

**Process and Content in Performance Management: How consistency and supervisor developmental feedback decrease emotional exhaustion via high-quality LMX**

**Drs. Isabeau VAN STRYDONCK<sup>1</sup>**

Department of Marketing, Innovation, and Organization, Ghent University,  
Tweekerkenstraat 2, 9000 Ghent, Belgium  
Isabeau.VanStrydonck@UGent.be  
ORCID: 0000-0003-4506-123X

**Prof. dr. Adeliën DECRAMER**

Department of Marketing, Innovation, and Organization, Ghent University,  
Tweekerkenstraat 2, 9000 Ghent, Belgium  
Adeliën.Decramer@UGent.be  
ORCID: 0000-0002-8480-7535

**Prof. dr. Riccardo PECCEI**

King's Business School, King's College London  
Bush House, 30 Aldwych, London, United Kingdom  
Riccardo.Peccei@kcl.ac.uk  
ORCID: 0000-0001-7255-8378

**Prof. dr. Mieke AUDENAERT**

Department of Marketing, Innovation, and Organization, Ghent University,  
Tweekerkenstraat 2, 9000 Ghent, Belgium  
Mieke.Audenaert@UGent.be  
ORCID: 0000-0002-9940-8203

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<sup>1</sup> Corresponding author

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## **ABSTRACT**

Performance Management (PM) is often criticized for undermining employee emotional exhaustion. To avoid such unintended consequences, this study investigates how PM can be of benefit to employee emotional exhaustion by integrating both process and content aspects of PM. Results show that a consistent PM process, in which the same performance expectations are maintained across the different practices of performance planning, monitoring and evaluation, is negatively related to employees' emotional exhaustion, indirectly via the development of high-quality Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) relationships. Second, we found that, in terms of the content, supervisor developmental feedback acts as a moderator, determining the need to implement PM as a consistent process. A consistent PM process was especially important when the feedback provided throughout the PM process involved a lesser developmental content. When employees already received a large amount of developmental feedback, the degree to which the PM process was characterized by consistency made no difference to outcomes.

**Keywords:** performance management consistency, developmental feedback, LMX-quality, emotional exhaustion, HRM process and content, performance management implementation

## **INTRODUCTION**

Effectively managing employee performance is one of the key human resource management (HRM) functions in any organization (DeNisi et al., 2021). In accordance with New Public Management approaches, public sector organizations have increasingly adopted performance management (PM) systems (Blackman et al., 2019; Cho & Lee, 2012; Selden & Sowa, 2011) to identify, measure, and develop employees' performance through the use of three main practices: performance planning, monitoring, and evaluation (Aguinis, 2019). Over the past years, a substantial number of studies have examined the link between PM and employee well-being and performance (DeNisi & Murphy, 2017; Schleicher et al., 2019). This body of work has, by and large, shown PM to have a positive effect on employee motivation and performance (DeNisi & Smith, 2014), which has also specifically been found in public sector organizations, where a meta-analysis of Gerrish (2016), for instance, showed that PM systems have a small, yet positive effect on the performance of public organizations.

However, PM has also been shown to have undesired negative effects on employee health, in particular by instigating feelings of emotional exhaustion (Conway et al., 2016). Emotional exhaustion, the most central dimension of job burnout (Lee & Ashforth, 1996), refers to a high level of fatigue that originates from a period of intense physical, affective, or cognitive strain (Demerouti et al., 2010). The negative effect of PM on employee emotional exhaustion is problematic, as emotional exhaustion not only has detrimental health-related consequences for the individual (e.g., depression, anxiety, insomnia [Bakker et al., 2023]), but also has far-reaching adverse consequences for organizations, as negative relationships have been found with several critical performance outcomes (Cropanzano et al., 2003; Lebrón et al., 2018). Therefore, an important question that needs to be answered urgently is how PM systems should be designed and implemented so that their potentially negative effect on employee emotional exhaustion can be avoided by organizations (Guest, 2017; DeNisi & Murphy, 2017; Peccei &

Van De Voorde, 2019; Schleicher et al., 2019). Addressing this question is particularly important for public sector organizations, where a healthy workforce is required to deliver effective and efficient public services (Borst & Knies, 2021).

Thus, it is the aim of this study to further address this research question and examine how PM can be designed and implemented to reduce employees' emotional exhaustion. This question is examined in a particular subsection of the public sector, namely secondary schools, where an ever-increasing number of teachers are reporting that they suffer from burnout (OECD, 2020; Wu et al., 2020). In studying how PM can be of a benefit to teachers' emotional exhaustion, we focus on two core aspect of PM systems, namely (1) their process (i.e., how the different PM practices of planning, monitoring, and evaluation are implemented and communicated to employees) and (2) their content (i.e., the inherent virtues associated with the actual content of the PM practices themselves (Aguinis, 2019, den Hartog, 2004; Sanders & Yang, 2016). This reasoning is in line with recent arguments from the strategic HRM literature that suggest that to explain the effectiveness of HRM systems like PM, two fundamental approaches need to be integrated: a process-based approach and a content-based one (Ostroff & Bowen, 2016; Sanders et al., 2014; Wang et al., 2020).

In line with the process-based approach to HRM, this study will investigate whether a *consistent PM process* – which refers to the extent to which the different PM practices are internally aligned and thus communicate the same expectations to employees (Decramer et al., 2013; Van Waeyenberg et al., 2017) – can be beneficial in reducing employees' emotional exhaustion. However, in public sector organizations, maintaining consistency in the planning, monitoring, and evaluation of employees' performance is often easier said than done (Jung, 2014). For that reason, this study will also examine whether another core aspect of PM systems, namely their content, can be of benefit in such circumstance. In line with recent calls in the PM literature to make the content of the PM practices more developmental in nature (Brown et al.,

2019; Decramer et al., 2021; Kim & Holzer, 2016), by, for example, providing employees with developmental feedback (Li et al., 2022), we examine whether *supervisor developmental feedback* – which refers to the degree to which employees are provided with valuable and helpful information that enables them to learn, develop and improve their future performance (Zhou, 2003) – might act as a moderator, compensating for a less consistent PM process. In exploring how the process and content aspects of PM affect employee emotional exhaustion, we build on relational leadership theory (Uhl-Bien, 2011), to identify the quality of the supervisor-employee relationship – also referred to as Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) quality – as an important mechanism through which these relationships occur.

The contribution of the research is threefold. First, this study contributes to the HRM – well-being literature by focusing on employee health (i.e., emotional exhaustion) as an outcome of a PM process (Guest, 2017; DeNisi & Murphy, 2017; Peccei & Van De Voorde, 2019; Schleicher et al., 2019). Since HRM, and as such PM, is often criticized for engendering feelings of being emotionally depleted (Conway et al., 2016; Guest, 2017; Peccei & Van De Voorde, 2019; Van De Voorde et al., 2012), and emotional exhaustion is a widespread problem at the workplace (American Psychological Association, 2022), especially across public sector organizations (Hsieh, 2014), enhancing our understanding of how PM might alleviate employees' emotional exhaustion is important. Second, this study makes an important contribution by examining the relative importance of a consistent PM process and supervisor developmental feedback, as well as their possible interaction, in developing high-quality LMX relationships and, consequently, in reducing employee emotional exhaustion. Although researchers have acknowledged the importance of both process and content aspects of HRM systems, like PM, they have yet to examine the relative importance of each and how they may interact with one another in determining outcomes of interest (Ostroff & Bowen, 2016; Sanders et al., 2014; Wang et al., 2020). As such, by examining supervisor developmental feedback as

a possible boundary condition affecting the need for a consistent PM process in building high-quality LMX relationships and consequently in reducing employee exhaustion, we not only respond to the call to study how the effectiveness of an HRM process depends on the content of the HRM practices (Mirfakhar et al., 2018), but also contribute to management practice by informing organizations about the relative importance of the content and process of key HRM practices like PM, and whether any potential trade-offs are possible when designing and implementing PM systems at the workplace (Schleicher et al., 2018).

