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Flexibility-oriented human resource management system and employee ambidexterity: a moderating role of psychological capital

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Abstract: This study examines the context needed for the development of individual ambidexterity by exploring relationships between the flexibility-oriented human resource management (FHRM) system and two distinct but related employee ambidextrous behaviours, namely exploitation and exploration. We further investigated the moderating role of psychological capital (PsyCap) in these relationships. With its sample of 419 employees in large banking organisations in Thailand, the study revealed that coordination FHRM and resource FHRM – two distinct forms of the FHRM system – are strongly related to exploitative and exploration behaviour, respectively. Our results also demonstrate that PsyCap strengthens the effect of resource FHRM on exploitation and that of coordination FHRM on exploration. This study extends previous research by emphasising that subsystems of FHRM have different behavioural consequences on individual-level ambidexterity and showing that a synergy between either coordination or resource FHRM subsystem and high PsyCap condition can effectively empower an employee to engage in both exploitation and exploration.

Keywords: flexibility-oriented HRM; exploitation; exploration; psychological capital; individual-level ambidexterity; PsyCap; bank; Thailand.

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1 Introduction

It has been suggested that, to enhance their competitiveness in managing existing business demands and future uncertainties, organisations must excel at both exploitation and exploration activities, which considered a competence known as ‘an ambidexterity’ (Gupta et al., 2006; Alamayreh et al., 2021; Raisch and Birkinshaw, 2008). ‘Exploitation’ refers to the management of current resources to increase productivity, while ‘exploration’ pertains to a quest for updated knowledge and competency to meet future demands (March, 1991). To address the tensions inherent to managing distinctive modes of ambidexterity, some organisations have partitioned their business units according to their explorative and exploitative purposes, providing different architecture, structures, and policies (Raisch and Birkinshaw, 2008; Tushman and O’Reilly, 1996). However, there is ongoing debate about this, as this spatial separation is a resource-consuming solution and increases constraints in the dynamic environment (Duncan, 1976; Patel et al., 2013). Therefore, Gibson and Birkinshaw (2004) suggest that firms should instead design a context that invites individuals to engage in both exploitative and exploratory activities within a single business unit.

Concerning the context-based antecedents of ambidexterity, past research has indicated that several factors foster a firm’s ability to manage conflicting demands. These factors include leadership styles (Jansen et al., 2009), the manager’s understanding of organisational culture and value (Mom et al., 2015), the senior management team (Chen et al., 2016; Tang et al., 2021), and the social climate (Meglio et al., 2015; Prieto and Pilar Pérez Santana, 2012). Although various antecedents have been studied, it is not yet known whether an HRM system could provide an appropriate context for the individual pursuit of exploitation and exploration (O’Reilly and Tushman, 2004; Tracey, 2012). This is because the provision of appropriate HRM context could enable a firm to manage employees in adopting the desired behaviours for its objectives (Becker and Gerhart, 1996; Boxall et al., 2011).

In this study, we propose that a flexibility-oriented HRM (FHRM) system is the appropriate context for enabling employees to manage seemingly opposing activities across different roles and situations (Brozovic, 2018; Chang et al., 2012; Jackson et al., 2017; Wright and Snell, 1998). FHRM system constitutes the two subsystems to equip employees with the capabilities to speedily respond to the present organisation demands

and to act on the future opportunities (Ketkar and Sett, 2010; Way et al., 2018). Coordination flexibility-oriented HRM subsystem (CFHRM) includes the provision of HRM practices to exploit employees' existing capabilities to achieve firm's objectives in a quick and effective way. Resource flexibility-oriented HRM subsystem (RFHRM) is another set of HRM practices aiming to prepare employees' capability for broader alternative uses and tasks for new business opportunities. As such, the provision of these two subsystems of the flexibility-oriented HRM practices can increase organisation flexibility to facilitate the employee ambidextrous behaviours to deal with job demands in the present and the future.

Moreover, this research proposes psychological capital (PsyCap) as specific condition to lever individuals in engaging exploitation and exploration activities (Schnellbacher et al., 2019). PsyCap is the positive psychological state to optimise human strengths including hope, self-efficacy, resiliency, and optimism which has been reported to have an influence on employee positive attitudes and innovativeness (Bouzari and Karatepe, 2017; Wojtczuk-Turek and Turek, 2015). Accordingly, PsyCap is likely to influence the way in which the employees engage in exploitation and exploration behaviours. Therefore, the extent to which employees perform ambidextrously in response to FHRM subsystems is said to be contingent upon the level of individual PsyCap.

In sum, the current paper aims to explore the extent to which CFHRM and RFHRM subsystems influence employee's exploitation and exploration behaviours and to investigate the condition under which these behaviours could be enhanced. Doing so, we contribute to the ambidexterity literature proposing FHRM system as an important context-based antecedent in ambidexterity facilitating individual activities towards both exploitation and exploration (Gibson and Birkinshaw, 2004; Good and Michel, 2013; Raisch and Birkinshaw, 2008). In particular, exploitative behaviour is largely driven by the ability of CFHRM subsystem or a firm's capability to quickly utilise resources in dynamic manner; and exploration behaviour is largely driven by RFHRM subsystem or the degree to which firms can prepare employees' knowledge and skills for unpredictable events. Therefore, we make considerable progress in demonstrating that employees' exploitation and exploration behaviours arise from specific HRM subsystems that are oriented towards flexibility.

