

**The implementation of a workload allocation system in pursuit of
employee health outcomes**

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Griffith Business School

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

by

Fiona Archontoulis

March 2020

**The implementation of a workload allocation system
in pursuit of employee health outcomes**

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Master of Business Administration

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Abstract

The impact of increasing global competitiveness and the ensuing decisions taken by organisations to adjust, often have negative impacts on the health and well-being of employees. Increasing workloads, time and resourcing constraints are contributing factors to changing dynamics and psychosocial characteristics in many workplaces. There is ample evidence about the cost to organisations, society and individuals when financial performance objectives are prioritised over employee health and well-being. Human resource management (HRM) studies commonly address organisational performance outcomes overshadowing the importance of workplace health policies and procedures.

Yet, extant literature reviewed from a variety of disciplines suggest effective HRM requires consideration of equity, fairness, job design, work stress and role expectations are important variables for employee health and well-being. Significantly for this study, the psychological health of employees, like physical safety, has gained increasing focus with legislation protecting employees against psychosocial hazards. Excessive workloads, work intensification, reduced recovery time and technology based systems supporting employees to work from home are all hazards associated with poor employee health and blur the boundaries between work and home.

The Australian higher education sector has not been spared the impacts of global competitiveness. Over the last four decades, the notion of a collegial, autonomous academic profession has gradually transitioned to an environment more aligned with corporatisation and managerialism. As a result, the sector has morphed into a highly competitive international market for higher education resulting in poor health and well-being outcomes for academic employees. There is much debate in the literature about the health of academics, increasing workloads and associated effectiveness of workload allocation systems utilised in many

universities. Yet there is minimal examination about how the systems could be positively utilised to support health and well-being outcomes for academics. Equally important, yet also not adequately understood is the role of frontline managers in higher education, their implementation of HR practices, the challenges they face in that, and the support they are afforded by senior management. This thesis addresses the issues highlighted above with an integrated HRM and workplace health perspective applied to a large Australian university (*The University*). A work profile system (WPS) is the HR practice of allocating work to academic employees at *The University* and is the unit of analysis for this study.

An inductive, multi-level case study approach was adopted for this thesis where qualitative data was collected from 52 semi-structured interviews. A review of documentation (both publicly available and confidential to the organisation) contributed to the data collection process. Senior management/HR personnel representatives comprised Study A (Designers) so as to gain a retrospective understanding of the factors considered by *The University* in its initial decision to introduce a WPS. Secondly, frontline managers (FLMs) comprised Study B (Implementers) providing insights into the implementation challenges and opportunities of the system. Thirdly, full time tenured academic employees (Study C - Experiencers) provided first-hand accounts of working within the stipulations of the WPS.

The research design enabled cross study analysis of data, and an investigation of the progression of policy development to implementation of a key HR practice at *The University*. This is an important contribution to knowledge providing a more holistic understanding of the why (the intention behind the WPS), the how (implementation practicalities) and the what (the actual experiences of the WPS). The thesis also finds internal contextual factors such as *The University's* psychosocial climate; unique job design of an academic's role; unique role of FLMs in academia and the power and authority delegated to them, all have significant influence on how the WPS can support better health outcomes of academic employees.

Two theories were used to guide the study. The process model of strategic HRM (Wright and Nishii, 2007) provided a framework for data collection. The Psychosocial Safety Climate (PSC) theoretical model (Dollard & Bailey, 2014) incorporating the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007) was the overarching theoretical guide for the study. The PSC theory also provided a foundation for the development of the sub-research questions for each of the three studies. Application of the PSC theory highlighted how management driven HR policies, practices and procedures for the protection of worker health can determine employees' perceptions of an organisation's psychosocial safety climate. Additionally, how the PSC can impact the level of receptivity of HR practices by employees.

However the PSC theory failed to explain a number of findings including why the PSC at *The University* can be misinterpreted when there is some evidence health and well-being concerns were behind *The University's* decision to introduce the WPS. The PSC theory was also unable to explain how external drivers had contributed to the decision to introduce the WPS. The findings did however highlight the spectrum of views among Designers in Study A suggesting a lack of consensus about the WPS. The JD-R component of the PSC theory was also unable to explain a disconnect between the views of some Designers that the WPS was a useful resource for academics to manage their workloads and the views of most Study B and Study C participants who perceived the WPS as a job demand.

As would be expected from the relevant theories and other research, many findings from this study are consistent and support the extant literature. However, due to the PSC theory being unable to fully answer the research question, an extension to the PSC theoretical model is proposed as the contribution to this study. If the principles of the HRM systems strength model, developed by Bowen and Ostroff (2004), are applied as an antecedent to the PSC theory, with more focus on HRM system design, implementation and feedback processes it is proposed both theories combined can provide the answer to the RQ: *How can a WPS support health and well-being outcomes of academics?*

People acting in the role of FLM in academia perform the role, often on a short term basis with the intention of reverting back to a frontline academic position. This arrangement often leads to a perceived lack of relevance of the WPS for operational needs and consequently a lack of consistency in implementation practices. While requiring a high level of management skills in implementing the WPS and managing their teams, FLMs are often not skilled to do so or do not have management inclinations. This was reflected in the data obtained from academic employees where they perceived their FLMs lacked authority in their role and therefore were not able to formally make adjustments to better support the health and well-being of their teams.

This study also identified that FLMs did not always have the required support of senior management to formally adjust resourcing where necessary. This resulted in frustrations and many time consuming work arounds often impacting negatively on their own health and well-being. The general view expressed by participants of Study C was the WPS does not accurately reflect all the responsibilities of their role. More so however, reduced autonomy over their work, their FLMs unable to make necessary adjustments to workloads and perceptions senior management were not listening suggested a low psychosocial safety climate.

In summary, this thesis identifies the need to adopt the principles of the HRM systems strength approach when introducing and implementing new HR practices. Consensus and consistency in messaging amongst HR/senior management; ongoing support for implementers of the practice; and a perceived distinctive relevance of the HR practice by employees are factors required to achieve intended outcomes. It was also identified improved management driven opportunities for academics to provide feedback about workloads, their workplace health and input for process improvements would contribute to a positive psychosocial safety climate at *The University*.

Statement of Originality

This thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and believe, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.



Fiona Archontoulis

March 2020

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	1
Table of Contents.....	6
List of Figures.....	10
List of Tables.....	11
List of Abbreviations.....	12
Glossary of terms.....	13
Acknowledgements.....	14
Publication arising from this thesis.....	16
CHAPTER ONE: Introduction.....	17
1.0 Introduction.....	17
<i>Workload allocation systems</i>	20
<i>The work profile system</i>	22
1.1 Research Context.....	23
<i>Australian higher education sector</i>	23
<i>The University</i>	26
<i>Enterprise bargaining</i>	27
1.2 Research focus.....	28
1.3 Thesis outline.....	30
CHAPTER TWO: Literature review.....	33
2.0 Introduction.....	33
2.1 Workplace health and employee well-being.....	34
2.2 The cost of poor workplace health and stress related illnesses.....	37
2.3 Explaining workload.....	39
2.4 Human resource management and workplace health and well-being.....	41
2.4.1 <i>Psychosocial safety climate philosophy</i>	42
2.4.2 <i>Work intensity/intensification</i>	44
2.4.3 <i>Context and Fit</i>	45
2.4.4 <i>Organisational Justice</i>	47
2.5 Job design.....	48

2.5.1 <i>Job design background</i>	49
2.6 Implementation of human resource management practices.....	53
2.6.1 <i>Roles involved in implementation of human resource management</i>	55
<i>Function of the human resources department</i>	55
<i>Line/frontline managers</i>	56
<i>Middle managers</i>	58
2.7 Role theory.....	59
<i>Role conflict and role ambiguity</i>	60
<i>Role clarity</i>	61
2.8 Identity theory.....	61
<i>Academic identity</i>	62
2.9 Work stress theories	63
2.9.1 <i>Psychosocial safety climate theory</i>	65
2.10 Research questions.....	72
2.11 Summary.....	73
CHAPTER THREE: Methodology.....	75
3.0 Introduction.....	75
3.1 Philosophical foundations of research	75
3.1.1 <i>Justification of philosophical research approach</i>	76
3.2 Research design	78
3.2.1 <i>Case study approach</i>	78
3.3 Data collection	79
3.3.1 <i>Data access</i>	79
3.3.2 <i>Data sample</i>	80
3.3.3 <i>Semi-structured interviews</i>	83
3.3.4 <i>Documentary evidence</i>	86
3.3.5 <i>Data Saturation</i>	87
3.4 Data analysis	88
3.5 Ethical considerations of the research	91
3.6 Limitations of the research methodology	92
3.7 Summary.....	93
CHAPTER FOUR: Study A - The Designers.....	95
4.0 Introduction.....	95
4.1 The Designers	96

4.2 Changes within the Australian higher education sector	96
4.2.1 <i>Employment arrangements prior to the work profile system</i>	98
4.3 External drivers	103
4.3.1 <i>Funding changes within the higher education sector</i>	103
4.3.2 <i>Research funding schemes</i>	105
4.3.3 <i>Industrial relations</i>	108
4.3.4 <i>Work health and safety legislation</i>	109
4.3.5 <i>Work health and safety representation at The University</i>	110
4.4 An internal response by <i>The University</i>	112
4.5 Summary	121
CHAPTER FIVE: Study B - The Implementers	123
5.0 Introduction.....	123
5.1 The Implementers	124
5.2 Work profile system - workload management.....	125
5.3 Work profile system - workplace health and well-being.....	136
5.4 Summary	152
CHAPTER SIX: Study C - The Experiencers	154
6.0 Introduction.....	154
6.1 The work profile system	157
6.2 Work profile system – workload management	157
6.2.1 <i>Work profile system – manager/supervisor support</i>	166
6.2.2 <i>Management priority</i>	172
6.3 Work profile system - workplace health and well-being.....	174
6.3.1 <i>Work profile system: Time pressures - work and family</i>	181
6.4 Summary	185
CHAPTER SEVEN: Discussion and Conclusion.....	187
7.0 Introduction.....	187
7.1 Designers: The original intention	192
7.2 Designers: Achieving intended outcomes	198
7.3 Implementers: Workload management	200
7.4 Implementers: Workplace health and well-being	204
7.5 Experiencers: Workload management/ workplace health	207
7.6 Contribution to theory.....	213

7.7 Practical implications.....	220
7.8 Limitations and opportunities	223
7.9 Conclusion	227
References.....	232
Appendices:	263
Appendix A Study A: Designers - Interview protocol.	263
Appendix B Study B: Implementers - Interview Protocol.....	264
Appendix C Study C: Experiencers - Interview Protocol.....	265
Appendix D Information sheet.	266
Appendix E Consent form.....	267
Appendix F Sample NVivo	268
Appendix G Human Ethics approval	269
Appendix H 2015 Workload metrics model comparison	270

List of Figures

Figure 1.1	Representation of the research context with interconnecting elements.....	28
Figure 2.1	Psychosocial Safety Climate Model adapted from Dollard and McTernan (2011) for Safe Work Australia’s Australian Workplace Barometer project (Dollard et al., 2012)	67
Figure 2.2	WPS is an additional component to the PSC theoretical model, displayed as an effective mechanism contributing to improved employee health and well-being, job satisfaction and achieving organisational objectives.....	71
Figure 3.1	A depiction of mediating relationships and multiple levels of analysis undertaken in examining different perspectives of stakeholders at <i>The University</i> : Adapted from the process model of SHRM (Wright & Nishii, 2007).....	81
Figure 7.1	A depiction of mediating relationships and multiple levels of analysis undertaken in examining different perspectives of stakeholders at <i>The University</i> : Adapted from the process model of SHRM (Wright & Nishii, 2007).....	189
Figure 7.2	Illustrating Designer’s lack of consensus about original intentions of a work profile system.....	194
Figure 7.3	Psychosocial Safety Climate Model adapted from Dollard and McTernan (2011) for Safe Work Australia’s Australian Workplace Barometer project (Dollard, Bailey, et al: 2012)....	214
Figure 7.4	Principles of the HRM Systems Strength model expands the PSC model, promotes linkage mechanisms for feedback and improves implementation of HR practices.....	219

List of Tables

Table 2.1 Relevant work stress theories overview	64
Table 3.1 Study A participants	89
Table 3.2 De-identified coding system and participant characteristics.....	90

List of Abbreviations

DH (L&T)	Deputy Head (Learning and Teaching)
Dsch	Discipline Head
EA	Enterprise Agreement
EBA	Enterprise Bargaining Agreement
FLM	Frontline Manager
HOS	Head of School
HR	Human resources
HRM	Human resource management
PSC	Psychosocial safety climate
SHRM	Strategic human resource management
WH&S	Workplace health and safety
WPS	Work Profile System

Glossary of terms

Enterprise agreement: A legally enforceable agreement made at an enterprise level between employers and employees and their union, about terms and conditions of employment.

Enterprise bargaining: Negotiation of wage and working conditions at the level of the individual organisations, as distinct from sectoral collective bargaining across whole industries. Once established, the agreement is legally binding on employers and employees.

Human resource management: Concerns the management of work and the management of people to do the work.

Inductive Research: A research method where experiences and observations of participants are gathered and synthesised to establish a general truth.

Job demands-resources (JD-R) model: An occupational stress model focussing on the balance between employees' work demands and work resources.

Psychosocial safety climate: Employees' shared perceptions of organisational policies and procedures developed and implemented by senior management to protect worker psychological health and safety.

Psychosocial safety climate theory: A work stress theory proposing psychosocial safety climate (PSC) as a precursor to job demands and job resources.

Safe Work Australia: An Australian Government statutory agency established in 2009 under the Safe Work Australia Act 2008. Their primary responsibility is to improve work health and safety and workers' compensation arrangements across Australia.

Strategic human resource management: The connection between a company's human resources and its strategies, objectives and goals.

Workplace health and safety: Commonly referred to as health and safety, occupational health and safety, occupational health, or occupational safety, is a multidisciplinary field concerned with the safety, health, and welfare of people at work.

Workplace health and well-being: Where you work affects your health, including your physical, mental, economic and social wellbeing.

Work profile system: The practice of allocating components of an academic's role through a percentage based work allocation system.

Acknowledgements

I began my association with Griffith University in the year 2000 commencing a part time Masters of Business Administration degree whilst working full time. I graduated in 2005 and did not envisage for a moment I would start a PhD nearly ten years later. Yet, I came back to Griffith and completed an Advanced Master of Business Administration degree, graduating with First Class Honours in 2015. That was a stepping stone to starting a Doctor of Philosophy degree in 2016. Somewhat naively, I underestimated the journey ahead of me for the next few years, in terms of both personal and professional challenges. The highs and lows of undertaking academic research and the steep learning curve involved in turning mounds of data into a thesis has been a long but rewarding achievement.

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Now, comes the time to acknowledge the wonderful co-candidates I have met along the way, shared our home away from home (the hub) and who have become good friends. Dr Mahan Poorhosseinzadeh, Dr Qian Ye Lee, Dr Carolina Bouten-Pinto and Dr Safa Riaz have graduated and embarked upon the next chapter of their lives. Rosa, Jane, Farid, Negar, Abdullah, Corie, Maria, Bec, Anna and Dan are progressing to completion of their PhD. I wish you all the best. Dr Susan Ressia has also been a friend for many years and a supporter throughout my candidature. Thank you to everyone for your friendship and chats over the coffee.

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Publication arising from this thesis

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CHAPTER ONE: Introduction

Margaret Sheil, vice-chancellor of Queensland University of Technology and former Chief Executive of the Australian Research Council recently warned: *“I know how hard it is to develop sensible metrics in research. It’s even more difficult in teaching. It’s hard to get a robust framework that drives meaningful change. You get very perverse outcomes if you’re not careful.”*

<https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/concern-over-timeline-australian-performance-funding-scheme>

1.0 Introduction

Human resource management (HRM) as a broad concept concerns the “management of work and the management of people to do the work” (Boxall & Purcell, 2011, p. 3). Many scholars agree a strategic approach to managing people involves designing and implementing HRM policies and practices that contribute to employees’ knowledge, skills and abilities and to positive organisational performance outcomes (Huselid, Jackson, & Schuler, 1997; Schuler & Jackson, 1987). However, an often overlooked aspect of HRM policy is the health and well-being of employees (Baptiste, 2008; Guest, 2017; Moore, Parahoo, & Fleming, 2010). HRM policies and practices can provide a mutual benefit to the employer and individual worker (both at and away from the workplace) when there is a more comprehensive approach encompassing personal, psychosocial and environmental factors (Karanika-Murray & Weyman, 2013). The psychological health of employees in the Australian workplace has gained more focus with legislation acknowledging poor psychological health can be attributed to

psychosocial risks such as stress, bullying, and excessive work demands (Johnstone, Quinlan, & McNamara, 2011; Safe Work Australia, 2019). The concept of well-being for this thesis is proposed to account for the psychological, physical and social workplace experience of employees (Winter, 2017).

Many sector and government reviews (conducted both in Australia and internationally) investigate the impact increasing workloads on the health and well-being of academics (Bexley et al., 2011; Bradley, 2008; Court & Kinman, 2008; Winefield, Boyd, Saebel, & Pignata, 2008b). Additionally, Langford (2010) and Bexley et al., (2013) claim the time required to fulfil the role of an academic has increased, thereby creating circumstances where work is conducted in the evening and/or weekends, encroaching on family, leisure and recovery time. Long working hours are a significant factor in poor psychological health due to the impact on time available for non-work activities such as family time (Dollard & Bailey, 2014). Findings from a recent study suggest employees who work longer than 39 hours per week are at risk of developing illnesses (Dinh, Strazdins, & Welsh, 2017).

Despite the growing literature about and in response to the changes within academia (as outlined in the Research Context section 1.1 of this chapter), there is a dearth of inquiry driven from the perspective of higher education institutions about the challenges involved in the allocation of academic work (Burgess, Lewis, & Mobbs, 2003; Houston et al. (2006); Hull, 2006). Further Rainnie, Goods, Bahn, and Burgess (2013) also suggest there is a scarceness of analysis by academics themselves about their own workplace arrangements. There is also limited empirical evidence obtained directly from academic employees about their perspectives of the systems used for workload allocation (Gill, 2014).

This thesis adopts a novel approach to understanding the ongoing concerns and unexplored research opportunities outlined in the previous paragraph by investigating how workload allocation systems (operating in most universities) could be used to support better health outcomes for academic employees. The

process model of strategic HRM (Wright & Nishii, 2007) was used to support the research design of the study where a three-tiered case study examined factors involved in the decision by senior management/HR personnel (categorised as Designers: Study A) to introduce the workload allocation system at their university. Perspectives were also sought from frontline managers (FLMs) responsible for implementing the system (Implementers: Study B) and academic employees experiencing the operationalisation of the system (Experiencers: Study C). Representatives from each of these groups are important and valid data sources for this study. The terminology within the literature discussing the systems for allocating academic work is varied (for example workload models, workload allocation systems and workload management systems). These are terms also used interchangeably in the literature. This study refers to the HRM practice for allocating academic work at a large Australian university (*The University*) as a work profile system (WPS), explained further in this Section on Page 22.

The psychosocial safety climate (PSC) theory (Dollard et al., 2012), a more recent work stress theory, was the overarching theoretical framework for the thesis. The PSC of a workplace can be influenced by an organisation's policies, practices and procedures for the protection of worker psychological health and safety (Idris, Dollard, Coward, & Dormann, 2012). Dollard and Bakker (2010) consider the PSC of an organisation as a resource able to influence the psychological health of employees through organisational policies, practices and procedures. A high PSC is achieved if there are effective stress prevention mechanisms and downstream HR practices such as adequate resourcing to meet job demands (Dollard et al., 2012).

Despite applying the two guides (Process model of SHRM and the PSC theory) to support the study, a third theory was needed to fully understand the findings. It should be noted the work profile system introduced at *The University* was not conceived through the theoretical lens of the PSC model in management planning meetings (Internal document). The PSC theoretical model was applied retrospectively for this study to explain the change made by management to the

work allocation process. It is, therefore, reasonable to expect that in applying the PSC theory for this thesis it would not align precisely with the findings. The HRM systems strength construct (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004) and (Ostroff & Bowen, 2016), combined with the PSC theory (Dollard et al., 2012) provided more explanatory power in response to the overarching research question: *How can a work profile system support workplace health and well-being of academic employees?* As argued by Bowen & Ostroff (2004) a strong HRM system endorses consensus in decision making, consistent and distinctive messaging from senior management. Thus, employees receive a clear understanding about expected behaviours and intended outcomes of HR practices. The next section provides an overview of workload allocation systems more generally in the context of higher education followed by an explanation of the design of the WPS (the unit of analysis for this study) utilised at *The University*.

Workload allocation systems

There are workload allocation methods operating in varying forms within a variety of industries and professions such as health, knowledge intensive firms, manufacturing, engineering and traditional ‘shop floor’ industrial environments (Kärreman, Sveningsson, & Alvesson, 2002; Martin-Rios, 2016; Schragenheim & Ronen, 1991). For example, the health sector, like the higher education sector, has growing demands on resources and services and therefore keeping pace with relevant HR practices is a high priority for senior management. The Queensland allied health profession reviewed how workloads were managed, and developed a model to support managers with a mapping tool enabling important non-patient activities to be captured (Simmons & Kuys, 2011, p. 173). Importantly, the model’s design assists managers to identify and pre-empt when changes to workload allocations are required. This is done on an intermittent basis to determine forthcoming resourcing needs. The health sector’s approach to managing workloads differs from universities where workloads of individuals can be adjusted retrospectively if output in one area of their role is considered to be low (Papadopoulos, 2017).

Workload allocation systems designed and implemented within academia are contextually distinctive to the academic profession. The academic role is distinctive, differentiated from most other jobs where three roles (research, teaching and service/administration) are incorporated into the one role (Bexley, Arkoudis, & James, 2013). There is an argument, formalised systems for managing academic workloads were introduced within universities to assist with maximising work outputs, to control increasing and competing workload demands and were also proclaimed to improve job satisfaction (Vardi, 2009). Yet there is a wide variety of practices between and within universities in the way work is allocated and what is included in the allocations and metrics (Barrett & Barrett, 2007). Vardi (2009), for example found 22 iterations of how work was allocated in the one university in her study.

A number of scholars including Houston, Meyer, and Paewai (2006) and Vardi (2009) claim these systems are failing due to a combination of factors including the credibility of time allocations, lack of staffing resources to perform the work, budgetary restrictions and ongoing change in the sector. As mentioned, time pressures in workplaces more generally also negatively influence employee health and well-being (Dinh et al, 2017). The use of time based metrics for managing workloads of academics has resulted in perceived loss of control and resourcing constraints (Vardi, 2009). This is important to highlight for this study because a job design that reduces the control employees have over organising their own work contributes to poor job satisfaction and impacts the workplace psychological climate (Karanika-Murray et al., 2017). Job design is an important aspect for this study and is an important policy agenda in many countries where government agencies (such as Safe Work Australia) view the design of jobs from both an economic and a health and well-being perspective (Parker, Morgeson, & Johns, 2017). Job design is discussed in more detail in the literature review Chapter Two (Page 48).

Kenny and Fluck (2014) argue the development of effective workload allocation systems require involvement of academics to ensure perceptions of credibility and fairness are achieved. Subsequently the degree of receptivity of the systems by

academics is claimed to be linked to the extent they are involved in the design process (Watson, King, Dekeyser, Bare, & Baldock, 2015). Papadopoulos (2017) however, argues workload allocation systems are fundamentally designed on an improbable principle that proposes the multiple activities of an academic's role can be realistically measured within timeframes. The same author notes the reality of implementation of the systems also contradicts that principle. Yet, if work allocation systems consider the self-managed nature of academic work they could be a more supportive resource for the increasing demands of an academic's role (Kenny & Fluck, 2014; Paewai, Meyer, & Houston, 2007). To date there is no evidence of prior research that empirically tests these claims. This thesis sets out to understand how a workload allocation system (referred to as the work profile system for this thesis) can support the health and well-being of academic employees. A brief overview of the design of the work profile system (WPS) is provided below.

The work profile system

The WPS applies various combinations of percentages to the three broad role components of teaching, research and service/scholarship creating a profile for individual academics. Typically, the work profiles of academic employees are set for a period of three years and form the basis of their performance review process. A common work profile is a balanced profile notionally prescribed as having a work allocation commensurate with 1725 annual working hours (as per *The University's* enterprise agreement), proportioned to 40 per cent (690 hours) for teaching activities, 40 per cent (690 hours) for research activity and 20 per cent (345 hours) for service activity (Public document). A teaching focussed profile has a higher percentage of teaching (typically 60 percent), 20 per cent research and 20 percent service also based on 1725 annual working hours. Underlying the overarching work profiles, time-based metrics are applied for activities associated with teaching responsibilities. Appendix H tables teaching metrics applicable for the three faculties examined for this research at *The University*.

The notable gaps in research mentioned above re-affirm the importance of the investigation carried out for this thesis. Autonomy, a work value associated with the role of an academic, is a central construct in self-determination theory that espouses beneficial outcomes such as well-being when freedom of choice is encouraged and facilitated (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Arguably the current approach for managing academic workloads, through a metrics based system, is difficult to reconcile with the autonomous style characterised by most academics (Lyons & Ingersoll, 2010). The next section outlines the research context of this study.

1.1 Research Context

Australian higher education sector

The higher education sector is considered unique in its role of developing and educating the next generation of knowledge creators and professional disciplines; it is integral to the long term success of Australia's intellectual and economic development (Department of Education and Training, 2016a). Australia's 40 universities and 130 other higher education providers had a combined revenue nearing \$30 billion in 2014, positioning the sector as an important financial contributor to national economic development (Norton & Cakitaki, 2016). Australian academia in a broad context, is classified into four main groupings of universities of similar style and focus. The four university classifications appear on the Australian Education Network (2017) website as per below:

- Group of Eight (Go8)
- Australian Technology Network (ATN)
- Innovative Research Universities (IRU)
- Regional Universities Network

The Australian higher education sector has experienced ongoing policy changes by governments of all persuasions for the past three decades including, government funding decreasing from over 80 percent at the end of 1980 to approximately 40 percent by 2015 (Norton & Cakitaki, 2016). From the 1950s through to the late 1980s government policy supported university education,

expressed in the Martin Report as “an investment which yields direct and significant economic benefits through increasing skill of the population and...that economic growth in Australia is dependent upon a high and advancing level of education” (Martin, 1964, p. 1). There was free access to universities “largely funded and implicated in the common project of nation-building, financed from taxation” (Marginson & Considine, 2000, p. 245). However in 1988, the Dawkins Report (John Dawkins was the education minister in the Hawke Labor government), led to the introduction of a contrasting neo-liberal policy espousing global competitiveness as a means of survival for higher education (Pick, 2006).

This shift in policy direction resulted in universities adopting a corporatised business model, introducing fee contributions by students and the government creating a student loan program, called the Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS). The new business model arguably gave more business decision making power to senior managers, Deans and Heads of Schools/Departments, previously the domain of academic boards and committees (Harman 2005). The Dawkins reforms also created a higher education system that unified colleges of advanced education, institutes of technology and universities all now categorised under the umbrella of university status (Pick, 2006). Since the year 2000, to be the legally defined as an Australian university, the higher education provider must meet criteria set by the Commonwealth Government, including being research active “across at least three broad fields of study” such as health, education or science (Norton & Cakitaki, 2016, p. 14).

In 2003 the Howard government in Australia created a template for higher education (that reflects current government policy) introducing full fees for domestic students and a competitive international market between universities for government funds (Pick, 2006). Thereafter, a labour government continued to encourage public universities to operate a demand-driven system, uncapping university places and allowing more students access to higher education (Department of Education and Training, 2016b) and bolstering the incomes of universities. In 2003, there were a total of 929,952 students enrolled in Australian higher education (prior to full paying fees). By 2017 the total number of higher

education students enrolled (domestic and international) rose to 1,513,383 (Department of Education and Training, 2016c) an increase of almost 600,000 students over a 14 year period.

Some scholars claim the demand driven system created a corporatised and commodity based environment where workloads often exceed resources, impacting employee health (Gillespie, Walsh, Winefield, Dua, & Stough, 2001; Winefield et al., 2008a). Research also suggests increased workload demands contribute to reduced job satisfaction amongst academics and increased workplace stress and stress related illnesses such as depression and anxiety amongst the academic profession (Kinman, 2008; Winefield et al., 2008b).

A review of the higher education sector by Bradley (2008) concluded greater job security and lower student-to-staff ratios were required as essential resources to increase job satisfaction, reduce stress and retain and renew the academic workforce. Currie and Eveline (2011) identified a blurring of boundaries between home and work. The adoption of technology based teaching has created additional responsibilities including developing, implementing and achieving pedagogically sound on-line learning outcomes for students (Gregory & Lodge, 2015).

In 2015, the Australian academic classified workforce consisted of 53,000 employees; a combination of research only or teaching and research positions, supported by a large component of casually employed tutors and lecturers who mostly hold teaching only positions (Norton & Cakitaki, 2016). In 2017, the Australian government discontinued the policy of uncapped university places (Department of Education, 2018). Kenny (2018) argues the increased focus of productivity in higher education needs to be addressed at a sector level to alleviate individual institutions responding to external drivers and placing counter-productive and unworkable performance expectations on academic employees. The next section outlines the research context specific to this thesis - *The University*.

The University

Specific information described and presented in this section of the chapter (and throughout the thesis) was sourced from a mix of publicly available documentation and confidential internal documentation. *The University* is a multi-campus higher education institution with approximately 4000 employees, comprised of both academic and general staff. *The University's* campuses are geographically diverse but also diverse in research and teaching, covering disciplines such as business, sciences, health, law, education and the arts. The executive administration is centralised and bureaucratic with many layers of reporting and a governing Council. Supervisors of academics at *The University* are typically Head of Discipline, Deputy Head (Learning and Teaching) and Head of School (HOS), considered as frontline managers (FLMs) for this study. HOS report to senior/middle management who are usually the faculty Dean and Pro-Vice Chancellor. Reporting structures for academics at *The University* can be complex and conflicting where it is not uncommon for them to report to three supervisors as part of the performance review process.

At the time this research was conducted organisational change processes were underway across most faculties, including the three involved in this study. Amalgamations of academic groups and reviews of the administrative support structure were causing concern for academics about potential redundancies, reduction in administrative support services and increasing workloads. Changes to the performance review processes and a recently introduced trimester teaching model were also part of the fluid operational landscape. The first year of operation of the trimester model had highlighted shortcomings in its operation adding to the tensions among academic employees. Moreover, there had been a recent expansion to on-line and blended learning platforms. Additionally, a new round enterprise bargaining between *The University* management representatives, employee representatives and the National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU) was underway. The NTEU is an Australian trade union for all higher education sector and university employees. It is an industry union and the only union working exclusively in the Australian university sector. Enterprise bargaining as it pertains to Australia is explained below.

Enterprise bargaining

Enterprise bargaining was introduced in Australia in the early 1990s, replacing a centralised system where wages were fixed, with a system enabling individual enterprises to collectively bargain and negotiate with employees about work place issues (Burgess, 1995). Enterprise bargaining is the process of negotiation generally between the employer, employees and their bargaining representatives (in the case of the higher education sector, it is the NTEU) with the goal of reaching mutual agreement. The Australian *Fair Work Act 2009* sets clear rules and obligations about how this process should occur, including rules about bargaining, the content of enterprise agreements and how an agreement is made and approved. The Fair Work Commission (formerly known as Fair Work Australia) is an independent national workplace relations tribunal. It is responsible for maintaining a safety net of minimum wages and employment conditions, as well as a range of other workplace functions and regulation (Fair Work Commission, 2016).

A visual representation of the research context is displayed at Figure 1.1. Centrally and hierarchically depicted in the figure are the key organisational stakeholder groups. The work profile system is centrally depicted as the unit of analysis. The external environment is displayed as an overarching element linked to both the internal environment and workplace health and organisational outcomes. Links between workplace health of employees and HRM practices is an important aspect for this study investigating how the WPS can support health and well-being of academic employees. The psychosocial safety climate (PSC) concept included within the internal environment component of Figure 1.1 is a facet specific component of organisational climate that advocates freedom from psychological and social risk or harm (Dollard & Bakker, 2010).

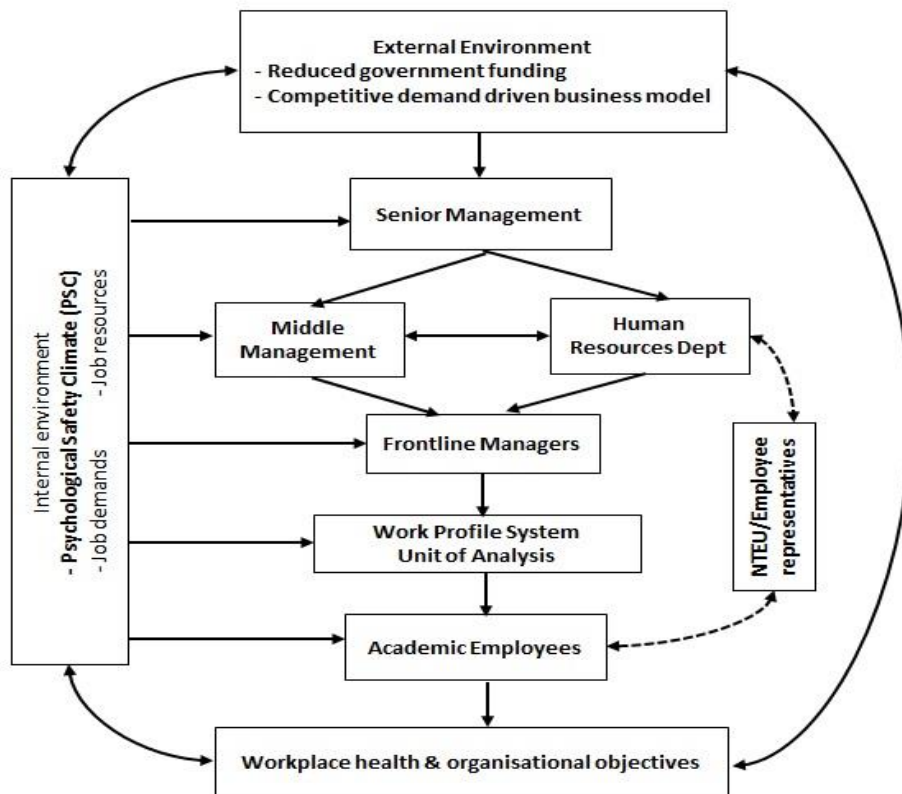


Figure 1.1 Representation of the research context with interconnecting internal and external elements.

The next section describes the research focus of this thesis.

1.2 Research focus

This study applies a novel approach to understanding the overarching research question: *How can a work profile system support health and well-being of academic employees?* There are a range of mediating processes and interactions between employees, teams, managers and organisations influencing the relationships between HRM, workplace health and organisational performance (Guest, 2017; Peccei, Van De Voorde, & Veldhoven, 2013). Nishii, Lepak, and Schneider (2008) argue HRM affects the psychological processes of individuals with flow on affects to their behaviour and to their broader environmental contexts. There is also a growing argument within the HRM research sphere espousing the need for more probing research expanding the organisational focus to include employers and occupational groups so that a deeper understanding of

complex workplace phenomena can be achieved (Ramsay, Branch, & Ewart, 2016). Hence, as outlined in the introduction section of this chapter, a three tiered case study was undertaken to understand the three perspectives of Designers, Implementers and Experiencers of the WPS at *The University*. Through an analysis of the findings of the research and an integration of HRM/WPH theoretical perspectives, this study seeks to understand how workload allocation systems within academia (and other sectors) can achieve improved health and well-being outcomes for employees. To address the gaps surrounding our knowledge, also identified in the introduction section of this chapter, the following sub-research questions (RQs) are presented for each study:

Study A: Designers:

Study A aims to understand the intentions of the strategic managers and HR personnel who brought about change to how work was allocated at *The University* during the 2000s. Additionally the study aims to understand how the Designers now perceive the system, as a supportive resource for the workplace health of academic employees. Therefore the two central questions for Study A are:

- A1) How did workplace health of academic employees feature in the policy designers' decision-making when introducing WPS?
- A2) How effective do strategic managers/HR personnel perceive the work profile system to be in supporting the workplace health of academic employees?

Study B: Implementers (Line/frontline managers):

Study B aims to understand the perspectives of those tasked with implementing the work profile system in more recent times. Furthermore, the study aims to understand how Implementers perceive the WPS supports the workplace health of academic employees. The two central questions for Study B are:

- B1) How do Implementers perceive the work profile system supports the management of academic workloads?
- B2) How do Implementers perceive the work profile system supports the workplace health and well-being of academic employees?

Study C: Experiencers (academic employees):

Study C aims to understand the perceptions of academic employees required to work within the stipulations of the work profile system and in particular how they perceive the system to be as a resource for supporting their workplace health. The two central questions for Study C are:

- C1) How do academic employees perceive the work profile system supports their workplace health?
- C2) How do academic employees perceive the work profile system is an effective mechanism for managing their workloads?

1.3 Thesis outline

This introduction chapter presents a broad explanation of workload allocation systems introduced into universities and how the largely collegial, autonomous nature of academic profession has changed. The WPS was explained in the context of its operation at *The University*. The research context was explained, both from the broader perspective of the higher education sector and specific to this thesis, *The University* context. The research focus described the three levels of stakeholders highlighting the three studies (A, B, C) and relevant sub-research questions for each study are presented.

Chapter Two reviews and discusses the scholarly literature that supports and explains the thesis topic including the emerging focus on ‘health’ within the ‘health and safety’ workplace policies and practices. The increasing incidences of stress related illnesses within workplaces, primarily due to high job demands and the associated significant financial costs to government, business and the community is discussed. Workload as a construct is explained. The role of employers in ensuring HRM policies and practices support the psychological safety of their employees is described. HR practices including job design, work intensity/intensification, relevance of context and fit and organisational justice that impact workplace health and well-being are outlined. The relevance of HR implementation is outlined and the importance of line and frontline management support by senior management for their devolved role in HRM responsibilities.

Details about the choice of the theoretical guide framing the study are also outlined in Chapter Two.

Chapter Three outlines the philosophical foundation for the study and justifies an interpretative paradigm and qualitative methodology approach adopted for the research. A breakdown of the data sample is described and the process for accessing data is explained. Semi-structured interviews and document analysis is outlined as the process for data collection and subsequent analysis. Steps to be taken in the data analysis process are explained. Ethical clearance obtained for the study is also confirmed in Chapter Three and the limitations and contributions to existing knowledge are also discussed.

Chapters Four, Five and Six analyse findings from the multi-level case study from the three diverse perspectives highlighting the complexity of the research context. In particular how the WPS is inextricably linked with workload metrics and the notional working hours stipulated in the enterprise agreement. Chapter Four, explains participants in the study and a brief summary of the research context outlining workplace arrangements for academics prior to the WPS. External drivers including government funding schemes, industrial relations changes and work health and safety regulations are explained. The views of three workplace health and safety representatives were canvassed for this study. Their insights and perceptions are provided regarding the role and priority of workplace health & safety processes at *The University*. More generally responses to Study A's sub-research questions (A1&A2) are explained.

Chapter Five analyses the data responding to the two sub-research questions for Study B (B1&B2) that enquired of the Implementers (line/frontline managers) how the WPS supports them to manage workloads of academics at *The University*. Additionally Chapter five explains Implementers' views about the WPS as a resource to support the workplace health and well-being of academic. The challenges faced by line/frontline managers in implementing the WPS, are outlined including their perceptions about the relevancy of the system for their

needs. How they work around obstacles such as their unpreparedness, support and training for management roles is described.

Chapter six presents the findings from Experiencers (academic employees) who work within the stipulations of the WPS. The unique design of an academic's role is highlighted within and across the profession itself whereby a one-size-fits-all approach to management of academic workloads is questioned.

Chapter Seven brings together the key findings from Chapters Four to Six and presents a discussion and conclusion for the thesis. The discussion section explains how the data answers the sub RQs for each of the three findings chapters resulting in the theoretical and practical contributions of the study. The contribution of this thesis pertains to building a strong HRM system and a philosophy that supports a psychosocial safety climate for academic employees. Chapter Seven also acknowledges limitations of the study and identifies opportunities for future research.

The next chapter examines literature relevant to this thesis including evidence on the increasing incidence of work related stress and declining employee well-being within Australia and organisations globally. Workplace health and employee well-being and the associated costs to employers and employees is discussed as a topical generalised concern for organisations in the 21st century. The role of line/FLMs and HRM in workplace health, policies and practices is explained including job design as an important construct that can impact the health of employees. A workplace health theory is explained as the guide for the research.

CHAPTER TWO: Literature review

2.0 Introduction

The previous chapter introduced the aim of this thesis, investigating how a work profile system (WPS) utilised at a large Australian university (*The University*) could be utilised to support better health outcomes of academic employees. The WPS was explained in the context of both the higher education sector more generally and within *The University*. The research focus was outlined including the structure of the thesis.

The premise of this thesis is primarily through the lens of the HRM discipline with a focus on incorporating workplace health in designing and implementing HRM policy and practice. My initial literature review began for the purpose of writing my confirmation document (undertaken between 2016 and 2017). Consequently, after the research began and data was collected and analysed in 2018/2019 it was necessary to review and fine tune the original literature review. Various search processes were undertaken and involved a number of strategies, including key word searches, searching primary sources obtained directly from literature, setting up data base alerts and accessing platforms including Proquest, Ebsco and Emerald.

The various aspects of my research included an element of historical exploration within the higher education sector over several decades, workplace health more broadly, workplace health in academia, human resource management, implementation of HRM policies and procedures as well as review of suitable theories. Therefore several search words and search strategies were utilised. Depending on the data base, when searching I applied limiters such as peer reviewed articles only, abstract only options, and specified discipline and sector journals. This eliminated often thousands of sources, saving time but also enabled selection of pre-determined requirements such as geographical or date range. However, books, book chapters and reports from seminal scholars were accessed directly through library catalogue systems.

This chapter begins with explaining and highlighting the importance of employee health and well-being considerations for organisations. The costs to workplaces as a result of work related stress are discussed in more detail validating the practical importance of this research for organisations. To understand how organisational factors in the workplace impact the health and well-being of employees, work stress frameworks are considered to guide the examination. Following the explanations about health and well-being as outlined above, literature on the importance of HRM processes and practices, job design, role and identity theories are also discussed. The psychosocial safety climate (PSC) theory is explained as the guiding foundation through which the HR practice of the WPS is analysed and how the WPS can support workplace health of academic employees. The process model of strategic human resource management (SHRM) is also appraised as a supporting framework for this study in light of the research design of the thesis.

2.1 Workplace health and employee well-being

Workplace health and employee well-being is a broad concept comprised of personal satisfaction, work-life satisfaction and general health; it is a combination of mental/psychological health and physical/physiological health (Danna & Griffin, 1999). Moreover Heffernan and Dundon (2016) discuss the concept of health-related well-being as a dimension that relates to the level of work pressure experienced by employees. Traditionally the 'health' in work health and safety has

received little regulatory attention for issues of psychological health or psychosocial risks such as stress, bullying, and excessive work demands (Australian Government Productivity Commission, 2019; Johnstone et al., 2011). However, the current Australian Work Health and Safety legislation now explicitly defines 'health' as both physical and psychological (Johnstone et al., 2011). Additionally, workplace health and employee well-being guidelines now clearly specify the psychological health of employees (Safe Work Australia, 2014).

The accumulating evidence that a healthy workforce results in positive performance is a compelling argument for organisational stakeholders (Boxall & Macky, 2014; Cooper & Cartwright, 1996; Cotton & Hart, 2003; Guest, 2017). Outcomes such as improved productivity, reduced absenteeism, staff retention, reduced costs and increased benefits for the employer are increasingly being explored as a link to healthier, more productive and loyal employees (Harvey et al., 2014). Factors linked to a supportive workplace for the health and well-being of employees include, respectful relationships, flexible work arrangements and clear communication (Dickson-Swift, Fox, Marshall, Welch, & Willis, 2014). However, without sufficient management controls positive health and well-being outcomes for employees can be jeopardised (Mellor & Webster, 2013; Salin, 2003).

The more recent construct of a psychosocial safety climate (PSC) is also underpinned by the notion that worker health must be supported by senior management through policies and practices prioritising health outcomes alongside productivity outcomes (Dollard & Bakker, 2010). Other literature also highlights the connection between the behaviour of leaders and managers and the influential effect on the well-being of employees (Gilbreath & Benson, 2004; Kelloway & Barling, 2010; Mellor & Webster, 2013). Evidence indicates poor leadership in the area of workplace health affects productivity and organisational performance (Donohue & Kelloway, 2014; Schyns & Schilling, 2013; Woodrow & Guest, 2014).

Job demands, such as excessive workloads can incorporate physical, social or organisational aspects of work that require physical and mental effort (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Poor job design, role ambiguity, workload issues, organisational culture and the impact of organisational change and how it is managed can play a significant role in workplace health outcomes and employee stress related illness (Dollard et al., 2012). Workplace Health and Safety Queensland (2014) consider excessive workloads as one of the most common sources of work-related stress. Occupations in the field of nursing, social work, medicine and welfare work are commonly regarded as stressful vocations where known risk factors include emotional demands, harassment, workplace bullying and psychological demands such as workloads and work pressure (Dollard & McTernan, 2011). Job demands and lack of time to complete tasks within their work allocations have been identified as stressors within and across the academic profession (Boyd, 2014).

