.*, 2019). Without considering the context in which authenticity emerges, one ignores the importance of context in determining the nature of authenticity (Hewlin *et al.*, 2017; Hewlin 2009). Is authenticity a choice, or a benefit from one's position? A greater understanding of the antecedents and consequences of authenticity must be reached before its application and value can be determined.

Authenticity

With so many benefits, the desire to pursue authenticity in the workplace seems natural, but a genuine understanding of what workplace authenticity is and what behaviours it entails, is more elusive. In the context of personal or workplace authenticity, authenticity most commonly refers to consistency and alignment between one's external expressions and internal experiences (Cha *et al.*, 2019; Roberts *et al.*, 2009; Gardner *et al.*, 2005). It is considered to include self-awareness, being genuine, processing information objectively, encouraging honest feedback from others, and acting in accordance with one's internal self (Cha *et al.*, 2019; Wood *et al.*, 2008; Gardner *et al.*, 2005). This includes an awareness of one's thoughts, motives, and values, relational transparency, and a lack of distortions, exaggerations, and denials (Gardner *et al.*, 2005). It can be measured by

examining the degree to which one knows themselves, the degree to which their behaviour matches their perceptions, emotions, values, and beliefs, and the degree to which they feel they must conform to other's expectations (Wood *et al.*, 2008).

Although workplace authenticity has been considered in this broader context, much of the attention has been focused on authentic leadership and the behaviours it includes. Authentic leadership includes integrity, trust, transparency, high moral standards, self-awareness, self-acceptance, and authentic actions and relationships (Gardner *et al.*, 2005). It can create trust between leaders and their followers (Leroy *et al.*, 2012) and reduce aversion to organizational change (Agote, Aramburu and Lines, 2016). It has a positive relationship with employee voice behaviours (Chou *et al.*, 2019) and has a crossover effect between leaders and followers (Braun and Peus, 2018). Authentic leadership behaviour not only predicts levels of authenticity in the workplace, but is a powerful antecedent (Ma *et al.*, 2020; Opie and Freeman, 2017; Leroy *et al,*2012).

Organizational culture shapes, and is shaped by, its leaders. There is an overwhelming relationship between leader authenticity, the environment it creates, and the impact it has on employees (Braun and Peus, 2018; Reis *et al.*, 2016; Agote *et al.*, 2016; Leroy *et al.*, 2012). By modelling authentic behaviour, leaders signal their preference for authentic behaviour and create an atmosphere of safety and trust between themselves and their followers (Ma *et al.*, 2020; Schmader and Sedikides, 2018; Reis *et al.*, 2016). Trust in management can influence the success of HRM practices, especially D&I (Downey *et al.*, 2015; Goswami and Goswami, 2018). Trust is earned when employees perceive a fair and safe environment which supports them (Ma *et al.*, 2020; Cha *et al.*, 2019). Trust is an essential component for developing authenticity, as authenticity requires risk and vulnerability (Hewlin *et al.*, 2017; Gardner *et al.*, 2009).

Employee perceptions of authenticity are important to building trust. Employees must be able to perceive leader authenticity for it to have an impact on their trust and their willingness to be vulnerable (Agote *et al.*, 2016; Gardner *et al.*, 2009). To build trust, employees must believe that their leaders don't just talk the talk, but also walk the walk (Leroy *et al.*, 2012). For this reason, leadership authenticity behaviours must be recognizable to followers (Fields, 2007). Integrity, openness, transparency, and authentic actions and relationships must be visible to help employees be authentic. When employees see their leaders behaving authentically and encouraging authentic relationships, it shows followers

that their unique identities are truly valued and they are safe to behave authentically themselves (Leroy *et al.*, 2012; Gardner *et al.*, 2005).

Supportive and authentic leadership shapes the environment and signals the degree to which employees can be authentic (Ma *et al.*, 2020; Leroy *et al.*, 2015). This is described by Schmader and Sedikides (2018) as State Authenticity as Fit to Environment (SAFE). Schmader and Sedikides argue that people naturally seek out environments in which they feel a genuine fit. When employees feel they fit, they feel freedom to be their authentic selves, and are more motivated to pursue goals because they feel valued in their environment (Ma *et al.*, 2020; Schmader and Sedikides, 2018). To create this environment, organizational cultures must be inclusive. Followers must feel safe to bring their authentic selves to work without fear of negative consequences (Schmader and Sedikides, 2018). Creating this environment is the key to seeing organizational benefits from authenticity. Perceived organizational support is not only a strong antecedent to authenticity, it is the single most important predictor of employee engagement (Saks, 2019; Rich, LePine and Crawford, 2010; May, Gilson and Harter, 2004), which may be the crown jewel of authenticity outcomes.

Employee Engagement

Increased employee engagement is one of the greatest benefits that authenticity offers an organization. Engaged employees bring more of themselves to work and commit more fully (Saks, 2006:2019). While understanding of employee engagement and what it entails continues to evolve, the benefits of employee engagement are not in dispute. Employee engagement includes increased commitment, energy, concentration, satisfaction, well-being, extra-role performance, productivity, and loyalty (Saks, 2019; Jeung, 2011). It has been shown to increase customer satisfaction, customer loyalty, and profitability, while decreasing turnover (Jeung, 2011; Rich *et al.*, 2010; Xanthopoulou *et al.*, 2007; Harter, Schmidt and Hayes, 2002). There are many different opinions on what exactly creates employee engagement (Saks, 2019; Jeung, 2011; May *et al.*, 2004), but all roads lead to needs fulfilment in some way. Creating engaged employees requires an investment in understanding and filling the needs of employees (Jeung, 2011; Harter *et al.*, 2002).

Engagement is a topic that has received considerable attention for over three decades. It was first introduced by Kahn (1990), who conceptualized it as a psychological state where

individuals present themselves fully during work role performance. According to Kahn, engagement refers to when individuals simultaneously employ and express their preferred selves in task behaviours that promote connections to work and others, physical, cognitive, and emotional presence, and active and full performances. Kahn states engagement is achieved when needs for safety, meaningfulness, and availability of resources are met and people attach intrinsic value to work role performances. Kahn's (1990) conception of engagement has laid the foundation for engagement research and informed many of the theories moving forward (Saks, 2006:2019; Jeung, 2011; May *et al.*, 2004; Harter *et al.*, 2002).

There are considerable differences in how engagement is defined. It was initially thought engagement could be measured by measuring levels of exhaustion, cynicism, and inefficacy, which are considered the main characteristics of burnout (Jeung, 2011). Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) contest this notion and show engagement to be an entirely different concept. They consider burnout to be an erosion of engagement which exists when energy turns to exhaustion, involvement turns to cynicism, and efficacy turns to ineffectiveness. Engagement has also been shown to be distinct from other similar constructs such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and job involvement, which are facets of engagement but refer more to attitudes than actions (Christian, Garza and Slaughter, 2011). According to Schaufeli *et al.* (2002, pp. 74), engagement refers to a "more persistent and pervasive affective-cognitive state that is not focused on any particular object, event, individual, or behaviour." Engagement includes absorption, satisfaction, focused attention, concentration, commitment, extra-role behaviour, high energy, involvement, and efficacy (Jeung, 2011; Rich *et al.*, 2010; Bakker and Schaufeli, 2008; Harter *et al.*, 2002). Work engagement is commonly measured by vigour, dedication, and absorption, which are the three subscales measured by the UWES-9 scale utilised by this study (Shaufeli *et al.*, 2006).

Considerable attention has been given to the antecedents of engagement. Harter *et al.* (2002) suggest emotional and cognitive engagement occurs when employees know what is expected of them and have the necessary resources available. May *et al.* (2004) believe characteristics of meaningfulness such as job enrichment and work role fit to have a significant impact on engagement, as well as psychological safety and ability. Christian *et al.* (2011) suggest it is a balance of motivational support, social support, physical demands, leadership, trust, and dispositional characteristics. Possibly the most comprehensive list of antecedents is offered by Saks (2006:2019). According to Saks, job characteristics, perceived

organizational support, perceived supervisor support, reward and recognition practices, perceptions of fit, opportunities for learning and development, dispositional characteristics, personal resources, procedural and distributive justice, leadership, and job demands, determine engagement.

The JD-R Model

The notion that the relationship between resources and demands determines levels of engagement is explained by the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model. The JD-R model is a two-process model in which job demands influence the amount of energy one has to operate effectively, and job resources play a motivational role helping individuals to reduce the negative effects of job demands (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004). According to the model, motivational resources such as support, autonomy, recognition, feedback, learning and development opportunities, opportunities for skill use, and a positive working environment (Saks, 2019; Crawford, LePine and Rich, 2010; Bakker *et al.*, 2007), are balanced by job demands to determine levels of engagement (Bakker and Schaufeli, 2008). High job demands can hinder engagement by wearing out energy and creating exhaustion. Job resources improve engagement by reducing the impact of job demands and helping individuals to learn, develop, and achieve goals (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004). Of the resources considered, perceived organizational support, and perceived supervisor support have been shown to have the greatest overall impact (Saks, 2019; Rich *et al.*, 2010; May *et al.*, 2004).

Personal resources such as self-efficacy, organizational-based self-esteem, and optimism, have also been shown to directly improve engagement, as they influence an individual's perception of job resources (Xanthopoulou *et al.*, 2007) and buffer the negative impact job demands can have (Chen, 2022). Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) show job demands do not predict employee engagement on their own. In fact, they have been shown to increase engagement in some cases. Crawford *et al.* (2010) suggest this is because not all job demands are negatively perceived. Some demands such as role conflict, ambiguity, and organizational politics, are perceived as hindrance demands because they add no value and create barriers. Other demands such as high workloads, time constraints, and high job responsibilities, can be perceived as challenge demands. These demands offer opportunities for growth. Following this logic, the impact of job demands depends on the perception and appraisal of the demands by employees.

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SDT and SET

Another way engagement can be viewed is by looking at engagement as the product of healthy environments and relationships. When employees feel their organizational culture benefits them, employee engagement increases (Reis *et al.*, 2016). Perceived organizational support has been shown to increase citizenship behaviours and job performance, while decreasing absenteeism (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005). Authentic leadership is a critical component, as leadership styles shape the cultural environment (Ma *et al.*, 2020; Gardner *et al.*, 2005). Authentic leadership increases trust and therefore employee engagement. It creates a reciprocal relationship whereby authentic leaders create authentic followers, who repay this relationship with their engagement (Gardner *et al.*, 2005). The relationships between leader authenticity, follower authenticity, and employee engagement, are best explained by self-determination and social exchange theories (Ma *et al.*, 2020; Reis *et al.*, 2016; Leroy *et al.*, 2015; Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005).

Environments that allow employees to perform activities which are consistent with their goals and values increase the positive outcomes associated with authenticity (Reis *et al.*, 2016). This relationship is commonly explained using Self-Determination Theory (Ma *et al.*, 2020; Schmader and Sedikides, 2018; Meyer and Gagné, 2008). Self-Determination Theory (SDT) draws a distinction between autonomous motivation and controlled motivation and suggests performing activities that align with one's goals and identity creates autonomous motivation by meeting psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Deci and Ryan, 2008). Studies show allowing employees to behave authentically is more likely to trigger autonomous motivation through needs fulfilment (Ma *et al.*, 2020), which increases employee engagement (Reis *et al.*, 2016).

