Developmental HRM, employee well-being and performance : the moderating role of developing leadership

DEVELOPMENTAL HRM, EMPLOYEE WELL-BEING AND PERFORMANCE:

THE MODERATING ROLE OF DEVELOPING LEADERSHIP

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ABSTRACT

Answering the call for more insights in the relationship between HRM, employee well-being and performance, this study examines the link between developmental HR practices and employee task performance, and includes both happiness (i.e. affective organizational commitment) and health related (i.e. exhaustion) well-being as mediators. Based on social exchange theory and cognitive dissonance theory, we also explore the line manager's developing leadership behaviour as a moderator in the relationship between developmental HRM and well-being. The multi-source data from 403 employees and 53 line managers show that distinct developmental HR practices influence well-being and employee performance differently, and suggest that the developing leadership behaviour of line managers influences the way in which developmental HR practices affect employees. Overall, the results underline the need for a configurational perspective on HRM, well-being and employee performance, taking line managers' behaviour into account as an essential element of the HRM system, next to formal HR practices.

Key words: developmental HR practices, developing leadership behaviour, well-being, employee task performance, social exchange theory, cognitive dissonance theory

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INTRODUCTION

To explain how HRM contributes to firm performance, employee well-being has been put on the forefront, in the sense that HRM is believed to influence performance indirectly through employee well-being (e.g., Boxall & Macky, 2009; Guest, 2017). Yet, at the same time, there has been considerable debate on the exact role of well-being within this relationship (Van de Voorde et al., 2012). Proponents of the so-called "*mutual gains*" perspective argue that HRM sends employees a signal that their contribution, well-being and development is valued and taken care of, thereby fostering their well-being (e.g. commitment and satisfaction). This, in turn, enhances performance, thereby creating a win-win situation for both employees and employers (Guest, 2017; Peccei et al., 2013; Van de Voorde et al., 2012). In contrast, supporters of the "*conflicting outcomes*" perspective challenge this optimistic view and see an inherent dark side to HRM. HR practices may indeed increase performance, but by intensifying work and increasing the strain on employees. As such, they are implemented at the expense of well-being and create a lose-win situation for employees and organizations respectively (e.g., Godard, 2001; Ramsay et al., 2000).

These contrasting views can be attributed to the multidimensionality of well-being. Building on Grant et al.'s (2007) model, HRM research typically considers one or more of three types of well-being: "*happiness*" (e.g., job satisfaction, commitment), "*health*" (e.g., stress, exhaustion) and "*social*" (e.g., trust, social support) well-being (e.g., Baluch, 2017; Heffernan & Dundon, 2016; Veld & Alfes, 2017). In their review, Van de Voorde et al. (2012) showed that there might be an inherent well-being trade-off as HR practices were found to improve both happiness and social well-being, thereby boosting performance, yet at the expense of health well-being. Hence, depending on the dimension of well-being, either the mutual gains or conflicting outcomes perspective seems to hold. Their review showed a strong need for more balanced studies

incorporating multiple dimensions of well-being, especially those in a clear trade-off (Van de Voorde et al., 2012; Wood et al., 2012). A few follow-up studies have taken such a balanced approach (Boxall & Macky, 2014; Heffernan & Dundon, 2016; Veld & Alfes, 2017), yet show inconsistent findings. This additionally suggests a need to discover boundary conditions explaining under which circumstances organizations can avoid this inherent trade-off, ensuring that employee well-being (in all of its facets) as well as performance is fostered (Peccei et al., 2013).

In response to both needs, this study takes a balanced approach, including two dimensions of well-being as mediators in the relationship between HR practices and performance, i.e. happiness and health well-being, represented by affective organizational commitment and exhaustion respectively. We choose these two dimensions because they are subject to an inherent trade-off and build further on existing and recent research making the same choice (e.g., Heffernan & Dundon, 2016; Veld & Alfes, 2017). Next, we focus on leadership behaviour of line managers as a key factor explaining when and why organizations experience a well-being trade-off (or not). Although line managers have been put forward as key stakeholders in realizing the effectiveness of HR practices (e.g., Bos-Nehles et al., 2013; Gilbert et al., 2011), little research on the relationship between HR practices, well-being and performance so far has included the line manager. In this study, we consider the leadership behaviour of line managers towards employees as an element of the *HRM system*, next to the formal HR practices (Purcell & Hutchinson, 2007), and build on social exchange (Blau, 1964) and cognitive dissonance theory (Festinger, 1957) to explain how it can influence the relationship between HR practices and well-being. Doing so, we concentrate on one particular set of HR practices and leadership behaviour, namely developmental HR practices and developing leadership behaviour. Investments in employee development are typically considered a vital part of a well-developed HRM system and a potentially strong catalyst

for creating a social exchange relationship as such investments show care for employees and feed their sense of being valued and appreciated (Dysvik & Kuvaas, 2012; Posthuma et al., 2013). While both developmental HR practices and developing leadership are related as they aim to send the same and important social exchange message to employees (i.e. the importance of development, their well-being and personal growth), they are also distinct. While the former are formal practices designed by higher management, the latter represents the informal day-to-day behaviour of line managers towards employees (Purcell & Hutchinson, 2007).

In sum, we contribute to the literature on (developmental) HRM, well-being and performance by testing the role of employee well-being more comprehensively through the simultaneous inclusion of two well-being dimensions that have been found to be in clear trade-off. Secondly, we unravel the conditions under which such a trade-off may (not) occur by including the line manager's developing leadership behaviour as a moderating variable and studying both elements of the HRM system as a configuration. In doing so, we also add to the limited number of existing studies focusing solely on HRM or leadership, or studies including both, but not studying their simultaneous impact on well-being (e.g. Alfes et al., 2013; Purcell & Hutchinson, 2007).

LITERATURE AND HYPOTHESES

Well-being as a Mediator between HR Practices and Performance

Employee well-being can be defined as the overall quality of an employee's experience and functioning at work (Warr, 1987). Apart from this holistic definition, much effort has been done to tease out different dimensions of well-being. Although many conceptualizations exist (e.g. Danna & Griffin, 1999; Page & Vella-Brodrick, 2009; Salanova et al., 2014; Zheng et al., 2015), HRM research has predominantly focused on one or more of three dimensions suggested by Grant

et al. (2007), i.e. happiness, health and social well-being (Clinton & Van Veldhoven, 2012; Van de Voorde et al., 2012). Happiness well-being reflects employees' subjective experiences and includes attitudes such as job satisfaction and affective organizational commitment (Grant et al., 2007; Peccei et al., 2013; Van de Voorde et al., 2012). The health dimension covers physical and mental health issues related to strain such as stress, diseases and exhaustion (Grant et al., 2007; Van de Voorde et al., 2012). Finally, social well-being refers to interactional aspects such as fairness, social support from and trust in others at work (Grant et al., 2007).