The workplace is considered to be an important opportunity to address the increasing cost of health care and chronic health issues by changing attitudes and behaviours through education and training, a supportive workplace climate, relevant availability of resources and a proactive workplace health ethos (Harvey et al., 2014; The Work Foundation, 2010). While the workplace provides a platform and catalyst to prevent, identify and manage health problems (emotional and physical), when not managed effectively can create additional costs to employers in the form of absenteeism, workers compensation and productivity loss (Chen, Tsai, & Wang, 2014). Additionally Papadopoulos (2017) suggests further examination is required in academia to consider health concerns that can arise from ambiguous management expectations about 'how much is enough' to protect academics from routinely working excessive hours. The costs in real terms for organisations are highlighted in the next section.

2.2 The cost of poor workplace health and stress related illnesses

An increasing expectation for employees to meet global market demands in the delivery of products and services with widespread downsizing and change programs common place within organisations has resulted in increasing negative effects on the health and well-being of employees (CIPD, 2016; World Health Organization, 2006). A recently released draft report by the Australian Government Productivity Commission (2019, p. 37) highlights a number of key cost indicators for Australian organisations about the psychosocial safety of employees in Australia and are listed below:

- *At least 3 million working Australians either have mental ill health or are carers of someone with mental ill health*
- *Median time taken off for mental health related worker's compensation claims is 16 weeks compared to 6 weeks for other claims*
- *In any one year approximately one in five Australians experiences mental ill-health*
- *The cost to the Australian economy of mental ill-health and suicide is, conservatively in the order of \$43-\$51 billion per year*
- *Estimates for the cost of absenteeism and presenteeism due to mental ill-health range between \$13-17 billion per year (70-80% attributed to absenteeism).*

Work related stress is the most common cause of high staff turnover, absenteeism and presenteeism (CIPD, 2016; Pricewaterhouse Coopers, 2014; Safe Work Australia, 2014). Absenteeism issues can be a result of environmental factors creating employee stress including job insecurity, unsustainable workloads, bullying and perceptions of unfairness in the workplace (Chan-Mok, Caponecchia, & Winder, 2013; Greenberg, 2004). Whereas presenteeism, pertains to employees physically present at work despite being unwell and limited in their capacity to perform their role productively and is recognised as a prevalent and costly workplace health issue (Brown, Gilson, Burton, & Brown, 2011; Dollard et al., 2012).

Presenteeism has been claimed to be more costly to organisations than absenteeism. Dollard et al. (2012) claim presenteeism is costing \$693 million per annum. There is also a notion that some employees believe they do not have 'time' to be ill and absent from work due to high workloads (Strazdins, Welsh, Korda, Broom, & Paolucci, 2016) thereby continue coming to work and facilitating presenteeism. Aronsson, Gustafsson, and Dallner (2000) found evidence of presenteeism predominately in care, welfare and education sectors where major decreases in employee numbers due to organisational downsizing caused anxiety amongst remaining employees with fewer people to do the same amount of work. Accordingly these sectors have also been found to be high in stress risk factors (Dollard & McTernan, 2011). Being ill and being at work for the academic profession is also known to be a fraught issue whereby academics often have porous work/life boundaries particularly when teaching responsibilities are involved often due to difficulties in finding a replacement at short notice (Cannizzo & Osbaldiston, 2016).

According to Safe Work Australia (2013) mental stress accounted for an average of 95 per cent of mental ill-health claims over the ten year period 2003-2013. The extent of problem is said to be underestimated, however, due to the statistics only including accepted claims; unaccepted claims or employees who do not claim, or who are not covered by workers compensation are not measured or included in these statistics (Safe Work Australia, 2013). The Australian Safety and Compensation Council (2008) reports the Australian workers compensation system identified the development of a psychological disorder as a potential outcome of experiencing mental stress in the course of work. Yet 69 per cent of people surveyed by Mental Health Council of Australia were reluctant to disclose a mental illness to an employer and 35 per cent said they would definitely not disclose a mental illness to an employer (Mental Health Council of Australia, 2013). These statistics align with other research findings about employees who are psychologically unwell and who are likely to be present at work because they do not want to expose their illness for fear of stigmatisation and/or loss of employment or potential promotional opportunities (Lack, 2011).

Nearly a decade ago the Australian Human Rights Commission (2010) estimated 3.2 days per worker per year are lost due to workplace stress, with Australian businesses losing more than \$5.6 billion per year by failing to provide appropriate support and interventions for ill-health in the workplace. Identifying appropriate and effective health interventions in the workplace has been a topic of organisational research for many decades both in Australia and overseas (Cooper & Cartwright, 1994; Danna & Griffin, 1999; Gmelch, Wilke, & Lovrich, 1986; Warr, 1990). Organisations commonly adopt holistic preventative approaches, attempting to address escalating workplace health issues and safeguarding the physical and the psychosocial well-being of their workforces (CIPD, 2016; Karanika-Murray & Weyman, 2013; Leka, Jain, Iavicoli, Vartia, & Ertel, 2011).

Workplace stress and related illnesses affect organisational performance, production outputs and costs when policies and workplace practices are not appropriately designed, implemented, managed and effectively evaluated (Nielsen, Taris, & Cox, 2010; Salin, 2003). Furthermore, without appropriate preventative strategies and workplace processes, employers often only become aware of instances of stress related illness when absenteeism becomes excessive, or line managers and colleagues report changes in employee performance and/or behaviour (Rolfe, Foreman, & Tylee, 2006). The previous two sections of this chapter highlight how and why employee health and well-being can impact organisational performance. The forthcoming sections of this chapter identify workplace climates that contribute to positive outcomes for the workplace health and well-being of employees. Firstly though, as this thesis concerns a HRM system for managing workloads of academic employees, a brief overview explaining workloads as a construct is outlined below.

2.3 Explaining workload

The focus of this qualitative study is academic workload, how they are designed, managed, implemented and their relationship to the workplace well-being of employees. More generally though, there are other organisational factors that can directly impact workloads, such as management expectations, enterprise agreements, job design, time constraints, work-family conflict, role conflict,

identity, motivation and recruitment strategies to name a few (Soliman & Soliman, 1997). Bowling and Kirkendall (2012, p. 222) consider 'workload' as a specific construct and propose it as "any variable reflecting the amount or difficulty of one's work" as a sufficiently generic explanation. They also acknowledge workload is multi-dimensional construct and defer to other scholars who have identified and operationalised workloads for further explanation. LaRocco, Tetrick, and Meder (1989) consider workload as "quantitative and qualitative", further refined by the amount of work and difficulty of work.

Dwyer and Ganster (1991) propose their definition of workload to acknowledge physical as well as mental workload. Excessive physical workload can result in physical symptoms of ill health and excessive mental workload may be strongly related to psychological symptoms, such as anxiety. Bowling and Kirkendall (2012) highlight how internal factors within organisations can contribute to workload stress such as organisational culture or professional identity, expectations of senior management and HR practices. Likewise, these authors also contend individual employees can self-impose pressures creating additional workload, such as lack of ability and skill level to perform effectively in their role, poor time management, taking on additional tasks or having a general propensity to view the world negatively. Moreover excessive workloads are known to deplete physical energy resources of employees or encroach on time available to complete tasks (Bowling & Kirkendall, 2012).

Placing a context around workload for this study, reference is made to an enterprise agreement for *The University* (Internal documents) stipulating how an academic's work design generally comprises three main components of teaching, research and service responsibilities. The enterprise agreement also refers to an annual notional number of 1725 hours for an academic's role. The 1725 hours is proportioned by percentages across the three role components; for example 40 per cent teaching, 40 per cent research and 20 per cent service. Activities or tasks required to be undertaken within those components is workload and quantified by time based metrics. Workloads have become contentious in higher education, said to have increased over the preceding three decades, impacting the health and well-

being of academic employees (Kenny, 2016). When HRM policies and practices encompass personal, psychosocial and environmental factors they can provide a mutual benefit to employers and employees (Karanika-Murray & Weyman, 2013). An overview of HRM practices and impacts on workplace health are discussed below.

2.4 Human resource management and workplace health and well-being

Greenwood (2013) describes HRM as the “management of people within the employment relationship, comprised of networks of public and private actors”. Many seminal scholars are in agreement about the need for a strategic approach to managing people through designing and implementing a set of HRM policies and practices that contribute to employees’ knowledge, skills, and abilities that result in positive performance outcomes for the organisation (Huselid, 1995; Huselid et al., 1997; Schuler & Jackson, 1987). Organisational performance and links to HRM has a major focus within the academic literature (Guest, 1997; Paauwe & Boselie, 2005; Peccei et al., 2013; Piening, Baluch, & Ridder, 2014), however an often overlooked aspect of HRM policy is the workplace health and well-being of employees (Baptiste, 2008; Guest, Wright, & Paauwe, 2013; Moore et al., 2010). Peccei et al. (2013) argue that despite an increasing focus on the effects of HRM on employee well-being and organisational performance, there is a gap in identifying specifically the relationship between the three elements of the intention of HR practices, implementation and experiences thereof.

Furthermore, there is growing argument for more focus on employee related outcomes to be recognised as relevant performance outcomes such as health and well-being (Guest, 2017; Nishii & Wright, 2008; Paauwe, Boon, Boselie, & Den Hartog, 2013). Some scholars highlight opposing outcomes between organisations and employees, with HRM practices, such as work intensification having positive outcomes for organisational performance but negative outcomes for employee well-being (Ramsay, Scholarios, & Harley, 2000). Nonetheless, evidence indicates there is a range of mediating processes and interactions between employees, teams, managers and organisations influencing the relationships between HRM,

workplace health and organisational performance (Guest, 2017; Peccei et al., 2013) that can result in mutual benefits for organisations and employees (Peccei, 2004) .

The foundation of the PSC construct purports a positive parallel to the opposing outcomes notion whereby HR policies enable and support employee well-being outcomes equitably to productivity targets. As can be seen, the PSC theoretical framework (Figure 1.1 Page 28 of this Chapter) diagrammatically highlights parallel pathways with the aim of achieving mutual benefits for employees and organisational outcomes. Peccei (2004) refers to mutual benefit as mutual gains and espouses an optimistic view of HRM as opposed to the pessimistic perspective of HRM practices that lead to work intensification and increased surveillance as examples. This view is of interest for this thesis that supports mutual benefits for employees and employers through progressive HRM practices such as job design, employee involvement and training and development whereby better health outcomes are achieved for academics and *The University* achieves its strategic objectives.

2.4.1 Psychosocial safety climate philosophy

Kellner, Townsend, Wilkinson, Greenfield, and Lawrence (2016) argue the philosophical nature of an organisation is communicated to employees through their HRM systems. Additionally, Kellner et al. (2016, p. 1255) state their support for other scholars including Boxall and Macky (2009) and Monks et al. (2012) who call for a wider examination “into the philosophy that underlies systems of HRM”. Also of interest for this thesis, is developing a strong psychosocial safety climate, whereby there are cohesive and shared perceptions among academic employees of senior management’s workplace health and well-being ethos at *The University*.

Further, when HRM practices send consistent messages about strategic priorities (for example, employee well-being is as important as productivity) “the more likely it is those goals will be achieved” (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004, p. 207).

Organisational climate is discussed in more detail later in this Chapter (Section 2.9.1 Page 65) in the context of the psychosocial safety climate. The aim of this section however, is to introduce a focus on the developing notion of a strong HR philosophy, embracing a climate of psychosocial safety for employees. Bond, Flaxman, and Loivette (2006) argue there is a theoretical and empirical case for managers to develop a positive psychosocial climate in organisations.

Additionally Nishii et al. (2008) argue HRM affects both the psychological processes of individual employees and the broader contexts in which they are bound. Glick (1985, p. 602) explains “researchers concerned with individual perceptions focus on psychological climate” whereas organisational climate researchers are concerned with exploring organisational characteristics. Importantly, theorising safety climate in terms of psychosocial factors better highlights the issue of workplace psychological health and employee well-being that has become a major concern and cost for organisations across the world (Dollard & Bakker, 2010) also highlighted at the beginning of this chapter in section 2.2.

The higher education sector, both in Australia and overseas, has been the subject of government and sector reviews for almost three decades regarding increasing workloads and associated workplace stress. This notion is discussed extensively in the literature, for example, Bradley (2008); Coaldrake and Stedman (1999); Coates, Dobson, Goedegebuure, and Meek (2014); Court and Kinman (2008); Winefield et al. (2008a). Evidence supports the notion of high intrinsic motivation within the academic occupation (Kenny, 2018). However, evidence also indicates that without the appropriate resources to balance the growing demands on academic employees, factors such as stress, poor health and motivation issues are becoming recognisable problems inside the sector (Bradley, 2008; Kenny, 2016; Lyons & Ingersoll, 2010; Pignata, Winefield, Boyd, & Provis, 2018). Relative to this thesis, work intensification within academia has been identified as contributing to poor health outcomes due to increasing pressure as a result of managerialism and new public management practices (Boxall & Macky, 2014;

Kenny, 2018). A brief explanation of work intensification and work intensity follows.

2.4.2 Work intensity/intensification

Franke (2015) purports that the two concepts of work intensification and work intensity are often used simultaneously to describe demanding job situations, with both leading to the impairment of employees' well-being, health and job satisfaction. Yet the author further explains they are also two distinct concepts, firstly work intensity as a job demand is characterised by time pressures, multi-tasking and frequent workflow interruptions. Franke also uses the conservation of resources theory (Hobfoll, 2001) and J-DR theory (Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2001) to argue these type of job demands require high levels of concentration, cognitive flexibility and self-control. Secondly, work intensity, according to Franke (2015), requires employees to extensively draw upon mental and emotional resources that can in turn lead to job stress and burnout when these resources become depleted. Additionally Allan (1998) found the major effect of work intensity was a decline in employee morale and their well-being.

Whereas work intensification, "is to have less time to deal with the same level of demands" Franke (2015, p. 18). The new public management business approach for example, where public sector organisations have adopted a productivity focus where employees are required to work with tight timeframes and increased pace is commonly explained as work intensification (Willis et al., 2016). Often the type of work that has become entrenched in new public management ways of operating, such as nursing and academia, can be extremely difficult to quantify (Kenny, 2018; Willis et al., 2016). Allan (1998, p. 136) explains it as a "distinct form of labour adjustment". Work intensification practices, as argued by Boxall and Macky (2014), was found to be associated with role overload resulting in fatigue, stress and work-life imbalance. The relevance of suitable HR practices for organisations is now discussed.

2.4.3 Context and Fit

HRM practices and their ‘fit’ or suitability with HRM systems and the organisations context (Huselid, 1995; Macduffie, 1995) has an underlying premise of organisational efficiency and effectiveness (Paauwe et al., 2013). The HRM models of Beer, Spector, Lawrence, Mills, and Walton (1985) and Fombrun, Tichy, and Devanna (1984) support the notion of a relationship between context and HRM policies and practices. For example, contextual, economic, political and cultural forces proposed by the Fombrun et al. (1984) Michigan model. The Harvard model by Beer et al. (1985, p. 16) proposes that “HRM policies are influenced by two major considerations: situational factors and stakeholder interests” including the well-being outcomes of employees and a broader concern other than organisational performance.

Context in HRM research is also considered through the several ‘fit’ concepts such as best fit, environmental fit or organisational fit (Wood, 1999). When a HR practice is associated as having ‘fit’, it is by description, considered to be suitable and context specific (Paauwe & Farndale, 2017). The ‘best fit’ (Wood, 1999) approach is concerned with ensuring the internal and external context of the organisation is matched with suitable HRM decisions (Porter, 1985). This differs from the ‘best practice’ approach (Pfeffer, 1994) which is associated with a more universal approach to deciding HRM strategy irrespective of sector or industry context (Marchington & Grugulis, 2000). Also, French, Rodgers, and Cobb (1974), the original proposers of the person-environment fit theory in the field of workplace stress, argue when there is a misfit between the person and the environment, psychological, physiological and behavioural strain may occur.

There are complex and contingent situational factors concerned with strategic decisions about HRM policies and practices. Occupational characteristics or legal and societal requirements as well as concerns of stakeholder groups such as employee groups, governments and unions (Beer et al., 1985) are important factors. Likewise institutional environments (in the case of universities) and their HR practices as examined for this thesis. An example of external (environmental) institutional practices impacting universities and imposing internal metricised

performance expectations of academic employees are research funding schemes (Kenny & Fluck, 2014). Universities, both in Australia and internationally have experienced pressures from external drivers, such as reduced government funding, whereby the introduction of corporatised business models has created conflicting motivations between productivity values and “traditional educational principles and scholarly aims” of academia (Hornibrook, 2012, p. 29). One consequence of the corporatisation of universities is use of quantified time control methods for managing workloads of academics, claimed to have impacted the health and well-being of academic employees (Boyd, 2014). Given the self-managed and intrinsic motivation academics more commonly apply to their jobs, Kenny (2018) argues institutions need to consider whether the current system for managing workloads may turn out to be counter-productive questioning the longer term relevancy for academia.

A more recent and less known approach in further considering the fit notion is the transformation from the intention of HR strategies and policies via their implementation and relationship to employee experiences and perceptions of HR practices (Paauwe et al., 2013). Bowen and Ostroff (2004) argue employees perceptions of the HR practices are formed through messages from senior management. Prior to discussing the intention of HR strategies and how they are perceived by employees, a brief explanation follows concerning the perceptions of organisational justice also conceived by employees through HRM messages about organisation’s fairness values and philosophy. Philosophy in the context of HRM systems as explained by Ostroff and Bowen (2016) is the organisation’s guiding principles and values of human resources and includes part of the HR architecture “the configuration of HR strategies, policies and practices” (Ostroff & Bowen, 2016, p. 201). According to Greenberg (1990, p. 399) employees’ perceptions of organisational justice decides their attitudes to the organisation and “are a basic requirement for the effective functioning of organisations and the personal satisfaction of the individuals they employ”.

2.4.4 Organisational Justice

Perceptions of justice, albeit subjective (Poole, 2007) are influenced by benefits or gains received by employees but also by the process of how the benefits have been determined. Theoretically these notions are conceptualised as distributive justice, procedural justice and interactional justice (Cropanzano, 2001). Distributive justice considers perceptions of fairness of outcomes taking into account equity, equality and needs (Greenberg, 1990). Procedural justice emphasises the importance of fairness of procedures used, such as decision criteria, voice and control of the process (Greenberg, 1990). Interactional justice concerns the collegial and respectful implementation of decisions and the way decisions are communicated (Tyler, 1987). Some scholars argue that together procedural justice and interactional justice are the key indicators of how fairness is perceived overall by individuals (Tyler, 1987).

Work allocation systems within academia are espoused to allocate workloads equitably and transparently (Boyd, 2014). Burgess et al. (2003, p. 230) defines an effective workload allocation system as one that “allocates workload equitably to the participants in a transparent manner such that staff behaviour is aligned with departmental strategic goals”. However, Hornibrook (2012) observes their definition of the process of workload allocation makes linkages between employee behaviour and the achievement of strategic goals and aligns with the ‘new public management’ approach referred to earlier in this chapter with reference to work intensification/work intensity. This thesis is investigating a business approach adopted by *The University*, said to have increased a productivity focus, where academic employees are required to work within specified measurable timeframes that has resulted in poor health outcomes.

There are arguments the work allocation systems utilised in academia are perceived by some academic employees to be unfair due to conflicting motivations of management required outcomes and the intrinsic motivation and autonomous approach academics apply to their work (Hornibrook, 2012). However, most university enterprise agreements in Australia include equity as a guiding principle (National Tertiary Education Union, 2017). Robertson and

Germov (2015) have the view work allocation systems can incorporate principles such as equity and transparency and at the same time link to the organisation's budget and resource planning processes. Employees' perceptions of justice are important, not only for organisational effectiveness but for their well-being (Poole, 2007). If perceptions are poor, they are also claimed to influence employee behaviour such as becoming an uncooperative team member (Ambrose, 2002) or diminished organisational commitment and motivation (Perreira & Berta, 2016)

2.5 Job design

Psychosocial stressors in the workplace are attributed to aspects of “work design and the organisation and management of work, and social and environmental contexts, which have the potential for causing psychological, social or physical harm” (Dollard, Skinner, Tuckey, & Bailey, 2007, p. 2). Psychosocial factors at work are defined as “interactions between and among work environment, job content, organisational conditions and workers' capacities, needs, culture, personal extra-job considerations that may, through perceptions and experience, influence health, work performance and job satisfaction” (International Labour Organization, 1986). Some scholars consider a job design that reduces the control that employees have over organising their own workloads contributes to poor job satisfaction and impacts negatively on the psychological climate in the workplace (Karanika-Murray, Michaelides, & Wood, 2017). These authors point out however that research on job design and employee outcomes has commonly considered job design separately from the organisational context. They argue job design needs to take into account the context specific psychological climate jobs are embedded in to achieve improved outcomes for employees such as well-being and job satisfaction.

Aspects of organisational context and the psychological climate is important for this study due to the unique job design and workplace of an academic where the introduction of a WPS has to some extent reduced control over their workloads and negatively impacted their health and well-being. Brough and Biggs (2014) explain generic measures and generic job characteristics have not always been

appropriate for studies involving academics in applied organisational research contexts as they do not reflect nuances of the operational job demands and characteristics of an academic's role. These authors argue more focus on occupation specific job characteristics can better inform the development, implementation and evaluation of workplace health interventions due to being designed with more relevance to specific occupational needs. Additionally, more focus on job specific characteristics enables more accurate theoretical explanations leading to more practical recommendations to improve employee health (Mauno, Kinnunen, Makikangas, & Feldt, 2010).

Job design at the most basic level refers to the actual structure of jobs that employees perform with a focus directly on the tasks or activities that are carried out each day (Oldham & Fried, 2016). There are also perspectives that explain job design or work design elements impact job incumbents and their job satisfaction (Karanika-Murray et al., 2017). Becker and Huselid (2010) express the importance of job design research by highlighting the centrality of work in the life of most people. Because of the important aspects discussed above it is appropriate to provide an overview of job design background in the next section.

2.5.1 Job design background

The industrial revolution in Great Britain (1760 to the middle of 1830s) and the concentration of labour produced a situation where a solution was needed for organising and managing work of large numbers of people working in factories (Parker & Wall, 1998, p. 2). Oldham and Fried (2016) chart the history of job design back to Charles Babbage (1835) and Adam Smith (1850) who proposed simplification and specialisation of jobs. Later developments in job design by Frederick Winslow Taylor created the 'scientific management' approach to determining the content of jobs in order to make them more efficient (Taylor, 1911). Taylor (1911) removed employee discretion, simplifying how tasks were done, including what was to be done, the exact time allowed for the doing, and thereby separating the planning of the work from the doing.

Oldham and Hackman (2010) discuss the seminal work by Kornhauser (1965) and Fraser (1948) who studied the negative impact of job simplification on worker psychological well-being and links to job design. Parker and Wall (1998) however point out early work was limited in that it did not address the negative effect lack of autonomy in job design had on the health of workers. As a consequence job design studies have become important and this thesis considers one aspect of job design (a WPS) to consider how it supports the health and well-being of academic employees.

The design of workload allocation systems within the industrial sector however, where jobs are more repetitive and structured and are by operational necessity (Parker, 2014) different to the time based formula design within academia. Graham (2015) compares the management of academics to the Taylorist style system and the manufacturing era, where academia is a commodified product, maximising output with the use of time and numbers. There is some argument “universities have been repositioned as key contributors to economic development within the context of the knowledge economy” (Jones, 2013, p. 75). As such scholars have suggested professionals working within knowledge intensive sectors are experiencing an emergent ‘back to the future’ trend toward ‘industrialisation’ whereby methods of working involve control through “management by numbers and other criteria from the past” (Kärreman et al., 2002, p. 70). Over 20 years ago Mintzberg (1998) claimed knowledge intensive workers have unique skills and capabilities that are difficult to adapt with a job design that standardises and measures workloads requiring an autonomous approach to undertake their workloads.

Frederick Herzberg’s ‘revolutionary’ approach to job design specified that employees needed to be motivated to work well through enriching rather than simplifying their jobs with responsibility, achievement, skill enhancement, recognition and promotion (Herzberg, 1966). This approach led to Hackman and Oldham developing the Job Characteristics Theory (JCT) (Hackman & Oldham, 1976, 1980), said to be the most widely researched and debated approach to job design for over 50 years (Ghosh, Rai, Chauhan, Gupta, & Singh, 2015). The

conceptual core of the JCT espoused people would be motivated to work well because ‘it simply felt good when they did’ (Oldham & Hackman, 2010, p. 464). Five core job characteristics comprise the JCT: skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy and job based feedback that were posited to produce ‘critical psychological states’ resulting in performance outcomes of job satisfaction, motivation, improved absenteeism and reduced turnover (Hackman & Oldham, 1980).

In later literature, Oldham and Hackman (2010) acknowledge a lack of recognition, within JCT, of the broader context of occupations, organisational culture and internal operations such as centralisation, formalisation, technology and control systems. Further, they “did not explore the possibility that certain job designs may be more appropriate in certain contexts than in others or that specific features of organisational cultural contexts shape job characteristics”(Oldham & Hackman, 2010, p. 472). Mixed and inconsistent results from studies of JCT, and a shift from manufacturing economy to a knowledge and service economy has resulted in new areas of job design research including a focus on enhancing employee well-being (Oldham & Fried, 2016; Parker, 2014) such as the focus of this thesis.

Morgeson, Dierdorff, and Hmurovic (2010, p. 352) describe an occupation “as a group of work roles spanning multiple organisations that share a similar set of work requirements, methodologies, objectives or worker requirements such as knowledge, skills and abilities”. Occupational context is the environment in which occupations are embedded requiring a different level of inquiry than the individual job level (Morgeson et al., 2010). As examples, professional sectors such as the judiciary where sentencing for certain crimes are standardised, and teaching professionals where traditionally flexibility and autonomy were exercised are now adopting bureaucratic controls incorporated into job design where organisational control is a characteristic (Davis, 2010).

A paucity of work design research from an occupational context perspective is apparent, proclaimed to be an important omission, as work context largely

influences organisational behaviour (Grant, Fried, Parker, & Frese, 2010; Johns, 2006; Parker & Wall, 1998). This study focuses on the occupational context of academia, investigating the design and implementation of a WPS and how it affects the health of academic employees. A lack of job design research in the academic context is also notable. As such this case study contributes to this shortfall and provides a platform for examining the design of an academic's work and how it is allocated, implemented and managed within the stipulations of a WPS, largely viewed by academics as not accurately reflecting the full responsibilities of their role.

There are numerous studies reporting a high level of workplace stress experienced by academic employees see for example, Chandler, Barry, and Clark (2002); Court and Kinman (2008); and Pignata et al. (2018)). Many scholars report evidence to support the existence of negative psychological health outcomes for non-academic employees as a result of high job demands (Boyd & Tuckey, 2014; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Nonetheless scholars such as Karasek (1979) with the Job-Demand Control theory and Demerouti et al. (2001) with the Job-Demand Resources theory, identify an antidote for high job demands causing poor health outcomes if there is sufficient autonomy to control the demands and resources to offset demands.

Despite the considerable work stress theories already in existence, Dollard, Tuckey, and Dormann (2011) argue, even when job demands are buffered by available job resources, other factors influence stress levels of employees such as the psychosocial safety climate (PSC). The PSC is defined by Dollard and Bakker (2010, p.90) as “shared perceptions of organisational policies and procedures developed and implemented by senior management for the protection of worker psychological health and safety” and is discussed in detail further in this Chapter (Page 65). This is an important concept for this thesis investigating a HR practice implemented by senior management at *The University* for managing workloads of academic employees and the impact it has had on academic health and well-being. As mentioned previously in this chapter, Peccei et al., 2013 point out the

relationship between HR practices, implementation and experiences of the practices. The implementation aspect of HRM practices is discussed below.

2.6 Implementation of human resource management practices

The Wright and Nishii model of SHRM (Wright & Nishii, 2007) concerns the distinction between intended HR practices designed by senior management, how those HR practices are implemented and then perceived by employees that in turn impacts their attitudes and behaviours. Effective implementation of HR practices is claimed to occur when there is a relevant fit between the HR architecture (the combination of HR systems, practices, employee competencies and behaviours) and the organisation's competitive strategy (Guest & Bos-Nehles, 2013). Organisational strategy is described by Kellner et al. (2016, p. 1242) as capturing "the competitive objectives of the firm, setting the tone for all subsequent activity and (ideally, in an aligned system) informing climate and HRM philosophy".

Woodrow and Guest (2014) claim that although there is no direct connection between implementation of HRM policies and organisational performance, poor implementation can affect the well-being of employees, increase absenteeism which in turn affects productivity and performance. However, effective implementation of HR practices requires considerable skills and abilities of those who are responsible for the implementation of them (Guest & Bos-Nehles, 2013). Yet the skills and abilities of the implementer is only one feature required in a four stage framework for effective implementation. The other stages include firstly the decision by organisations to introduce a particular HR practice, then the choice of the HR practice and the core driver behind implementing the practice (Guest & Bos-Nehles, 2013). For this reason, the focus of Study A for this thesis was about understanding the decision made by senior management and HR personnel at *The University* to introduce a WPS.

Farndale and Sanders (2017) argue the implementation of a HR process is dependent upon contextual factors of the organisation. The Implementers (line/frontline managers) of the WPS in this current case study are academic employees with management and supervisory responsibilities. Henkel (2006)

points out departmental heads are more commonly perceived as having a management identity because of responsibilities in budget and resource allocations. Winter (2009) discusses a division in academic identity resulting from a conflict in “professional and managerial work ideologies and values systems” where professional values (fit) and environment (context) can be in opposition or conflict with each other. Similarly, these opposing and potentially problematic positions were previously discussed in this chapter about the contextual HRM model of Fombrun et al. (1984) and the situational perspective of Beer et al. (1985).

Bos-Nehles, Van Riemsdijk, and Looise (2013) applied the Ability-Motivation-Opportunity (AMO) theory (Appelbaum, Bailey, Berg, & Kalleberg, 2000) to explain line managers’ effectiveness in the implementation of HR practices. Ability, defined by the Bos-Nehles et al. (2013, p. 864) study is having HRM competencies to “successfully implement HRM practices on the work floor”; motivation recognises the level of engagement by line managers to embrace their role in HRM; and opportunity for a line manager to perform HR roles includes support from HR departments, adequate time to be involved with HR implementation with clearly defined HR policies and procedures to minimise role ambiguity. Furthermore, line managers need clarity from HR departments to perform effectively in their HRM implementation role with a clear understanding of mutual expectations and responsibilities (Bos-Nehles et al., 2013).

According to the literature the HR roles of academic managers in higher education are somewhat blurred between a commitment to their profession and lack of time resulting in role ambiguity and lack of clarity and consistency depending upon their up-line manager’s preference for involvement in HR (Biron, Brun, & Ivers, 2008; Gmelch, 2004). Wright and Nishii (2013) Becker and Huselid (2006) argue if HR strategies are to be effective in practice, frontline supervisors and employees need to be involved in implementation of the strategy as well as having appropriate HR infrastructure and HR architecture to facilitate implementation. Shifting attention to employee perspectives may help illuminate some areas, not always viewed as problematic by managers, but are in fact perceived by

employees to be problematic (Nishii et al., 2008). Hence the inclusion of frontline managers and academic employees (Study B and Study C) was a key to understanding and including their perspectives for this study. As previously noted in this chapter, the research design for this thesis applied the process model of SHRM (Wright & Nishii, 2007) and is displayed at Figure 3.1 (Page 81).

Research has found evidence emphasising the positive impact middle managers and HR managers can have in reducing negative health impacts caused by corporatised business models (Noblet, Teo, McWilliams, & Rodwell, 2005). Owing to the relevance of the research context for this thesis where corporatised business models have been introduced into higher education (Berg, Huijbens, & Larsen, 2016) the role of the HR department, line/frontline managers and middle managers are explained below.

2.6.1 Roles involved in implementation of human resource management

Function of the human resources department

A review of international experiences of HRM in higher education revealed senior HRM managers are involved in developing the HR function, including recruitment and retention, workforce planning, leadership development, organisation development, performance management, employment relations and cost reduction (Dowds, 2009). Dowds suggests that HR personnel are adopting ‘business partner’ roles whereby they advise senior management teams regarding new strategies or structures and devolving more operational decision-making power to the faculty level. Australia often adopts this model with permanent location of limited HR personnel in, or dedicated to faculty heads who work with centralised HR experts to provide advice (Dowds, 2009). Bennett et al. (2017) argue the HR function has a critical role in designing and implementing role changes within academia and emphasise the importance of systematic and well communicated processes.

If supported by senior management, HR professionals are in a unique position to influence and prioritise workplace health and employee well-being agenda, through sustainable systematic approaches integrated into both the corporate

strategy and workforce requirements (CIPD, 2016). Monks et al. (2012) argue there is a lack of understanding about the underlying relationship between HR systems and HR practices. Furthermore, the presence of HR practices does not guarantee the effective implementation of such practices (Bos-Nehles & Meijerink, 2018; Wright & Nishii, 2013). Ostroff and Bowen (2016) argue employers can send messages to employees through the type of HR practice utilised and how it is conveyed to them. Research conducted in Australia found evidence emphasising the positive impact middle managers and HR managers can have in reducing negative health impacts caused by corporatised business models (Noblet et al., 2005). The authors' evidence highlighted that HR managers and middle managers have influence they can apply, such as how jobs are designed to maintain or improve how employees regard their jobs and work life balance. These are relevant points for this thesis that is examining the implementation of a WPS, often associated with poor health outcomes, whereby Deans and senior HR personnel could influence and support better outcomes if more flexibility was applied.

Line/frontline managers

The FLM role is a pivotal role in most organisations. There are numerous descriptions of the FLM role found within the academic literature, as well as variations of their role title such as; team leader, supervisor, first tier manager, first-line manager, line manager (Hales, 2005; van Baalen & Martins, 2009). Child and Partridge (1982) attribute this multiplicity of terms to the confusion regarding the FLM role description. FLM roles and responsibilities can vary from one company to another and one department to another due to differing idiosyncrasies of industries (Sims, Veres, Jackson, & Facteau, 2001). Frontline managers in academia typically supervise work allocation of academics with role titles such as Heads of School, Deputy Heads of School and Discipline Heads and often assume the term of supervisor at the Discipline Head level. They do not always have the autonomy to decide how the work is allocated but are responsible for ensuring the work allocations are carried out. Like FLMs in many sectors their responsibilities have increased while their decision-making authority has not (Hales, 2005).

The FLM role within academia can include numerous responsibilities; generally responsible for HR activities, leadership, management, scholarly activity and staff development (Sarros, Gmelch, & Tanewski, 1997; Smith, 2002). Some scholars claim the role of the FLM in higher education is misunderstood, managing within ambiguous role descriptions, and requiring a skill set to effectively manage academics in a changing and dynamic environment (Sarros et al., 1997; Smith, 2007; Smith, 2002). Invariably, FLMs in higher education are key allocators of resources and responsible for balancing teaching and research activities within their department or school (Bryman, 2007). Valverde, Ryan, and Soler (2006) claim the role of line management is to execute established policies, however managers need to be prepared, trained and supported during the implementation phase to be effective in their role otherwise employees' perceptions of the initiative can be negatively impacted (Gratton & Truss, 2003).

Literature highlights a tension between FLMs and HR departments, in part due to the increasing devolution of HR responsibilities and lack of support to implement them (Hall & Torrington, 1998; van Baalen & Martins, 2009). In the context of workplace health policy and practice, some scholars place the onus on the FLM to manage the psychosocial risks and well-being of employees (Black, 2008; Donaldson-Fielder, Yarker, & Lewis, 2011; Kompier, Cooper, & Geurts, 2000). Mellor and Webster (2013) argue there is a need for FLMs to regularly assess their own leadership style and its impact on employee well-being, while also relying on the support of workplace health specialists and the HR function to facilitate the balance between employee well-being and productivity.

Generally a gatekeeper for organisational systems and a direct contact for frontline employees (Kidd & Smewing, 2001; Townsend & Russell, 2013), FLMs are also often considered a catalyst in facilitating organisational change programs (Franken, Edwards, & Lambert, 2009; Neves, 2011; Renwick & MacNeil, 2002). Whitchurch and Gordon (2013) found FLMs in higher education are experiencing a 'meat in the sandwich' situation. Required to fulfil organisational or 'top down' pressures for greater use of resources and 'bottom up' challenges emanating from

academic employees experiencing work related stress thereby requiring more management skills and additional time.

Middle managers

Research on HR devolution has primarily been focussed with the FLM (Bos-Nehles et al., 2013; Purcell & Hutchinson, 2007). Floyd (2016) claims research on academic middle management is sparse concerning how they are supported in their roles. There are often several layers of management with line management and HR responsibilities such as middle management roles, often who have ambiguous levels of hierarchy (Op de Beeck, Wynen, & Hondeghem, 2018; Winter, 2009). The nature of the Head of School role in higher education can vary depending on the school culture and different experiences and skills they bring to the role, often from an academic role (Floyd, 2016). More generally middle managers often have responsibility for mediating, negotiating and interpreting the organisation's strategic and operational intentions to frontline employees (Floyd, 1997).

Middle managers are closer in the hierarchy to senior management and HR personnel and associated HR issues, often being privy to decisions about the intention of HR practices they are required to implement (Op de Beeck et al., 2018). Due to their relative power position, employees in leadership position, such as middle management, are prominent role models (Allen, 2002). This same author argues a leader's engagement in employee health and well-being reflects the organization's attitude towards them and enhances the psychological climate for health. Therefore in this study, middle managers are considered to have an important role in sending messages about how health and well-being through appropriate workload allocation systems designed to capture context specific job characteristics.

There are studies that have examined the workplace health responsibilities of FLMs and supervisors in the construction industry (Townsend, Loudoun, & Markwell, 2016), and the retail sector (Carmichael, Fenton, Pinilla-Roncancio, Sing, & Sadhra, 2016). Yet the literature is scant on how middle management

roles within the higher education sector approach their workplace health responsibilities. A workplace health focus appears to be neglected in management roles in higher education where the environment has become increasingly bureaucratic, arguably requiring strong leadership skills (de Boer et al., 2010; Smith, 2002; Whitchurch, 2004). There is evidence that managers and leaders generally in Australia and overseas, lack access to the training required to equip them with the skills to confidently manage the increasing incidence of declining employee workplace health (Rolfe et al., 2006; Shann, Martin, & Chester, 2014; Winefield et al., 2008a).

Nöhammer, Schusterschitz, and Stummer (2013) argue previous research has not taken into account employee's perspectives when developing or identifying a suitable theoretical approach to managing workplace health. Typically, decisions are often made based on employers' opinions thereby missing perspectives of the intended target group (Nöhammer et al., 2013). Hence by including academic employees as part of the data source for this study will enlarge the knowledge base regarding the use of a WPS as a mechanism for managing workplace health. There are also several studies recommending management of higher education institutions address issues relating to psychosocial risks for academic employees including considering new strategies to address the well-being of employees (Opstrup & Pihl-Thingvad, 2016; Pignata et al., 2018). Therefore, the findings from previously unexplored avenues within the workplace health purview provides an opportunity for this study to focus directly on the workplace health of academic employees, an issue highlighted as a persistent problem within the higher education sector. Role theory and the associated constructs of role conflict, role ambiguity and role clarity as relevant to the unique nature of an academic's job design are discussed in the next section.

2.7 Role theory

Role theory provides the basis for an understanding about the multiple roles employees play inside and outside the workplace and how interpretations and expectations around those roles impact individual employees and organisational outcomes (Lee, Townsend, Troth, & Loudoun, 2019). Role conflict and role

ambiguity (explained further below) are common causes of anxiety for employees at work and can have a negative impact on organisational outcomes (Rizzo, House, & Lirtzman, 1970).

Role conflict and role ambiguity

This brief section provides an overview of these concepts as relevant to this thesis. Role conflict occurs when “expectations associated with multiple roles are incompatible” (Kahn & Fellows, 2013, p. 672). Role conflict has also been identified as contributing to stress in the workplace (Pomaki, Supeli, & Verhoeven, 2007). The academic profession has been linked to workplace stress where research has found the professoriate employees had a high risk level of stress due to role conflict and a medium risk for role ambiguity (Biron et al., 2008).

As previously noted the academic job design by nature has three competing role components (research, teaching and service) all requiring different skills sets and application. Additional to the academic responsibilities, academic managers (line/frontline managers) experience role conflict and ambiguity between their academic role and their management role (Hutchinson & Purcell, 2010; Townsend, Wilkinson, & Kellner, 2015). There is also an argument, line/frontline managers require the support of senior management (Bos-Nehles & Meijerink, 2018) and to have opportunities to perform their roles effectively, including the skills and motivation to do so whereby one factor (management responsibilities) affects the other (academic responsibilities) (Bos-Nehles et al., 2013).

Role conflict can also arise when individuals are faced with inconsistent or incompatible demands (Rizzo et al., 1970) and Katz and Kahn (1978, p. 204) define role conflict as “simultaneous occurrence of two or more role expectations such that compliance with one would make compliance with the other more difficult”. Studies have shown that role conflict and role ambiguity should be minimised by organisations due to the potential negative impact on the health and job satisfaction that in turn affects commitment and performance of employees (Ebbers & Wijnberg, 2017; Jackson & Schuler, 1985).

Role ambiguity is a lack of clarity about task and responsibilities and occurs when there is insufficient information provided or made accessible to employees. To avoid role ambiguity Rizzo et al. (1970) state all positions in formal organisations should have a specific role statement outlining tasks and responsibilities. This way, employees understand what is expected of them in their day to day role enabling to perform efficiently and effectively (Caplan & Jones, 1975).

Role clarity

(Langford, 2010) found high levels of role clarity amongst academic employees, however it was suggested this outcome may have been in response to an upper level clarity about the three components of an academic role such as the research, teaching and service that are unambiguous for academics. Whereas, when employees with line/frontline management roles have role clarity about expectations, the more effective they will be in performing their roles. This requires policies and procedures to be clearly communicated to enable full understanding of their responsibilities (Lowe, 1992).

Lack of clarity in line/frontline management roles can result in two outcomes as argued by (Guest & Bos-Nehles, 2013); either inconsistency in implementation of HR practices for example, leading to situations where employees can perceive inequitable or favoured employees; or the line manager adhering strictly to policy and practice thereby losing flexibility and mutual benefits for employees and the organisation. Related to role theory is the notion of identity and academic identity, explained briefly below in the context of this research topic.

2.8 Identity theory

Identity theory was inspired by Mead (1934) whose fundamental emphasis was on “understanding and explaining human social behaviour and interaction” from two dimensions (Burke & Stryker, 2016, p. 2). Stryker, Serpe, and Hunt (2005) explain the two dimensions. The first is the relationship between identities and social or external structures (such as cultural, education related or family). The second is perceptual or the “internal subjective processes within the minds of human beings”. Sveningsson and Alvesson (2003) argue an alternative view of

identity dimensions and include organisational, professional, social and individual identities.

Sveningsson and Alvesson (2003, p. 1163) highlight how identity is central and complex taking account “meaning and motivation, commitment, loyalty, logics of action and decision-making, stability and change, leadership, group and intergroup relations and organisational collaborations”. Social identity theory supports the notion that a person’s belief they belong to a social category or group is their social identity (Hogg & Abrams, 1988). Stets and Burke (2000, p. 225) explain this notion further whereby “a social group is a set of individuals who hold a common social identification or view themselves as members of the same category”. As argued by Neary and Winn (2016) the research interest of academic identity lies in the nature of academic work and how academic’s apply an intrinsic motivation to their profession. How the changing nature of academia is said to have obstructed the traditional academic identity and how academics see their roles in a corporatised landscape is briefly outlined below.

Academic identity

Traditionally synonymous with the values of self-regulation, collegiality and high standards of intellectual endeavour these attributes have been challenged by a managerial culture, corporate efficiencies and a focus on productivity outcomes (Winter, 2009). It is therefore the changing nature of academic work and relational impacts on academic employees that has contributed to increasing interest in research investigating academic identity (Billot & King, 2015; Clegg, 2008). There is an increasing argument about the ‘multiple identities’ of academics due to increased pressures with competing commitments such teaching, leadership, knowledge exchange and research activity (Boyd & Smith, 2014).

Archer (2008, p. 385) sought to understand academic identity from a generational perspective, whereby the traditional ‘authentic’ and/or ‘successful’ academic identity is a conflicting aspiration, a desired yet refused identity for many younger academics, who she argues “must negotiate on a daily basis not only their attempts at becoming, but also the threat of unbecoming”. While this study does

not focus on specific generations of academics, it investigates how a WPS can support better health outcomes for academic employees in general. Therefore understanding how a theory or theories can support this phenomenon is discussed in the next section.

2.9 Work stress theories

Within the workplace health literature there are number of widely accepted theories. These include the Job Demands-Control Model (Karasek, 1979), Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) framework (Demerouti et al., 2001) and Effort-Reward Imbalance Model (Siegrist, 1996). It is proclaimed these commonly used workplace health theories focus mainly on generic work characteristics (Dollard et al., 2012). Brough and Biggs (2015) have previously advocated the value in assessing occupation specific as well as generic job demands when evaluating health and well-being for employees. Caponecchia (2016) claims the workplace health of employees is best served through work and organisational design including HRM policies, supervisory practices and the design of systems and structures where employees have control, clear role and responsibility clarity and consultative processes about task completion within achievable times. Four theories are presented below to demonstrate how the choice to adopt the PSC theory to guide the research for this thesis was made.