It is not just the meeting of needs that creates employee engagement through authenticity, it is the feeling of gratitude created in employees (Reis *et al.*, 2016). This can be explained by Social Exchange Theory (SET). SET looks at relationships as transactional. According to Blau's (1964) conception, social exchanges are transactions and are limited to actions contingent on rewarding reactions from others. SET posits that a series of interdependent interactions can create future obligation between parties. This is based on an unstated system of reciprocity. The actions of one create a rection in another, which generates feelings of personal obligation, gratitude, commitment, and trust (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005; Blau, 1964). By encouraging authenticity and creating a safe space for needs

fulfilment, leaders create a need in followers to reciprocate. Employee engagement is a positive reaction to feeling supported by the leader and/or organization (Reis *et al.*, 2016).

The Role of Fit

According to Schmader and Sedikides' (2018) SAFE model, social identities motivate the situations people choose to approach or avoid. People are looking for a fit between themselves and their environment and seek out situations which are compatible with their inner selves (Ma *et al.*, 2020). Environments should ideally provide self-concept fit, goal fit, and social fit. When environments offer these types of fit, they facilitate cognitive, motivational, and social fluency, and promote state authenticity. Fit is an antecedent to authenticity and misfit can reduce motivation and engagement while creating a threat to one's identity (Schmader and Sedikides, 2018). While the answer to this predicament has been to seek out a fit between the organization and employee in the selection process (Albrecht *et al.*, 2015; May *et al.*, 2004), this practice seems to conflict with what is known about encouraging authenticity.

Though many suggest a fit in values is important, others question if this notion is outdated or simply unfair (Opie and Freeman, 2017; Albrecht *et al.*, 2015; Hewlin, 2003). Although it would seem ideal to hire employees who already share organizational goals and values, is it practical? Organizations aren't static. As they change, employee value congruence also changes (Stormer and Devine, 2008). Some question if the assessment of organizational fit is really just an assessment of how well one conforms to organizational norms (Opie and Freeman, 2017; Hewlin, 2003). What role does bias play in determining the ideal employee? Stormer and Devine (2008) suggest HRM policies should be examined to ensure they reflect only necessary key performance indicators and competencies. Pushing for value congruence may signal a need to develop FOC to retain value. Unless one truly believes they can hand pick employees that do share, and will always share, their core beliefs and values, looking for fit might be the direct opposite of looking for authenticity and what some would argue creates the environment in which inauthenticity is the best choice (Livingston *et al.*, 2021; Schmader and Sedikides, 2018; Hewlin, 2009).

Inauthenticity

Authenticity is normally considered on its own, as though authenticity is one thing, and inauthenticity is another (Cha *et al.*, 2019). What if this is an incorrect assumption? What if they are just opposite sides of the same coin? Having evaluated authenticity research from 2003 through 2019 to determine what exactly work authenticity refers to, Cha *et al.* (2019) created a list of 10 constructs that relate to it. They determined 6 primary constructs directly describing authenticity, and 4 secondary constructs which relate to inauthenticity. FOC is a secondary construct.

According to Cha *et al.* (2019), the 6 primary constructs of authenticity include authentic functioning, authentic leadership, authentic personality, authentic self-expression, perceived inauthenticity, and role authenticity. Authenticity research highlights their benefits but rarely considers antecedents or contextual standards. This is opposite to the approach to examining secondary constructs. Research that focuses on secondary constructs looks first at contextual standards and antecedents. This is likely because secondary constructs are associated with negative outcomes. Secondary constructs include emotional labor, FOC, identity manifestation, and hypocrisy (Cha *et al.*, 2019). With the possible exception of hypocrisy, these constructs are noticeably tied to conformity pressures. One would have to question why someone would choose to display inaccurate emotions, values, or identity, if they didn't feel it necessary to their success. This is where the argument for authenticity takes a turn.

Secondary construct behaviours are usually adopted as survival mechanisms. They are more common among people who feel marginalised (Hewlin *et al.*, 2016; Hewlin, 2009). It is the desire to fit in and succeed despite one's differences that creates pressure to adopt these inauthentic behaviours (Hewlin *et al.*, 2017). Antecedents to inauthenticity include devalued social identities, emotional display rule requirements, organizational values and beliefs, public values, nonparticipative work environments, minority status, and personal characteristics (Cha *et al.*, 2019; Hewlin, 2003). People have an innate desire for belonging and relatedness and will try to adapt to their environment to fulfil those needs (Schmader and Sedikides, 2018; Hewlin *et al.*, 2017). This calls to question the validity of some authenticity research claims. Is authenticity a choice, or a benefit from one's position, and can it be enjoyed by all?

Power often determines the level of authenticity one can enjoy without negative consequences (Hewlin *et al.*, 2017; Kifer *et al.*, 2013). When examining company cultural, one must consider if everyone has the same power or if power in unevenly distributed to those who are cultural defaults (Cha *et al.*, 2019; Schmader and Sedikides, 2018; Fields, 2007). Although a culture may look diverse and inclusive, power really tells the tale. Just because minorities are represented in management, doesn't mean they have the social or political power to be authentic if that authenticity challenges the status quo (Roberts *et al.*, 2009). Minority leaders often feel pressure to become prototypical leaders to succeed (Seegars and Ramarajan, 2019). Kifer *et al*. (2013) suggest that power is the greatest factor in determining someone's opportunity to be authentic; powerful people get to be themselves. In this way, power is the mechanism by which authenticity is achieved.

Power may also determine if one is perceived as authentic, whether they behave authentically or not. Authentic leadership behaviour must be legitimized by followers (Roberts *et al.*, 2009). It can be accepted or rejected based on follower's assumptions or expectations. Minorities are more heavily scrutinized and expected to conform to stereotypes (Schmader and Sedikides, 2018). Unusual characteristics can affect follower consensus on authenticity (Fields, 2007). Characteristics that may be labelled straight forward or assertive for one, may be labelled confrontational for another (Barnes, 2017). Authentic behaviour that does not conform to expectations can be rejected as inauthentic or even deviant (Cha *et al.*, 2019; Fields, 2007). Minority leaders may not receive the support they need to be authentic, or to reap the rewards of authenticity (Roberts *et al.*, 2009).

If everyone doesn't stand to gain the same from authenticity, it doesn't hold the same value to everyone. The ethics of promoting authenticity must be questioned. Opie and Freeman (2017) question if organizations should be encouraging employees to be themselves when everybody will not be embraced equally. Authenticity research does not account for people who have what are considered "dark" personality traits (Womick, Foltz and King, 2019). It relies on the assumption that people are basically good, and organizations and employees will benefit from authenticity at work. What happens when an employee's true self conflicts with organizational values? Promoting authenticity may be asking employees to act outside their own interests (Opie and Freeman, 2017). Unless an environment is truly inclusive and employees have the freedom to enact their true identities, authenticity is more like a carrot just out of reach for some.

The Role of HRM on Authenticity

Authenticity research has demonstrated the importance of the organizational environment in the cultivation of authenticity and positive authenticity outcomes (Reis *et al.*, 2016). The role of HRM is to construct policies and practices that support organizational goals, while giving employees the necessary resources and motivation to be most effective. This requires careful consideration of what policies and practices best support both the employee and the organization (Armstrong, 2011). Before promoting practices designed to increase engagement, job satisfaction, or commitment, the merits of these practices should be evaluated more thoroughly. HRM practices often send mixed messages and support opposite ideals (Conway *et al.*, 2016). If positive authenticity outcomes are an HRM objective, it must start by evaluating how other practices and policies support this objective. CSR, D&I, and selection and socialization practices, all have the potential to negatively impact authenticity outcomes if not executed correctly (Saks, Gruman and Zhang, 2022; Schmader and Sedikides, 2018; Albrecht *et al.*, 2015).

CSR practices have been shown to increase engagement and employee satisfaction (Saks *et al.*, 2022; Barakat *et al.*, 2016), and impact profits (Yang, Chuenterawong and Pugdeethosapol, 2021). As amazing as these benefits are, CSR can have negative consequences as well. Employees want to feel an alignment between their values and those of the company (Barakat *et al.*, 2016). The more values an organization attaches to itself, the harder it will be for employees to agree with all of them. When employees do not perceive they fit, they are less likely to behave authentically (Schmader and Sedikides, 2018). Authenticity has been shown to have a tremendous impact on the employee and the organization (Cha *et al.*, 2019; Braun and Peus, 2018; Emmerich and Rigotti, 2017). It may be prudent, therefore, to examine CSR endeavours thoroughly before attaching the organization to too many values and beliefs. CSR may unintentionally undermine efforts to create an environment where all employees feel their beliefs systems are valued and reduce identification with the organization for some.

D&I programs should also be re-examined to ensure they have the intended outcomes. D&I programs that focus on the wrong things may undermine minority advancement and acceptance. According to Purdie-Greenaway and Davidson (2019), a focus on value in equality is preferred to a focus on value in difference. Minorities prefer fairness centred D&I messaging. People are more likely to trust messaging that focuses on similarity instead of

embracing diversity. Diversity is one of the most common topics associated with FOC according to Stormer and Devine (2008). It is important for HR managers to understand that efforts cannot stop with good D&I programs. Diversity is not enough, there must be a truly inclusive culture (Blake-Beard *et al.*, 2019; Downey *et al.*, 2015). Minority representation in leadership may not mean minorities feel safe to genuinely represent minority difference (Seegars and Ramarajan, 2019). D&I programs that do not look at the relationship between power and the ability to enact one's identity, will fall short of providing the environment necessary to foster authenticity. Biases inherent in many HRM practices must be weeded out.

Selection and socialization practices should be examined to determine if they conflict with authenticity goals. Many organizations look for a good fit and encourage employees to adopt company values during the socialization process (Opie and Freeman, 2017; Cable, Gino and Staats, 2013). Although many see the value in looking for employees that already fit (Albrecht *et al.*, 2015; May *et al.*, 2004), this practice may significantly undermine authenticity. What does this initial introduction to the company communicate to those who fall outside of company norms? The organizational socialization process is an important opportunity to promote authenticity (Cable *et al.*, 2013). HR managers may want to consider if the socialization process would be better used as a vehicle to show employees how the organization values their uniqueness and is committed to their growth (Albrecht *et al.*, 2015; Cable *et al.*, 2013).

The value of authenticity as a HRM objective seems contingent on understanding the organization creates opportunities or limitations for authenticity by its practices. Inauthenticity is most often the result of contextual standards. Secondary constructs are often reactionary or preventative (Cha *et al.*, 2019; Hewlin, 2003:2009). Understanding how these constructs relate to the larger conversation about the benefits of authenticity is crucial. As a secondary construct, FOC appear to be less of a choice than a response. A deeper understanding of the relationship between façade adoption and perceived status, as well as an understanding of the impact façade adoption may have on others, would contribute greatly to current understanding of the construct as well as authenticity research (Cha *et al.*, 2019; Hewlin, 2009).