To increase insight in the relationship between HRM, well-being and performance, Van de Voorde et al. (2012) reviewed 36 quantitative studies including one or more of the above-mentioned dimensions. Their main conclusion was that the implementation of HR practices could imply a trade-off between increasing happiness and social well-being on the one hand and damaging health well-being on the other hand. Accordingly, recent research in this domain has focused on incorporating multiple dimensions simultaneously to unravel these trade-offs. Yet, conflicting findings emerged. While some find HR practices to foster job satisfaction, commitment and/or reduce strain (e.g. Boxall & Macky, 2014; Veld & Alfes, 2017), others find a unilateral destructive effect on both happiness and health well-being (e.g. Heffernan & Dundon, 2016). Hence, we need more insight into boundary conditions explaining when the different dimensions of employee well-being are fostered or harmed. In this regard, some studies have focused on how organizations can avoid a backlash of HR practices on health well-being. For example, Conway et al. (2016) found that performance management can increase employees' exhaustion, but this can be offset by granting employees voice in decision-making. The underlying argument is that voice can act as a job resource to help employees cope with increasing performance demands and influence the process. In a similar vein, Zhang et al. (2013) and Alfes et al. (2012) found the overall

relationship with the organization to matter, such that a high quality relationship (e.g. characterized by trust) counters the exhausting effects of HR practices. Finally, Shantz et al.'s (2016) show that HR practices may only reduce exhaustion when they are seen as a means to help employees performance better, while the opposite occurs when they are seen as a means to reduce costs.

We wish to build on and add to these studies, by exploring the role of the line manager's leadership behavior as a contingency variable explaining when HR practices improve or hurt well-being and subsequent performance. We thereby focus on two dimensions of well-being which have been found to be in explicit trade-off, i.e. happiness and health well-being. Following previous research, we represent the former by using affective organizational commitment (AOC; e.g., Heffernan & Dundon, 2016; Ramsay et al., 2000; Veld & Alfes, 2017) and the latter by exhaustion (e.g., Conway et al., 2016; Vanhala & Tuomi, 2006; Zhang et al., 2013). Moreover, whereas former studies have predominantly focused on organizational performance, we focus on employee task performance as a more proximal outcome of HR practices and employee well-being. Because organizational performance is influenced by many other intervening variables, apart from well-being, former studies may have under- or overestimated effects of HR practices and well-being on performance (Jensen et al., 2013). Finally, since many types of both leadership behavior as well as HR practices exist, we take a first step towards exploring the interaction between both by focusing on a specific set of HR practices as well as leadership behavior, i.e. developmental HR practices and developing leadership. Developmental HR practices are formal practices designed by higher management (Purcell & Hutchinson, 2007) consisting of training, career development (promotion opportunities and career counselling) and feedback practices (developmental and performance appraisal) (Kuvaas, 2008). Contrary, developing leadership behaviour represents the informal day-to-day behaviour of line managers towards their employees in support of their

development, such as coaching employees, offering advice, and helping people learn how to improve their skills (Yukl et al., 2002). Figure one visualizes the proposed model of this study.

Insert figure one

The Configuration between Developmental HR Practices and Developing Leadership Behaviour

Through their behaviour, line managers give day-to-day direction to their employees, which can serve as a signal to employees that the organization is willing to engage in a social exchange relationship with them to support their well-being, growth and development (van Dierendonck et al., 2004; Renwick, 2003; Wang et al., 2005). Similarly, HR practices are often seen as signals sent to employees, with the explicit aim of conveying such a social exchange relationship (e.g., Bal et al., 2013; Marescaux et al., 2013; Townsend et al., 2012). As such, Purcell and Hutchinson (2007) argued that HR practices and line manager's leadership behaviour are two crucial elements of an *HRM system* which coexist and together send signals to employees concerning the organization's desire to engage in a social exchange relationship. Supporting this, they found that these two elements independently affect employees' well-being and attitudes. Yet, while they argued that there is an *'interactive and dynamic relationship'* between line managers' leadership behaviour and HR practices, this was not explicitly theorized nor empirically tested. Building on the notion that both are elements of an HRM system, we can draw from the configurational system perspective (Delery & Doty, 1996) to argue that these different elements should fit or form a strong configuration to achieve maximum impact. Subsequently, the importance of this fit for employee well-being can be explained through social exchange theory and cognitive dissonance theory.

Firstly, since both elements convey signals to employees on the firm's willingness to engage in a social exchange relationship, we can argue that both signals can reinforce each other when

employees experience developing HR practices as well as developing leadership behaviour. For example, line managers can encourage employees to take on promotion opportunities, to achieve goals from career counselling or to act on feedback from performance and developmental appraisals. Doing so, line managers reinforce the social exchange relationship which the organization intends to build with employees through the HR practices (Kuvaas & Dysvik, 2010) thereby triggering well-being. Indeed, AOC is considered a typical reciprocal reaction from employees in response to a social exchange relationship (Gould-Williams, 2007; Van de Voorde & Beijer, 2015). Moreover, clear signs that the employer is willing to invest in a reciprocal social exchange relationship reduces the odds of exhaustion, as it protects the balance between what employees contribute to the firm and what they receive (Conway et al., 2016; Zhang et al., 2013).

Secondly, cognitive dissonance theory (Festinger, 1957) can further explain why consistent and positive signals from HR practices and leadership behaviour result in higher well-being above and beyond social exchange theory. In case of such a strong fit, employees perceive separate (both from the line manager and the HR practices) but consistent signals, and will experience not only a strong social exchange relationship but also a state of *cognitive consonance* (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004). This is considered an intrapersonal state of comfort, harmony and internal consistency which reflects on their attitudes towards the situation (Beehr et al., 2009; Stoverink et al., 2014). Since this fit – and its resulting cognitive consonance – is a characteristic of the organization's HRM system, it further stimulates positive attitudes towards the organization and increases AOC (Beehr et al, 2009). Moreover, this psychological comfort reduces the odds of negative emotions and moods, such as exhaustion (Beehr et al., 2009; Van Dijck & Brown, 2006). As a result, we would expect the most favourable levels of AOC and exhaustion in this configuration.

Alternatively, in case of low developing leadership behaviour and a lack of developmental HR practices, employees also experience a strong configuration. They observe a consistent signal that the organization is not willing to engage in a social exchange relationship. Hence, in this situation, employee well-being should be low (i.e. low AOC and high exhaustion). Yet, this situation does imply that employees experience cognitive consonance because they receive consistent messages, which would benefit their well-being (cf. the reasoning we mentioned above). Because of the inherent negative message of this configuration (i.e. a lack of a social exchange relationship), this situation would, however, be suboptimal at best. Therefore, in this situation, we would expect a suboptimal or medium level of AOC as well as exhaustion.