In addition, this research is conceivably among the earliest to examine the importance of PsyCap to foster the relationships of FHRM subsystems and exploitation and exploration more effectively. By empirically investigating moderating relationships, we found variance in the explorative behaviour of the CFHRM impact in accordance with PsyCap level differences, and likewise for the exploitative behaviour and RFHRM relationship. Therefore, our findings suggest that organisations should take advantage of PsyCap to balance and magnify the benefits of both CFHRM and RFHRM subsystems in establishing ambidextrous behaviours.

The following chapter provides a theoretical basis to link FHRM subsystems, exploitation, exploration, and PsyCap to the aims of this research. We then describe the research sample, the data collection process, and the measurements. The empirical findings are presented in relation to the hypotheses in data analysis session. Finally, the main findings and their implications for theory and practice are discussed.

2 Literature review

2.1 Employees' exploitation and exploration behaviour

We define 'ambidexterity' at the individual level as the behavioural capacity of an employee to flexibly undertake dual activities (exploitation and exploration), regardless of the provision of a dual-structure solution (Gibson and Birkinshaw, 2004). Exploitation behaviour refers to actions taken to develop existing knowledge for efficiency or improvement in the current market, while exploration behaviour involves searching, experimenting with, and introducing novel products to markets. In general, individual ambidexterity involves the cognitive ability to switch between exploitative and exploratory operations. We emphasise that exploitative and exploratory behaviour repertoires are separate phases achieved via employees' own capabilities, and they can be embedded in a modified work context (O'Reilly and Tushman, 2008; Schnellbacher et al., 2019). However, previous studies have provided insufficient examination of the proper context for exploitation and exploration (Mom et al., 2018). Therefore, we seek to address this gap by analysing distinct HRM systems that support exploitation and exploration at the individual level.

2.2 Coordination and resource flexibility-oriented human resource management subsystems

In line with Chang et al. (2012), the FHRM system induces human resource flexibility and enables employees to face a dynamic environment. The FHRM can be delineated into coordination and resource (Sanchez, 1995), where the former involves the rapid reconfiguration of resources to respond to business circumstances and the latter refers to the extent to which resources can be used in alternative ways (Chang et al., 2012; Do et al., 2016; Sanchez, 1995). When these concepts are applied to the FHRM system, the CFHRM subsystem is designed to deploy, synthesise, and reconfigure internal human resources in an effective and timely manner (Wright and Snell, 1998). For example, to quickly and effectively engage employees to meet its goals, the firm could employ broader job designs, promote empowerment, implement reward systems, and adapt the staffing procedures. The RFHRM is a supportive system that promotes the application of knowledge, skills, and information for alternative uses in a variety of situations (Sanchez, 1995). The RFHRM subsystem employs certain HRM practices to enable employees to achieve a wider range of tasks (Wright and Snell, 1998). For example, firms recruit multi-skilled employees, develop their capabilities and knowledge, and motivate them to perform different roles in the changing environment, with the support of recruitment and selection, training courses, and reward management.

2.3 Psychological capital

'PsyCap' is conceptualised as the strengths and developable state of individuals, including their self-efficacy, hope, resilience, and optimism (Avey et al., 2009). Self-efficacy is confidence that one can succeed at tasks (Bandura, 1999). Hope is associated with determination and the belief in alternative pathways to achieve one's goals (Avey et al., 2009). Resilience refers to abilities to sustain one's efforts, bounce back from setbacks, and overcome challenging conditions when faced with adversity or

even positive events (Luthans et al., 2006). Optimism means positive expectations (Luthans et al., 2007b). Overall, PsyCap has synergetic effects, with the four subscales in combination being more effective than a focus on each of them individually (Avey, 2014).

2.4 Hypotheses development

This study proposes that employee exploration and exploitation behaviours require distinct sets of supportive contexts (Gibson and Birkinshaw, 2004). An HRM system oriented to flexibility signals to employees to behave flexibly in response to opposing goals. This paper examines the desirable behaviours of employees through the lens of social exchange theory. When positive perceptions of FHRM subsystems are supported by the organisation, this may result in a high degree of reciprocation (Gould-Williams and Davies, 2005; Oubibi et al., 2022). In short, organisations may expect desirable exploitative and explorative behaviours when they implement a beneficial HRM system. In a similar vein, in accordance with the job demands-resources model, this study asserts that exploitative and explorative behaviours are challenging demands that require sustained effort from employees; while both the CFHRM and the RFHRM subsystems are useful resources, aiding employees in coping with these demands (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007).

