A qualitative exploration into the link between congruent HRM frames and employees' trust in HRM: a case study at VanDrie Group

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Abstract

Due to the devolution of human resource (HR) activities to line managers, their role in human resource management (HRM) is growing. As a result, the differences in the perceptions of line managers and HR professionals of HRM are of integral importance to the function of the HRM within the organization. The theoretical lens of cognitive frames is adopted to investigate the perceptions concerning HRM of HR professionals and line managers, through the investigation of their HRM frames. Employees' attitudes about HRM are based on the messages they receive from HR professionals and line managers. Inconsistencies in these messages are likely to influence the level of employees' trust in HRM. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore the link between congruent HRM frames of HR professionals and line managers and employees' trust in HRM.

This article presents results from a mixed methods case study conducted at three plants of a Dutch meat processing organization, VanDrie Group. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with two HR professionals, one production manager and fourteen line managers to investigate the content and structure of their HRM frames. To examine the level of employees' trust in HRM, a questionnaire was distributed among the employees of all three plants.

Results of the analysis indicate that the HRM frames of HR professionals and line managers were congruent and employees had a reasonably high level of trust in HRM. Based on these findings, however, it is difficult to draw strict conclusions about the link between the two, although there seems to be a positive relationship between the congruence in HRM frames of line managers and HR professionals and employees' trust in HRM. A remarkable finding is that line managers had more categories within their HRM frames than HR professionals, which could be explained by their regular interaction with employees. HR professionals do not communicate regularly with employees, which could explain why these categories were not found in their HRM frames.

Preface

This master thesis was written to obtain my master's degree in Business Administration at the University of Twente. The purpose of this research was to explore the link between congruence in HRM frames of HR professionals and line managers and employees' trust in HRM. Through semi-structured interviews, the HRM frames were investigated. The findings section describing the HRM frames is lengthy, but do not worry, the findings are summarized at the end of the section. I would like to thank a number of people for their support.

First of all, I would like to thank my first supervisor, Tanya Bondarouk, for her valuable advice and support during the writing process. Through numerous meetings and e-mails, she kept encouraging me to improve my work and she provided me with useful feedback. I would also like to thank my second supervisor, Huub Ruël, for his critical feedback that helped me to improve the quality of my master thesis.

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1. Introduction

Line managers' role in human resource management (HRM) is growing, since more human resource (HR) activities are devolved to line managers (Nehles, van Riemsdijk, Kok & Looise, 2006). Ideas adopted by top management need to be transformed into practice by line managers (Purcell & Hutchinson, 2007). Line managers are now responsible for the implementation of HR practices, which seems sensible since they are responsible for their employees and deal with them on a daily basis (Armstrong, 2006). Before line managers implement an HR practice, they already have their own interpretation of it. This interpretation consists of knowledge, assumptions and expectations about the practice (Bos-Nehles & Bondarouk, 2012). These knowledge, assumptions and expectations together form the key cognitive elements of an individual's frame, on which the individual's behavior is based. A frame refers to a cognitive structure, which is considered to be shared within a social group when key the cognitive elements are similar (Orlikowski & Gash, 1994). Line managers and HR professionals are likely to belong to different social groups (Tichy, Tushman & Fombrun, 1979), resulting in the fact that the frames are expected to be different for HR professionals and line managers. However, the structure and content of the frames of HR professionals and line managers can be aligned, which is referred to as congruence in frames (Orlikowski & Gash, 1994). Thus, even though HR professionals and line managers may not have fully shared frames, these can be congruent. If the frames of line managers and HR professionals are congruent, they will work towards a common goal (Gallivan, 2001), which is important due to the involvement of both HR professionals and line managers in HRM.

Most researchers in the field of HRM have neglected the importance of translating the HR policies into action (Purcell & Hutchinson, 2007). However, weak translations of HR policies into practice could decrease the level of employees' trust in management (Gratton & Truss, 2003). The alignment between HR policies and action is fundamental to the effectiveness of HRM (Gratton & Truss, 2003). Incongruent HRM frames of line managers and HR managers could reduce the level of employees' trust in management and HRM effectiveness, which is an especially pressing issue in face of the recent trend towards devolution.

Within the research field of information technology, incongruence in frames between social groups and its effect on information technology implementation has been investigated extensively. This research has shown that incongruence in technological frames—the elements of a cognitive structure that are concerned with technology—often results in difficulties in the implementation and use of a new technology (Orlikowski & Gash, 1994;

Yoshioka, Yates & Orlikowski, 2002; Barrett, 1999). Extending these research findings to the field of HRM, it could be argued that the implementation of HRM would be more difficult when incongruence in HR professionals' and line managers' frames concerning HRM exists. Recently, employees' perceptions of HRM have gained attention within the field of HRM. When employees' perceptions of HRM improve, it was found to positively affect job satisfaction and customer satisfaction (Piening, Baluch & Salge, 2013). Furthermore, employees' perceptions of HRM were found to be positively related to innovative work behavior (Abstein, Heidenreich & Spieth, 2014), organizational citizenship behavior, and well-being, and negatively related to turnover intentions (Alfes, Shantz & Truss, 2012) and work-life conflict (Abstein et al., 2014) Moreover, employees' perceptions of an organization's HRM were found to affect their commitment and work engagement, which in turn affect organizational performance (Katou, Budhwar & Patel, 2014). Thus, employees' perceptions of the organization's HRM are important, since they influence several employee attitudes and behaviors. In addition, the perceptions that employees have of the HRM practices affects the level of trust they have in the organization (Searle, Den Hartog, Weibel, Gillespie, Six, Hatzakis & Skinner, 2011) and their trust in three levels of organizational authority (Cho & Poister, 2013). Even though employees' perceptions of HRM practices were found to influence several levels of trust, this study will focus on employees' trust in HRM in particular.

Following this line of reasoning, more insight is needed into the differences between the HRM frames of line managers and HR professionals, and how these differences are linked to employees trust in HRM. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore the link between congruent HRM frames of HR professionals and line managers and employees' trust in HRM. This research was conducted by a research group consisting of eight researchers, who conducted case studies at four different organizations. This paper presents the results of one of these case studies.

In the next section the literature is discussed, that is followed by the Methodology chapter, in which the research design and methods are explained. In the fourth chapter, the findings on congruence in HRM frames and trust in HRM are presented. Next, the results are discussed, and the limitations of the research and possibilities for future research are described. The final section presents the conclusion of the research.

2. Theoretical framework: Shared HRM frames and trust in HRM

2.1 HRM frames

An individual's frame of reference consists of tacit knowledge that individuals use to structure and derive meaning from situational and social information to create an understanding of the information (Gioia, as cited in Orlikowski & Gash, 1994). Through social interaction—or more specifically communication—similar interpretations can be created, shared and sustained (Gray, Bougon & Donnellon, 1985). Thus, by communicating the interpretations resulting from an individual's frame of reference, shared interpretations can be developed. Even though a number of different terms are used to describe these cognitive structures (Orlikowski & Gash, 1994), in this paper the term frames will be used. A frame refers to a cognitive structure, which is considered to be shared when a number of key cognitive elements—assumptions, expectations and knowledge—are similar (Orlikowski & Gash, 1994). The focus of this paper is on the aspects of the cognitive structure that concern human resource management, which is termed HRM frames. *"HRM frames are stocks of knowledge which people draw upon to communicate meaning and attitudes in their actions and interactions linked to HRM"* (Bondarouk, Looise & Lempsink, 2009, p. 475). HRM frames are considered to be shared among individuals when the key cognitive elements are similar (Orlikowski & Gash, 1994).

Orlikowski and Gash (1994) argue that frames can have both constraining as well as facilitating effects. A frame is facilitating when it structures organizational experience, helps with the interpretation of ambiguous situations, reduces the uncertainty in the face of changes and complexity, and provides the basis for action taking (Orlikowski & Gash, 1994). The frame is constraining when it determines which ideas fit with the view of the world and the ideas that do not, will consequently be disregarded (MacLeod & Davidson, 2007). Thus, the content of the HRM frame might have consequences for the interpretation of new information related to HRM, which could either be facilitated or constrained.

Bowen and Ostroff (2004) point to the importance of not only considering the content of the HRM system (i.e. the set of HRM practices), but also the process of the HRM system. Process is defined as *"how the HRM system can be designed and administered effectively by defining metafeatures of an overall HRM system that can create strong situations in the form of shared meaning about the content that might ultimately lead to organizational performance"* (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004, p. 206). Research focusing on the relationship between the content of the HRM system and its effect on organizational performance is gradually acknowledge to have

limited usefulness, since it largely ignores the complexity of the relationship (Nishii & Wright, 2008; Kehoe & Wright, 2013). By focusing on perceptions of HRM, this research will follow the process-based approach.

Nishii, Lepak and Schneider (2008) investigated the impact of employees' perceptions of the purpose of HR practices on their affective commitment and their satisfaction with the organization. Through a survey conducted at 95 stores of a supermarket chain, they found that different HR attributions (i.e. why HR practices exist) have different effects on affective commitment and satisfaction. For example, when employees perceive the HR practices to reflect a managerial philosophy focusing on employee exploitation, their affective commitment and satisfaction are negatively affected. In contrast, when employees perceive the HR practices to reflect a managerial philosophy focusing on employee well-being, this is positively related to their affective commitment and satisfaction (Nishii et al., 2008). The research conducted by Nishii et al. (2008) highlights the importance of taking a process-based approach to HRM. Even though the content of HRM might be the same for everyone, it can still be perceived differently by different employees, which affects their affective commitment and satisfaction differently as well.

2.1.1 Congruence in HRM frames

Even though a frame is shared within a social group, the frame might be incongruent with the frames of other social groups. Congruence in frames refers to "*the alignment of frames on key elements or categories. By congruent we do not mean identical, but related in structure (i.e., common categories of frames) and content (i.e., similar values on the common categories)*" (Orlikowski & Gash, 1994, p. 180). Thus, frames are congruent when the assumptions, expectations and knowledge are similar.

Organizational members belonging to different social groups have different frames, and thus do not interpret new information all in the same manner (MacLeod & Davidson, 2007). For example, Gallivan (2001) investigated the frames of three different stakeholder groups in a change initiative. He found that in the absence of clear communication about the change initiative, stakeholders relied on their existing frames to interpret the initiative and behaved accordingly. This resulted in the different stakeholder groups pursuing different goals, as they interpreted the change initiative differently. Even though the frame provided the basis for each stakeholder group's actions, it was constraining in the sense that all groups acted upon their existing frames without considering a different interpretation (Gallivan, 2001). Thus, the

incongruent frames of the different stakeholder groups resulted in different behaviors across these groups.

In the field of technology management, several researchers have investigated the effect of incongruent frames on technology implementation. Through a case study at a make-to-order firm, McGovern and Hicks (2004) found that incongruent technological frames led to difficulties in implementing an information technology system. Similarly, incongruent frames of technologists and users resulted in initial skepticism and frustration in the case of the implementation of a groupware product at a large professional services firm (Orlikowski & Gash, 1994). Furthermore, in a case study of the implementation of groupware within a global organization, incongruent technological frames resulted in limited use of the technology (Yoshioka, Yates & Orlikowski, 2002). Thus, McGovern and Hicks (2004), Orlikowski and Gash (1994) and Yoshioka et al. (2002) all found that incongruent frames had negative consequences for the implementation process.

McLoughlin, Badham and Couchman (2000) conducted case studies within three manufacturing companies implementing a new manufacturing system as part of a research project. In all three cases, the researchers faced technological frames that were incongruent with their own frames. As a result, the researchers faced difficulties in creating legitimacy for the manufacturing system. In these case studies, problems arose at the outset of the implementation process (McLoughlin et al., 2000). Thus, previous research has not only found that incongruent frames have negative consequences during the implementation of a new technology, but could also create problems at the outset of the implementation process.