Finally, a weak configuration results in inconsistent signals. On the one hand, developing leadership behaviour could be accompanied by few developmental HR practices: line managers may stimulate employees to achieve goals and give feedback, but in the absence of, for example, clear promotion opportunities, career counselling or training, line managers' willingness to invest in employees is not reinforced by formal signals from the organization. On the other hand, strong developmental HR practices could be combined with low developing leadership behaviour. For example, line managers may neglect to stimulate employees to apply for a promotion, to attain the goals set out in career counselling, to transfer new knowledge from training to the workplace or to act upon feedback from developmental and performance appraisal. In both cases, inconsistent signals are sent to employees. This firstly undermines the social exchange relationship. For example, while high developing leadership behaviour signals the line manager's willingness to invest in employee well-being, personal growth and development, the formal signals of the organization (i.e. a lack of developmental HR practices) contradict this. Hence, while the former

signals a social exchange relationship, the latter undermines this, counteracting the positive impact on well-being described above, both for AOC and exhaustion.

Secondly, this double-bind communication involving two separate, contradictory messages, may result in cognitive dissonance, creating a stressful and uncertain situation for employees (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004). Cognitive dissonance is a situation of psychological discomfort which is associated with an unpleasant state of tension (Dechawatanapaisal & Siengthai, 2006; Festinger, 1957). Since this discomfort originates from the organization's HRM system, it generates negative attitudes towards the organization and reduces AOC (Beehr et al., 2009). Moreover, the tension increases the odds of negative emotions and moods, such as exhaustion (Beehr et al., 2009; Van Dijck & Brown, 2006). Hence, in both situations, we expect the most unfavourable levels of AOC as well as exhaustion. The reasoning above leads to the following hypotheses (see also figure 2):

H1: *Developing leadership behaviour moderates the relationship between developmental HR practices and AOC such that developmental HR practices lead to higher (lower) AOC under the condition of high (low) developing leadership behaviour*

H2: *Developing leadership behaviour moderates the relationship between developmental HR practices and exhaustion such that developmental HR practices lead to lower (higher) exhaustion under the condition of high (low) developing leadership behaviour*

Insert figure two

Furthermore, we assume a positive relationship between AOC and task performance. Employees who feel attached to and identify with their organization are assumed and found to repay the organization by working harder (Meyer et al., 2002). In line with social exchange theory, we assume a negative relationship between exhaustion and employee task performance.

Employees may reciprocate exhaustion, which is personally costly, with lower task performance. This idea is also common in the work psychology literature. Exhaustion implies that employees' energy resources are draining (Bakker & Heuven, 2006). This lack of energy decreases the efforts put into work (Singh et al., 1994). Moreover, exhaustion may reduce employees' self-confidence to deal with work-related problems decreasing their in-role performance (Bakker et al., 2004).

H3: AOC relates positively to employee task performance

H4: Exhaustion relates negatively to employee task performance

Overall, we thus hypothesise that a strong configuration is preferred over a weak configuration. "Mutual gains" in terms of employee well-being and subsequent task performance are generated when developmental HR practices are part of a strong configuration with high developing leadership behaviour. We expect the results for low developmental HR practices and low developing leadership behaviour to be suboptimal. However, in both cases, consistent messages are sent to employees who subsequently experience more AOC (H1) and less exhaustion (H2) and ultimately perform better (H3 and H4). If developmental HR practices are not supported by developing leadership behaviour or the other way round (a weak configuration), we assume employee task performance decreases through a reduction in both dimensions of employee well-being. The conflicting signals sent by HR practices and leadership behaviour will reduce AOC (H1) and make them feel more exhausted (H2) and this will make them perform less (H3 and H4).

METHODOLOGY

Procedure and Sample

We made use of quantitative survey data collected among employees and their line managers in Belgium. We contacted HR managers from very large organizations (≥ 1500 employees) since

these are more likely to have an extensive HRM system. Seven organizations agreed to participate. In consultation with the HR managers, we selected a heterogeneous sample of teams across different levels of the organization. We emailed the online survey to 122 teams consisting of 1536 employees and 122 line managers. Reminders were sent after a week resulting in a total usable sample of 426 employees (28% response rate) spread over 70 teams. We retained the data from teams comprising of at least three participating employees leading to a final sample of 403 employees spread over 53 teams. These teams covered all seven participating organizations operating in diverse industries: consultancy (3), car assembly (5), technology (8), glass production (1), health care (22), finance and insurance (9) and the aviation industry (5). The team sizes vary from 3 to 16 (average = 7.60; median = 6; mode = 5). 54.8% of the employees are women and the average age is 42.21 (SD=10.44). The average organizational tenure was 13.58 years (SD=11.02); the average job tenure 9.02 years (SD=10.68). 43.4% had a high school degree or less, 37.5% had a bachelor's and 19.1% a master's degree. Diverse functional levels were represented: operational (56.8%), administrative (17.4%) and professional (18.6%) staff, and middle management (7.2%).

Measures

Employees reported on developmental HR practices, exhaustion, AOC and line manager's developing leadership behaviour. Their task performance was assessed by their line manager.

Developmental HR practices involve training opportunities, feedback (performance and developmental appraisals) and career development (career counselling and promotion opportunities) (Kuvaas, 2008). We followed Macky and Boxall's (2007) reasoning that some practices are factual (employees are subject to them or not) while others are more perceptual and thus a matter of degree. For developmental appraisal, performance appraisal, career counselling and training, we asked respondents to indicate whether they were subject to these practices in the

past year (yes/no). To ensure a shared understanding of these practices, we described them. Developmental appraisal was described as '*a conversation in which your strengths, weaknesses, and actions to improve future functioning are discussed without resulting in an evaluation or reward';* performance appraisal as '*a conversation in which the degree to which you achieved your performance goals is evaluated and in which this evaluation can imply a reward*'; career counselling as '*activities or conversations in which your career is planned, guided, and developed*', and training as '*undergoing training or schooling'*. Promotion opportunities, in turn, were measured as a matter of degree by asking whether they perceived *'to be able to progress professionally in the organization'* (on a scale from one (*totally disagree*) to six (*totally agree*)).

HRM research commonly bundles practices into an index. However, the pathways through which HR practices affect employee performance may differ according to the individual practice considered (Van de Voorde et al., 2012). Indeed, studies have found large differences between HR practices in the impact they have on employees (e.g. Kinnie et al., 2005; Macky & Boxall, 2007; Marescaux et al., 2013; Wood et al., 2012). We therefore investigate the impact of developmental HR practices separately rather than bundling them into a composite measure.

Developing leadership behaviour was measured using the three-item scale developed by Rafferty and Griffin (2006) (e.g., "*my line manager encourages staff to improve their work-related skills*"; 5-point scale ranging from one (*totally disagree*) to five (*totally agree*); α=.89).

Exhaustion was measured using the short version of the Utrecht Burnout five-item Scale (e.g., "*I feel used up at the end of a workday*"; 7-point scale ranging from one (*never*) to seven (*daily*); α=.91) (Schaufeli & Van Dierendonck, 1994).