2.4.1 Relationship between the flexibility-oriented human resource management system and employee exploitation behaviour

Organisations may build contexts that support exploitation demand by emphasising a new combination of human resources within firms and facilitates knowledge flows within that combination in a changing environment (Aamir et al., 2021; Chang et al., 2012). To illustrate, when employees form a flexible group, they can share useful information for performing their tasks and implementing ideas for improvement (Jansen et al., 2006). Knowledge-sharing between employees and colleague support are crucial resources for undertaking exploitation activities (Chen et al., 2016). Moreover, to sustain job-related task performance, employees engage in knowledge exchange with other organisational members (Cabrera et al., 2006; Ziegert et al., 2022). Accordingly, the CFHRM subsystem may immediately respond to circumstances and sustain competitive advantage in the current market by loosening strict instructions in team building and supporting unofficial communication (Garaus et al., 2015; Patel et al., 2013; Teece, 2007).

This reasoning can also be linked to RFHRM subsystem, as broadening employees' expertise for use in other areas might be beneficial for conducting exploitation activities (Chang et al., 2012). For instance, the capabilities required for exploitative tasks are more likely to include the ability to understand customers' needs and improve existing products. Therefore, the RFHRM subsystem – including broad prior job-experience selection, skill-based development, and cross-functional training – helps employees to effectively apply new knowledge to improve existing products. However, while RFHRM supports employee exploitation behaviour, the speed and effectiveness of resynthesising resources are decisive factors in exploitative activity. The CFHRM subsystem seems to be a more appropriate context for exploitative purposes. We hypothesise as follows:

H1 The CFHRM subsystem has a stronger effect than the RFHRM subsystem on employees' exploitation behaviour.

2.4.2 Relationship between the flexibility-oriented human resource management system and employee exploration behaviour

The underlying assumption regarding the influence of the FHRM system on exploration behaviour is that employees should experience a variety of tasks to improve their ability to search for new knowledge, implement creativity, and generate innovation (Ketkar and Workiewicz, 2022; Seeck and Diehl, 2016). The CFHRM subsystem enables employees to be creative and engage in experimentations. Coordination between individuals within and between business units is beneficial for accepting a new goal and gathering new ideas (Kang and Snell, 2009). In addition, the implementation of certain HRM practices in the recruitment, selection, and placement of employees may facilitate the mobility of resources, ensuring that employees can participate in different roles – hence, exploratory behaviour (Beltrán-Martín and Roca-Puig, 2013; Rosing et al., 2011).

Since the RFHRM subsystem promotes skill variety and adaptability amongst employees in broad range of situations, a beneficiary might realise that their errors be accepted which inhibits explorative learning opportunities. According to social exchange theory and the job demands-resources model, employees who are developed through the RFHRM subsystem are more capable of creative tasks and anticipating future market opportunities (He and Wong, 2004). A provision of broad job design, skills-based selection, various training courses can trigger market novelties (Good and Michel, 2013; Lakshman et al., 2017). More specifically, the supportive recruitment and selection process based on broadened expertise is likely to help employees more accurately predict and provide solutions for unpredictable demands (Beltrán-Martín and Roca-Puig, 2013; Chang et al., 2012). Moreover, organisations offering new areas of knowledge through training and development– as well as incentive schemes – can encourage employees' creativity and motivate proactivity (Song et al., 2019). In a similar vein, when employees are supported to rotate across units and expand their job scope to learn new knowledge, they can increase their decision-making autonomy and become more involved in innovation processes (Anderson et al., 2014). Therefore, employees who are supported by RFHRM subsystem may reciprocate efforts toward new opportunities. This means the exploratory behaviour is strongly leveraged by the promotion of a diverse pool of competencies through the RFHRM subsystem. Therefore, we hypothesise as follows:

H2 The RFHRM subsystem has a stronger effect than the CFHRM subsystem on employees' exploration behaviour.

2.4.3 The moderating role of psychological capital in the relationships between flexibility-oriented human resource management subsystems and employee exploitation and exploration behaviour

PsyCap is likely to influence employees' understanding of the importance of supportive FHRM system as well as the obligation to behave reciprocally towards the firm. Employees with psychological strength have the readiness and time-management ability needed to participate in both exploitation and exploration tasks (Gibson and Birkinshaw, 2004). This paper proposes that PsyCap plays a moderating role in the relationship between FHRM subsystems and dichotomous constructs of ambidexterity. Willing

participation in exploitation and exploration at the individual level may require the employee to have a positive mental state, rather than any specific trait or skill (Lee et al., 2019; Wojtczuk-Turek and Turek, 2015). Similarly, a positive response to the FHRM system could generally be a response to positive expectations and convictions. Past research has shown that high-PsyCap employees are able to manage the attention and time they give to competing goals (Bouzari and Karatepe, 2017; Hsu and Chen, 2017).

PsyCap produces positive interpretations of circumstances and translates judgement into work motivation (Gagné and Deci, 2005; Obeng et al., 2021). For example, employees with high PsyCap see opportunities to exploit their knowledge and expertise through extensive training and development programmes that support their career achievement. Moreover, they are adaptive to change and they are persistent, even when beset by uncertainty (Milosevic et al., 2017). This means that they may be motivated to execute new ideas and learning in workplace and to take risks without fear of job loss. Therefore, PsyCap is the most consistent boundary condition for promoting the FHRM system towards the desired ambidexterity behaviour.