2.1.2 Resolving incongruence in frames

Yeow and Sia (2008) studied the implementation of a "best practice" package software at a major public organization in Singapore. The software was modified to fit with the different needs of the users, however, it fitted more with the interests of some stakeholder groups than with that of others. The operations department had the strongest influence on the software changes, because of their formal power as project management and their access to critical resources. As a result, the technological frame of the operations department became for the largest part the dominant technological frame. Even though the software could be modified to fit the needs of the users, it still did not solve the incongruence in the technological frames existing within the organization (Yeow & Sia, 2008). Hsiao (2003) conducted a case study at a company that builds e-commerce websites for East-Asian companies. He investigated the fears associated with the use of the new technology and concluded that the implementers of

the new technology should acknowledge the need for a different technological frame for adopters to reduce the fear associated with the implementation (Hsiao, 2003). Therefore, both studies point to the importance of resolving incongruence in the technological frames before the new technology is implemented.

The assumptions, expectations and knowledge included in a technological frame are dynamic, meaning that they can change over time. Social interactions can result in framing and reframing of the cognitive elements of the frame (Lin & Silva, 2005; Balogun & Johnson, 2004). To arrive at congruent technological frames, mutual understanding and communication across frames should be created (Iivari & Abrahamsson, 2002). Thus, through social interaction and reframing, the problem of incongruence could be solved.

In the field of HRM, several researchers have investigated the implementation of HR practices taking a process-based approach (Woodrow & Guest, 2014; Guest & Conway, 2011; Nishi & Wright, 2008; Khilji & Wang, 2006). In this research, the theoretical lens of cognitive frames will be adopted to investigate whether the progress made in the field of technology management also has explanatory power in the field of human resource management.

Since the purpose of this study is to explore the link between shared HRM frames of HR professionals and line managers and employees' trust in HRM, in the next section the concept of trust in HRM will be examined.

2.2 Trust

2.2.1 Organizational trust

Rousseau, Sitkin, Burt and Camerer (1998) defined trust as: *"a psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability based upon positive expectations of the intentions or behavior of another"* (p. 395). They derived this definition from a literature review of definitions of trust, and built on the most frequently cited definition developed by Mayer, Davis and Schoorman (1995). As Schoorman, Mayer and Davis (2007) note, the definition of trust they developed in their paper of 1995 lacked a multilevel perspective. Rousseau et al. (1998) developed a definition of trust that is applicable across multiple levels of analysis. Furthermore, the definition of Rousseau et al. (1998) identifies trust as a psychological state, which is agreed upon by most theorists as being the fundament of trust (Kramer, 1999). Therefore, this research will built upon the definition developed by Rousseau et al. (1998).

There are two conditions that must be present for the development of trust: risk and interdependence. If there is no uncertainty about the behavior of the other party, then there is no need to develop trust. Furthermore, interdependence is a condition for the development of trust. Interdependence refers to the dependence of one party on another to achieve its interests, which cannot be achieved without reliance on the other party (Rousseau et al., 1998).

Several researchers have investigated the effect of organizational trust on organizational outcomes. For example, organizational trust was found to be positively related to organizational citizenship behavior (Robinson, 1996; Rafieian, Soleimani & Sabounchi, 2014), organizational commitment (Liu & Wang, 2013; Tanner, 2007), and job satisfaction (Tanner, 2007; Chathoth, Mak, Jauhari & Manaktola, 2007), and negatively related to turnover intentions (Farooq & Farooq, 2014).

2.2.2 Trust in HRM

Alfes et al. (2012) investigated the effect of employees' perceptions of HR practices on task performance, citizenship behavior, turnover intentions and employee well-being, and whether these relationships are moderated by trust in the employer. They conducted a case study at a support services organization in the United Kingdom, resulting in a sample of 613 employees. They found that perceived HR practices positively influence citizenship behavior and employee well-being, and negatively influence turnover intentions. Furthermore, organizational trust was found to strengthen the relationships between perceived HRM practices and task performance and employee well-being at high levels of trust in the employer. The relationship between perceived HR practices and turnover intentions is strengthened by trust in the employer, both at high and low levels of trust (Alfes et al., 2012). Furthermore, Gould-Williams (2003) investigated the effect of HRM practices on organizational trust through a survey conducted with 191 public-sector employees. He found that the extent to which organizations adopted HRM practices has a significant positive influence on organizational trust. The research conducted by Alfes et al. (2012) and Gould-Williams (2003) point to the relationship between both the content and the process of HRM with organizational trust.

Previous research has focused on the link between HRM and organizational trust, but research into trust in HRM seems to be lacking. Even though Alfes et al. (2012) and Gould-Williams (2003) have found that HRM is related to organizational trust, it could be argued that HRM will especially influence trust in HRM, since it is directly related to it. Since previous research

into trust in HRM seems to be lacking, a definition of trust in HRM was developed in collaboration with eight other researchers. Based on the definition of trust developed by Rousseau et al. (1998), trust in HRM refers to an individual's psychological state which comprises the intention of the individual to accept vulnerability on the basis of the positive expectations of the intentions of the HRM system or the actions of the HRM system.

An HRM system can be defined as *"a program of multiple HR policies that are espoused to be internally consistent and reinforcing to achieve some overarching result"*(Lepak, Liao, Chung & Harden, 2006, p. 221). HR practices are specific organizational actions that are designed on the basis of the HR policies (Lepak et al., 2006). The program from which the HR policies are derived, is the overarching HR philosophy (Schuler & Jackson, 1995). HR philosophy refers to the organization's statement of how it regards human resources, the importance of human resources to the success of the organization, and how human resources should be treated and managed (Schuler, 1992). Each HRM system should consist of three distinct HR policy domains, targeted towards: influencing the employees' knowledge, skills, and abilities; influencing their effort and motivation, and; offering employees the opportunities to contribute (Lepak et al., 2006). Thus, to establish the level of employees' trust in HRM, the focus will be on a specific HRM system of the organization.

Trust is based on the individual's expectations, which means that trust is conceptualized as a belief. When trust is conceptualized as a belief, trust refers to the trustor's beliefs about his/her relationship with the trustee, on which the trustor will base assumptions about the consequences of the trustee's actions for himself/herself (Dietz & Den Hartog, 2006). In this research, the trustor is the employee and the trustee is the HRM system, since the focus is on employees' trust in the HRM system. This research focuses on the system-level of trust, which is defined as the belief that proper impersonal structures are present that enable the trustor to anticipate successful interactions with the trustee (Pennington, Wilcox & Grover, 2003).

Employees' trust in the HRM system is based upon the employees' judgments about different characteristics of the HRM system. Four attributes of trust have been agreed upon by most researchers: competence, benevolence, integrity and predictability (Dietz & Den Hartog, 2006). These components of trust are adopted in this research to assess employees' trust in HRM. Competence is concerned with whether the trustee has the needed skills and knowledge to carry out their obligations. Benevolence refers to the trustee's kindness and benign motives toward the other party and the trustee's sincere concern with the welfare of the other party. Integrity is defined as the trustee's compliance with a set of principles that are judged as

acceptable by the trustor, which encompasses fairness, honesty and avoiding hypocrisy. Predictability refers to the regularity and consistency of the trustee's behavior (Dietz & Den Hartog, 2006). Employees' trust in HRM is conceptualized as employees' trust in the HRM system, which has four attributes: ability, benevolence, integrity and predictability.

2.3 Research model

For the last few decades, researchers in the field of HRM have investigated the devolution of HR activities from HR professionals to line managers (e.g. Hall & Torrington, 1998; Renwick, 2000; Nehles et al., 2006). Operational activities are mainly devolved to line managers (Hall & Torrington, 1998), with the HR professionals taking a more supportive role (Nehles et al., 2006; Renwick, 2000; Perry & Kulik, 2008). HR professionals are still responsible for the development of HR policies, however, the HR practices are implemented by line managers (Renwick, 2003).

Different social groups have different frames, which would result in differences in interpretation (Orlikowski & Gash, 1994). Social groups refer to two or more individuals sharing a social identification or who perceive themselves to belong to the same social category (Turner, 2010). As line managers and HR professionals are not likely to identify themselves similarly, they are argued to belong to different social groups. If line managers and HR professionals do not belong to the same social group, they will hold different HRM frames, consisting of different assumptions, expectations and knowledge. Even though HR professionals and line managers do not have a shared HRM frame, their frames could be congruent. The frames are considered to be congruent when the content and structure of the frames are aligned (Orlikowski & Gash, 1994). When incongruence between HR professionals' and line managers' HRM frames exists, it could lead to inconsistencies in the messages about the HRM system that employees receive, since both groups represent the same HRM system (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004).

Trust is based upon positive expectations about the behavior or intentions of the other party (Rousseau et al., 1998). Employees will not receive clear messages about the intentions of the HRM system and will perceive actions of the HRM system to be inconsistent, if the HRM frames of HR professionals and line managers are incongruent. Based on these mixed messages, employees are not likely to develop positive expectations about the intentions and behavior of the HRM system. As a result, the HRM frames of HR professionals and line managers are argued to influence employees' trust in HRM.

3. Methodology

The aim of this research was to explore the relationship between the congruence in HRM frames of line managers and HR professionals and employees' trust in HRM. An exploratory study was chosen, because the focus was on gaining insight into the relatively unknown field of HRM frames (Durrheim, 2006).

For the purposes of this study, a case study was conducted. The phenomenon under investigation was complex and broad, needed in-depth investigation, was inseparable from its context (Dubé & Paré, 2003), and little previous knowledge about HRM frames existed (Gerring, 2004). Therefore, a case study was the most suitable approach to investigate the HRM frames of HR professionals and line managers. Within our research group, every researcher investigated a single case. This allowed us to develop a deep understanding of the HRM frames in its context (Dyer & Wilkins, 1991). These single case studies contributed to the generation of theory about HRM frames and provided us with rich insights into HRM frames (Walsham, 1995).

A mixed methods study was conducted, with a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches within a single study (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). The purpose of this mixed methods study was to develop a deeper understanding of the main concept of HRM frames accentuated by the concept of employees' trust in HRM (Greene, Caracelli & Graham, 1989). The rationale for the mixed methods research was that of complementarity, the aim was to seek enhancement and illustration of the results of the qualitative method by the results from the quantitative method. This approach allowed us to investigate the consequences of congruence in HRM frames of line managers and HR professionals, to highlight the importance of the topic under investigation (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004) by investigating its influence on a key employee outcome.

The concept of HRM frames was accentuated by employees' trust in HRM. A dominant-less dominant study was conducted, in which the study is conducted through a single dominant research method with a small component of the study conducted through an alternative design (Creswell, as cited in Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). The concept of HRM frames was investigated qualitatively, since we aimed to explore this concept (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). A quantitative approach was taken for the concept of employees' trust in HRM, because the interest was on measuring the level of trust (Blumberg, Cooper & Schindler, 2008). Quantitative research is based on the numerical measurement of a specific phenomenon, seeking a general description of the phenomena (King, Keohane & Verba,

1994). Since a general description of employees' trust in HRM was needed, a quantitative approach was the most appropriate approach.

3.1 Case selection

The judgment sampling technique was selected, since it allowed the researchers to select a case based on certain criteria (Blumberg et al., 2008). Firstly, the company needed to have an established HR department, to ensure that HRM frames are in-place within the organization. Second, the organization needed to have a sufficient number of HR professionals and line managers willing to be interviewed to provide data for a meaningful analysis. Third, the organization needed to have an HRM system in place with which HR professionals, line managers and employees were familiar. Both HR professionals and line managers needed to be involved in HRM to be able to compare their HRM frames.