Lastly, since this study explicitly focuses on teachers, our findings also have important practical implications. Worldwide, an alarming number of teachers are suffering from psychosocial disorders such as burnout (OECD, 2020; Wu et al., 2020). This is problematic, as teachers' emotional exhaustion may not only push them to quit teaching in general (Muylaert et al., 2022), but may also seriously endanger their provision of high-quality education to students (Arens & Morin, 2016; Madigen & Kim, 2021). Finding ways to prevent burnout is therefore high on the agenda within the field of education, and even other public organizations in general. As the findings of this study underscore that teachers' perceptions of a consistent PM process and supervisor developmental feedback can decrease their emotional exhaustion, our study thus offers an important practical contribution in this regard.

## **THEORY AND HYPOTHESES**

As stated, scholars examine PM in terms of both its process and content approaches. In line with the process-based approach to HRM, scholars suggest the effectiveness of PM largely depends on the extent to which employees perceive consistency in the implementation and communication of the different practices of performance planning, monitoring, and evaluation (Audenaert et al., 2019; Bauwens et al., 2019; Van Waeyenberg et al., 2017). In a consistent PM process, an employee's performance is monitored and evaluated on the same objectives as

agreed upon during the planning phase, and the final evaluation is in line with the criteria that were discussed during the progress follow-ups. A consistent PM process might be especially important in public sector organizations, where employees typically face multiple, complex job demands and performance objectives (Jung, 2014) that can lead to stress and exhaustion (Borst & Knies, 2021).

However, in public sector organizations, maintaining consistency in the planning, monitoring, and evaluation of employees' performance is not always easy to manage (Jung, 2014), especially since public sector employees often face great levels of role ambiguity or uncertainty in their jobs (Van der Hoek et al., 2018), or have to provide societal services that are more difficult to quantify, monitor, and evaluate to the same extent (Van der Wal et al., 2011). Given the potential negative consequences that such inconsistent PM processes can have for employees' emotional exhaustion, we thus also examine whether the content of the PM practices can be of benefit in such circumstances. Rather than focusing on the extent to which the different PM practices of planning, monitoring, and evaluation are perceived to be implemented in a consistent way, the content-based approach to PM focuses on the inherent characteristics of the PM practices involved and, in particular, on whether they are of a more controlling and directive versus a more developmental and enabling nature (Franco-Santos & Doherty, 2017). Following recent calls in the PM literature to make the content of the PM practices more developmental in nature (Brown et al., 2019; Decramer et al., 2021; Kim & Holzer, 2016), we examine whether supervisor developmental feedback, as a key aspect of PM content, might act as a moderator, compensating for a less consistent PM process. Supervisor developmental feedback is a relevant content aspect of PM to focus on, since this type of feedback can be provided throughout the entire process of planning, monitoring and evaluating employee performance.

Importantly, supervisors play a crucial role in achieving the beneficial effects of PM, as they need to translate the intended, organizational PM policies into actual, implemented PM practices (den Hartog et al., 2004), and are thus responsible for planning, monitoring, and evaluating employee performance (Bauwens et al., 2019). This implies that PM is built upon ongoing interactions between supervisors and employees, which can thus largely affect their relational dynamics (Brown et al., 2019). LMX-quality, which has been identified as an influential approach to study these relational dynamics (Uhl-Bien, 2011), reflects the dyadic supervisor-employee relationship that can range from low to high quality (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). High-quality relationships are characterized by mutual trust, respect, caring, and a strong exchange of resources, such as emotional support and information sharing (Liden & Maslyn, 1998; Walumbwa et al., 2011). Following relational leadership theory (Uhl-Bien, 2011), which states that relation-oriented leader - or supervisor - behaviors that demonstrate a supervisor's care and respect towards an employee affect employee outcomes through the development of high-quality LMX relationships, we contend that a consistent PM process and supervisor developmental feedback are two different manifestations of relation-oriented supervisor behavior that are negatively related to employees' emotional exhaustion via high-quality LMX. Specifically, we propose a moderated mediation model whereby a consistent PM process and the supervisor's developmental feedback both have a direct, as well as a compensating, effect on LMX-quality, and in turn, on employee emotional exhaustion. The overall research model is shown in Figure 1.

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## **A consistent PM process and employees' emotional exhaustion: LMX-quality as a mediator**

Drawing on relational leadership theory (Uhl-Bien, 2011), we contend LMX-quality acts as an important conduit that explains how a consistent PM process is negatively related to employees' emotional exhaustion. According to relational leadership theory, high-quality LMX relationships can be obtained when a supervisor demonstrates positive, relation-oriented behaviors that show their consideration and respect towards an employee. In PM implementation, this is done by consistently recognizing and valuing the work performed by an employee (Meinecke et al., 2017; Yukl et al., 2002). Building on this notion, we argue implementing the different PM practices as a consistent process can be seen as a form of relation-oriented behavior shown by the supervisor: supervisors who plan, monitor, and evaluate employees on the same criteria that were communicated beforehand provide role clarity and guidance for employees, showing appropriate recognition for the work they perform. Through this consistent PM process, employees will experience that they can rely on their supervisor's expectations to guide their work efforts, knowing that their supervisor will recognize, value, and evaluate these efforts as previously agreed upon. In this way, employees will feel they are treated fairly, with respect and care, thereby helping to develop greater trust towards their supervisor. All of which, in turn, are the corner stones of a high-quality LMX relationship (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995).

The contrast here is with PM processes where the performance criteria are unclear and shift and change over time so that employees are unsure what is required of them or how their performance will ultimately be evaluated by their supervisor. This kind of inconsistent PM process, in turn, is likely to undermine employee trust in their supervisor and result in a low-quality LMX relationship. Research has shown in fact that employee perceptions of how a supervisor treats them during PM implementation facilitates the development of high-quality

LMX (Selvarajan et al., 2018). A consistent PM process may thus be particularly important for the formation of high-quality LMX, since the trust, care, and respect inherent in high-quality exchanges can be developed through an employee's perceived series of consistent, satisfactory interactions with their supervisor. We therefore hypothesize the following:

***Hypothesis 1:** A consistent PM process is positively associated with LMX-quality.*

Research shows that high-quality relationships with supervisors are critical in the alleviation of employees' emotional exhaustion (Schermyly & Meyer, 2016). When the LMX relationship is of a higher quality, employees tend to receive more emotional support and encouragement from their supervisor, as well as the necessary guidance to deal with their job demands (Walumbwa et al., 2011). They receive greater job direction and more job-relevant information, which reduces uncertainty and role ambiguity (Son et al., 2014), two important aspects in the development of burnout (Harris & Kacmar, 2006). The clear direction and support received from supervisors in high-quality LMX relationships thus serve as valuable resources for employees that help to make them feel less emotionally exhausted (Lai et al., 2018).