Conceptually, the influence of the CFHRM subsystem on both exploration and exploitation behaviour is contingent upon PsyCap. To illustrate, providing rapid collaboration, an empowered environment, and a broader job design to employees who believe in their own abilities, find different paths in fulfilling task, are resilient in the face of setbacks, and expect positive outcomes can increase these employees' commitment to their current tasks (Qadeer and Jaffery, 2014; Revilla and Rodríguez-Prado, 2018). In a similar vein, when dealing with challenging tasks, individuals with higher PsyCap may positively interpret the CFHRM subsystem as encouraging curiosity and providing job security. Thus, the higher the employee's level of PsyCap, the stronger the effect of the CFHRM subsystem on their exploitation and exploration behaviour.

H3a PsyCap moderates the relationship between the CFHRM subsystem and employees' exploitation behaviour, such that the effect of the subsystem on exploitation behaviour becomes stronger with higher levels of PsyCap.

H3b PsyCap moderates the relationship between the CFHRM subsystem and employees' exploration behaviour, such that the effect of the subsystem on exploration behaviour becomes stronger with higher levels of PsyCap.

PsyCap could also strengthen the effects of the RFHRM subsystem on exploitation and exploration behaviours. Regarding exploitation, applying RFHRM subsystem is extremely useful for high-PsyCap individuals, since they believe in the skills that they gain through development practices and expect positive outcomes (Luthans et al., 2004; Milosevic et al., 2017). Similarly, employees are more willing to apply new skills, knowledge, and abilities in exploration activities through RFHRM support when they are satisfied and positive about their ability to succeed in unexpected tasks (Ghafoor and Haar, 2022). To illustrate, an employee's propensity to suggest new ideas, their judgement of new situations, and their willingness to conduct innovative experiments are all associated with their individual level of PsyCap (Chen et al., 2016; Sung and Choi, 2018). Therefore, employees are more effective in their actions when they are confident in their skills, expect desirable outcomes when applying their skills, are capable of bouncing back from failure, and are willing to take risks. This paper consequently hypothesises as follows:

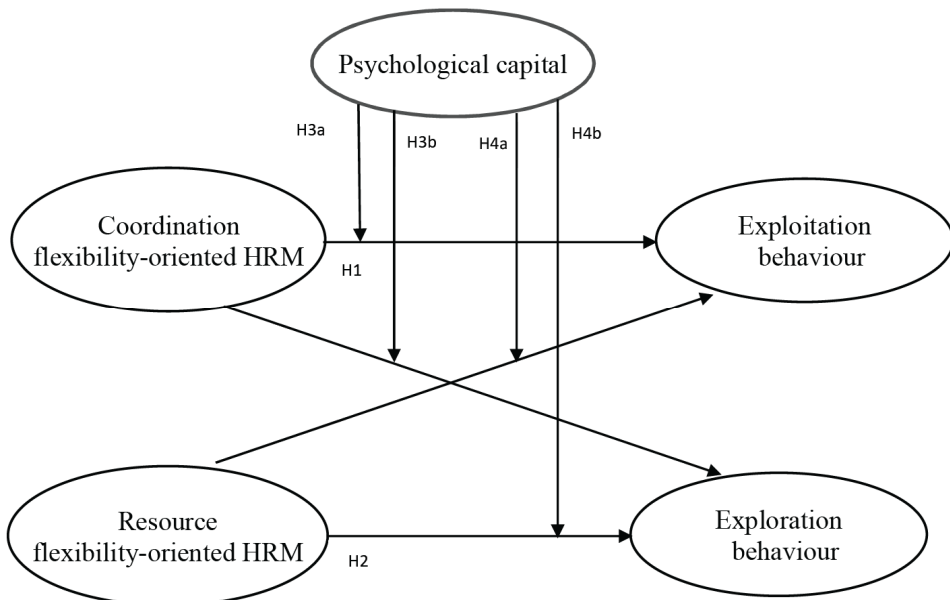
- H4a PsyCap moderates the relationship between the RFHRM subsystem and employees' exploitation behaviour, such that the effect of the subsystem on exploitation behaviour becomes stronger at higher levels of PsyCap.
- H4b PsyCap moderates the relationship between the RFHRM subsystem and employees' exploration behaviour, such that the effect of the subsystem on exploration behaviour becomes stronger at higher levels of PsyCap.

3 Methodology

3.1 Theoretical framework

As illustrated in Figure 1, we explored the relationships between the key variables of CFHRM, RFHRM, PsyCap, exploitation, and exploration.

Figure 1 Research model



3.2 Banking service industry, the research sample, and data collection

This study used a survey technique to obtain primary data through questionnaires. Data were collected from employees in the banking service sectors in Thailand. This industry was chosen because it involves high-pressure customers, competitors, and technologies, alongside a continual push for innovation and operational efficiency (Jansen et al., 2006). Moreover, banking personnel are typically involved in the simultaneous pursuit of service quality and effective sales volume (Yu, 2010).

Several criteria were considered when constructing the sample. First, the key variables were conceptualised and sampled at the individual level. We focused on employees in large banking service companies, since they often face challenges when attempting to ensure efficiency and innovation (Jansen et al., 2006). Our target population was employees in critical banking roles including analysts, financial advisers, product development specialists, and marketing and relationship officers. This population was chosen because their core capabilities, knowledge, and skills can be more comprehensively transformed into ambidextrous behaviour than those of non-core employees (Chang et al., 2012; de la Lastra et al., 2014). Finally, the aforementioned job roles tend to be supported by organisations and FHRM system (Campanella et al., 2016).