3.2 Role of the researcher

To develop an understanding of the context of the research within the company, involvement prior to data collection was needed. The involvement in the company allowed us to take an inside view of the organization (Walsham, 1995), which was needed to develop a deep understanding of the research context. Moreover, information about reporting structures, functional areas and potential participants could be obtained (Darke, Shanks & Broadbent, 1998) through meetings with the HR manager prior to data collection. Even though this approach might have compromised the neutrality of the researcher (Buchanan & Bryman, 2007), the involvement was necessary for the development of a deep understanding of the HRM frames in its context.

3.3 Measures

HRM systems have a specific strategic focus on which the configuration of HR practices are based (Lepak et al., 2006). Several researchers have investigated HRM systems based on this conceptualization, for example by looking at HRM systems striving for occupational safety (Zacharatos, Barling & Iverson, 2005), customer service (Schneider, White & Paul, 1998), information technology implementation (Bondarouk & Ruël, 2008), knowledge-intensive teamwork (Chuang, Jackson & Jiang, 2013), and organizational innovation (Jiménez-Jiménez & Sanz-Valle, 2008). This research stream suggests to focus on an HRM system for a specific organizational objective, which includes the HR policies and practices that serve to accomplish this objective.

The operationalizations of the constructs under investigation are shown in Table 1. To explore managers' and HR professionals' HRM frames, four main HRM frame domains were developed in consensus with eight researchers based on the work of Lepak et al. (2006). The knowledge, assumptions and expectations of HR professionals and line managers about these frame domains were investigated. These domains were operationally defined as follows:

1. HRM-as-intended: the beliefs of the intended goals and managerial reasons for introducing the specific HRM system;

2. HRM composition: the organization members' views of the set of guidelines that the HRM system is intended to deliver;

3. HRM in use: the organization members' understanding of how the HRM system is used daily and the consequences associated with it. It includes HR instruments and practices employed to accomplish certain tasks and how the HRM system is organized in specific circumstances, and;

4. HRM integration: the beliefs of how the specific HRM system is positioned in HRM within an organization.

Based on Dietz and Den Hartog (2006), four attributes of trust can be discerned (Table 1), which are operationalized as follows:

- Competence refers to whether the trustee has the needed skills and knowledge to carry out their obligations.

- Benevolence refers to the trustee's kindness and benign motives toward the other party and the trustee's sincere concern with the welfare of the other party.

- Integrity refers to the trustee's compliance with a set of principles that are judged as acceptable by the trustor, which encompasses fairness, honesty and avoiding hypocrisy.

- Predictability refers to the regularity and consistency of the trustee's behavior.

Benevolence and integrity taken together, refers to a global belief about the organization's positive intentions. This definition was adopted, since the concept are too interrelated to make separate investigation possible (Searle et al., 2011).

To establish the level of employees' trust in HRM, a questionnaire was distributed among the employees who were supervised by the interviewed line managers. The questionnaire was developed using the measures of competence and benevolence/integrity developed by Searle et al. (2011), and the measure of predictability developed by Cummings and Bromiley (1996). The item "*This [sub-system] does not exploit external stakeholders*" was deleted from the scale in consensus with eight researchers, since there are no external stakeholders involved in

the HRM system. The resulting questionnaire items (Appendix I) were translated to Dutch and translated back to English to ensure the validity of the items (Douglas & Craig, 2007). The items were slightly altered in consensus with the HR manager and two professors, to alter the wording of the items to fit with the vocabulary of the employees. Three levels of trust were discerned: distrust, confident and complete trust (Dietz & Den Hartog, 2006). Based on a five-point Likert scale, scores from 1.0 to 1.9 were classified as distrust, scores from 2.0 to 3.9 were classified as confident trust, and scores from 4.0 to 5.0 were classified as complete trust.

Some individuals are more likely to trust than other individuals (Mayer et al., 1995). To control for an individual's propensity to trust, the eight-item scale developed by Schoorman, Mayer and Davis (1996, as cited in Mayer & Davis, 1999) was included in the questionnaire (Table 1). These items were also validated through the translation-back-translation techniques (Douglas & Craig, 2007) (Appendix II). These items were slightly altered in consensus with the HR manager and two professors, to alter the wording of the items to fit with the vocabulary of the employees. Some additional control variables were included that might influence employees' level of trust in the HRM system. These control variables were gender, organizational tenure, job tenure, function, department, type of contract and familiarity with the HRM system (Appendix III).

Table 1: Operationalization of constructs

Construct	Dimensions	Research instrument	Sample of items
HRM frames are defined as "*stocks of knowledge which people draw upon to communicate meaning and attitudes in their actions and interactions linked to HRM*" (Bondarouk et al., 2009).	Knowledge, expectations and assumptions about: - HRM-as-intended - HRM composition - HRM in use - HRM integration	- Semi-structured interviews with HR professionals and line managers. - Document analysis.	- What do you think the HRM system is designed to achieve? - What do you think is the role of the HRM system in the total HRM?
Trust in HRM refers to an individual's psychological state which comprises the intention of the individual to accept vulnerability on the basis of the positive expectations of the intentions of the HRM system or the actions of the HRM system.	- Competence - Benevolence/ Integrity - Predictability	Questionnaire among employees.	- The HRM system is capable of meeting its responsibilities. - The HRM system would never deliberately take advantage of its employees.
Propensity to trust refers to "*a trait that leads to a generalized expectation about the trustworthiness of others*" (Mayer et al., 1995, p. 715).		Questionnaire among employees.	- Most experts tell the truth about the limits of their knowledge. - Most salespeople are honest in describing their products.

3.4 Data collection

To qualitatively investigate the HRM frames of line managers and HR professionals, semi-structured interviews were conducted, which provided us with detail, depth and the interviewee's perspective (Leech, 2002). This data collection technique was selected, since it enabled the exploration of people's opinions and perceptions regarding complex topics. Furthermore, semi-structured interviews enabled the use of probes to gather more information or clarifications about the respondent's opinions and perceptions (Barriball & While, 1994). The aim of the research was to explore the HRM frames of line managers and HR professionals, for which the opinions and perceptions regarding the HRM system needed to be investigated. Therefore, the usage of semi-structured interviews was appropriate.

Based on consensus among eight researchers, an interview protocol (Appendix IV) was developed to guide the semi-structured interview conversations (Emans, 2004). The interviews were recorded, which allowed us to focus on observing nonverbal expressions of the interviewee during the conversation (Witzel, 2000).

17 interviews were conducted with 2 HR professionals, 14 line managers and 1 production managers with a total duration of 679 minutes (Table 2), as a sample size of at least 12 interviewees is considered enough to ensure that all different perspectives within the organization are covered (Francis, Johnston, Robertson, Glidewell, Entwistle, Eccles & Grimshaw, 2010). The interviewees were selected based on their function within the organization, which was done in consensus with two HR professionals. The full transcripts of all interviews are available on request, but are not included in this work for confidentiality reasons.

Table 2: Interview data

Function	Number of interviewees	Total interview duration	Range of the interview duration
HR professional	2	82 minutes	40.5 and 41.5 minutes
Line managers	14	564 minutes	Between 24.5 and 67.5 minutes
Production manager	1	33 minutes	33 minutes
Total	17	679 minutes	40 minutes on average

Employees' trust in HRM was measured through a questionnaire, which enabled us to identify and describe the variations in employees' trust in HRM (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). The population of interest for the questionnaire were all employees supervised by the line managers that participated in the interviews. In total, 248 employees from the three different plants were selected as the target population. First, all these employees received a questionnaire from their line manager which could be handed in anonymously in a closed box. The deadline for handing in these questionnaires was lengthened twice and reminders were placed in the weekly newsletter both times. 41 respondents handed in the questionnaire within this period, which resulted in a response rate of 16.5 percent. Second, a researcher actively approached employees during several lunch breaks to increase the number of respondents. This resulted in 30 additional responses, which increased the response rate to 28.6 percent.

Six questions were included in the questionnaire to gather background information about the respondents. Analysis of these variables revealed that 95.8 percent were male and 4.2 percent female. According to internal documentation, the overall distribution of gender within the three plants are 12.9 percent female and 87.1 percent male. Since mostly production employees were included in the target population, it can be assumed that the gender distribution found in the questionnaire is a reasonable representation of the population. The organizational tenure had a mean of 17.62 years with a standard deviation of 9.87 years. In total, 14 different function were reported, but 81.7 percent of the respondents were production staff. The mean job tenure was 12.76 years with a standard deviation of 8.51. 65 respondents reported to have a permanent full-time contact, 3 respondents reported to have a permanent part-time contact, and 3 respondents reported to have a fixed-term full-time contract. One item was included to check the respondents' familiarity with the absenteeism policy. Only 2 respondents reported to be unfamiliar with the absenteeism policy, whereas the other 69 respondents reported to be familiar with the policy.

3.5 Data analysis

The interviews with the HR professionals and line managers were coded based on meaning categorization, in which lengthy statements are reduced to simple categories (Kvale, 1996). The categories for codification were the knowledge, assumptions and expectations about the four HRM frame domains. After dividing the transcript into these categories, descriptive codes were developed to attribute segments of the text to certain phenomena (Miles & Huberman, 1994). To investigate the HRM frames of the HR professionals and line managers separately, the interviews were coded based on the respondents' function. For every code, a description of the line managers' statements and the HR professionals' statements was developed. This allowed us to analyze the differences and similarities in the knowledge, assumptions and expectations of these two groups about the HRM system.

Two researcher coded six of the same transcriptions individually, after which the codes were discussed (Appendix V). This check-coding increased the clarity of the definitions as well as the reliability of the results (Miles & Huberman, 1994). After a discussion, the overall agreement about the coding of these interviews was 98%.

The data gathered through the questionnaire, was coded using the coding schemes shown in Appendix I, II and III. The Cronbach's alpha for the trust in HRM measure was 0.92. The Cronbach's alpha for the propensity to trust measure was 0.67 after the exclusion of item 1 and item 4 from the scale. Cronbach's alpha scores between 0.7 and 0.8 are satisfactory

(Bland & Altman, 1997). The reliability of the trust in HRM measure was well above this threshold, which means that this measure's reliability was satisfactory. The Cronbach's alpha of the propensity to trust scale was in line with the reported alpha by Mayer and Davis (1999), who found an alpha of 0.55 and 0.66 in two subsequent periods for the propensity to trust scale.

Both propensity to trust and trust in the HRM system were measured using a 5-point Likert scale. *"A Likert scale [...] is composed of a series of four or more Likert-type items that are combined into a single composite score/variable during the data analysis process"* (Boone & Boone, 2012, p. 2). The propensity to trust scale consisted of six Likert-type items, which were combined into a single variable for analysis. Twelve Likert-type items were combined during the analysis process into the single variable trust in the HRM system. For the purposes of this research, it was not relevant to analyze the Likert-type items separately. Likert scale data is interval-level data, since the variables propensity to trust and trust in the HRM system are created by composing the items into one variable. Therefore, the central tendency can be described by calculating a mean score and the variability can be analyzed by calculating the standard deviation. For additional data analysis, regression analysis, t-tests, Pearson's *r* and ANOVA are appropriate (Boone & Boone, 2012). Regression analysis was the most appropriate procedure, since this analysis tests the causal relationship between an independent and a dependent variable (De Vocht, 2010). To investigate whether there existed a significant difference between the trust in the HRM system of employees with a high propensity to trust and a low propensity to trust, a paired t-test was appropriate (Berenson, Levine & Krehbiel, 2009). Scores lower than three would indicate a low propensity to trust, whereas scores above three would indicate a high propensity to trust. However, a distinction between high and low propensities to trust could not be made, since the propensity to trust values centered around the mid-point of the scale.

Both job tenure and organizational tenure are ratio-level data, since both variables can take on any value as measured by a predefined measurement unit, which has an absolute zero point. For ratio-level data, regression analysis can be used (De Vocht, 2010).