Table 2.1 Relevant work stress theories overview

Theory	Key Premises	Key relevance to thesis
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Job-Demands Resources (J-DR) (Bakker & Demerouti 2001) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Links stressors (demands and resources) to health problems and positive work behavior 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apply to a wide range of occupations Generic application
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Job-Demands Control (J-DC) (Karasek & Theorell 1990) (Organisational Psychology) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of job control links to negative health outcomes for employees and organisations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Generic measures of work characteristics seldom meet the requirements of academics or organizational stakeholders in applied organisational research contexts (Brough & Biggs, 2014)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effort-Reward Imbalance (ERI) (Siegrist 1996) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Job strain results from imbalance between effort and reward 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Simple model does not reflect complex reality of organisations of today Autonomy and job control lacking in model
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Psychosocial safety climate (an extension of J-DR) (Dollard & Bailey, 2014) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Specific aspect of organizational climate Philosophy, values and actions of senior management Extension of J-DR (explains origins of job demands and resources (antecedent)) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organisation and occupation specific context (Brough & Biggs, 2014) Multi-level constructs result in better understanding of psychological phenomena unfolding within organisations (Bakker & Demerouti, 2011)

2.9.1 Psychosocial safety climate theory

The PSC is a specific aspect of organisational climate and proposed as an antecedent to the workplace environment, averting psychosocial risks such as poor job design, work pressures, poor communication or voice channels and low job control; factors often stemming from the priorities of senior management (Dollard & Bakker, 2010). According to Hall, Dollard, Winefield, Dormann, and Bakker (2013) a positive PSC in its antecedent capacity, is a broadly useful resource that can provide support to employees in a variety of ways pertaining to individual coping needs such as autonomy, job control and/or social support. Organisational climate research in the past has been a broad construct and sometimes considered inadequate due to its lack of specificity in predicting outcomes (Carr, Schmidt, Ford, & DeShon, 2003). However, Bowen and Ostroff (2004) suggest organisational climate is an important construct, impacting attitudes and behaviours of employees, and therefore related to HR practices and how they are managed and ultimately perceived as a strong HR climate.

The PSC theory builds on a safety climate theory which has a long history as the main theory guiding research on accidents and physical injuries in the workplace (Zohar, 1980). Yet PSC is a different aspect of safety climate due to its specific focus on psychosocial stressors and psychological health as opposed to physical health hazards (Dollard et al., 2011). The safety specific facet of organisational climate was introduced by Zohar (1980) with a focus on physical health and safety within industrial organisations. Zohar (1980, p. 96) proposed “any given organization creates a number of different climates, and the term organizational climate has to be supplemented by an appropriate adjective indicating which type of climate it is”. Zohar’s construct is well known and has been applied to identify employees’ perceptions of management’s commitment and performance pertaining to safety policy, procedures and practices including industry sector accidents and individual worker safety behaviours. See for examples: Nielsen (2014) and Cooper and Phillips (2004).

Dollard and Bakker (2010) have incorporated a more specific approach to the climate construct with their PSC theory and a unique focus on the climate for

psychosocial health and safety they propose precedes general workplace conditions such as job demands and resources. The authors claim two defined research areas have emerged with the safety climate focus remaining on physical health outcomes and the PSC concerning psychosocial risk factors and psychological health outcomes. The importance of a psychosocially safe workplace is endorsed by international scholars in occupational health psychology as a valuable construct for understanding the influencing factors for employee well-being (Guest, 2017; Peccei et al., 2013). While the PSC concept is a more recent construct, it is developing as a credible basis and work health theoretical guide having been used to develop evidence based guidelines for Safe Work Australia's, *Australian Workplace Barometer Project* investigating the psychosocial safety climate and worker health in Australia (Dollard et al., 2012; Dollard & Bailey, 2014).

Empirical evidence highlights, that by applying the PSC theory to research enables workplace stressors to be addressed by focussing on job demands and job resources within specific contexts (Dollard et al., 2012). The competitive and growing higher education sector has become known for increasing workloads and inadequate resourcing having an impact on health of academic employees and how they perform their roles (Houston et al., 2006; Kenny, 2016; Lyons & Ingersoll, 2010). Strazdins et al. (2016) for example, argue sufficient time is a necessary resource required for good health. However, sufficient time for research activity has been identified in the literature as an unavailable resource for many academics due to teaching demands and administrative activities taking precedence. There is evidence this lack of time for researching in standard work time often results in academics researching in their personal time (Langford, 2010) and impacts on work-life balance and poor health outcomes (Reichwein & Gow, 2013). This is important to consider for this study investigating how the WPS that allocates work and time for academic employees can support their health and well-being.

The PSC theory (Figure 2.1) incorporates the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Demerouti et al., 2001) linking factors associated with job design and workplace stress categorising them into job demands and job resources. The notion posits high demands result in psychological ill health and adequate resources result in positive organisational outcomes (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Commonly, job demands are recognised as indicators of poor employee health while resources tend to be associated with work engagement and job satisfaction (Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Demerouti, & Schaufeli, 2007). Autonomy, for example is a job resource argued by Hackman and Oldham (1976) to be a motivator in their job characteristics model. Hobfoll's Theory of Conservation of Resources argues that "prime human motivation is directed towards the maintenance and accumulation of resources" and "that resource loss is the principal ingredient in the stress process" (Hobfoll, 2001, p. 337).

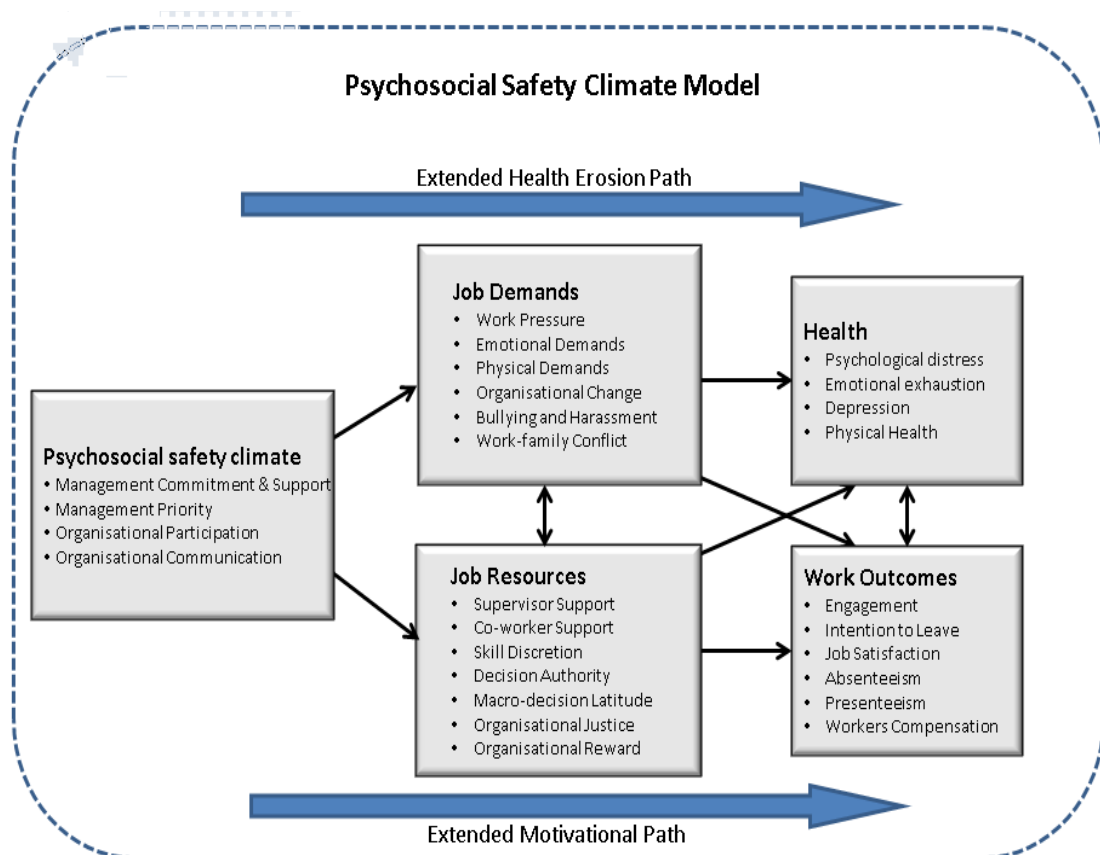


Figure 2.1: Psychosocial Safety Climate Model adapted from Dollard and McTernan (2011) for Safe Work Australia's Australian Workplace Barometer project (Dollard et al., 2012)

There are four main theoretical domains of the PSC theory (sometimes referred to as pillars) developed by Hall, Dollard, and Coward (2010) presented below and depicted in the diagrammatical model at *Figure 2.1* as preceding operational issues:

1. Management commitment and support (e.g. senior management act decisively when a concern of an employee's psychological status is raised).
2. Management priority (e.g. senior management considers employee psychological health to be as important as productivity)
3. Organisational communication (e.g. there are good communication channels supporting psychological safety issues).
4. Organisational participation (e.g. employees are encouraged to become involved in psychological safety matters).

JD-R model considers the impact job demands, such as work pressure and emotional demands, and job resources such as job control and remuneration for example, have on health and engagement via two psychological process pathways (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Whereby negative health outcomes result from continued high job demands that impact on worker's energy reserves whereas adequate resources result in engagement and positive outcomes for the organisation.

Application of the PSC theory enables the psychosocial safety climate within the research context for this study to be examined. Additionally, it will enable understanding of senior management's commitment and priorities to a psychologically safe workplace through the use of the HR practice of a WPS, taking into account specific job demands and job resources of an academic's role.

An organisational PSC is affected by external factors such as globalisation and national issues including government policies and legislation that can contribute to a change in labour markets, work intensification and job insecurity for employees (Dollard, Shimazu, Nordin, Brough, & Tuckey, 2014, p. 8). The higher

education sector has not been spared from the impacts of these external dynamics with ongoing dialogue from within the academic profession and unions about increasing working hours and work pressure due to a more corporatised environment. This thesis provides an opportunity and a platform to examine the PSC theory application within an Australian higher education context as an alternative to other workplace health theories. To date, quantitative research using the PSC theoretical premise focussed on a cross section of industries in Australia and overseas, including policing, nursing, motor vehicle industry with development of theory largely stemming from there.

It is important to understand how it applies in a different industry, such as the higher education sector where job demands are unique. Further there is limited published qualitative, exploratory a posteriori studies applying the PSC theoretical model with the exceptions of Zinsser and Zinsser (2016), Kwan, Tuckey, and Dollard (2016) and Potter, Bailey, and Dollard (2019) at the time of writing. Additionally it should be noted that the application of the PSC theoretical model did not fully predict findings in a study investigating retention among the social work profession where work engagement, job satisfaction and organisational commitment were measured. The PSC model could not provide an explanation for work engagement or organisational commitment and the retention of social workers (Geisler, Berthelsen & Muhonen, 2019). Also, Garrick et al (2014) propose PSC as a moderator of job demands and job resources as opposed to an antecedent as argued by Dollard & Bakker (2010).

In the past psychological health has received less focus in organisational settings than physical safety and the PSC theory addresses a significant theory gap within the work stress and safety climate literature by connecting occupational health and safety with occupational health psychology literature (Dollard et al., 2011). As such, the PSC theory is a way forward for social science theory within the workplace stress literature (Dollard & McTernan, 2011). The anticipated contribution to theory for this study is based on literature that argues workplace health theories are limited due to their generic applicability across a wide spectrum of organisations, roles and contexts (Cox & Griffiths, 2010).

While the PSC theory is diagrammatically depicted at Figure 2.1 reflecting workplace variables identified in the Workplace Barometer project, a modified model is presented at Figure 2.2 illustrating examples of context and occupation specific variables within a higher education context. The WPS is displayed as an effective system incorporated into Figure 2.2 and is proposed as a mutually positive outcome for employees and *The University*. A direct and integral link between job satisfaction and improved employee health and well-being is proposed as an additional outcome for *The University*.

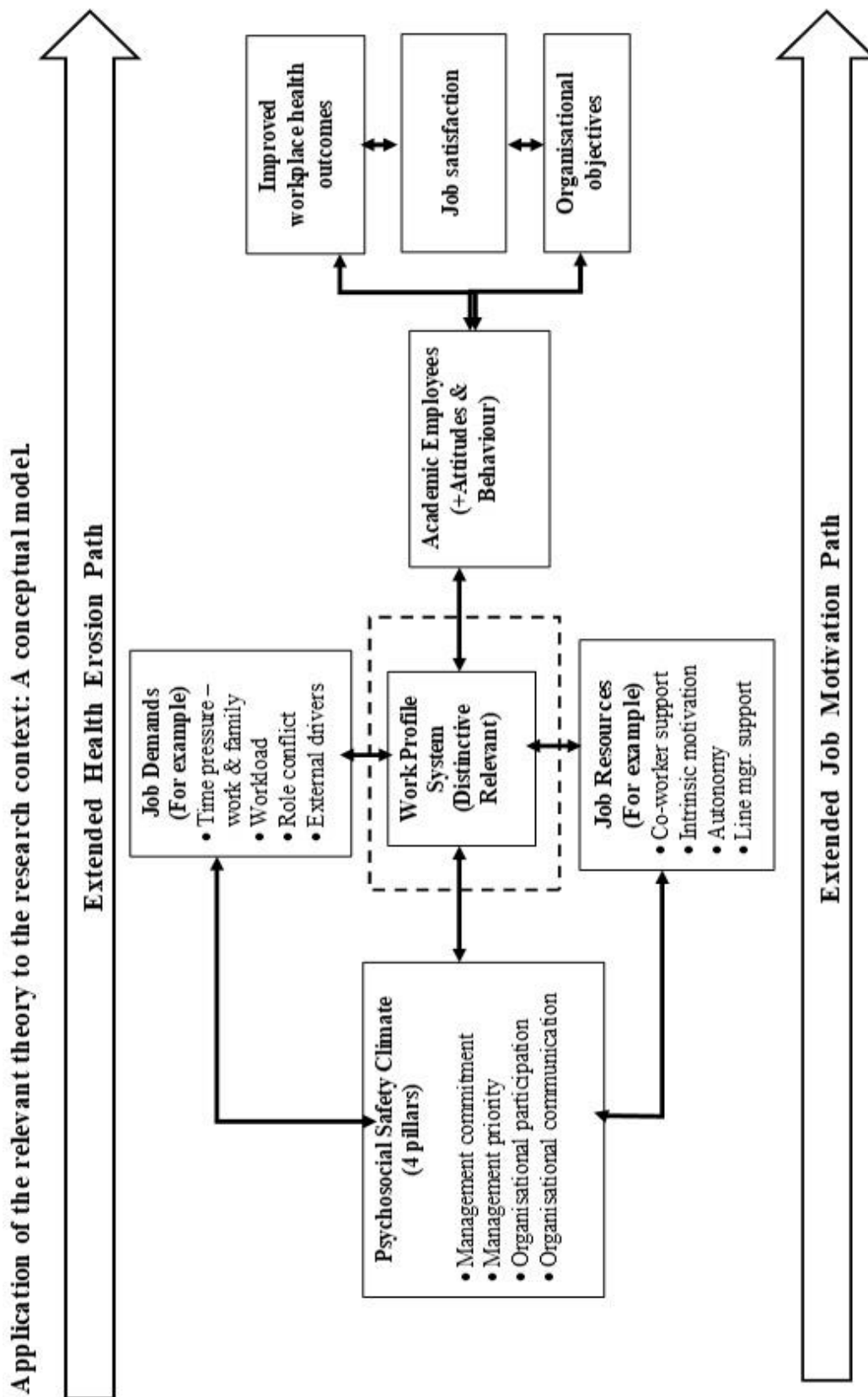


Figure 2.2: WPS is an additional component to the PSC theoretical model, displayed as an effective mechanism contributing to improved employee health and well-being, job satisfaction and achieving organisational objectives.

The four theoretical domains of the PSC Theory were used as a guide for developing research questions for this thesis and are presented below for each of the three studies undertaken.

2.10 Research questions

Evidence illustrates there are problems within the higher education sector regarding the workplace health of academic employees. The introduction of corporatised business imperatives is said to have increased workloads often not offset sufficiently by resources. Formal systems for allocating workloads are used in most universities, however evidence highlights there is dissatisfaction by many academics regarding their design, application and suitability. How the work allocation systems can be utilised as a mechanism to manage the workplace health of academic employees is an under researched area despite legal and ethical responsibility to do so. This study is designed to examine this phenomenon; the following questions are proposed first presenting the overarching research question:

RQ. How can a work profile system support workplace health and well-being of academic employees?

Sub-research questions:

Study A: Designers

- A1) How did workplace health of academic employees feature in the policy designers' decision-making when introducing WPS?
- A2) How effective do strategic managers/HR personnel perceive the work profile system to be in supporting the workplace health of academic employees?

Study B: Implementers (Line/frontline managers):

- B1) How do implementers perceive the work profile system supports the workplace well-being of academic employees?
- B2) How do implementers perceive their role in workplace well-being of academic employees?

Study C: Experiencers (academic employees):

- C1) How do academic employees perceive the work profile system to be an effective resource to manage their workloads?
- C2) How do academic employees perceive the work profile system supports their workplace well-being?

2.11 Summary

The chapter began with explaining the importance a healthy workforce for organisations and associated costs if employee health is not factored into key management practices. The literature review highlighted several areas where there is opportunity for further investigation about the management of workplace health through integration of a HRM and workplace health lens. While literature supports an association between HR practices and workplace health and well-being it was identified opportunity exists to further explore the relationship between intention of HR practices, the implementation of HR practices and employee experiences thereof (Peccei et al., 2013; Wright & Nishii, 2013).

Importantly this Chapter presented literature to support this research aiming to understand how a WPS can support better health outcomes of academic employees. Largely society and governments hold trust in the traditional academic institutions where the transfer of knowledge and solutions to world health, engineering, business and societal problems contribute to national policy decisions. The continued demand for knowledge and qualifications sought from higher education is evident by the significant economic contribution universities make to national revenues. As discussed in Section 2.8 of this Chapter there are claims that the new public management approach to operating universities is challenging the traditional academic identity (Kenny, 2018) and associated values such as self-regulation, collegiality and ethical standards of intellectual endeavour (Winter, 2009).

The job design of an academic is unique with competing components (research, teaching and service) requiring different skill sets and by consequence multiple identities (Boyd & Smith, 2014). Yet, it is argued by Mauno et al (2010) when

there is a sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration and challenge in relation to one's work there is a strong dedication to, and identification with that work. Despite external drivers that have contributed to a corporatised culture within academia, there is an argument that intrinsic motivation is a primary driver within the academic profession to maintain these traditional values (Kenny, 2018).

Opportunity was also identified within the literature to further examine workload ambiguity in academia. When there is a lack of clarity about management expectations of work outputs, academics can work excessive hours resulting in poor health outcomes (Papadopoulos, 2017). Other aspects of HR practices including relevant fit of HR practices, context, organisational justice and job design were highlighted as factors that can have a negative impact on the workplace health of employees and therefore relevant to be considered as part of this thesis. Several work stress theories were discussed. However, two theoretical guides were identified from the literature to be suitable guides for this research. Firstly applying the process model of strategic HRM supports the research design whereby a clearer understanding can be achieved through understanding the relationships between design, implementation and experiences of HR practices. Additionally drawing on the significance of the PSC theory, this qualitative case study provides an opportunity for it to be applied within the higher education context to support and guide the study. The chapter also presented the research questions for each of the three studies. The next chapter discusses the choice of research paradigm and research design used to answer the research questions. Data sample, access, collection and analysis process are outlined. Ethical considerations, limitations and contributions to theory and practice are also explained followed by a conclusion.

CHAPTER THREE: Methodology

3.0 Introduction

The previous chapter discussed the landscape of literature reviewed for this thesis. Notably the review identified a lack of research undertaken about HRM practices specifically relevant to the higher education sector. This is an important absence in the literature due to the broad spectrum of existing studies and reports about increasing academic workloads, the HRM systems utilised for managing their workloads and poor workplace health outcomes of academic employees. This chapter explains the methodological process undertaken to explore the research questions relevant to the thesis as outlined in Chapter Two. Specifically, the chapter begins by presenting opposing philosophical research foundations, justifying the choice of an interpretivist paradigm, inductive theoretical direction and qualitative methodology. Thereafter, the research design is presented explaining the case study approach for the research, data collection processes, data analysis and ethical considerations. Finally research limitations are presented along with strategies to minimise their impact on the validity of the findings.

3.1 Philosophical foundations of research

This study aims to build knowledge and understanding about the HRM practice of the work profile system (WPS) operating within a large Australian university (*The University*) and how it can be used to support workplace health and well-being of

academic employees. The opposing philosophies (or paradigms) of interpretivism and positivism are contrasting methodological approaches (qualitative and quantitative). The interpretivism paradigm is concerned with the epistemology, or the nature of knowledge, developing new knowledge and inductively contributing to existing theory (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Positivism is about the ontology, or nature of reality. Mackenzie and Knipe (2006, p. 194) discuss the importance of choosing a paradigm stating “without nominating a paradigm as the first step, there is no basis for subsequent choices regarding methodology, methods, literature or research design”. Therefore the choice of paradigm for this study is the initial consideration of this chapter.

Paradigms are most commonly explained in the literature as philosophical worldviews, a theoretical framework or a family of philosophical frameworks that influence the research direction and research design (Creswell, 2007, 2014; Glesne, 2016; Sarantakos, 2005). Some scholars claim these statements about qualitative and quantitative methodologies and paradigm comparisons are oversimplified and argue choosing the research approach is complex, dependent upon the context of the research topic and the natural disposition and reflexive approach of the researcher (Morgan & Smircich, 1980; Mortari, 2015; Tracy, 2013). This section explains and justifies the process undertaken for choosing an interpretative paradigm and qualitative methodology for this study.

3.1.1 Justification of philosophical research approach

This study focussed on obtaining the views and perceptions of participants with first-hand knowledge and understandings about the research phenomenon. A number of factors were considered when choosing the paradigm and methodology including a review of paradigm and methodology literature as well as consideration of the epistemological preference of the researcher. The Interpretivism paradigm supports eliciting subjective views from study participants about their worlds and the events they have experienced or observed (Creswell, 2014). Conversely the positivism paradigm supports starting from knowledge or theories that already exist (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Rossman &

Rallis, 2003). Descriptions of the roles of the interpretivist and positivist researcher also differ in how they apply their own epistemological and ontological preference (Johnson & Duberley, 2003).

The qualitative researcher becomes the research instrument, collecting and recording the data thereafter analysing and interpreting observations and identifying themes (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). This dual role requires the researcher to adopt a reflexive approach to avoid a biased perspective and ensure that the validity of data interpretation is through the lens of the participants and not from their own lens (Holloway, Brown, & Shipway, 2010). The process of reflexivity can be utilised as a transparent and legitimising tool for qualitative inquiry (Mortari, 2015). On the other hand, the positivist researcher collects large volumes of data in the form of statistics that can be measured and deductively analysed for meanings and hypothesis testing gained from already existing knowledge and theory (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Tracy, 2013). Quantitative data is also more likely to be considered generalisable across communities and cultures (Neuman, 2014).

The qualitative findings from this study are constructed through interpretation of social interaction, unique to the research context (in this case academia) and the research phenomenon (Cunliffe, 2003). Three levels of inquiry were undertaken for this thesis and incorporated into three related studies: Study A, B and C. Participants representing senior management/HR personnel from the higher education sector Study A, implementers of the WPS (Study B) and academic employees (Study C) were interviewed to understand their firsthand experiences and perceptions. Thereby further justifying why the positivism approach was not considered appropriate for this inductive research. An epistemology of conducting research among people to gain a rich understanding of the research phenomena was advocated as the most suitable for this research (Rossman & Rallis, 2003; Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2007). As a result of the aforementioned consideration of factors an interpretivist paradigm using qualitative methodology within an embedded case study was considered to be the most appropriate

research design for the study (Creswell, 2007; Rubin & Rubin, 1995). The research design and case study approach is described in the next section.

3.2 Research design

This section of the thesis explains the choice of a case study approach as the strategy for eliciting rich layers of data from participants for this research. Findings obtained from case studies can evolve through an interlinking of combined sources of data (Cassell, 2009) as is demonstrated in the next section.

3.2.1 Case study approach

Yin (2013, p. 321) describes a classic case study as consisting “of an in-depth inquiry into specific and complex phenomenon set within its real world context”. A case study approach facilitates an understanding of the phenomenon in its natural context from the perspectives of participants (Creswell, 2007). Additionally, Yin (2009, p. 4) states case studies allow the “how and why” of social phenomena to be better explained. This thesis is an embedded case (Yin, 2013) that allowed cross examination of multiple perspectives of participants exploring the phenomenon of the WPS and how its application can support workplace health and well-being of academic employees. Therefore a case study design is consistent with the philosophical paradigm shaping this research.

The primary method of collecting data for case studies is undertaking interviews (Yin, 2009, p. 106), where the researcher becomes the data collection instrument (Punch, 2006; Rubin & Rubin, 1995). The data from the three studies primarily comprised the experiences and perceptions of informants from *The University*. A semi-structured interview process was the primary data collection process using an interview protocol as a guide. An interview protocol provides a framework for the researcher to draw from. It is not a structured protocol yet still allows specific questions to be addressed (King, 2004; Yin, 2012) as well as adjusting to informant responses that address more than one question as often occurred throughout the interview process for this study. Accordingly three interview protocols were formulated specifically for the different perspectives of participants (Appendices A, B, C). The data collection process is outlined in the

next section including data access, data sample, semi-structured interviews as the research method, other data sources and data saturation.

3.3 Data collection

Data were collected for this study via semi-structured interviews and organisational documents including Minutes of enterprise bargaining meetings, publicly available enterprise agreements and strategy documents. The use of multiple sources of evidence for case study data collection, generating convergent lines of inquiry supports validation of data in the analysis process (Yin, 1994). Data collection began in September 2017 and continued through to February 2018. As discussed in the next section there were obstacles and delays experienced in obtaining access to employees at *The University* resulting in considerable delays in commencing the research. Drawing on lessons learned about negotiating access to data (Cafferkey, 2018) it is important to understand access is a complicated process for researchers and gaining access, staying in the organisation and achieving valuable data is not always an easy part of the process. Achieving data access for this study provided a challenge as explained below.

3.3.1 Data access

Organisations are dynamic and complex environments and requests to collect data from employees can sometimes be viewed suspiciously, particularly if the research topic is perceived as sensitive in any way or is perceived to be questioning of management's decision making (Okumus, Altinay, & Roper, 2007). While this was not deemed to be the case for this study, the topic of work allocation in the higher education sector is considered to be at least topical, if not sensitive. A purpose statement was prepared to accompany the request for access approval explaining the importance of the research, including methods of data collection and estimated time commitment required from participants (Creswell, 2014; Locke, Silverman, & Spirduso, 2014).

Generally, access to organisations to obtain data for qualitative research can be a time consuming activity for researchers when there are unclear processes or pathways to the 'approver', as was the case for this study. A series of

unsuccessful attempts to gain approval, due to multiple gate keepers, resulted in nearly twelve weeks delay. Eventually formal written approval was received and the process of contacting participants directly via email began immediately. Data sampling for the study is described below.

3.3.2 Data sample

The sampling strategy for the case study was based on obtaining multiple perspectives of participants, a notion supported in qualitative research (Yin, 2013). Overall participants for the study were selected through a stratified purposive sampling strategy typically used in exploratory qualitative research (Punch, 2006). However, Neuman (2014) argues, generalisation from a population selected through purposive sampling is difficult to achieve. This is acknowledged in Section 3.6 of this Chapter and in Section 7.7 of Chapter Seven as a limitation for this study. However purposive sampling allows the researcher to obtain and compare information from specific target groups which was a primary objective in this study because a deeper understanding of the research problem is attained when there are various levels and layers of comparable data sources (Ramsay et al., 2016). Fifty-two interviews across three studies were conducted for this research.

Participant groups forming the data sample consisted of senior management/HR personnel with knowledge of the intention and design of the WPS (Study A), managers with current implementation responsibilities of the WPS (Study B) and current academic employees (Study C) at *The University*. All participants were recruited on a voluntary basis. Study A participants consisted of past and present employee, sector and employee representatives. The inclusion criteria for participants stipulated that all participants from Study B and Study C had full time tenured employment with *The University* and across all academic levels from lecturers to professors. A decision was made to exclude participants who did not have full time tenured employment status to ensure consistency of data analysis.

Using the process model of SHRM (Wright & Nishii, 2007), participants were categorised into three groups enabling an understanding to be gained between the different levels of data analysis. For example, the differences between intended HR practices (senior management level) and employee level outcomes after implementation. As this model's purpose is to identify variation in the HRM/performance relationship, and as the aim of this research was not to directly investigate HRM/performance relationship, the process model of SHRM was not intended to be used exhaustively as a data analysis framework but rather as a useful multi-level linking guide for three levels of data sources.

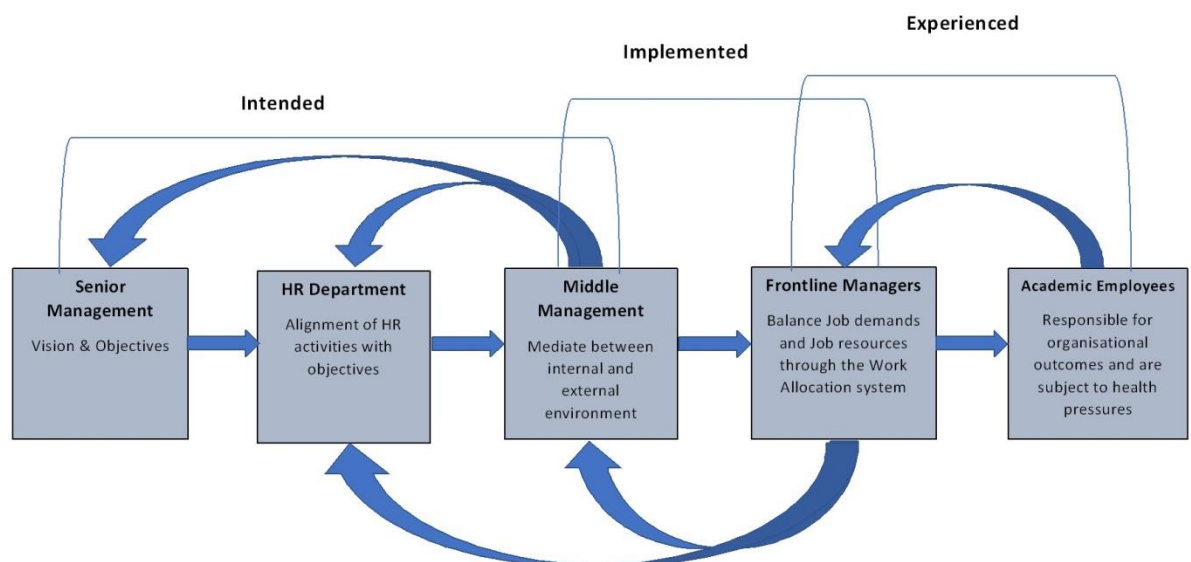


Figure 3.1: A depiction of mediating relationships and multiple levels of analysis undertaken in examining different perspectives of stakeholders at The University: Adapted from the process model of SHRM (Wright & Nishii, 2007)

Study A - Designers

Eleven study participants comprised representatives from *The University's* senior management, human resource (HR) department, Australian Higher Education Industry Association (AHEIA), National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU), and past and present senior academic employees. Participants also included former managerial employees and employee representatives who were involved in initial design and implementation of the WPS system to further inform the study.

A further three interviews were conducted with representatives of work health and safety committees at *The University* who were asked to provide their insight into work health and safety priorities and processes of those committees. These data sources were deemed to provide a source of information regarding frequency; perceived priority of workload allocations and associated workplace health issues given on the meeting agendas; and what influence the representatives perceived their roles to have on those committees when representing workload related health concerns of academic employees. Chapter Four Section 4.3.5 (Page 110) provides an understanding of the representative's roles and responsibilities in workplace health and safety relevant for this thesis.

Study B - Implementers

Twenty participants were interviewed to gain the perspectives of those tasked with responsibility of implementing the WPS and were categorised as line and frontline managers for this study as well as supervisors who were Discipline Heads. The group consisted of Heads of Schools (HOS), Deputy Heads of School (Learning & Teaching) and Discipline Heads from three diverse faculties. Different levels of responsibilities and autonomy for work allocation were revealed in the interviews. Participants had different levels of seniority and experience as a FLM thus providing a cross section of views about challenges and opportunities in implementing the WPS.

Study C - Experiencers

Eighteen academic employees were interviewed at multiple campus settings from three faculties comprising seven female and eleven male participants. Fourteen were employed at either Level B or Level C status and four had associate professorship status. Career stage of participants ranged from early careers through to enduring academic careers of up to 35 years. During the time waiting for formal access to be approved, informal interviews were initiated by the researcher with representatives from the HR department and senior academics who had expressed support for, and interest in the study. These meetings assisted in ascertaining the level of interest and an insight into the research phenomenon within the research context.

Additionally the HR representatives were able to suggest names of previous employees and potential participants who had since left the organisation. This was important information because it enabled credible substantiation about their involvement in the original design and introduction of the WPS at *The University*. Without this information, sourcing of participants for Study A would have been more difficult. Generally participants for Study A proved difficult to enlist as a significant amount of time had elapsed from the original design and introduction of the WPS to the point in time the research for this thesis was conducted. This is also noted as a limitation in Section 3.6 of this Chapter and Chapter 7 (Section 7.7).

Following formal approval to proceed with data collection, a process of emailing individual letters of invitation to prospective participants was undertaken. An interim list of potential participants for Study B and Study C was prepared by the researcher and used to systematically invite participation. The list was prepared by reviewing online telephone staffing lists of targeted faculties and departments. Attempts to obtain detailed faculty or departmental organisational charts from the HR department and several school secretaries were unsuccessful. This transpired to be for a number of reasons, explained by HR personnel as organisational reviews and departmental amalgamations where incumbency of roles was uncertain. The staff telephone listing provided the most current status of employees and their incumbent roles at that point in time. Detail about the semi-structured interview process is provided below.

3.3.3 Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews facilitate a participant's active role in constructing the nature of the interview and direction it can take (King, 2004). Data was collected through a stratified purposive sampling approach and the multi-level process of enquiry enabled understanding from the various contextual perceptions of the work allocation system. Initial interviews in each study were not only used to collect data but also to refine interview protocol to ensure as relevant information as possible was collected. The organic and flexible nature of semi-structured

interviews enabled adaptation of the line of enquiry often assisting the researcher to identify data that otherwise may not emanated from a more structured process of data collection (Tracy, 2013).

The rich narrative based data obtained from the semi-structured interviews answered the research questions and contributed to knowledge and understanding of the issues relevant to the research problem. This primary method of data collection was preferred as findings interpreted from one-on-one verbal interaction with the participants resulted in the researcher better understanding the uniqueness of the workplace context (Cunliffe, 2003) and job design of academic employees. The job design of academic employees is integrally linked to the WPS therefore gaining an understanding directly from academic employees who work within the stipulations of the WPS was vital in obtaining the rich layers of data. To gauge the adequacy and relevance of proposed interview questions, pilot testing of the interview questions was undertaken informally with a sample representative from each of the three groups. This exercise proved useful and resulted in some fine tuning questions prior to commencing the scheduled interviews.

All participants were interviewed face to face except for two telephone interviews. The telephone interviews were necessary due to the geographical distance between the researcher and the interviewees. Stratified purposive sampling (Creswell, 2016) enabled identification of different groups of data sources and facilitated data comparison (Punch, 2006). Triangulation and corroboration of interview data from across the three distinct groups of participants as well as examining official documentation from *The University* was integral to understanding the various organisational perspectives, recollections and roles of research participants (Yin, 2012).

All interviews were arranged in advance through email communication and the fifty local interviews were conducted in a location preferred by the interviewee, mostly their workplace office. The logistics and venue for conducting interviews for research is an important consideration for successful outcomes (Tracy, 2013).

The office environment proved to be private and quiet and conducive to enabling clear recordings of the interview without background noise to contend with thereby facilitating clarity of the transcription process. Typically the interview would commence with the researcher refreshing the participant about the purpose of the interview, although a research information sheet (Appendix D) was emailed to the interviewee upon confirmation of the interview date and time. The researcher felt this was appropriate as several participants asked for a reminder of the research purpose before commencing the interview particularly if a lag in time had expired since booking the interview and the interview taking place. The research overview became a standard part of the interview process as a courtesy to participants. A consent form (Appendix E) was also signed by the interviewee before commencement of the interview.

The interviews were conducted in a conversational style at the same time ensuring the interview questions were answered. The conversational style approach assisted in facilitating a rapport with interviewees and a relaxed situation during the interview enabling natural and free flowing responses. Abbe and Brandon (2014) explain that developing rapport is central (but not exclusive) to success of an investigative interview and can result in positive outcomes for the interviewer by increasing trust and cooperation with participants as well as obtaining additional and unexpected information. While rapport is considered a social phenomenon and requires the interviewee to be engaged with the interviewer (Abbe & Brandon, 2014) there are some specific techniques for developing rapport. Including non-verbal cues such as making eye contact (Imada & Hakel, 1977), active listening and intermittent paraphrasing (Abbe & Brandon, 2014) also contribute to achieving positive outcomes from interviews. However, it is pertinent to note the concept of 'over-rapport' where the interviewer identifies too overtly with the interviewee and becomes a challenge and counter-productive to maintaining objectivity (Hodkinson, 2005).

The research topic was familiar to participants and therefore all were able to provide rich, contextual, and relevant empirical data. Participants were encouraged to expand upon their responses and to provide examples where

possible. The interview duration was on average 45 minutes. Interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. Additional to the data obtained from interviews, relevant documents such as enterprise agreements, official Minutes of negotiation meetings and organisational policies have been reviewed and interpreted as an additional source of information (Yin, 2012, p. 10). These sources are outlined in the next section.

3.3.4 Documentary evidence

The University's enterprise agreements between 1995 and 2016 were compiled and workload allocation components read to gain an understanding of the sector's landscape. These documents were retrieved from the Fair Work Commission's website <https://www.fwc.gov.au/>. Enterprise agreements provided an historical paper trail, an alternative source of empirical knowledge and data triangulation. Bryman and Bell (2011) support the use of multiple methods of data collection as a means of triangulating data instead of relying on a single source. Further, it is claimed by (Ramsay et al., 2016) that a deeper understanding of the research problem is attained when there are several levels and layers of comparable data sources.

Additionally, a critique of documented Minutes from collective bargaining meetings at *The University* between the years of 2003 and 2012 covering three enterprise agreements provided insightful information. Access to the Minutes was provided by the HR Director of *The University* however they are confidential documents and cannot be expanded upon or used verbatim in the thesis. Nevertheless, they were able to provide the researcher a better understanding of how the WPS system evolved over time. Publicly available documents, such as strategy documents, also an additional source of data allowed the researcher to corroborate findings across data sets reducing potential bias that can occur from a single source study (Bowen, 2009). To meet national ethics requirements and maintain confidentiality these documents are not formally cited or included in the reference list. Triangulation and corroboration of interview data from across the three distinct groups of participants, as well as examining official documentation

from *The University* was integral to understanding the various organisational perspectives, recollections and roles of research participants (Yin, 2012).

3.3.5 Data Saturation

According to many scholars (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Robinson, 2014; Saunders & Townsend, 2016) there are numerous considerations involved in the process of nominating the appropriate number of participants for a study, such as research purpose, representativeness and quality of responses. Additionally, there are differing opinions between academic disciplines as to what is an appropriate number of participants. Marshall, Cardon, Poddar, and Fontenot (2013) for example suggest 15-20 participants for single case studies. Whereas Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006) propose purposive sampling be inductively decided, continuing with the research until data saturation occurs. This inductive approach to knowing when to stop can be problematic if for example participant numbers are required to be stated upfront for purposes of gaining access to an organisation (McDonald, Townsend, & Waterhouse, 2009) however this was not the case for this study. Data collection was ceased when no new information was attained from participants (Guest et al., 2006). According to Fusch and Ness (2015, p. 1413) there is no one size fits all method to reach data saturation and more is not necessarily better than less and vice versa.

Based on recommendations within the literature where similar research was conducted in organisational settings, using qualitative case studies and involving multiple groups of participants, this number of participants was considered an appropriate sample for this study (Saunders & Townsend, 2016). However, it should be noted the Saunders and Townsend article pertains to sample sizes in published journal articles therefore was used as a guide for this thesis. Sample size consideration was also given to the access constraints to participants due to availability (Marshall et al., 2013; Saunders & Townsend, 2016). There is an argument interpretation of qualitative data is ambiguous (Tracy, 2013) due to the multiple methods involved in doing so. Therefore, to avoid ambiguity the next section provides an explanation of the qualitative data analysis pathway undertaken for this research.

3.4 Data analysis

This case study involved analysing data through a combination of coded themes derived primarily from the semi-structured interviews. Data analysis process began with transcribing interview audio recordings verbatim. The transcripts were read against recordings of the interviews several times to ensure nuances, intonations, irony and non-verbal comments such as sighs were captured and not 'lost in translation' (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015, p. 204) as they can provide additional interpretation of the spoken word. NVIVO software is a data analysis tool for processing and organising large volumes of qualitative data and was used for this study. The package allows storing data, application of multiple levels of coding and thematic analysis in an iterative manner. See an example of NVIVO coding (Appendix F).

The transcriptions of interviews were entered into NVIVO. The generic characteristics of the interview participants were drawn from NVIVO and exported into an excel table allowing for ease of regular referencing and analysis of participant responses (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). Generic (non-recognisable) characteristics of the interview participants were recorded such as an informant ID, demographic information and context details such as faculty were assigned. Study A participants were de-identified only with their affiliation with *The University*, the higher education sector and/or knowledge of the research topic (Table 3.1 Page 89). The characteristics of Study B and Study C participant are illustrated at Table 3.2 (Page 90). Intermittently referring to these tables assisted the researcher in retaining a focus on the interpretive process (Tracy, 2013). This enabled the researcher to inductively consider emergent themes and contradictions (Miles et al., 2014). Thematic coding allowed exploration of the how and why questions (Tracy, 2013) as well as assisted in identifying when data saturation had occurred (Guest et al., 2006). The researcher undertook data analysis of interview transcripts while concurrently continuing to interviewing participants as well as reviewing relevant internal documents.

Table 3.1: Study A participants

Study A Informants	Affiliation with research topic
Designer 1	Previous HOS at <i>The University</i> (current employee of <i>The University</i> in different role)
Designer 2	Previous HOS at <i>The University</i> (current employee of <i>The University</i> in different role)
Designer 3	Industry Association representative
Designer 4	Employee Representative at <i>The University</i>
Designer 5	Previous HR director at <i>The University</i>
Designer 6	Previous Dean of <i>The University</i> - no longer at <i>The University</i>
Designer 7	Previous HR Director (current employee of <i>The University</i> in different role)
Designer 8	Previous HR Director another University
Designer 9	Previous employee representative at <i>The University</i> (current employee of <i>The University</i> in different role)
Designer 10	Previous Dean at <i>The University</i> (current employee of <i>The University</i> in different role)
Designer 11	Union Representative at <i>The University</i>

Table 3.2: De-identified coding system and participant characteristics

Study B: Implementers

Informant ID	Faculty code	Academic level	Sex	Work Profile
DSH 1	A	AP	M	50%S,20%R,30%T
DSH 2	A	AP	F	20%SCH,40%M,40%T
DSH 3	A	AP	M	30%S,40%R,30%T
DSH 4	A	Dr	F	30%S,30%R, 40%T
HOS 1	A	P	M	70%M,20%R,10%T
HOS 2	A	P	M	70%M,20%R,10%T
HOS 3	A	P	M	50%M,20%S,20%R,10%T
DH(L+T) 1	B	AP	F	50%M&S,30%R,20%T
DH(L+T) 2	B	AP	M	40%Adm,10%S,25%R,25%T
DH(L+T) 3	B	P	M	40%R,40%T,20%S
HOS 4	B	P	F	Unassigned
HOS 5	B	P	M	70%S&Adm,20%R,10%T
DH(L+T) 4	C	Dr	F	60%S(50%L/ship+10%S)30%R,10%T
DH(L+T) 5	C	P	F	50%(M&S) 30%R 20%T
DH(L+T) 6	C	AP	F	20%M,20%S,40%R,20%T
DSH 5	C	P	F	40%M,30%R&Sch,20%S,10%T
HOS 6	C	P	F	60%S,30%R,10%L&T
HOS 7	C	P	M	70%M,20%R,10%T
HOS 8	C	P	M	50%EXT,50%INT (40:40:20)
HOS 9	C	P	M	60%M&S,40% ÷ 60%R,20%T,20%S

Study C: Experiences

Informant ID	Faculty code	Academic level	Sex	Work Profile
E 1	A	AP	F	Balanced
E 2	A	AP	F	Balanced
E 3	A	AP	F	Teaching Focussed
E 7	A	Level C	M	Balanced
E 18	A	Level C	F	Teaching Focussed
E 5	B	Level B	M	Balanced
E 6	B	Level C	M	Balanced
E 8	B	Level C	M	Balanced
E 12	B	AP	M	Balanced
E 13	B	Level B	M	Balanced
E 14	B	Level B	F	Balanced
E 4	C	AP	M	Balanced
E 9	C	Level B	M	Teaching Focussed
E 10	C	Level B	M	Balanced
E 11	C	Level B	M	Teaching Focussed
E 15	C	Level B	F	Balanced
E 16	C	Level C	M	Balanced
E 17	C	Level B	F	Balanced

Work allocation legend:

Adm Administration

R Research

S Service

Teaching focussed=60/20/20%

L/ship Leadership

M Management

Sch Scholarship

Balanced = 40/40/20%

Academic level legend:

AP Associate Professor

P Professor

B,C (Dr level)

Concurrent to these processes, a code book to record abbreviation, code and brief explanation of the code was used as an additional method for cross referencing data (Tracy, 2013, p. 190). NVIVO provides a code book option to be developed that clearly highlights how many sources have been attributed to specific codes thereby identifying clusters of key words or themes. This tool was also utilised by the researcher for this study. The process of coding approximately 50 hours of interview data initially resulted in an unmanageable number of codes. The analysis process involved coding hundreds of sentences and key words into themes and concepts using the “child node” function in NVIVO. A specific “node” was created early in the analysis process for isolating potentially relevant quotes that could be used in the results chapters. This was a useful activity as it saved time in not having to revisit the full transcript. The refining process was repeated several times resulting in more discreet themes that contributed to constructing the outline of the results chapters of the thesis.