Facades of Conformity

Hewlin (2003, p 634) defines FOC as "false representations created by employees to appear as if they embrace organizational values." This can be verbal or nonverbal behaviours. Employees may make false statements of agreement or adopt voice behaviours to conceal inconsistencies between their inner thoughts and outward behaviours (Chou *et al.*, 2019; Hewlin *et al.*, 2017). They might change their attire, nod in agreement when they disagree, or express emotions that seem more appropriate than their own (Hewlin, 2003). FOC can be direct by conforming in appearance and action, or indirect by avoidance of action (Stormer and Devine, 2008). By faking commitment and suppressing their own values, actors attempt to blend in with those that hold the majority opinion (Cha *et al.*, 2019; Hewlin, 2009).

FOC are different from other similar constructs. FOC focus on the tension created between the cognitive dissonance developed by pretending and the consonance one hoped to achieve by the act (Stormer and Devine, 2008). Although FOC can be used for IM, the focus of IM is to positively influence outcomes through behaviours, usually opportunistically; this does not consider any conflict in values (Hewlin, 2003;2009). Emotional labor describes managing one's emotions but is limited to describing emotional expressions. Compliance is similar to FOC as it describes behaviours which conflict with one's values, but it does not include the IM aspect. FOC are acts of compliance as well as the conflict between outward behaviours and inward beliefs and values (Hewlin, 2009; Stormer and Devine, 2008; Hewlin, 2003). FOC are commonly measured by Hewlin's (2009) Facades of Conformity Scale, which is the scale measure utilised by this study.

FOC are usually adopted to help an employee fit in. They are created as a survival mechanism to combat threats to belongingness and minimise visible difference. They are often believed to be critical to one's success or survival at an organization (Hewlin, 2003: 2009). Phillips *et al.* (2016) consider FOC from a different vantage point and consider it to be a social mobility strategy employed by the politically savvy. It is a tactic used in an attempt to move from low-status groups into higher-status groups. Although this characterises those who adopt FOC less as victims of circumstance and more as actors manipulating their environment, it must be considered that others would not need to develop these tactics in the first place. Factors that contribute to FOC creation include work environments that are intolerant of diverse perspectives, perceived minority status, job insecurity, organizational reward systems, and personal traits such as the degree to which a person is a self-monitor,

cultural orientation, and regulatory focus (Hewlin *et al.*, 2016; Phillips *et al.*, 2016; Liang, 2017; Hewlin, 2003:2009).

Regulatory focus may play a large role in FOC adoption. Regulatory Focus Theory (Higgins, 1997) suggests people are motivated by the avoidance of pain or the pursuit of pleasure. Individuals either adopt a security-related focus or a nurturance-related focus (Gorman *et al.*, 2012). People who adopt security-related focuses are considered prevention focused, while those who adopt a nurturance-related focus are considered promotion focused (Liang, 2017; Gorman *et al.*, 2012). Promotion focuses are associated with advancement, growth, goals, ideals, and accomplishment, while prevention focuses are associated with security, safety, responsibility, obligation, and necessity (Gorman *et al.*, 2012). For this reason, an individual's regulatory focus impacts their likelihood of adopting FOC (Liang, 2017). If one is more concerned with feeling safe and secure, they are more likely to adopt FOC. Adopting the FOC characterization of Phillips *et al.* (2016), it could also be argued FOC may be employed by those focused on promotion as well.

FOC creation cannot be deterred by simply hiring high-integrity leaders. On the contrary, research shows that marginalised employees will react to positive treatment with a stronger desire to reciprocate and therefore conform to organizational standards (Hewlin *et al.*, 2017). According to SET, the presence of a leader that makes one feel valued will create a desire to show appreciation to the leader. For employees that struggle to fit in, HRM practices such as D&I programs or CSR may even add to the problem. Although these practices seek to align the organization with good values and ultimately increase commitment from employees and consumers, these practices also align organizations to value and belief statements (Yang *et al.*, 2021). Good employees may hold personal values that are not in line with those of the organization. Managers especially would be positioned to actively promote values which may conflict with their own.

FOC adoption has negative personal consequences for the employee. Efforts made to reduce threats to belongingness and increase feelings of value, often lead to strengthened feelings of detachment (Chou *et al.*, 2019). FOC have been shown to cause emotional exhaustion, hinder psychological and emotional well-being, reduce job satisfaction, increase negative emotions like frustration, and reduce cognitive and emotional resources (Chou *et al.*, 2019; Hewlin *et al.*, 2017; Hewlin, *et al., 2016*). Research shows this effect is not limited to the workplace. FOC create an emotional and cognitive burden that is often taken home

(Liang, 2020). The dissonance and draining of resources caused by FOC can take its toll and often results in a desire to escape the situation (Hewlin *et al.*, 2017; Hewlin, 2009).

FOC adoption has serious consequences to the organization as well. FOC limit voice behaviours, which may have the positive effect of reducing conflict, but it decreases job satisfaction (Chou *et al.*, 2019). FOC adoption has been shown to lower productivity that comes with affective commitment, deplete the cognitive and emotional resources which contribute to job performance, decrease employee engagement, and increase intent to leave the organization (Chou *et al.*, 2019; Hewlin *et al.*, 2017; Hewlin *et al., 2016*). FOC creation has also been linked to sabotage during organizational change processes (Stormer and Devine, 2008). These consequences are limited to what is known about FOC adoption, and do not consider the possible affect perception of FOC adoption has on others. Given the consequences of FOC adoption, a deeper understanding of its impact is necessary.

While studies have considered the impact of façade creation on the employee (Chou *et al.*, 2019; Hewlin *et al.*, 2017; Hewlin *et al.*, 2016; Hewlin, 2009), little attention has been paid to the possible affect FOC adoption may have on others. If perception of leader authenticity is necessary to the development of follower authenticity, how might the perception of FOC in supervisors impact efforts to foster authenticity in the workplace? If engagement is tied to one's ability to be themselves and feel valued in their workplace environment, how might the perception that one's manager doesn't feel safe to be authentic impact the follower's perceived safety and, thereby, engagement? Exploring questions like how often employees perceive FOC in their managers/supervisors, if perceived FOC adoption among supervisors affects follower engagement, or if status impacts these results, would help address gaps in current research. This may provide valuable insights into the complexity of FOC, the accessibility of authenticity as a practice, and the value of HRM policies designed to enhance employee well-being and engagement.

Chapter 3: The Research Question

This research questions how often employees perceive FOC in their supervisors and what impact, if any, it has on their work engagement. Are perceptions of FOC commonly reported? It is possible that since FOC deal with concealing values and beliefs, this form of inauthenticity is harder to perceive. Do perceptions of FOC in supervisors have a similar negative impact on employee engagement as has been demonstrated by studies on perceived leadership inauthenticity? Will perceptions of FOC in supervisors have a negative effect on engagement levels? FOC research shows minorities are more vulnerable to FOC (Hewlin, 2009); does minority status influence perceptions of FOC? Is there a difference in the rate at which perceptions of FOC are reported between minority and non-minority employees? If there is, what is the difference? Authenticity research has shown power has an impact on authenticity (Kifer *et al.*, 2013). Minority employees may feel they have less power in their environment. How might a difference in power impact the relationship between perceived FOC in supervisors and work engagement?

Objectives:

The first objective of this study is to determine to what degree FOC are perceived in supervisors. It is important to understand how often these perceptions occur to determine the significance of any negative outcomes that may be discovered. The second objective is to determine if a negative relationship exists between perceived FOC adoption in supervisors and employee engagement levels. The third objective is to determine if minority status has a significant effect on the perception of FOC or the impact of its perception. These objectives address gaps in FOC research and may lead to results that further illustrate how contextual standards affect one's ability to be authentic.

Research Question Defined:

Is there a significant level of perception of FOC in supervisors and, if so, is there a negative relationship between employee perceptions of FOC adoption in their supervisors and their work engagement? Does minority status impact the rate of perception of FOC in supervisors or any relationship determined between perceptions of FOC in supervisors and employee engagement?

These questions will be addressed by determining if the following hypotheses are supported by cross-sectional survey data. The degree to which perceptions of FOC are

significant may be relative to the importance one places on their consequences. For this reason, significance will be determined by the percentage of employees who report perceptions of FOC in their supervisors, relative to the results of testing the survey hypotheses.

H_1: Employee perceptions of FOC adoption in their supervisors will have a negative relationship with their work engagement.

H_2: Perceptions of FOC in supervisors will be higher for those who report minority status.

H_3: The relationship between perceptions of FOC adoption among supervisors and decreased engagement will be greater among those who identify as minorities.

Each hypothesis has a competing null hypothesis (H_0), which would indicate an absence of statistical support for the predicted result.

Chapter 4: Methodology

Research Instrument and Design

The objectives of this study were to gather data to statistically evaluate the strength of relationships between study variables and the rate of perceived FOC in participants. Data needed to be collected from a relatively large set of participants in a short period of time with limited resources. For this reason, the study utilised a quantitative research approach and a cross-sectional survey method, as is most common for this type of research (Cha *et al.*, 2019), especially FOC research (Chou *et al.*, 2019; Hewlin *et al.*, 2016; Hewlin, 2009). Due to limitations of time and resources the study utilized a convenience sampling approach. Although this limits the reliability of the sample (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2012), constraints of time, GDPR concerns from organizations and universities, and issues of anonymity, made this the best choice (A complete copy of the survey can be found in Appendix F). The study's methodology may also be limited by common methods bias, especially consistency bias (Saunders *et al.*, 2012).

A 24-item questionnaire was provided to respondents by email or a social media platform, via a hyperlink to an online survey through SurveyMonkey. This included introductory explanations about the study, its voluntary nature, and how the data would be handled. It concluded by thanking the participants and providing details about how survey results can be requested. The survey included an item to indicate consent, 3 items to ensure participants met study criteria, 5 demographic questions, and 15 scale items.

Research Sample

The population of interest to this study are adults working in Ireland under some form of direct supervision for a minimum of 20 hours per week. A sample was sought that would reflect these parameters and the variety of individuals and industries that would be reflected by this population. Initially, participation was sought by contacting a list of 15 Irish colleges and universities and requesting they circulate an email with the survey information and link among students in post-graduate programs. Students were a preferred choice as they would represent a variety of industries and could be reached via their institutions student email. This technique was utilised by Hewlin (2009), a key author in FOC research. Response rates from universities were minimal, with only two universities agreeing to participate and no

recognizable increase in survey responses. The next approach was to email various organizations, an approach that has also worked for other researchers (Agote *et al.*, 2016), as well as reaching out to HR Managers on LinkedIn, informing them about the research, and requesting their contact details. Organizations and HR Managers who agreed to participate or learn more about the study were then emailed a letter detailing the survey and its process. While this approach did gather more participation, survey response numbers were still low. Additional participants were sought by expanding contacts on LinkedIn, to include a variety of graduate students to solicit for participation, and utilising existing networks on Facebook. Although this process offered less control over the sample, it did generate enough participation to move forward after a two-month period.

Participants

To ensure respondents had enough exposure to supervisors to inform their opinions and were of age to consent, participant criteria stipulated they be adults over the age of 18, working a minimum of 20 hours per week under direct supervision. The initial survey response total was 239 participants. Given the anonymous nature of the survey and the variety of approaches to gaining participation, there is no way to determine the number of people invited to participate. Of the 239 survey responses only 162 met the participant criteria for the study. A further 15 participants were excluded for providing incomplete answers.