Multiple regression analysis was performed in which propensity to trust, organizational tenure and job tenure were the independent variables and trust in the HRM system the dependent variable. Multiple regression analysis was selected, since this procedure tests the causal relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable (De Vocht, 2010). Multiple regression analysis allowed us to quantify the effect that changes in propensity to trust, organizational tenure and job tenure had on employees' trust in the HRM system. Based

on this analysis, the percentage of variation in employees' trust in the HRM system that is explained by these control variables can be identified (Berenson et al., 2009). To determine the validity of the linear regression model for the analysis of this relationship, three assumptions are necessary. These assumptions are linearity, normality of error and equal variance. Based on a residual analysis, it was concluded that these assumptions hold (Berenson et al., 2009).

The control variables gender, plant, type of contract and department are nominal-level data, since the categories of these variables are mutually exclusive. To investigate whether there a significant difference in the trust in the HRM system across gender existed, a Mann-Whitney test was performed. This test was selected, since the data did not fulfill all assumptions necessary for the independent sample t-test. Plant, type of contract and department consisted all of more than two categories, for which an ANOVA test could be used. However, not all assumptions are met for the usage of this test. Therefore, the Kruskal-Wallis test was selected (De Vocht, 2010).

The case study also included the analysis of several documents about the organization, which are listed in Table 3. Document analysis refers to collecting, reviewing, interrogating, and analyzing different forms of text (O'Leary, 2004). Document analysis was used to check the validity of the information gathered through the interviews (Patton, 1999), and provided information about the context of the research project.

Table 3: Document analysis

Document	Description
Publicly available documents	- Official website VanDrie Group - CSR Annual Report 2012: Veal with Vision - Arbeidsvoorwaarden in de Vleessector - Slachterij wil personeel fitter in het vel - Winstdaling VanDrie Group in 2012
Internal documentation	- Sociaal Jaarverslag 2012 Ekro B.V. - Dashboard cijfers Ekro, Oukro, en Schils 2012 en 2013 - Ekro-Sociaal - VanDrie Group brochure

3.6 Trustworthiness of the study

The quality of the data collected has been ensured by taking several measures. First, the interviewees were asked to verify the transcripts, to ensure the accurate interpretation of the interview by the researcher (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Second, familiarity with the culture of the organization prior to the start of the research project was developed through preliminary visits to the organization and the consultation of several documents (Shenton, 2004). Third, the translated scales were validated through the translation-back-translation techniques (Douglas & Craig, 2007) based on consensus among eight researchers. Fourth, to prevent measurement error by participant misinterpretation, the questions were phrased in conjunction with the HR manager (Blumberg et al., 2008). Fifth, the interview protocol was developed in consensus with eight researchers (Rabionet, 2011). Sixth, within the thirteen meetings with the whole research group, the data collection techniques were discussed.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the results, several steps were taken. First, the analysis technique of the data derived from the interviews was utilized in previous research (Spiggle, 1994), which increased the credibility of the results (Shenton, 2004). Second, multiple researchers analyzed the interview data to reduce selectivity and interpretive biases (Patton, 1999). Third, document analysis was used to verify the information provided by the interviewees (Shenton, 2004). Fourth, the case description was verified by the company's HR manager to ensure the accuracy of the description. Fifth, the preliminary results were discussed with another researcher to ensure the appropriateness of the conclusions drawn. Sixth, within the thirteen meetings with the research group, the interpretation of the findings was discussed.

4. Case description

A case study was conducted at three plants of VanDrie Group, called Ekro, Oukro and Schils. The analysis of publicly available documents has revealed that VanDrie Group is a Dutch-owned private company with twenty-four plants in the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, France and Italy (VanDrie Group, 2014).

VanDrie Group is specialized in the production, processing and the trade of veal, calfskins, calf milk powder, roughage and muesli, and the production and trade of basic dairy products (VanDrie Group, 2012). The company was founded by Jan van Drie Sr. in the 1960s and is now managed by three of his sons.

Currently, the company is seen as the world market leader in veal. The annual sales in 2012 were approximately two billion Euros (VanDrie Group, 2012) and annual revenues amounted to 35.4 million Euros (van der Horst, 2014). Internal documentation revealed that VanDrie Group has approximately 1,700 employees, of which 268 employees work at Ekro, 32 employees work at Oukro, and 71 employees work at Schils.

"VanDrie Group is a Dutch family business that stands for high quality and safe products. We consider respect for people, animals and the environment to be of paramount importance" (VanDrie Group, 2012). Respect for people is reflected in an internal social annual report about Ekro, in which important issues related to the health of the internal workforce of Ekro are discussed. For example, the working conditions are analyzed and suggestions for improvements during the next year are made.

Ekro, Oukro and Schils are located in three different branches of the company (Figure 1). Ekro is seen as one of the most modern calf slaughterhouse in the world at which over 400,000 calves are slaughtered annually. At Schils, milk replacement products for young animals are developed and sold. Oukro processes all calfskins from VanDrie Group and is the largest supplier in the world. At this plant, 1,400,000 calfskins are processed annually (VanDrie Group, 2014). Ekro and Oukro are located at the same site in Apeldoorn, whereas Schils is located in Sittard (Appendix VI). The geographical distance could be difficult for the replication of HRM systems in the dispersed plant (Morris, Wright, Trevor, Stiles, Stahl, Snell, Paauwe & Farndale, 2009), because a larger geographical distance generally reduces the level of interaction (Knoben & Oerlemans, 2006). Since similar interpretations arise from social interaction (Gray et al., 1985), the line managers of Schils might not have the same HRM frame as the other line managers.

Figure 1: Organizational structure VanDrie Group
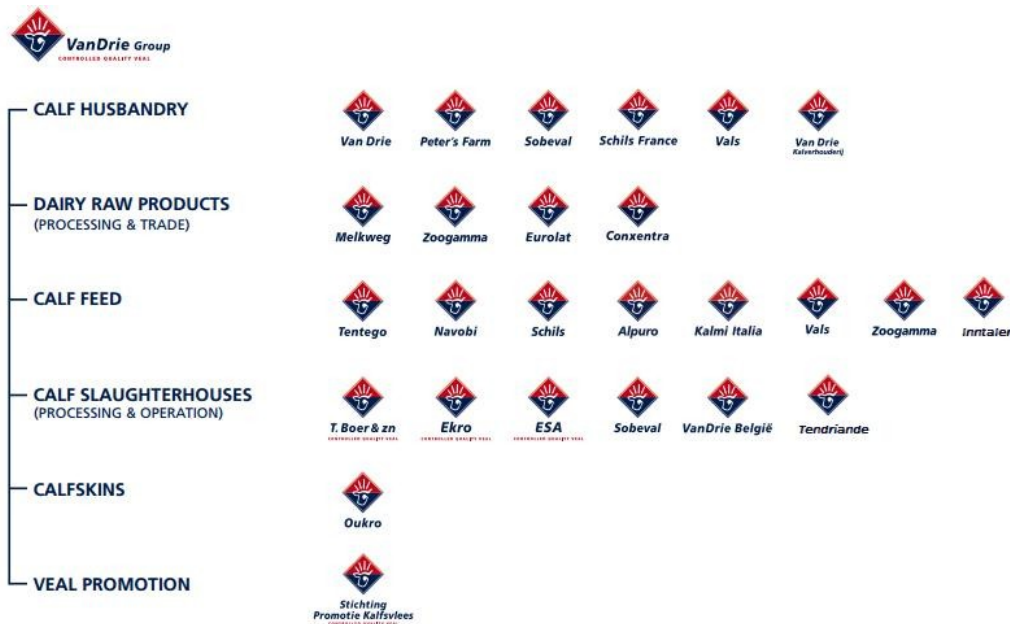
In this case study, the HRM system for absenteeism was investigated. This HRM system was selected, since the HR manager judged this as one of the most important HRM systems within the organization. All managers are actively involved in this HRM system, which made it a highly relevant system to investigate with regard to congruent HRM frames. The high absenteeism rates are a recurring issue for Ekro, as the internal social annual report of 2012 stated. The absenteeism rate is a concern to VanDrie Group, since the aim is to keep the absenteeism rate as low as possible (VanDrie Group, 2012). As shown in Table 4, the absenteeism rates for all three plants were above the national average in 2013. Internal documentation revealed that the absenteeism rate of Ekro is higher than the rates of the other two plants, which could be explained by the physically more demanding production work at Ekro compared to the work at the other two plants.

According to the HR manager of these three plants, the HRM system for absenteeism is one of the most time-consuming HRM systems for the HR professionals, the line managers and the production manager. The line managers are responsible for the operationalization of the HR policies and practices, whereas the production manager coordinates the line managers' work and is responsible for the implementation of the HR policies. The HRM system for absenteeism is based on the collective agreement of the meat industry (Centrale Organisatie voor de Vleessector, 2013a). Based on the analysis of internal documentation, it can be concluded that the HRM system for absenteeism is more extensive than the collective agreement requires. For example, the line managers are obliged to call the employee on their

first day of absenteeism to schedule an appointment to discuss the reason of his/her absenteeism. Furthermore, a physiotherapist employed by the Ekro is available to all employees that experience physical burdens from their work. In 2011, a project was started at Ekro to stimulate the employees to adopt a healthier lifestyle (Leeflang, 2011). Despite these efforts to increase the health of the employees and to decrease the absenteeism rate, the rate is still well above the national average for all three plants.

Table 4: Absenteeism rates

	Absenteeism rate 2013	Absenteeism rate 2012
National average	3.90%*	4.00%*
VanDrie Group	-	5.40%**
Ekro	9.22%	7.49%
Oukro	5.24%	2.13%
Schils	6.37%	6.19%
* Source: Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek (CBS), 2014a.		
** Source: VanDrie Group, 2012.		

VanDrie Group is active in the meat processing industry. Within this industry, the working conditions need to be improved. The improvement of working conditions could partially be achieved by mechanization (Lloyd & James, 2008). The line-production system—employed within VanDrie Group—was found to have a lower physical workload than other, less mechanized production systems. However, some psychosocial consequences are associated with the line-production system, for example the inability of the line workers to influence the working pace (Arvidsson, Balogh, Hansson, Ohlsson, Åkesson & Nordander, 2012). Even though improvements have been made to the working conditions, work-related health problems are still common in the meat processing industry (Stinis, Bakker, Kuijer, Spreeuwers & Lenderink, 2009; Sundstrup, Jakobsen, Jay, Brandt & Andersen, 2014).
In Table 5, the demographic characteristics of the agricultural sector, which includes the meat processing industry, are shown. It can be concluded that the majority of the employees are male, between 45 and 65 years old and attended secondary education. Most jobs within the meat processing industry do not require a specific educational background, which makes it an attractive industry for people who received limited education (Centrale Organisatie voor de Vleessector, 2013b). According to Joppen (2006), the aging of the workforce is a problem

within the meat processing industry, since the inflow of younger workers is significantly lower than the total outflow.

Table 5: Demographic characteristics of the agricultural sector

Demographic characteristics	Categories	Percentages
Gender	Male	72.1%
	Female	27.9%
Age	15-25 years old	10.9%
	25-35 years old	15.2%
	35-45 years old	22.4%
	45-55 years old	31.5%
	55-65 years old	19.4%
	Unknown	0.6%
Educational background	Primary education	35.3%
	Secondary education	51.5%
	Higher education	12.2%

Source: Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek (CBS), 2014b.

5. Findings

5.1 HRM-as-intended

Based on the analysis of the interview data, two subcategories of HRM-as-intended were discerned, namely goals and managerial reasons. Goals are the beliefs about the intended goals of the absenteeism policy, whereas managerial reasons are the beliefs about the managerial reasons for introducing the absenteeism policy.

5.1.1 Goals

The content of the frame domain HRM-as-intended with regard to the beliefs of line managers and HR professionals about the intended goals of the absenteeism policy is summarized in Table 6.