Altogether, following the rationale of relational leadership theory (Uhl-Bien, 2011): when employees perceive their supervisor implements the different PM practices of planning, monitoring, and evaluating performance in a consistent way, employees will perceive this behavior as caring and respectful and are, therefore, more likely to build a good relationship with their supervisor, which, in turn, will reduce their emotional exhaustion. On this basis, we hypothesize the following:

***Hypothesis 2:** LMX-quality mediates the negative association between a consistent PM process and employees' emotional exhaustion.*

### **The moderating role of supervisor developmental feedback**

PM processes can vary not only in terms of their consistency but also of their content. In terms of content, the distinction is between PM processes of performance planning, monitoring, and

evaluation that are of a more controlling and directive nature, with a strict focus on current and past performance outcomes (i.e., traditional performance feedback), and PM processes that are of a more developmental and enabling nature, where there is an explicit emphasis on providing employees with feedback for improvement and future performance (i.e., supervisor developmental feedback) (Franco-Santos & Doherty, 2017; Li et al., 2011). According to relational leadership theory (Uhl-Bien, 2011), enhancing an employee's professional development and improvement during PM implementation can also be perceived as a form of relation-oriented supervisor behavior (Meinecke et al., 2017; Yukl et al., 2002) that positively contributes to the development of high-quality LMX relationships. As such, besides a consistent PM process, we identify supervisor developmental feedback as another form of relation-oriented supervisor behavior that might contribute to the development of high-quality LMX relationships. Indeed, previous research shows that when supervisors provide their employees with developmental feedback, employees perceive this behavior as positive and caring, thus developing a positive affect towards their supervisor (Zhang et al., 2019). We therefore hypothesize:

***Hypothesis 3:** Supervisor developmental feedback is positively associated with LMX-quality.*

In addition, we argue supervisor developmental feedback may not only contribute to the development of high-quality LMX relationships, but also affect the strength of the positive relationship between a consistent PM process and LMX-quality. More specifically, we argue that, in building high-quality LMX relationships, planning, monitoring, and evaluating employees' performance in a consistent way will be more important and needed when less developmental feedback is provided. We expect the positive effect of a consistent PM process on LMX-quality to be stronger when the feedback provided throughout the process entails a less (vs. more) developmental content. To support this argument, we build on Jiang et al.'s

(2012) notion of the compensating or substitutive relationship between the components of an HRM system. A compensating relationship exists when both HRM components have somewhat similar effects on the outcome, whereby the need to add one of them depends on the extent to which the other is already present (Delery, 1998). Since a consistent PM process and supervisor developmental feedback are two different manifestations of relation-oriented supervisor behavior (Meinecke et al., 2017; Yukl et al., 2002), and both can thus be expected to positively contribute to the development of high-quality LMX-relationships (Uhl-Bien, 2011), we hypothesize that, in building these high-quality LMX relationships, a consistent PM process is likely to be especially impactful and important when less developmental feedback is provided.

When a supervisor provides systematic developmental feedback throughout the PM process, they already engage in relation-oriented behavior (Meinecke et al., 2017; Yukl et al., 2002) that demonstrates genuinely care and respect towards employees (Zhang et al., 2019). Hence, a consistent PM process might be less needed or important and have a smaller effect in the development of high-quality LMX relationships. The idea that such substitutive effects between different relation-oriented supervisor behaviors might be at play is also recently reflected in the PM literature, where Meinecke and colleagues (2017) suggested that supervisors' relation-oriented behavior during PM implementation could reach an inflection point, after which the benefit of engaging in more relation-oriented behavior becomes asymptotic.

On the other hand, if during the process of planning, monitoring, and evaluating employee performance, the focus is mainly on employees' current and past performance outcomes instead of on their future performance and improvement (i.e., low developmental feedback; Li et al., 2011), a supervisor must compensate for this lack of relation-oriented behavior. Thus, in such cases, engaging in another form of relation-oriented supervisor behavior by planning, monitoring, and evaluating employees' performance in a consistent way

(Meinecke et al., 2017; Yukl et al., 2002), will be more important and needed to build a high-quality LMX relationship (Delery, 1998; Jiang et al., 2012).

***Hypothesis 4:** Supervisor developmental feedback moderates the positive association between a consistent PM process and LMX-quality, such that the association is stronger when supervisor developmental feedback is low (compared to when supervisor developmental feedback is high).*

Accordingly, as we argue supervisor developmental feedback will determine the strength of the association between a consistent PM process and LMX-quality, it may, as a result, also affect the strength of our hypothesized mediation. Thus, we propose that there will be a moderated mediation, in which the strength of the indirect relationship between a consistent PM process and emotional exhaustion via high-quality LMX will be dependent on the level of supervisor developmental feedback. Specifically, we hypothesize:

***Hypothesis 5:** Supervisor developmental feedback moderates the mediated association between a consistent PM process and emotional exhaustion via LMX-quality, such that the mediated association is stronger when supervisor developmental feedback is low (compared to when supervisor developmental feedback is high).*

## **METHODS**

### **Procedure and sample**

To test our hypotheses, survey data were collected from secondary schools in Flanders, Belgium. In Flanders, all schools are subsidized by the Flemish Government (Flemish Parliament, 2020), and can thus be seen as public schools. In the Flemish educational system, school principals are by decree expected to regularly plan, monitor, and evaluate teachers' performance (Department of Education, 2021), making them the central actors of PM implementation (Tuytens & Devos, 2018). More specifically, at the beginning of the school

year, principals are expected to plan the goals and tasks of the teacher for that year. Next, during the course of the year, they are expected to monitor how teachers are performing towards their goals during several follow-up sessions, which, at the end of the school year, can be followed by a more formal performance evaluation (Department of Education, 2021). Throughout this process of planning, monitoring, and evaluating teachers' performance, principals are also supposed to contribute to teachers' professional growth by providing them with developmental feedback on how they can enhance their future performance (Department of Education, 2021).

Although the Flemish government sets out these general guidelines for principals, it does not specify detailed procedures for them to follow (Tuytens & Devos, 2018). This implies that the precise implementation of PM, and whether it is perceived as consistent or not by employees, is ultimately highly dependent on the principals themselves (Tuytens & Devos 2010). Although school principals are by decree expected to guide and document the performance of their teachers (Department of Education, 2021), some principals may well be inclined to intensively engage in PM implementation, while other principals do not engage in it at all or to a lesser extent. However, although PM may be more symbolic and absent in some schools, there are differences in how teachers perceive these PM practices at the individual level. Indeed, research shows that even when HRM practices are present at the intended organizational level (i.e., school level), employees (i.e., teachers) may still perceive these practices to be rather absent at the employee level, and vice versa (Nishii and Wright, 2008; Wright & Nishii, 2013). The perceptions of HRM practices can thus strongly vary between individuals. Importantly, for that reason, we build upon HRM research (Nishii and Wright, 2008; Van Beurden et al., 2021) and focus on employee perceptions of the PM process rather than the organizational-level policy (Sharma et al., 2016).

Implementing PM can be quite challenging for school principals (Tuytens & Devos, 2018; Vekeman et al., 2015), especially since teachers can be confronted with ambiguous or

conflicting job demands (e.g., achieving their predetermined educational objectives vs. taking into account the learning capacity and abilities of all students) that make it more difficult for principals to plan, monitor, and evaluate their performance in a consistent way (Jung, 2014). Since a poorly-designed and perceived PM system might adversely impact employees' health, examining how the effect of consistent PM processes is contingent on the extent to which the content of the PM practices is perceived to be of a more or less developmental nature is thus highly relevant. This is especially true for the educational sector, given that secondary school teachers already constitute a major risk group in terms of burnout (García-Carmona et al., 2019).

This study is based on a two-wave, one-year time-lagged survey design, in which the dependent variable (emotional exhaustion) was measured twice (cf. Wong et al., 2021). Between October and December 2019, 397 secondary school teachers from 48 schools returned a paper-and-pencil questionnaire in which they provided answers regarding the independent variable (consistent PM process), the moderator (supervisor developmental feedback), and control/demographic variables. Of those 397 teachers, 255 provided an email address for a follow-up electronic Qualtrics survey containing the mediator (LMX-quality) and the dependent variable (emotional exhaustion). The follow-up survey, which was sent out one year later in November 2020, was completed by 183 teachers from 46 schools (response rate: 71.8%). The time-lag of one year was chosen in line with previous studies that explored the relationship between HRM systems and employee outcomes (Veth et al., 2018).