Affective organizational commitment was assessed with Meyer and Allen's (1997) six-item scale (e.g., "*I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization*"; 5-point scale ranging from one (*totally disagree*) to five (*totally agree*); α=.91).

Employee task performance was evaluated by the line manager using four items measuring in-role behaviour (Williams & Anderson, 1991; e.g., "*This employee adequately completes assigned duties*"; 7-point scale ranging from one (*totally disagree*) to seven (*totally agree*); α=.95).

Control variables. Gender, functional level, functional and organizational tenure were used because they affect burnout, AOC and/or employee task performance (e.g., Brewer & Shapard, 2004; Meyer et al., 2002; Ramsay et al., 2000). Since developmental HR practices only represent a subdomain of HRM, we also controlled for other HR practices commonly identified as high-performance work practices which affect employee attitudes and performance (Posthuma et al., 2013). Regarding *compensation and benefits*, we measured whether the employee is subject to a pay for performance system (yes/no), whether the employee perceives his or her pay to be equitable compared to what other organizations are paying and whether the employee is satisfied with the benefits (the latter two are rated on a scale from 1 to 6). Concerning *job and work design*, we possess data on employees' perceived autonomy (measured through 4 items from the SIMPH-questionnaire; Notelaers et al., 2007; α = .69), whether they take part in the decision-making of the organization (e.g. through decision-making boards or quality circles), whether their job is enriched with broader tasks and responsibilities and whether they have flexible work schedules (the latter three are measured in a yes/no fashion). Finally, regarding *employee relations*, we have information on employees' perceived job security measured by a three-item scale (De Cuyper & De Witte, 2007) (α = .82). Following previous research (e.g. Macky & Boxall, 2007), we calculated z-scores for each practice to account for the different response formats and combined them into an

HR-index (i.e. the higher the score, the more HR practices are present) which was added as a control variable. Finally, dummy variables were used to control for differences between organizations in the use of developmental HR practices, AOC, exhaustion and task performance.

RESULTS

Measurement Model

We performed a four-factor confirmatory factor analysis on the multi-item measures (exhaustion, AOC, task performance and developing leadership). A satisfactory fit was attained: Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (*SRMR*: .04), Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (*RMSEA*: .07), Comparative Fit Index (*CFI*: .96) and Tucker Lewis Index (*TLI*: .95) (Bentler, 1990; Byrne, 2001). All observed variables had significant loadings ranging from .66 to .94 (table one) implying a valid measurement model.

Insert table one

Analyses

Table two presents descriptive statistics and correlations. Several developmental HR practices showed a positive relationship with employee task performance: training ($r = .24$; $p < .001$) and promotion opportunities ($r = .17$; $p < .01$). AOC was found to correlate positively with training ($r = .13$; $p < .01$), promotion opportunities ($r = .34$; $p < .001$) and career counselling ($r = .16$; $p < .01$). Next, promotion opportunities correlate negatively with exhaustion ($r = -.27$; $p < .001$). Developing leadership relates significantly to AOC ($r = .42$; $p < .001$), task performance ($r = .22$; $p < .001$) and exhaustion ($r = -.16$; $p < .01$). Finally, AOC correlates positively with employee task performance ($r = .15$; $p < .01$) whereas exhaustion does not.

Insert table two here

Structural equation modelling in MPLUS was used. To reduce multicollinearity, we mean-centered the developmental HR practices. As we have nested data (e.g., one line manager provided task performance evaluations of several employees), we calculated the intra-class correlations (ICC1's) and design effects of all measured variables (see table two). The ICC1 values for exhaustion and promotion opportunities (both .12) and for AOC and career counselling (both .10) were low, resulting in low design effects (respectively 1.79 and 1.66) (Muthen & Satorra, 1995). However, for the remaining variables, the ICC1 values varied between .16 and .34 (resulting in design effects between 2.06 and 2.39). Hence, we used the COMPLEX procedure in MPLUS using teams as the clustering variable in all further analyses.

We first tested the hypothesized model which resulted in a satisfactory fit (CFI = .93; TLI = .91; RMSEA = .05; SRMR = .04). Yet, the modification indices suggested a direct path between training and task performance. Adding this improved the model significantly ($\Delta\chi^2(1) = 15.93$; $p < .001$) resulting in a better fit (CFI = .93; TLI = .92; RMSEA = .05; SRMR = .03). Moreover, this path has implications for the discussion concerning the role of well-being in explaining the impact of developmental HR practices. As such, we report the results of this second model (figure 3).

Insert figure 3

Hypothesis one and two are partially supported. Four significant interaction effects between developmental HR practices and developing leadership emerged. The size effects of these interaction effects were considerable: adding them to the model increased the explained variance in exhaustion from 17.6 to 22.8 percent and from 33.9 to 36.2 percent in AOC as opposed to a model containing only main effects. Additionally, we performed simple slope analyses testing the relationship between developmental HR practices and well-being at high and low levels of developing leadership behaviour (one standard deviation above and below the mean) (Cohen et al., 2003) (figure

4). As expected, the positive relationship of career counselling with AOC only emerges when it is supported by developing leadership behaviour ($\beta = .25$; $p < .01$). If not, career counselling relates negatively to AOC ($\beta = -.39$; $p < .05$). Similarly, career counselling ($\beta = -.28$; $p < .05$) and developmental appraisals ($\beta = -.48$; $p < .05$) only relate negatively to exhaustion when the line manager exhibits developing leadership behaviour. In its absence, developmental appraisals relates positively to exhaustion ($\beta = .57$; $p < .001$), whereas career counselling is unrelated to exhaustion. Finally, contrary to our expectation, promotion opportunities relate positively to AOC when developing leadership behaviour is low ($\beta = .19$; $p < .001$). Under the condition of high developing leadership behaviour, there is no significant positive relationship. However, overall AOC remains higher under the condition of strong developing leadership behaviour. Next to these interaction effects, we found main effects: irrespective of developing leadership, promotion opportunities ($\beta = -.26$; $p < .001$) and performance appraisals ($\beta = -.12$; $p < .05$) were negatively associated with exhaustion. Finally, training was directly related to task performance ($\beta = .21$; $p < .01$).