For the data gathering, human resources managers in six nationwide banks were contacted by a letter of request. These banks are large in terms of market capitalisation and total assets, each ranking in the top 100 companies on the Stock Exchange of Thailand (SET). We sent each bank 100 sets of questionnaires, and HR managers disseminated these to the target population. The participants were informed of the purposes of the research and given a privacy statement. To increase the response rate, participants were told that 20 Thai Baht would be donated to a certain charity for each completed questionnaire, as such acts of charity are highly appreciated in Thailand.

This study adopted scales well-established in previous research and followed a back-translation procedure. Skilled translators and banking personnel validated the English and Thai translations (Behr, 2017). Prior to data collection, a pilot study was conducted to assess the reliability and validity of the translated questionnaires. This highlighted areas of ambiguity in some of the items, and we were able to clarify these using additional back-translation.

3.3 Measures

- CFHRM. We used items developed by Way et al. (2015) based on 5-point Likert scales from strongly disagree to strongly agree. To operationalise this, we changed the reference in the original scale from '*Firm provided*' to '*I am provided with*'. Doing so allowed us to associate the employee experience of coordination and resource FHRM with outcome more accurately. Sample item is '*I am provided with quick and effective staffing procedures*' (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.79$).
- RFHRM. The five-item scale of Way et al. (2015) was used and assessed by a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). Similar to the measure of CFHRM, a change of reference is applied. The sample item is '*I am provided with compensation structures that rewarded who perform different work activities and produce different outcomes*' (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.87$).
- PsyCap. A validated shortened version of the PsyCap Questionnaire developed by Luthans et al. (2007a) was preferred for the current study. The items were found to be reliable psychometric test since they have been verified through multiple samples and acceptable statistical conditions (Caza et al., 2010; Luthans et al., 2008; Qadeer and Jaffery, 2014). Respondents replied to these items using a 5-point Likert-scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Sample item is '*I feel confident in representing my work area in meetings with management*' (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.89$).

- Exploitative behaviour. A seven-item scale including such items as ‘*I carry activities as if it were routine*’, ‘*I focus on achieving the short-term goal*’ and ‘*I engage activities with clearly fit company policy*’ was used (Mom et al., 2009). Respondents were asked to rate the extent to which they engage in exploitative activities, on seven-point Likert (from extremely small extent to extremely large extent) (Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.91$).
- Explorative behaviour. This study used scale developed by Mom and colleagues (2009). The sample exploration variables include ‘*I engage in strong renewal of products/services or processes*’, ‘*I earn new skills or knowledge*’ and ‘*I search for new possibilities with respect to products/services*’ (Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.94$).
- Control variables. The research controls for gender, experience-related factors, workplace (banks) and individual responsibilities (positions) at individual level, which could influence the results otherwise.

Table 1 Respondents’ demographic profile

| | <i>Frequency</i> | <i>%</i> |
|----------------------------------|------------------|----------|
| <i>Gender</i> | | |
| Male | 166 | 39.60 |
| Female | 250 | 59.70 |
| Prefer not to disclose | 3 | 0.70 |
| <i>Age</i> | | |
| Below 30 | 97 | 23.20 |
| 30–39 | 204 | 48.70 |
| 40–49 | 67 | 16.00 |
| 50 and above | 51 | 12.20 |
| <i>Tenure</i> | | |
| Less than 5 years | 133 | 31.74 |
| 5–9 years | 116 | 27.68 |
| 10–14 years | 70 | 16.71 |
| 15–19 years | 13 | 3.10 |
| 20 years and higher | 82 | 19.57 |
| <i>Educational level</i> | | |
| Diploma | 3 | 0.72 |
| Bachelor degree | 187 | 44.63 |
| Higher than bachelor degree | 228 | 54.42 |
| <i>Job roles</i> | | |
| Analyst | 103 | 24.58 |
| Advisor and relationship officer | 103 | 24.58 |
| Marketing representative | 100 | 23.87 |
| Product developer and IT officer | 113 | 26.97 |

4 Data analysis

4.1 Descriptive analysis

A total of 419 responses were usable for analysis, representing a response rate of 70%. On average, the final samples have worked in their firm for 9.9 years. There are 250 female respondents or 59.7% of survey, with 39.6% are males and 0.6% prefer to disclose. There were quite equal proportion (25%) among respondents working as analysts, relationship officers, marketing and product development specialists. For education, a majority received higher than bachelor degree (54.4%), following by bachelor degree (44.6%). Moreover, the majority of respondents has an age ranging between 30 and 39 years (47.5%).

4.2 Reliability and validity

To ensure the conditions for multivariate analysis, exploratory factor analysis with varimax rotation was applied to assess convergent and discriminant validity as well as reliability of all constructs. Most items were loaded significantly on their latent construct which ranged from 0.6 to 0.9, then each construct was tested by cross-loadings in reflective items for the discriminant validity assessment. Following Hair et al. (2014), some items for PsyCap, exploration and exploitation which loaded below 0.5 were removed from the final scales. Overall, the values of Cronbach's alpha of all measures demonstrated good construct reliabilities ranging between 0.79 and 0.94 (Kline, 2015).