Independent-samples t-tests indicated that teachers who participated in both waves did not significantly differ from teachers who only participated at Time 1 in terms of their perceptions of a consistent PM process ( $t=-.952, p>0.05$ ), supervisor developmental feedback ( $t=-1.893, p>0.05$ ), emotional exhaustion ( $t=.651, p>0.05$ ), gender ( $t=-.096, p>0.05$ ), age ( $t=-1.084, p>0.05$ ), dyad tenure ( $t=.569, p>0.05$ ) and number of working hours per week ( $t=-1.569,$

$p > 0.05$ ). Little's MCAR test, including all items under study, was not significant (Little MCAR test Chi-square = 327.730,  $df = 304$ ,  $p = 0.167$ ), indicating that the missing data at Time 2 is more likely to be missing completely at random (MCAR). We used full information maximum likelihood (FIML; Enders & Bandalos, 2001) to address missing data, wherefore the final sample comprised 183 participants. Compared to listwise deletion, FIML has been shown to result in more trustworthy parameter estimates and better model fit estimation efficiency (Enders & Bandalos, 2001).

Male teachers accounted for 35.5% of the sample, which corresponds to the actual gender distribution of Flemish teachers (i.e., 35% male teachers, Department of Education, 2020). On average, teachers were 40.16 years old ( $SD = 9.76$ ), enjoyed a tenure of 15.38 years ( $SD = 9.27$ ) and worked 36.48 hours per week ( $SD = 10.08$ ).

### **Measures**

Items were measured using a seven-point Likert-scale (1 = totally disagree; 7 = totally agree) and can be found in the Appendix. Cronbach's alphas ranged from .88 to .97, which is above the .70 threshold of reliable scales (Nunnally, 1978).

*Consistent PM process (Time 1).* A consistent PM process was measured with a three-item scale, developed by Decramer et al. (2013). We asked the secondary school teachers: '*To what extent is there a link (1) between the monitoring and evaluation of your educational activities?; (2) between your planned educational activities and the evaluation of your educational activities? and (3) between your planned educational activities and the monitoring and evaluation of your educational activities?*'

*Supervisor developmental feedback (Time 1).* Supervisor developmental feedback was measured with a three-item scale developed by Zhou (2003). A sample item was '*While giving me feedback, my school principal focuses on helping me to learn and improve.*'

*LMX-quality (Time 2).* LMX-quality was measured with the eight-item scale developed by Bauer and Green (1996). A sample item was ‘*I would characterize the working relationship with my school principal as very effective.*’

*Emotional exhaustion (Time 1 + Time 2).* Emotional exhaustion was measured with eight items from the Utrechtse Burnout Schaal (UBOS; Schaufeli & Van Dierendonck, 2000), the Dutch version of the Maslach Burnout Inventory-General Survey (MBI-GS; Schaufeli et al., 1996). A sample item was ‘*I feel mentally exhausted by my work.*’

*Control variables.* Following the recommendations of Bernerth and Aguinis (2016), control variables that might alter teachers’ perceived LMX-quality and emotional exhaustion were included. More specifically, gender (0 = male), age (in years) and working hours per week (including teaching, administration, and the like) were included, since past research shows female teachers (Redondo-Flórez et al., 2020), younger teachers (Antoniou et al., 2006) and teachers with more working hours per week (Loonstra et al., 2009) tend to report higher levels of emotional exhaustion. Furthermore, we controlled for teachers’ dyad tenure (in years), as research shows the longer people are working for a particular supervisor, the more likely they are to perceive the relationship with that supervisor as of a high quality (Sears & Hackett, 2011). We also controlled for teachers’ emotional exhaustion measured at Time 1, since research shows that employees with mental health problems (e.g., emotionally exhausted employees) perceive their supervisor as less supportive over time (De Lange et al., 2005).

### **Common method bias**

Since a consistent PM process, supervisor developmental feedback, LMX-quality, and emotional exhaustion are private experiences for which no other data are available, using perceptual survey data is appropriate to study these constructs (Conway & Lance, 2010). However, using these kinds of data is susceptible to common method bias (CMB; Podsakoff et al., 2012). For this reason, we took a series of steps to mitigate such bias (George & Pandey,

2017; Podsakoff et al., 2012). Most importantly, we used a time-lag between the independent variable and moderator on the one hand, and both the mediator and dependent variable on the other hand (Podsakoff et al., 2012). Although for the Time 1 survey, the independent variable (a consistent PM process) and moderator (supervisor developmental feedback) were measured at the same time, we placed the two measures in separate sections of the survey (Podsakoff et al., 2012). Each section started on a new page and had its own relevant title to separate the two measures as much as possible conceptually and psychologically. In the second survey, one year later, we also positioned the mediator (LMX-quality) and dependent variable (emotional exhaustion) in different sections. Further, to check post-hoc that CMB was not a problem in our study, we conducted a one-factor Harman (1976) test on our data (George & Pandey, 2017). The results of the one-factor test showed that the first factor only accounted for 33.80% of the variance suggesting that CMB did not pose a significant problem in this study.

### **Analytic procedure**

Since our model contained latent variables, we used lavaan (version 0.6-8) in R (Rosseel, 2012) to analyze the data. Considering the nested structure of our data, i.e., teachers are nested in their school principal's approach to PM, we used cluster-robust standard errors.

We followed the two-step approach of Anderson and Gerbing (1988). In the first step, we calculated the measurement model where we tested the latent variable structure of our model by means of a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). In the second step, we constructed the structural model that explored the relations between our variables (Kline, 2011). The product indicator approach was used to test the interaction effect of supervisor developmental feedback on the relationship between a consistent PM process and LMX-quality. We added a new latent interaction variable to the model of which the indicators are the product terms of the matched pair items of a consistent PM process and supervisor developmental feedback (Marsh et al.,

2004). Following Lin et al.'s (2010) recommendations, the double-mean-centering strategy<sup>i</sup> was applied.

## RESULTS

### Descriptive statistics

Descriptive statistics, including means, bivariate correlations, and Cronbach's alphas for all variables in the study are shown in Table 1. Multicollinearity was not a major concern as the highest correlation between two variables was  $|.57|$ , which is far below the limit of  $|.80|$  (Gujarati, 2008).

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### Measurement model

The results of the CFA showed that the hypothesized five-factor model (emotional exhaustion at Time 1 included) provided a good fit to the data ( $\chi^2 = 759.825$ ,  $df = 395$ ,  $CFI = .91$ ,  $TLI = .91$ ,  $RMSEA = .07$ ,  $SRMR = .06$ ), with all items having factor loading above the minimal threshold of  $.50$  (Hair et al., 2014). Moreover, the five-factor model fit the data significantly better than alternative one-factor ( $\Delta\chi^2 = 2677.500$ ,  $\Delta df = 10$ ,  $p < .001$ ) or common-factor models ( $\Delta\chi^2 = 70.071$ ,  $\Delta df = 5$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Furthermore, a three-factor model in which a consistent PM process, supervisor developmental feedback, and LMX-quality shared a factor ( $\Delta\chi^2 = 340.980$ ,  $\Delta df = 7$ ,  $p < .001$ ), or a four-factor model in which a consistent PM process and supervisor developmental feedback shared a factor ( $\Delta\chi^2 = 224.660$ ,  $\Delta df = 4$ ,  $p < .001$ ) also showed significant lower fit.

Furthermore, we calculated the construct reliability (CR) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values to test the reliability and validity of our constructs. The mean CR values

for a consistent PM process, supervisor developmental feedback, emotional exhaustion Time 1, LMX-quality and emotional exhaustion Time 2 are classified as good (.97; .89; .91; .94; .91 respectively). AVE values ranged between .58 and .91 (.91;.74;.56;.67; .58 for a consistent PM process, supervisor developmental feedback, emotional exhaustion Time 1, LMX-quality, and emotional exhaustion Time 2 respectively), endorsing the convergent validity of our model. Additionally, the discriminant validity of our model was tested by comparing the AVE values to the squared correlations. Discriminant validity was warranted, as the AVE values of all constructs were higher than the squared correlations between any two constructs (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

### **Structural model and Hypothesis Testing**

Both the standardized and unstandardized coefficients are reported in Table 2 and Table 3. In this section, we report the standardized ones. With regards to Hypotheses 1 and 2, we expected that when employees perceive their supervisor to implement PM as a consistent process, they tend to perceive this process as positive and caring, thereby fostering a high-quality LMX relationship with their supervisor. This high-quality LMX relationship, in turn, was expected to be negatively associated with employees' feelings of being emotionally exhausted. As shown in Table 2, a consistent PM process was indeed positively associated with LMX-quality ( $\beta = .36, p < .001$ ), which, in turn, was negatively associated with emotional exhaustion ( $\beta = -.28, p < .001$ ). Bootstrapping in 10,000 samples demonstrated a significant indirect association between a consistent PM process and emotional exhaustion via LMX-quality ( $\beta = -.10$ ; CI:  $-.207, -.033; p < .01$ ). Hypotheses 1 and 2 are therefore supported.