All line managers perceived affecting the absenteeism rate as the goal of the absenteeism policy, just as one of the HR professionals. The main focus within this goal was on the creation of the lowest level of absenteeism as deemed possible. Some line managers also saw the shortening of absenteeism as an important objective. The HR manager argued that the stimulation of employability was part of it:

> *"Our only interest is to keep employees employable for the tasks they were hired to do or that they are supposed to do. That is the aim of the absenteeism policy, to accomplish this goal"* (HR-2).

Some line managers also reported affecting employees' health as a purpose of the absenteeism policy, which was argued to lead to the prevention of absenteeism. Prevention of absenteeism was mentioned frequently by line managers and an HR professional as an important goal of the absenteeism policy. Even though prevention was seen by both groups as an important aim, the HR professional expressed concerns about the difficulty of attaining this aim. Related to this goal, a few line managers mentioned the creation of appropriate working conditions as an intention of the absenteeism policy.

Some line managers also expressed that effecting their department's costs related to absenteeism was an objective of the absenteeism policy. Each department gets a budget for absenteeism assigned each year, saving on these costs is a concern to these managers:

> *"The costs determine the financial performance of my department, on which I get reviewed every month"* (LM-1).

Supporting the absentees and keeping them committed to the organization were reported by some line managers as goals of the absenteeism policy as well. The importance of offering

support to employees was also reflected in the purpose to reintegrate employees in an appropriate manner. A few line managers felt that they are responsible for the assignment of appropriate work tasks to absentees returning to work. The absentees' commitment to the company was argued to affect the duration of their absenteeism:

> *"Another goal is to keep employees committed to the organization, I think this is important. They often say: 'Out of sight, out of mind.' I am trying to prevent this from happening"* (LM-3).

Table 6:HRM frames: Intended goals of the absenteeism policy

Subcategory within frame domain HRM-as-intended	Line managers	HR professionals
Goals	- Absenteeism rate - Employees' health - Prevention - Working conditions - Department's costs - Support and commitment - Employee reintegration	- Absenteeism rate - Prevention

5.1.2 Managerial reasons

All line managers and HR professionals reported about the managerial reasons for introducing the absenteeism policy (Table 7).

Both HR professionals and some line managers reported that the managerial reason for introducing the absenteeism policy was to create clear procedures of which everyone was aware. Clear procedures were argued to give direction to the absenteeism policy, making sure that everyone knows which actions are required within the policy.

The majority of the line managers reported the minimization of the company's absenteeism-related costs as the managerial reason for the introduction of the absenteeism policy. The costs related to absenteeism are high and the company aims to reduce these costs to a minimum. This means that they are trying to minimize the absenteeism within the company:

> *"The costs are just too high, it costs the company a lot of money. Then you have to implement a policy to make sure that absenteeism is shortened. You have to make sure that absentees return to work as quickly as possible, because this eventually means*

productivity. Then you get returns on the money you spend. This costs were the reason
for the introduction of the policy, I think" (LM-12).

Another managerial reason mentioned by a few managers, was to ensure the quality of the products. The products' quality can be ensured by employing a fixed group of employees at a department. This is only possible when the absenteeism rate is under control. Thus, a managerial reason for introducing the absenteeism policy is to control the company's absenteeism rate. Some managers related this to the possible abuse of the company when there is no absenteeism policy:

"I think that the abuse of absenteeism led to the introducing of the absenteeism policy.
I mean when you consciously call in sick, when you are not. I think that this once led
to the introduction of the policy. You have to do something about it, by putting
punishments on it. You obviously want to control the absenteeism, you would prefer an
absenteeism rate of 0%, which is a utopia" (LM-10).

A final reason reported by some managers and an HR professional, was to create insight into absenteeism. Creating insight into the reasons for absenteeism and the actions taken to stimulate the recovery of the absentee were the most important insights needed. These managers and the HR professionals argued that this was a managerial reason for the introduction of the absenteeism policy.

Table 7:HRM frames: Managerial reasons for introducing the absenteeism policy

Subcategory within frame domain HRM-as-intended	Line managers	HR professionals
Managerial reasons	• Clear procedures • Absenteeism-related costs • Product quality • Company's absenteeism rate • Abuse of the company • Insight into absenteeism	• Clear procedures • Insight into absenteeism

5.2 HRM composition

The absenteeism policy is documented in the Ekro Sociaal. However, the guidelines reported in this document are not applied by all managers in practice. About half of the line managers mentioned the Ekro Sociaal, but some of them reported that they did not use these guidelines. On the other hand, a few managers reported to use the Ekro Sociaal when absenteeism-related

problems arise. A statement made by an HR professional acknowledges the variability in the application of the Ekro Sociaal:

> *"In practice it is used, but often the circumstances differ. I do not think that we handle these cases differently, but working with people is never entirely black or white. In between are often some shades of grey. So we handle this pragmatically"* (HR-2).

A guideline mentioned by all HR professionals and line managers, was to have personal contact regularly. Most line managers reported that the guideline includes employees contacting the line manager and an HR professional on the first day of their absence. It depends on the circumstances when the next contact will be, it could be the following day when the illness is not severe. When someone is absent for a long time, most line managers report to have contact with them every week. The HR professionals stated that line managers should have as many contact with the absentee as needed, to make sure that they are always informed when a change in the absentee's circumstances occurred.

Some line managers also reported the reliance on the company doctor's advice as a guideline. Mostly in the case of reintegration or long term absenteeism, line managers reported to rely on the advice of the company doctor. A few managers stated that even though they do not agree with the advice of the doctor, they still rely on his judgment.

Both HR professionals and almost half of the line managers also mentioned the registration of absenteeism-related information at the HR department as a guideline of the absenteeism policy. For the line managers, this translates into sending emails to an HR professional about all new information they receive from an absentee. One HR professional registers all information in an information system. Even though most line managers saw this as obligatory, one line manager expressed his doubts about this:

> *"I register the information for myself to be able to get back to this later. I document thus the reasons for absenteeism. [...] I do not know whether this is a real guideline of the company, but it is my guideline. Everything I document, goes by email to the HR department as well"* (LM-8).

A number of line managers also expressed monitoring employees at work as a guideline of the absenteeism policy. These line managers monitor employees to be able to pick up signals when they are not able to perform their work due to health problems. Moreover, some managers reported to monitor employees to make sure that they use safety devices and devices available to prevent work-related health problems.

Another guideline of the absenteeism policy reported by the majority of line managers is the assignment of therapeutic work tasks to absentees when they are able to perform some tasks,

but are unable to do their own work. Therapeutic work tasks that can be assigned are less demanding tasks within the own department or within another department (e.g. administrative tasks). Some managers even report to come up with new tasks just to keep employees busy and present within the company. They argued that keeping employees at work translates into a higher involvement in the company, making it less difficult to return to their own function after recovery.

A guideline only mentioned by one HR professional, is that managers have to make sure that every absentee is legitimately absent:

> *"I try to have the line managers diminish the absenteeism of which the legitimacy is questionable. They have to be convinced that an employee is actually ill or entitled to be absent. If they are not, then measures should be taken to make sure that they are convinced. The first choice is to have the employee come to the company. If that is not possible, then they can stop by the employee themselves, that is a possibility. Of course, they can also have the absenteeism nurse stop by to examine the employee. This way, you are always certain that it is alright, what is claimed by the employee. Whenever they are not certain or doubt the employee, they have to make sure that the doubt will be resolved"* (HR-2).

A few line managers reported that a guideline of the absenteeism policy is to show social interest in and support to employees. They argue that as line managers, they have a social responsibility too, it is up to them to support and show interest in the employee. One line managers argues that this translates into employee commitment to the company.

Table 8: HRM frames: HRM composition

Frame domain	Line managers	HR professionals
HRM composition	• Ekro Sociaal • Regular personal contact • Doctor's advice • Registration • Monitoring employees • Therapeutic work tasks • Social interest and support	• Ekro Sociaal • Regular personal contact • Registration • Legitimacy absenteeism

5.3 HRM in use

Within the frame domain HRM in use, two subcategories emerged from the interview data. The first subcategory discerned is usage, which consisted of the HR professionals' and line managers' understanding of how the HRM system is used daily. The second subcategory consisted of the consequences associated with the absenteeism policy.

5.3.1 Usage

Communication was important within the absenteeism policy (Table 9), which was reflected by the numerous times communication was mentioned by all line managers and one HR professional. Communication was used for several purposes. Most often reported was the use of communication to get insight into an employees' health problems or absenteeism. Second, line managers used communication to control the duration of the absenteeism. Communication was also reported to be used for the prevention of future health problems and to confront employees with problems arising as a result of their absenteeism. Furthermore, some line managers stated that communication was used to make sure that employees approach them whenever they experience problems at work. Almost half of the line managers stated that communication was also used to determine whether someone was legitimately absent. Other purposes of communication reported were to support absentees, to get employees to use safety devices, to make them aware of the help the company can offer to them, to keep employees involved or committed, to discuss absenteeism with other managers and to make employees aware of their own responsibility in their recovery. Communication was seen by most line managers as essential.

The majority of line managers and an HR professional reported the use of appointments with the company doctor or physiotherapist. Appointments with the company doctor are used for several purposes. Firstly, employees are referred to the company doctor when line managers doubt their reported health problems. Secondly, line managers refer employees to the company doctor so he can advice them in how to deal with their illness. The company doctor can, for example, advice them to make an appointment with a specialist or a physiotherapist. Thirdly, managers use these appointments to get advice about what work tasks an employee is able to perform and how many hours an employee is able to work. Fourthly, appointments with the company doctor are made to support employees during their reintegration in the company. Fifthly, these appointments could be used to prevent future health problems by having the company doctor advising employees about their health and lifestyle. A line manager and an HR professional also reported that the company doctor can request an

authorization to discuss an absentee's illness with the absentee's doctor. This can be used to resolve the ambiguities that line managers have about the disease of the absentee. Line managers mostly refer employees to the physiotherapist to prevent health problems. The physiotherapist can assign them certain exercises to prevent problems or advice them about seeking help somewhere else.

About half of the line managers and one HR professional stated that managers advice employees about health problems occasionally. Some managers reported to advice employees about their lifestyles such as advising an employee to lose weight or to exercise regularly. Others expressed to give employees the advice to seek professional assistance when they are struggling with health problems. One manager also reported to advice employees about safety and performing work in such a manner that it will not lead to work-related health problems. A few managers reported to offer help to employees when they experience problems related to their health, for example by contacting an insurance agent to help an employee who was in a dispute with the insurance company about medical expenses. Two managers reported to use themselves as role models for their employees. A line manager stated the following about being a role model:

> "But I can give the right example, by living healthy myself, I can show that I handle my body and my work pressure with care. For example by exercising and proper nutrition. I try to show this through my own presentation" (LM-4).

The use of an inspector to assess whether an employee is illegitimately staying at home was reported by about half of the line managers and both HR professionals. The inspector is send to the absentee's home on request of the line manager, who request an inspection when doubts about the absenteeism exist. Two managers reported to be aware of the possibility to send the inspector, but stated to have never used this inspection. If an employee was found to be illegitimately absent, one of the HR professionals and the employee's line manager decide whether a sanction is in place and what the next actions need to be. The sanction often takes the form of a letter of warning. The use of the inspector can also serves as a warning to other employees.

About half of the line managers and an HR professional reported that line managers monitor employees' behavior. Most of the line managers said to monitor employees to signal problems in time, to be able to prevent the problems that lead to absenteeism. The HR professional, on the other hand, stated that monitoring employees is difficult:

> "We want employees to give a signal in time. It is always about finding the balance, is someone complaining too soon or too late? We prefer employees to give a signal in

time. That is hard to accomplish. This is actually only possible when people call in
sick" (HR-2).