4.3 Hypotheses testing

The results from the multiple regression analysis indicate that CFHRM and RFHRM explain the variance in employees' exploitation behaviour. As shown in Model 2 (see Table 2), the effect of CFHRM on exploitation behaviour ($\beta = 0.272$, $p < 0.01$) is stronger than that of RFHRM ($\beta = 0.254$, $p < 0.01$), which supports H1. The results of Model 6 (see Table 2) show that RFHRM ($\beta = 0.343$, $p < 0.01$) has a greater impact on employees' exploration behaviour than CFHRM does ($\beta = 0.136$, $p < 0.05$), as posited in H2.

To test the moderating role of PsyCap, the independent variables of CFHRM, RFHRM, and PsyCap were mean-centred prior to the creation of an interaction term. According to Table 2, Model 4 shows that the moderating effect of PsyCap on CFHRM and exploitation behaviour is positive but not significant ($\beta = 0.023$, ns), thus H3a is rejected. However, Model 8 shows that the interaction term between CFHRM and PsyCap is significant and positively related to exploration ($\beta = 0.178$, $p < 0.01$); therefore, H3b is supported and PsyCap moderates the relationship between CFHRM and employees' explorative behaviour. In line with Preacher et al. (2006), a simple slope analysis was conducted to compare the moderation effects between high (at one standard deviation above the mean) and low PsyCap (at one standard deviation below the mean). As plotted in Figure 2, the slope increases when PsyCap is high, suggesting that the positive relationship between CFHRM and exploration behaviour is strengthened by PsyCap.

Table 2 Multiple regression table for hypotheses testing

| | Exploitation | | | | Exploration | | | |
|---|--------------|---------|---------|---------|-------------|----------|----------|---------|
| | Model 1 | Model 2 | Model 3 | Model 4 | Model 5 | Model 6 | Model 7 | Model 8 |
| <i>Direct effects</i> | | | | | | | | |
| Coordination flexibility-oriented HRM | | 0.272** | 0.159** | 0.160** | | 0.136* | 0.031 | 0.034 |
| Resource flexibility-oriented HRM | | 0.254** | 0.127* | 0.116* | | 0.343** | 0.221** | 0.216** |
| <i>Moderator variable</i> | | | | | | | | |
| Psychological capital | | | 0.404** | 0.402** | | | .372** | 0.366** |
| <i>Interaction effects</i> | | | | | | | | |
| Coordination flexibility-oriented HRM x psychological capital | | | | 0.023 | | | | 0.178** |
| Resource flexibility-oriented HRM x psychological capital | | | | 0.103* | | | | -0.031 |
| <i>Control variables</i> | | | | | | | | |
| Gender | -0.001 | 0.006 | -0.017 | -0.027 | -0.039 | -0.034 | -0.056 | -0.072† |
| Age | 0.017 | -0.049 | -0.072 | -0.069 | 0.090 | 0.037 | 0.015 | 0.038 |
| Education | 0.076 | 0.110* | 0.084† | 0.080† | 0.018 | 0.052 | 0.027 | 0.031 |
| Tenure | 0.044 | 0.115 | 0.073 | 0.073 | -0.016 | 0.060 | 0.022 | -0.002 |
| Relationship officer | 0.123* | 0.043 | -0.008 | -0.013 | 0.148* | 0.074 | 0.027 | 0.029 |
| Marketing representative | 0.046 | -0.031 | -0.036 | -0.027 | 0.169** | 0.107* | 0.103* | 0.115* |
| Product specialist | 0.095 | 0.030 | -0.004 | -0.005 | 0.228** | 0.181** | 0.150* | 0.147** |
| Bank A | -0.083 | -0.032 | -0.039 | -0.035 | -0.046 | 0.000 | -0.007 | -0.002 |
| Bank B | -0.022 | 0.168 | -0.046 | 0.048 | -0.020 | 0.062 | 0.042 | 0.039 |
| Bank C | -0.143* | -0.096 | 0.073 | -0.061 | -0.230** | -0.180** | -0.159** | -0.142* |
| Bank D | -0.007 | 0.051 | 0.022 | 0.028 | 0.004 | 0.059 | -0.032 | 0.052 |
| Bank E | -0.051 | -0.030 | -0.021 | -0.017 | -0.054 | -0.040 | 0.031 | -0.029 |

Note: † p < 0.10, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01.