Additionally, by including supervisor developmental feedback, and its interaction with a consistent PM process in the research model, we tested whether supervisor developmental feedback, as a key aspect of the PM content, (i) was positively associated with LMX-quality and (ii) moderated the positive association between a consistent PM process and LMX-quality.

As shown in Table 3, supervisor developmental feedback was positively associated with LMX-quality ( $\beta = .41, p < .01$ ), which supports Hypothesis 3. Furthermore, we found a significant interaction effect with a consistent PM process ( $\beta = -.14, p < .05$ ). The results of the interaction, plotted in Figure 2, show the positive effect of a consistent PM process on LMX-quality was strongest when employees received less developmental feedback from their supervisor (i.e., 1SD below the mean) compared to when employees received more developmental feedback from their supervisor (i.e., 1SD above the mean). Consistent with Hypothesis 4, we thus found that, to build high-quality LMX relationships, a consistent PM process is more important and needed when less developmental feedback can be provided throughout the process. Our additional simple slope analyses, in fact, revealed that the positive association between a consistent PM process and LMX-quality was only significant for teachers who received less (i.e., 1SD below the mean) supervisor developmental feedback (simple slope  $\beta = .33, p < .05$ ). For teachers who already received high levels of developmental feedback from their supervisor (i.e., 1SD above the mean), a consistent PM process no longer significantly contributed to the development of a high-quality LMX relationship, as shown by the non-significant slope (simple slope  $\beta = -.08, p = .939$ ) in Figure 2. More specifically, the confidence intervals that were generated by the Johnson–Neyman technique (Lin, 2020), used to demonstrate the regions of significance of the interaction effect, indicated that a consistent PM process no longer had a significant effect on LMX-quality when supervisor developmental feedback exceeded the absolute value of 5.10 (on a 7-point scale). Interestingly, this finding suggests that, in building high-quality LMX relationships, supervisor developmental feedback can compensate, or act as a substitute for, a less consistent PM process.

Lastly, we calculated the conditional indirect effect of a consistent PM process on emotional exhaustion through LMX-quality under low (i.e., 1SD below the mean), average (i.e., the mean), and high (i.e., 1SD above the mean) levels of supervisor developmental feedback.

As shown in Table 4, bootstrapping in 10,000 samples revealed that the mediated association of a consistent PM process on emotional exhaustion via high-quality LMX was stronger when supervisor developmental feedback was low ( $\beta = -.09$ ; CI:  $-.163, .002$ ;  $p = .055$ ) compared to when supervisor developmental feedback was high ( $\beta = .02$ ; CI:  $-.053, .049$ ;  $p = .939$ ), providing support for Hypothesis 5. The final model is depicted in Figure 3.

### **Additional analysis**

As can be seen in Table 4, the mediated association under low levels of supervisor developmental feedback was marginally significant ( $p = .055$ ). However, following Becker and colleagues (2016), we did an additional analysis in which we tested the research model, but this time only including the control variables that were significantly correlated with our mediator (i.e., LMX-quality Time 2) and/or dependent variable (i.e., emotional exhaustion Time 2). This to keep the research model as parsimonious as possible (Bernerth et al., 2018). Table 1 shows that only emotional exhaustion Time 1, as a control variable, was significantly correlated with LMX-quality Time 2 and/or emotional exhaustion Time 2, hence we only included this control variable in the research model. Results of this additional analysis showed that the moderated mediation effect then was significant ( $\beta = -.10$ ; CI:  $-.173, -.003$ ;  $p < .05$ ), providing significant support for Hypothesis 5.

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## **DISCUSSION**

PM is often criticized for endangering employees' health by instigating feelings of emotional exhaustion (Conway et al., 2016). It was the aim of this study to examine how PM can be of benefit to employees by minimizing or reducing feelings of emotional exhaustion. By integrating both process and content aspects of PM systems, the findings of the study show a consistent PM process can reduce employees' emotional exhaustion, indirectly, via the development of high-quality LMX relationships. Moreover, supervisor developmental feedback, as a content aspect of PM, acted as an important moderator: A consistent PM process was especially important when the feedback provided throughout the PM process involved a lesser developmental content. When employees already received a large amount of developmental feedback, the degree to which the PM process was characterized by consistency made no difference to the development of high-quality LMX and, consequently, to the reduction of employees' emotional exhaustion, showing that supervisor developmental feedback can compensate for a less consistent PM process. Moreover, the results in Figure 2 also showed that, regardless of whether the PM process was perceived to be consistent, the highest-quality LMX relationship was found when employees perceived that they received more developmental feedback from their supervisor, compared to when they perceived they received less developmental feedback as part of the PM process. The findings of this study offer important implications for theory and practice, which are further discussed below.

### **Theoretical contributions**

An important question in the HRM literature is how HRM, and more specifically PM, may not only enhance employees' performance, but also stimulate their well-being (Guest, 2017; DeNisi & Murphy, 2017; Peccei & Van De Voorde, 2019; Schleicher et al., 2019). While previous research has merely focused on the positive motivational and behavioral employee outcomes

of a consistent PM process (Audenaert et al., 2019; Bauwens et al., 2019; Van Waeyenberg et al., 2017), less is known about the impact of such consistency on employees' health, such as their emotional exhaustion. However, gaining insight into this relationship is important, especially since research on the PM-health relationship is still limited, and what research there is in this area tends to point to a potentially negative effect of PM on employee health (Conway et al., 2016). A recent study of Van Waeyenberg and colleagues (2022) demonstrated that a so-called "strong" PM process, of which consistency is a subpart, was negatively related to employees' emotional exhaustion. The findings of this study add to this work, as we found that a consistent PM process, in and of itself, can also be beneficial in reducing employee emotional exhaustion, indirectly, via the development of high-quality LMX relationships. Hence, we make an important contribution to the HRM literature (Guest, 2017; Peccei & Van De Voorde, 2019, Van De Voorde et al., 2012), as we add to previous studies demonstrating a positive effect of a consistent PM process on employee performance and satisfaction (Audenaert et al., 2019; Bauwens et al., 2019; Van Waeyenberg et al., 2017) by showing that it can also bring mutual gains with respect to employee health.

Our second contribution relates to LMX-quality as a mediator in the relationship between a consistent PM process and employees' emotional exhaustion. Audenaert et al. (2019) and Bauwens et al. (2019) showed that LMX-quality moderates the relationship between a consistent PM process and various motivational and behavioral employee outcomes. Our findings extend this research by showing that LMX-quality also acts as a key mediating mechanism in the relationship between a consistent PM process and employee health, in the form of emotional exhaustion. Our findings thus contribute to the PM literature by showing that LMX-quality may not only act as a boundary condition in terms of the effect that a consistent PM process has on individual innovation and job satisfaction (as found in the studies of Audenaert et al., 2019; Bauwens et al., 2019), but that such high-quality relationships are also

driven by consistent PM processes, thereby connecting such consistent processes to important health-related employee outcomes. Indeed, additional analyses, not shown here but available from the authors, showed that the interaction effect between a consistent PM process and LMX-quality on emotional exhaustion was not significant ( $\beta = .03, p = .616$ ). These additional results support the idea that LMX-quality acts as a mediator, rather than as a moderator, in the relationship between a consistent PM process and employee health. Importantly, this finding supports the view that HRM and LMX can combine in multiple ways in affecting different employee outcomes (Bos-Nehles & Audenaert, 2019; Leroy et al., 2018).