Additionally, the researcher regularly met with the supervisory team to discuss developing themes and refining the research protocol as a way of avoiding potential bias. This approach has been used by qualitative researchers such as Kreiner, Hollensbe, and Sheep (2009). The resulting themes identified contextual factors including the impact external disruptions have had on the higher education sector contributing to some internal responses by senior management/HR personnel. These themes for example concerned the process of introducing a HRM system for allocating workloads of academics. This had consequences for those responsible for implementing the system and how the system was experienced by academics and is discussed further in Chapters Five and Six.

3.5 Ethical considerations of the research

Prior to contacting participants, ethical clearance was obtained from Griffith University’s Human Research Ethics Committee and allocated the reference number GU Ref No: 2016/957 (Appendix G). The study has been conducted in line with Griffith University’s ethical guidelines. After participants agreed to be interviewed, they were sent an information sheet (Appendix D) outlining the purpose of the research, the process to be followed, and advising of confidentiality

and voluntary participation with the right to withdraw from the study at any time. An informed consent form (Appendix E) signed by all participants at the outset of all interviews clarified recording of interview and confirmed participant confidentiality and anonymity. Original audio files were stored on a secure drive and deleted after transcription in accordance with Griffith University research ethics requirements. Transcripts have been stored in secure cabinets within a secure and professional location throughout the duration of the research and beyond. Also, in line with Griffith University's ethical guidelines, the author of this thesis declares no conflict of interest in undertaking this research at *The University*. Additionally, there was a deliberate strategy to exclude where ever possible, any participants who would have direct contact with any members of the research team. Research limitations of the study are outlined in the next section.

3.6 Limitations of the research methodology

There are three main aspects to this study that should be considered when discussing possible research limitations. First the purposive data sampling and case study method used for this study limits generalisability of the findings (Neuman, 2014). Although data collection included a hierarchical cross section of employees involved in a direct way with some aspect of the WPS, findings are still limited to the specific organisational context and specific point in time of those individual participants. While this is a limiting factor within qualitative research and does not support generalisation of findings, the particular themes and descriptions developed in the context of the unique research setting are important to better understand the phenomenon being researched (Creswell, 2014); in this case how the distinctive WPS can better support health and well-being of academic employees.

Another constraint was the interview availability of some academic participants due to teaching schedules and commitments that coincided with timing of data collection however notwithstanding data saturation was able to be obtained with the available data. Additionally, a constraint of the designer case study was locating and contacting personnel involved in initial negotiations and planning of the WPS as many were no longer contactable. Others said they did not feel they

could contribute significantly enough to the study due to the time lapse factor therefore declined to be involved in the study. The data sample did not include Dean level participants. It is possible the inclusion of Deans in the sample may have generated more direct insight into current implementation demands placed on implementers at *The University* as Deans commonly have budgetary control for resourcing. They are often more privy to strategic organisational objectives.

While the subjective view of self-perceived attributes of participants is a factor to be considered when discussing findings, it can be argued that in-depth and valid understandings of the research problem are best achieved through self-reporting (Tracy, 2013). Additionally delimiting the data sources to the one institution contributes to a more thorough understanding of the research problem unique to universities, thereby setting a sector boundary to the case study (Hancock & Algozzine, 2011). The ability to develop firm conclusions about the predictive capacity of the proposed enhanced theoretical model in an academic environment would be strengthened by a longitudinal study. However the time-frame for conducting this case study did not permit a longitudinal approach to data collection and analysis.

3.7 Summary

This chapter provided an outline of the philosophical foundations of the study, explanation of the data sample, data collection methods, data analysis process and considerations to the limitations of the chosen methodology. Furthermore, justification for the inductive, qualitative embedded case study approach as the most suitable research design was established. Consequently, it is further proposed this research design contributes to HRM/workplace health literature offering an alternative theory related to the practical management of workplace health and well-being of employees within any organisation that employ formalised work allocation systems. The next three chapters (Four, Five and Six) present the findings from the three groups of participants addressing the research questions. The final chapter (seven) of the thesis discusses how the findings contribute to theory and practice and future directions for research in organisations that utilise work allocation systems to manage the workloads of

their employees. The findings from Study A are presented first in Chapter Four, where the designers provide an understanding of the intentions of introducing a work profile system to *The University*.

CHAPTER FOUR: Study A - The Designers

4.0 Introduction

Chapter Three presented the methodological approach applied to this qualitative three tiered case study. This chapter begins by explaining the composition of the participants of Study A, the Designers. A background overview of changes within the higher education sector and the concerns regarding the health and well-being of academics in Australia and more generally is explained. Employment arrangements prior to the introduction of a work profile system (WPS) at *The University* are outlined. External drivers impacting the higher education sector more broadly are described.

Exploration of these issues together is important as it provides an understanding of the context in which the WPS was introduced and the associated constraints and opportunities facing employers and employees in terms of the workplace arrangements they choose to implement and how they are negotiated. Many scholars claim (see for example Karanika-Murray and Weyman (2013) employers should play a role in actively seeking ways to address workplace issues that impact the health and well-being of employees. Dickson-Swift et al. (2014) also argue these types of contextual organisational factors affecting employee health are less well understood.

Therefore contextual workplace drivers and psychosocial factors that can impact work place health of employees such as poorly implemented HRM practices are considered as part of this research. Wright and Nishii (2013) argue intended HRM practices introduced by senior management groups can be distinctive from the actual outcomes experienced by employees. These outcomes are explored further in Study B and Study C (Chapters Five and Six) from the perspectives of Implementers and Experiencers at *The University*. A brief overview of the composition of Study A participants (Designers) and the alternative data sources drawn upon for the study is presented below (Section 4.1) followed by Sections 4.2 – 4.4 (themes that emanated from analysis of interview data) and a Summary Section 4.5.

4.1 The Designers

As outlined in Chapter 3, interviews were conducted with key informants from *The University* and the higher education sector more generally. The eleven participants comprised representatives from *The University's* senior management, human resource department, Australian Higher Education Industry Association (AHEIA), National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU) and past and present senior academic employees. A review of *The University's* enterprise agreements (EAs) covering the period 1995 and 2016 was undertaken. These documents were retrieved from the Fair Work Commission's website <https://www.fwc.gov.au/>.

A critique of official Minutes of enterprise bargaining meetings held between the years of 2003 and 2012 afforded the researcher with additional relevant information and enabled cross referencing of interview data. The Minutes assisted in answering Sub RQ 1A: *How did workplace health of academics feature in the policy designers' decision making when introducing the WPS?* Contextual background information is outlined below setting the scene for Study A.

4.2 Changes within the Australian higher education sector

In the late 1990s, the Australian government and the higher education sector were beginning to receive and investigate claims by academics of stress to do with increased workloads (Education Employment and Workplace Relations Senate Committee, 2001; Winefield et al., 2003). Around this time Coaldrake and

Stedman (1999) also highlighted concerns for both university management and academics about external drivers negatively impacting the sector. Their concerns included increasing workloads, a shift from an autonomous culture to a more corporately focussed culture and the blurring of distinctions and priorities between the three key role components of research, teaching and service (Coaldrake & Stedman, 1999).

Gillespie et al. (2001) reported other factors such as poor management practices, job insecurity and insufficient recognition and reward as contributing to poor health outcomes for academics. Bryson, Barth, and Dale-Olsen (2013) argue unions can play an important role when employers introduce changes that create job related anxiety in employees. Internal documentation reviewed for this study included meeting Minutes from enterprise negotiations between unions and management. Subsequently the union's role in the introduction of the WPS is discussed throughout this chapter. Workplace stress claims by academics also coincided with the emergence of formal systems for allocating academic workloads and enterprise agreement negotiations. According to one participant employed as a previous HR Director.

...in the mid-90s there was pressure [on management] based on concerns about academic stress and occupational stress to try and introduce into the enterprise bargaining process, a series of, I suppose rules or guidelines initially on what would be appropriate. And the approach that was taken was that there would be workload clauses and that these would provide some, initially, just guidelines about how institutions would manage academic workload. (Designer 8)

Another designer expanded on Designer 8's comment by recalling his involvement in discussions with unions about how to address quantification of teaching work that occurred around the mid-1990s.

I've been involved in something to do with the union's presentation of arguments about workload stuff...I got co-opted into a part of the enterprise bargaining...it was in the mid-90s...the issue then was the need to quantify, particularly teaching work...it's always this issue of how do you quantify the components of teaching work really. (Designer 4)

In the late 1990s enrolment fees were introduced for domestic students in Australia thereby contributing to a competitive national and international market place (Pick, 2006). Increasing job demands relative to available resourcing, increasing student numbers and associated administrative responsibilities, resulted in claims of stress by academics (Winefield et al., 2003). As documented throughout the Minutes of enterprise negotiation meetings, NTEU representation tabled on multiple occasions, issues of concern including student to staff ratios, reasonable working hours, resourcing and increasing bureaucracy (Internal documents 2003).

Enterprise negotiations continued over a number of years at *The University* until the work profile concept for allocating academic work was endorsed in the 2009-2012 Enterprise Agreement (Public Document). This agreement introduced balanced, teaching focused, research focused, teaching intensive and research intensive work profiles. This section has highlighted a combination of factors claimed to be impacting the health and well-being of academics from the early 2000s. Changes to government funding, job security concerns, increasing workloads and cultural change within academia were the factors raised. The following section discusses how internal factors may also have contributed to *The University's* choice to introduce a WPS for allocating academic workloads.

4.2.1 Employment arrangements prior to the work profile system

The job design of an academics' role has traditionally comprised teaching, research/scholarship and service activities (Blaxter, Hughes, & Tight, 1998) and is typical in universities today. Some of the Designers recounted when an academics' work at *The University* was simply allocated by dividing the three role components into equal thirds. Moreover, they reported the number of hours

academics were expected to work each week/year was unspecified. Designer 5 reflected “*When I came to university [in 2001], academic workloads were managed according to an unwavering formula - a third teaching, a third research, a third service, that's what everyone did and academics had undefined hours*”. Similarly, Designer 9 also recalled the work arrangements as “*in the old days it [an academic's role] was broken into a third, a third, and a third*”.

According to some Designers, undefined working hours for an academic's working week had become an entrenched compromise for flexible working hours often allowing academics autonomy to come and go from campus with minimal supervision or oversight from supervisors. Designer 8, who previously worked as a HR director at another Australian university explains:

...now, at that stage academic staff had no regulated set hours, so under their award the quid pro quo [something in return for something] for not having set of maximum hours to work in a week, was a high level of flexibility, and that had been negotiated many years before, so flexibility about attendance that is. (Designer 8)

Notwithstanding the comment by Designer 8, the job characteristics of an academic's role has traditionally enabled flexible working arrangements where work is carried out across the span of seven days often in the evenings and weekends for teaching associated activities. As argued by Karasek (1979), job characteristics such as job control and autonomy to self-adjust working hours are generally a valued resource for many employees to counteract negative health impacts of poor job design. Accordingly, Bellamy, Morley, and Watty (2003) claim autonomy and flexibility are principal reasons for becoming and remaining an academic.

According to a management representative from within the Designer group the “thirds-based” work allocation system as described above was often applied in an *ad hoc* way by some Heads of School. Rather than an even split, teaching responsibilities were sometimes decided and allocated through informal

conversations between the Head of School and senior academics. Designer 7 claimed that “*basically, the academic work they [senior academics] were given...well if they agreed or not agreed [to do], they nominated and had discussions around [themselves], within the schools of what teaching needed to be covered [and who would do it].* A previous Head of School who had a similar opinion to Designer 7, claimed there were exceptions made for some academics to avoid more teaching, despite the recognised thirds-based arrangement: “*I think certain people [some academics] were excused a full teaching load and that was mainly regarded with service [allocation]. But the [official] expectation was that everybody should do the same*” (Designer 2).

Furthermore, it was claimed by some Designers, faculties had different methods and requirements for teaching students, such as laboratory based lectures, and clinical or studio based learning environments. A Designer who was a previous FLM at *The University* recalled that between 2000 and 2003 a points-based system was used to allocate academic work, further demonstrating the range of HR practices historically in place at *The University*.

I was head of the department from 2000 to 2003. I think I inherited a workload model that was based on a point system. So, there were a number of different workload models floating around at the time, so each department had different workload allocation systems (Designer 2).

Designer 7 explained how a review was undertaken “*...they [schools] all had various forms of teaching [clinics and studio based teaching]...there were so many different weird models and deals made, there wasn't the transparency to how it was done...we talked extensively to various schools and I had [at] one stage about 20 or 30 different work models sitting on the desk trying to work out if there was any commonality*” (Designer 7).

Yet, other Designers believed that work allocation was more appropriate to be applied by Heads of School who knew the distinctive requirements of their disciplines “*this [work allocation] for a long time had been an area that had been left to the individual disciplines to make their own arrangements many of which would have been peculiar to their particular circumstances*” (Designer 6).

This disparity in Designer’s views highlighted a disconnect between the views of senior management/HR personnel and the Heads of School. Senior management wanted the workloads to be managed more consistently across *The University* but the Heads of Schools did not subscribe to a ‘one size fits all approach’. Bowen and Ostroff (2004) argue the importance of agreement between those in positions of authority in order to emit consistent messages to employees about the intention of the overarching HR message.

Similarly, Bos-Nehles and Meijerink (2018) argue the relational and reciprocal approach comes into play for HR implementation and how it is perceived by employees. These same authors explain this argument is based on the social exchange theory (Blau, 1964). Employees therefore are more likely to respond with positive attitudes and behaviours when there is a social process of co-operation and interaction between HRM actors (including HR personnel and line managers), towards the organisation (Bos-Nehles & Meijerink, 2018).

Other aspects of the thirds-based work allocation system were also explained as problematic by some Designers. They said the service component of the academic role was difficult to quantify and research allocations were contentious. These claims by Designers were explained as senior academics were allocated more research by the Heads of School placing them in an advantageous position for promotions, thus creating perceptions of inequity amongst peer groups. Designer 9, an employee representative who was involved in enterprise bargaining negotiations in 2004 explained “*there was a third of work that was in essentially a black box around service, and also with research, some people were clearly doing a lot more research than others, and yes, those people would be more likely to be promoted*”.

Another Designer also remarked that the thirds-based work allocation system was poorly managed by Heads of School and therefore impacted on the performance review process for some academics whereby:

“...because you have this notional equal allocation, then performance management was based on performing in all three domains...they [Professors] knew how to maneuver the workloads around the teaching allocations, so the [classroom] teaching will all get loaded up on Level Bs [less senior academics], they wouldn't be getting any research and they would be failing [their performance reviews] (Designer 5).

Some Designers said the thirds-based allocation system was ineffective for achieving economical business outcomes for *The University*, if work outputs were not aligned with work allocations. *“From the point of view of a strategic approach to productivity to the deployment of the resources that you purchase with your labour budget, the whole thing [thirds-based formula] was a portrait of inefficiency, it was rubbish (Designer 5).*

In 2003 *The University* began enterprise agreement negotiations with the NTEU (National Tertiary Education Union) with a proposal to introduce a work profile system (Page 22 for explanation) as an alternative to the thirds-based system for allocating academic workloads (Internal document 2003). The WPS as a broad concept first appeared in *The University's* 2003-2006 enterprise agreement (Public document). A standalone clause simply introduced the concept of work profiles advising further negotiations would follow.

“During the life of this Agreement a framework will be negotiated between the parties which will enable differing academic work profiles for individual staff members. This framework will be closely linked to workload allocation models. The framework will have reference to individual preference and workload and contain grievance resolution mechanisms.” (Public Document)

This section highlights the inconsistent understandings amongst Designers about the factors at play leading to the introduction of the WPS at *The University*. There were various imperatives proffered by Designers for the WPS, such as improved HRM systems; enabling academic employees to apply their skills more appropriately; and increased economic outcomes. The findings discussed above also indicate internal factors may have contributed to introducing a WPS at *The University*. Government led funding initiatives integrally tied to research outputs were significant financial incentives for universities more broadly to reconsider their business operations. The next section provides an overview of the external drivers that impacted the higher education sector and how they may have propelled *The University* to change HR practices for allocating workloads at *The University*.

4.3 External drivers

The previous section discussed Designer's perceptions about internal factors that may have led to *The University's* decision to introduce a WPS for allocating academic workloads. This section explains how universities (in Australia and globally) reconsidered their business operations in reaction to external drivers impacting the higher education sector. External drivers filtered down from government policy and included industrial relations and workplace health and safety legislation, also discussed in this section. Firstly, a background to evolving government support in Australia for higher education is outlined that has led to significant changes to the business operations of all universities including *The University*.

4.3.1 Funding changes within the higher education sector

From the 1950s through to the late 1980s Australian government policy supported university education, seen as "contributing to the social, cultural and economic development of the nation" Martin (1964). There was free access to higher education "largely funded and implicated in the common project of nation-building, financed from taxation" (Marginson & Considine, 2000, p. 245). However in 1988, John Dawkins, the education minister in the Hawke labor government introduced the Higher Education Funding Act of 1988, otherwise

known as the Dawkins' reforms, a contrasting neo-liberal policy espousing global competitiveness as the means of survival for the sector (Cannizzo & Osbaldiston, 2016; Pick, 2006). The Dawkins' reforms included the amalgamation of educational institutions thereby creating 37 Australian universities competing against each other for government funding, research grants and student enrolments and the demand driving business model was introduced (Pick, 2006).

Government funding for universities in Australia decreased from 80 percent to approximately 40 percent during the period from late 1980s to 2015 (Norton & Cakitaki, 2016). This led to tensions between senior management and the academic work force about resourcing constraints and manifesting in poor health and well-being outcomes (Baldry & Barnes, 2012). Some Designers explained resourcing constraints meant a change in career focus for some academics, as demonstrated by Designer 5's quote below:

It's an overarching proposition; there are significant misalignments between the traditional academic identity which leads individuals to have expectations of their role, and the actual investment expectations of universities. Public money is invested in universities with the expectation of certain outcomes. (Designer 5)

Impacts of external drivers filtered down to frontline management of the academic workforce in ways that had previously not been customary and are discussed further in Study B of this thesis. Designer 3 noted this in his quote below about how the funding changes also impacted the health of managers who were responsible for implementing the changes to HR practices.

Government funding decreased and the fact that universities themselves had to go out and find the money...so they do have to be more entrepreneurial and that percolates down to the individual [employee], it would also be a source of stress for people [management] at the higher level. (Designer 3)

A government enquiry into higher education held in the early 2000s, described universities as “conceiving themselves as ‘entrepreneurial universities’ with an ultimate goal of financial self-reliance and, in some cases, global ambitions” (Education Employment and Workplace Relations Senate Committee, 2001, p. 15). Similarly Clark (1998) and Anderson et al. (2002) discuss the ‘entrepreneurial university’ concept in the context of risk-taking by universities claiming innovative business decisions often had to be made despite the uncertainty of what the outcomes would be. These authors explain how this course of action was necessary in light of governments changing their funding commitments yet still with the expectation of producing competent graduates for the workforce and innovative research techniques with fewer resources.

Additional demands such as increasing administrative duties were delegated to academic employees without concomitant increases in resources. Evidence prevails about the positive buffering role appropriate job resources can have in negating the impact of job demands as argued by the Job Demands Resources model (JD-R) (Bakker & Demerouti, 2016) and the PSC model incorporating the JD-R.

This section of Chapter Four explained how changes to government funding began in the late 1980s contributing to more pressures on university’s administration units in the financial management of their businesses. At the same time the government demanded more accountability from universities and evidence indicates this had an impact on the health and well-being of academic employees (Winefield et al., 2003). Other government-led initiatives that impacted the workplace climate of academia such as research funding schemes are explained below.

4.3.2 Research funding schemes

During the period of time from around 2003-2009, competitive government funding schemes emerged as part of the landscape in higher education where universities were financially rewarded on the number of high quality publications and successful grant applications (Donovan, 2008). The first such scheme, The

Research Quality Framework (RQF) was introduced in 2005 and then replaced with a similar scheme, The Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA) in 2007 by a successive government (Donovan, 2008). Both schemes compared the impact of research publications between all Australian universities, thereby resulting in highly competitive marketing strategies between institutions for access to public funding and putting downward pressure on universities to increase research outputs.

A number of Designers recalled their understanding of how the funding schemes were applied at *The University*, adding to the concerns of academics about job security and career directions with more control exerted by senior management. This is significant when considering how the WPS was designed. Selenko et al. (2017) argue feelings of job insecurity are detrimental to employee well-being particularly when there is a social identity attached to a particular profession or simply the fear of becoming unemployed. The academic profession has been renowned for seeking an identity aligned with their field of research (Boyd & Smith, 2014). However, the pressure to compete against other universities for government funding reinforced perceptions within *The University* about the precariousness of future tenure for some academics. One Designer (previously a Dean at *The University*) recalled:

The University was constantly looking at rankings and where they could fit. And so I remember distinctly that there was documentation from the University of Melbourne that just showed what a research dynamo power house it was and [we were] being compared to that and what we were expecting of staff [academics]. So, I know that that certainly occurred, and that the sense of productivity around research and benchmarking expectations of performance around research was the main driver.
(Designer 10)

And a previous HR director from *The University* commented:

So, for the first time they [universities] are measuring the outputs of research, and basically given that ERA then translates into some form of funding, it's perceived that if you are limited on what you can teach [and] you're not producing research, you're not earning your keep [value for pay].
(Designer 8)

Accordingly, some Designers recalled *The University* wanted to employ or retain only researchers who could provide benefit from the research funding schemes. They said some academics were encouraged not only away from doing research but also to produce fewer publications if they were not going to benefit *The University*. Designer 9 who represented employees during enterprise bargaining negotiations explained: *“It would be better if you had fewer publications and they were high quality, because what you're [as an academic] doing is actually hurting us [The University] with having low rank publications”*.

The previous HR director also recounted how it was common practice in some universities to manoeuvre staff arrangements whereby less active researchers could not be factored in for ERA scores: *So, if you moved somebody to a teaching-focused role, they are outside the devisor [not counted] for ERA, therefore your ERA scores go up. So, there are two drivers behind it, one is the desire for enhanced productivity, and two is “how do we shift these guys [academic employees] out of the way”?* (Designer 8)

Designer 6 also felt a sense of injustice explaining: *“I can remember really good teaching colleagues who felt they were getting pushed out of the place as they weren't getting as much done in the way of research”*.

One Designer said academics with teaching careers considered themselves as not a valued employee and recalled occurrences of unfair recruitment strategies being employed by *The University* as a result of the funding schemes as per the quote below:

This is where you got universities maybe putting an international expert on point four [high point salary range] or something so that... that person [was] on the books and [attributed with] their publications. (Designer 3)

There is some opinion within the academic profession these funding schemes described above created the ongoing tensions that exist today between how research and teaching careers are perceived by some academics (Boshier, 2009; Papadopoulos, 2017). However, this is a complex and sensitive issue for many academics involving a number of factors including but not limited to the individual epistemologies and ontologies of academics and their career aspirations (Robertson, 2007).

This section has highlighted differing perceptions amongst Designers about the research funding schemes and the impacts on job security concerns, careers of academics and their health and well-being. The Dawkins' reforms referred to earlier in this chapter in regard to financial reforms, also brought about fundamental changes to industrial relations laws that regulated academic work through enterprise bargaining agreements (Anderson et al., 2002). Industrial relations and associated issues are discussed below.

4.3.3 Industrial relations

Changes to industrial relations within the Australian higher education sector included the formation of the Australian Higher Education Industrial Association in 1990 followed by the NTEU union in 1993. The intended roles of the newly developed industrial groups was to centrally bargain (at the institution level) for greater efficiency and productivity gains from academic employees in return for improvements in working conditions and salaries (Anderson et al., 2002). However, the centralised bargaining processes were later decentralised to the level of individual institutions where enterprise bargaining processes began and senior administrators became more involved in workplace arrangements of academics (Anderson et al., 2002).

The government introduced new legislation including the Higher Education Workplace Relations Requirements (HEWRRs) and Work Choices legislation in 2003 and 2005 (respectively) favouring employer groups over employees (Barnes, 2006). Furthermore, university funding from the government was dependent on compliance with specified measure and control processes (Barnes, 2006; McAlpine & Roberts, 2003) such as implementing performance review processes. Shortly after the introduction of new industrial relations legislation that created tensions between senior management and academic employees, workplace health and safety (WH&S) legislation was introduced in Australia that would provide improved protection for the health of workers in all industry sectors.

4.3.4 Work health and safety legislation

In 2009, under the Safe Work Australia Act 2008, Safe Work Australia (an Australian government statutory agency) was created with the primary responsibility to improve workers' health and safety and compensation arrangements across Australia (Australian Law Reform Commission). In Australia each state and territory developed and applied their own individual WH&S laws however in 2011 Safe Work Australia developed and implemented one common national set of laws (Safe Work Australia, 2019). This was to encourage harmonisation of the WH&S laws across the country. These national laws are known as model laws. Australian health and safety legislation provides greater recognition of the impact workloads and workplaces can have on psychological health including stress related illnesses resulting from work overload and poor job design (Safe Work Australia, 2013). The Acts recognise joint health and safety committees and employee-elected health and safety representatives as based on the Robens' UK model of self-regulation. In the pure Robens' model, the principal vehicle for employee representation is the health and safety representative who is consulted by employers regarding health and safety recommendations (Australian National University, 2017).

Dollard and Nesar (2013) argue external pressures in the form of enforced legislation can contribute to better management and health outcomes for employees and encourages collaboration between employees, unions and

management. Using data from the “2009 European Survey of Enterprises on New and Emerging Risks” (ESENER), Dollard and Neser (2013) assessed workplace psychosocial safety climate. The survey conducted across 31 countries identified 63 per cent of managers respond to psychosocial risks in the workplace because of legal requirements; 45 per cent as a result of requests from employees or their representatives; and 18 per cent due to high absenteeism. These statistics are relevant for this study where there is evidence of high work demands and low control contributing to increased stress levels for academic employees (Langford, 2010).

While employees interpret the PSC through organisational messages, such as management responding to WH&S legislation, it can be argued there is more opportunity to improve positive perceptions of the PSC. Strong HRM systems signal and communicate unambiguously to employees their value (Ostroff & Bowen, 2016) such as how WH&S is valued by their organisation apart from their legislative requirements. To understand the relevance and priority of WH&S representatives at *The University*, as per the Robens’ model of WH&S, three interviews were conducted and are discussed briefly in the next section.

4.3.5 Work health and safety representation at The University

The three interviewees comprised a union appointed WH&S representative with a position on the institutional WH&S committee, a senior HR representative also involved at the strategic level of WH&S, and an employee who represents the union on consultative committees. Firstly, the union appointed representative at the institutional WH&S level explained poor health to do with workloads is not included on the committee’s agenda. The representative explained the committee is not the correct forum, nor is it comprised of appropriate personnel to have purposeful discussions about workload allocation concerns despite the committee’s strategic positioning.

I think this workplace health and safety committee is not derived... I would be very surprised if workload allocation came up here. I think it's more of a reactionary legislatively driven committee ...let's plan our HR, let's plan how we are going to deal with recruitment and retention...but from a health and safety committee, that's not really their main business [health and safety]...they may have a voice in that, but really that business is HR and developing university policies and protocols and that sort of thing. (WH&S union appointed representative)

Secondly, the representative of the school level consultative committee said there is inadequate employee consultation in determining workload allocations and thereby an existing disconnect between those who determine policy and employees who work within the policy.

So, there is still a dangerous exclusion of staff from that process because it gets down to the fact that the staff are working under the workload models, which are generated by people that doesn't work under it or are subject to it. So, there's a massive disconnect. And there's no democratic process where people could actually have input into the model they're governed by, it's simple as that. It's very autocratically organized very little input from staff and the input you do have is pretty much ignored. So, getting into those processes [having a voice in workload committees] I think that's the important thing for workplace health and safety. (Member of a consultative committee)

Thirdly, the representative with a senior HR role at *The University* explained the process for reporting workplace health issues is, in the first instance for employees to report to supervisors. Thereafter, cases are elevated to *The University's* WH&S department for follow up. The representative considered this a more efficient way of addressing concerns rather than waiting for *The University's* WH&S committee meetings that only meet four times per year.

If there is an issue in the workplace you raise it with your supervisor in the workplace. If you don't have satisfaction, slowly you'll [the academic] roll it up the line. You don't wait two months to address the health and safety committee. The committee is a strategic approach for The University. They also check through stats and try to see if there are any trends, so if it's here and there, if there's concern, etc. But it's more of a strategic level on where they're going, about how the university's tracking on safety and how is the well-being of our staff. (WH& S Representative)

This section highlighted how Australian WH&S legislation provides protection for employees with model laws, ensuring employers manage and deal with health issues the same as any other unsafe practice or workplace hazard. Health hazards such as high workloads and poor job design are contributing factors to stress related illness (Safe Work Australia, 2012). The Roben's model supports employee WH&S representatives as the critical link between employees and management. They are responsible for reporting hazards to senior management if considered to be harmful for the psychological health of employees. However the findings from the interviews with the WH&S representatives highlighted a different process for reporting WH&S concerns at *The University*. Employees report directly to supervisors rather than through a WH&S committee representative. There was no indication from this study *The University* adopted the pure Robens' model where the employer seeks recommendations from the health and safety representatives. The findings were also not able to determine that the Robens' model was considered as a viable or suitable option for strategically addressing workload issues more effectively. The next section details how *The University* chose a renewed approach to managing workloads of their academic workforce by introducing a WPS.

4.4 An internal response by *The University*

The findings presented earlier in this chapter explained how workload allocation was often *ad hoc* and unfair at *The University* and academics had undefined hours for their working week with little or no tracking of their attendance or performance. The anomalies in HR practices propelled *The University's* HR

department to undertake a review of faculties to gain a better understanding of how work was allocated and managed. In doing so, some practices were identified that were considered to not fairly reflect the best interests of the majority of academics or the business needs of *The University*. This is demonstrated by The quotes below from Designers 7 and 5:

We had allocation models, some of which were very skewed and when we started investigating they were rather unfair so [we said] let's see if we can come up with some common guidelines as part of the agreement [Enterprise Agreement], which would go towards satisfying the union's claim, but also go towards balancing how we manage academic work across the organisation. (Designer 7)

And:

Now, the truth of it was everyone was missing out, the university was losing productivity. Basically, they were buying time, if you look at salaries as buying time, that wasn't used for anything, like lots of research time that produced no research. (Designer 5)

While the concept of the WPS was included in the 2003-2006 enterprise agreement, it took over six years of negotiations for it to be fully endorsed in 2009-2012 Agreement (Public document). The protracted outcome points to the complexities involved and possibly the divisiveness of the WPS concept amongst key stakeholders. Together with increasing government expectations for more accountability in return for financial support and reports of negative impacts on academic health and well-being, universities reviewed their processes for allocating academic work more rigorously (Burgess et al., 2003). As one Designer explained in the quote below, the mutual needs of both union and management were taken into consideration with the proposal of a WPS:

I'm not making it all fluffy and warm or anything else. When we started looking at the union's claims, we were also looking at what we wanted to do with our academic staff and recognising the differences and the strengths. So our model was based on, has always been based on, equity for staff and recognising transitions in their academic career. (Designer 7)

As explained by Designer 9, a WPS could also support the professional strengths of individual academics by providing clearer pathways for promotion and enabling more efficient ways of utilising *The University's* academic workforce.

A previous HOS said: "I personally thought that it [WPS] was a really good idea, and the whole idea of getting people to play to their strengths was one that made a lot of sense to me". (Designer 9)

Designer 8's comment also suggested formalised work allocation models were becoming a more commonly accepted practice because of external pressures university VCs were facing including more accountability measures to satisfy government requirements.

Initially vice-chancellors I think just ignored workload models, in fact, workload models weren't even on their table I would say. But by 2008, 2009, 2010, because of the impact of all these factors [government accountability], people management groups started to look at workload models more seriously, and the introduction of much more formalised workload models. (Designer 8)

As previously noted, a notional 37.5 hours per week was also established around this same time for the working hours of academic employees at *The University*. The calculation was based on dividing the National Employment Standards (NES) of 1725 hours per annum by 46 weeks. The 46 weeks was derived at by subtracting the standard 4 weeks per annum annual leave entitlement, plus two week of national public holidays from the calendar year of 52 weeks. The notional 37.5 per week was not intended to be prescriptive due to the acknowledged

fluctuations in the academic calendar where some weeks would require more hours and some less hours of work (Internal document).

Some Designers claimed the WPS was implemented as an extension of *The University's* aim to have a fair and manageable system and enabled a more robust method of managing budgets. Additionally, it was claimed by some of the Designers the WPS enabled *The University* to have strategic flexibility for the use and allocation of their academic resources. One Designer said teaching focussed and research focussed profiles were intended to provide the opportunity to address organisational strategic priorities and support the strengths of individual academics and their career aspirations:

“[The WPS] can be used strategically for the right reasons. For example if you [The University] wanted to increase an area of research and if there is a person [an employee] who has that skill, you'll take that risk to add them to a research centre” (Designer 7).

And Designer 5 explained:

... that you could vary the amount of teaching because a very good teacher should teach more, a very good researcher should research more, and there was more value to the university in that, and quite frankly it was a more productive way of organizing the workforce. (Designer 5)

Designer's responses were divergent about *The University's* intentions for introducing the WPS, such as to enable a fairer and more equitable system for academics and supporting career aspirations. A previous HR director's view was that while workplace health and safety had been one intention of the WPS, the outcome changed quite markedly.

It started off being about work health and safety, and it ended up being...it ended up being a core university process for managing staff. (Designer 8)

Some Designers acknowledged there was opposition to the introduction of the WPS emanating from different concerns of senior academics about how their research priorities and career directions might be impacted. However the Designers who supported the concept of WPS maintained *The University's* intention was to provide a more equitable system for allocating work of academic employees, particularly for less senior academics.

...there was a lot of misinformation put out by a number of disgruntled senior staff academics, as in, in the professoriate. There were almost some open rebellion in some schools, so because those days we talked about faculty models, to lift it [work allocation] from the schools because they were so many variations in the school's models. Some of them were extremely dodgy, they also favoured the...they could skew the model quite easily to favour senior academics. The benefit was protection for them [less senior academics] against excessive workload. (Designer 7)

Khoreva and Wechtler (2018) however argue implementation of a HR practice intended to benefit employee well-being, such as improving job satisfaction, may not be seen as a benefit to other employees. Some Designers recalled the reaction by Heads of Schools to resist the WPS concept due to anticipated opposition from academics within their schools. This opposition was expected because the perceptions were that by introducing teaching focussed profiles would have less professional value than research focussed activity. Haggerty and Wright (2010) argue to achieve the intended outcomes, including impact on employee behaviour, HR practices need to be perceived to have legitimate authority. Further they claim a legitimate HR practice “encourages consistency, and promotes consensus among groups of employees who are comparing interpretations of messages” (Haggerty & Wright, 2010, p. 107). Designer 2's quote below indicates the WPS may not have achieved shared legitimate authority or relevancy in the design stage. Therefore messages about the WPS were not consistently sent by senior management or consistently received by the Heads of School.

My feeling was that the heads of department dragged the chain and tried to avoid implementing it [WPS] as long as they could because they saw it as unpopular. And certainly, what was unpopular of course was the idea of getting allocated teaching-intensive. It wasn't unpopular the idea of being allocated research-intensive, but even there I think that heads dragged the chain a bit because they could see that if you had one eventually you would have to have the other. (Designer 2)

Some Designer participants attributed the introduction of the WPS as a contributing factor to perceptions about research output tied to university reputation favours promotional prospects. These Designers also claim that perception has divided the academic professional into two categories; either a research professional or teaching professional. Designer 2 explains this:

I think there were two things that happened around the same time. Back then [prior to the WPS] there was no such thing as research-intensive or teaching-focused. When it [the WPS] was first introduced I think there was a real focus of climbing up the research pole, and so there was almost a rush to appoint people as research-intensive. Over a short period of time we actually hired about half-a-dozen professors and they were all made research-intensive (Designer 2).

A teaching focussed profile was described by some Designers as negative and career limiting because of mixed signals and a focus on the importance of research outputs and government funding schemes. Designer 6 recalled “*it was going to be a fairly demoralising thing to find yourself in that boat [with a teaching focussed profile].* This view was supported by other Designers, for example Designer 5 said:

We moved to the 40-40-20 [balanced profile] and then we moved to the ability to vary that, so you might have 50 percent teaching, I might have 60 per cent. I think getting it up to 60 percent [a teaching focussed profile] was one of the big challenges (for management) (Designer 5).

However there were contradictory views. Designer 7 maintained the WPS provided a more accountable and measurable process for research, teaching and service activities as “*it allows a far more evidence-based discussion [with academics at performance reviews] than what was able to be done previously...we adjusted the emphasis of how promotion was done to try and ensure that people [academics] who were excellent at teaching...they were able to be promoted in that area emphasis, where traditionally you didn't [get promoted].* (Designer 7)

Designer opinions also differed regarding the importance of teaching focussed profiles as opposed to the importance for academics to have an established and recognised research profile within academia nationally and internationally “*it's one thing to get promoted internally and it's another thing to establish your own independent research record...and to be honest, I don't believe that [playing to strengths] were the original intentions. I believe they were the original rhetoric...it was “this will help us [The University] to build our research profile”, that was the real focus of it.* (Designer 2)

However, despite other Designers espousing a well-intentioned rationale about a WPS and the decision to introduce it, there were other Designers who expressed dissatisfaction with the process of how the concept was initially introduced and then eventually implemented. As we will see in subsequent chapters, this lack of consistency and consensus among Designers about the WPS has had flow on effects into the future. Inconsistent implementation of the WPS by line managers and general dissatisfaction of academic employees was a common finding in Study B and Study C. One Designer said a less rigorous consultation process by *The University* when introducing the WPS had resulted in poor perceptions of the system by employees.

Well, my feeling was that it was all totally top-down. He [previous VC] came in and there was really... well anybody who sort of raised questions about it or queried about it was marginalized. What you had was these formal discussions, but they were very token. (Designer 2)

Other Designers had the view that the WPS was not introduced in a collaborative manner suggesting poor consultation processes had occurred across the academic workforce, both during design and prior to implementation. Designer 6 said: “*My sense of it was it was presented more a fait accompli rather than something on which it was going to be worked through*”. Similarly, Designer 10 recalled: “*My recollection was that that decision was made at executive level and then brought down*”. A common principle of organisational justice whereby having procedures to include employees’ voice in deciding outcomes enhances their perceptions of fairness of the outcomes (Greenberg, 2004). Additionally evidence points to positive outcomes for employees’ job satisfaction when the perception organisational justice has been facilitated through HR practices (Ambrose & Schminke, 2003). Designer 11 said:

The previous [enterprise] agreement didn't protect staff input into the metrics of the workload models, so it was taken [perceived by academics] staff input was pretty much marginalized, and so there was no sort of sense that justice was seen to be done which I think is important symbolically for staff. In reality the thing that makes a difference is staff feeling empowered about their workplace. (Designer 11)

Designer 4 recalled pilot programs for the WPS being trialled though some faculties but despite this he still thought there was insufficient consultation. Additionally, Designer 4 claimed academics who could have provided a first-hand account of an academic’s responsibilities had not been involved in the development of the system. The observation made by Designer 4 described his experience with the consultation process as: “*every process I've been involved in... it's all involved people [managers] sitting around and guessing how long does it take for you to do blah*”. (Designer 4)

As explained previously in this section the WPS was advocated by some Designers as being an equitable, flexible and a supportive approach where academics could focus on their professional area of strength and expertise during their life and career stages. While *The University* promotes these attributes as

contributing to academic's career aspirations (Public document) according to some Designers the WPS was about providing a management mechanism to control and monitor academic workloads. Nishii et al. (2008, p. 505) however argue it is possible for employees to share perceptions based on the HR practices they experience, but to disagree about why those HR practices were put into place to create that climate. For example employees might share a positive perception about the presence of well-being practices, but at the same time perceive them, or understand they are motivated by external drivers such as legislation.

I think they [management] were interested in gaining a greater sense of what was going on and it was couched in terms of 'we have anonymous arrangements all over the place we need some structure, we need some rigour and consistency in relation around how these things ought to be done. (Designer 6)

Designer 11 was employed at *The University* prior to and during the initial inception of the WPS in 2003 and recalled senior management's initial intention to introduce work profiles included quantifying the amount and type of work that needed to be accounted for and therefore more quantified distribution of work amongst the workforce.

The intention was to first of all codify workload in some way...partially successful because we got bread and butter metrics...like an hour of lecture is equal to three hours...not perfect...some of the metrics for example convenorship, program directorship were under allocated because the amount of administrative work which has grown in those roles over the years . (Designer 11)

Meeting Minutes indicated the NTEU and senior management aimed to address increasing workloads and stress levels of academics through the WPS (Internal document 2003). Yet Designers who were interviewed did not recall employee health or work-life balance being an explicit consideration as part of the decision to introduce the changes. Sanders, Dorenbosch, and de Reuver (2008) claim

employees tend to be more committed to HR practices when they are perceived to be consistent and distinctive. Furthermore, to achieve strong HRM systems distinctiveness, consistency and consensus is required between all stakeholders (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004). Similarly workplaces where there is a high PSC are more likely to achieve mutual outcomes for employees and employers (Dollard & Bakker, 2010). This is important for this study as these three elements of the HRM systems strength were not clear in this case study context.

I do not recall the workload allocation model to have any focus for supporting academics' work-life balance - it was purely about administrative control and increasing productivity. (Designer 10)

And:

No, I can't remember that [reference to work-life balance] at any stage to be honest. I can't remember that at the major presentation with the PVC. I can't remember it at any of the forums. The way it was sold was this is to enable people to play to their strengths. (Designer 2)

Chapter Four concludes with a summary of the empirical findings from Study A.

4.5 Summary

Over the preceding three decades, ongoing changes at *The University* and the higher education sector more generally have been common place. Arguably by necessity, they have been strategic in nature aimed at counteracting external and internal drivers. The concept of the entrepreneurial university was considered in this chapter where repercussions from changing government funding policies in the late 1990s led universities to find innovative ways of increasing their financial resourcefulness. The Dawkins's reforms and related Higher Education Policy specified universities would be encouraged to implement "strong managerial modes of operation" and "streamlined decision-making processes" (Dawkins, 1988, p. 103). Hence, it is often asserted the previously collegial and autonomous climate of the higher education sector changed after these reforms to become a corporatised environment that embraces a managerialism ethos (Anderson, 2006).

Thus, the corporatised business model at *The University* has seen a number of changes in workplace arrangements and implementation of HR practices. Recapping, these include collectively negotiated enterprise agreements; quantifiable work allocation systems (the WPS) linked with notionally defined weekly hours of work; and a more streamlined performance review system. Consequently, as a result of the significant changes and the expectations of senior management about the way academics perform their role, some would say a “work smarter not harder” mantra exists. Broader interpretation of WH&S legislation across all industry sectors supports the recognition of health and health hazards in the workplace such as work overload. Exploration of the Designer understandings of the intentions of the WPS has identified divergent understandings and beliefs. Threads to emerge indicate an intention by some senior management the WPS would provide support to less senior academics for career aspirations thereby providing increased job satisfaction, increased perceptions of fairness and equity, thereby supporting workplace health and well-being.

Equally, other participants argued the intention of senior management was to redesign the jobs of academics and direct their careers via corporately imposed processes, thereby enabling *The University* to gain more control over budgets and its research reputation. The data demonstrates inconsistent communication and a lack of consensus amongst senior management at *The University* about the introduction of the WPS. This resulted in mixed messages being sent to and received by the academic workforce. Poor collaboration and consultation with academic employees and the managers at the time hindered a shared understanding of the relevance of introducing the WPS. The next chapter examines workload management and workplace health facets in the implementation of the WPS at *The University* approximately a decade after its introduction.

CHAPTER FIVE: Study B - The Implementers

5.0 Introduction

Study A examined data from Designer participants to understand the intentions of introducing the WPS at *The University*. This is important to understand in the context of the overarching research question (RQ) for this thesis; investigating how a WPS can support the workplace health and well-being of academic employees. The Designers were selected on the basis of their involvement and knowledge about the original proposal to adopt the WPS in the early 2000s. They proffered their retrospective insight into the rationale behind the decision.