Hypothesis three was supported: AOC relates positively to task performance ($\beta = .12$; $p < .05$). As such, we tested a few indirect paths to verify the mediating power of AOC. Firstly, the indirect path from promotion opportunities to task performance through AOC is only marginally significant ($\beta = .03$; $p < .10$). Moreover, the interaction effect does not carry through to task performance as this indirect path is not significant. This is corroborated by showing that neither at low ($\beta = .03$; $p > .05$) or high levels ($\beta = .01$; $p > .05$) of developing leadership, promotion opportunities affect task performance significantly through AOC. Secondly, the indirect path from the interaction between career counselling and developing leadership behaviour to task performance through AOC is significant ($\beta = .06$; $p < .05$) suggesting that AOC carries this indirect relationship. Yet, estimates of the indirect slopes at high ($\beta = .04$; $p < .10$) and low ($\beta = -.06$; $p <$

.10) levels of developing leadership show that these indirect relationships are relatively modest and only marginally significant. We therefore only cautiously conclude that AOC mediates the relationship between these developmental HR practices and employee task performance. Contrary to hypothesis four, exhaustion did not affect employee task performance ($\beta = .07$; $p > .05$) and therefore does not act as a mediator between developmental HR practices and task performance.

Insert figure 4

DISCUSSION

This study sought to contribute to the HRM-well-being-performance literature by testing the mediating role of well-being in the HRM-performance relationship, and the moderating role of leadership behaviour in the relationship between HRM and well-being. Doing so, we answered the call for more attention towards the conditions under which organizations can foster multiple facets of well-being as well as generate economic benefits through HRM, instead of creating a trade-off.

A major conclusion we can draw is that our findings show limited support for a clear mutual gains perspective. We only find mutual gains for career counselling since AOC only mediates the relationship between career counselling and task performance. Specifically, in case of high developing leadership, we found task performance to increase through higher AOC, suggesting a gain for both the employee and firm. For health-related well-being (i.e. exhaustion), however, we find no support for its role in the relationship between developmental HR practices and task performance. This supports Van de Voorde et al.'s (2012) conclusion that health well-being might act as a parallel outcome of HR practices next to performance, rather than being a causal mechanism. Alternatively, the impact of exhaustion on in-role performance could only be manifesting itself after some time (Wright & Bonnet, 1997). Moreover, research points to

counteracting motivational mediators in the exhaustion-performance relationship. The study of Halbesleben and Bowler (2007) for instance shows that exhaustion may decrease achievement striving but increase communion striving. Both may have a different impact on performance. Finally, Demerouti et al. (2014) found that employees use different strategies to cope with burnout symptoms (e.g., exhaustion). Interestingly, which strategy they use determined whether and how burnout symptoms affect employee performance. Hence, the insignificant relationship we found between exhaustion and performance may hide a more complex causal relationship.

In sum, apart from career counselling, at best, we find support for increased happiness and health well-being as a result of developmental HR practices, but this does not translate into higher task performance, i.e. a clear gain for the organization. This is the case for developmental appraisals (yet only when combined with high developing leadership), promotion opportunities, and performance appraisal which all reduce exhaustion. In contrast, training was found to improve task performance, yet does not contribute to well-being. This suggests that training increases employees' knowledge and skills which directly adds to their performance, rather than well-being.

Despite the limited clear-cut support for employee well-being as a mediator in the relationship between HRM and performance, our findings have several important implications. The complexity of the findings underline the need for more sophisticated perspectives on HRM, well-being and employee performance. Firstly, we found that the mechanisms explaining the impact on employee well-being and task performance depend on the developmental HR practice under study. This differential impact of HR practices on well-being is in line with other studies (e.g., Macky & Boxall, 2007; Marescaux et al., 2013; Vanhala & Tuomi, 2006), and confirms the added value of studying HR practices separately instead of combining them in a composite variable (an approach which currently dominates the HRM literature) (Van De Voorde et al., 2012).

Second, not only does developing leadership more strongly affect task performance through AOC than any developmental HR practice, it also acts together with some practices as interdependent elements of the HRM system that can reinforce or counteract each other in their impact on employees. Our results suggest that developing leadership serves as a strong contributor to creating and reinforcing a social exchange relationship. It reinforces the impact of career counselling on AOC, as this facet of well-being is highest when career counselling is combined with a developing leader, yet it also compensates for a lack of career counselling as AOC is still relatively high in this condition. In contrast, without a developing leader, career counselling results in the lowest level of AOC, even below a situation in which neither is present. This supports our reasoning that a fit (and its resulting cognitive consonance) can outperform a misfit, even when the fit sends an inherently negative signal. We find similar results for exhaustion. For developmental appraisal and career counselling, exhaustion is lowest when a strong fit occurs with developing leadership behaviour, supporting both social exchange theory as well as cognitive dissonance theory. In further support of cognitive dissonance theory, a weak configuration (i.e. a lack of developmental appraisal and developing leadership) results in nearly equally low exhaustion as a strong configuration. This emphasizes employees' need to experience consistent signals (and cognitive consonance) to avoid exhaustion, even when they are inherently negative (i.e. a lack of care for employee well-being, development and growth). Moreover, these findings resonate with recent research showing that for the sake of employees' stress levels, it is better to act consistently unfair than send inconsistent signals by alternating between unfair and fair treatment s (Matta et al., 2016). Hence, our findings further highlight the importance of consistency in messages (and its cognitive consonance) to employees apart from their specific content.

In addition, our findings underpin the importance of taking into account leadership (behaviour) to unravel the impact of HR practices. Hence, future HRM research should examine the impact of HR practices in interaction with other parts of the HRM system, and not in isolation. HRM research has mainly focused on vertical fit, i.e. between organizational strategy on the one hand and HR strategy and practices on the other hand, and horizontal fit, i.e. between HR practices themselves (e.g., Kepes & Delery, 2007; Wang & Shyu, 2008). We show that the leadership behaviour of line managers is a fruitful future avenue to explore to get a full grip on how the HRM system can create a strong configuration and contribute to well-being and performance.

Yet, admittedly, for some developmental HR practices, we found no support for our hypotheses. It seems the fit with developing leadership behaviour matters less for performance appraisal, promotion opportunities and training. First, regardless of developing leadership, performance appraisals lower exhaustion. Despite conceptually being considered a developmental HR practice as it entails feedback (Kuvaas, 2008), a performance appraisal may be less experienced as developmental by employees because it evaluates past performance in the current job rather than helping employees improve their future functioning. Perhaps the combination of this practice and developing leadership does not trigger cognitive dissonance or consonance because they are less interrelated and do not necessarily send (in)consistent signals in the mind of employees. In this case, psychologically, it creates neither comfort nor discomfort, such that an impact on employee well-being and performance is less likely. For this practice, other forms of leadership might be needed to create cognitive consonance and a strong configuration. *Task-oriented behaviour* in the form of clarifying responsibilities and goals can for example be crucial to reinforce the purpose of performance appraisal (Yukl et al., 2002).

Similarly, promotion opportunities may also be less experienced as developmental, as they result from good performance evaluations and career counselling, rather than being developmental on their own. They also offer employees concrete alternatives for their current job. These alternatives especially matter when the line manager does not act as a developing leader, as only in this case, they increase AOC. In case of high developing leadership, however, promotion opportunities do not affect AOC. Perhaps people attach more importance to promotion opportunities when they are in a less satisfying situation (e.g. a low developing leader). In this case, promotion opportunities keep the social exchange relationship in balance and/or offer a potential way out of the unsatisfying situation. Alternatively, the impact of promotion opportunities could perhaps also be reinforced through a configuration with *recognizing* behaviour from the line manager, which implies acknowledging an employee's achievements and potential for promotion and by giving praise and showing appreciation (Yukl et al., 2002).