Third, our study makes an important contribution by including supervisor developmental feedback, a relevant content aspect of PM, as a moderator in our research model. In doing this, we contribute to the broader HRM field by responding to the calls from several scholars (e.g., Ostroff & Bowen, 2016; Sanders et al., 2014; Wang et al., 2020) to study HRM effectiveness in terms of both its process and content aspects, especially with regards to how the need for a strong HRM process might be contingent upon the content of the practices that are implemented (Mirfakhar et al., 2018). In particular, we contribute by showing that, in building high-quality LMX relationships and, consequently, helping to reduce employees' emotional exhaustion, planning, monitoring and evaluating employees' performance in a consistent way is especially needed when employees receive less developmental feedback throughout the PM process. However, when employees already receive a large amount of developmental feedback, a consistent PM process, in and of itself, will not necessarily further contribute to the development of high-quality LMX-relationships, as shown by the non-significant slope in Figure 2, suggesting that supervisor developmental feedback can act as a substitute for a less consistent PM process.

Finally, this study also brings an important contribution through its focus on PM effectiveness in the public sector. Over the last decades, the public sector has been subjected to

many managerial reforms, referred to as New Public Management (Ferlie et al., 2007). These reforms include the adoption of private sector-managerial practices and systems such as strategic planning (George & Desmidt, 2014) and employee PM systems (Moynihan et al., 2012), with the aim of managing and increasing individual and organizational performance (Walker et al., 2010). Accordingly, a shift was made from a rather bureaucratic approach to HRM to a more performance-based approach to HRM (Brown, 2004), in which improving and maximizing the quality, efficiency and effectiveness of public services is paramount (Gieske et al., 2020). However, whether this performance-based approach to HRM, fueled by New Public Management is effective is still a controversial debate among researchers and practitioners alike. While PM systems may include benefits for efficiency and productivity, research shows they could also create unintended pressure (Diefenbach, 2009), thereby increasing employees' feelings of emotion exhaustion (Campbell et al., 2014; Conway et al., 2016). Knowledge of how to prevent such unintended effects is thus needed, especially since public organizations need a healthy workforce to deliver effective and efficient public services (Borst & Knies, 2021). Our study makes an important contribution in this regard, as it shows that, to avoid such unintended consequences on employee emotional exhaustion, it is important that PM systems are perceived to be consistent, meaning that the communication across the different practices of planning goals, monitoring progress and evaluating performance is coherent and signals the same required behaviors (Bauwens et al., 2019).

Notwithstanding, the New Public Management approach to PM is often criticized for relying too heavily on the prioritization of hard quantifiable indicators (Kirkpatrick et al., 2005; Pollitt et al., 2007). These indicators are often the result of an organization's strategic plan, which defines their concrete priorities, goals, and plans for the future (George et al., 2019). From this strategic plan then follows the establishment of a PM system, which includes the identification of quantitative goals and measurements, linked to the strategic plan, as well as

the monitoring of the achievement of these goals (George & Desmidt, 2018). However, in public sector organizations, it can also be challenging to translate such strategic plans into clear goals for the employee, as public employees often provide societal services more difficult to quantify, measure, and monitor (Van der Wal et al., 2011), making it harder to maintain a consistent PM process (Jung, 2014). This is especially true for complex public services, such as education and healthcare, where the process and outcome are harder to capture in specific procedures and metrics (Jakobsen et al., 2018). With this study, we show that a focus on employee learning and development can help in such circumstances, thereby highlighting the importance of explicitly taking into account employees' learning and development in the implementation of PM systems (Kim & Holzer, 2016), and perhaps even in the strategic planning (Kools & George, 2020), of public sector organizations.

### **Practical implications**

This research has important implications for public sector organizations and policy makers, since almost all public sector employees, at one point or another, deal with PM implemented by their direct supervisor. Since PM is often criticized for having negative side-effects on employees' health, such as their emotional exhaustion (Conway et al., 2016), it is important to gain a better understanding of how this negative effect can be alleviated. Our findings show a PM process in which employees perceive that the different PM practices of performance planning, monitoring, and evaluation are implemented consistently is beneficial in this regard. We therefore suggest organizations would do well to take measures to ensure consistency throughout the entire PM process. Organizations could, for example, provide (digital) HRM tools and guidelines that support supervisors in the implementation of a consistent PM process (Bondarouk et al., 2017).

Our results, however, also show that the need for a consistent PM processes is contingent upon the extent of developmental feedback that is provided by the supervisor. Another

important practical implication of our results, therefore, is that organizations need to bear in mind that planning, monitoring, and evaluating employees' performance in a consistent way is particularly important when, throughout the entire PM process, less developmental feedback can be provided by supervisors. This may be the case, for example, when supervisors do not have the knowledge or skills to do so (Van Waeyenberg & Decramer, 2018), or because they simply lack the opportunity to do so because their span of control is too wide to pay attention to the professional development and improvement of each employee (Thiel et al., 2018). When operating in these kinds of situations, it is therefore important for organizations to take the right steps to enable supervisors to ensure consistency throughout the entire PM process.

On the other hand, our results also indicate that receiving developmental feedback throughout the PM process can compensate for a less consistent PM process. This finding is especially interesting for public sector organizations, where a consistent PM process is difficult to manage given the ambiguous, conflicting, or hard to quantify goals public employees often face (Jung, 2014; Van der Hoek et al., 2018). In these kinds of situations, organizations should especially encourage supervisors to pay particular attention to their employees' learning, development, and future performance improvement needs when planning, monitoring, and evaluating their performance. To this end, organizations can usefully train and assist supervisors to play a more developmental role in the PM process to increase both their ability and motivation to do so (Nankervis & Compton, 2006).

Lastly, our findings, as presented in Figure 2, also show that the highest-quality supervisor-employee relationships were found when employees received a high amount of developmental feedback. Moreover, it shows that when employees already received this high amount of developmental feedback, the consistency with which the various PM practices were perceived to be implemented no longer made a difference in the development of high-quality supervisor-employee relationships. Taken together, these results suggest that to obtain the most

beneficial effects, in terms of maintaining LMX-quality and reducing employee emotional exhaustion, supervisors should give priority, where possible, to providing developmental feedback to employees. This is an interesting result as it highlights the fact that, as suggested by Schleicher et al. (2018), organizations can indeed consider potential trade-offs when designing and implementing their PM systems.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

Although the present research makes noteworthy contributions to the literature, it is not without limitations. Both waves of the survey were completed by employees, thereby posing the risk of common method bias (CMB). However, the use of self-reported data is appropriate when studying individual perceptions and feelings (Podsakoff et al., 2012) – which are at the core of this study – and when potential CMB can readily be detected through a one-factor test (George & Pandey, 2017). Most importantly, we (1) included a time-lag between the independent variable and the moderator on the one hand, and between the mediator and the dependent variable on the other, and (2) were careful to place the items measuring the independent variable and moderator in the first questionnaire, and the mediator and the dependent variable in the second questionnaire, in separate sections of the surveys, thereby reducing the likelihood of CMB (Podsakoff et al., 2012). Second, although we employed a time-lagged research design to mitigate concerns regarding CMB, the final sample size of our study was reduced due to attrition. Nonetheless, it is important to emphasize here that the post-hoc tests that we conducted (i.e., independent-sample t-tests and Little's MCAR) demonstrated that this attrition was completely at random.

Additionally, the findings of this study may provide avenues for future research in the domain of public management and public administration. First, although we have suggested that our finding that supervisor developmental feedback can compensate for a less consistent PM process might be especially relevant for public organizations where employees often face

ambiguous, conflicting, or fast-changing performance goals (Jung, 2014; Van der Wal et al., 2011; Van der Hoek et al., 2018), future research could explicitly test whether such contextual contingencies do indeed determine the need for a consistent PM process and/or supervisor developmental feedback. Such research, focusing specifically on the public sector context, would contribute essential evidence-based insights into the added value of HRM for public sector employees (Boselie et al., 2021).