Demographics: The survey generated responses from 147 participants who met the criteria for inclusion established by the study ($N = 147$). Of these participants, 105 (71.4%) were female and 42 (28.2%) were male ($M = 1.29, SD = .453$). A wide variety of industries are represented by this study (Appendix A provides a graphic breakdown of representation per industry category). Perceived minority status was reported by 34%, with 66% reporting no minority status ($M = .34, SD = .475$). Of the 34% minority status reported, 12% was in the gender category (A breakdown of minority status by category can be found in Appendix B). All participants were aged between 18-64 years. Participant age categories were broken down as follows: Under 18 (1), 18-24 (2), 25-34 (3), 35-44 (4), 45-54 (5), 55-64 (6), and 65+ (7). The minimum value reported was 2. The maximum value reported was 6. The mean of participant age groups was 3.7687 ($SD = .97270$). Job level was broken into 6 categories: Other (0), Owner/E-Suite (1), Senior Management (2), Middle Management (3), Intermediate

(4), and Entry Level (5). The mean of participant job level was 3.4626 (*SD = 1.18941*). For breakdowns of age and job level by category see Appendices C and D.

Measures

The survey utilised two pre-established, peer-reviewed scales to ensure validity and reliability.

Facades of Conformity. FOC was an independent variable when examining the perception of FOC in supervisors and employee engagement relationship, and a dependent variable when examining the rate of FOC perception dependent on minority status. It was initially measured using Hewlin's (2009) Facades of Conformity Scale (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.83$). This six-item scale is scored on a 5-point Likert-style frequency scale ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (always). An example item is: "I withhold personal values that conflict with organizational values (Hewlin, 2009)." For the complete scale see Appendix E. As this is a self-reported scale, it was modified slightly to ask about the manager/supervisor instead of the respondent, a method used previously by Zheng *et al.* (2020) when asking respondents to evaluate manager authenticity. An example of the modified item is "My manager withholds personal values that conflict with organizational values."

Having run a test for scale reliability in the present survey, the Cronbach's α for the scale was only 0.429. Two scale items stood out as contributing disproportionately to this low score. The first was survey item 21 (See Appendix F for all survey items), which is a negatively worded item, the answer to which would indicate a lack of FOC when given a response of 5 (always). After having manipulated the variable score to reflect the negative item, responses to that item were inconsistent with that of other scale items. This may be attributed to some participants not reading the item clearly. Item 12 also had inconsistent responses. The item was "My manager behaves in a manner that reflects the organization's value system even though it is inconsistent with their own personal values." Although these scale items have been used effectively in other FOC research (Chou *et al,* 2019; Hewlin *et al.*, 2016; Hewlin, 2009), the scale was not reliable in this study. This may be due to the change from self-reported measures to reporting on one's manager. Item 12 specifically, may have asked more than the participant felt they could report. The result of this finding was the

reduction to four scale items which were labelled Mod Hewlin Facades of Conformity. This produced a Cronbach's α of 0.761 for the four-item scale.

Work Engagement. Work engagement was a dependent variable. Respondent engagement was measured using the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale-9 (UWES-9), which has three subscales that measure absorption, dedication, and vigor. Each subscale is represented by three items. Internal consistency of this scale has been shown to vary across countries; the median Cronbach's α = .92. This is a nine-item scale scored on a 7-point frequency rating scale ranging from 0 (never) to 6 (always) (Schaufeli *et al.*, 2006). In the present study, Cronbach's α = .897.

Data Analysis

Data was collected on the SurveyMonkey online platform and then imported to IBM SPSS statistics software to be analysed. Data for this study is limited to the survey responses imported from SurveyMonkey, which remained after the data screening and clearing process (Pallant, 2016). Data was reviewed and participants who did not meet study criteria were removed. From an initial response group of 239, data from 147 participants remained for analysis.

Before descriptive and inferential statistics were generated, some variables and scales were modified. The minority status variable initially contained 7 possible scores. The variable was modified to indicate a score of 0 for those reporting no minority status, and 1 for those who reported minority status of some kind. Hewlin's (2009) Facades of Conformity Scale was modified to adjust scores for survey item 21, which is a negatively worded item. Further to review of this scale and an insufficient internal consistency score, survey items 12 and 21 were removed from the scale. This created a new four-item scale, modified from Hewlin's (2009) scale. The four scale items used to measure FOC were scored together as a single scale variable for analysis. The nine items from UWES-9 (Schaufeli *et al.*, 2006) were also computed as a variable with a single score for analysis.

Normality and reliability were assessed before data analysis began. Internal consistency scores were gathered for both scales and Cronbach's alpha scores were above the conventionally accepted minimum score of .7 (Urdan, 2017). The normality of variables

being tested by hypotheses was assessed using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test of normality (Pallant, 2016). Table 1 shows normality test results. Some significance scores fell below .05, indicating a lack of normality and violating the assumptions necessary for utilising the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient, which is commonly the preferred method for computing correlation (Pallant, 2016; Urdan, 2017). For this reason, non-parametric statistics were utilised.

The relationship between study variables in hypotheses 1 and 3 were analysed using the Spearman rank-order correlation (Spearman rho) to test the study's hypotheses (Pallant, 2016). Hypothesis 2 required use of the Mann-Whitney U test (Leard Statistics, 2018) as it included an abnormally distributed and ordinal dependent variable (perceived FOC in supervisor) which needed to be compare between two independent groups (minority and non-minority). Significance testing was used to determine if the p values representing the relationships proposed by the hypotheses were less than .05 and required the rejection of respective null hypotheses (Saunders *et al.*, 2012). Additionally, study results indicated a need to re-examine the data for more information. FOC and work engagement were analysed again using the Spearman rho test, but splitting the data by gender, age, and then gender and age concurrently, as well as the minority status variable.

Table 1: Normality

Tests of Normality

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
work engagement	.068	147	.095	.984	147	.097
Mod Hewlin Facades of Conformity	.131	147	<.001	.958	147	<.001

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Ethical Considerations

There were no risks posed to any person or organization associated with this survey design. All data gathered was completely anonymous. The online survey was circulated

through institutional email lists by the institutions themselves, and online social media platforms. There were no survey items indicating the participants name or organization, and each participant was labelled only by their survey entry number. All demographic questions were for the use of ensuring survey participant criteria were met or to be used as variables for analysis. All participants were made aware of their rights and asked for consent to participate. This research did not seek out or require participation from any vulnerable groups. Although the anonymous nature of the survey cannot guarantee the exclusion of all vulnerable parties, no participants were recruited on that basis. The research utilised a survey design only, and no participants were manipulated as part of the research process.

The purpose and nature of this study was disclosed to institutions and organizations before participation was requested. Institutions and organizations were contacted by email and/or social media and a letter which described the study, its expectations from participants, and its voluntary nature, was provided, along with a promise of anonymity, an explanation of how data would be used and stored, and the link to the online survey. Survey participants were provided a similar explanation at the start of the online survey. The voluntary nature of the study was made clear as well as the right to withdraw participation at any point before the survey's conclusion. At the start of the survey, item 1 required participants to indicate they had read and understand the terms of the study and gave their consent to participate. Information was provided at the conclusion of the study as to how participants could request a copy of the study.

Data storage and analysis was also considered carefully. Data was initially gathered by SurveyMonkey, a secure online platform. Access to this platform is password protected. After the survey's conclusion, data was imported to the IBM SPSS statistical software program on the researcher's computer. This computer is password protected and data files for SPSS were given a further encryption and password protection. Data gathered had no identifiers other than the entry number of each online survey. Data taken from that platform will be stored on the researcher's home computer in an unmarked file, password protected, and will be held for the 5 years required by National College of Ireland. GDPR rules and regulations have been considered and adhered to by this process (Data Protection Commission, 2019).

Chapter 5: Findings and Analysis

Descriptive Statistics

Facades of Conformity: FOC was reported with a mean score of 9.21. The minimum value was 4; the maximum value was 18 (*SD = 3.521*). Skewness was .424. Kurtosis was -.476. Although the histogram of the distribution appeared normal, a Kolmogorov-Smirnov test of normality showed a significance value of <.001, indicating a lack of normal distribution. Table 2 shows the FOC histogram. Extreme values were considered to establish their impact on normality but removing outliers did not improve normality scores. Table 3 shows extreme values for FOC and work engagement variables.

Work Engagement: Work engagement was reported with a mean score of 42.7007. The minimum value was 16; the maximum value was 62 (*SD = 9.36871*). A Kolmogorov-Smirnov test of normality showed distribution to be normal. Table 4 shows the work engagement histogram. Table 5 provides a complete list of descriptive statistics for the FOC and work engagement variables.

Table 2: FOC Histogram
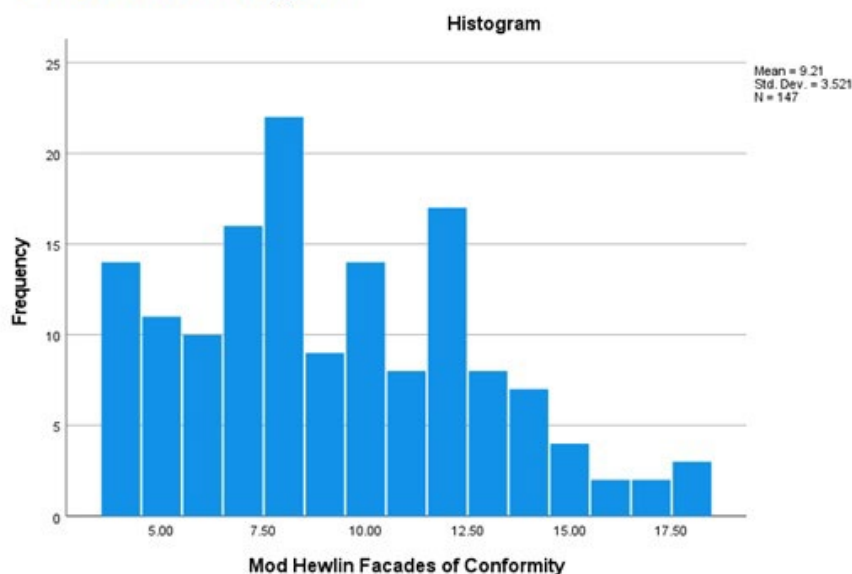
Table 3: Extreme Values - FOC & Work Enagement

Extreme Values

			Case Number	EntryNumber	Value
work engagement	Highest	1	64	134.00	62.00
		2	52	155.00	61.00
		3	91	85.00	61.00
		4	134	20.00	60.00
		5	70	120.00	59.00[a]
	Lowest	1	126	28.00	16.00
		2	39	175.00	20.00
		3	14	214.00	21.00
		4	11	217.00	21.00
		5	5	231.00	21.00
Mod Hewlin Facades of Conformity	Highest	1	35	181.00	18.00
		2	100	67.00	18.00
		3	137	13.00	18.00
		4	20	206.00	17.00
		5	76	112.00	17.00
	Lowest	1	125	29.00	4.00
		2	118	39.00	4.00
		3	115	42.00	4.00
		4	104	60.00	4.00
		5	98	70.00	4.00[b]

a. Only a partial list of cases with the value 59.00 are shown in the table of upper extremes.

b. Only a partial list of cases with the value 4.00 are shown in the table of lower extremes.