The data analysis from Study A indicated the WPS was an internal response to external drivers with a two-fold intention. One intention was to enable more efficient use of human resources by *The University*. Another intention was it would also improve workplace outcomes for academic employees. However the lack of consensus and spectrum of views to emerge from the Designer data indicates inconsistent messaging, poor communication and inadequate collaboration in the design stage resulting in a lack of shared understanding and later acceptance of the system.

Data from Study A is one part of a tripartite analytical approach to answering the research questions for this thesis. The two additional Studies (B and C), investigated more recent operational aspects of the WPS. This chapter examines the responses of Study B participants who carry responsibility for implementing the WPS. The Implementer's responses provide answers to the sub-RQs about how the WPS supports workload management and workplace health outcomes of academic employees. Study B is framed in a more recent operational context at *The University*. The composition of Study B participants is briefly explained in the next Section 5.1 followed by Sections 5.2-5.3 (themes that emanated from analysis of interview data) and a Summary Section 5.4.

5.1 The Implementers

As outlined in Chapter 3 (Methodology), twenty Implementers were interviewed comprising nine Heads of School (HOS), six Deputy Heads - Learning and teaching (DHL&T) and five Discipline Heads (DscH) from three diverse faculties within *The University*. A range of role autonomy was identified within the Implementers. As an example, some Heads of School had little involvement in how workloads were allocated or managed on a day to day basis, delegating the responsibility to their Discipline Heads. Other Heads of School maintained the overall operational control and decision making about workload allocation.

All Implementers had dual roles with manager/supervisor responsibilities as well as academic responsibilities and their own percentage based work allocations. Table 3.2 (Page 90) demonstrates the complex array of how the Implementer's roles are comprised on paper. As with the spectrum of Designer's views in Study A, there was a spectrum of perspectives amongst Study B participants about implementation of the WPS in light of relevance for workload management and as a resource for workplace health. Their views are presented below in response to sub RQB1 and B2 beginning with the WPS and workload management.

5.2 Work profile system - workload management

As previously outlined a balanced work profile at *The University* is notionally prescribed as having a work allocation commensurate with the 1725 annual hours, proportioned to 690 hours (40%) for teaching activities, 690 hours (40%) for research activity and 345 hours (20%) for service activity (Public document 2009-2012). There are also specified metrics for teaching activities quantifying certain tasks underlying the allocated hours (often referred to as the workload model). Workload metrics are set at faculty level. Also as previously noted in the introduction chapter, a 2015 comparison table of teaching metrics for Faculties A, B and C at *The University* is displayed at Appendix H. As can be seen there are similarities between the three faculties but also some differences. Some examples of note, in Faculty B and C there is no inclusion for student consultation and Faculty B provides 50 additional hours per year for marking (based on a balanced work profile). Faculty B is also more generous in supervision hours allocated to academics for supervising Master's students.

Workload issues such as extended working hours, teaching workloads more generally and the time-based metrics were regularly referred to by the Implementers when discussing the WPS. These additional issues were mostly in the context of the time Implementers spent attending to complaints by academics about their workloads. As demonstrated by quotes below, most Implementers said they try to support the academics with adjustments and work arounds where possible, depending upon how much role autonomy they have to redistribute or reallocate teaching responsibilities.

They [academics] come to me because of my responsibilities for teaching allocations as deputy Head of School, so they do come directly to me and they say "the courses that I am teaching are excessive" and because I know everybody that is teaching across the entire school I know whether or not people's teaching is excessive or not. And if it means I have to shift people around, there's constantly a big game of dominos so I'm constantly shifting people in and out of different places, trying new things out. (DH L&T 5 Faculty C)

And:

I think when people have mentioned it [difficulty with workloads], I've always tried to do what I can with the workload. It's quite hard when you've got to distinguish people that are really stressed and people that always moan and that's the balance to take. (HOS3 Faculty A)

Some Implementers prefer to adopt an informal approach to working within the profile system supporting flexibility rather than sticking to specified hours when managing their teams. As explained by one HOS below:

What I like to do is look at people getting to that ballpark rather than measuring you are doing 573 hours and believing that's actually accurate. People in the right ball park I don't particularly negotiate with one way or the other. It is give and take. (HOS 9 Faculty C)

The “ballpark” referred to by HOS 9 is based on the 1725 hours, prescribed in *The University's EA* (Public document). However, a Discipline Head explained while he was responsible for overseeing the enactment of the WPS for individual academics, responsibility for deciding on the WPs occurred at the level of Dean. He also explained he does not have the level of role discretion to be flexible as described by other Implementers because his Dean has a firm expectation the enterprise agreement was adhered to.

Now, I'm constrained in that they [academics] have to do within what we call 690 nominal hours of work, and I have to fill that. I couldn't leave an academic at 600 nominal hours, that will then go up to the Head of School and then the dean, and I will be sent a message saying "do something about this, this member of staff is not meeting their workload allocation." (DscH3 Faculty A)

The approach by the Dean in Faculty A, as described above by DscH3 superseded the any perceived authority or power of the Head of School and Discipline Head by academics regarding negotiation or consultation. This indicates the Deans

(middle management) are in positions of power and leadership and messages they send about employee health and well-being via HR practices to employees are important (Allen, 2002). The inflexibility demonstrated by the Dean in Faculty A could send messages to FLMs and academic employees health and well-being is not considered with equal priority to productivity outcomes by the organisation. The underlying principle of the PSC theory (Dollard & Bakker, 2010) purports a high PSC is achieved when equality priority is given to health and well-being and organisational outcomes.

Wright, McMahan, and McWilliams (1994) also claim inflexibility of HRM practices at the senior level in the organisation can manifest in reducing a shared sense of organisational values. This is demonstrated by HOS7 Faculty C who remarked *“that's the danger of a system that's very granular, you start arguing...you lose that give and take”*. Strictly adhering to EA conditions added other complexities to the Implementer's HR responsibilities. Discretionary contributions and the flexibility of working hours for academic employees are expected as part of their job design. Employee's attitudes and behaviours can be dependent upon how they view HR policies and practices and can also determine how they apply their discretionary behaviour (Appelbaum et al., 2000).

A Deputy Head (Learning and Teaching) explained the prescriptive approach of adhering to conditions in the EA could in turn result in a lack of co-operation by academics. Discretionary contributions in attending important events for *The University* such as open days on weekends or student engagement activities in the evening are part of an academic's role. *“You still kind of want to have staff have some goodwill and do the stuff like turning up for Open Day and so on that isn't necessarily on your spreadsheet, but is worth doing”*. (DHL&T2 Faculty B) Some Implementers said reduced discretionary contributions and A-typical work ethics within their teams sometimes occurs due to the prescriptiveness of the WPS. As described by Deputy Head (L&T): *“it does lead to almost this kind of shop assistant mentality of clock-watching rather than a professional approach to your job*. (DHL&T 1 Faculty B)

Similarly, another Deputy Head (L&T) from Faculty C also said some of her team members do adapt their working hours to align with the enterprise agreement rather than a flexible approach to managing their workloads.

They [the academics] do complain a lot. And I think that's where one of the big problems is...where they are on a balanced profile, say 40 per cent teaching, 40 per cent research, 20 per cent service, and so they take that literally and sort of go "OK, I've got 37 and a quarter hour weeks, over the year I've got 690 hours I'm meant to teach." And they sort of go "No, I've hit my number [I am not doing anymore]." (DHL&T4 Faculty C)

However, there were other Implementers who support staying within the boundaries of the WPS because in their view it helps to minimise complaints about perceived workload inequities thereby they spend less time addressing problems. These comments align with the notion of a mediating effect between HRM practices, organisational justice (when fairness is perceived to have been done) and employee well-being (Heffernan & Dundon, 2016). Some Study A participants claimed achieving this balance was part of the intention of introducing the WPS. DHL&T explains how the WPS assists him:

I think there are pros and cons of the type of model [WPS] that we use. Just focusing on the teaching for a minute, it's handy to know for most people 40 percent which is 690 hours if they [academics] are full-time. And what's good about it then, using some sort of formula to allocate those hours, assists with transparency and giving people a sense of fairness that everything is allocated. (DHL&T1 Faculty A)

A Head of School from the same faculty has a similar view:

I find the workload allocation system generally very useful. I think having a workload system does give accountability. It does mean that you can at least try and get equity across different staff members and allocate resources fairly...for me as the Head of School it's more a blessing than a

curse, or a tool that could be used effectively rather than [negatively] because if it's not fair or equitable then you get staff complaining and you get a lot more kind of grief coming back from the staff. (HOS3 Faculty A)

These perspectives could suggest the WPS is an efficiency driven tool where academics have little control over how they self-manage their work or career aspirations. How jobs are designed, including opportunities for control over aspects of an employees work can lead to increased well-being and job satisfaction (Karanika-Murray et al., 2017). Additionally Dierdorff and Morgeson (2013) claim there is a connection between job design, occupational values and job satisfaction. This case study suggests academic employees achieve job satisfaction because of an intrinsic motivation they have for their profession. Yet the time based metrics applied to their job tasks causes them to feel stressed and is an impediment to their job satisfaction. This in turn can negatively impact health and well-being of many FLMS and academic employees.

The decision making process about allocation of the volume of work appeared to be complex and time consuming for the Implementers. When one Implementer was asked specifically how the WPS supports her to manage the workloads of the academics, she laughed out loud before settling with her response. She explained having a system in theory is a positive concept but in reality it is counter-productive and consequently time consuming. She described it as a complex process for the many employees involved, including the managers. The quote below describes the Implementer's view:

I think it is a good tool, I think it is good to have, but it is a challenge, it is a nightmare. So, I think the principles and the idea that we have such a thing is a good thing, but it's a lot of time. So, yes, I think that in principle these things have got lots of potential. I think the workload allocation, the idea of having - I suppose rules - but having some flexibility around if that doesn't suit a particular School is a good thing because there is a degree of transparency and equity, which I think is good. But I think that the

logistics of implementing it are just huge and horrendous. (DHL&T 4 Faculty C)

Another Deputy Head (L&T) explained how she thought work allocation could be done in a simpler, less time consuming way, although she acknowledged the difficulty in finding a solution to suit everyone:

I would ideally like something simple where we just said, "Everyone has three courses a year, you run them professionally the way you want to run them. If you have more than x number of students you can have some sessional help, end of story." I would love something like that, but then you would get the complaints about someone doing something different or whatever. (DHL&T1 Faculty B)

Most Implementers claim a disconnect exists between the expectations of senior management at *The University* and the actual resourcing capacity of the frontline. They also claim this is an often misunderstood and unaddressed problem by management. While there are many arguments about the key role of managers in HR practices and their outcomes, there are often constraints over which they often have no control (Larsen & Brewster, 2003) such as budgetary control. This is an important issue for this study. Many Implementers said when senior management did not support them with additional resourcing, they in turn, could not support their team members, making their roles more stressful.

Stanton, Young, Bartram, and Leggat (2010) point out the importance of senior managers' support for lower level managers in achieving intended outcomes from HRM practices. The quotes below suggest many Implementers may be lacking the support of senior management with their implementation difficulties. An absence of feedback mechanisms to convey actual outcomes to senior management limited their opportunities to provide better outcomes for academic employees. Ostroff and Bowen (2016, p. 197) argue signals sent through HR practices will be interpreted "idiosyncratically" unless other HR process mechanisms are in place to create a strong HRM system. Other HR process mechanisms include relevance

of the practices to strategic and goal achievements as perceived by employees and the legitimacy of authority of the HR practice. The next two quotes demonstrate a lack of shared positive perceptions about the HRM system of workload allocation by Implementers whereby they are prevented from fulfilling requirements of their role to support the workplace health of their teams.

Everybody from the VC down knows that these hidden numbers of hours [unaccounted for work input] are going on, and in many ways their hands are tied as well. But I'm not seeing that workplace health is being taken very seriously, I really am not seeing it taken very seriously. There is nothing much I can do to take the load off the staff in my school and I know they are suffering. It's an under resourced environment. (HOS 6 Faculty A)

A Discipline Head from within the same Faculty as HOS 6 explained how his ongoing requests for additional resources made him feel ignored by senior management and disempowered in his role.

It goes back to the comment about we've got a resort [head office] and they have zero connection of what's happening at the coal face. They make policy, they make decisions...you've got this Discipline Head screaming...it's actually the biggest discipline in the school, and he's screaming that he doesn't have enough staff "That can't be right, just ignore him". (DscH3 Faculty A)

Some Implementers worked around the underlying metrics of the system and made adjustments where they could to support their teams. Senior management were usually not involved or aware of these adjusted 'work-arounds'. Yet this lack of knowledge may perpetuate ongoing problems rather than addressing them. It was pointed out by one Deputy Head (L&T) the work-arounds were not always in the longer term best interests of academics as there could be repercussions at performance reviews when the official profile was not reflective of the actual work outputs.

Other Deputy Heads (L&T) described the one-size-fits-all approach to workload allocation as not always practical for the different requirements of schools. Different modes of teaching or large student enrolments are not always accommodated and require additional time allocations. As can be seen in Table 5.1 (where there commonly are large student numbers), Faculty C does not recognise student consultation. Yet it is feasible there are higher demands on teachers when there are higher student numbers. Additionally, the work arounds by Implementers place extra demands on their time. This is significant for this study because when job demands that are not relatively balanced by appropriate resourcing, stress is a common outcome for employees (Boyd & Tuckey, 2014). As explained by one Deputy Head (L&T):

I think what sometimes is the issue is that, certainly in this school, because it's so enormous we have one program that's got 2,700 students, and it's taught across three campuses. And so when people take on service loads like program director, it's not a program director as most people would see it. But to date, nobody who is in one of those massive service roles gets more than 20 per cent service and...we do actually allocate a time to it, but it's not kind of officially recognised in the profile, and I think that's the problem, so one thing that we do plan to do is for people who have very large service roles to actually make their profile reflect what they're doing, because at the moment what we're doing is a work around. (DH L&T 6 Faculty C)

And another DH (L&T) also explained:

I think it's a variation in individuals. It's really hard to find a one-size-fits-all, and I think that goes actually across individuals within the school, I think it goes across the way teaching is done in different courses within a school, just in terms of the way courses are delivered, but also from undergraduate through honours, post graduate teaching can be quite different, I think across schools within a group and then across groups. I think there is a lot of variation. And if it was just a case of going, "Plug in

all the people, plug in all the numbers, and bingo, that's what you're going to do for the year" but it just doesn't work like that. (DHL&T 4 Faculty C)

However, there was a view of some Implementers, many academics had not adjusted to changing organisational priorities and the WPS had been not revised to reflect those changes in academic roles at *The University*. Many Implementers noted the reduction in administration or support staff had had a significant impact on the additional work that has filtered down to academics, including management level academics. *"The workload allocation model works ok if I've got the admin support behind it. Without the admin support I struggle to keep up to be honest"*. (HOS 9 Faculty C)

And:

I think what's happened in academia over the last 10 or even more years is a phenomenon called academic shift, so the tasks that once weren't classified as academic [tasks] are now classified as academic [tasks], and certainly the role of an academic has changed quite dramatically over a period of time, and certainly over the last 2 or 3 years, it's been a very rapid change, particularly in this university to move forward, but also within the environment as well. (HOS 6 Faculty C)

One Discipline Head recognised external factors impacted the decisions of university administrators, but noted the decisions exacerbated tensions between senior management and the operational context of academics. Yet the quote by DscH2 below demonstrates there is a lack of listening and response by senior management about implementation difficulties experienced by frontline management.

In defence of the institution, I don't think the institution is doing this. I think the institution is adapting to an environment in which it finds itself. But I think at the moment there are some very big changes happening [at The University]. I think the pace of that is very, very fast, and I think there's increasing disconnect between what the senior executive thinks

should be done and the pace at which those things can reasonably be implemented. (DscH2 Faculty A)

Nishii et al. (2008) claim in order for HRM practices to achieve intended outcomes, such as positive attitudinal and behavioural responses of employees, HRM practices need to be perceived and interpreted positively by employees. Further the design of HRM practices needs to consider practical implications and take into account a broader community of stakeholders including management, employees and customers (Beer, Boselie, & Brewster, 2015). To illustrate this, a Deputy Head (L&T) Faculty C explained how the time based metrics for marking exams were inappropriate. She explained this often resulted in academics having to make a difficult choice. One choice is to spend more time than allocated on marking exams and provide better learning outcomes for students. This choice can potentially impact upon student evaluations of their teaching performance and their academic performance reviews. The alternate choice is to adhere to the allocated time, not always sufficient for learning needs of students, or their own job satisfaction and professional values.

All I can say is that often the allocations don't reflect the actual workload. So if you look at for example the [xxx] Group's allocations for marking, they're woefully inadequate, you cannot... you can't do a good job marking in the time frames. So you can either do really shit marking...That's not fair to the students. Or you can do a good job and then it's not fair to you.
(DH (L&T) 6 Faculty C)

And:

So, it's a funny game actually, and I don't think it always serves the best interest of The University, because The University actually needs satisfied students, and it needs people who will roll up their sleeves...and it's not encouraging that. (DH (L&T) 1 Faculty B)

Hall et al. (2013) explain high job demands in combination with low job resources results in energy depletion of employees. Psychosocial hazards such as tensions between available resources and job demands can impact motivation of employees

at work with a potential to increase the likelihood of poor health outcomes. Some Implementers expressed reservations about the prescriptive nature of the WPS not allowing them autonomy to support individual academics' and their careers. Further they said a generic application from a spreadsheet dictated how work in the schools was allocated, satisfying organisational requirements rather than supporting the individual strengths of academics. Some Heads of School said the WPS does not fit with their school's staffing model and therefore is unsuitable for their use.

I suppose it gets to the heart of the question about why you have a workload allocation formula at all, and I guess it all comes down to finance in terms of how you actually manage your budget. I personally see little value in actually having a workload allocation model that doesn't work. And within a school such as this I think it really comes down to the senior management of the school about how you actually use your academic staff. I know who are my productive members of staff and who are my non-productive members of staff, I don't need any metrics for you to tell me that. I look at things like publication outputs and grants and so forth, but in terms of their learning and teaching, I'm close enough to it all to know who is doing what. (HOS8 Faculty C)

And:

I think it's [the WPS] a little bit artificial...for a school like ours where we use a more collegiate and collaborative approach to allocation of workload around teaching. (HOS9 Faculty C)

Not all Implementers found these frustrations concerning though. Some worked around the system and maintained a more collegial approach to managing workloads. They suggested this flexible approach was more conducive to the academic context where emphasis on controlled time based outcomes should be less important. Dsch5 explained the team approach in her area is flexible and therefore she applies a flexible approach to allocating work bypassing the formal WPS.

Nobody in the team here does 36 and a quarter hours a week. What I want people to do is to work their work-life flexibly, creatively, productively and to a quality standard. So, saying all of that, we do allocate workload, we do it as a team. It's fully transparent, for everybody, all the teaching [academics], all the clinical [academics]. (DscH5 Faculty C)

Applying the approach as explained by DscH5 above supports the notion job satisfaction comes through employees finding fulfilment and meaning in their work and where job design has a positive impact on their psychological well-being (Karanika-Murray et al., 2017). The next section addresses sub-RQB2, the WPS and workplace well-being.

5.3 Work profile system - workplace health and well-being

The preceding section highlights inconsistencies in how Implementers perceive the WPS supports them to manage workloads of academics. Additionally it highlights a range of autonomy for Implementers to adjust workloads and a variation in levels of support from senior management. Time consuming work arounds were reported as commonly enacted by most Implementers to assist and support their academic teams. Bowen and Ostroff (2004) assert a strong HR system is achieved through features such as consistency and relevancy of practices to requirements thereby portraying positive messages to employees.

According to Dollard and Bakker (2010) a low psychosocial safety climate can occur when employees feel unsafe to discuss concerns about job demands with their managers. Further Dollard and Bakker (2010) claim poor communication can be exacerbated when workers perceive senior management are not listening to their concerns and psychological well-being is not recognized as a workplace hazard. Many Implementers in Study B explained they often only became aware anecdotally of academics poor health outcomes to do with high workloads. They said this occurred because academics commonly tended not to report poor health or make formal complaints especially in relation to workloads. This was because academics perceive their complaints may result in negative outcomes. Demonstrating these claims, two Heads of School explained:

I think people are just reluctant to admit weakness in the popular sense of it also. That's where what I would call the grapevine is essential because you will hear from people like, "So-and-so is not doing well, so-and-so is having trouble." And then you proactively go and say, "I heard you were having some trouble, what's going on?" I find people rarely present me with the situation, I usually hear about it secondhand and then follow up.
(HOS 7 Faculty B)

And:

And do people talk about combating stress? They complain about a handful of hours here and everywhere. No one has actually said to me, "I can't do this job in the allocation that I've been given." No one has ever said that to me. I've said that to my boss [The Dean] and was completely ignored, but no one said it to me. So I think there are some very negative connotations around putting down "I'm not coping...stigma of mental illness is very much real even though it is brought on by work...it is real.
(HOS2 Faculty A)

One domain of the PSC theory espouses the importance of effective two-way organisational communication and workplace health policies and procedures that supports employees to safely discuss health concerns (Zadow & Dollard, 2016). One Implementer (HOS) said while academics rarely discuss their work related health issues, she is able to recognise signs of stress through unusual behaviours. Refusing to carry out tasks, or what she considers irrational justifications for not meeting deadlines, are often indicators for her of stress in a team member. The Head of School explained how she tries to manage individual situations to support her teams, and in one case discreetly re-allocated work so as not to offend the team member by broaching the subject of stress related behaviour. This can be time consuming for frontline managers.

We haven't had staff here in the school that say that they are unduly stressed, but I would actually say that I can identify behaviours that could indicate stress. And if you actually approach the topic of "The University

does have counselling, there's an online course that you can do for stress management" for example, they are mortally offended... there is some stigma still, people not actually wanting to be open enough to say, "Yes, I'm feeling depressed or anxious." Because there is also some literature that says that they feel that there's going to be an impact on their career or their promotional opportunities if they come out and say that, so it's hard to know. You can't approach it, it's a very difficult conversation to have... But when they are behaving badly, do you know what I mean?
(HOS6 Faculty C)

Some Implementers explained they are aware of the poor health outcomes associated with long working hours but they are unable to provide support for their teams through reducing workloads. This is a role obstacle for Implementers when they do not have the authority to make modifications to work allocations or they are unable to authorise additional resourcing to ease the demands of the job. There was no suggestion in the findings from Study B these situations were being elevated to, or addressed by senior management. Evidence shows that line managers usually have the responsibility for implementing HR practices, but to do so effectively, they also require the support of senior management and HR professionals to achieve the intended outcomes (Bos-Nehles & Meijerink, 2018). As one Discipline Head explains:

I get to see a slightly different picture. When you see health things coming up that you've never seen before, all of a sudden, lots of people are sick for this reason. And it's not my situation, not my position where I can step in and say, "Actually I think a little bit of this has been brought about by workload." The rub is that the first thing they come back and say is, "Well, can you reduce my load?" And the answer is, "No, I can't." (DscH3 Faculty A)

This is an obstacle reported by Implementers from other Faculties as demonstrated in the quote below from a Deputy Head (Learning and Teaching) from Faculty C. However this participant highlighted an acceptance and

knowledge from within the organisation that academics are working late nights and weekends, overlapping with home and family life, to get their job done.

But I think it's still possible that people [academics] might fall through the cracks. And I know people come to me and sort of say, "I'm very worried about so and so" they're doing so much teaching. I know we've got people teaching across campuses and so there's traveling time, and at the moment it's becoming more of a nightmare. So, I think, in our School at least, people do watch out, but at the end of the day you're still in your office, in your home at midnight working and on the weekends. (DHL&T 4 Faculty C)

Bos-Nehles et al. (2013) argue the perception at times that line managers are reluctant or incapable of performing HR responsibilities needs to be understood. Primarily these same authors argue if line managers are delegated HR responsibilities they need the support of the organisation to do so effectively.

There is ample research highlighting stress related illnesses experienced by academics as a result of work pressures (and an impetus for this case study). There is also evidence role conflict and role ambiguity can contribute to employee stress and for this reason requires consideration for controlling their impact (Pomaki et al., 2007). For this reason scholars argue the importance for organisations to reduce role conflict and negative outcomes such as poor workplace health, low job satisfaction and low employee engagement (Jackson & Schuler, 1985; Rizzo et al., 1970).

An additional outcome of introducing the WPS to *The University* as explained by the Designers in Study A, and stated in *The University's* enterprise agreement, +was to support career aspirations of academics by allowing them to work to their professional strengths, benefit from promotional opportunities and improve job satisfaction. The job design of an academic role is unique by nature, requiring, three different skill sets as explained by a Deputy Head of School can be problematic without appropriate processes in place. The comment below by

Deputy Head (L&T 1) suggests the complex mix of an academic's role makes it difficult for them to focus on any one area and could lead to role conflict and poor job satisfaction rather than supporting careers.

Academia is a weird thing. In most jobs you have a particular role and you do it really well and you get promoted. And in this job, you have at least three different roles which you can't always be doing well, you...get pulled in all directions. And I think it is very difficult. (DHL&T 1 Faculty B)

There was disagreement amongst Implementers about how the WPS supports career aspirations of academics because it is hindered by the organisation's performance expectations across all three areas of the academic role. Further the Implementers explained, time often became a barrier for academic's to achieve promotion without working long hours outside the prescribed times in the enterprise agreement.

The system only speaks to the 40 percent of their career trajectory and aspirations, because it really only relates to teaching. The service side and the research side are kind of covered by different regimes of expectations and tracking. So you have to put all three together to provide a comprehensive sense of where is this person coming from and where do they want to go. Generally speaking, research tends to lead career development, teaching follows closely, and service matters hardly at all as long as it's being done. So therefore you want to ensure an alignment between teaching and research, which has nothing to do with allocation of workload, it's got to do with ensuring that someone is teaching courses that match their research interest. Where there is not an alignment between the research and the teaching agenda, then you get people very demoralized and frustrated. HOS5 Faculty B

Yet Head of School 3 from Faculty A explained there is some opportunity for promotions at *The University* if the profile is focussed in one area, allowing more clarity about priority:

The 60 per cent [profile] teachers can still be kind of 20 per cent research and still churn out papers, do lab-based stuff, so they can still do that, but I have a lot of people across school wanting to do less teaching, but we need the teaching [academics]. I think there is a career path for teaching in the university and I think some are realising that. (HOS 3 Faculty A)

Head of School 6 explained careers are important to academics. However academics did not always invest their time, or focus their interests in the areas that is important to *The University*. Head of School 6 also said *The University's* senior management should provide clearer expectations and consistent communications to early career academics so there is less ambiguity in messaging and more clarifying mutual expectations. He explained this by saying:

I think that early career mentoring is really important for staff so that they get to know what's important for The University and how they could channel their efforts [to better support their career progression]. (HOS 6 Faculty C)

The level of role clarity and uncertainty for employees about expectations depends on how much information employees are given about their roles (Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, & Snoek, 1964). A role clearly define role can also result in employees either increasing or decreasing their activities (Ebbers & Wijnberg, 2017). Likewise, in the case as explained by Head of School 6 clear communication could provide role clarity for early career employees thereby avoiding associated frustrations or mixed messages about their role and career expectations.

Demonstrating how the WPS and associated promotional processes for academics is not universally considered across *The University*, another Head of School, also

from Faculty C explained career progression is not applicable for academics in his school. This was because the learning activities for students do not involve typical coursework settings. Instead student learning is conducted in clinical settings. He further explained the usual student evaluation system that counted towards academic promotions was not relevant and many academics in his team were frustrated because they could not progress their careers at *The University*.

Generally, if you're going to get promoted on the basis of your learning and teaching, you have to have evidence of things like your student evaluations, learning and teaching grants, that sort of thing. And of course for our program, student evaluations are almost meaningless, because it's not coursework. (HOS8 Faculty C)

Boxall and Macky (2014) argue when organisations introduce HR practices intended to improve quality of working life there needs to be a balance between an employee's capacity without it involving excessive hours and increasing work intensity. Time pressures and long working hours can result in poor workplace health outcomes for employees because of a negative impact on work-life balance (Dinh et al., 2017). Some Implementers explained there are deleterious health outcomes for academics due to the WPS as explained by a Discipline Head below:

It's not [a supportive system for academic's health and well-being] because they're [senior management] actually not putting in the foundation to allow that to happen. And I see this with some of the academics, particularly one who in my team who changed her profile to teaching-focussed, they're [senior management] still demanding that excellence across all those areas, so it's not just in teaching. So even if it's teaching and scholarship, they're [senior management] still wanting publications and scholarship. And you still have to have an H index [publication profile], you still have to have awards, you still have to have grants, you still have to have all of those things within 20 per cent scholarship. (DscH1 Faculty A)

And a Deputy Head of School (Learning and Teaching) explained how job demands exceed the available resourcing in his school and how the WPS disguises the amount of work that is being done because many things are not accounted for despite being an integral requirement of the role:

Any academic who works 37 1/4 hours is never going to get ahead, and so everybody works way more than that. But the way that the workloads are done, it's just those set amount of points given, and so it looks like everybody is doing all the work in the right amount of time, but of course they're not and they are disgruntled because it's not being recognised.
(DHL&T 4 Faculty C)

Gilbert, De Winne, and Sels (2015) found line managers are often faced with managing the tensions between work preferences of employees and their actual strengths and abilities. Some Implementers in this study explained how career preferences of academics are important to them, yet they are often incongruent with the organisational priorities and requirements. For example they explained, some academics prefer researching to teaching, yet *The University* requires experienced academics to teach the increasing number of students. Some Implementers thought the WPS provides a framework to assist them in supporting academics to adjust their work efforts, reducing role conflict. Evidence from this study suggests the WPS suited some Implementers more than others, and some disciplines more than others.

Clegg (2008) and (Henkel, 2006) suggest the notion of academic identity, explained as “a subjective interpretation of our individuality in the context of activities” (Billot, 2010, p. 711) can create tensions between the individual and their workplace. Billot (2010) points out the responsibility is often placed on the academic themselves to manage the dynamics between their own expectations of the job and the actualities of a changing academic environment. Some Heads of School explained (see quotes below) the WPS is a useful resource for managing their teams. The examples presented below from two Heads of School indicate their support for the WPS:

From a Head of School perspective, where they [academics] are channelling their energies might not be in areas where we operationally need them, and so I suppose one thing that the workload allocation method is good at, is to try and point out to staff how much time they should be spending on each of their activities. If you've got X amount of time then you do the best you can with that amount of time and not go more and more and extra and extra and extra at the detriment of something else that they also need to do. (HOS 6 Faculty C)

And:

All academics have their own interests. Some are very keen on teaching and are not particularly comfortable with research and would ignore the research if they got the chance. Some only want to research, they wouldn't want to eat or have sex, they just want to research, and to get them to teach could be tricky. (HOS 2 Faculty A)

In contrast to the view of Heads of School 6 and 2 above, who found the WPS was a useful resource to harness the focus of some academics; other Implementers said prescribed time-based work allocation systems are counterproductive as a resource for supporting positive health and well-being outcomes. Some scholars found work time control is associated with stress-related diseases (Härmä, 2006). Implementers from two different faculties explain their views about the time based system and how they believe it adds to the stress of academics and their workload management:

I think in some ways having a workload allocation system that tells you that in an average week you're only supposed to be working 17 and a quarter hours on teaching, it can be counterproductive, because if somebody is thinking, "Well, I actually need to do 'this' many hours, and I still want to do 'this' many hours" if people [HR systems] haven't told them this is the expectation they're just free to roll through doing what they thought, they actually may feel less stressed than if they sit back and think "Well, I've just spent 40 hours doing that and I was supposed to only have spent 18. I must be shit." (HOS 1 Faculty A)

A Deputy Head (Learning & Teaching) explains in the quote below that she prefers to use the autonomy in her role to adjust the prescribed metrics to better support the well-being of academics and individual academic workloads. She felt her approach is a fairer and more equitable way of allocating workloads within her team that acknowledges the differences in requirements of courses more than *The University's* system.

So we then developed... I don't know what you would call it. We've got like an incremental one where if it's up to this many students you get this many hours, if it's in this category you get this many hours, if it's about 500 you get this many hours, and that way at least there's a little bit more equity. So we've done a lot of that, just working around. And as I said, when I first came in there was no allocation...no recognition of workload for the big service loads. (DHL&T7 Faculty C)

HR practices are seen as signals by employees that are idiosyncratically interpreted (rather than organisationally interpreted) and hence form the basis of the workplace psychological climate (Ostroff & Bowen, 2016). These same authors also claim supporting mechanisms are required to reinforce the signals sent by HR practices so as to achieve a strong HRM system. In this study, there is evidence to suggest acknowledgment by senior management about appropriate resources to meet job demands could improve the psychological climate at *The University*.

Some Implementers explained long working hours, high workloads, competitive environment of academia and performance expectations by senior management contributed to poor health outcomes for themselves and academics rather than the WPS as a standalone instrument. One Head of School explained this:

But let's just take the workload model and park it aside. Does any of us really think we can do this job in 40 hours, in spite of the 40-40-20 model, and still do 690 hours of teaching? That is just complete bunkum. The answer is... it's going to take at least 50 or 60 hours to do this job, 37 and a half hours isn't it... it's a 50 or 60 hour job if you're going to stay competitive. So I don't know the workload model per se adds the stress, the expectations of performance, workload model pushed aside, certainly adds stress. (HOS6 Faculty A)

While Baptiste (2008) acknowledges the necessity of business oriented performance outcomes, they also argue they have increasingly become more important to senior management than employee well-being. A key element of the PSC theory argues management priority lies in considering employee psychological health as equal priority to productivity (Hall et al., 2010). The quotes below highlight how the pressure for performance outcomes from senior executive at *The University* downstream to the Heads of School could be overlaid to academics at the frontline.

Ostroff and Bowen (2016) argue HR practices should send clear signals to employees for them to understand the intended message and to understand what is valued, expected and rewarded. However, there were instances described by some Heads of School, while they had the authority to renegotiate work allocations for better health outcomes for academics and to support careers, they also used the WPS to impose changes to work allocations. They said they did this by utilising the WPS as a performance management tool when they deemed it necessary for business purposes or poor performance as demonstrated in the comments below:

As a Head of School, where I would prefer to do it [adjust the WPS] by negotiation and agreement but I actually can impose it, so I can impose a change on somebody. So that is a management tool that I do have. So sometimes I initiate a conversation with somebody, and sometimes somebody initiates conversation with me. (HOS1 Faculty A)

And similarly another HOS also from Faculty A said:

We've used that model to apply to stress. We've had that conversation... "in about two years' time you're going to be out of here unless you change your workload profile or get your act together in research and/or teaching". So we've certainly used it to apply stress – oh so subtly. (HOS6 Faculty A)

Other Implementers acknowledged they are aware there is punitive use of the WPS sometimes but were not in agreement with the practice. They explained how it could be utilised as a more positive HR practice, supporting career aspirations and strengths of academics as demonstrated by quotes from a Discipline Head and Deputy Head (L&T):

There's been a lot of talk about the flexibility of it, but I rarely see that used, and usually I see it, certainly across my discipline and most other places as well, you usually see it [the WPS] as the 40-40-20 split and that balanced profile. It has to be quite an extreme case usually for it to change, and as I said it often seems to be used almost punitively when I think it could be used positively to say "Look you're actually a really fantastic teacher or researcher". (Dsch4 Faculty A)

And a Deputy Head (L&T) from a different faculty agreed:

We have a couple of colleagues teaching in our standard program who are 60 per cent teaching intensive, and that's really because they [the academics] haven't been performing as researchers. It's kind of a funny thing to say if you are a bad researcher we'll give you more teaching because they are not necessarily great teachers either. Sometimes it's performance issues. But the solution at the moment seems to be if they [academics] are not publishing you [managers] give them more teaching. (DH L&T 1 Faculty B)

There was a lack of consensus among Implementers generally about the punitive use of the WPS and how it could or should be used in a more positive way for example. Yet the practice was acknowledged as occurring and seemed to be overlooked to a certain extent by those with less perceived power or influence. It was not clear from the findings whether senior management were aware the WPS was sometimes used as a performance management tool, however senior management have the power to intervene when unintended outcomes of HR practices occur (Allen, 2002; Noblet et al., 2005). Bowen and Ostroff (2004) also suggest when there is consensus among those who have the authority to implement HR practices there is more likely to be consistent messages conveyed to employees thereby more positive acceptance of the HR practices.

Some Heads of School described differences in abilities and inclinations of the Discipline Heads relation to applying the WPS to support health and well-being of academics. Floyd (2016) argues supporting middle management in universities with a more strategic and nuanced approach in leadership development, particularly in an increasingly challenging corporatised environment is critical to ongoing organisational success of the higher education sector. This approach by Head of School 1 to Discipline Heads is illustrated below:

Well we try and take a proactive approach where the supervisor checks in with the staff members. And if they are [the academics] feeling stressed and they're feeling overwhelmed with their workload, I usually ask the supervisor, "What is the staff member doing? Can you offload anything to anyone else or re-distribute workload so that they have an achievable workload? Or are there any other resources that we need to provide to be able to support that person in doing that job?" Now, that relies on the supervisor being pretty well on top of what's happening with their staff member, which works really well in some disciplines, but not necessarily in others. (HOS1 Faculty C)

This comment raises the issue of how supervisors or managers in academia were recruited for their role and whether they possessed the required skills. Bos-Nehles et al. (2013) argue the HR department has a responsibility to support line managers in their HR responsibilities ensuring they have appropriate abilities and opportunity to undertake their role in HR duties. Several Implementers said they saw themselves more as academics than managers but sometimes were conflicted in their role responsibilities. Baptiste (2008) identified positive supportive working relationships, often through HR implementation, because line managers are usually more connected to frontline employees. This was demonstrated by a Deputy Head (L&T) who has been promoted from an academic role to a management role:

So I've tried really hard. I'm guessing the advantage for me in this management position is that I very much come up through the ranks and suffered at the other end of the spectrum, so I kind of am really aware of what gets done and trying to be fair to people. (DHL&T 6 Faculty C)

The skills required of line managers in supervisory roles include the ability to engage and communicate effectively with team members often through times of change (Purcell & Hutchinson, 2007). It was explained by Implementers their roles required a complex skill mix including management skills as well as having academic responsibilities. Further, HOS1 Faculty C was concerned that despite the critical role Discipline Heads play, there was a lack of training that prepared them for a management role. She claimed Implementers often simply drew on their firsthand experience of being an academic and applied that understanding to the role of an Implementer. For example:

There is no specific training for them [Discipline Heads]. So you have program director training, you've got course convenor training...so they are academics rather than managers...mind you, there is no Head of School training either. But for me they're the linchpin in the school and they are the people that need to operationalize everything that happens, almost everything that happens in the school. (HOS1 Faculty C)

This comment was supported by other Implementers. For example a Deputy Head (Learning and Teaching) commented:

So, I think it's that difference between we're being asked to run like a business, but we're not a business. Those of us who are actually running the business are not trained to do that. And again, across different...one would think that maybe business people would be better at doing that, but I'm not totally convinced of that either because academics are academics first and foremost. (DH L&T 4 Faculty C)

This study identified recruitment for the Head of School roles took place on a rotational and voluntary basis with no formal training offered to assist in their transition to a management role or implementation of HR practices. Townsend, Wilkinson, Bamber, and Allan (2012) argue similarly FLMs in the hospital setting were often unprepared and unskilled for the role of manager as they transitioned from the role of nurse. Yet, argued by Bos-Nehles et al. (2013), line managers are key to achieving effective implementation of HR practices and they require an ability, motivation and opportunity to do so. As explained by a Deputy Head (Learning and Teaching), often people were picked for the role despite not wanting the role.

"It's a little different too I think when you're in a business in an outside organization that you have a person who is the manager or is the CEO or is whatever, the boss, and that's their job. You don't find that every three years off the floor you have a bit of a random vote as to "Who wants to put their hand up to be boss for the next three years?" That's how universities operate within schools, Head of School is appointed for three years. Sometimes it's advertised externally as a real job, but often it's just a case of your turn is up. And people get canvassed, and nobody puts their hand up; somebody gets told "Guess what? You're going to volunteer." (DH L&T 4 Faculty C)

Being able to recruit the right people with the right skill set for Discipline Head roles was extremely critical for Head of School 6 in Faculty C who explained how two critical Discipline Head roles were unfilled for some time because of lack of interest from applicants because of the expectations of the role.

The Discipline Head role is usually advertised, and advertised externally. And when you look at the selection criteria, they have to be fantastic at everything. And in two situations, in two of my disciplines, it's been impossible to find someone who has professorial level research, who can do learning and teaching and who wants to manage ten people. HOS1 Faculty C

Kahn et al. (1964) claim role conflict can lead to role stress when employees are faced with incompatible demands within the scope of their role. Likewise it could be said there is role stress experienced by Implementers in this study. They have dual, complex and demanding roles. One Implementer explained his dual role also included a WH&S representative component where he was conflicted in acknowledging workloads were high and sometimes unmanageable for academics. However, *The University's* approach was said to be one of managing the stress involved in high workloads rather than reducing the workloads.

"We're not going to reduce your workload or introduce efficiencies or cut out the bullshit, we're just going to teach you how to manage this. So if you're into alcohol, if you're into drugs, if you're losing all your sleep, or we can probably tell you that you shouldn't be drinking so much alcohol, you shouldn't be smoking so many drugs, and really you should be getting a good night's sleep". Well, thank you very much, I do know that, that's not really helping me at this point. If I didn't have 26 folders on this pile, I'd perhaps be much better off. (DscH2 Faculty A and WH&S Representative)

Another explained how it was important to spend time preparing on Sundays for Mondays.

I try very hard not to work on the weekend. And I'm exhausted by Friday. So if I do anything on the weekend I do a little bit on Sunday to prepare for Monday. But I rather work pretty hard during the week and take some time out on weekends...you need to have a break, whatever system you use it needs to be sustainable for that particular person. (HOS 6 Faculty C)

5.4 Summary

In summary this section revealed there were inconsistent approaches to implementing the WPS by the Implementers often due to how they perceived its suitability for their schools and the support or otherwise they received from senior management. Accordingly Guest and Bos-Nehles (2013) argue achievement of effective outcomes from HRM practices lies in the effectiveness of the implementation of the HRM practices. Further Guest and Bos-Nehles (2013) also argue if Implementers of HRM practices are not committed to the practice, it is more likely to result in implementation inconsistencies and unintended outcomes that reduce the strength of the HRM-performance relationship.

Several Implementers explained it was not a suitable model for their school but attempted to utilise it as best as possible, some did not use it at all. Others were prepared to utilise their discretion and autonomy with a flexible approach to adjusting profiles where possible that enabled some semblance of collegiality whereby they felt contributed to better health outcomes for academics. However there were also punitive uses of the WPS reported by some Implementers.

Consistent implementation and commitment to HR practices by managers and supervisors requires them to believe their efforts will have positive outcomes that contribute to employee job satisfaction and well-being (Dollard & Bailey, 2014). However the data from Study B indicated the Implementers did not generally perceive their efforts in the WPS contributed to academic job satisfaction and well-being generally because of resourcing constraints, time pressures of workloads and a lack of shared acceptance of the WPS by academic employees.

There was no consensus found among the Implementers about WPS as a positive tool in supporting them to manage workloads of academics or their workplace health.

Primarily they were faced with adapting to their current operational drivers with or without the support of their senior management. Opportunities or mechanisms to provide feedback that might enable longer term changes and improve how workloads could be management was lacking. It could be implied the messages coming from the senior management at *The University*, as indicated by the Implementers and findings from this study, are contributing to a low PSC and overall weak HRM processes. Inconsistencies and lack of consensus about the relevance of the WPS in supporting work place health and well-being was evident in Study B.

Additionally, factors impacting the capacity of some Implementers to consistently implement were also explained including preparedness for a management role, resourcing, job demands and trust and communication issues. However there were some unexpected findings that were outside of the scope of this thesis that bear highlighting such as the impacts on the health and well-being of several Implementers given their critical role in implementing HR practices. It could be argued that the poor health and well-being reported by Implementers was a result of them trying to implement a HR practice that doesn't align with available resources. It is also likely because of this mis-alignment, the longer term success of the WPS may also be impacted through loss of experience, skills, organisational knowledge and associated costs. Empirical findings from Study C data are presented in the next chapter where the attributions of academic employees are explored in relation to the research questions and their first-hand experience of working within the stipulations of the WPS.

CHAPTER SIX: Study C - The Experiencers

6.0 Introduction

Chapter Five presented findings from Study B participants (Implementers) who were tasked with the responsibility of implementing the work profile system (WPS) at *The University*. The data identified inconsistencies in implementation practices albeit across three diverse faculties, varying levels of commitment to the WPS and differing levels of autonomy within the participant group. Some Implementers thought the WPS provided a helpful framework to transparently and equitably distribute workloads which saved them time and resulted in fewer complaints from their teams. Yet other Implementers were opposed to the WPS as they said it did not appropriately represent the distinctive characteristics of an academic's role and thus resulted in many complaints by academics. These Implementers explained how they managed complaints with time consuming work arounds, shuffling resources or by arranging extra resourcing where it was budgetary possible.

Many Implementers said the WPS did not support health and well-being of their team members often because there was more work than was accounted for in the metrics. Implementers said they knew this caused frustration and anxiety amongst the academics although they said most academics did not directly report that they were experiencing poor health outcomes. Without being able to address health concerns directly, some Implementers intuitively reallocated work to ease the

workload of those team members who they recognized as showing signs of being stressed, such as irregular behaviour or physical symptoms. There were other reports from Study B participants who used the WPS punitively at times as a performance management tool whereby they modified work profiles, often increasing the teaching component. While it can't be definitively argued this type of use was an unintended outcome, there were indications amongst some Implementers they were only aware of its intention as a tool to oversee work allocation.