Second, although we found that a consistent PM process is beneficial in reducing employees' emotional exhaustion, it might also unintentionally induce more emotional exhaustion for the supervisor who must implement this consistent PM process. Indeed, consistently planning, monitoring, and evaluating employees' performance can be a very demanding and time-consuming activity for supervisors, who often already experience high workloads. Building on insights from Job-Demands-Resources theory (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017), future research may thus usefully examine whether the implementation of a consistent PM process may be perceived as a job demand by supervisors, thereby causing them to feel stressed or emotionally exhausted, as well as look for possible resources that might better enable them to cope with the situation. Digital HRM tools that support supervisors in implementing a consistent PM process, so that the implementation becomes easier and more efficient might, for instance, be helpful in this regard.

Third, the performance-based approach to HRM, fueled by New Public Management principles is often criticized for requiring supervisors to extensively collect and register performance information (Moynihan et al., 2012). In practice, however, whether a consistent PM process leads to an increase in rules and regulations (Jakobsen & Mortensen, 2016), and thus creates more red tape for the supervisor (Blom et al., 2021; George et al., 2021) is likely to depend on how the PM system is actually managed and implemented in the organization. Whether, for example, it is implemented in a more or less formal and/or top-down fashion, with

or without much support or input from supervisors themselves (Decramer et al., 2012). This is clearly an important issue that merits closer attention in future research.

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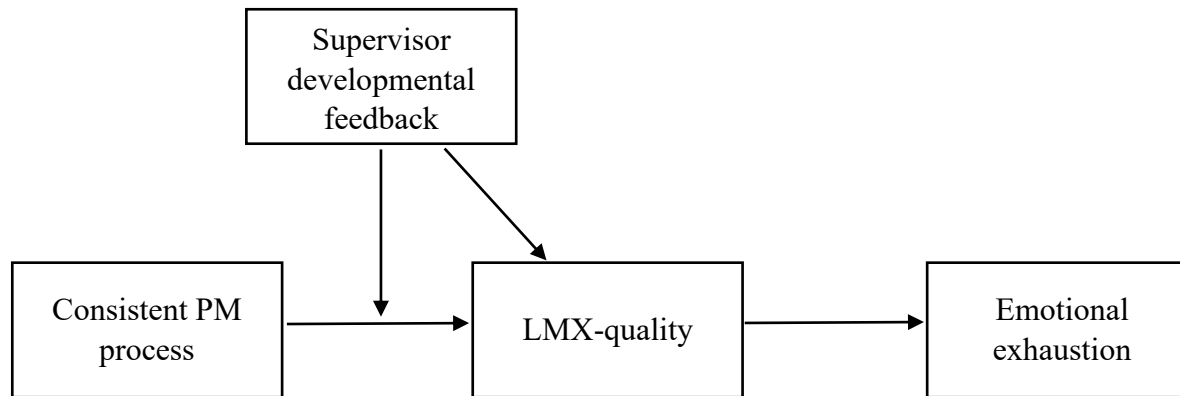
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**FIGURE 1** Conceptual model



*Notes:* Abbreviations: PM, performance management; LMX, leader-member exchange

**TABLE 1** Means, Standard Deviations, Correlations and Cronbach Alphas among variables

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
<b>Control variables</b>											
1. Gender <sup>a</sup>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2. Age <sup>a</sup>	40.16	9.76	-.12								
3. Working hours <sup>a</sup>	36.48	10.08	-.08	-.23**							
4. Dyad tenure <sup>a</sup>	5.84	5.13	.14	.26**	-.15*						
5. Emotional exhaustion <sup>a</sup>	3.04	1.14	.13	-.06	.18*	.04	(.91)				
<b>Main variables</b>											
6. Consistent PM process <sup>a</sup>	4.28	1.33	.03	-.06	.04	-.14	-.12	(.97)			
7. Supervisor DFB <sup>a</sup>	5.06	1.43	-.04	.03	-.08	-.24**	-.37**	.53**	(.88)		
8. LMX-quality <sup>b</sup>	4.99	1.16	-.02	-.10	.01	-.09	-.23**	.38**	.51**	(.94)	
9. Emotional exhaustion <sup>b</sup>	3.27	1.21	.04	-.00	.10	.03	.57*	-.17*	-.27**	-.40**	(.91)

Notes:  $N = 183$ . Cronbach alphas are reported in parentheses on the diagonal. \*\*,  $p < .01$ ; \*,  $p < .05$ .

Abbreviations: PM, performance management; DFB, developmental feedback; LMX, leader-member exchange

<sup>a</sup>Variables measured at Time-one.

<sup>b</sup>Variables measured at Time-two.

**TABLE 2** Results of the mediation analysis

	LMX-quality <sup>b</sup>			Emotional Exhaustion <sup>b</sup>		
	$\beta$	B	SE	$\beta$	B	SE
<b>Control variables</b>						
Gender <sup>a</sup>	-.01	-.03	.18	-.01	-.03	.17
Age <sup>a</sup>	-.08	-.01	.01	.02	.00	.01
Working hours <sup>a</sup>	.01	.00	.01	.03	.00	.01
Dyad tenure <sup>a</sup>	-.00	-.00	.02	-.01	-.00	.02
Emotional exhaustion <sup>a</sup>	-.23**	-.24**	.08	.51***	.62***	.10
<b>Main variables</b>						
Consistent PM process <sup>a</sup>	.36***	.36***	.09	.02	.02	.06
LMX-quality <sup>b</sup>	-	-	-	-.28***	-.34***	.10

Notes:  $N = 183$ . \*\*\*,  $p < .001$ ; \*\*,  $p < .01$ ; \*,  $p < .05$ .

Abbreviations: PM, performance management; LMX, leader-member exchange

$\chi^2 = 789.562$ ,  $df = 418$ , CFI = .90, TLI = .90, RMSEA = .07, SRMR = .07

<sup>a</sup>Variables measured at Time-one.

<sup>b</sup>Variables measured at Time-two.

**TABLE 3** Results of the moderated mediation analysis

	LMX-quality <sup>b</sup>			Emotional Exhaustion <sup>b</sup>		
	$\beta$	B	SE	$\beta$	B	SE
<b>Control variables</b>						
Gender <sup>a</sup>	-.02	-.05	.17	-.01	-.03	.17
Age <sup>a</sup>	-.12	-.02	.01	.02	.00	.01
Working hours <sup>a</sup>	.04	.01	.01	.03	.00	.01
Dyad tenure <sup>a</sup>	.07	.02	.02	-.01	-.00	.02
Emotional exhaustion <sup>a</sup>	-.11	-.11	.08	.51***	.62***	.10
<b>Main variables</b>						
Consistent PM process <sup>a</sup>	.13	.12	.09	.02	.02	.06
Supervisor DFB <sup>a</sup>	.41**	.43**	.13	-	-	-
Consistent PM process x Supervisor DFB <sup>a</sup>	-.14*	-.08*	.04	-	-	-
LMX-quality <sup>b</sup>	-	-	-	-.29***	-.34***	.10

Notes:  $N = 183$ . \*\*\*,  $p < .001$ ; \*\*,  $p < .01$ ; \*,  $p < .05$ .

Abbreviations: PM, performance management; DFB, developmental feedback; LMX, leader-member exchange  
 $\chi^2 = 1091.469$ ,  $df = 606$ , CFI = .90, TLI = .89, RMSEA = .07, SRMR = .07

<sup>a</sup>Variables measured at Time-one.