Table 4: Work Engagement Histogram

Histogram

Mean = 42.70
Std. Dev. = 9.369
N = 147

29
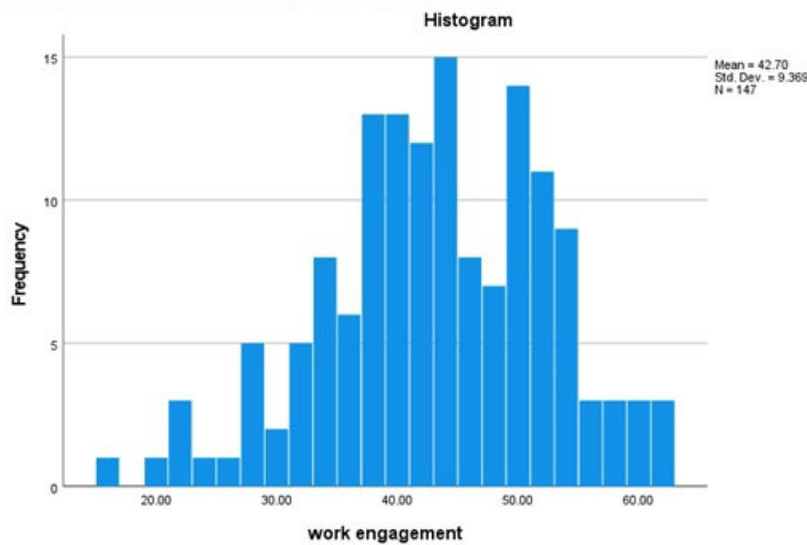
Table 5: Descriptive Statistics - FOC and Work Engagement

Descriptives

			Statistic	Std. Error
work engagement	Mean		42.7007	.77272
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	41.1735	
		Upper Bound	44.2278	
	5% Trimmed Mean		42.9346	
	Median		43.0000	
	Variance		87.773	
	Std. Deviation		9.36871	
	Minimum		16.00	
	Maximum		62.00	
	Range		46.00	
	Interquartile Range		13.00	
	Skewness		-.354	.200
	Kurtosis		-.045	.397
Mod Hewlin Facades of Conformity	Mean		9.2109	.29044
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	8.6369	
		Upper Bound	9.7849	
	5% Trimmed Mean		9.0654	
	Median		9.0000	
	Variance		12.400	
	Std. Deviation		3.52142	
	Minimum		4.00	
	Maximum		18.00	
	Range		14.00	
	Interquartile Range		5.00	
	Skewness		.424	.200
	Kurtosis		-.476	.397

Results

The objectives of this study were to determine if perceived FOC in supervisors were significantly reported, to determine if a negative relationship exists between perceived FOC and work engagement variables, and to determine if minority status impacts the relationship between these variables. The mean score of 9.21 (*SD = 3.521*) for the perceived FOC variable shows perceptions of FOC in supervisors are common. With a minimum possible score for the modified FOC scale of 4 and a maximum score of 20, a mean score of 9.21 shows a significant number of participants perceived FOC in their supervisors. The first study objective is satisfied by this data. The remaining study objectives will be satisfied by analysing results of the outlined hypotheses (H_1, H_2, and H_3).

Correlation between perceived FOC in supervisors and work engagement was assessed using Spearman rho (Pallant, 2016). Hypothesis 1 predicted perceptions of FOC would have a negative relationship with work engagement. Table 6 shows results from the Spearman rho correlations and shows a significant negative relationship between perception of FOC and work engagement ($\rho = -.208, p < .05$). Although the relationship was weak, a p value of .011 demands the null hypothesis be rejected and H_1 is confirmed (Urdan, 2017, Saunders *et al.*, 2012).

The second hypothesis (H_2) was that perceived FOC in supervisors would be reported at a higher rate for minorities. Table 7 shows results from the Mann-Whitney U test and shows mean ranks are not statistically significant between the minority and non-minority groups ($U = 2803, z = 1.553, p = .120$). The null hypothesis must be retained, and H_2 rejected.

The third hypothesis (H_3) predicted the negative relationship between perceptions of FOC adoption among supervisors and employee work engagement would be greater among those who reported minority status. Although Spearman rho results showed a significant negative relationship ($\rho = -.242, p < .05$) between perceived FOC in supervisors, work engagement, and minority status, the negative relationship belonged to the group reporting no minority status. The correlation result for the minority status group ($\rho = -.178, p = .216$) shows the significance of the negative correlation between perceived FOC in supervisors, work engagement, and minority status is not below the accepted value to reject the null hypothesis ($p < .05$) and H_3 must be rejected (Urdan, 2017; Saunders *et al.*, 2012). These results are further illustrated by Table 8.

Table 6: FOC and Work Engagement Correlation Results
Correlations

			Mod Hewlin Facades of Conformity	work engagement
Spearman's rho	Mod Hewlin Facades of Conformity	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.208[*]
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.011
		N	147	147
	work engagement	Correlation Coefficient	-.208[*]	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.011	.
		N	147	147

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 7: Increased Minority Reporting Mann-Whitney U Results

Hypothesis Test Summary

	Null Hypothesis	Test	Sig.[a,b]	Decision
1	The distribution of Mod Hewlin Facades of Conformity is the same across categories of Non-Minority vs Minority.	Independent-Samples Mann-Whitney U Test	.120	Retain the null hypothesis.

a. The significance level is .050.

b. Asymptotic significance is displayed.

Independent-Samples Mann-Whitney U Test Summary

Total N	147
Mann-Whitney U	2803.000
Wilcoxon W	4078.000
Test Statistic	2803.000
Standard Error	243.435
Standardized Test Statistic	1.553
Asymptotic Sig.(2-sided test)	.120

Table 8: Correlation Results Split by Minority Variable

Correlations

| Non-Minority vs Minority				Mod Hewlin Facades of Conformity	work engagement
Spearman's rho	.00	Mod Hewlin Facades of Conformity	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.242[*]
			Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.017
			N	97	97
		work engagement	Correlation Coefficient	-.242[*]	1.000
			Sig. (2-tailed)	.017	.
			N	97	97
	1.00	Mod Hewlin Facades of Conformity	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.178
			Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.216
			N	50	50
		work engagement	Correlation Coefficient	-.178	1.000
			Sig. (2-tailed)	.216	.
			N	50	50

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Findings

The findings of this study fall outside of the expectations of the researcher. Although it was expected perceived FOC would be reported, the prevalence of perceived FOC in supervisors was a surprise. The assumption of the researcher that governed H_2, that minority employees would be more familiar with the behaviours or signs of FOC adoption and report perceived FOC in supervisors at a higher level, was incorrect. The same is true for the assumptions that underlie H_3. Literature on FOC indicates minorities are far more susceptible to FOC and, therefore, the negative consequences (Hewlin *et al.*, 2016; Hewlin, 2009). It was expected this would translate similarly in the consequences for perceived FOC in supervisors. The expectation was that minority employees would perceive a threat when FOC were perceived in their supervisor, based on their need to fit in (Phillips *et al.*, 2016), or to reciprocate behaviour when they feel obligated by strong organizational relationships (Reis *et al.*, 2016). This perception was incorrect. The relationship between perceived FOC in supervisors was stronger in those who did not report minority status.

The results for H_1 were consistent with expectations from authenticity, FOC, and work engagement literatures, but did not have the strength of relationship expected by the researcher (Figure 1 illustrates the correlation results). Authenticity literature shows trust and perception of authenticity in one's leader predicts work engagement (Ma *et al.*, 2020, Leroy *et al.*, 2015). FOC is a form of inauthenticity (Cha *et al.*, 2019). For this reason, it was expected a similar result would be found for perceptions of FOC in supervisors and decreased work engagement. Although the relationship did exist, it was weak. These results led to more questions and analysis to determine if a reason for the disparity could be ascertained.

Figure 1: FOC and Work Engagement Correlation Scatter Plot
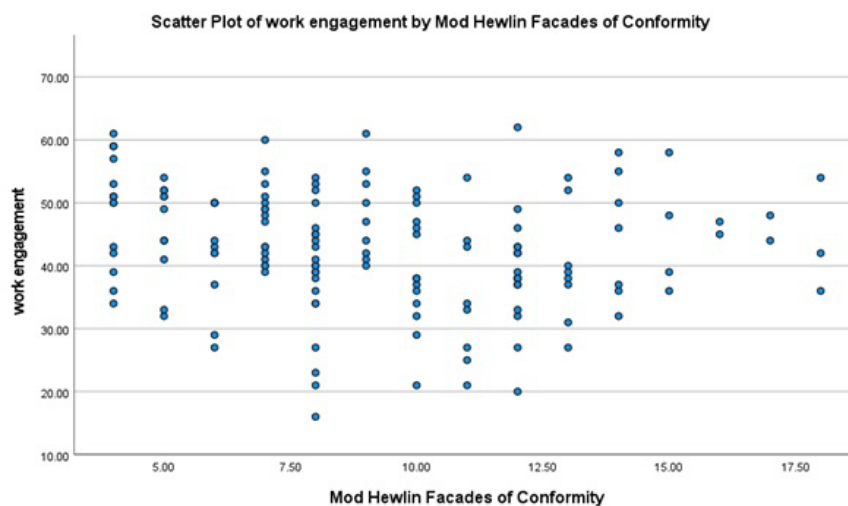
Additional Findings

Although the results satisfy research objectives and provide answers to the study's hypotheses, they led to further queries. It is noted that the majority of participants were female (71.4%). It is also noted that the gender category accounted for the largest portion of minority status reported, followed by age and ethnicity (See Appendix B for a breakdown according to minority group). It has been assumed ethnicity would be the most salient of categories that would impact minority status results by others researching the impact of FOC adoption (Phillips *et al*., 2016). The disparity between study results and other research on FOC led to further analysis of the perceived supervisor FOC and work engagement relationships, and gender, age, and minority status variables.

Further analysis was run to determine if gender, age, or looking at gender and minority status separately, would impact study results. Splitting the results of the Spearman rho correlation of scale variables by gender showed a significant negative relationship between perceived FOC adoption in supervisors and employee work engagement in women ($\rho = -.330, p < .01$). Table 9 shows the difference in results by gender, which is further illustrated by Figure 2. The results showed there was no significant relationship between these variables for men ($\rho = .134, p = .398$). Splitting the Spearman rho correlation of scale variable results by age category also showed significant results. A significant result was found in the age category of 45-54 ($\rho = -.458, p < 0.05$). Although significance did not meet the threshold of $p < .05$ for other age categories, the age category 18-24 had a result of $\rho = -.255$, the 35-44 category had a result of $\rho = -.217$, and the 55-64 category had a result of $\rho = -.441$. By further separating participants by gender as well as minority status, a significant negative relationship was found between perceived FOC in supervisors and work engagement, in female participants who did not report minority status ($\rho = -.373, p < 0.01$). Table 10 shows correlations split by both gender and minority status. Table 11 shows correlations split by age.