This chapter presents findings from Study C participants (Experiencers) about how they experience the WPS in the context of workload management and workplace well-being outcomes. There is a plethora of studies and reports about the changing nature of academia and the impacts of corporatisation, reduced government funding, increased student intakes, increased workloads and claims of stress by academics (Pignata et al., 2018). The traditional academic identity commonly associated with an autonomous and collegial culture is claimed to have been obstructed by the corporatisation of academia where auditing, accountability and performance demands are now well entrenched (Clarke, Knights, & Jarvis, 2012).

Yet, despite the growing literature about, and in response to the changes within academia there is limited empirical evidence obtained directly from the perspectives of academic employees (Gill, 2014). Further Rainnie et al. (2013) also suggest there is a scarceness of application of analytical skills by academics to their own workplace arrangements. This omission is significant to address and to gain a better understanding of the impacts on academics from a psychosocial perspective considering the future of academia and the important role academics play in research and educating future generations. Therefore this chapter goes some way to addressing these omissions by offering the perspectives of academic employees about the psychosocial workplace environment and first-hand experiences of the operationalisation of the WPS.

The PSC, a facet-specific component of organisational climate, is claimed to be a precursor to and critical determinant of working conditions (Dollard & Bakker, 2010). The PSC of an organisation can be impacted by external factors such as globalisation and national issues including government policies and legislation resulting in a change in labour markets, work intensification and job insecurity for employees (Dollard et al., 2014, p. 8). The psychological safety of employees, like the physical safety climate in organisations is mandated through legislation in many countries including Australia's Work Health and Safety (WH&S) Act (Safe Work Australia, 2014). This legislative protection covers employees against environmental, organisational and individual situations that can result in psychological harm such as work overload and excessive working hours.

Wright and Nishii (2013) argue further exploration of employee perceptions of HR practices is required to better understand how HR practices impact on organisational performance. Although organisational performance is not the main focus of this thesis, it is important to consider it when discussing health and well-being as evidence indicates organisational performance outcomes are linked to how employees react to HR practices and systems (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004; Huselid, 1995) Therefore, this chapter also explores the Wright and Nishii (2007) framework explaining how HR practices can have different outcomes for employees than was originally intended.

Data from 18 academic employees employed at *The University* were collected and analysed to understand their experience of working with a work profile system. Analysis of data highlighted how the allocation of workloads, work intensification and resourcing issues has become interconnected and interchangeable within the discourse of academia. Therefore throughout the interviews and presentation of the data analysis in this chapter it was not possible to completely isolate the topic of the WPS in operation at *The University* from other aspects associated with workloads articulated by participants. The next Section of this Chapter (6.1) begins with a brief overview of the WPS followed by Sections 6.2-6.3 (themes that emanated from analysis of interview data) and a Summary Section 6.4.

6.1 The work profile system

The HR practice of allocating academic workloads at *The University* proportions the broad role components of teaching, research and service through an overarching percentage based system referred to as work profiles. As noted in the Introduction Chapter (Page 22), there are three main work profiles. The principles of the work profile system (WPS) are embedded in *The University's* enterprise agreement (Public document). Metrics (See Appendix H) underpin the WPS guiding how much time academics should spend on certain tasks, more specifically relevant to activities that comprise the teaching component. The next section outlines how Experiencers at *The University* perceive the relevance of the WPS in relation to the management of their day to day workloads and as a supportive resource for their health and well-being.

6.2 Work profile system – workload management

Several participants in Study A (Designers) claimed the WPS was originally introduced with the intention to more equitably allocate workloads of academic employees allowing them to achieve in their areas of professional strength. Many participants interviewed for Study C explained the WPS had not achieved these outcomes. Instead they claimed workload demands increased because of expectations from senior management to excel across all three areas of their role. These expectations, they said contributed to them working more hours, adding to their stress levels and impacting their workplace well-being and work-life balance.

So you have to be a jack-of-all-trades as an academic, you have to be not just 20 per cent, 40 per cent and 40 per cent, you have to be 100-100-100 per cent, and that's what's stressing people out, you have to be super at everything. And I just worry about that. (E9 Faculty C)

This view is supported by colleagues in another Faculty, for example:

It's the expectations that you have to excel in three areas, whereas people are either really good at their teaching and would like a teaching career

and not that interested in doing research. And there's others that just want to focus on research and should be allowed to have really minimal teaching... and they say they do that but they don't. When you get to your academic review...when I was research intensive, we were still expected to do enough teaching to be able to be assessed on it, so it's a really difficult.... it's national, it's not just this university. And it's all the KPIs that you would have to meet to be satisfactory in your position. (E1 Faculty A)

Extending these claims, there was a prevailing argument by most Experiencers in Study C, the metrics underpinning the WPS did not reflect the actual requirements of their roles. The quotes below, while demonstrating Experiencer's views about the relevance of the WPS also highlight unwillingness by them to formally voice their concerns. Instead they chose to adopt an acquiescent attitude believing that little could be done to bring about change. When employees choose to be silent, or not to speak up, opportunities for senior management to gain and/or act on important information is lost (Milliken, Morrison, & Hewlin, 2003). Morrison (2014) proposes it is an organisational imperative to foster conditions to support employees in speaking up and to minimise barriers such as fear of being dismissed or viewed negatively. The PSC theory also promotes an environment that encourages employees to feel empowered to report concerns about health matters (Hall et al., 2010).

I don't have a problem with the workload allocation model. But when it comes to the matrices published by the various groups, somebody should actually take a look at those and say, "Does this reflect what we ask our academics and our people to do?" And if it doesn't reflect it, then somebody should fix the document, because there won't be any arguments and there won't be any awkwardness...and so...I just sit there and I go..."how many years have we had those matrices in place, and who has updated them?" (E18 Faculty A)

And similarly:

A lot of things go unrecognised; a lot of things you are expected to do without any sort of quantifiable way of measuring what they are and how much worktime they take. I often describe myself as 40-40-40, because it's 40 per cent research, 40 per cent teaching, and 40 per cent service. Do the math. And I think that's kind of... it's just all thrown together and you just have to deal with it, because what else are you going to do. (E8 Faculty B)

Dollard and Bakker (2010) argue where there is a lack of clear organisational policies and procedures for reporting work overload and fatigue or when employees perceive that if they report such concerns negative outcomes will ensue, there is low workplace PSC. Employees gain trust in management when espoused actions are observable resulting in a high workplace PSC and employees with a higher level of psychological health (Yulita, Dollard, & Idris, 2017). But participants in Study C explained there was growing reluctance by academics at *The University* to speak up about workload issues. Instead they opt to stay quiet about their concerns with management, and try to deal with the pressures themselves.

In some schools where there is not the best relationships between middle managers, Heads of School, and so on and staff, yes, they would be reluctant to put their head up and say, "I need more hours for this or I need more hours for that." because often the Heads of School might not know this, and then it's a problem with lack of knowledge, it's not a problem of [ignoring the issue]. (E12 Faculty B)

And:

It's because there is a culture of fear here now for speaking out, because it didn't exist ten years ago but it definitely exists now, so you can't identify yourself as struggling, wanting to talk about these things. So it's really scary if you're an employee of this organisation, so that's why we don't [speak up], It would be that you identify yourself as a problem employee and then that might manifest in a poor performance review, and so then you would be worried about ending up on probation. (E13 Faculty B)

There is a long line of scholarly enquiry investigating the powerful role occupational ideology has in mediating the decisions of employees' reluctance to voice their dissatisfaction with organisational policies and processes even though they may have a negative impact on the quality of their working environment (Hirschman, 1970). This research is largely based on the choice individuals have to either speak out with a hope that matters improve or to leave the organisation. While there is some evidence in the literature academics are making career and work-life choices and leaving academia in significant numbers (Kinman & Jones, 2008) this study did not find strong evidence of this.

The Experiencers interviewed for this study expressed views they had considered this option from time to time because of frustrations about workloads and where their voices had not been heard. This reluctance largely stemmed from professional and personal reservations about leaving *The University* including dedication to students and fear of becoming unemployed.

That day when I got the email from my deputy Head of School loading me up with additional work I actually seriously considered resigning, because I just felt like, "you're not listening." That was a straw, and hence everyone was like, "I've never seen you this angry before." And they hadn't; it was the straw, I'd had enough. This always happens - if it wasn't for my students I would have thrown it in. If I wasn't supervising a bunch of people who I know rely on me to be there, I'd throw it in, or that day I wanted to. (E17 Faculty C)

And another Experiencer expressed concerns about leaving without having another job to go to.

The other thing is that it's just not that easy to get another job, you are stuck...if this job ended for whatever reason, finding another one would be difficult, probably necessitate me moving to another city or something, another country. (E8 Faculty B)

Furthermore, other Experiencers acknowledge the competitive employment environment within the higher education sector could result in some academics staying in their roles despite the pressures experienced in the job. Some Experiencers thought *The University* recognised this situation and therefore management had reduced impetus to address the concerns of the academics. They said this left them to interpret this lack of response as a negative signal and left them feeling undervalued, despondent and contributed to a lack of motivation.

I think there's an argument that could be made...I would say it's opportunism where "We [The University] don't have to improve the condition when really... there is still a bloody long queue of people who want the job" so people must think that. But by and large they [academics] suck it up, but there must be some who give up. (E4 Faculty C)

As well as feelings of despondency, work overload was the main concern of Experiencers when management overlooked the impact it was having on their health and well-being such as working extended hours, weekends and evenings. For example:

Sometimes I feel like there is a little bit of exploitation going on. Especially with this addition of a new trimester, you don't pay the academics any extra for teaching in this third trimester, but everything is incorporated into the existing workload. So, I feel like sometimes there is a sense that we are being exploited. (E10 Faculty C)

When employees perceive the design of a HRM system lacks relevance to supporting goal achievement, their motivation to achieve goals is likely to be negatively impacted (Kelman & Hamilton, 1989). This is a key issue for this study investigating a WPS, claimed by many academics to be impacting their health and well-being due to time based metrics that do not accurately reflect their roles. The PSC theory, the guide for this study purports motivation is an extended pathway to positive health and workplace well-being outcomes (Dollard & Bailey, 2014). To provide quality teaching to students is considered to be an intrinsic

motivation of the academic profession (Kenny, 2016) therefore they require the appropriate resources and relevant HR practices to do so that in turn results in positive health outcomes of academics. A typical response came from Experiencer 11.

Yes. But I choose to work over. I sometimes complain in a sense. I could work less, and I choose to work longer hours because I don't like doing a job not well I suppose. So I get a lot of satisfaction out of teaching and supporting the students, and that does take time. (E11 Faculty C)

Participants described the time metrics of the WPS was not adequate for them to provide quality feedback in aspects of their teaching roles. The issue of time for quality feedback to students was also expressed by Study B participants who explained the WPS and time metrics seemed to be designed where academics had to make a choice between supporting their own well-being by restricting time they spend on students or to work extra hours and provide a better learning experience to students. Similarly, Experiencers said:

And I don't understand why they can't get that [marking metrics] right. You want us to give feedback to students, you want students to be happy, why can't you [The University] give the appropriate amount of time? When I'm marking, I review, if I've got 60, I put them in order, I'll check them to see for consistency, I'll take examples out to compare grades. I'll do all of these things to give better feedback and fairer marking. (E14 Faculty B)

A colleague from Faculty C explained it was important for him to find the balance between teaching and convening where he got to know the students although this involved more time that was not factored into the metric allocation. Therefore he worked more hours than coincided with the WPS's allocated metrics to achieve the job satisfaction he sought.

I would go over my allocated hours. But I guess it's difficult in the sense of convening and then wanting to teach an appropriate amount that you feel would be best for the students. So, for me personally I wouldn't really want to do a course where I convene and not have much face-to-face access with my students, because I feel I wouldn't build that rapport. So, it's kind of swings and roundabouts. I'm probably happy to maybe do a bit extra for the greater good of my students than stick solely to the tool then maybe jeopardize the quality of the course. (E16 Faculty C)

The same Experiencer also commented this came at a cost to his work-life balance:

So, the question is just time. Probably [I work] 10 hours a day, and then probably 10 hours on a weekend collectively. My wife says it has an impact on our work-life balance. (E16 Faculty C)

Collaboration between unions, employees and management is said to be fundamental to developing a healthy PSC where communication about the work environment is encouraged (Dollard & Karasek, 2010). However Morrison (2014) argues there are many reasons why employees choose not to speak up including the perceived effectiveness of systems for doing so, fear of consequences, lack of resources such as time to do so. Similar reasons were reflected in comments by Experiencers who were asked about opportunities or channels in place at *The University* to voice their concerns about the WPS and workloads. An Experiencer who was also a union representative explained academics often fail to consider the union as an option for taking up matters with management about work allocation problems. He thought this was often due to their lack of understanding about the enterprise agreement.

Some of the staff probably first of all are unsure about their rights in that respect, because that kind of requires a fairly sophisticated knowledge of the agreement and how that relates to workload models, and workload models have notoriously been inaccurate maps of what people do when

they don't have things in them which could potentially be a teaching activity which requires allocation and things like that. (E12 Faculty B)

Other Experiencers felt the unions had reduced negotiating influence in the current environment of the higher education sector therefore were seen to be unable to achieve better outcomes for their members. Despite this somewhat negative perception about the union effectiveness, 67 per cent of academics interviewed for Study C said they were union members.

No I don't talk to the unions. The Unions have lost all their power. Because, like I said, it's the current sort of political climate which is bigger than any of us, including the unions. My colleagues do though [speak to the union] but they're absolutely classed as trouble makers and everyone knows they're classed as troublemakers, and they know they don't get ahead because they are [classed as] trouble makers, absolutely. (E5 Faculty B)

On the other hand, some participants were satisfied with the way the WPS was implemented saying it was fairly and equitably decided and openly transparent.

In our school it's always been a fairly democratic process, there's a workload allocation meeting, a group, anyone can attend, you can have a say. Then we get an email with the attached draft, asking for any problems, any errors. But I think once those drafts are agreed to, there is an email that goes out that says, "attached is here" that's the workload, everybody can see it. It's alphabetical, one page per staff. (E 4 Faculty C)

Apart from the metrics underlying the WPS that many Experiencers have attributed as an inaccurate reflection of actual required time for tasks, many Experiencers also said some tasks such as administration were omitted from the WPS. Therefore extra time was required to complete tasks that were not acknowledged in the design of the WPS. Commonly the Experiencers said this resulted in working extended hours without formal recognition to complete the

tasks. This resulted in poor perceptions about how senior management valued their commitment to their role as an academic. A senior lecturer explained this type of unacknowledged work as: *“It’s [administrative work] low visibility academia, because it flies under the radar, but it can take up a lot of time.* (E17 Faculty C)

Similarly,

There is so much invisible work. And that’s why your workload is 55 plus hours because these systems never capture all the work you have to actually do. There’s nowhere in the teaching workload allocation that records all the little bits and pieces...there’s nowhere in the workload model that gives you credit for all that time you spend. (E4 Faculty C)

In order to attain a strong HRM system and for HR practices to achieve their intended outcomes where employees collectively understand what is expected, rewarded and valued, Bowen and Ostroff (2004) claim there are three criteria required. Of the three criteria; distinctiveness of the HR practice, consistency of messages to employees and consensus among those who send messages, the distinctiveness criteria includes four factors: “visibility, understand-ability, legitimacy of authority and relevance” (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004, p. 209). Relevance of HRM systems is contingent upon how effective employees perceive it to be in achieving specific goals (Kelman & Hamilton, 1989).

Study C highlights Experiencers tried to work within the boundaries of the WPS despite the difficulties outlined above, however the effectiveness of HR practices also depend on those in line manager support roles and on management priorities. There is some argument line managers do not efficiently perform well in HR responsibilities, often because they do not have the necessary support from senior management and because they often lack skills or opportunity to execute their roles effectively (Bos-Nehles et al., 2013). Hence the next section outlines how Experiencers in Study C perceive the role of their supervisors and Heads of School in supporting the effectiveness of the WPS in workload management of academic employees.

6.2.1 Work profile system – manager/supervisor support

Bowen and Ostroff (2004, p. 210) claim those in “positions of power or legitimate authority” such as line managers or supervisors can support employees to achieve goals through allocation of appropriate resources. This can be done either through using their authority to directly allocate resources or using their position of influence to affect allocation of resources (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004). Many Experiencers in Study C described how their Discipline Heads or Heads of School were often not able to affect resources that could support them to manage their workloads within the stipulations of the WPS. More specifically, their responses highlighted how Heads of School were constrained by budget and perceived to be somewhat powerless to adjust resources to meet demands. Bakker and Demerouti (2007) claim job resources are necessary to counteract job demands and reduce associated psychological impacts. This is a relevant claim for this study aiming to understand how workloads of academics can be allocated to better support psychological health of academic employees. Experiencer 4 explained how some Heads of Schools acquiesced to organisational resourcing limitations choosing to overlook how academics met the demands of the job with existing resources:

In terms of the actions you typically don't see much evidence of that [increased resourcing] ...a lot of times the Heads of Schools would see themselves as cogs in the machine, "I don't make the policy, I am here to make them work. I've got to find staff to teach all these courses, I've got to get people to do all these jobs." (E4 Faculty C)

Line managers' HR implementation practices can influence employee outcomes of performance, job satisfaction and perceptions of procedural justice, therefore it is important for line managers to be engaged and confident in their HR responsibilities (Sikora & Ferris, 2014). As previously outlined in this chapter, line managers require the support of senior management to affect HR practices. This includes the ability, motivation and opportunity afforded to them by the organisation, given a line managers' key role in implementing HR practices (Bos-Nehles et al., 2013).

Experiencer 1 explained how her direct supervisor was not empowered or engaged in her supervisory responsibilities because of her own role commitments. The same participant explained her Head of School was only concerned about ensuring there were enough resources to teach the courses:

So my immediate supervisor, I've met her once in the last 12 months. And because we're sort of equals [same level] she's just focused on her role...she's great, but I don't speak to her about this because she's powerless to do that. She's not in a position to...but my Head of School could... well he's so...I don't know whether you call him aloof or what, but I've come out of the meetings thinking he hasn't heard anything I've said. All he talks about is, "How am I going to get all this teaching done? We need people." (E1 Faculty A)

Some Experiencers claimed they did have supportive managers and supervisors who listened and assisted with workload adjustments where possible, albeit more reactively than proactively monitoring their team members' well-being. This phenomenon could be associated with the Implementers own workload demands inferred in quotes above and in the findings of Study B. The Implementers, it was found, were often not trained as managers or to undertake HR responsibilities thereby affecting their effectiveness as a line manager. Lepak, Liao, Chung, and Harden (2006) argue even when managers and supervisors have the ability and motivation to be effective in their HR roles, organisations must support them with appropriate opportunities to enable their skills to be used efficiently and to achieve the intended outcomes of HR practices. As demonstrated by the comments below, Experiencers 8 and 11 from two different faculties, acknowledged their supervisors would respond and adjust workloads if they could but only if it was brought to their attention.

They're nice people; they want me to be happy in my work, so yes we do have those sorts of conversations. And as I've said, if I was overloaded and I could if I felt I had to talk to them and say, "Listen, I need to offload

this and I need to make my life a little bit more manageable." And I think they would accommodate me as much as they could. (E8 Faculty B)

And similarly:

My supervisor [Deputy Head (L&T)] is good in the sense that... it's not that I couldn't raise things with her, I think she would like to know, I know that she'd be welcoming of that conversation. If I were to turn to her and say I was feeling overwhelmed, I feel confident that she'd be welcoming of that conversation. So there's a structured process which is very odd, which is this once a year conversation, and she doesn't have a vision for how that would operate and it's not a particularly meaningful sort of process. So her approach is sort of passive, and I think that's quite typical. Her approach is "if there is a problem come and see me but otherwise don't expect for me to be popping in and talking to you". (E11 Faculty C)

Additionally, some Experiencers explained there was often disruption to management of teams due to the transitory nature of the Head and Deputy Head of School roles. Ostroff and Bowen (2016) discuss the importance of consistency in administration of HR practices so as to achieve shared perceptions and understanding of the intention of the HR practices across the workforce. Quotes from Experiencer 11 and 13 below explained how regularly there were disruptions to managers and supervisors in their faculties and how they perceived it had resulted in a lack of leadership and continuity of management direction.

Our school has been a mess basically in terms of a leadership sort of perspective. So we had someone who was employed as the Head of School who didn't apply for the job but had applied for another job but was unsuccessful so was appointed to that job [our Head of School], but didn't really want to be in that job. He then went off and someone else was acting in that role, but then she took ASP and the first person came back into the role, but now he's finishing up and we're about to find out who our new Head of School. So I think the staff in our school would sort of say that we've felt a little bit like we haven't been well-served in terms of someone

who wants to be Head of School and who is energized about being Head of School. (E11 Faculty C)

And:

I've had 11 supervisors in 17 years, and the current one is the only one I've had for longer than a year...they keep moving because of turnover at that level of the organisation. (E13 Faculty B)

Many of the participants in Study C described how they had three different supervisors to report to for each component of their work profile (Research, teaching and service). Moreover Experiencer 6 explained the supervisor who was responsible for his annual performance review did not have any role in overseeing any of his day to day activities:

My supervisor, who is excellent, is a very good supervisor. So, he does my performance review, but he doesn't have anything to do with my research, teaching or service. (E6 Faculty B)

Furthermore, the three components of his work profile were monitored by three different supervisors each with their own expectations who did not take into account demands from each of the other areas. He explained this was due to the balanced work profile:

And because it's a 40-40-20, the managerial lines are split. So, the person that manages my teaching is not the same person that manages my research or that manages service. So, somebody will look at your teaching allocation as if that's all that you do. And if you make the argument "It will impact on my research" they're like "Try another [excuse] and I don't know, that doesn't matter, my focus is on your teaching". And if the person who is managing your research, you say to them, "I have a lot of teaching, I've been doing a lot of teaching" it doesn't count. It's outside their area. (E6 Faculty B)

Further it was explained there was no apparent co-ordinated approach or communication between the supervisors resulting in conflicting role priorities and lack of clarity for the academics about which part of their role was considered most important. Some Experiencers pointed out there were negative consequences for academics if they were deemed by supervisors to have performed unsatisfactorily in one area of their work profile, such as when Heads of School punitively changed the percentages of work profiles changing the profile focus. This occurrence was also acknowledged by several participants in Study B (Implementers) who said they sometimes used this form of performance management. Experiencer 6 explained how this practice was enacted in his faculty and the perceived negative and inconsistent message it imparted:

Pretty much everyone is on a balanced workload. And the ones who don't do good research are given a teaching profile, intense teaching profile as a punishment. So, you can't be promoted on the basis of teaching [and] if you don't do enough research you're certainly given more teaching. What is the signal that you're sending? It's a very unmistakable signal. And a research-intensive profile is a chimera, it's an illusion. (E6 Faculty B)

The Katz and Kahn (1978, p. 204) explain role conflict as the “simultaneous occurrence of two or more role expectations such that compliance with one would make compliance with the other more difficult” is relevant to Experiencer’s in this study. The examples provided in Study C highlight how academics experience role conflict as a result of having multiple supervisors each with their own expectations and priorities. Furthermore, and relevant to this thesis, seminal scholars such as House and Rizzo (1972), Jackson and Schuler (1985) and Kahn et al. (1964) claim inconsistent or incompatible demands, if not minimised can lead to dissatisfaction, anxiety, lower commitment and lower performance levels of employees.

To achieve a strong HR system and a high PSC workplace where the larger HR message about employees’ workplace well-being is an organisational priority requires consensus among message senders and perceptions of fair processes by

employees (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004). Experiencer 13 questioned why factors contributing to inconsistent messages and a perceived low PSC were not addressed by management at *The University*.

I think the related question is why is it that managers don't see this issue? And that's a thing that I find really incredible because a lot of them have social justice commitments and beliefs, yet if they can't see what they're doing day to day as they make ethical decisions, or I would say unethical decisions about work modes and the management of their staff. (E13 Faculty B)

However, there was also some empathy expressed for the Head of School and Discipline Head roles by Study C participants when trying to apply the WPS. They acknowledged the role was required to balance organisational requirements ensuring there were enough resources allocated to teaching responsibilities.

I guess there are several tiers to it. The head of the school will oversee the load, but within it we have Discipline Heads as well, but I do feel sorry for him [Discipline Head], he's never going to be a popular person because he's always got more hours to give out and less people to give them out to. (E 7 Faculty A)

This view is further expanded by a colleague of Experiencer 7 who stated:

And I've heard people complaining about her, and I said, "Can you just look at it from her perspective as well? This is what she's dealing with." And they are like, "Oh. But..." I'm like, "No, no, no. You don't want her job, because if you think you've got it bad now, imagine being her" because I don't want her job either, there is no way I want to be in any part of that. (E 17 Faculty C)

6.2.2 Management priority

Many Experiencers thought productivity and outputs were more important to senior management than the manner in which workloads were allocated and managed. Management priority where employee well-being is considered to be equal to a productivity focus is one of the four main principles of the PSC theory (Dollard & Bakker, 2010), the theory guiding this study. Many Experiencers claimed job demands outweighed resources and their senior management were either unaware of these concerns or not prepared to make additional resources available. For example, a large science based group had lost approximately ten personnel through redundancies and remaining academics were covering the teaching gaps left behind. Some participants expressed concerns about budgeting decisions made at the higher levels within *The University* about resourcing requirements not meeting operational demands and a lack of input invited from employees who were more closely aligned with actual requirements. Two Experiencers from different faculties highlighted their concerns about the impact on their health and well-being due to what they considered to be inadequate priority given to appropriate resourcing:

Quite honestly if the University intend to make it manageable, the University has to open the purse strings. We can only go on like this for a certain period of time, and it's only a matter of time before someone falls dead of a heart attack at their desk, it is only a matter of time. I know I'm sounding dramatic on that, but I sort of do feel strongly about this. (E7 Faculty A)

And:

I know there is a sessional budget, and I think the pressure or the feeling is to save sessional money, so if they [management] don't need a sessional there or if they [management] don't want you to have a sessional, it's like "why do you need him or her there? Can't you do that one yourself?" And that worries me too because it's diluting out the learning experience of students if we have to not get sessionals [casuals] when we need them, so I worry a little bit about that too. (E9 Faculty C)

Despite findings from Study A where some participants claimed the WPS would enable academics to play to their professional strengths and, in turn, lead to job satisfaction and support better health and well-being outcomes, many Experiencers disagreed with this. The following quotes support some suggestions the WPS is perceived to be more aligned with organisational requirements than individual employee's career aspirations. Additionally, many Experiencers said they did not feel there were consistent processes in place to support individual academic's strengths or transparent processes when deciding how work profiles were assigned.

The reality comes back to there is no option because we have X amount of staff and Y amount of teaching, so it's Y divided by X, that's the amount of teaching you get, it's a simple as that. The fact that we're doing substantially more teaching than we were a few years ago, and they're using artificial metrics to make it look like we're doing the same or less, gives them the impetus to be able to say that you're doing the same or less and throws more on you. (E7 Faculty A)

And other comments suggested lack of collaboration had resulted in a lack of justice about how the work profiles were decided. For example:

There's no discussion and this is my experience in this school for the last 16 years...there is no discussion about...so we don't get together and go, "Who can teach what? What do you want to teach? Or who would prefer to convene?" It comes out on a spreadsheet and you're just expected to accept it, no one discusses it with you. No consultation or negotiation. (E1 Faculty A)

There is evidence showing workplace well-being can be negatively impacted if career progression is stifled (Ismail & Gali, 2016). Scholars have argued that university processes for career development should provide more flexible and transparent expectation guidelines with career development pathways (Smith, Crookes, Else, & Crookes, 2012). By way of example, Experiencer 2 from a

different discipline within Faculty A explained the WPS did not facilitate promotions because its design did not accurately reflect the job design of an academic's role:

The workload allocation [WPS] does not support careers here...because the thing is here at this university, and I think it's a bit everywhere, of course you are evaluated on your performance, but mostly on your research performance and on the amount of money you bring in. And I think it's a wrong model in the sense that you need to be teaching, you need to have also a very good performance in teaching, and that takes a lot of time if you want to do it very well. And because the workload profile is not reflecting exactly what you are doing, you might spend much more time teaching than researching. (E2 Faculty A)

And Experiencer 6 highlighted how the intrinsic motivation to his profession often led him to working extended hours but he also said there was an expectation to do extra work so as to be seen favourably for promotions. However this often ended in a lack of clarity about that expectation.

The thing about this allocation model, if you want to get ahead then it's not just about meeting terms, you have to exceed them. So, I find that people are encouraged to work hard in order to get ahead and obviously much harder than they're required to, and this is part of it as well. I love my job, which is why I put up with that workload allocation. I love my job, I really do. (E 6 Faculty B)

The next section of this chapter considers the relevance of the WPS to how Experiencers perceive it is a supportive mechanism for their workplace health and well-being.

6.3 Work profile system - workplace health and well-being

In addition to previously stated arguments, Ostroff and Bowen (2016) also claim the intention of HR practices will not be visible to employees unless messages

about the HR practices are consistent and HR practices are perceived to be fair. Many of the participants for Study C explained they thought there was a lack of clarity about role priorities, time allocations and they thought management expectations required more visibility and clearer communication that would provide more information for them and assist them in understanding expectations. Despite the academic profession more commonly associated with an autonomous and flexible culture the introduction of quantitatively applied metrics and specified working hours has resulted in a different mindset and focus about how much work is done and delivered.

Many Experiencers were concerned they were not meeting expectations and were unsure about how much workload was expected. As discussed earlier in Chapter 5, role clarity and uncertainty for employees about role expectations depends on the clarity of information they are provided about the expectations of their role (Kahn et al., 1964). Additionally Bowen and Ostroff (2004) argue the importance of consistent and distinctive communication of HR related practices to send clear messages to employees.

There isn't a clear workload framework in terms of how work... so no one knows how much they're meant to be doing, and so when they're asked to do more, no one has any sort of capacity to know sort of the basis, say I'm a lecturer, I'm at capacity now so I can't do anymore, but there's no sort of transparent agreement. (E16 Faculty C)

Similarly:

The problem is partly that some of it is a bit nebulous, as I say, the service, you just don't know how much you're supposed to be doing. And even the research, you don't know how much you're supposed to be doing, so it's hard to say if you're doing too much or not enough or what. If service was you got a certain number of points for being convenor of such and such a committee, or if you have a certain amount of points for being the HDR convenor, so at least you knew how it all factored in together to create your overall workload, but you don't right now. (E 8 Faculty B)

Robertson and Germov (2015) argue it is possible to develop a work allocation system that incorporates principles such as equity and transparency and also links to the organisations budget and resource planning processes. This is achieved through a clear methodology, easily understood and widely accepted by academic staff. Employees develop interpretations of HR practices from the signals they receive from their organisations about the intention of the practice and what that means for them as employees (Ostroff & Bowen, 2016). A senior lecturer said while they have opportunity for input via a colleague who is a representative on a workload committee, the colleague's presence and input was interpreted as not being well received and the meetings were often strained. This made other colleagues reticent to openly contribute to the discussions. The PSC theory supports the notion of freedom for employees to voice their concerns about health related matters in an open and safe environment (Dollard et al., 2012)

So nearly every year we have a discussion in school committee where we're told actually...it's called consultation...but it's not because we're told what the new formula will be. And so really that framework is designed by the deputy Head of School, teaching and learning...but in fairness in conjunction with a subcommittee which always has union representation like our colleague XX, so he's on it, he's really good [he speaks up for his colleagues] but he gets roused on, I don't know how he does it actually, the poor guy...there is no way I would take that sort of risk [speaking up]. (E6 Faculty B)

However Blewett and Dorrian (2012) argue employee participation in decision making about health and safety outcomes results in a sense of control, autonomy and improved communication. Perceptions of justice are also equally important for organisational effectiveness and the well-being of employees (Poole, 2007). Procedural justice emphasises the importance of fairness of procedures used such as decision criteria, voice and control of processes (Greenberg, 1990). Poole (2007, p. 730) argues “people are more likely to perceive that a decision is fair if they feel they have had a voice or sense of process control”.

Study A for this thesis identified that many Designer participants believed the WPS was introduced as a fairer and more equitable system for allocating workloads of academic employees and would lead to mutual benefits with improved organisational outcomes and improved health and well-being for staff. Yet there were also many Implementers in Study B who said it was not introduced collaboratively. Many participants in Study C said they did not think there was enough consultation and transparency about how decisions were made about how the work profiles were allocated. The participants who thought work profiles were not decided transparently also said it was not an open process and it was not possible to know the profiles of colleagues unless the colleagues chose to divulge the information. *“No it is not transparent - you don't know what anyone else's profile is. No, not unless you ask or find out over time if someone is teaching focused or not”*. (E 9 Faculty C)

A lack of transparency can also contribute to colleagues becoming suspicious of each other and creating tensions between colleagues and impacting on employee behaviour and attitudes (Poole, 2007) as illustrated in the quote below:

The process itself is public, so the formulas they use, the targets, they are set. The individual workload profiles are not made public or are easily accessible and not everyone talks about their profile. There are some who are quite open about it, in particular the ones I work fairly close to, and actually that's part of my personal gauge for how things are happening fairly. Which is if someone is having a serious health impact from the workload, I assume that they are pulling their fair weight. And if someone is walking around happy, you sort of assumed maybe they are not. (E 5 Faculty B)

When HR practices do not send consistent messages to employees it is unlikely employees will perceive the HR practice as distinctive and relevant for their requirements and can negatively impact the likelihood of achieving a strong HRM system (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004). Therefore it could be implied that the approach to HRM process highlights the importance of the psychological process

and how employees attach meaning (Sanders, Shipton, & Gomes, 2014) as could be understood from the Experiencer 5's attribution above.

Other Study C participants expressed concerns about the health outcomes of colleagues who they thought were working excessively without monitoring by management or providing additional resourcing and described the approach to health and safety as reactive at *The University*. The second pillar of the PSC Theory guiding this research highlights management priority about health and well-being and how employee psychological health is as important as productivity (Hall et al., 2010). The comments below shed light on employee perceptions about the PSC of *The University* and management's prioritisation of job demands and health and safety processes.

I don't know whether there is any mechanism for doing it [monitoring workloads], and I think that's the problem with all of these things. If you've got a finite resource, then The University just keeps fudging the numbers, so of course when I first started here you got four hours of time allocation for every hour of lecture you gave, now we only get three. And you used to get three hours for labs and now you only get two, and so it's just a fudge to make you do more for less reward. (E 3 Faculty A)

And:

The University's health and safety people have no clue how to manage health and safety in a large organization. Their workplace health is entirely reactive, it's all "wait until someone gets injured or the health equivalent of being injured and then ask them to self-identify and then respond". (E 5 Faculty B)

According to a 2015 workloads survey conducted by the National Tertiary Education Union, academics provide much additional free and unaccounted for labour above the nominal 1725 hours per annum (or 37.5 hours per week). The Union's survey found that more than 85 per cent of the full time academics who were surveyed across Australia worked in excess of 40 hours per week. Furthermore almost 50 per cent of those 85 per cent worked in excess of 50 hours

per week. This would coincide with comments from participants about having to work longer hours to meet their workload obligations. When participants were asked about discretionary contributions to their workloads, a common response was in congruence with the findings from the Union survey.

It adds up to way more than say the thirty seven hours I'm paid for. On average across the year I work 50/55 hours a week. I would say one half times more than I am paid for. (E 4 Faculty C)

Another Experiencer said:

I regularly get here... a late start for me is 8:30, I'm usually here at 8:00, and an early finish about 6:30, 7:00. That's 11 hour a day and I always take two hours work home with me. So 12 to 13-hour day is normal, it's not unusual, it's normal five days a week, and quite often a bit of work that I have taken home with me on the weekend as well. So a 60-65 hour week is normal and has been for the last year or two. (E7 Faculty A)

Despite the espoused acceptance by Experiencers about undertaking the additional work, participants expressed concern about management's implicit expectation that the work would continue to be done. There were also claims from other participants of Study C who felt there was no recognition for the additional hours worked. Commonly it was claimed by Experiencers the many discretionary hours could be contributing to poor health outcomes that are not officially reported. Yet Morrison (2014) argues when employees withhold input by staying silent or not voicing about workplace matters, is potentially depriving organisations of useful information. In the case of not reporting health related matters to *The University* it may be resulting in counter-productive outcomes for academic employees.

There are however reasons why employees do not speak up and this has been discussed in this chapter posited to perceptions of fear of repercussions, a situation that is incongruent with a high PSC in the workplace (Potter et al., 2019) where organisational climate is linked to psychological health of employees (Law, Dollard, Tuckey, & Dormann, 2011). The two quotes below by Experiencers

from different faculties explain while they know the workplace health of colleagues has been impacted, those colleagues had not formally reported it.

I see a lot of people suffering quietly from stress. And the stress may just manifest into a physical illness that is not necessarily tied to the stress behind it. But they [academics] don't talk about it. (E16 Faculty C)

Experiencer 8 concurred with this:

I would say productivity is obviously important to them. Workplace health, as I said before, they have a sort of nod towards it, but a lot more could be done, and there is a lot of people who are sort of suffering with one thing or another, depression and anxiety are probably the key ones. It's not an uncommon conversation to have with people. They don't usually say, "Well, I'm depressed and anxious right now." But they do quite often say, "When I went to the counsellor the other day they said I should blah, blah, blah." That's not an uncommon conversation. (E8 Faculty B)

Other participants in Study C explained some colleagues took more control of their workloads deciding to work within the allocated timeframes and notional hours of 37.5 hours per week, as per the enterprise agreement, but this impacted other colleagues who felt they were left to pick up the additional work. Peiperl and Jones (2001) claim that unless employees achieve desired rewards of promotions or recognition they often leave the organisation or withdraw their labour contributions. It was found in Study B, investigating implementation of the WPS, some Implementers also commented there were academics who chose to work the notional 37.5 hours per week as per the enterprise agreement. Some Experiencers explained how this approach by colleagues impacted other members of the school. *"They just sort of throw things at you and you are expected to do them. And if you don't do them, it's your colleagues who suffer"*. (E8 Faculty B)

And:

I know one staff member who does everything in terms of the hours, so 20 per cent of this [many hours] and she exhausts all of her stuff [work allocation] in just doing the convenor role, she exhausts the time that is

allocated for service, and does no other service. And that's why people like me end up doing all of these dual roles because you keep saying, "OK, fine there's nobody else that will do it." (E6 Faculty B)

The next section highlights the impacts on work and family pressures as a result of extended working hours.

6.3.1 Work profile system: Time pressures - work and family

Generally, the participants of Study C said they feel pressure and stress when trying to fulfil demands of their roles within certain time frames continuing to work at home or working additional hours in the office until tasks are completed either. Working extended hours, is usually found to be an unsustainable practice leading to energy depletion and can also impact employees' motivation at work (Demerouti et al., 2001). Experiencers described how the expectation to work extended hours was commonly accepted at *The University*, yet it was not a sustainable practice if there was limited time for recovery between finishing tasks and restarting work. "...you can't have a downtime. You might have a research day, but they'll still contact you. It's just having the time to think". (E18 Faculty A)

It's [extended hours] having an effect on the time needed to decompress, I guess a workaholic can work every day of the year. But very few people are actually really like that, because the rest of us... even robots break down so humans break down too. (E9 Faculty C)

Many participants in Study C also discussed how the work demands and time pressures conflicted with their home life responsibilities and the psychological impact such as feelings of guilt about compromising family time had on them. Frone, Russell, and Cooper (1992) claim work-family conflict has been linked to stress and well-being outcomes for employees also impacting on performance outcomes for organisations. This is evident with our sample:

I feel a sense of guilt and extra stress though when I am working long hours. Yes. So what I will do also sometimes is when I come back only at 6:00pm, I am with them [the family] and then I work, let's say from 8:00pm to 11:00pm, I work at home. So I have a replica of that [computer] in my home and I work there. And I know it's not good. (E2 Faculty A)

And similarly:

The workload document comes out just before semester starts, so you sometimes don't even know what you're doing. It is hard to prepare for your own non work-life when you don't know what's coming up. The workload allocation is not taken into consideration or used as a resource that could be used to balance work and home life [for academics]. (E1 Faculty A)

While *The University* supports flexible work with HR policies and practices in place (Internal document), Experiencers described the actual hours required to fulfil their work commitments created a blurring of boundaries between work and home. Yet Waters and Bardoel (2006) argue despite work-family policies available in most Australian universities the increased demands on employees has eroded the overall benefit of having the policies. Additionally, some participants felt there was more emphasis on budgets and productivity than enquiring about employees' well-being. Again, referring to a high PSC environment where the main premise of the PSC theory espouses employee well-being equally prioritised with productivity outcomes, some examples provided in this thesis do not indicate this is always the case at *The University*. Examples provided by two colleagues from Faculty B:

I would say productivity is obviously important to them. Workplace health, as I said before, they have a sort of nod towards it, but a lot more could be done, and there is a lot of people who are sort of suffering with one thing or another, depression and anxiety are probably the key ones. It's not an uncommon conversation to have with people [colleagues]. They don't usually say, "Well, I'm depressed and anxious right now." But they do

quite often say, "When I went to the counsellor the other day they said I should blah, blah, blah." That's not an uncommon conversation. (E8 Faculty B)

And E14 said:

The things that really resonated with me from staff meetings are generally conversations about budgets, conversations about student retention, less so about how you're feeling. (E14 Faculty B)

Most of the participants from Study C thought *The University* did not fully adhere to workplace health legislation. Explanations for this perception included business outcomes were prioritised over health prevention, legislation was not taken seriously enough and a perceived disconnect between policy, communication and implementation.

Regarding the workplace health and legislation...I think decreasingly so the organisation takes that seriously enough. It's a business, they are trying to push more and more students through, that's the source of their income, and they are trying to do it as economically as possible, which involves all sorts of cutting corners like casualization of workforce and so forth, requiring people [managers] to incrementally increase the workload on staff. (E 4 Faculty C)

And:

The hours that I work are not monitored or assessed. The official record of workload allocation is monitored and assessed. The physical number of hours I spend within the building, I don't think anyone would be aware of...other work colleagues would informally monitor and assess general levels of stress by asking, "How are you?" (E5 Faculty B)

An assessment of PSC in European workplaces by Dollard and Nesar (2013) found external pressures in the form of enforced health and safety legislation can contribute to better management and healthier workplace outcomes for employees. Responses from Study C participants indicated workplace health

policies and available support in matters regarding psychosocial health were inconsistently understood. The majority of academic employees interviewed were vague when explaining how to access the workplace health policies. Comments included *I think the information is there on the website or the intranet or that kind of thing. So, if you seek it you'll find it* (E6 Faculty B). Another participant similarly said *“No, not really. I have probably no idea who I might first go to”*. (E16 Faculty C)

In the event employees are provided with clear and consistent communication about HR practices, there is more likely to be positive consensus about the work environment (Ostroff & Bowen, 2016) in the case of this study, more positive attitudes about perceptions of the workplace health priorities of *The University*.

Participants explained accessing *The University's* WH&S processes included the individuals accessing counselling services or reporting stress related illness through online processes. However, participants saw this as depersonalising what they felt required more support and understanding from the organisation. Other responses described a self-report approach for health-related issues rather than organisational HR processes that facilitated a two way approach for raising or following up on health and well-being of academics.

I know the workplace health policies are there, they send you links. No one comes and sits down and talks to you and go, "This is what you need to do." So you have to do everything as a self-servicing type of arrangement. I just feel like that's [health] never been taken into consideration and you have to battle on your own. If you do actually express your concerns about your health it is taken negatively. And actually advice from HR was not to use the word stress. (E1 Faculty A)

Another colleague said:

I would say they are not taking it [legislation] seriously and because it is a legal obligation, if you set that train in process, I can't help but be convinced you'll be flagged as a trouble maker”. (E6 Faculty B)

Some of the Experiencer participants from Study C demonstrated their lack of clarity between WH&S policy and health and well-being initiatives. Zohar (2008) agrees it is difficult for employees to distinguish between formal policies, practices and procedures that are less accessible than enacted practices that are more observable. Comments such as “*Yes, I definitely see the communication that comes out about wellness week etcetera*” (E10 Faculty C) and “*I have heard of it [WH&S policy], because occasionally you get an email about well-being month, healthy well-being month and events that go on*” (E9 Faculty C) could suggest there was unclear and inconsistent awareness messaging about *The University’s* formal obligations about WH&S legislation and their policies.

6.4 Summary

This section has presented views of Study C participants – Experiencers, who are academic employees at *The University*. *The University’s* approach to supporting and communicating workplace health legislation through enacted policies and procedures was perceived by the majority of Experiencers to warrant more proactivity. However, responses of the Experiencers indicate they are not proactively assertive in addressing concerns with either the hierarchy or seeking union support for perceived unfair or inappropriate work allocation matters that impact their health. The reasons given for this by Experiencers to formally report was based on their concerns about repercussions impacting tenure, or promotion, or poor formal ‘safe’ mechanisms for doing so. Suspicion and concern expressed about senior management’s perceived ability to use their managerial power to cease employment through redundancies or unsatisfactory performance reviews indicated a general lack of trust about job security amongst Experiencers at *The University*. However, this situation is not congruent with the safety net condition of continuing employment as per *The University’s* enterprise agreement (Public document).