Figure 2 Interaction effect between CFHRM and exploration relationship

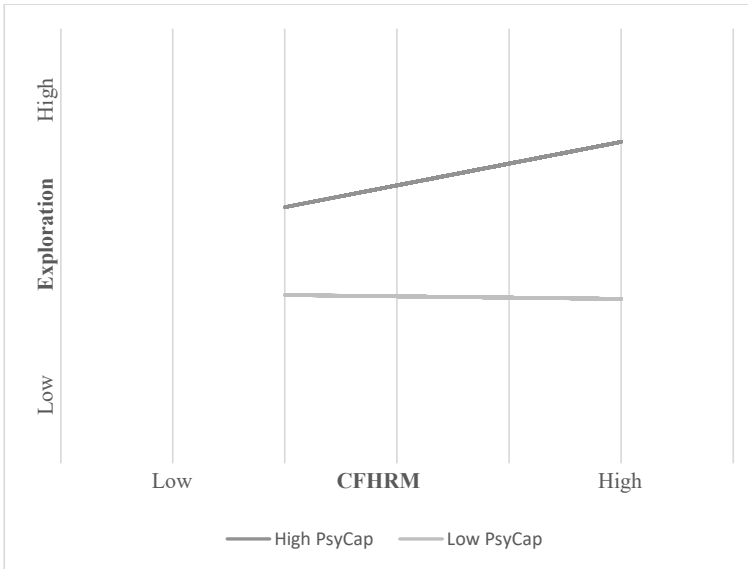
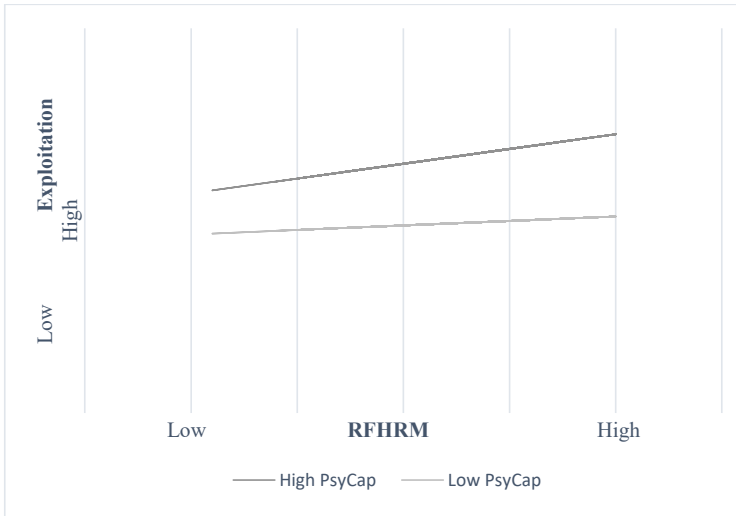


Figure 3 Interaction effect between RFHRM and exploitation relationship



Concerning the moderating effect of PsyCap on the relationship between RFHRM subsystem and employees’ exploitation behaviour, the results in Model 4 show an interaction effect, with RFHRM and PsyCap positively and significantly related to exploitative behaviour ($\beta = 0.103, p < 0.05$). Thus, H4a is supported. Figure 3 shows interaction patterns between RFHRM and exploitation at high and low PsyCap. Consistent with H4a, the effect of RFHRM on exploitation is stronger when PsyCap is high. However, the results in Model 8 Table 2 indicate that the interaction term of RFHRM and PsyCap has no effect on exploration ($\beta = 0.103, ns$). It appears that PsyCap

does not moderate the effect of RFHRM on employees' exploration; so, the H4b is rejected.

5 Discussion

This study investigated the influence of FHRM subsystems on employees' ambidextrous behaviours, i.e., exploitation and exploration and the moderating role of PsyCap on these relationships. In doing so, this study responded to call for research on HRM supportive context to enhance ambidextrous behaviours (Junni et al., 2015; Simsek, 2009; Lavie and Rosenkopf, 2006). We argued that the provision of FHRM subsystems can be a major driving force of exploitation and exploration (Brozovic, 2018) and that employee PsyCap can magnify the impact of these subsystems on ambidextrous outcomes.

Our results suggested that two subsystems of FHRM increase both exploitation and exploration behaviour but in different magnitudes. CFHRM has a stronger effect on exploitative behaviour whereas RFHRM has a stronger effect on exploratory behaviour. This is consistent with Andriopoulos and Lewis (2009), which found that coordination HRM subsystem facilitates the utility of employee's existing knowledge to improve product specialisation and meet customer's expectation. Put differently, our findings illustrate that CFHRM shapes employees to exploit their existing knowledge and capabilities to quickly and effectively make decision and seize market opportunities (Gibson and Birkinshaw, 2004; He and Wong, 2004; Popadiuk et al., 2018). As for the RFHRM subsystem, the results indicated an important role of RFHRM practices to provide employees with additional skills or knowledge to engage in the exploration behaviour. This is consistent with the findings of Kang and Snell (2009) that multi-skilled employees are likely to take risks, accept errors, search for new knowledge, and detect possibilities. Therefore, it is important to support the employees with new competencies through the provision of RFHRM subsystem if organisations would like to promote the behavioural exploration.