Table 9: Correlation Results Split By Gender

Correlations

				Mod Hewlin Facades of Conformity	work engagement
Spearman's rho	Female	Mod Hewlin Facades of Conformity	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.330**
			Sig. (2-tailed)	.	<.001
			N	105	105
		work engagement	Correlation Coefficient	-.330**	1.000
			Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	.
			N	105	105
	Male	Mod Hewlin Facades of Conformity	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.134
			Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.398
			N	42	42
		work engagement	Correlation Coefficient	.134	1.000
			Sig. (2-tailed)	.398	.
			N	42	42

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Figure 2: Correlation Differences By Gender Scatter Plot

Scatter Plot of work engagement by Mod Hewlin Facades of Conformity by What is your gender?
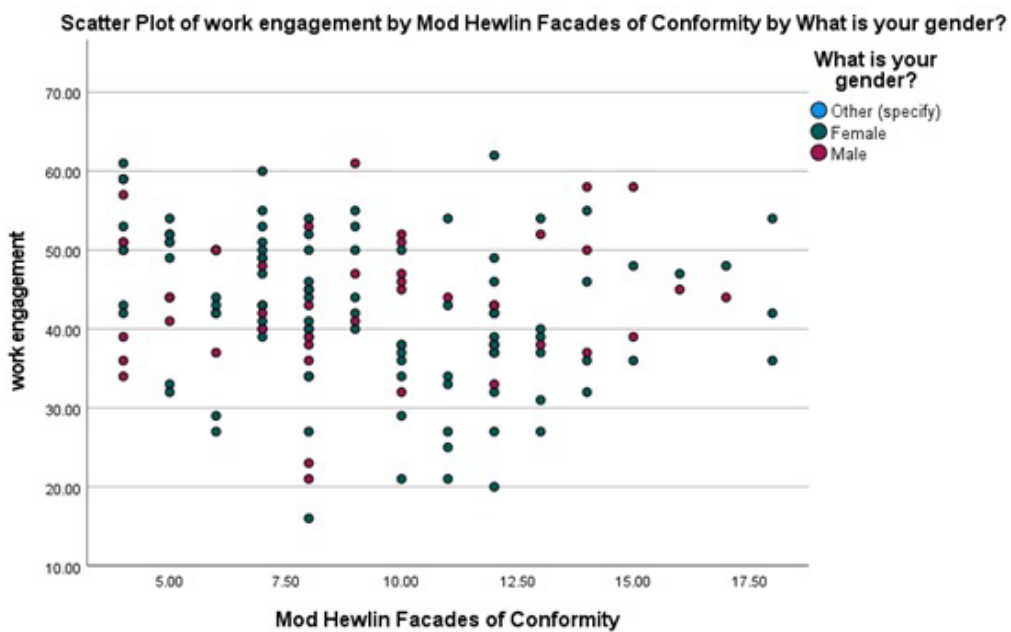
Table 10: Correlation Results Split By Gender & Minority Status

Correlations

What is your gender?	Non-Minority vs Minority				Mod Hewlin Facades of Conformity	work engagement
Female	.00	Spearman's rho	Mod Hewlin Facades of Conformity	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.373[**]
				Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.002
				N	69	69
			work engagement	Correlation Coefficient	-.373[**]	1.000
				Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	.
				N	69	69
	1.00	Spearman's rho	Mod Hewlin Facades of Conformity	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.293
				Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.083
				N	36	36
			work engagement	Correlation Coefficient	-.293	1.000
				Sig. (2-tailed)	.083	.
				N	36	36
Male	.00	Spearman's rho	Mod Hewlin Facades of Conformity	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.079
				Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.689
				N	28	28
			work engagement	Correlation Coefficient	.079	1.000
				Sig. (2-tailed)	.689	.
				N	28	28
	1.00	Spearman's rho	Mod Hewlin Facades of Conformity	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.262
				Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.365
				N	14	14
			work engagement	Correlation Coefficient	.262	1.000
				Sig. (2-tailed)	.365	.
				N	14	14

[**]. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 11: Correlation Results Split By Age Category

Correlations

What is your age?				Mod Hewlin Facades of Conformity	work engagement
18-24	Spearman's rho	Mod Hewlin Facades of Conformity	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.255
			Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.400
			N	13	13
		work engagement	Correlation Coefficient	-.255	1.000
			Sig. (2-tailed)	.400	.
			N	13	13
25-34	Spearman's rho	Mod Hewlin Facades of Conformity	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.001
			Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.995
			N	45	45
		work engagement	Correlation Coefficient	-.001	1.000
			Sig. (2-tailed)	.995	.
			N	45	45
35-44	Spearman's rho	Mod Hewlin Facades of Conformity	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.217
			Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.102
			N	58	58
		work engagement	Correlation Coefficient	-.217	1.000
			Sig. (2-tailed)	.102	.
			N	58	58
45-54	Spearman's rho	Mod Hewlin Facades of Conformity	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.458[*]
			Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.021
			N	25	25
		work engagement	Correlation Coefficient	-.458[*]	1.000
			Sig. (2-tailed)	.021	.
			N	25	25
55-64	Spearman's rho	Mod Hewlin Facades of Conformity	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.441
			Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.381
			N	6	6
		work engagement	Correlation Coefficient	-.441	1.000
			Sig. (2-tailed)	.381	.
			N	6	6

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The additional findings of this study provide valuable insight. Gender was found to be an important variable in determining the impact of FOC perception in supervisors on work engagement, as was age. Men showed no significant relationship between perceived FOC in supervisors and work engagement (ρ = .134), whereas women showed a significant negative relationship (ρ = -.330). This indicates men and women are impacted by perceptions of FOC differently, something that has not been highlighted in FOC literature as FOC literature has focused on the impact of FOC adoption on the individual or organization (Cha *et al*, 2019; Hewlin, 2003;2009), not on other employees. FOC literature has also shown age has less impact on FOC adoption as it increases (Hewlin *et al, 2016*). The findings of this research show negative effects of perceived FOC in supervisors increase in the higher age category of 45-54.

The relationships between gender, minority status, and perceived FOC in supervisors and work engagement, were the most interesting. Based on results from FOC research, it was expected by the researcher that females who reported as minorities would show a more significant negative relationship between the scale variables. The findings were the opposite. Females who did not report minority status showed a greater negative relationship between perceived FOC in supervisors and work engagement than those who did. This further contradicts expectations of this study about the effect of minority status on the dependent variable. It is also noteworthy that although a statistical significance was not found between these variables and men reporting minority status, a weak positive correlation was found ($\rho =$ .262). It is possible that the sample size for that category ($N = 14$) was not large enough to show significance, but a positive relationship may exist between perceived FOC in supervisors and work engagement in males who report minority status. It is clear the effects of perceived FOC are different from those of self-reported FOC.

Chapter 6: Discussion

This research has advanced FOC study in serval ways. FOC research has been focused on the impact FOC have and the individual who adopts FOC and the resulting consequences on their performance and commitment (Cha *et al.*, 2019; Hewlin, 2009). Most FOC research focuses on self-reported, first-hand accounts of FOC (Chou *et al.*, 2019; Philips *et al.*, 2016; Hewlin, 2003:2009). While the effects of FOC have been examined, this research is the first to determine the degree to which FOC are perceived in supervisors and what effect it might have on employee engagement. It considers the impact of perceptions of FOC in supervisors in the context of authenticity outcomes. In the same way perception of leadership authenticity has been evaluated against positive outcomes, it evaluates perceptions of this secondary construct authenticity behaviour against negative outcomes, thereby advancing knowledge in that area. The result is an advanced understanding of the impact of FOC, its reach within an organization, and its application to authenticity cultivation and HRM practice theory.

Perceptions of FOC adoption in supervisors have been shown by this study to have a negative relationship with work engagement. This was expected given the insights provided by authenticity research on the power of perception and authenticity outcomes (Leroy *et al.*, 2012; Fields, 2007), and theories relating to how work engagement is cultivated (Saks, 2019; Jeung, 2011, May *et al.*, 2004). The difference in how one experiences perception of FOC in one's supervisor and personal FOC adoption, however, was unexpected and adds new insights to FOC research. It is clear what has been understood about the impacts of FOC in those who adopt them does not always apply to the perception of FOC in others. Although there was an effect for some, FOC did not have the negative impact on engagement expected. The effects were impacted greatly by demographic variables.

This study has shown perception of FOC has a significantly different impact than experienced FOC, dependent on gender, age, and minority status. Although previous research has highlighted a difference in the way minority groups can be impacted by FOC (Phillips *et al.*, 2016), this study further illustrates how demographic variables can impact the outcome of FOC research, a research direction suggested by Hewlin (2009). Evaluating the relationship between scale variables and the sample showed only a weak relationship but splitting the sample into these demographic groups painted a much different picture. For instance, women showed a stronger negative relationship between scale variables and men showed no

significant relationship. This difference was further compounded by splitting the groups again, adding the minority status variable. Not only were women impacted to a greater degree, but women who do not report minority status were impacted more than those who do. Furthermore, it is possible a positive relationship exists between scale variables for men who report minority status. Perceptions of FOC in supervisors by minority employees may actually be positive. This notion contradicts inferences of FOC and authenticity literatures. One must question why.

This study highlights the value and necessity of future FOC research to understand the difference between demographic groups, the ways their perceptions are internalized, and the value they place on leader authenticity. Phillips *et al.* (2016) indicate that minorities are positively impacted by feeling similar and want to believe they fit. The positive relationship between scale variables and men who report minority status could be evidence of this, as could be the difference in negative impact results between females who report minority status and those who do not. Does the perception that one's supervisor also must pretend to hold values incongruent with one's own help minorities feel a sense of justice or similarity that reduces negative effects? A distinct difference has been shown between gender and the impact of perceived FOC in one's supervisor. What does this indicate? What is the difference between the way men and women perceive FOC in others? Do women who do not report as minorities feel pressure to conform when they have a female supervisor who has? Is the impact dependent on the supervisor's gender?

Another unexpected finding in this study was the relationship between age and the impact of perceived FOC in supervisors. FOC literature shows the tendency to adopt FOC decreases with age (Hewlin *et al.*, 2016). Why would the perception of FOC have the greatest statistical impact on those in a higher age category? The two highest age categories showed a negative relationship between perception of FOC in supervisors and work engagement. Although the results from the 55-64 category did not reach significance, this may be due to the limited number in that sample group. Why is there a difference in how age influences the adoption of FOC and the impact of its perception? Are individuals less inclined to conform with age but still negatively impacted by the perception that their supervisor feels they should do so?

These findings are valuable to authenticity research. Authenticity research highlights the importance and value of perception on positive outcomes such as work engagement and

the role perception plays in determining the strength of relationships and needs fulfilment that underlie work engagement (Ma *et al.*, 2020; Leroy *et al.*, 2015; Fields, 2007). Although FOC has been regarded as a form of inauthentic behaviour which has negative outcomes for the adoptees and the organization (Chou *et al.*, 2019; Hewlin *et al.*, 20117; Hewlin *et al.*, 2016; Hewlin, 2009), the role perceptions of FOC in supervisors may have on these important leader-follower relationships had not been examined. Research has shown employee's perceptions of their ability to be authentic impacts engagement (Reis *et al.*, 2016). This study looks further at perceptions of the ability to be authentic by considering if perceptions of FOC in supervisors would contribute to a perceived inability to be authentic and reduce positive authenticity outcomes. Perceptions of inauthenticity in one's supervisor measured by this study did not have the negative impact expected. The negative relationship was largely dependent on other variables. It would seem the value of leadership authenticity differs according to demographic group. This further illustrates the value of understanding secondary authenticity constructs like FOC and their impact on authenticity outcomes.