Further, it is proposed as an outcome of this study, HR systems that support relevant and distinctive processes, with effective feedback mechanisms reaching senior management, could result in improved employee health and well-being outcomes as an indicator of organisational performance. The data analysis also

exposed inconsistencies about transparency of the WPS across schools and faculties. This section of the findings revealed job demands among participants consisted of concerns around job design where their role encompassed three different aspects they considered were not always weighted appropriately. It was also considered by most participants, conceptually the WPS was not an unreasonable framework for proportioning their role components however it was the underlying time-based metrics and unaccounted for tasks and senior management's expectations about what they considered was possible. This contributed to working extended hours over and above the notional 37.5 hours per week or 1725 hours per annum as per the enterprise agreement. Additionally, there was some evidence of role conflict and role ambiguity with participants who explained there a lack of clarity about expectations and priorities in what was required to be done across their roles. Multiple supervisors who each had their own agendas and outcome expectations also created role conflict for academics about performance expectations.

Experiencers described incongruence between the HR practice of the WPS and relevance to what their roles fully entail. Furthermore, conflict and ambiguity between aspects of their roles, work and family time pressures impacted on their workplace health and well-being. However, many said they were reluctant to voice their concerns formally or felt they were not involved sufficiently in decision making and perceived inconsistencies in transparency of processes about how work profiles were decided and allocated.

CHAPTER SEVEN: Discussion and Conclusion

7.0 Introduction

The preceding three chapters of the thesis presented findings from a case study investigation aimed at understanding how a work profile system (WPS) can be used to support workplace health and well-being of academic employees. To achieve this aim a qualitative methodological approach was used in a three tiered embedded case study seeking multiple perspectives from a cross section of participants (Yin, 2013). In addition to moral, ethical and productivity reasons to safeguard health there are legal requirements as well. The psychological safety of employees, like the physical safety climate in organisations is mandated through legislation in many countries including Australia's Work Health and Safety (WH&S) Act (Safe Work Australia, 2014). This legislative protection covers employees against environmental, organisational and individual situations that can result in psychological harm.

This chapter presents the discussion section and conclusion of the thesis. The discussion section analyses the emergent themes from Studies A, B, and C against the guiding theory for this thesis and against existing empirical research. The discussion section also highlights both limitations of the study and opportunities for further investigation. The conclusion summarises the foundations of the thesis and clarifies the contribution to knowledge made by the study. The theoretical contribution to the HRM discipline with a focus on psychosocial factors

impacting work place health outcomes for academic employees is presented. The research focus of this study is organisational factors (internal and external) that affect PSC of *The University* and in turn policies, procedures and processes that impact the workplace health of academics.

To understand this phenomenon, the views of 52 key informants were examined with semi-structured interviews providing the primary source of data. Three tiers of informants provided rich layers of data including perspectives from those involved in the original design of the system (Study A) such as senior management and HR personnel; Implementers of the system (Study B) including Heads of School, Deputy Heads of School and Discipline Heads; and academic employees (Study C) who experience the operationalisation of the system. Guest and Conway (2011) assert there is a strong case for understanding the different stakeholder perspectives on HR practices where more commonly they are sought from employees rather than senior managers. Their claim is based on senior managers having more influence over the strategic HRM decisions made by organisations. For this study, it was important to include senior managers in the data collection as they were directly involved in the original decision to introduce a WPS. Therefore the inclusion of three levels of stakeholder perceptions provides a more holistic understanding of decisions about HRM practice and implementation thereof.

Applying the process model of SHRM (Figure 7.1 below), the perspectives of the three groups of participants enabled a cross comparison of responses to the overarching research question posed: ***How can a WPS support workplace health and well-being of academic employees?***

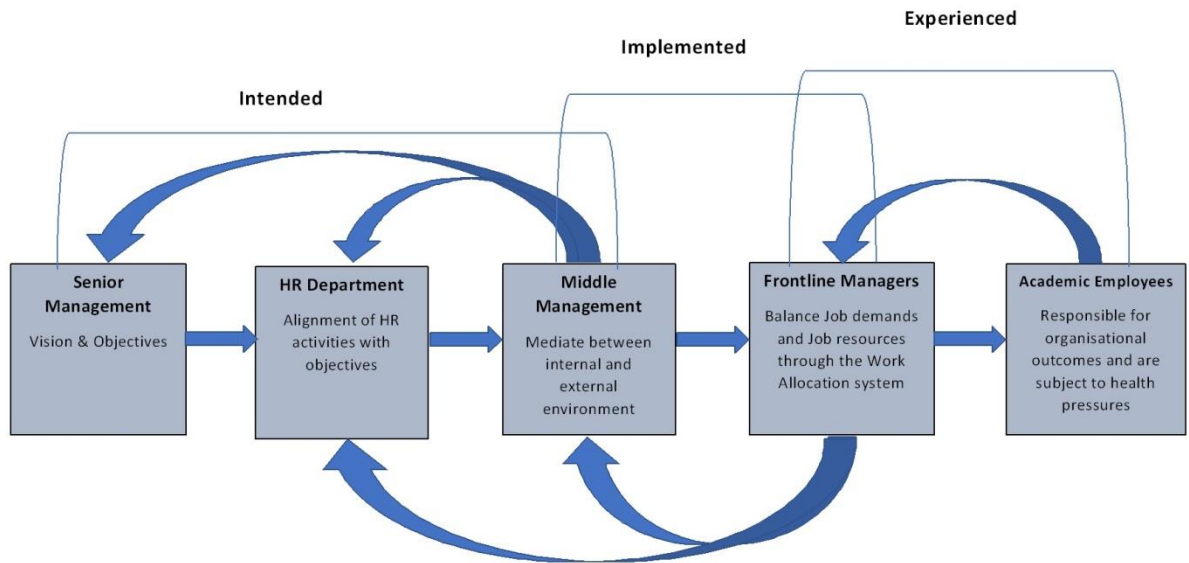


Figure 7.1: A depiction of mediating relationships and multiple levels of analysis undertaken in examining different perspectives of stakeholders at The University: Adapted from the process model of SHRM (Wright & Nishii, 2007)

Additionally, *The University's* official Minutes from enterprise bargaining meetings and other strategy documents provided supplementary sources of data. These additional data sources also provided an understanding of the research context and identified areas for follow up in interviews. Additionally the Minutes provided a source of reference to cross corroborate findings from the interview participants. While already presented in Chapter Two the research questions posed for each study investigating the overarching research question are also presented below:

Study A: Designers

The following sub-research questions (RQs) aimed to understand the intention of the strategic managers and HR personnel who brought about the change to how work was allocated at *The University* during the 2000s. Additionally sub-RQ 2 aimed to understand how the Designers perceived the system (almost a decade after its introduction), as a supportive resource for the workplace health of academic employees.

A1) How did workplace health of academic employees feature in the policy designers' decision-making when introducing WPS?

A2) How effective do strategic managers/HR personnel perceive the WPS to be in supporting the workplace health of academic employees?

Study B: Implementers (Line/frontline managers)

The sub-RQs aimed to understand the perspectives of those who are tasked with implementing the WPS in more recent times. Furthermore, sub-RQ B2 aims to understand how Implementers perceive their role in supporting the workplace health of academic employees they supervise.

B1) How do Implementers perceive the WPS supports the management of academic workloads?

B2) How do Implementers perceive the WPS supports the workplace health and well-being of academic employees?

Study C: Experiencers (academic employees)

The sub-RQs for this study aimed to understand the perceptions of academic employees who are required to work within the stipulations of the work profile system and in particular how they perceive the system to be as a resource for supporting their workplace health.

C1) How do academic employees perceive the WPS supports their workplace health?

C2) How do academic employees perceive the WPS is an effective mechanism for managing their workloads?

The literature review identified multiple investigations of the higher education sector, both in Australia and worldwide about linking increasing workloads of academic employees to poor health and well-being outcomes. The investigations were conducted in Australia by government departments, the National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU) and research institutions. However, given the ongoing investigations and continuing conjecture attributing changed organisational factors to poor workplace health outcomes of academics, it is evident no clear resolution has been found.

Guest et al. (2013) argues future research examining HR practices and how they are decided is needed to gain a more pluralist perspective of all stakeholders. This thesis examined perceptions of academic employees including academic managers who implement HR practices as well as senior management and HR personnel who design HR practices for workload allocation. The research design for this study supports the claim by Guest et al. (2013, p. 203) there is a need for multiple stakeholder perspectives and broader organisational contexts to inspire outcomes of “legitimacy, fairness, sustainability and mutual benefits” from HRM.

Additionally, prior to organisations deciding on job redesign practices intended to achieve well-being outcomes, Grant et al. (2007) claim more strategic long term analysis is required. The Psychosocial safety climate (PSC) theoretical model was helpful in guiding the study by providing a framework explaining the origins of psychosocial factors and supporting the development of research questions. By extension, the well-cited JD-R stress model (Demerouti et al., 2001) incorporated in the PSC theory recognises that an imbalance between job demands and available job resources negatively impacts employee health outcomes.

An important emergence from this thesis is the theoretical contribution offering a way to more precisely bridge the PSC construct and SHRM. Figure 7.4 demonstrates how there is scope for HRM practices to be more consensually accepted and consistently utilised as a workplace health resource when the HRM systems strength model (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004) foregrounds the factors required of a positive or high PSC environment. Dollard and Bakker (2010) argue the PSC of an organisation is largely driven by management’s workplace policies, practices and procedures intended to protect worker psychological health. Additionally, the PSC theory advocates senior management’s commitment, priorities and values in supporting workplace health and well-being are given equal consideration to productivity priorities. The next section of this chapter discusses the findings from sub-RQ A1 “Why were strategic managers/human resource personnel motivated to introduce a work profile system”? Information obtained from reviewing internal confidential documents is referred to in this section and was an additional and complementary data source.

7.1 Designers: The original intention

At the outset of the data collection process it seemed clear to the researcher the unit of analysis was the work profile system (WPS) with the aim of answering the overarching RQ asking: *How can a work profile system better support the workplace health of academic employees?* However, throughout the course of the interviews it became apparent the WPS was not a stand-alone concept and is intrinsically linked to concerns of academic employees about high workloads, many working hours perceived to be unrecognised by management and the metrically applied formulae. This intertwining of relevant matters was also reflected in confidential internal documents, including official Minutes across several years of enterprise bargaining negotiations at *The University*. The documents also confirmed the differing priorities and motivations of key stakeholders including academic employees, The NTEU and management representatives of *The University*.

The documents established there were extensive and protracted negotiations between parties about the introduction of the WPS, consultation and communication processes thereof and eventual introduction of the WPS. Further, these documents made apparent the complexity of negotiations. The proposed WPS, increasing workloads and the introduction of notional annual hours of work for academics were inextricably linked and considered in conjunction with each other by all stakeholders. As an illustration, noted from the enterprise bargaining Minutes, the union stated, “progress on the university’s work profile proposal will depend on development of a suitable workload allocation model” (Internal Document 2003). Furthermore, an additional statement by university representatives detailed “The university is considering the total workload across the year in conjunction with work profiles and more involved discussion will take place on work profiles once in principle agreement is reached on workloads” (Internal document 2004).

At the time the NTEU requested more detail from *The University* about how they proposed the work profile system would be formulated before they would consider the proposal of a work profile system concept. Yet *The University*

wanted an in principle agreement on workloads before further discussion would progress about work profiles. The back and forth negotiations between the NTEU and *The University* can be attributed to lengthy delay between start of negotiations to reaching an agreement several years later. While the WPS was only one matter under negotiation, the protracted negotiations had become a source of major frustration for the NTEU. At one stage of the negotiations, the branch of the union directly involved with *The University* instigated industrial action whereby a proposal was put forward to the Australian Electoral Commission to conduct a ballot to determine whether academic employees (union members) would strike or withhold their services aiming to bring pressure for a resolution (Internal document). The industrial action did not go ahead.

Notwithstanding the insights gained from the confidential internal documentation highlighting the on-going negotiations between parties to reach a mutual agreement, data for Study A was primarily obtained from interview participants. The interviewees included previous Deans and Heads of School at *The University* when the concept of the WPS was first tabled during enterprise agreement negotiations in 2003. Other Study A participants included senior HR personnel (past and present), a sector representative, and employee representatives from the NTEU. As verified by the Minutes and review of public documents, the WPS took several years of protracted negotiation and three enterprise agreements for it to be officially endorsed in the 2012-2016 Enterprise Agreement.

The central argument of this thesis supports the Bowen and Ostroff (2004) argument that, without consensus between HRM managers and employees, inconsistent messaging results in inconsistent delivery of HRM practices. Lack of consensus among Designer participants about the intention of the WPS emanated as a key finding from Study A. The spectrum of positions and views (illustrated in in Figure 7.2 below) further highlighted the importance of the HRM system strength approach when designing and introducing a new HR practice. Achieving consensus when designing new HR practices can contribute to positive workplace health outcomes and a favourable workplace PSC.

Designers lack of consensus & spectrum of views about original intention of Work Profile System

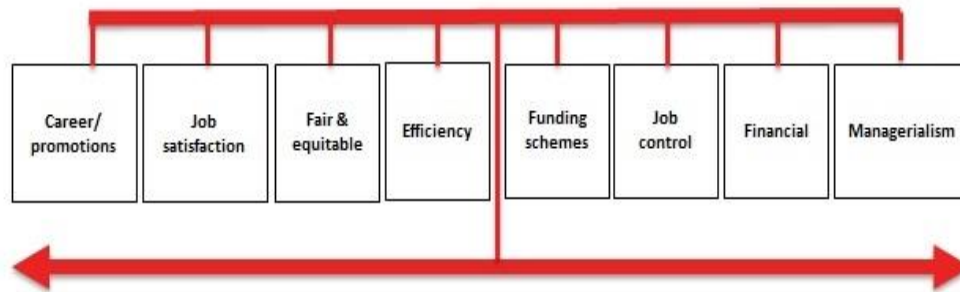


Figure 7.2: Illustrating the lack of consensus among Designer's about perceived intentions of the work profile system for The University

One view explained by some Designers about the introduction of the WPS was to provide faculty managers with a fairer and more equitable framework to manage the work of academic employees. The ultimate aim, they professed was for improved overall outcomes for academic employees including career opportunities and improved job satisfaction. Some also saw it as a better use of academic resources where good teachers could teach and good researchers could research. Formal reference to WPS supporting the health and well-being of academics featured in 2012-2016 enterprise agreement (Public document).

The same Designers said an additional intention was to improve career opportunities for junior academics. It was explained, The HR department at *The University* (prior to a WPS) undertook a review of workload allocations across the faculties and found inconsistent HRM practices and inequitable allocation of research activities were favouring senior academics. They said the WPS was espoused to provide more reward and recognition for teaching activities and for the more junior academics to overcome career advancement barriers thereby improving health and well-being through increased job satisfaction. This group of Designers also acknowledged there was some scepticism and lack of common support for introducing the system but claimed it was intended to improve HRM practices around work allocation.

The views outlined above were not however shared by of all Designers. Some senior academics and previous Heads of School interviewed for Study A saw the intention of the WPS as a basis for productivity and economic reasoning. Albeit, brought about by external drivers rather than a strategy to support job satisfaction and workplace well-being of academic employees. The Designers with this view purported the intended strategy was for *The University* to benefit financially from government funded research schemes. This would allow *The University* opportunity to offset reduced government funding with research grants obtained by a selected group of research academics. The concerns expressed included *The University* gaining control of research outputs, recruiting externally for researchers specifically for research projects and bypassing existing internal employees. Additionally there were concerns that the WPS would act as a budgeting tool supporting leaner allocation of resources at *The University*.

Moreover, these participants believed the WPS had not been introduced collaboratively into *The University* but rather it was a *fait accompli* and top down decision by senior management. Townsend and Loudoun (2016) argue positive outcomes are more likely to be achieved in bargaining processes if employee voice systems are incorporated into the process. On this issue, an internal document (2003) highlighted the union had requested the communication to employees proposed by *The University* about the WPS should clearly stipulate proposed consultation was about implementation of the WPS proposal and not on developing a more refined proposal. This supports the suggestion by some participants there was little opportunity for employees more broadly to be consulted on the proposal as consultation was only to cover implementation of the system.

Of increasing relevance for this thesis is the claim by Ostroff and Bowen (2016) that without consensus at the decision making level when introducing HRM practices, achieving shared perceptions and acceptance of the practice by employees may be compromised. This outcome was verified in the findings by Study B and Study C participants. Interview data pointed to the WPS as not widely accepted as a relevant and reflective tool for the job demands of academic

employees. Primary concerns expressed by Study B and Study C participants (and detailed later in this chapter) included lack of clarity about workload expectations from senior management, inappropriate metrics and increasing working hours impacting their work-life balance.

There is literature affirming less reliance on government funding led to subsequent responses from university administrators such as the introduction of formalised systems for managing workloads (Arimoto, 2014). According to Kenny and Fluck (2014), reduction in government funding has contributed to increased workloads for academics due to increased managerial control over resourcing allocation. Alvesson and Spicer (2016) claim managerialism is the result of global marketization and increasing bureaucratic processes such as the use of control systems and performance management processes. Data collected for this study at *The University* and published analysis about the organisational climate within the higher education sector more generally (Kenny, 2018) suggests internal business decisions at *The University* may have been influenced by external drivers that had flow on effects for frontline academic employees.

The changed business operations favouring corporatised management practices within universities in Australia, and elsewhere over the last thirty years has led to negative consequences for the psychological well-being of academic employees (Bexley et al., 2011; Gillespie et al., 2001; Winefield et al., 2003). High levels of anxiety, depression, and stress-related illness have been found in academic employees compared to general population samples (Mark & Smith, 2012). These are relevant issues for this thesis where HRM practices that impact employee well-being can be often overlooked in favour of improving organisational performance (Guest, 2017). To mitigate this type of risk, relevant regulations such as WH&S legislation and associated employer responsibilities need to be clearly integrated into HRM policies and practices (Pauwe & Farndale, 2017). The Union had requested information from *The University* about how stress claims by academic employees would be addressed as previous WH&S indicators had shown a poor environment for psychological well-being (Internal Document 2004). However, this research was unable to identify in the documentation what

The University's response was to the Union's request. As mentioned previously WH&S clauses were introduced in *The University's* 2012-2016 Enterprise Agreement (Public Document).

Wright and Nishii (2013) argue HRM practices represent outcomes of an organisation's HRM strategy, similarly Ambrose and Schminke (2003) claim HRM practices are intended to achieve a particular response from employees such as gaining a sense of organisational justice and job satisfaction. While this study did not clarify the existence of an explicit HRM strategy at *The University* to increase perceptions of organisational justice, a principle included in *The University's* 2009-2012 and 2012-2016 Enterprise Agreements explicitly state, fair and equitable workload allocations. There is support to argue external factors contributed to internal decisions by *The University* to introduce more streamlined and accountable processes for the management of academic workloads. Notwithstanding, there is also an argument that both external and internal factors are necessary for organisations to understand and consider when developing strategic initiatives and responses (Cascio, 2015).

Importantly though, critical consideration of possible implications of proposed HRM practices is required to understand any barriers to achieving intended outcomes (Cascio, 2015; Grant et al., 2007). Ostroff and Bowen (2016, p. 203) explain "consensus among key decision makers about the HRM practices and their message is necessary for enhancing distinctiveness of the practices and consistency in their administration". Yet the analysis of data from Designer interviews in Study A revealed key differences in perspectives about the initial motivation for introducing and adopting the WPS at *The University*. Similarly Stanton et al. (2010) argue agreement and consensual understanding about scope of HR practices amongst senior levels of management is required to achieve cross-group agreement. When HR practitioners ensure there is a high level of consensus, consistency and distinctiveness in their HR systems there is the likelihood that positive PSC can be achieved. The next section addresses sub-RQ A2.

7.2 Designers: Achieving intended outcomes

The findings identified a spectrum of views among Designers when asked about factors involved in the introduction of the WPS (sub-RQ A1). Ostroff and Bowen (2016) claim it is how HRM systems are introduced and communicated as to how employees understand the intention of the HRM practice that is of key importance in avoiding ambiguous perceptions of intended outcomes. When FLMS and employees receive ambiguous signals from senior managers about HRM practices, it is less likely the practices will be clearly understood or seen as a positive investment in themselves as employees (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004).

In keeping with the spectrum of views and responses of Designer participants, further analysis of the Designer responses to sub-RQ A2 revealed different viewpoints about the effectiveness of the WPS, some ten years post introduction. Some Designers considered the WPS to be a positive tool for academic employees, albeit they suggested some employees had not adjusted to working with the WPS. Yet, they acquiesced some improvements to the system were required. Academic employees were encouraged to provide feedback through their supervisors as there were processes to review workloads nevertheless it was acknowledged by some Designers that there were no instances of this option being taken up by academics at the time the interviews were undertaken. Yet, as is discussed further in this chapter, many Implementers (Study B) and Experiencer (Study C) participants were resolute in explaining the provision of negative feedback upwards to more senior management about workloads or workload allocations was not encouraged by *The University* as they believed it could result in reduced promotional opportunities or job security. The PSC theory however espouses, a high PSC environment supports communication channels whereby employees are encouraged to openly and freely report issues that negatively impact their health outcomes.

Some Designer participants suggested negative comments from academics about the unsuitability of the WPS were unwarranted because most academics do not want to compromise their preference for research activity. Therefore, they said it was the academic's research efforts that led to working extra hours rather than a

shortcoming of the WPS. Additionally, the Designers in support of the WPS claimed a teaching focussed work profile decreased role stress given the increasing expectations within academia for research outputs. The demand driven enrolment system had increased student enrolments significantly (Page 45 for details) lending support to the suggestion from some Designers, *The University* benefits by having more teaching focussed academics.

Designer participants who viewed the WPS as an effective system were generally HR personnel or middle management, commonly known to be more strategically involved in HR resourcing decisions (Guest & Conway, 2011). It could be argued from the findings their views maybe concerned with financial benefits and practical resourcing resolutions. Accordingly, Wright, McMahan, Snell, and Gerhart (2001) found HR managers were often more likely to have an optimistic view of the effectiveness of HRM practices. However, Wright et al. (2001) and Bos-Nehles et al. (2013) also infer the view of line managers as valid due to the direct role in implementing the HR practice. Because HR practices are implemented at the operational level, effective working relationships between senior management, HR personnel and line managers can result in more acceptance and value of HR practices by employees (Bos-Nehles & Meijerink, 2018). Line managers require support with more time and delegated authority for their HR responsibilities (Bos-Nehles & Meijerink, 2018). This is a relevant claim for this study and validates the inclusion of middle managers and frontline managers as a source of data particularly in regard to the critical role implementation plays in how HRM practices are understood and responded to by employees.

Similarly, Burgess et al. (2003) recognise differing views are common when discussing work allocation systems and their duality of purpose such as a resource planning tool yet espoused by management to be a tool for equitably allocating workloads. Further, Nishii et al. (2008) explain negative employee attributions or perceptions can occur if employees perceive cost associated reasons are behind HRM practices particularly if there are opportunities for employee exploitation. By way of supporting the claim by Nishii et al. (2008), this study found some

participants from Study C said they felt there was exploitation by *The University* because of the commitment to their profession and willingness to contribute discretionary hours. They said this was because important and requisite tasks were not acknowledged or accounted for in the WPS metrics and therefore contributed to a level of disengagement amongst some employees within *The University*. This further points to the usefulness of the PSC model as a guide for this study where the main premise of the theory purports management considers the psychological health of employees as important as productivity priorities (Zadow & Dollard, 2016).

Conflicting perspectives of Designers could reflect a gap between the needs of senior management to have adequate resources to meet their teaching requirements and the needs of the academic to feel fulfilled in their career aspirations (Flecknoe et al., 2017). Career fulfilment was also a stated intention of senior management for introducing the WPS as highlighted in the findings. However, the data from this study indicates many academics are not satisfied with the direction of their careers. Job demands in one component of their role such as teaching demands were said to encroach on their time for research opportunities. The next section discusses Implementers responses from sub-RQ B1: How effective do Implementers perceive the WPS to be in supporting them to manage workplace health of academic employees?

7.3 Implementers: Workload management

Implementer participants included representatives from frontline management and supervisory roles including Heads of School, Deputy Heads of School (Learning and Teaching) and Discipline Heads. Because of the varying levels of hierarchy, style of Implementer and faculty requirements, different levels of involvement were identified in how the WPS was implemented and by whom. Some Implementers, usually the Heads of School, were involved at a higher level, overseeing the workload allocations with the final say in adjustments delegating the day to day implementation to Discipline Head roles. However literature highlights effective implementation of HR practices requires the support of senior

and middle management if positive outcomes are to be achieved for the organisation (Bos-Nehles & Meijerink, 2018; Bos-Nehles et al., 2013).

Discussing these viewpoints Bryman (2007) contends faculty managers within the higher education sector are key allocators of resources and adjusting workloads. Valverde et al. (2006) argue in order to achieve positive outcomes they need to be trained and supported during implementation phases of HRM initiatives. This notion is advocated by Wright and Nishii (2013, p. 102) who argue “that not all intended HR practices are actually implemented, and those that are may often be implemented in ways that differ from the initial intention”. Baptiste (2008) identified positive supportive working relationships occurred through the implementation of HRM practices by supervisors because commonly they worked closer with frontline employees. Hence, it is not surprising that several frontline managers interviewed for Study B said they saw themselves more as academics than managers. This sometimes caused them to feel stressed and conflicted in their roles if they did not agree with the HR practices.

The skills required of supervisors however, include the ability to engage and communicate effectively with team members often through times of change (Purcell & Hutchinson, 2007). This is a relevant point for this thesis. During the data collection phase for this study at *The University* there were amalgamations of departments and redundancy programs creating tensions for FLMs including meeting the same demands with fewer resources. Their teams however, thought the managers’ concerns were more about the practical operational issues rather than how the health of academics would be impacted if there were the same demands and fewer resources. The PSC theory supports the provision of adequate resourcing for employees whereby health and well-being has equal priority to productivity outcomes.

Implementers also have their own workload allocation at *The University* requiring them to manage a team of academics, as well as teaching, research and service responsibilities. As such, some Implementers interviewed for the study described their roles as several different roles within the one role and often felt conflicted.

Despite this, generally the Implementer role at *The University* is responsible for leading and managing a team of academics, deciding how the workload of the team is allocated and ensuring the allocations are applied and implemented. Many Implementers explained they too felt stressed when they were unable to support their teams with appropriate resourcing.

Most participants in Study B explained the implementation difficulties they had with the WPS as a HRM practice because of the many complaints and frustrations expressed by the academic employees who say the system does not reflect the full requirements of the academic role. Moreover, some Implementers described instances of what they perceived to be poor attitudes and behaviour (caused by stress) displayed by academics including negative responses to work related requests and at times atypical tensions and disputes between peers. Dollard and Bakker (2010) identified similar responses in a study of education workers where a change in psychological distress has occurred and linking symptoms to the increased job demands and the health impairment process.

By extension, there were some negative reactions when the Implementer's offered support and assistance with workloads such as re-distributing work to other colleagues. Nishii et al. (2008) argue positive attitudes and behavioural responses of employees are dependent upon how the intentions of the HRM practices are perceived. In this study it was found the HRM practice of WPS is not generally perceived as a positive practice because it has (in some instances) been found to create stress rather than alleviating it due to the emphasis on fitting the workloads to the specified time based metrics and notional working hours. Strazdins et al. (2011) argues that time pressure is linked to poor mental health outcomes as time as a resource, is as important as income for health and well-being.

The data from Implementers also highlighted some academics are opting to work within the prescribed notional 37.5 hours per week as per *The University's* enterprise agreement. Traditionally academics aspire to approach their profession as a vocation rather than a 'nine-to-five' job or 38 hour week culture. Instead their intrinsic motivation drives them rather than a prescriptive work allocation system

(Kenny, 2018). This notion was supported by many Implementers who claimed the WPS can be counter intuitive for some academics and the way they approach their work trying to meet time pressures. Therefore, in many cases the WPS did not act as a supportive resource for Implementers to manage academic workloads or their workplace health and well-being.

Some Implementers however, found the system to be a useful framework. When it was applied consistently academics accepted it as an equitable way of allocating work and were less likely to complain about workloads. Stanton et al. (2010) argue less time required by managers to attend to employee complaints and industrial relations issues mean more time to attend to customer and client outcomes. Similarly, the relevance for this thesis means Implementers who spent less time trying to find work arounds because of complaints, more time could be spent in meaningful ways, such as supporting student outcomes. Bowen and Ostroff (2004) claim consistent implementation of HR practices produces clear messages for employees and effective outcomes for the organisation.

Many Implementers said they did not have the necessary management skills and training to effectively negotiate difficult situations with their team members or had relevant management training for their supervisory responsibilities. A difficult situation could include having a direct discussion with a staff member they perceived is overwhelmed with work demands but who is not seeking support. These findings are similar to what Townsend et al (2012) found in the hospital setting, where trained nurses are transitioning to management roles requiring HR/administrative skills without the necessary training and preparation.

Compounding a sometimes lack of skill, the Head of School role in higher education has traditionally been transitory, either filled on an rotational or voluntary basis for a period of time whereupon they then return to their academic role (Parker, 2004). Being unprepared for a management role was explained by Implementers as a challenging part of their role when they did not have a formal management background or relevant training. Furthermore, most Implementers in this study claimed they see themselves as academics not managers despite their

management responsibilities. This point leads to the next section addressing Sub-RQ B2 about how Implementers perceive their role in managing the workplace health of academic employees?

7.4 Implementers: Workplace health and well-being

As outlined in the previous section, an initial intention of the WPS was to provide a framework minimising inequitable workload allocation practices thereby improving job satisfaction and well-being of academics. Some Implementers responded to sub-RQ B2 by explaining they had autonomy in their role to adjust workloads and did so as required. However, others made the system appear to fit for the purposes of reporting to senior management, while in practice the work allocation was decided through a more collegiate team based process. Other Implementers at the supervisor level, such as Discipline Heads often had less authority in HRM matters and were only able to observe and report back to the Heads of School when complaints were made and/or work related illnesses became apparent.

Many Implementers gave examples about difficult situation with academics who at times displayed out of character behaviours, such as uncooperativeness. They explained this as academics' reluctance to disclose stress to do with workloads because of the stigma often associated with poor mental health and perceptions that disclosure may impact their professional status. A workplace with high PSC has established and well communicated policies, practices and procedures supporting health and well-being, and where employees have a collective understanding of their organisation's support. Joyce (2013) argues mental health has an associated stigma and organisations should approach the issue strategically, clearly outlining to employees the actions addressing the issue and fulfilling legal obligations to support health as well as safety responsibilities. It was the view of many Implementers there is an association between workload demands (despite the WPS as a management tool), health and well-being and a collegial climate amongst academics.

Equally, there were many reports the WPS was not a relevant fit for many of the Implementers and their teams as it did not take into account the unique job characteristics of an academic's role or supported open team discussion about workload management. Oldham and Fried (2016) argue the importance of considering well-being when considering job design and job characteristics. Likewise Paauwe and Farndale (2017) argue HRM practices should be an appropriate fit for the operational environment so as to achieve maximum outcome for all stakeholders. For this study, "maximum outcome" would be a WPS designed to better reflect the role of academic employees in the 21st century, supporting work-life balance for academics and strategic objectives of the organisation. This does not seem to be the case for this study where, based on analysis of the data, the WPS does not support positive health outcomes for academic employees.

Bowen and Ostroff (2004) argue HRM practices serve as communication mechanisms signalling to employees expected behaviours that support organisational objectives. Further these authors suggest the power of the HRM systems strength theory is in the "linking mechanism that builds shared, collective perceptions, attitudes and behaviours among employees" (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004, p. 206). Moreover Monks et al. (2012) and (Kellner et al., 2016) claim HRM systems and practices have the ability to represent the philosophy of an organisation. This study found where there is an HRM philosophy that supports a high PSC, through clearly and consistently communicated organisational values, there are better health outcomes for employees. This study also found evidence of a lack of consensus among Implementers about the relevance and suitability for purpose of the WPS. Arguably, this is a result of the inconsistent communication emitted by senior management when it was first introduced that has not been addressed.

Inconsistent commitment to implementing the WPS could be attributed to how relevant Implementers perceive the system to be for purpose, the needs of the disciplines, management style and team culture. For example, some disciplines had maintained a more collegial approach, distributing work through discussion

and appropriateness of abilities and skills rather than applying a spread sheet formula to allocate workload. Additionally, expectations from senior management at *The University* could contribute to irregular use of the system where messages about financial and productivity are more apparent than messages about health and well-being outcomes.

For the reasons suggested above, the data indicates Implementers often aligned and empathised with the challenges experienced by the Experiencers, such as lecturer and senior lecturer roles about working within the stipulations of the WPS. Furthermore, some Implementers also said they understood *The University's* difficult situation due to external drivers and the internal decisions and responses made by senior management. This finding from Study B was in response to questions asked about how the WPS assisted Implementers to support the health and well-being of academic employees. However, participants frequently explained the negative impact on their own workplace health and well-being due to expectations from senior management of adhering to the WPS metrics and juggling demands with existing resources.

Gmelch (2004) argues management roles have become sandwiched between organisational directions of higher education, a leadership role and their own career aspirations; Smith (2007) suggests it is also a misunderstood role. Demands outlined by Implementers included the unobserved or invisible work previously mentioned that was not accounted for or acknowledged in the WPS such as excessive administrative duties and continuous learning of new technology applications. Additionally, the Implementer's described time consuming HR issues resulting from claims of work overload by academics, as described above, was causing them stress if they were unable to adjust workloads because of resourcing limitations. The next section addresses responses from Study C participants, the Experiencers. This study comprises academic employees who experience firsthand the operationalisation of the WPS. Sub-RQ C1 and C2 are discussed jointly in the next section due to the intertwining topics in this study of workload management and workplace health.

7.5 Experiencers: Workload management/ workplace health

The introduction of formalised workload allocation systems and workload models into many universities in Australia and internationally (Boyd, 2014) is said to be part of academia's transition to corporatised management practices (Hornibrook, 2012). The changed management practices are associated with the claims of poor health within the academic profession (Pignata et al., 2018). Workload allocation systems are linked to workload formulas stipulating metrics applied to teaching tasks in particular. Boyd (2014, p. 316) describes a 'workload model' as "a flexible tool that attempts to measure and capture the behaviour and characteristics of the observed and unobserved aspects of an academic staff member's work".

The unobserved aspects of an academic's work, referred to by Boyd (2014), were raised as a key concern by many participants from Study C (and Study B). These participants saw the omission of tasks as a critical flaw in the design of the WPS, many referring to the unobserved tasks as invisible work. They perceived management chose to overlook work that was not accounted for despite the expectation it would be done. Further most Experiencers said the system was contributing to poor health outcomes of academic colleagues such as feeling stressed largely because unrecognised additional hours are worked which are not accounted for, or recognised in the WPS metrics or by senior management. The participants expressed the views that they, and most of their colleagues, were reluctant to speak out and talk about the stress they experienced due to perceived repercussions by management such as being overlooked for promotions. Yet, they said they did speak with their colleagues about the health impacts of workloads and there was a sense of concern for the well-being of others and they generally tried to 'look out' for each other.

Wright and Nishii (2007) argue HRM practices, when implemented, can be perceived differently by employees from what was originally intended. Consequently, employees create certain perceptions based on their experiences of HRM practices and how they are implemented. These perceptions and reactions then influence employees' attitudes and behaviour. The findings from interviews

with Experiencer participants reflect the rationale behind the process model of SHRM. Perceptions of the Experiencers about the WPS and reactions to it do not align with some of the Designer participants' explanations about the initial intention of the system. In particular, some Designers said it was intended as a more equitable workload allocation system, support better health and well-being and career aspirations of academics by 'playing to their strengths'.

Implementation practices were found to be inconsistent often due to how the Implementers perceived the relevance of the system to be as a resource for them, or if they had autonomy to make adjustments or work arounds. An internal *University* document (2003) specified Heads of School were considered to be a significant actor in the operationalisation of the WPS and were required to attend mandatory training. It is relevant to point out the Heads of School in 2003 are not the same Heads of School at the time the research for this thesis was conducted. It was ascertained through this research though many Implementers lacked management training including training in implementation of HR practices.

Bowen and Ostroff (2004) argue HRM practices are signals from the organisation intended to produce outcomes from employees that contribute to the performance of the organisation. Wright and Nishii (2013) also explain there is usually a transition period of sense making for employees about how they understand the intention of new HRM practices and the intended goals. Further, in order to achieve the desired outcomes, the signals need to be clearly understood by employees. Yet results from Study A (Designers) and *The University's* internal documentation (2003 and 2004) suggest there were mixed signals emanating from management and the Union at the design stage and introduction of the WPS thereby shared acceptance by employees may have been hampered by inconsistent communication about intended outcomes. Communication of the proposed WPS to employees was raised by the Union who requested more widespread access to all employees however this was not approved by *The University* (Internal documents 2004). Instead *The University* proposed information would be available on *The University* website, potentially limiting reach to the broader academic workforce and understanding of the WPS proposal.

The details of the WPS were eventually agreed upon and introduced through a drawn out enterprise bargaining process over several years from initial negotiations in 2003 (Internal document 2003) to formal introduction EA 2009-2012 (Publicly available document). Therefore, the importance of capturing and monitoring employee views throughout enterprise bargaining cycles and mature voice systems for employees to provide feedback and input improving understanding and outcomes for both employees and employers (Townsend & Loudoun, 2016) is relevant for this study. Findings from this study indicate a lack of consistent communication to, and collaboration with the broader academic community when introducing the WPS impacted attitudes and behaviours that potentially permeated through to the views of Experiencers and Implementers in this case study.

The majority of participants in Study C said the WPS did not accurately reflect their workloads from a content perspective but it captured the essence of the three components of their role. They described the incongruence between the percentage based allocations in relation to the 1725 nominal hours specified within *The University's EA* (Public Document). The participants said the tasks and responsibilities were not accurately captured or accounted for in the WPS due to unrecognised tasks including attending to teaching responsibilities. As a result their obligations were often fulfilled at night and weekends taking up valuable home and family time. Many participants in Study C claimed recovery time between teaching commitments was often inadequate resulting in stress and fatigue. Recovery in this instance requires periods of time free from the demands related to teaching activities enabling employees to return re-energized and engaged with the replenished physical and mental resources to fulfil the requirements of their role (Garrick et al., 2014).

Most academics interviewed for Study C typically reported working in excess of 50 hours per week most weeks of the year. The standard notional working week for Australian academics is 37.5 hours per week. A 2015 NTEU survey found that more than 85 per cent of the fulltime academics who were surveyed across Australia worked in excess of 40 hours per week. Furthermore 43.6 per cent of

those 85 per cent worked in excess of 50 hours per week. Increasing job demands without the corresponding availability of resources was identified in this study as problematic for academics, contributing to feelings of work overload and time pressures. The JD-R model purports psychosocial hazards such as excessive job demands combined with low job resources result in reduced motivation and poor health (Hall et al., 2013).

In 2009 the student to staff ratio at *The University* was 21.58:1 and in 2016 it was 22.29:1, both higher than the national ratios in corresponding years that were 20.5:1 and 21.37:1 respectively (Department of Education and Training, 2017). Despite a government led review of the higher education sector by Bradley (2008) recommending student to staff ratios be decreased in order to achieve more reasonable workloads for academic employees, there is some evidence presented in this thesis to suggest student to staff ratios have increased at *The University* over the preceding ten years.

Accordingly Idris et al. (2012) found evidence job demands were a strong indicator of an organisation's PSC and a lead indicator of psychosocial risks. This study found because of the intrinsic motivation academics generally apply to their profession (Kenny, 2016) they continue to provide discretionary hours to meet job demands. This is despite having a negative impact on their health and well-being and work-life balance. Similarly Gould-Williams (2007) found in their study the discretionary contributions by employees were not withdrawn or altered as a result of any relationship between HRM practices and the organisational climate. Nevertheless, Gould-Williams (2007) found there were negative outcomes for employees such as work related stress and reduced motivation when discretionary contributions were ongoing. Universities benefit from the discretionary contributions of their academic employees to support and produce employable, work ready graduates to meet the workforce requirements of the nation. However, while the Experiencer participants did not make reference to the practice of withholding discretionary contributions, some Implementers did. They advised of instances where academic employees were taking more control of their time and making a conscious effort to work the notional annual or weekly hours.

The number of hours employees work creates conflict between work and time away from work (or family time) and is one of the major contributors to poor outcomes of employee health and well-being in Australian workers (Dollard & Bailey, 2014). The academic profession is described as a vocation (Ramsay, 2001), rather than a job, where academics generally do not apply their skills and knowledge with a 9am to 5pm work ethic nor equally do they work a 38 hour week. The nursing profession has also been identified as one where nurses also apply a vocational approach to their jobs within an industry (health) also facing increasing challenges such as increasing operational costs and a per capita decrease in government funding (Townsend et al., 2012).

The transition over the previous three decades from a collegial, flexible workplace to a corporatised higher education sector with quantifiable processes for teaching and research productivity has been a stark cultural change for many academics (Kenny, 2018). The data from Study B and Study C strongly indicate there was an entrenched work ethic amongst academics where they do what is required of them regardless of a workload allocation system that dictates metrics and time frames. The WPS was also considered by most participants in Study C (and some participants in Study B) to be counter-productive to the espoused intentions by Designers, who said it would result in better health and well-being outcomes for academics due to fairer allocation workload allocation processes of workloads.

As described by most Experiencers (Study C), their job demands include increasing accountabilities (which requires additional administrative work) and increased student communications due to large cohorts in many courses. This finding is consistent with findings of a study conducted by the NTEU in 2015 where only 17 percent of Australian academics said workload had not increased significantly in the five years preceding the survey (National Tertiary Education Union, 2015). The Experiencers in the study for this thesis perceived management did not fully understand what is required of an academic's role. Hence many activities were not accounted for in the time based metrics of the WPS. Yet some Designers claimed the introduction of the WPS was intended to be a supportive

and equitable resource to support workload allocations and career opportunities than had previously been the case for academics at *The University*.

Generally, the Experiencers said feedback loops were not effective in having their concerns heard due to a perceived disconnect between those who determine policy and those who work within the policy. Most participants interviewed for Study C expressed their reluctance to formally utilise organisational processes such as workplace health and safety avenues, or the processes stated in the enterprise agreements. There was perceived stigma associated with reporting stress to senior management or their frontline manager to do with workloads and/or fear to be seen to be complaining. Job security concerns and or career limiting outcomes were suggested as likely repercussions.

A high PSC in organisations depends on management's commitment to prioritising employee's psychological health and prompt responses to address issues about health concerns. Additionally employees of high PSC organisations are encouraged to be involved in psychological health matters where participation involves multiple stakeholders across the organisation including unions and health and safety representatives (Zadow & Dollard, 2016). While opportunities existed for employee representatives to be involved in health and safety and workload committees, participants perceived their input was ignored by senior management as there were no clear changes implemented as a result of their suggestions to these committees. Poor consultation processes about task completion within achievable times; low control over tasks; and HRM practices inappropriate for operational requirements are factors negatively impacting the health of employees across workforces more generally (Caponecchia, 2016).

Significant job design features include the amount of autonomy employees have over job demands or discretion in time required for tasks (Parker, 2014). Job design has important psychological consequences for employee well-being (Pfeffer, 2010). Inadequate time allocated for tasks has been identified in the data from Study B and Study C as a job demand contributing to pressure for teaching academics. Boyd (2014) highlights how the introduction of workload allocation

models in universities changed the job design of an academic's role, reducing autonomy and control over how they manage increasing workloads. It is argued a combination of these factors is contributing to poor health outcomes for academic employees (Kenny, 2016). These factors were also found to be impacting academic health and well-being in this study thereby supporting application of elements from both the PSC theory and HRM systems strength theory. The next section discusses the theoretical contribution as well as practical implications for the HRM and WPH literature.

7.6 Contribution to theory

The literature review for this case study drew together two existing theoretical frameworks considered to be suitable guides for the study. According to Anfara and Mertz (2006) it is common for more than one theoretical approach to be used in qualitative studies because often one does not sufficiently provide an explanation. Likewise for this study, the Wright and Nishii (2007) process model of SHRM (Figure 7.1) and Dollard and Bailey's psychosocial safety climate (PSC) model (Figure 7.3) both provide partial explanations about how health outcomes are linked to HRM practices. Nevertheless, an explanation follows as to why neither of these two theories was able to adequately frame the overarching research question: *How can a WPS support the workplace health and well-being of academic employees?*

The process model of SHRM supported the research design of the study whereby three levels of investigation and analysis was undertaken. Exploration of linkages between the three studies highlighted the complexities emanating from the various perspectives, often in conflict with each other. However, some assumptions are incorporated into the Wright and Nishii (2007) model that could not be fully reconciled with the structure of this study. Firstly, one assumption is that HRM practices are intended to be uniform and consistently applied within the data source or job group under investigation. The second assumption is that business strategy is outside the parameters of the process model of SHRM and not considered as part of the intention of the HRM practice.

Addressing these assumptions, the data analysis identified the WPS is not a consistently applied HRM practice. In addition, due to the conflicting perceptions of Designer participants, business strategy could not be definitively ruled out as an intention by *The University* for introducing the WPS. The findings did however support Wright and Nishii's theory that HR practices do not always achieve the intended outcomes due how they are implemented. The SHRM process model also has a specific focus on increasing understanding of how HRM impacts organisational performance. As already specified earlier in this thesis, understanding organisational performance outcomes was not the main objective of this study. Therefore the process model of SHRM could not be fully applied to predict or explain the findings for this study.