The company offers some tools to employees to keep them able to perform their work properly. One line manager reported to promote the elderly regulation to his employees, which allows the older employees to work less hours. Furthermore, a few line managers mentioned the gym membership the company offers to its employees for a reduced price. Furthermore, two managers mentioned the devices offered by the company to assist employees in performing their work. The use of safety devices to prevent work-related health problems was reported by a few line managers and an HR professional as well. Another tool mentioned by a few line managers and an HR professional is the use of a periodic medical examination, which is offered to the employees once every four years. Moreover, all of the line managers and an HR professional reported the improvements that the company makes to working conditions when possible. These improvements are made to prevent work-related health problems, for example:

> *"Through the signaling of absenteeism at a certain workplace, for example by*
> *backaches, we can look at improvements. Then we will look at how to minimize this*
> *chance. Then we will look at the process, where possible improvements are needed.*
> *The improvement of working conditions never stands still. If the insights change*
> *through changes in techniques, then we keep looking into it. You try to optimize it. The*
> *automation brings a great relief for humans. The heavy work diminishes, as a result*
> *the short cyclical work increases"* (LM-11).

A compensation offered to employees that are absent two times or less times a year was mentioned by two line managers and one HR professional. This compensation was reported to be used by a line manager to prevent employees from reporting sick when they are not too ill to work. According to the HR professional, this compensation is based on the collective agreement of the meat processing sector.

About half of the line managers reported the rotation of work tasks as part of the absenteeism policy. Through regularly rotating the work tasks of the employees, the burden on the employees' bodies is reduced. Most of these managers argue that rotation is used to prevent absenteeism. One line managers expresses the difficulties he faces in making employees rotate:

> *"Employees often choose the same workplace every day. Sometimes they rotate. But*
> *certain people have certain qualities. Sometimes I think that it is not good to have*
> *these people always do the same work, but they like it. That this places a certain*

burden on their body, they take for granted. I do not know whether to change this, I find it difficult to have people change workplaces because this often goes at the expense of the quality of the work" (LM-1).

Some line managers and one HR professional reported to start the reintegration of an absentee in agreement with the employee. They reported that the reintegration of the employee depends on the contact between the line manager and the employee, and what they agree upon. The use of therapeutic work tasks was reported by the majority of line managers and an HR professional. According to them, employees get assigned therapeutic work tasks on several actions. First, they can perform therapeutic work tasks when they are reintegrating in the company, but are not able to perform their own work or are not able to perform their own work the whole day. Second, employees can get less demanding tasks assigned to them when they report to their line manager to experience health problems in performing their regular work tasks. Third, some employees get assigned therapeutic work tasks structurally, since they are not able to perform the work they were hired to do. A number of line managers also reported the use of employee relocation to another department or company when health problems inhibit them from performing their work. These employees can get a new function or can be relocated to another department. If this is not possible, the HR department can get an outplacement agency to arrange a job at another company for the employee.

Both HR professionals and some line managers mentioned the use of a registration program to centrally record all information related to an absentee. They reported that all absenteeism-related information is communicated to and registered at the HR department. In practice, this translates into all line managers, HR professionals and the company doctor reporting the information they have about an absentee to one of the HR professionals. The information received by this professional is all registered in an information system to make the information retrievable later on. An HR professional mentioned to prepare weekly management reports for the line managers to inform them about the absenteeism rate of their department. These reports were mentioned by a few line managers as well. They reported to also receive an weekly update from the HR department about the status of all absentees of their department. This information is retrieved from the information system.

One HR professional and one line manager reported that extreme cases are handled by the HR department. Extreme cases were seen as cases in which the employee does not get along with the line manager or when problems arise that the line manager is not able to solve.

Table 9: HRM frames: Usage of the absenteeism policy

Subcategory within frame domain HRM in use	Line managers	HR professionals
Usage	• Communication • Company doctor and physiotherapist • Manager's advice • Offering help • Manager as role model • Inspector • Monitoring employees' behavior • Elderly regulation • Gym membership • Devices to assist in work • Safety devices • Periodic medical examination • Improvement working conditions • Compensation • Rotation • Start reintegration • Therapeutic work tasks • Employee relocation • Registration • Management reports • Extreme cases handled by HR department	• Communication • Company doctor and physiotherapist • Manager's advice • Inspector • Monitoring employees' behavior • Safety devices • Periodic medical examination • Improvement working conditions • Compensation • Start reintegration • Therapeutic work tasks • Registration • Management reports • Extreme cases handled by HR department

5.3.2 Consequences

HR professionals and line managers reported several consequences associated with the absenteeism policy (Table 10). The most often reported consequence associated with the absenteeism policy is a change in the absenteeism rate, which was mentioned by almost all line managers and one HR professional. The most often reported change in the absenteeism rate was a decrease in this rate. Most line managers mentioned this as a consequence of their

own approach to the absenteeism policy, the consequence they see within their own department. A few line managers expressed their doubts about the effectiveness of the absenteeism policy, since they think the absenteeism rate is still too high:

> *"The goal is to limit the absenteeism. That is what you eventually want to achieve, but now we are mostly busy with firefighting. We do not have a clue about how to remove the fluctuations in the absenteeism or how to reduce the high absenteeism rate"* (LM-6).

The majority of line managers reported employee commitment as a consequence associated with the absenteeism policy. Mostly by paying attention to all employees, not just absent ones, and offering therapeutic work tasks, line managers reported employee commitment to increase. A few line managers argued that employee commitment led to a decrease in absenteeism as well.

A number of line managers reported that a consequence associated with the absenteeism policy is the inability to prevent all work-related health problems. Even though the company invested in the improvement of working conditions, most of these line managers reported to still see too many work-related health problems. One line manager did report to notice a decrease in the work-related health problems. Another line manager said that the work-related health problems could partly be explained by the inability to improve some working conditions.

A few line managers noted that a consequence associated with the absenteeism policy is a decrease in the absenteeism-related costs. Two of these managers reported to see a decrease in these costs as a consequence of the reduction of absenteeism through the absenteeism policy as a whole. One line manager attributed the cost reduction to one specific practice:

> *"I think that the absenteeism policy results in savings, I think that the costs have decreased. This is a result, I think, of the compensation offered to employees when they are not absent. I think the compensation compared to the costs, gives a positive result. This is a saving for the company"* (LM-4).

A number of line managers also reported the replacement of employees as a consequence of the absenteeism policy. They reported to replace employees that cannot perform their work due to health problems. One line manager expressed that this is troubling for his department, because new employees have to get to know the company first, which takes time. Another line manager reported the extension of employees' working life through the absenteeism policy's effect on employees' health as a consequence. This manager argued that the absenteeism

policy led to an improvement in employees' health, which makes them able to perform their work longer.

A consequence mentioned by a few line managers and one HR professional, is the creation of insight into absenteeism. According to them, the insights generated through the absenteeism policy can be used to improve working conditions and makes absenteeism more manageable. Moreover, the absenteeism policy makes the company able to comply with regulations, which was reported to be a consequence by one line manager and one HR professional.

Both HR professionals were the only ones to point out two other consequences. One of them reported the clear procedures that the employees have to follow, whereas the other professional mentioned the timely registration of absenteeism. The clear procedures within the absenteeism policy were argued to result in employees complying with the procedures. The insurance of the quality of the product was mentioned by one line manager as a consequence of the absenteeism policy.

The absenteeism policy was also reported to result in higher employee motivation by one line manager. This manager argued that by regularly contacting an employee, the employee would be motivated to take action to enable him to get back to work. A related consequence was reported to be the alienation of long-term absentees from the company and his coworkers. This consequence was reported by one line manager and one HR professional.

Table 10: HRM frames: Consequences associated with the absenteeism policy

Subcategory within frame domain HRM in use	Line managers	HR professionals
Consequences	• Absenteeism rate • Employee commitment • Work-related health problems • Absenteeism-related costs • Replacement employees • Employees' health • Insight into absenteeism • Compliance regulations • Product quality • Employee motivation • Alienation long-term absentees	• Absenteeism rate • Insight into absenteeism • Compliance regulations • Clear procedures • Timely registration • Alienation long-term absentees

5.4 HRM integration

Overall, the line managers and HR professionals seemed to be unaware of the integration of the absenteeism policy in the overall HRM. They mostly understood this to translate into the role of the absenteeism policy in other policies. Furthermore, the integration was often understood as relating to the role of the HR professionals and the line managers within the absenteeism policy.

5.4.1 Role of absenteeism policy in other policies

A number of line managers mentioned the role of the absenteeism policy in training. Most of them talked about a training they had taken recently, which was focused on stimulating the communication between the line manager and the employee. The absenteeism policy took a role in this training, since the reported aim of the course was to train managers to ask neutral questions to obtain more information from absentees. A few of the line managers also mentioned the integration of the absenteeism policy within employee training. One manager reported that training is offered to employees to motivate them, which in turn would lead to a

lower absenteeism rate. Another line manager talked about a training to learn employees to perform their work in a manner that should not lead to work-related health problems.

The absenteeism policy was also seen as integrated into performance appraisal by about half of the line managers and an HR professional. Most of them report to discuss frequent absenteeism during performance appraisal, because this is seen as part of the performance of the employee. A few line managers and one HR professional reported that the absenteeism policy was integrated into performance appraisals by discussing employees' health and lifestyle during performance appraisals. Some line managers also reported to talk about improvements to working conditions that facilitate the prevention of absenteeism during performance appraisals.

Two other forms of integration were both only mentioned by one HR professional. One professional reported that the absenteeism policy has a role in the hour and salary administration and the other professional reported that the prevention policy is integrated into the absenteeism policy.

Table 11: HRM frames: Role of absenteeism policy in other policies

Subcategory of frame domain HRM integration	Line managers	HR professionals
Role of absenteeism policy in other policies	- Management training - Employee training - Performance appraisal	- Performance appraisal - Hour and salary administration - Prevention policy

5.4.2 Role of line managers and HR professionals

The majority of line managers and both HR professionals reported that the HR manager guides managers in solving absenteeism-related problems. The HR manager guides the line managers by pointing out that contact is needed or advices them about actions they could take. The HR manager mostly provides this guidance during a weekly meeting with the line managers and the company doctor, but some managers also reported to contact the HR manager when help is needed.

Several line managers reported that the HR tasks are mainly performed by the line managers, which results in a variety of different approaches. One line manager stated that the absenteeism policy is seen mostly as a task for the HR department. A few managers pointed out that the HR department should be more involved with the absenteeism policy, to make

sure that everyone puts it into practice in the same manner. For example, the production manager stated:

> *"I think that it is too dependent upon individual directions, the absenteeism policy is insufficiently integrated across all levels that should be working with it. Managers, line managers, the HR department and I have a role in it, but this is not sufficiently integrated"* (PM-1).

Two line managers reported about the separation of the absenteeism policy from their other HR tasks. One line manager stated that he does not see the absenteeism policy as relating to other HR tasks, whereas the other line manager said that he would like to be able to separate the absenteeism policy from other HR tasks more.

One line manager and one HR professional mentioned the separated tasks that line managers and HR professionals have within the absenteeism policy. The tasks that are only performed by the HR professionals are related to the outplacement of employees. Both interviewees reported that a task only performed by the HR professionals is contacting the Dutch employee insurance organization and re-integration agencies.

One HR professionals reported that the HR manager has a mediating role in the absenteeism policy. The professional stated:

> *"Sometimes, there can be exaggerated about an employee, then I try to nuance a bit. Then I will call the employee myself in some cases to ask what is going on. I do try to mediate in it, that sounds a little overdrawn, but that is the kind of role I take in it. I try to take on an independent role"* (HR-2).