Implications for HRM

Perceptions of FOC adoption in supervisors have been shown to have a negative impact on employee work engagement. It has been acknowledged that FOC have a negative impact on those who adopt them and on organizations, but much of the literature on FOC focuses on minority status or environments that create insecurity (Cha *et al.*, 2019; Hewlin, 2003;2009). It is clear the negative effects of FOC have a far greater reach than previously acknowledged. FOC do not only impact those who adopt them, but also those who perceive them. Minority status actually reduces the impact of perceived FOC, making FOC an issue that has the potential to impact all employees regardless of their minority status or personal feelings toward their organization. FOC must be considered a threat to HRM effectiveness and HRM practices and policies must be re-evaluated on this basis.

Authenticity and engagement depend on the work environment to thrive (Ma *et al.*, 2020; Reis *et al.*, 2016). The work environment has changed considerably over recent years. Conversations that once might have been considered private, personal, or political, are now considered an ethical responsibility for organizations. CSR agendas require organizations to take a stand and organizations can be penalised by the public eye when they do not (Yang *et al.*, 2021). How might this expose employees to a new era of FOC formation? How can HR

managers balance the needs of the company with those of the employee? HRM plans need to re-evaluate what values and beliefs are most beneficial to their talent management systems and which practices are standing in the way of authenticity goals. Programs and policies such as CSR and D&I, designed to increase employee satisfaction and engagement, may not always have the intended outcomes (Livingston *et al.*, 2021; Downey *et al.*, 2015). An evaluation of what the organization is doing/saying, and why, is necessary to creating effective practices to encourage authenticity an cultivate employee engagement.

One of the most insightful findings of this study is that minorities may be less impacted, or even positively impacted, by the perception of FOC in their supervisors. What might this indicate about their perception of their own ability to be authentic? If one draws an inference that this result is due to a perceived level of fairness or similarity, one must also consider what this indicates about the current state of D&I. The group most impacted by perceptions of FOC were women who did not report minority status. Men who did not report minority status did not seem affected at all by their supervisors' inauthenticity, whereas men who did may have been positively impacted. This suggests that while some groups of people do not feel threatened by the presence of FOC in their supervisors, others do, and others may feel relieved by it. According to Kifer *et al.* (2103) authenticity comes down to power. These finding seem to support this.

HRM must consider how to ensure the power to be oneself is distributed evenly to all employees. HRM policies and practices communicate what the organization expects and values to its employees (Cable *et al.*, 2013). Socialization processes should focus on promoting resources that fill needs for meaning, safety, and significance, and supply the employee with the necessary managerial and social support (Albrecht *et al.*, 2015). Socialization processes that encourage identity may send a message of congruence between diversity and inclusion goals and practice. This messaging could create the trust necessary to encourage authenticity in the workplace and reinforce the relationships that underpin employee engagement. HRM must be careful to ensure that its practices align with inclusion messaging and do not send conflicting messages which suggest conformity is the path to success.

Possibly the greatest implication these findings have on HRM are the impact they should have on the practice of looking for fit. Instead of focusing on the degree to which employees fit preconceived notions of what an ideal employee should be, HRM plans should

reject all competencies and value systems that aren't necessary to the job itself (Stormer and Devine, 2008) and focus on creating an environment where employees feel their true selves have an opportunity to be valued and enrich the organization. Instead of trying to pick employees that match the environment, the focus should shift to creating an environment that is more inclusive for employees. If organizations stay focused on selecting and cultivating only the employees that "fit," opportunities for employees and organizations to benefit from authenticity will be limited by this mindset and it may create the environment that fosters FOC adoption.

Addressing these issues effectively begins with a strong D&I program. Practices, policies, and the organizational environment must be evaluated to identify and address all areas of concern and anything standing in the way of diversity and inclusion goals. This should extend past looking at demographic differences, to include cognitive differences such as beliefs systems, learning types, and personality traits. The review of practice and policy is a lengthy process, which should take several months and be followed by management training, shareholder engagement, and measuring results (Remesher, 2022). Management training is essential, especially upper management, as leaders shape the cultural environment (Remesher, 2022; Ma *et al.*, 2020) and must understand what changes have been made and why. Progress should be measured by evaluating employee retention and representation among diverse groups, as well as employee surveys.

Cost is a major concern, but it does not necessarily need to be. While hiring a consultancy firm that deals specifically with these concerns is an option, it is very expensive. These firms can bill at €500 per hour for a senior consultant and €285 per hour for the junior consultant who works with them. Training alone for a large firm can cost over €100,000 (Sands, 2022). Utilizing current HR staff in this process is a much more cost-effective approach. While this process will take a great deal of time, policy review, training, and measurement, can all be done in house, as part of an ongoing process toward a healthier working environment.

Chapter 7: Conclusions and Recommendations

Research Overview and Critical Findings

This study set out to evaluate the effect perceptions of FOC in supervisors might have on employees. Previous FOC research demonstrates a link between FOC and outcomes like engagement (Hewlin *et al.*, 2017; Hewlin, 2009), and authenticity research demonstrates a relationship between employee perceptions of leadership authenticity and positive authenticity outcomes (Braun and Peus, 2018; Leroy *et al.*, 2012). The relationship between the perception of FOC in others and authenticity outcomes had not been explored. Given the established relationship between perception, leadership authenticity, and positive outcomes like employee engagement, the relationship between perceptions of FOC in supervisors and employee work engagement needed to be examined. This research set out to address that need.

The objectives of this study were to evaluate the degree of perceived FOC adoption in supervisors, its relationship with employee engagement levels, and any impact minority status may have on perceptions of FOC or its effects on engagement. This was addressed by asking the following research questions: Is there a significant level of perceptions of FOC in supervisors and, if so, is there a negative relationship between employee perceptions of FOC adoption in their supervisors and their work engagement? Does minority status impact the rate of perception of FOC in supervisors or any relationship determined between perceptions of FOC in supervisors and employee engagement? It was subsequently addressed by developing and testing three hypotheses designed to answer the research questions.

The study used a quantitative, cross-sectional survey approach to answering research hypotheses in the form of a 24-item online survey. The survey utilised two pre-established scales to measure FOC and work engagement. Work engagement was measured by UWES-9 (Schaufeli *et al.*, 2006), and FOC was measured by a slight modification of Hewlin's (2009) Facades of Conformity Scale. This scale provided insufficient internal consistency and reliability and was modified to a four-item measure labelled Mod Hewlin Facades of Conformity. Participants were limited to those over age 18, working a minimum of 20 hours per week under direct supervision. Participants were selected using a convenience sampling approach that included participants solicited by contacting universities, organizations, and individuals by email and through social media platforms. Data was collected via the online SurveyMonkey platform and analysed using IBM SPSS.

Results of the study supported one study hypothesis and contradicted the other two. Employee perceptions of FOC in supervisors were shown to have a negative relationship with employee engagement, supporting Hypothesis 1. Hypothesis 2, which predicted perceptions of FOC in supervisors would be higher for those who report minority status was rejected. Hypothesis 3, which predicted the relationship between perceptions of FOC adoption among supervisors and decreased employee engagement would be greater among minorities, was also disproved. Furthermore, the study showed gender effects the impact of perceptions of FOC in supervisors on engagement, as does age. It also showed females who do not identify as minorities are impacted to a greater degree than those who do.

This study shows perceived FOC have a different impact on employees than experienced FOC. This is valuable information in several ways. FOC are usually associated with minorities or those in a position of reduced power (Kifer *et al.*, 2013; Hewlin, 2009). Of course, this group is important, but it is limited by the potential number of those it includes. This research shows FOC have the potential to impact all employees on a personal level. FOC have been shown to have serious and negative consequences for organizations (Chou *et al.*, 2019; Hewlin *et al.*, 2017; Hewlin *et al.*, 2016). Extending the scope of those impacted by FOC extends the scope of potential consequences to organizations as well. The study's findings also highlight a gap in FOC research. It is clear FOC have not been considered in a broad enough context. This lends itself to several avenues of future study. Most critically, the findings of this study show HRM practices and policies need to be evaluated critically to help ensure they do not cultivate FOC. As demonstrated previously by authenticity research (Braun and Peus, 2018; Leroy, *et al., 2012*), it is clear perception creates reality. Perception of FOC in one's leader can have negative effects on important outcomes like employee engagement. More attention must be paid to ensuring organizations not only support employee authenticity, but actively engage policies and practices that reduce the necessity for inauthenticity like FOC in the first place.

Limitations

This study has several limitations. It is limited by its cross-sectional nature and open to common methods bias (Saunders *et al.*, 2012). Although data was taken at multiple points in time, as recommended by other researchers to reduce this bias (Cha *et al.*, 2019; Chou *et al.*, 2019), it is still a concern. Consistency bias is a concern due to self-reported measures. Due to the study design, non-response bias could not be calculated. The sample was also

smaller than necessary to reflect a margin of error less than .5%. It should be at least 384 respondents (Saunders *et al.*, 2012).

Analysis of Research and Future Recommendations

Overall, study objectives were met, and the research was successful. That said, there were aspects of the process and methods that may have provided better results if altered. The main observed issue was the use of the Facades of Conformity Scale (Hewlin, 2009). The survey utilised pre-established scales to ensure reliability. Previous authenticity research has shown slight modifications to scales to report on one's manager instead of oneself can be used without damaging scale reliability (Zheng *et al.*, 2020). This was not what was observed by this study. It may be because FOC is a construct that relates to very personal and private beliefs. It may be employees did not have the knowledge or relationships necessary to feel they could assess FOC in their supervisor. Although the four-item scale utilised has acceptable reliability results, it is possible a new scale should be adopted to evaluate perceived FOC in others. Qualitative study could provide insight and answer questions highlighted by this study in a way quantitative study may not.

In addition to this issue, there were other aspects of the study and survey design that could have been better. The research set out to examine a population of Irish employees. Although all requests for participation were made to Irish universities, colleges, organizations, and individuals who stated on social media they work in Ireland, the use of social media platforms to increase participation meant it couldn't be guaranteed all respondents worked in Ireland. The survey should have included an item asking where the participant worked. This was not something considered during the survey design process as the need for increased participation was not anticipated. Additionally, the item which indicated minority status was meant to allow participants to select all categories that fit. There was an error in the survey design that did not allow for this, which was not noticed during the survey preview process. Although minority variables were split into two categories for analysis (minority and non-minority), it would have been interesting to see if that additional data may have added something to the study. It also would have been interesting if the survey had included demographic questions about the supervisor. Having this data may have helped address some of the disparities between study expectations, results, and FOC literature. Finally, although the survey instructed participants the terms manager and

supervisor could be used interchangeably, it would have been more concise if the survey items used the term supervisor instead of manager.