The PSC theoretical model (Figure 7.3) however has a specific focus on workplace health outcomes. Further and importantly the PSC model enables an understanding of the influencing factors of psychosocial stressors on psychological health and employee well-being.

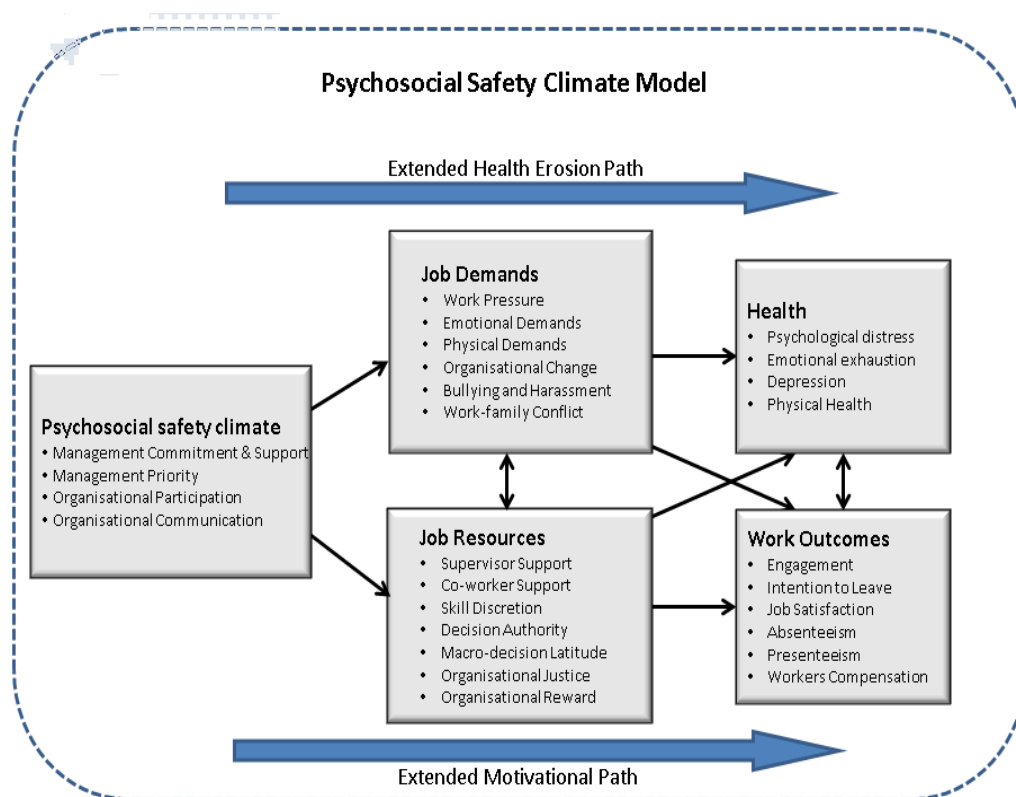


Figure 7.3: Psychosocial Safety Climate Model adapted from Dollard and McTernan (2011) for Safe Work Australia's Australian Workplace Barometer project (Dollard, Bailey, et al: 2012).

The PSC model comprises a four pillar framework supporting the prevention of workplace stress (also see Literature Review Page 68)

1. Management commitment and support for employees' health and well-being
2. Management priority for employees' health and well-being
3. Organisational communication - supporting psychological safety issues
4. Organisational participation - employees are encouraged to be involved in psychological safety matters.

Additionally, the Job Demands-Resources model (JD-R), incorporated within the PSC model, is an adaptable and flexible model. It can be used within many occupational contexts to determine the impact context specific job demands and job resources can have on employee health and well-being (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Brough and Biggs (2014) also claim by focussing on occupation specific job characteristics increases perceived validity for study participants and improves theory testing. Research based on the JD-R model supports the notion HRM practices and processes enabling an appropriate balance of job resources and job demands results in enhanced employee well-being (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007).

The premise of the PSC theory is that an organisation's PSC (perceived as high or low by employees) culminates from management driven policies, practices and procedures for the protection of employee health and well-being (Dollard et al., 2011). Subsequently, these factors are argued to be the origin of the PSC formed by employees. While the PSC theory promotes good communication processes enabling psychological safety issues to be voiced, similarly to the SHRM process model it could not adequately explain the findings as demonstrated below. As noted in Chapter One (Page 19), the work profile system introduced at *The University* was not conceived through the theoretical lens of the PSC model but was applied retrospectively for this study as an explanation for change to the work allocation process. It is therefore reasonable to expect that in applying the PSC theory for this thesis that it would not fully align precisely with the findings.

Similarly, as noted in Chapter Two (Page 69) other studies were not able to fully reconcile the PSC theory with their findings. Geisler, Berthelsen & Muhonen (2019) applied the four pillars of the PSC framework investigating how PSC could predict indicators of retention among social workers; work engagement, job satisfaction and organizational commitment. While these authors found PSC did provide a significant contribution to the explanation of social workers' job satisfaction it did not provide an explanation of work engagement or organisational commitment. Therefore it is considered the PSC as a construct may require further investigation to determine whether its effect is best understood as an antecedent for job resources and job demands, as proposed by Dollard & Bakker (2010), or in terms of a moderator in relation to job demands and job resources and outcomes as highlighted by Garrick et al. (2014) in an earlier study.

An important finding from the study at *The University* that could not be fully reconciled with the application of the PSC Theory indicated a need for *The University* to understand the PSC and why academics do not feel empowered or lack trust to report concerns about health and safety matters. The underlying construct of the PSC theory (Pillar 1) supports processes whereby employees are encouraged to report or discuss workplace matters that impact their psychological health. Despite processes available to employees to dispute or challenge concerns about workloads and negative health impacts, the study found they were not accessed by any academic employee. It was also found, academics were reluctant to report experiences about their health concerns due to perceived negative outcomes. This is a finding incongruent with Pillar 1 of the PSC theory.

Pillar 2 of the PSC Theory espouses high PSC environments support the provision of adequate resourcing for employees whereby health and well-being have equal priority to productivity outcomes. Yet in general participants from both Study B and Study C indicated resourcing in respect to time and metrics for teaching tasks are inadequate to meet demands. This then contributes to an imbalance in their work/non work time commitments and priorities. The findings also suggest most senior management view the WPS as a resource. However, most interviewees in

Study C perceive the WPS to be a job demand that has negative impacts on their health and well-being.

The University has merit and alignment with Pillar 3 of the PSC Theory. Public policy and procedural documents (Enterprise Agreements) claim a commitment to safeguard the health of employees including access to family friendly flexibility and support for health and well-being programmes. Empirical evidence from some Study A interviewees advocated the intention of the WPS was to be a supportive resource to assist academic employees with workloads and career aspirations therefore would be considered an organisational contribution to a positive PSC. Yet knowledge of the policies and accessibility to them was found to be varied amongst some Study B and most Study C participants who generally perceived the policies were poorly communicated and or/implemented at the employee level. *The University* also encouraged and facilitated the use of mechanisms such as online counselling programmes, although many participants in Study C said they would not use them as the delivery of them was inappropriate for their requirements. Therefore either poor or inconsistent communication or lack of feedback loops for employee input was evident in the findings and could not fully be explained within the framework of the PSC Theory.

The JD-R component of the PSC Theory was also unable to explain why the WPS was unable to act as a resource and counteract academics working extended hours including across family/non work time. The nature of academic work requires evening and weekend attendances for lecturing and teaching associated activities and supports the notion of intrinsic motivation associated with the professional identity of an academic (Neary & Winn, 2016). However, because of this approach to their profession, most Study B and Study C participants reported difficulties in implementing self-efficacy practices for better managing their own health and well-being. The findings suggest the WPS is generally not a supportive WHS resource. Additionally, external drivers were identified in the study as factors contributing to decisions made by *The University* about their HR policies and practices including the introduction of the WPS. The PSC theory was not able to fully explain how external drivers may have contributed to *The University's*

decision to introduce the WPS because of the lack of consensus and spectrum of views expressed by participants in Study A.

To understand how an organisation that purports to value psychological health and well-being of employees and translate that ethos to practicality and improved outcomes it is necessary to extend the theoretical considerations of the PSC theory. When introducing new HR practices, consensus about the purpose, transparency of design processes and inclusion of employees is required to ensure relevancy and distinctiveness to contextual requirements (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004). When there is an organisational HR philosophy that supports consensual and collective understanding of organisational strategies, values and priorities, so too are there effective outcomes for both employers and employees. It is also argued from the findings of this case study, the PSC of organisations can be misinterpreted, despite good will of organisations, if there is poor transparency and mixed messaging by senior management about the intended purpose of HR practices.

The theoretical contribution from this study contributes to two existing theories and current knowledge and understanding within the HRM/WPH literature. The principles of the HRM systems strength model developed by Bowen and Ostroff (2004) are required as an antecedent to the principles of the PSC theory to achieve and support health and well-being outcomes of employees. As illustrated in Figure 7.4 the blue highlighting demonstrates expansion of the PSC theoretical model (Dollard and Bailey, 2014) with the principles of HRM systems strength (Bowen and Ostroff, 2004). Linking mechanisms that support feedback loops enhance the principles of a strong well-designed HRM system where employee interpretations of HRM practices can be heard. Importantly, inconsistent communication and lack of relevance of HR practices impacts implementation practices and hinders the organisation in achieving what they set out to do. How feedback is considered, responded to by senior management produces greater homogeneity of a high PSC, improved employee health and well-being and organisational outcomes.

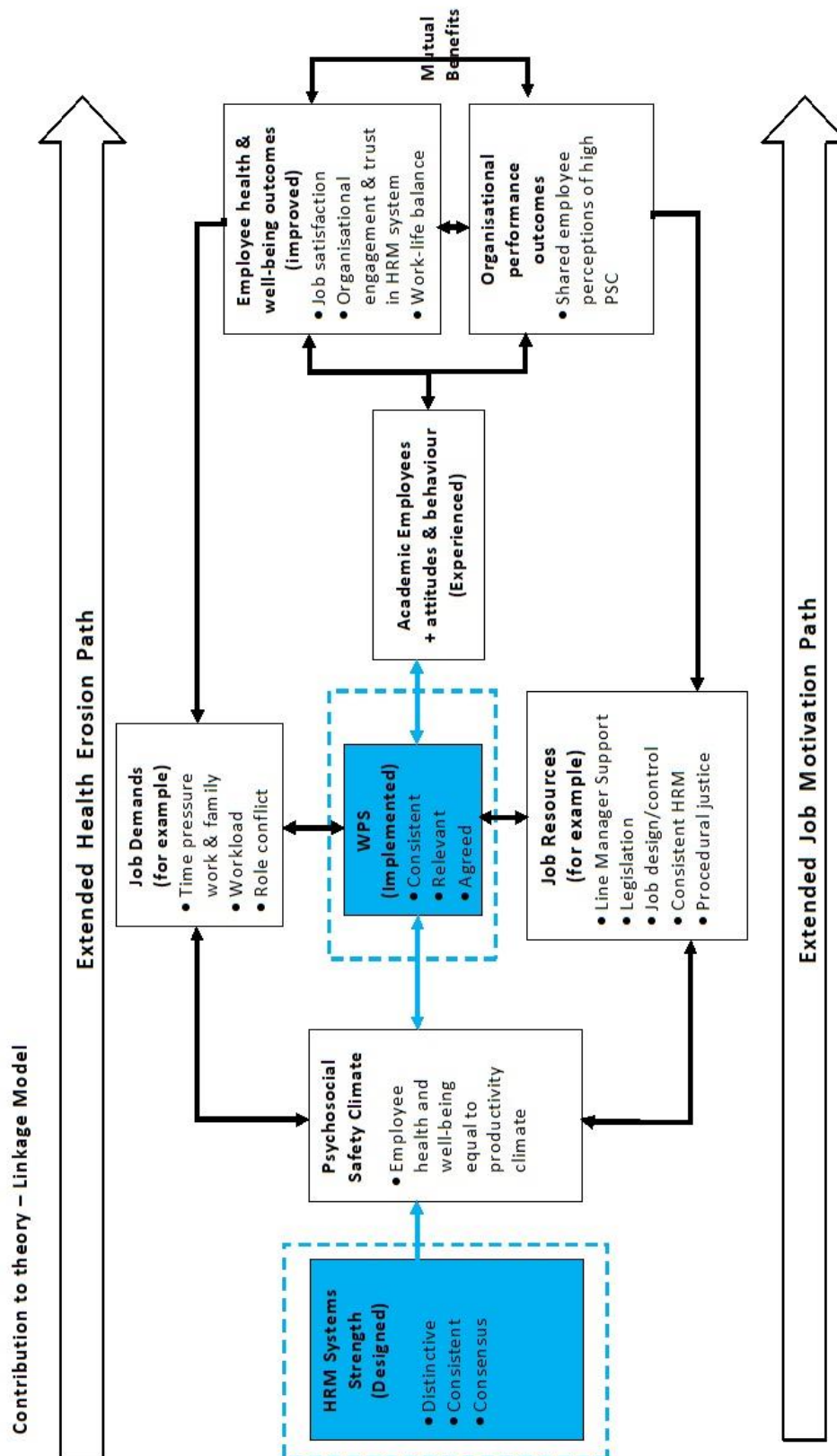


Figure 7.4: Contribution to theory: Principles of the HRM Systems Strength model expands the PSC model, promotes linkage mechanisms for feedback and improves implementation of HR practices.

This section presents a contribution to existing theory through expanding framework boundaries of the PSC model (Dollard & Bailey, 2004) with the principles of the HRM systems strength theory (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004). Applied in practice, the features of the strong HRM system strength model are based on communication processes about HRM practices. Consensus amongst decision makers about the intentions of HRM practices and how they align with strategic objectives must be communicated consistently and clearly to employees. A shared understanding of the purpose of distinctive and relevant HRM practices can support health and well-being outcomes for employees and improve organisational PSC.

7.7 Practical implications

The literature review in Chapter Two highlighted growing concerns within the higher education sector. The expectations of senior management and corporatised business practices impacting health and well-being of academic employees were identified as key factors. Therefore, examining this phenomenon in a real-world environment is the key to understanding a way forward in achieving better health outcomes for academic employees while testing the utility of this thesis.

The findings from this case study offer a number of practical implications that can be translated into learnings, applied and incorporated into future organisational, sector and national policies and practices for the health and well-being of employees. In particular the opportunity to review and improve workload allocation practices at *The University* safeguarding the health and well-being of academic employees. Organisations have a legal obligation to identify specific circumstances or contextual factors contributing to stress in the workplace and to minimise, where possible, the source of stress (Safe Work Australia 2019).

This study identified Implementers receive critical firsthand signals from academics in their day to day role about workloads, negative health impacts and out dated time based metrics of the WPS. However, their perception was that they were often unable to take action because there was no formal process for them to

do so. Furthermore, their views were often overshadowed by inflexible expectations from senior management. Most Implementers indicated they did not feel empowered to question senior management, such as their Dean, or if they were empowered to do so, they were not heard and acquiesced to the environment where such matters are 'normalised'. This study highlighted how many Implementers continually made short term work around adjusting workloads to support the academics, which often resulted in negative impacts on their own workloads and health. There is a well-known and well established link between excessive workloads and poor health and well-being (Safe Work Australia, 2014).

It is proposed the WPS cannot be discounted as a resource for allocating and managing workloads of academics if Implementers are empowered to make appropriate decisions about budgets and other methods of adjusting workloads. Thereby *The University* needs to equip Implementers with the resources and ability to confidently comply with the legislation. The current Australian Work Health and Safety legislation explicitly defines 'health' as both physical and psychological (Johnstone et al., 2011). Endorsement of WH&S by *The University*, such as providing seminars and training on psychosocial topics "should be promoted throughout all levels of the organisation" (Dollard & Bailey, 2014, p.290). With time noted as a lacking resource and raised consistently throughout this study by both Implementers (and Experiencers), it is imperative time should not be a disincentive to attend or partake in training to increase their ability to perform their roles (Bos-Nehles et al., 2013).

Additionally, reviewing and amending time based metrics applied to the WPS with the direct involvement of academic employees would enhance trust and improve employee engagement with *The University*. This study highlighted a strong commitment and engagement of academic employees to their profession. The study also highlighted however their disengagement with *The University's* policies and procedures about WH&S, considered to be ambiguous by most academics, and who are reluctant to access them due to a perceived associated stigma. Additionally employee health needs to be clearly articulated as a priority over productivity outcomes (Dollard et al., 2012) and acknowledgement of

genuine and often conflicting job demands of an academic role. The findings indicated there are opportunities for improved outcomes from WH&S committees at *The University*. Pillar 4 of the PSC theory advocates across organisational participation where employees are encouraged to be involved in psychological safety matters (Hall et al., 2010). Appointment of a workplace well-being specialist could take responsibility for mobilising a well-being committee and a suite of strategies including creating and embracing an HRM philosophy supporting and enabling a high PSC whereby:

- the environment supports safe expression of health concerns by employees including internal two way communication channels and clearly communicated and accessible pathways for feedback about health matters by employees (PSC theory and HRM systems strength)
- developing and implementing risk management/assessment processes for health/psychosocial hazards (excessive workloads and poor job design) supporting and strengthening the national harmonisation of the legislated WH&S Act that considers psychological health as a risk factor
- a dedicated well-being committee where workload management and health is a standing agenda item with inclusion of all HR partners such as representatives from HR executive, L&D units and employee representatives.

There was a lack of consensus or agreement amongst the Designers who were the message senders about the intention of the WPS. Findings indicate that messages were inconsistently communicated at the outset and therefore the intended outcomes of the WPS were not fully understood by academic employees or those tasked with implementing it. Unless the relevance of HRM practices are clearly understood by employees with opportunities for meaningful consultation, employees can individually interpret signals resulting in individual negative perceptions of the workplace PSC rather than shared positive perceptions (Ostroff

& Bowen, 2016). Furthermore, when signals are ambiguous, the PSC can be perceived as more productivity focussed than employee well-being focussed resulting in negative reactions and poor organisational outcomes. Additionally, more focus from senior management about the messages HR practices send to employees would be more beneficial in achieving positive outcomes for academics than a focus on the HR practice itself.

This thesis shows there is a need for organisations to more clearly consider employee feedback mechanisms either directly from employees or through supervisors, FLMs or middle management level. Additionally, effective implementation of HRM practices is crucial in achieving the outcomes intended by organisations therefore training and inclusion of middle and frontline managers is necessary to support better health outcomes of academics. However, all studies result in identifying limitations and opportunities, this study being no exception. Accordingly these are outlined below.

7.8 Limitations and opportunities

As discussed in Chapter Three, an embedded three tiered qualitative case study approach was chosen as a suitable research method to explore the overarching research question for this thesis: *How can a work profile system support workplace health and well-being of academic employees?* Although the data provided rich content, some limitations of the study's findings should be noted. Firstly, the study was conducted within the higher education sector and at one data collection site with primarily one occupation category. Therefore, the results may not be generalisable for all contexts or occupations.

However, offsetting this limitation, the study allows a single in depth investigation for future pressing conversations. Winefield et al. (2008a, p. 75) notes however each university must be individually responsible for "ensuring that its staff members work in healthy environments". Strategies to safeguard health and well-being of academic employees when introducing change to workload allocation processes includes collaboration and consultation between key stakeholders including Union and employee representatives. This study provides

an opportunity for HR practices to be consistent with other institutions in the sector and other occupations where current practice around health and safety is followed.

The participants in Study A were asked to recall their involvement in events that occurred over ten years ago. It is possible they did not recall the situation and conversations accurately. However, this potential limitation was partially addressed by reviewing confidential meeting Minutes provided to the researcher, enabling some corroboration of participant's version of events. An additional limitation for Study A included the difficulty in sourcing participants who had originally been involved when the WPS was introduced at *The University* and who were willing and able to participate in the study. Some potential participants who were contacted declined the invitation to participate stating they had left the organisation and it was too long ago for them to remember the details of their experience. Others who were contacted said they did not want to be involved in the study. Some did not reply to first email or a follow up email. This limited the potential number of participants who could have been interviewed for the study. However, those participants who were interviewed provided their perceptions and attributions of the situation at the time and data saturation was achieved.

Study B participants reported a range of practices applied to the implementation of the WPS. A revealing practice by some Heads of School was the punitive use of the WPS in conjunction with the performance management process. However, the research design for the study did not allow assessment of how commonly this type of practice was used by the Implementers. Although, participants in both Study B and Study C substantiated it was a frequent occurrence well-known across faculties to be practiced. Future studies would be useful to provide opportunity to investigate reasons contributing to this practice by some Implementers. A further limitation identified as a result of findings from Study B, questions the accuracy and causality of poor health outcomes reported to Implementers via third party sources.

Many participants in Study B claimed there were demands about budgets and resourcing and adhering strictly to enterprise agreements coming from managers above Head of School level, such as at the Dean level. The data sample did not include Dean level participants other than previous Deans included in Study A who were asked about intentions behind the introduction of the WPS not about recent operational issues. It is possible the inclusion of present Deans in the sample, may have generated more direct insight into implementation demands placed on middle management level employees at *The University*.

Study C participants reported the difficulties of having multiple supervisors to report to, each with conflicting priorities, and sometimes lack of understanding about the stress and lack of clarity this created for academics in fulfilling their roles. Katz & Kahn (1978) argue role clarity and management expectations need to be clearly documented to avoid the stress associated with lack of clear understanding about expectations. An opportunity to reduce these conflicting situations could be alleviated by more collaboration and communication between the Implementers, either prior to performance review processes, or to introduce opportunities for joint discussions between all parties.

Within the higher education sector, it is commonly acknowledged there is work-related stress primarily said to be associated with economic pressures, globalisation, increased dependence on technology, and reduced government funding. This is despite the responsibilities of employers regarding the psychological health of employees and increasing regulatory and legislative attention. It is suggested there are opportunities for further examination in academia to consider how ambiguous management expectations around 'how much is enough' to protect academics from routinely working excessive hours resulting in poor health outcomes (Papadopoulos, 2017). Due to the contextual knowledge of industry associations (for example the Australian Higher Education Industry Association in the case of this study) it is proposed opportunity exists for their involvement in supporting better workplace health outcomes for employees within their sectors (Kenny, 2018; Marsh, Lewis, Macmillan, & Gruszyn, 2018).

This study investigated the intentions of decision makers about the WPS, a distinctive HRM practice and the associated outcomes of its implementation and operationalisation effectiveness. A practical contribution includes a broader understanding of the problem of workload management and workplace health of academics if the features of the HR system strength are applied (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004). However, the study revealed there are opportunities to investigate the field of SHRM and linkages to workplace health and improved psychosocial safety climate of organisations.

It is important for organisations to understand the relationship between organisational objectives and psychosocial factors and how implementation of HRM systems can impact employee well-being. The HRM systems strength has three elements (consensus, consistency and distinctiveness). Findings from this study identified consensus about the purpose of HR practices and relevancy to contextual requirements were the most important factors. Future research including the HRM systems strength model would also enable more focus on consistency of implementation processes for improved mutual benefits to employers and employees. Equally, inclusion of the HRM systems strength model to studies of health and safety processes would be beneficial. Employers' approach to workplace health and well-being and their obligations to legislation could be investigated in other organisational contexts to determine whether the findings from this study at *The University* are typical of other work settings particularly those who utilise formal work allocation systems.

On another theoretical note, the PSC theoretical framework has not yet been used to qualitatively explore the academic work environment *a posteriori*, which is a departure from previous *a priori* applications of the model where research has centred mainly on theory validation. Additionally to date there has been minimal qualitative investigations using the PSC model, such Potter et al. (2019), Zinsser and Zinsser (2016) and Kwan et al. (2016). As a result the findings from the study for this thesis offers opportunity to contribute to limited existing insights into practical situations about how workplaces function to protect and promote psychological health despite the presence of relevant legislation mandating such

practices. Finally, a longitudinal study in the future would strengthen the understanding of the conclusions (as discussed below) reached from this thesis.

7.9 Conclusion

Reviews and investigations by governments, academics and the National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU) about the health and well-being impacts of academic professionals have a long history (Anderson et al., 2002; Bexley et al., 2011; Bradley, 2008; National Tertiary Education Union, 2017). Moreover Bexley et al. (2011, p. xi) found in their study of 5, 525 academics, overall only less than one third of Australian academics believe their workload is manageable, and close to half of mid and late career employees indicated “their work is a source of considerable personal stress”.

Therefore, this study has an important focus on the ongoing unresolved phenomenon of the management of academic workloads and the impact on their health and well-being. The academic profession is responsible for supporting learning needs of future generations of all disciplines. Academics are also responsible for developing new knowledge leading to innovative solutions to complex societal problems including business, medical and scientific breakthroughs. Furthermore, most universities, including *The University*, acknowledge and state in their strategic business plans the importance of academic employees in the quest for attracting and retaining students, preparing them for their transition to the workforce. Subsequently, and importantly HRM strategies should appropriately align with and facilitate implementation of an organisation’s strategic business plan (Cascio, 2015) through relevant and distinctive HR practices (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004) that support better health and well-being outcomes for academics.

This concluding chapter of the thesis presented a discussion of the findings from a three tiered case study investigation at *The University* in relation to the primary research question: *How can a work profile system support the workplace health and well-being of academic employees?* Analysis of multiple levels of data was able to provide an understanding of how the decision to introduce a HRM system

without consensus amongst key stakeholders has had enduring implementation, operational and philosophical implications for the organisation. The findings identified the influence of external factors within the higher education sector has impacted the internal philosophical context of *The University*. The introduction of a metrically time based HR practice is incongruent with the practicalities of an academic's role where weekend and evening work is a standard requirement. The job design of an academic's role has traditionally relied upon, (and still does) discretionary labour contributions by academic employees often conflicting with home and family time. *The University's* decision to quantify academics work against time can be said to have had partial success in achieving mutually beneficial outcomes as evidenced by the findings discussed in this chapter.

The findings from this study support extant literature about the corporatisation of academia, increasing workloads, and to an extent normalisation of work intensification and negative health impacts on academic employees (Kenny, 2018). However, the findings question the sustainability of the WPS as a stand-alone construct, primarily intended by HR personnel and senior management as a framework to allocate academic work. There was some evidence in this study indicating a new generation of academics are asserting more control over their workload and reducing the amount of their discretionary labour. This outcome is in contrast to the ethos and intrinsic motivation commonly associated with an academic's vocational approach to their profession. Increased legitimacy of the WPS by academics requires increased transparent, collaborative processes for reviewing and revising the metrics to re-gain a sense of balance and control over their work and health outcomes.

Analysis of the Designer group data from Study A identified inconsistencies and variances in understandings and perceptions amongst participants about the intended purpose of the WPS at *The University*. Wright and Nishii (2007) explain HR practices are developed by decision makers with the intention of achieving desired responses from employees. The data identified there was no consensus amongst the Designer participants about *The University's* intention of introducing the WPS. Consensus of HR practices is achieved through consistent

communication to employees about relevancy and distinctiveness to the environment whereby employees adopt a shared understanding and appropriate responses (Ostroff & Bowen, 2016). The spectrum of Designer's views about the WPS ranged from being a productivity based decision to benefit *The University* financially, to being a benefit for academics, their careers and an equitable way of allocating academic workloads. Therefore while the actual intended outcome of introducing the WPS is not able to be substantially clarified or reported in this thesis, the Wright and Nishii (2007) theory can be partially supported whereby proposed intentions of HR practices are not always achieved as they were intended.

Additionally, the review of internal documentation highlighted the introduction of the WPS was complex and integrally tied to workloads, metrics and hours of work. One concept could not be introduced without introducing the others. The absence of consensus amongst the Designers in supporting the WPS stemmed from the unsuitability of a 'one size fits all' system for the requirements of different faculties and perceived disruptions to career aspirations rather than the espoused support for career aspirations. It was also reported by some Designers, Heads of Schools were concerned the system would create disputes between academics in the workplace and therefore they avoided potential outcomes by delaying support for the introduction of the WPS.

The data analysis from Study B revealed inconsistencies in implementation practices. Additionally, variations were reported from Implementers about their role autonomy and discretionary decision making when it came to adjusting work profiles and workloads of academics. Some Study B participants also acknowledged a degree of role conflict was a factor in implementing HRM practices as they often saw themselves as academics first and foremost before a manager. As previously explained the role of a Head of School is often transitory and incumbents return to their academic role after a period of rotation, arguably contributing to their sense of affiliation with the role of an academic. Furthermore, Study C highlighted the experiences of academics about operational functionality

and suitability of the WPS for the purpose of managing their workloads and subsequently their health and well-being.

The administration and operations of universities in the 21st century have adjusted to a corporatised competitive environment similarly to private sector organisations, employing new public management philosophies (Parker, 2011). Likewise, the business systems, HRM practices and organisational climate in universities have aligned with the pressures and competitive nature of a globally corporatised environment. Changed business operations of universities in Australia and elsewhere in the world over the last thirty years have had consequences for the psychological well-being of academic employees (Bexley et al., 2011; Gillespie et al., 2001; Winefield et al., 2003).

Congruent with existing literature, increasing job demands and lack of recognition, or least a response by senior management about actual resourcing requirements was identified in this study as problematic for academics at *The University*. Notwithstanding pressures to work within time based metrics and perceptions of being undervalued and unheard by their organisation creates an added dimension to how the utility of WPS is perceived. Consequently the HRM systems utilised by universities must be relevant with a legitimacy of authority (Ostroff & Bowen, 2016) to address the distinctive needs of academic disciplines and the intrinsic approach academics apply to their roles. Townsend, Wilkinson, and Burgess (2014) argue organisational strategies are not static constructs, have competing interests and must continue to adapt to changing environments. Without senior management's demonstrated understanding of the day to day implications HR practices, such as a WPS, have on health and well-being of academic employees, the mutually beneficial outcomes required for universities in the 21st century to achieve sustainable strategic objectives maybe at risk.

To conclude the findings of this thesis and supporting the philosophy of David Ulrich as quoted by Bowen and Ostroff (2004) and Ostroff and Bowen (2016) "To make HR practices more than isolated acts, managers and HR professionals must master the theory behind HR work; they need to be able to explain conceptually

how and why HR practices lead to their outcomes” (Ulrich, 1997, p. 238). This thesis proposes managers and HR professionals must listen and respond to feedback from their employees when individual health and well-being is at risk of harm. Feedback opportunities should be perceived as a safe channel for employees to discuss negative impacts of workload on their health and well-being and where stigma about mental health issues is minimised if not removed. (Hall et al., 2010)

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Appendices:

Appendix A Study A: Designers - Interview protocol.

1. What was your role at the time and do you recall what year this was?
2. Do you recall how workloads were allocated at the time of your involvement? Ie thirds/balanced etc? And how were workload allocations proposed to tie in with the work profiles?
3. Do you recall the people/roles or employee groups who were involved in any consultation regarding the initial concept of the academic work profiles? How that evolved etc? Union driven or University drive?
4. What is your understanding of how the design of the work profiles were established?
5. Could you tell me about your understanding around management/HRs original intention of the academic work profiles? Ie were there internal drivers (fairness/equity/productivity) or external drivers (Govt funding, Work choices/ HEWRR)?
6. Do you recall there was any discussion/consideration to support health/work life balance/job satisfaction/promotions etc with the introduction of the academic profiles?
7. From your perspective did you consider the profiles would assist and support HODs to better manage work life of academics?
8. Do you recall if HODs/frontline managers were supportive of the introduction of the profiles?
9. Do you recall how the concept of academic work profiles was communicated to employees as a benefit? Was it voted on?
10. From your perspective as an academic I would be interested in whether you consider original intentions of the work profiles have been achieved?
11. How much autonomy do HODs have in re-negotiating work profiles if/when there are claims of negative health outcomes?

Appendix B Study B: Implementers - Interview Protocol.

1. As a resource, how effective do you perceive the WAS to be in supporting you to manage the workloads of academics?
2. To what extent is there room for negotiation between yourself as HOS/FLM and the academic either at the outset of a new employment contract or during regular performance appraisals to individualise workload allocation formulas/work profiles
3. what about ...if/when a situation has arisen, where an academic is requesting a modification to their allocation due to health issues they claim is being caused by workloads and resourcing issues?
4. Have you had experiences where you have required the support of senior management/HR business partners if/when an academic, under your supervision, is experiencing difficulty managing their workloads within their formal allocation? What kind of support was given?
5. There is some evidence academics are leaving early in their careers...some reasons are unmanageable workloads or better offers overseas... but From your perspective do you consider the WAS impacts decisions of academics to stay in academia or leave?
6. From your first hand interactions with academics, to what extent do you understand the WAS supports their career trajectories? Could you give some examples?
7. As you would be aware the health of employees in the workplace has gained more focus since the introduction of legislation where the 'health' aspect incorporated in 'work health and safety' policies and practices now acknowledges psychological health and psychosocial risks such as stress and excessive work demands. How effective do you consider your organisation's workplace health policies and procedures generally to be in supporting you as a HOD (or deputy HOD) in your supervisory capacity? Can you tell me how or with whom you access the policies and procedures..
8. Given you have a very busy role As a HOD/deputy HOD...managing up and down I would assume..., how do you perceive your role or responsibility in the management of an academic's workplace health? Without mentioning names can you tell me of any circumstances where you have had a 'subordinate' academic raise with you concerns about their workplace health?
9. Do you feel you are supported by senior management/ HR business partners or the organisations policies and procedures if/when an academic under your supervision, is experiencing negative health impacts as a result of their workloads, workload allocations and/or resourcing issues? Can you provide any examples, positive or negative, when you have needed support from HR or a more senior manager of a team members' workload?
10. To what extent do you perceive you have the support of senior management or HR representatives in managing the workplace health of academics under your supervision? How is the support enacted?

Appendix C Study C: Experiencers - Interview Protocol.

Some generic (non-recognisable) data:

- i) How long have you been an academic?
 - ii) Are you employed as: a) permanent b) fixed term contract?
 - iii) Can you tell me what your work allocation or work profile is?
 - iv) How long have you been employed with an enterprise agreement specifying workload allocations?
 - v) Age group? Gender?
 - a) 25-35
 - b) 35-45
 - c) 45-55
 - d) 55 +
1. Can you tell me about current work allocation and if you consider it is reflective of the various responsibilities of your role? If you consider it does not accurately reflect your role can you tell me how/where are there discrepancies? To what extent are you able to manage to do all that is required of you in the workload allocation/work profile?
 2. To what extent were you involved in consultations with your HOD/deputy HOD or HR department in developing your workload allocation/work profile? In your opinion, is the process reasonably transparent in your department? Did you find the negotiations resulted in an appropriate (fair and equitable) allocation? Can you explain why you found this to be the case?
 3. How much opportunity is there to negotiate or discuss changes to the allocated work/work profile with your HOD/deputy HOD during your performance appraisals (or any other time) if you believe your workload and available resources are inequitable?
 4. To what extent do you consider you are able to manage all that is required of you in your work allocation? Have you ever given any thought to how many hours you work approximately opposed to the allocated formula?
 5. To what extent do you believe your current work allocation supports your career trajectory?
 6. Would you say you consider the WAS to be a resource that supports a balance between your work life and non-work life? Can you provide some examples of how this is so?
 7.
 - a) How effective do you perceive the communication processes to be regarding workplace health policies, practices and procedures ?
 - b) Are you able to describe the workplace health policies and procedures?
 - c) How effective do you perceive the enactment of workplace health policies, practices and procedures to be?
 8. Are your working conditions assessed or monitored (and by whom) in regard to your workplace health ie are you able to discuss with your supervisor if you have concerns around the balance of job demands and job resources and your work and non-work life balance.
 9. To what extent (if any) do you perceive work output and productivity are more important aspects to senior management than workplace health in this organisation? Can you give some examples of this?
 10. To what extent does the design and/or workability of the WAS influence your decision to continue (or otherwise) your career as an academic?

Appendix D Information sheet.

Who is conducting the research:

Dr Rebecca Loudoun Griffith University, Nathan 4111 Australia r.loudoun@griffith.edu.au Ph (07) 3735 7743	Assoc Professor Keith Townsend Griffith University, Nathan 4111 Australia k.townsend@griffith.edu.au Ph (07) 3735 7589	Fiona Archontoulis PhD Candidate Griffith University fiona.archontoulis@griffithuni.edu.au Ph 0413968724
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Why is the research being conducted?

This study proposes to examine the implementation of academic workload allocation systems within the university context. Frontline managers will be the unit of analysis as the implementers of the system and how the systems might be utilised to assist with ameliorating work related stress experienced by academics.

What you will be asked to do:

You will be asked to participate in a face to face interview that will take approximately 60 minutes in duration. The researcher will ask questions about your role as a frontline manager. The questions will consider how factors both internal and external to the organisation affect or impact the implementation of the workload allocation system. The recording of interviews is for data analysis and is an important part of this data collection phase. Potential participants who do not wish to have their interview recorded will not be able to participate in this research.

The basis by which participants will be selected or screened:

Participants will be selected for this research on the basis they are frontline managers responsible for implementing workload allocation systems within a university context.

The expected benefits of the research:

It is expected that the findings from this research will provide insights for better understanding how or if workload allocation systems can be utilised to ameliorate workplace stress within a current university context.

Your confidentiality:

Information will be collected from you in the form of an interview which will be tape-recorded. All interviews will be transcribed for the purpose of the research and will be erased upon completion of the transcribed document. The transcript may be used in future research but will not contain any identifiable attributes of participants. The interview data will remain confidential and individuals will not be identified from this research or any future research that may be carried out in this regard. Nor will any information collected be shared with Griffith University, any government departments, or any other institutions.

All data collected for this study will be stored within a locked filing cabinet by the research team for a period of 5 years. Participants names, their departments and organisation will be coded prior to any notes and/or other data related to the interview being put into any digital format (e.g. such as interview notes being transcribed into a work document). Access to the data will be limited to the research team.

Your participation is voluntary:

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You do not need to answer all of the questions unless you wish to do so. Participants are free to withdraw from the study at any time. Access to a summary of the results of the research project will be available upon request at the completion of the study.

Please contact any member of the Research Team if you have any concerns or questions about this research. Thank you for your assistance with this research project.

Appendix E Consent form

Research Team

Assoc Professor Rebecca Loudoun Griffith University, Nathan 4111 Australia r.loudoun@griffith.edu.au Ph (07) 3735 7743	Assoc Professor Keith Townsend Griffith University, Nathan 4111 Australia k.townsend@griffith.edu.au Ph (07) 3735 7589	Fiona Archontoulis PhD Candidate Griffith University, Nathan 4111 Australia fiona.archontoulis@griffithuni.edu.au Ph 0413968724
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Ethics approval: GU Ref No: 2016/957

I have received an information sheet on the project working title: Work allocation systems and workplace health of frontline academics. By signing below, I confirm that I have read and understood the information package and in particular have noted that:

- a) I understand that my involvement in this research will include participation in an interview of approximately 45- 60 minutes duration, discussing my role as HR representative in the context of workload allocation systems;
- b) I understand that the interview will be recorded for the purpose of analysis but will be erased upon completion of the transcription and that the transcript may be used for future research;
- c) The data collected from the interview is included within the research for analysis purposes and will remain strictly confidential;
- d) I have had any questions answered to my satisfaction;
- e) I understand the risks involved;
- f) I understand that there will be no direct benefit to me from my participation in this research;
- g) I understand that my participation in this research is voluntary and will in no way impact on my relationship with my employer, other institutions, government departments or agencies;
- h) I understand that if I have any additional questions I can contact the research team;
- i) I understand that I am free to withdraw at any time, without explanation or penalty;
- j) I understand that I can contact the Manager, Research Ethics, at Griffith University Human Research Ethics Committee on 3735 4375 (or research-ethics@griffith.edu.au) if I have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the project; and
- k) I agree to participate in the project.

Name	
Signature	
Date	

Appendix F Sample NVivo

Respondent: The people who work under her are more likely to be on seasonal. There might be some people on fixed term contracts who would come within the workload allocation model, but she doesn't allocate the teaching. And that's the main thing is the teaching, like we talk about all these three components of work, but in effect it's all about teaching because that's the one thing that can be quantified.

Interviewer: Yes. But then things that are a little bit of a sticking point with what you said and you get 20% or whatever, so a

Respondent: And it's one of those things that it, but we need to take more control over that more active area, it's not just a sort of repository for things like course convenorship, to move course convenorship away from that, to get acceptance that some activities of course, what is it? 10 to 90%, or is it 50/50

New Node

Location: Nodes [Select...]

Name: The model

Description: The model refers to the workload allocation system that is used to allocate various components of an academic's work such as teaching, research and service components

OK Cancel

Interviewer: So is that being discussed for this EB?

Respondent: Yes. Well, no. I think it should be, but I think it's in the end going to have to come down to a debate about... like at the guideline level. We've tried to open up conversations about particular activities, say with course convenors, we wanted to put them all in the clause, the ones that are teaching activities that are very important teaching activities, to just bunk them all in the clause, and the clause has just got enormous. So what kind of backed off and said, "Well, if you can involve the union in drafting, rewriting the policy to this corporate role of the course convenor" and take on what you said about let's divide up all of the mass of different activities in that policy, say this is teaching, this is service, then that might solve some of the problems.

Appendix G Human Ethics approval



Kim Madison <k.madison@griffith.edu.au>

Your Human Ethics Protocol 2016/957 has been Fully approved

rims@griffith.edu.au <rims@griffith.edu.au>

21 April 2017 at 10:12

To: f.archontoulis@griffith.edu.au, k.townsend@griffith.edu.au

Cc: research-ethics@griffith.edu.au, k.madison@griffith.edu.au

GRIFFITH UNIVERSITY HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

Dear APro Keith Townsend

I write in relation to your application for ethical clearance for your project "To what extent do workload management systems support FLMs in moderating workplace stress" (GU Ref No: 2016/957). The research ethics reviewers resolved to grant your application a clearance status of "Fully Approved".

This is to confirm receipt of the remaining required information, assurances or amendments to this protocol.

Consequently, I reconfirm my earlier advice that you are authorised to immediately commence this research on this basis.

The standard conditions of approval attached to our previous correspondence about this protocol continue to apply.

Regards

Kim Madison | Human Research Ethics

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Researchers are reminded that the Griffith University Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research provides guidance to researchers in areas such as conflict of interest, authorship, storage of data, & the training of research students.

You can find further information, resources and a link to the University's Code by visiting Griffith's webpage: Griffith University Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research

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Appendix H 2015 Workload metrics model comparison

Teaching Duty	Faculty A	Faculty B	Faculty C
Teaching Preparation (and associated teaching duties)			
➤ Lectures (Basic)	2 hours / contact hour	2 hours / contact hour	2 hours / contact hour *
➤ Tutorials	1 hour / contact hour	1 hour / contact hour	1 - 2 hour / contact hour
➤ Parallel on-line <input type="checkbox"/> on-campus	Stand- alone online courses are weighted as per standard course. Online courses that are part of dual mode or taught with similar course are weighted at 50%	Online and on campus activities have equal weight	Online activities have 0.5 weighting
Course Convenorship			
➤ Primary Convenor (base)	10 hours	10 hours	10 hours
➤ Campus Convenor (base)	Positions do not exist in this Group	5 hours	5 hours
➤ Course size (escalation)	Base + 0.1 hour / student	Base + 0.1 hour / student up to max 30 hours (200 students) Campus: 0.1 hour / student up to max 25 hours (200 students)	Base + 0.1 hour / student up to max 30 hours (200 students) Campus: 0.1 hour / student up to max 25 hours (200 students)
Student Consultation	0.15 hour/student x fraction of lectures	Unspecified Included in teaching preparation above	Unspecified Included in teaching preparation above
Marking	1.1 hour / student x fraction of lectures	Up to 1 hour / student. 40% profile = 200 hours / year.	Up to 1 hour / student. 40% profile = 150 hours / year
Supervision			
➤ PhD Principal	Supervision per FTE student 50 hours/FTE student/ year (split if >2 supervisors). Max of 100 hours per year for all supervisions (= 4 PhD students if 2 supervisors and 50/50 split)	Supervision per FTE student 50 hours/FTE student/year (split if >2 supervisors) Max of 100 hours per year for all supervisions** (= 4 PhD students if 2 supervisors and 50/50 split)	Supervision per FTE student 50 hours/FTE student/ year (split if >2 supervisors) Max of 100 hours per year for all supervisions (= 4 PhD students if 2 supervisors and 50/50 split)
➤ PhD Co-principal	Pro-rata percentage applies	Pro-rata percentage applies	Pro-rata percentage applies
➤ MPhil	As above	50 hours / student / year (split if > 1 supervisor)	35 hours / student / year split if >1 supervisors)
➤ Research Masters dissertation	As above	30 hours / student / year (split if > 1 supervisor)	20 hours / student / year (split if >1 supervisors)
➤ Hons	Allowance provided (at the discretion of HoS)	20 hours / FTE student /year	20 hours / student / year split if >1 supervisors)
Course Development			
➤ Development of a new course	Unspecified reduction in teaching	50-100 hours (depending on local arrangements, e.g. new to course)	50-100 hours (depending on local arrangements, e.g.: new to course)
Program Convenorship	Base of 10 hours plus an allocation of up to 5 hours/course depending on local arrangements	30-100 hours depending on local arrangement	30-100 hours depending on local arrangements
Moderation	Not specified	Not specified	Not specified
Field Trips	Local: 8 hours / day Remote: 14 hours / day. Max 11 days	Not specified	Not specified