Table 12: HRM frames: Role of line managers and HR professionals

Subcategory within frame domain HRM integration	Line managers	HR professionals
Role of line manager and HR professionals	- HR manager guidance - HR tasks mainly performed by line managers - Absenteeism policy mainly HR department's task - Separation HR tasks - Separated tasks for HR professionals and line managers in absenteeism policy	- HR manager guidance - Separated tasks for HR professionals and line managers in absenteeism policy - Mediating role HR manager

5.5 HRM frame congruence

Congruence in frames refers to "*the alignment of frames on key elements or categories. By congruent we do not mean identical, but related in structure (i.e., common categories of frames) and content (i.e., similar values on the common categories)*" (Orlikowski & Gash, 1994, p. 180). To assess the congruence in the HRM frames of line managers and HR professionals, the structure and content of the HRM frame domains were assessed. HRM-as-intended consisted of the two subcategories goals and managerial reasons. Line managers reported seven goals and six managerial reasons, whereas HR professionals reported two goals and two managerial reasons. Even though the structure of the HRM frame domains were not identical, the goals and managerial reasons of HR professionals were also included in the line managers' HRM frame domain HRM-as-intended. Within these common categories, the opinions about these categories of both groups were similar. Thus, the content of HRM-as-intended was similar in both HRM frames. For this reason, there was congruence in the frame domain HRM-as-intended of line managers and HR professionals.

Three common categories arose within the frame domain HRM composition of both line managers and HR professionals. The content of these categories were similar for both the line managers and HR professionals, since both groups expressed similar opinions about these guidelines of the absenteeism policy. Therefore, the HR professionals' and line managers' frame domains HRM composition were congruent.

Within the frame domain HRM in use, two subcategories were discerned. For both the subcategory usage and the subcategory consequences, line managers were found to have more categories. However, the categories found in both the HRM frame domain of the line managers and the HR professionals, were similar in content. Within the common categories, no differences were found in the opinions about the usage and the consequences of the absenteeism policy. The frame domains HRM in use of line managers and HR professionals were found to be congruent, based on the content of the common categories.

Within the frame domain HRM integration, only three common categories were found. For both line managers and HR professionals categories were found that were not included in the other group's frame. However, within the three common categories, similar values arose. Thus, the content of the frame domain HRM integration was found to be similar. Based on this similarity, the line managers' and HR professionals frame domains HRM integration were found to be congruent.

In conclusion, the HRM frames concerning the absenteeism policy of line managers and HR professionals were congruent. Even though the line managers were found to have more

categories within all frame domains, the content of the HRM frames of both groups were similar.

5.6 Trust in HRM

Twelve items were included to measure the respondents' trust in the HRM system. The mean trust in the HRM system was 3.235 with a standard deviation of 0.546 (Table 13). Based on the scale developed by Dietz & Den Hartog (2006), the level of trust in the HRM system can be classified as confident trust. Another six items were included in the questionnaire to measure the respondents' propensity to trust. The mean propensity to trust was 2.895 with a standard deviation of 0.362.

Table 13: Mean, standard deviation and correlation

	Mean	Standard deviation	Correlations			
			Organizational tenure in years	Job tenure in years	Propensity to trust	Trust in the HRM system
Organizational tenure in years	17.620	9.868				
Job tenure in years	12.760	8.512	.619*			
Propensity to trust	2.895	.362	-.324	-.128		
Trust in the HRM system	3.235	.546	-.066	-.049	.491*	
* Correlation is significant at p<.01						

To investigate the effect of the control variables on the level of trust in the HRM system, several tests were performed. The results of the multiple regression test indicated that organizational tenure (B=.000, β=-.009, *p*=.966) and job tenure (B=.003, β=.045, *p*=.833) do not have a significant influence on employees' trust in the HRM system. To exclude the effect of organizational tenure and job tenure on the relationship between propensity to trust and trust in HRM, a regression analysis was performed to exclude the non-significant variables from the model (De Vocht, 2010). Simple linear regression was used to assess the influence of propensity to trust on trust in the HRM system, since the result of the multiple regression indicated that this causal relationship was significant (B=.687, β=0.442, *p*=.012) (Table 14).

Table 14: Regression analysis effect of control variables on trust in the HRM system

	B	Standard Error B	β	Significance
Organizational tenure	.000	.012	-.009	.966
Job tenure	.003	.012	.045	.833
Propensity to trust	.687	.258	.442	.012*
* Significant at p<.05				

The results of the simple linear regression indicated that propensity to trust had a significant positive influence on trust in the HRM system (B=.742, β=.491, p=.002). 24.1% of the variation in trust in the HRM system was explained by its relationship with propensity to trust (Table 15).

Table 15: Simple linear regression analysis effect on trust in the HRM system

	B	Standard Error B	β	Significance
Propensity to trust	.742	.219	.491	.002*
* Significant at p<.01				
Notes. **R²=.241**				

The results of the Mann-Whitney test indicated that there was no significant difference in employees' trust in the HRM system between males and females (U=23, p=.101). Furthermore, the results of the Kruskal Wallis test showed that no significant difference existed in employees' trust in the HRM system across the different plants (χ^2=4.870, p=.088) and across the different departments (χ^2=12.278, p=.267). In addition, the different types of contracts held did not significantly influence employees' trust in the HRM system (χ^2=3.846, p=.146).

6. Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore the link between congruent HRM frames of HR professionals and line managers and employees' trust in HRM. For the investigation of this relationship, a case study was conducted at three plants of VanDrie Group. HR professionals' and line managers' HRM frames were investigated qualitatively. In addition, a quantitative approach was taken to measure employees' trust in HRM. Within this mixed methods study, the focus was on one specific HRM system—the absenteeism policy.

6.1 Content and structure of the HRM frames

Four frame domains were identified within HRM frames: HRM-as-intended, HRM composition, HRM in use and HRM integration. Based on semi-structured interviews, the content and structure of these frame domains were investigated for line managers and HR professionals separately. Even though the line managers were found to have more categories within all frame domains, the content of the HRM frames of both groups were similar. Based on these results, the HRM frames concerning the absenteeism policy of HR professionals and line managers were congruent, meaning that the content and structure of these frames were found to be related (Orlikowski & Gash, 1994). The difference in the number of categories could be explained by line managers' interaction with employees. Through interaction with employees, line managers become aware of employees' point of view about the absenteeism policy and exchange ideas related to it with employees (Marchington & Suter, 2013). Within the organization, the HR professionals do not have regular contact with the employees. Therefore, the interaction between line managers and employees could have led to the development of categories in the HRM frames of line managers which were not found in the HRM frames of HR professionals.

Based on the analysis of the interview data, two subcategories of HRM-as-intended were discerned: goals and managerial reasons. Within the HRM frames of both line managers and HR professionals, the goals of effecting the absenteeism rate and the prevention of absenteeism were found. A number of additional goals were reported by line managers, which were not mentioned by the HR professionals. These goals mainly concerned the interests of the employees, for example line managers reported that a goal of the absenteeism policy was to affect employees' health. Within the subcategory managerial reasons, the HRM frames of line managers were also found to include more categories than the HRM frames of HR professionals. Nevertheless, two common categories were found in this subcategory for line managers and HR professionals. Both the managerial reason to create clear procedures and

the managerial reason to create insight into absenteeism were reported by line managers and HR professionals. Based on these findings, it can be concluded that the structure of the frame domains HRM-as-intended of line managers and HR professionals were not identical. However, within the common categories, the opinions of line managers and HR professionals were similar. The content of the HRM frame domains HRM-as-intended was, thus, related. Therefore, the frame domains HRM-as-intended of line managers and HR professionals were congruent.

Three common categories arose within the frame domains HRM composition of line managers and HR professionals. Both line managers and HR professionals reported that the guidelines of the absenteeism policy are documented in the Ekro Sociaal, of which the application was perceived by both groups to vary. One guideline was only reported by the HR professionals, whereas four additional guidelines were found in the HRM frames of line managers. The guideline only found in the HRM frames of HR professionals was the guideline that line managers have to make sure that every absentee is legitimately absent. Even though HR professionals reported this to be a guideline for line managers, line managers did not mention this guideline. Within this frame domain, line managers' HRM frames were again found to contain more categories than the HRM frames of HR professionals. The content of the common categories within this frame domain was similar, since line managers and HR professionals expressed similar opinions concerning the guidelines found in both groups' HRM frames. Even though the structure of the HRM frame domains HRM composition of line managers and HR professionals differed, these frame domains were congruent.

Within the HRM frame domain HRM in use, two subcategories were discerned. Fourteen common categories arose within the HRM frames of line managers and HR professionals concerning the usage of the absenteeism policy, of which the use of communication was mentioned most often. Both line managers and HR professionals stressed the importance of communication within the absenteeism policy. Seven additional categories were found in the subcategory usage of line managers, whereas no additional categories concerning the usage of the absenteeism policy arose from the interviews with the HR professionals. The absence of these categories in the HRM frames of HR professionals could be explained by line managers' presence at the work floor. Most of these categories concerned practices used in the daily work of the employees, like devices that are offered to employees by the company to assist them in their work and the use of the rotation of work tasks. Within the second subcategory consequences, several common categories arose from the interview data. Both

groups reported the decrease of the absenteeism rate as a consequence of the absenteeism policy, even though the absenteeism rate was argued to still be too high. Both line managers and HR professionals reported some consequences that were not mentioned by the other group. However, the line managers' HRM frames were found to contain more categories concerning the consequences associated with the absenteeism policy than the HRM frames of HR professionals. Thus, for both subcategories line managers were found to have more categories in their HRM frame domains than HR professionals, meaning that the structure of the HRM frame domains HRM in use of line managers and HR professionals differed. Within the common categories, similar opinions were expressed by line managers and HR professionals. Based on the similarity in the content, the HRM frame domains HRM in use of line managers and HR professionals were found to be congruent.

The HRM frame domain HRM composition was found to consist of two subcategories: the role of the absenteeism policy in other policies and the role of line managers and HR professionals within the absenteeism policy. Overall, line managers and HR professionals seemed to be unaware of the integration of the absenteeism policy in the overall HRM. Only one common category was found in the HRM frames of line managers and HR professionals concerning the role of the absenteeism policy in other policies and two common categories were found concerning the role of line managers and HR professionals within the absenteeism policy. Both line managers and HR professionals reported that they have separate tasks within the absenteeism policy, which could partially explain the differences in their HRM frames. Since both groups focus on separate tasks, they could have focused on different elements of the absenteeism policy during the interviews as well. However, the content of the common categories was found to be similar. Based on these findings, the HRM frame domains HRM integration of line managers and HR professionals were found to be congruent.

Overall, the HRM frames of line managers and HR professionals concerning the absenteeism policy were congruent. Even though the structure of the HRM frames of line managers and HR professionals differed, the content of the common categories was similar. Based on this similarity, the HRM frames were found to be congruent.

6.2 Employees' trust in HRM

A confident level of employees' trust in the HRM system reflects that employees hold positive expectations on the basis of confident knowledge about the absenteeism policy, which includes the HRM system's competence, benevolence, integrity and predictability. The level of complete trust was not reached, meaning that employees do not identify themselves

with the policy and do not see a complete unity in their purposes (Dietz & Den Hartog, 2006). Even though the highest level of trust was not found, employees do hold positive expectations about the system. Based on the congruence in HRM frames and employees' reasonably high level of trust in HRM, a positive relationship between these two variables seemed to exist. When unambiguous messages are communicated to employees about the appropriate behavior within the HRM system, the development of shared perceptions of the HRM system are fostered (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004). The less incongruence in the HRM frames of HR professionals and line managers, the less ambiguous the messages to employees about the HRM system will be (Dorenbosch, de Reuver & Sanders, 2006). In this case, the HRM frames of HR professionals and line managers were congruent, implying unambiguous message-sending to the employees. When employees receive clear information about the HRM system from HR professionals and line managers, they will be able to develop a clear understanding of the HRM system. In turn, employees are more likely to have a high level of trust in HRM, since trust is higher when uncertainty is reduced (Heimer, 2001).