Finally, the lack of effect of the configuration of training and developing leadership might be explained by the broad measure we used for training. The practice was measured as '*undergoing training or schooling'* (yes/no). It is highly likely that the type of training (e.g. formal or informal, on-the-job or off-the-job) and the content of the training (e.g. on a firm-specific matter (technical training) or on a general matter (diversity training)) matters. Developing leadership behaviour will perhaps be more important in a context of formal and off-the-job training, and for training on a general matter as compared to a context of informal and on-the-job training and for a training on a firm-specific matter. In the former situation, the link to and utility for employees' individual development in his or her job is less clear-cut and might therefore need more line manager's support. In sum, this highlights the need to more carefully tease out winning but also deadly combinations between HR practices and line managers' leadership behaviour.

A final implication of our findings is related to the developmental HR literature which has mainly focused on establishing an independent relationship between (perceived) developmental practices and happiness well-being or performance (Kuvaas, 2008; Kuvaas & Dysvik, 2009). An exception is Kuvaas and Dysvik (2010) who show that general perceived supervisor support acts as a boundary condition. Our results confirm their conclusion about the importance of the direct supervisor. Moreover, we add to this research in two manners. First, we do not only look at positive employee outcomes of developmental HR practices, but also introduce potential negative health outcomes (cf. exhaustion). Second, we look at different developmental HR practices separately and show that the pathways through which developmental HR practices influence employee well-being and task performance can differ according to the practice under consideration.

Practical Implications

Our results suggest that developmental HR practices can stimulate well-being and/or task performance, showing their relevance to organizations. Training and career counselling boost task performance either directly or through AOC. Promotion opportunities, career counselling, developmental and performance appraisal all have the power to lower exhaustion. Yet, the impact of career counselling and developmental appraisal is contingent on the developing leadership behaviour of the line manager. These findings show the importance of clear and consistent HRM messages. Agreement between the HR department and line managers regarding the relevance and implementation of developmental HR practices is crucial. To make sure that line managers find developmental HR practices relevant and implement them as desired, the HR department should ensure that these practices contribute to the line managers' goals. The developmental HR practices should score high on validity and instrumentality, and answer needs from the business (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004). Regarding the implementation of the developmental HR practices, it is of great

importance for organizations to make them understandable, fit with each other and train their direct line managers to show developing behaviour towards employees if they implement them.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

This study has several limitations. First, we measured several developmental HR practices through single items. While single-item measurement is common to measure the mere presence of an individual HR practice (Boselie et al., 2005; Kehoe & Wright, 2013), it may not capture the entire complexity of an HR practice (e.g. on-the-job vs off-the-job training or the frequency and justice of appraisals). Hence, we encourage future research to further tease out the impact of developmental HR practices taking these distinctions into account.

Second, we limited our study to developmental HR practices and developing leadership behaviour. This was driven by the configurational system perspective stressing the importance of a fit between HR practices and the behaviour of the line manager to send consistent messages to employees and generate the desired effects. However, this 'fit' idea can be broadened to other types of leadership behaviour and HR practices. For example, employee participation could be supported by *empowering* leadership behaviour, as both aim to provide employees with more autonomy and discretion (Yukl et al., 2002). Moreover, the effects of a match between control-oriented HR practices (e.g. pay-for-performance) and high task-oriented leadership behaviour (e.g. monitoring performance) on employee well-being and task performance could be worth examining. Although both may lead employees to feel controlled and pressurized (Nishii et al., 2008), their match may send consistent and clear messages buffering these pressurizing effects. As such, we would encourage future research to go beyond developing leadership and developmental HR practices. Additionally, we reasoned that the fit between leadership behaviour and HR practices affects employees by reinforcing a social exchange relationship and causing

cognitive consonance. Yet, we did not measure these processes. While this did not stand in the way of our main objective (i.e. to test the role of employee well-being in the HR-performance relationship in a more balanced manner and the conditions under which an employee well-being trade-off can be avoided), we do encourage future research to further disentangle this process.

Third, while gathering information on task performance from a different source greatly reduces the odds of common method bias (CMB), all other information was gathered from the same source, i.e. employees. However, we used validated measures that were extensively psychometrically evaluated and therefore less prone to CMB (Doty & Glick, 1998). These measures also had different response formats preventing respondents from answering the questionnaire in a pattern (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Moreover, we tested both convergent and discriminant validity (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). A three-factor model (distinguishing between exhaustion, AOC and developing leadership behaviour) in which all items loaded on their respective factor yielded a good fit to the data (CFI = .94; TLI = .93; RMSEA = .08; SRMR = .04) and produced significant estimated parameter coefficients ranging between .66 and .92. As such, convergent validity was established. We also estimated several models in which the correlation between two factors was constrained to one. As the fit of these models was significantly worse than the unconstrained model ($\Delta\chi^2(1)$ ranging between 1197.57 and 1274.56; $p<.001$), discriminant validity is achieved. We therefore conclude that CMB has not significantly affected our study.

Fourth, we knowingly chose two dimensions of well-being that have were found to be in trade-off, as our main goal was to study whether line manager's behaviour can influence this trade-off. Hence, we did not include social well-being as an additional dimension as it entails the same trade-off with health well-being as happiness well-being (Van de Voorde et al., 2012). Moreover, there is considerable debate on the role of social well-being (e.g., trust, social support, fairness) in the

causal chain between HRM, health/happiness well-being and performance. While some studies have considered it at the same level as the other two dimensions of well-being (e.g., Baluch, 2017; Kooij et al, 2013), others consider it a linking pin between HRM and health/happiness well-being (e.g., Gould-Williams, 2003; Kroon et al, 2009) or even as a moderator explaining when HRM affects health/happiness well-being (e.g., Alfes et al., 2012; Zhang et al., 2013). Hence, we would encourage future research to include all three dimensions, yet focus on teasing out the exact causal role of the three dimensions and/or their potential interplay.