Additionally, our results give strong support for the moderating effect of PsyCap in bolstering up the impact of CFHRM subsystem on exploration behaviours. As previously discussed, CFHRM is relatively important for leveraging employee's exploitation behaviours. However, we found that when employees have high levels of PsyCap, the effectiveness of CFHRM subsystem tends to be advanced on the exploration. To explain, employees are more willing to involve in uncertainties and experimentation when they think positively, believe in ones' abilities, and are determined to achieve goals (Luthans et al., 2007b). However, although the RFHRM subsystem is an effective context for individual exploration, PsyCap is served as a condition that influences the impact of RFHRM on exploitation. This suggests that the employees with high PsyCap are keen for performance improvement and the provision of RFHRM subsystem can broaden their skills and knowledge in contributing more creatively to the current assignments. To explain, when organisations provide sufficient support for skill development, individuals with high PsyCap will apply a variety of skills on the specific job objectives to accomplish the current tasks. As such, the employees can exploit the repertoire of skills and capabilities resulted from RFHRM for effectiveness (Luthans et al., 2007b; Milosevic et al., 2017).

5.1 Contribution of the findings

Previous studies have demonstrated that structural differentiation at the organisation and unit level is an insufficient and resource-consuming method of achieving ambidextrous objectives (Chang, 2015; Gibson and Birkinshaw, 2004). Reflecting this viewpoint, the current paper addresses the gap in contextual ambidexterity literature and extends previous research findings by investigating ambidexterity at the individual level (Gibson and Birkinshaw, 2004; Mom et al., 2015; Patel et al., 2013). Importantly, firms must build contexts that support individuals engaging in competing demands for exploitation and exploration. There is however little evidence to understand the way in which contextual system allows individual to engage in exploitation and exploration (Mom et al., 2009). In doing so, we are amongst the first to assert that individual-level exploitation behaviour can be encouraged by a firm's support for effective coordination between individuals CFHRM, while exploration behaviour can be promoted by a system that supports the development of individual knowledge and skills RFHRM. In other words, our results point to the importance of both CFHRM and RFHRM, showing that organisations can become ambidextrous, cultivating both exploitation and exploration behaviours, by emphasising the two FHRM subsystems.

Moreover, the ability of firms to encourage employees for exploiting their efficiency and exploring innovativeness may be contingent upon specific boundary conditions (Way et al., 2018). Responding to past research (Prieto and Pilar Pérez Santana, 2012), this article identifies that the individual's positive psychological state can influence the way in which they realise the support from organisations and seek to perform ambidextrous behaviour. Accordingly, our findings contribute to the literature by highlighting the crucial role of PsyCap in facilitating balanced behavioural ambidexterity. Firms can set up both CFHRM and RFHRM subsystems or, alternatively, exploit the synergy between PsyCap and one selected subsystem. To explain, our results imply that the strength of the FHRM subsystem is contingent on the level of PsyCap found amongst the employees. In organisations characterised by high-PsyCap employees, enabling rapid coordination between people working in a changing environment – or promoting the development of skills and capabilities for multiple uses – can support employees to manage the exploitation and exploration behaviours that are critical for achieving ambidexterity.

5.2 Implication of the findings

The results of this paper have important practical implications. First, the CFHRM subsystem and RFHRM subsystem allow employees to manage exploitation and exploration in different ways. This means that, to leverage employees' behaviour for exploitative activities, firms should provide an HRM system that supports coordination between employees. In addition, HRM practices that focus on diverse and new competencies as an essence of the RFHRM subsystem could promote the explorative behaviour of employees. For example, firms may employ broader job specifications and multi-skill-based selection policies to enhance employees' abilities in exploring new products and services. Taking these suggestions together, HR managers should prepare their organisations for uncertainties by applying CFHRM when dealing with exploitation and RFHRM for exploration.

Second, the findings demonstrate that PsyCap boosts the effects of CFHRM on exploration and those of RFHRM on exploitation, suggesting practitioners to incorporate

the important attribution of PsyCap into HRM policies. Firms should hire employees with high levels of PsyCap to model exploitation and exploration behaviours. This could be done by using the PsyCap questionnaire (PCQ) developed by Luthans et al. (2007a) in the recruitment and selection process. In addition, since PsyCap is state-like and developable, firms should provide training and development sessions – such as PsyCap training interventions – for employees in dealing with ambidexterity tasks (Luthans et al., 2010).

6 Conclusions

To conclude, this study uncovers the relationships among FHRM subsystems, employees' ambidextrous behaviour, and PsyCap. We have contributed to the ambidexterity literature by investigating the distinct influences of CFHRM and RFHRM on two components of ambidexterity, i.e., exploitation and exploration. Moreover, the empirical results highlighted the important role of employee PsyCap in facilitating a more balanced behavioural ambidexterity.

6.1 Limitations and future research

On the basis of the results of this study, various suggestions are made for future research. First, the focus on core employees and bankers may limit the external validity of this work to other groups of employees. While bankers provide a useful illustration of exploitation and exploration activities (such as generating sales, improving service quality, creating new products, and targeting new market segments), we suggest that future studies extend our model to explore different positions in support functions as well as consider different organisational sectors and occupational groups to facilitate insights into other contexts. Second, while the results of this study indicate that FHRM subsystems explain the variance in both exploitation and exploration behaviours, we cannot infer a causal claim from the present model. Future research could adopt a longitudinal research design to investigate the clearer picture of these relationships. Finally, this study although employed a single method and self-report data, our analyses revealed that all constructs in the study are statistically distinct. Moreover, after conducting the Harman's single factor test, the common method biases do not exist (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

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