Recommendations for Future Research:

The findings of this study indicate a clear need for further research on the impact of perceptions of FOC. Perceptions of FOC have been shown to impact work engagement, but to different degrees and in different ways dependent on gender, age, and minority status. Given the benefits associated with increased work engagement (Saks, 2019), future research should ascertain why. The current study did not measure self-reported FOC against perceived FOC to determine if perceptions of FOC in supervisors were accurate. It also did not gather information such as the gender of the supervisor in question or their minority status. Future studies that measure both self-reported FOC in supervisors and perceived FOC by employees, as well as full demographic items on both groups would help to provide these answers. Additionally, it must be considered if perceived FOC should be the focus of some qualitative research. How do the differences found between the impact and perceived FOC and self-reported FOC relate to the validity of measuring perceived FOC with a self-reported scale? Should a completely new evaluation be drawn for perceived FOC and the language that would measure it?

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CIPD Reflection:

Recommendations and Implementation

The results of this study indicate a need to re-examine HRM practices and policies, and potentially make some changes. HR managers who wish to capitalize on the benefits of authenticity need to look at the cultural environment they create and ensure practices and policies are developed with inclusion in mind. This would include an honest inventory of selection and socialization practices to identify any practices that undermine these efforts by signalling out characteristics that are not competency related. It should also include a thorough evaluation of programs intended to support employee satisfaction and engagement. Appropriate training would be necessary to ensure managers understand the direction being taken, its benefits, and the appropriate actions necessary to accomplish these goals. Success should be measured by evaluating how changes impact retention, diverse group representation, and employee opinions. This could be accomplished by utilising existing talent management professionals to avoid the costs incurred by hiring consultancy firms. Although this approach will take more time, if done thoroughly, it should yield the necessary results and a reasonable cost to the organization.

Personal Learning Statement

This process was very enjoyable for me. I went into it hoping to learn everything I could from both lectures and the dissertation process, an approach I had not taken during my undergraduate degree. I chose a topic that interested me and had the potential to add something to current HRM theory. I believe this approach really paid off, as I am very satisfied and proud of the resulting dissertation as well as all I have learned about HRM.

If I were to begin this process again, there is not much I would change. I met obstacles such as low participation, survey malfunctions, and scales that weren't reliable, which I would certainly plan for differently in future, but I was able to work around these obstacles in a manner that produced what I consider to be a good piece of research. This process has showed me the value of planning, being thorough, and completing things one step at a time. In the end, the greatest lesson I have learned is that learning is a choice and an action, and I am able to learn and accomplish anything I set my mind to. It has been an extremely rewarding process.

Appendices:

Appendix A:

Which of the following best describes your current occupation?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Other (please specify)	12	8.2	8.2	8.2
	Management Occupations	13	8.8	8.8	17.0
	Business and Financial Operations Occupations	21	14.3	14.3	31.3
	Computer and Mathematical Occupations	4	2.7	2.7	34.0
	Architecture and Engineering Occupations	2	1.4	1.4	35.4
	Community and Social Service Occupations	3	2.0	2.0	37.4
	Legal Occupations	2	1.4	1.4	38.8
	Education, Training, and Library Occupations	11	7.5	7.5	46.3
	Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media Occupations	1	.7	.7	46.9
	Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations	3	2.0	2.0	49.0
	Healthcare Support Occupations	4	2.7	2.7	51.7
	Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations	9	6.1	6.1	57.8
	Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance Occupations	1	.7	.7	58.5
	Personal Care and Service Occupations	1	.7	.7	59.2
	Sales and Related Occupations	6	4.1	4.1	63.3
	Office and Administrative Support Occupations	33	22.4	22.4	85.7
	Farming, Fishing, and Forestry Occupations	1	.7	.7	86.4
	Construction and Extraction Occupations	9	6.1	6.1	92.5
	Installation, Maintenance, and Repair Occupations	6	4.1	4.1	96.6
	Production Occupations	3	2.0	2.0	98.6
	Transportation and Materials Moving Occupations	2	1.4	1.4	100.0
	Total	147	100.0	100.0	

Appendix B:

Do you consider yourself to hold minority status in any of the following categories? Please tick all boxes that apply

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	None of the above	97	66.0	66.0	66.0
	Gender	18	12.2	12.2	78.2
	Age	10	6.8	6.8	85.0
	Ethnicity	10	6.8	6.8	91.8
	Religion	2	1.4	1.4	93.2
	Lifestyle	4	2.7	2.7	95.9
	Other	6	4.1	4.1	100.0
	Total	147	100.0	100.0	

Appendix C:

Age

		Value	Count	Percent
Standard Attributes	Label	What is your age?		
Valid Values	1.00	Under 18	0	0.0%
	2.00	18-24	13	8.8%
	3.00	25-34	45	30.6%
	4.00	35-44	58	39.5%
	5.00	45-54	25	17.0%
	6.00	55-64	6	4.1%
	7.00	65+	0	0.0%

Appendix D:

Which of the following best describes your current job level?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Other (please specify)	7	4.8	4.8	4.8
	Owner/Executive/C-Level	1	.7	.7	5.4
	Senior Management	18	12.2	12.2	17.7
	Middle Management	34	23.1	23.1	40.8
	Intermediate	65	44.2	44.2	85.0
	Entry Level	22	15.0	15.0	100.0
	Total	147	100.0	100.0	

Appendix E:

Facades of Conformity Measure

Directions: Can you be yourself at work? The following statements reflect how people in organizations feel about sharing their personal beliefs and values at work. Please answer as honestly as possible the degree to which you agree or disagree with each statement.

1. I don't share certain things about myself in order to fit in at work.

2. I suppress personal values that are different from those of the organization.

3. I withhold personal values that conflict with organizational values.

4. I don't "play politics" by pretending to embrace organizational values.

5. I behave in a manner that reflects the organization's value system even though it is inconsistent with my personal values.

6. I say things that I don't really believe at work.

Appendix F:

My name is Erin Murray, and I am a Masters student at National College of Ireland, working on my final dissertation research. I am investigating the degree to which employees feel their managers/supervisors can be themselves in the workplace. This questionnaire asks your opinion on aspects of your work life and perceptions of your work environment. Your answers will add to current understanding of how employees perceive authenticity in the workplace and how it might impact them. If you decide to take part, the questionnaire should take about 3 minutes. Many of the questions are opinion-based. There are no wrong answers. The information you provide will be completely anonymous. You will be asked to provide demographic information for academic use of the researcher only. You will not be asked your name or the organization you work for. All completed surveys will be entered automatically into a main data set with no identifying characteristics. There will be no risk posed to you as a participant of this study. Your participation would be greatly appreciated. Your decision to take part in this study is completely voluntary and you can withdraw your participation at any point before completion.

* 1. I understand the terms of this study and give my consent to participate.

Yes, No

* 2. What is your age?

Under 18, 18-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45-54, 55-64, 65+

* 3. How many hours do you work per week on average? Less than 20 hours, Between 20-30 hours, 30 or more hours

* 4. Do you work under a supervisor/manager at your place of work?

Yes, No

* 5. What is your gender?

Female, Male, Other (specify)

* 6. Which of the following best describes your current job level?

Owner/Executive/C-Level, Senior Management, Middle Management, Intermediate, Entry Level, Other (please specify)

* 7. Which of the following best describes your current occupation?

Management Occupations Business and Financial Operations Occupations, Computer and Mathematical Occupations, Architecture and Engineering Occupations, Life, Physical, and Social Science Occupations, Community and Social Service Occupations, Legal Occupations, Education, Training, and Library Occupations, Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media Occupations, Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations, Healthcare Support Occupations, Protective Service Occupations, Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations, Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance Occupations, Personal Care and Service Occupations, Sales and Related Occupations, Office and Administrative Support Occupations, Farming, Fishing, and Forestry Occupations, Construction and Extraction Occupations, Installation, Maintenance, and Repair Occupations, Production Occupations, Transportation and Materials Moving Occupations, Other (please specify)

 * 8. Do you consider yourself to hold minority status in any of the following categories? Please tick all boxes that apply

Gender, Age, Ethnicity, Religion, Lifestyle, Other, None of the above

* 9. Roughly how many full-time employees currently work for your organization?

1-10, 11-50, 51-200, 201-500, 501-1,000, 1,001-5,000, 5,001-10,000, 10,000+, I am currently not employed

Please answer the following questions by indicating the frequency with which you agree with the statements. If you are unsure, give the answer that best reflects your perception. The term manager is interchangeable with supervisor.

10. At my work, I feel bursting with energy.

Never, Almost Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often, Very Often, Always

11. At my job, I feel strong and vigorous.

Never, Almost, Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often, Very Often, Always

12. My manager behaves in a manner that reflects the organization's value system even though it is inconsistent with their own personal values.

Never, Not Often, Sometimes, Often, Always

 13. My manager says things that they don't really believe at work.

Never, Not Often, Sometimes, Often, Always

14. I am enthusiastic about my job.

Never, Almost Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often, Very Often, Always

15. My job inspires me.

Never, Almost, Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often, Very Often, Always

16. My manager doesn't share certain things about him/herself in order to fit in at work.

Never, Not Often, Sometimes, Often, Always

17. My manager suppresses personal values that are different from those of the organization.

Never, Not Often, Sometimes, Often, Always

18. When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work.

Never, Almost Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often, Very Often, Always

19. I feel happy when I am working intensely.

Never, Almost Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often, Very Often, Always

20. My manager withholds personal values that are in conflict with organizational values.

Never, Not Often, Sometimes, Often, Always

21. My manager does not "play politics" by pretending to embrace organizational values.

Never, Not Often, Sometimes, Often, Always

22. I am proud of the work that I do.

Never, Almost Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often, Very Often, Always

23. I am immersed in my work.

Never, Almost Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often, Very Often, Always

24. I get carried away when I am working.

Never, Almost Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often, Very Often, Always

Thank You

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. This survey hopes to determine if employees detect certain types of inauthenticity in their managers and if this impacts how they feel about their

work/organization. If you would like the results of this study, please email your request to

x20148313@student.ncirl.ie.

Appendix G:

Example Participation Request email.

31/03/2022

Dear (Org Name) HR Manager,

My name is Erin Murray, and I am a student at National College of Ireland, working on my final dissertation research. I will be conducting a study that looks at aspects of authenticity in the workplace and hopes to examine the relationship between employee perceptions of manager authenticity and outcomes like work engagement. I am writing to request participation from your organization.

Your participation would be greatly appreciated. The study will be completely anonymous and utilize an online survey platform. The survey takes about 3 minutes to complete, and respondents would choose to take place on a completely voluntary basis by following the link provided. Data collected will go directly into a main data set and will have no identifiers to participants or organizations. Data will not be shared and will be for the academic use of the researcher only. A copy of the survey's findings will be made available after the study's conclusion

If you are willing to participate, please let me know at your earliest convenience. All that will be requested from participating organizations is to share the following link, www.surveymonkey.com/r/5SZ6HDK , with employees via email or intranet, and invite them to take part in the study. I understand the value of your employees' time, and greatly appreciate you taking the time to consider this request.

Thank you for your time.

Kind regards,

Erin Murray – Masters Student, National College of Ireland