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TABLE 1

Results of confirmatory factor analysis

Items	**Factor 1:** Exhaustion	**Factor 2:** Affective organizational commitment	**Factor 3:** Employee task performance	**Factor 4:** Developing leadership behaviour
1.I feel mentally exhausted by my work	.81			
2.I feel 'burned out' by my work	.87			
3.An entire day of work is a heavy burden for me	.85			
4.I feel tired when I get up in the morning and have a whole day of work ahead of me	.78			
5.I feel used up at the end of a workday	.81			
6.I feel a strong sense of 'belonging' to my organization		.78		
7.This organization has a great deal of personal meaning to me		.89		
8.I feel "emotionally" attached to this organization		.92		
9.I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization		.73		
10.I really feel as if this organization's problems are my own		.66		
11.I feel like "part of the family" at my organization		.81		
This employee…				
12.fulfils responsibilities specified in job description			.86	
13.performs tasks that are expected of him/her			.94	
14.meets formal performance requirements of the job			.93	
15.adequately completes assigned duties			.94	
My line manager…				
16.encourages staff to improve their job-related skills				.91
17.suggests training to improve my ability to carry out my job				.86
18.coaches staff to help them improve their on-the-job performance				.79

TABLE 2

Descriptive statistics, correlations and ICC1-values (n=403)

	Mean	S.D.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	ICC1
1.Training	.60	.49	1									.34
2.Performance appraisal	.59	.49	.10*	1								.34
3.Developmental appraisal	.65	.48	.02	.39***	1							.16
4.Career counselling	.19	.39	.15**	.12*	.21***	1						.10
5.Promotion opportunities	3.72	1.12	.26***	.12*	.11*	.34***	1					.12
6.Exhaustion	2.35	1.13	-.10	-.01	.02	-.09	-.27***	1				.12
7.Affective organizational commitment	4.22	.87	.13**	-.03	.03	.16**	.34***	-.25***	1			.10
8.Employee task performance	5.97	.99	.24***	.07	.07	.05	.17**	-.03	.15**	1		.32
9.Developing leadership behaviour	3.54	.92	.40***	.12*	.14**	.25***	.46***	-.16**	.42***	.22***	1	.21

Notes: * p < .05; ** p < .01; *** p < .001

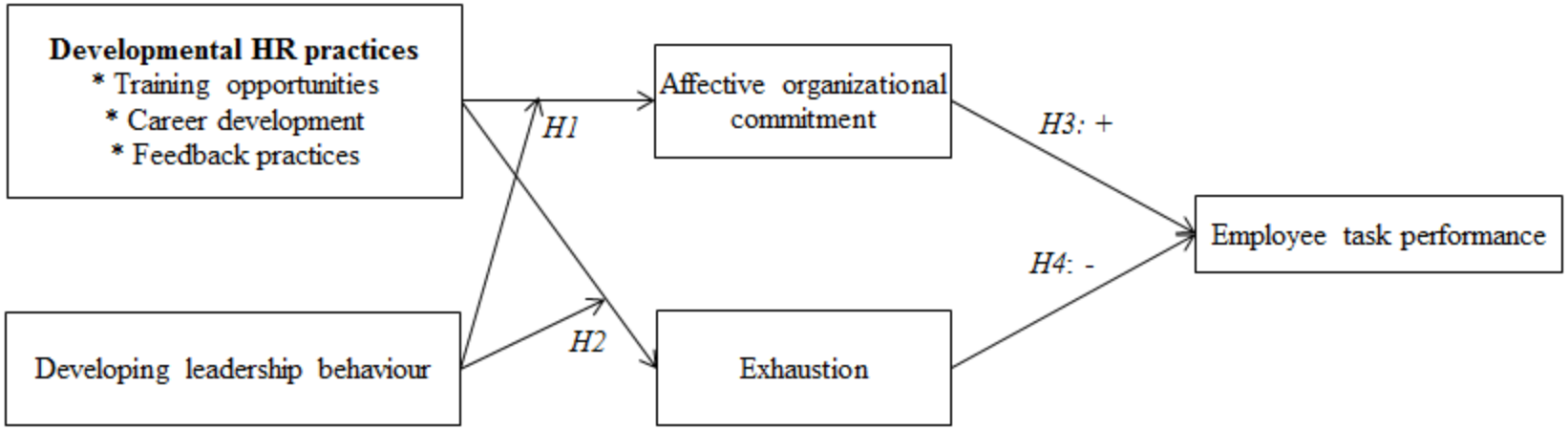

FIGURE 1. Overview of hypotheses

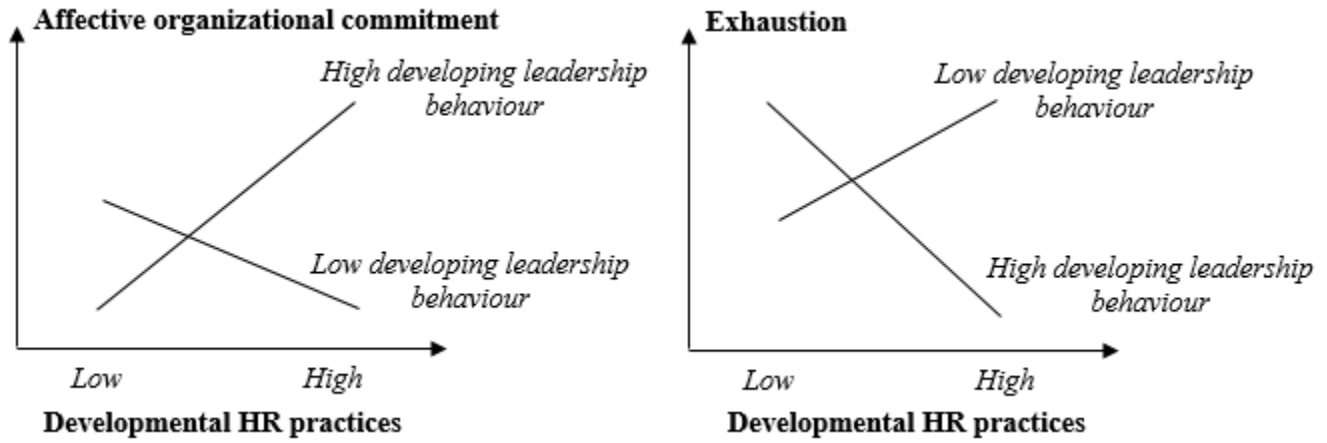

FIGURE 2. Hypothesis 1 and 2: Interaction between developmental HR practices and developing leadership behaviour