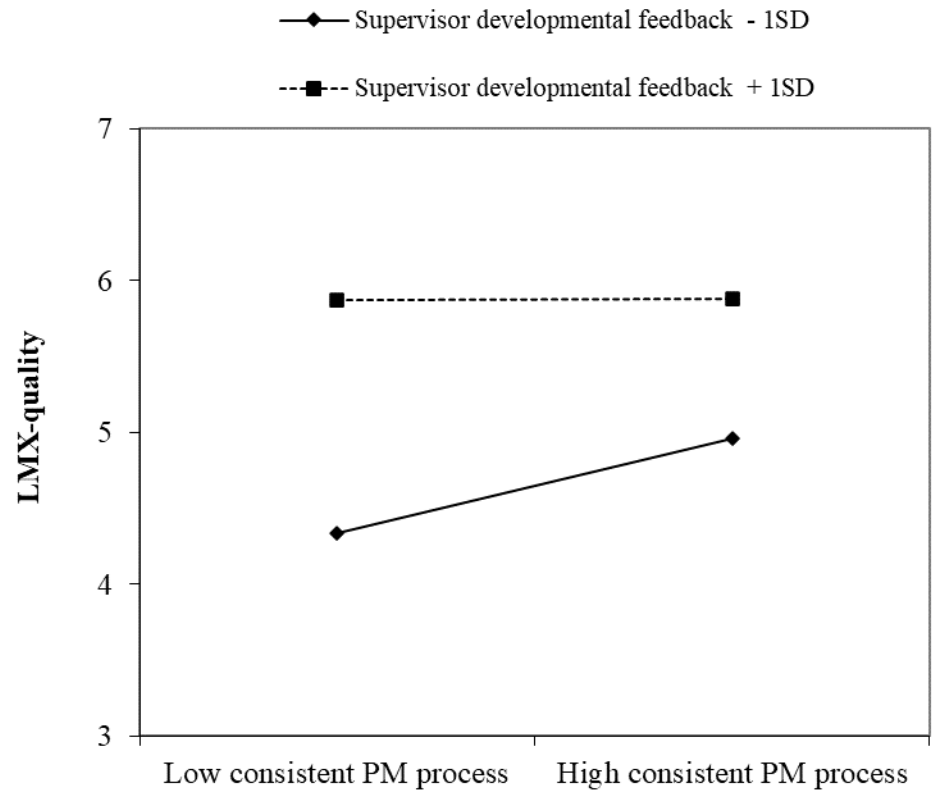
<sup>b</sup>Variables measured at Time-two.

**TABLE 4** Results of the conditional indirect effects of a consistent PM process on emotional exhaustion via LMX-quality across levels of supervisor developmental feedback

<b>Levels of supervisor DFB</b>	<b>Effect</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>LL 95% CI</b>	<b>UL 95% CI</b>
Low (-1SD)	-.08	.04	-.163	.002
Mean	-.04	.03	-.098	.015
High (+1SD)	-.00	.03	-.053	.049

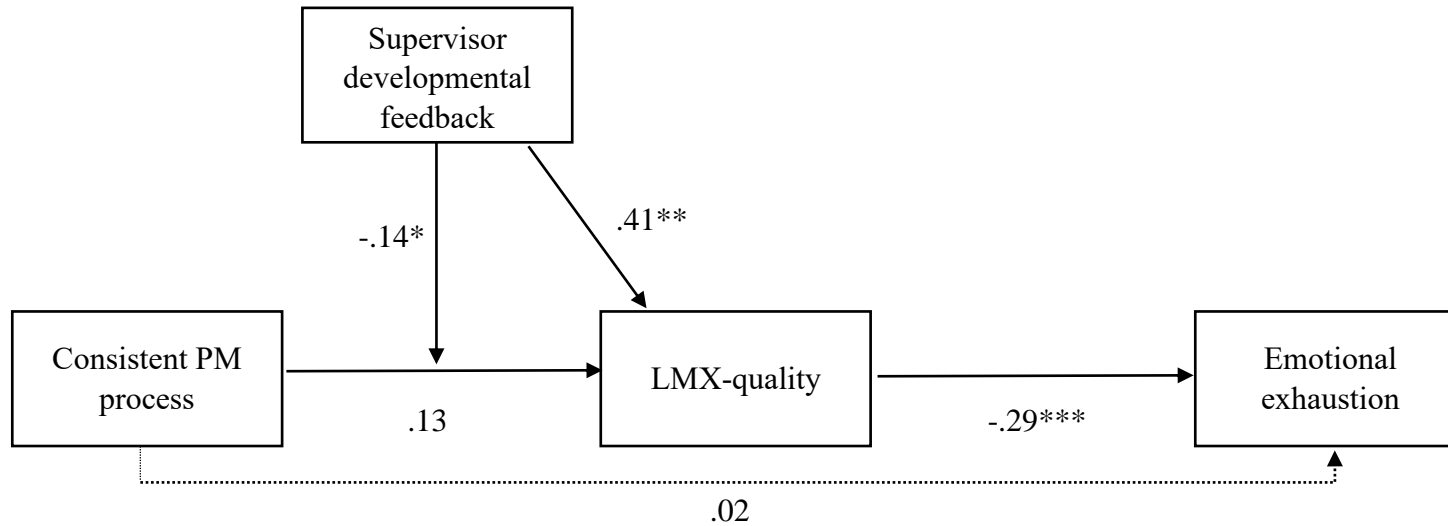
*Notes:*  $N = 183$ . Control variables include employees' gender, age, working hours, dyad tenure and emotional exhaustion. Abbreviations: PM, performance management; LMX, leader-member exchange; DFB, developmental feedback; CI, confidence interval; LL, lower limit; UL, upper limit.

**FIGURE 2** Two-way interaction between a consistent PM process and supervisor developmental feedback in predicting LMX-quality



*Notes:* Abbreviations: PM, performance management; LMX, leader-member exchange

**FIGURE 3** Path model of the moderated mediation



Notes:  $N = 183$ . \*\*\*,  $p < .001$ ; \*\*,  $p < .01$ ; \*,  $p < .05$ .

Abbreviations: PM, performance management; LMX, leader-member exchange

The impact of control variables is not depicted.

The arrows above represent associations between variables, but do not necessarily indicate causal relationships.

## Appendix

### Questionnaire items

#### (1) Consistent performance management process

- a. There is a link between the monitoring and evaluation of my educational activities.
- b. There is a link between my planned educational activities and the evaluation of my educational activities.
- c. There is a link between my planned educational activities and the monitoring and evaluation of my educational activities.

#### (2) Supervisor developmental feedback

- a. While giving me feedback, my school principal focuses on helping me to learn and improve.
- b. My school principal never gives me developmental feedback. (*reverse-scored*)
- c. My school principal provides me with useful information on how to improve my job performance.

#### (3) Leader-member exchange quality

- a. I usually know where I stand with my school principal.
- b. My school principal understands my problems and needs.
- c. My school principal recognizes my potential.
- d. My school principal would use his/her power to help me solve work-related problems.
- e. I can count on my school principal to 'bail me out', even at his or her own expense.
- f. My school principal has enough confidence in me, that he or she would defend my actions and decisions if I were not present to do so.
- g. I would characterize the working relationship with my school principal as very effective.
- h. I usually know how satisfied my school principal is with what I do.

#### (4) Emotional exhaustion

- a. I feel mentally exhausted by my work.
- b. At the end of my working day, I feel empty.
- c. I feel tired when I get up in the morning and there is another working day ahead of me.
- d. Working with people all day is a heavy burden for me.
- e. I feel 'burned out' by my work.
- f. I feel frustrated by my job.
- g. I think I put too much effort into my work.
- h. I feel like I'm at the end of my rope.

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<sup>i</sup> In the double-mean centering approach, all observed indicators are mean-centered prior to creating the product terms. These product terms are then again mean-centered prior to fitting the model with the latent interaction (Cheah et al., 2020; Lin et al., 2010). Thus, applied to our study, the indicators of both a consistent PM process and supervisor developmental feedback (three indicators each) were first mean-centered. Next, these indicators were matched paired and multiplied together to form three product terms (which were the indicators of the created latent interaction). These three product terms were then again mean-centered before fitting the model with the latent interaction.