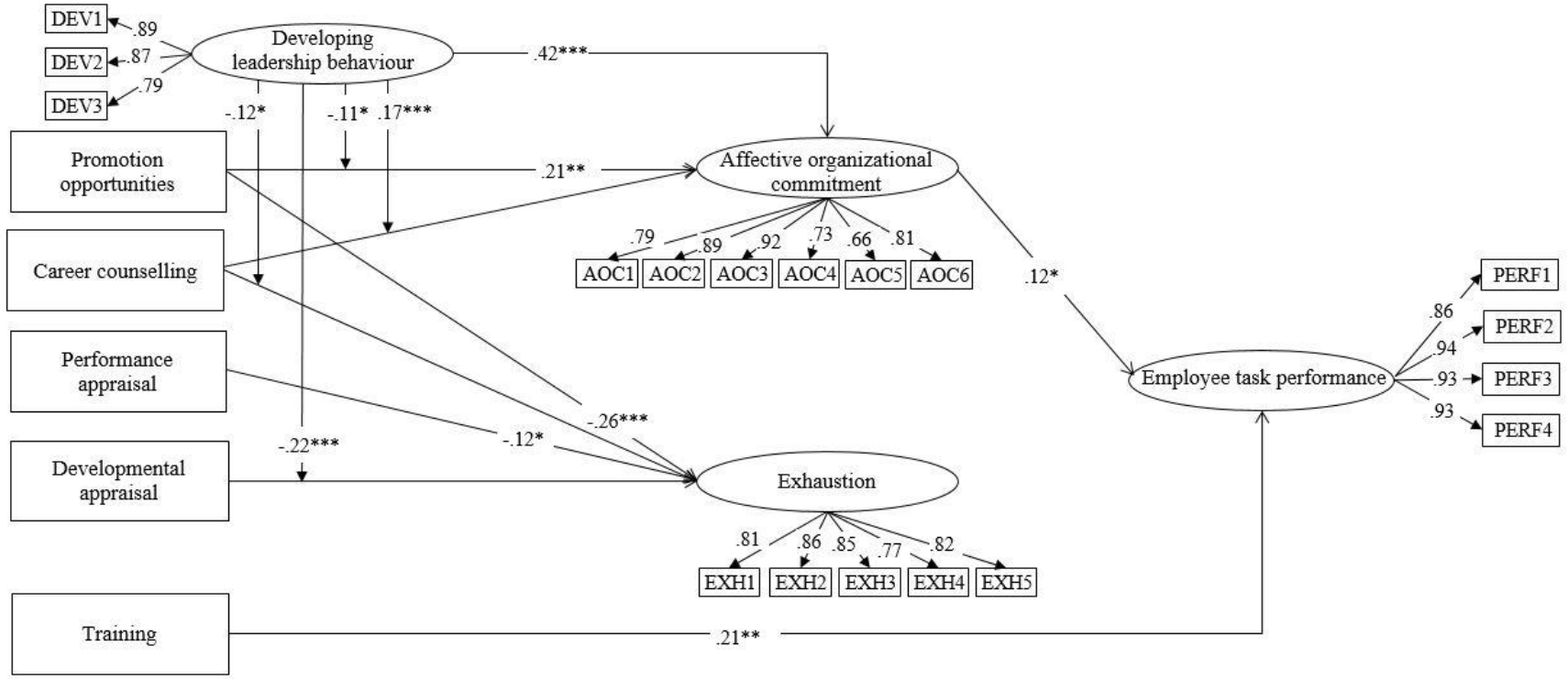

FIGURE 3. Standardized SEM results[a]

Notes:

* p < .05; ** p < .01; * p < .001;

[a] For ease of representation, only significant results are reported. All developmental HR practices, developing leadership and their interactions were regressed on affective organizational commitment and exhaustion.

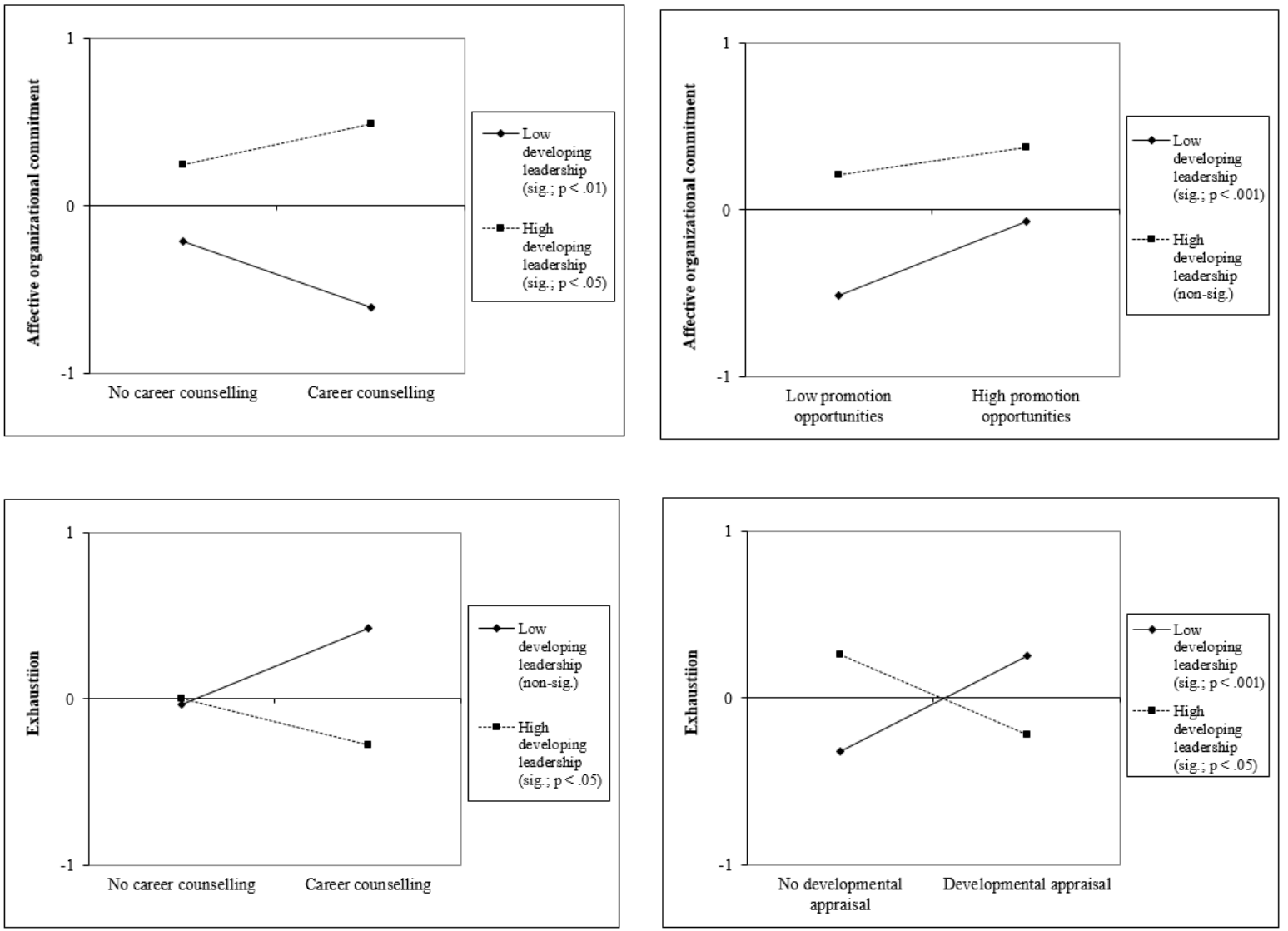

FIGURE 4. The moderating role of developing leadership behaviour