One explanation for the lack of complete trust in HRM might be the goal of the absenteeism policy. From previous research, we know that when employees perceive an HR practice to be focused on cost reduction, their affective commitment and satisfaction are negatively affected (Nishii et al., 2008). Since both line managers and HR professionals reported that the goal of the absenteeism policy is to minimize absenteeism, which could be similar to cost reduction, this could affect employees' attitudes towards the HRM system. Thus, employees' perceptions about the intentions of the HRM system, could have led to a lower level of trust in the HRM system, even though HR professionals' and line managers' HRM frames were congruent.

Even though the focus of this study was on the process, the content of the HRM system could provide an explanation for employees' level of trust in HRM. Regular interaction between managers and absentees to establish whether the absenteeism is legitimate, could be a source of conflict. Previous research has found that employees felt that the interaction resulted in a high pressure to return to work, whereas managers felt that this interaction was essential to managing absenteeism (Wynne-Jones, Buck, Porteous, Cooper, Button, Main & Phillips, 2011). Regular interaction with the absentee was found in both the HRM frames of line managers and HR professionals as a guideline of the absenteeism policy, which could thus be perceived negatively by employees, leading to a lower level of trust in HRM. Furthermore, absenteeism policies which allow graded reintegration, flexibility in work tasks and onsite health services were positively perceived by employees of two public sector organizations,

whereas sickness absence reporting procedures were perceived negatively (Buck, Poretous, Wynne-Jones, Marsh, Phillips & Main, 2011). All these practices were found to be part of the HRM frames of HR professionals and line managers about the absenteeism policy of VanDrie Group. Even though the graded reintegration, flexibility in work tasks and onsite health services could positively influence employees' perceptions of the absenteeism policy, the absence reporting procedures could have a negative influence on the perceptions. Therefore, the level of employees' trust in HRM could be distorted by the content of the absenteeism policy.

Working conditions within the meat processing industry are in need of improvement (Stinis et al., 2009; Sundstrup et al., 2014). The improvement of working conditions was seen as part of the absenteeism policy by HR professionals and line managers, which could thus be the case for employees as well. The poor working conditions within the industry could bias the level of employees' trust in HRM, since these conditions could be perceived negatively by VanDrie Group's employees.

6.3 Contributions to research

The findings of this research contribute to existing HRM knowledge, by highlighting the importance of congruence in HRM frames of line managers and HR professionals. More HR activities are being devolved to line managers (Nehles et al., 2006), making them active participants in the implementation of HRM (Gilbert, De Winne & Sels, 2011). Therefore, both the interpretation of HR professionals and line managers are important for the implementation of the HR practices. An empirical investigation allowed us to distinguish between four different frame domains: HRM-as-intended, HRM composition, HRM in use and HRM integration. These clearly defined domains could be used in future research to investigate HRM frames quantitatively.

A process-based approach to HRM was taken within the study, meaning that line managers' and HR professionals' perceptions of the HRM system were investigated (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004). The process-based approach is a promising development in the field of HRM, since it could explain the impact of HRM on organizational and individual performance. However, how the process influences these outcomes, is not known yet (Sanders, Shipton & Gomes, 2014). By exploring the congruence in HRM frames of HR professionals and line managers and its link to employees' trust in HRM, insight into how the process influences an employee-level outcome was developed.

Previous research in the field of HRM has focused on the link between HRM and organizational trust (Alfes et al., 2012; Gould-Williams, 2003), but research into trust in HRM seems to be lacking. This research attempted to fill this gap, by investigating the link between HRM frame congruence and trust in HRM. A measurement scale for employees' trust in HRM was developed based on the work of Searle et al. (2011) and Cummings and Bromiley (1996). The Cronbach's alpha for this measure was 0.92, which implies an excellent reliability (George & Mallery, as cited in Gliem & Gliem, 2003).

To control for the influence of other factors on the level of trust in HRM, control factors were included in the questionnaire. Only individual's propensity to trust was found to explain variance in their trust in HRM, which confirms previous research (Costa, 2003; Lu, Zhao & Wang, 2010; Searle et al., 2011).

6.4 Recommendations

Even though the HRM frames of HR professionals and line managers were congruent, line managers did have more nuanced categories in all frame domains. Social interactions are shown to have an impact on framing and reframing of the cognitive elements of the frame (Lin & Silva, 2005; Balogun & Johnson, 2004), which fosters the development of a mutual understanding of the HRM system. Even though the HRM frames are congruent at the time, they could change over time (Ovaska, Rossi & Smolander, 2005). Therefore, it is advisable for HR professionals and line managers to communicate regularly about the HRM system. The communication should cover all aspects of the absenteeism policy. In the case of VanDrie Group, it is advisable to first focus on the guidelines as documented in the Ekro Sociaal and the role of the absenteeism policy in the overall HRM, since ambiguities seemed to exist about these topics. Furthermore, the specific instruments offered by the company to reduce absenteeism (e.g. gym memberships and compensations) should be discussed as well, since not all managers and HR professionals were aware of these arrangements. Direct instruments of communications—such as personal emails and periodical meetings—would be the most appropriate, since indirect instrument such as the Ekro Sociaal are often only consulted when necessary (Nijenhuis, 2014).

Employees' perceptions of an HRM system were found to influence several employee attitudes and behaviors (Kehoe & Wright, 2013; Ang, Bartram, McNeil, Leggat & Stanton, 2013). By communicating with employees about the HRM of the organization, employees' perceptions of HRM can be influenced, which in turn influences their behavior and attitudes. VanDrie Group could employ this strategy to influence employees' trust in HRM. Especially

line managers have a profound influence on how employees perceive the HRM system, since they are the most visible to the employees (Edmondson, 2003). Line managers should be aware of this influence in their daily operations, because they could influence employees' perceptions of the HRM system through their daily communication.

6.5 Limitations and future research

This research employed a mixed methodology by combining qualitative with quantitative research methods (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). As a result, it was not possible to establish an empirical relationship between HRM frame congruence and employees' trust in HRM. To establish this relationship empirically, future research is needed to develop a quantitative approach to measuring HRM frame congruence.

A limitation of the quantitative data collection within the case study, was the low response rate, which might have introduced a bias in the survey results (Templeton, Deehan, Taylor, Drummond & Strang, 1997). Even after several attempts to increase the response rate, only 28.6 percent of the target population completed the questionnaire. Within the production sector, the average response rate was found to be 50.3 percent (Baruch & Holtom, 2008), and within management studies, the average response rate was found to be 52.3 percent (Anseel, Lievens, Schollaert & Choragwicka, 2010). These average response rates are both significantly higher than the response rate within this company. By talking to some employees, several reasons were discovered for the low response rate. Firstly, some employees did not speak Dutch or did not master the language well enough to be able to complete the questionnaire. Secondly, some employees had an insufficient educational background to understand the statements included in the questionnaire. These factors should be taken into account in future research, by tailoring the questionnaire to the educational level and vocabulary of the employees. Even though the questionnaire in this study was altered to fit with the vocabulary of the employees, it was still found to be too difficult for some employees to complete. Thirdly, some employees expressed their concern about the anonymity of the data, which made them unwilling to participate. Therefore, it might be advisable to include less questions about employee-specific information.

7. Conclusion

Due to the devolution of human resource (HR) activities to line managers, their role in human resource management (HRM) is growing (Nehles et al., 2006). As a result, the differences in the perceptions of line managers and HR professionals of HRM are of integral importance to the function of the HRM within an organization. This research contributed to the research field of HRM, by taking a process-based approach investigated through the theoretical lens of cognitive frames. Even though the perceptions of line managers, HR professionals and employees have been investigated in previous studies (e.g. Bondarouk et al., 2009; Nishii et al., 2008), the impact of these perceptions on organizational-level and employee-level outcomes has been neglected (Sanders et al., 2014). Employees' attitudes about HRM are based on the messages they receive from HR professionals and line managers (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004). The inconsistency in these messages, will likely influence the level of employees' trust in HRM. This research provided insight into how HR professionals' and line managers' perceptions of the HRM system influences an important employee attitude, namely trust in HRM. The HRM frames of HR professionals and line managers were found to be congruent, and the level of employees' trust in HRM was found to be relatively high. Based on these findings, a positive relationship between congruence in HRM frames and employees' trust in HRM seemed to exist. By focusing on employees' trust in HRM, another gap in the literature has been filled. Previously, the focus had been on the effect of HRM on organizational trust (Alfes et al., 2012; Gould-Williams, 2003), but research into trust in HRM seemed to be lacking. A remarkable finding was that line managers had more categories within their HRM frames than HR professionals, which could be explained by their regular interaction with employees (Marchington & Suter, 2013). HR professionals do not communicate regularly with employees, which could explain why these categories were not found in their HRM frames.

8. Appendix

8.1 Appendix I: Measurement scale trust in HRM

Item number	Code	Original item	Item translated to Dutch	Variable
1	Co1	This [sub-system] is capable of meeting its responsibilities.	Het verzuimbeleid kan aan zijn plichten voldoen.	Competence
2	Co2	This [sub-system] is known to be successful at what it tries to do.	Het verzuimbeleid staat erom bekend dat het succesvol is.	Competence
3	Co3	This [sub-system] does things competently.	Het verzuimbeleid voert zaken goed uit.	Competence
4	BeIn1	This [sub-system] is concerned about the welfare of its employees.	Het verzuimbeleid is begaan met het welzijn van werknemers.	Benevolence/ Integrity
5	BeIn2	Employees' needs and desires are important to this [sub-system].	De behoeften en wensen van werknemers zijn belangrijk in het verzuimbeleid.	Benevolence/ Integrity
6	BeIn3	This [sub-system] will go out of its way to help employees.	Het verzuimbeleid doet haar uiterste best om werknemers te helpen.	Benevolence/ Integrity
7	BeIn4	This [sub-system] would never deliberately take advantage of its employees.	Het verzuimbeleid zal nooit opzettelijk misbruik maken van medewerkers.	Benevolence/ Integrity
8	BeIn5	This [sub-system] is guided by sound moral principles and codes of conduct.	Het verzuimbeleid is gebaseerd op goede normen en waarden.	Benevolence/ Integrity
9	BeIn6	Power is not abused in this [sub-system].	Rechten van werknemers worden niet geschonden	Benevolence/ Integrity

			binnen het verzuimbeleid.	
10	BeIn7	This [sub-system] does not exploit external stakeholders.	Deleted.	Benevolence/ Integrity
11	Pr1	I think that [the sub-system] meets its negotiated obligations to our department.	Ik denk dat het verzuimbeleid voldoet aan zijn verplichtingen tegenover onze afdeling.	Predictability
12	Pr2	In my opinion, [the sub-system] is reliable.	Naar mijn mening, is het verzuimbeleid betrouwbaar.	Predictability
13	Pr3	I feel that [the sub-system] will keep its word.	Ik heb het gevoel dat afspraken over verzuim nagekomen worden.	Predictability

8.2 Appendix II: Measurement scale propensity to trust

Item number	Code	Original item	Translated item
1	Pt1	One should be very cautious with strangers.	Men zou erg voorzichtig moeten zijn met onbekenden.
2	Pt2	Most experts tell the truth about the limits of their knowledge.	De meeste experts zijn eerlijk over de tekortkomingen van hun eigen kennis.
3	Pt3	Most people can be counted on to do what they say they do.	Bij de meeste mensen kun je erop rekenen dat ze doen wat ze zeggen.
4	Pt4	These days, you must be alert or someone is likely to take advantage of you.	Tegenwoordig moet je goed opletten, anders is de kans groot dat iemand van je profiteert.
5	Pt5	Most salespeople are honest in describing their products.	De meeste verkopers zijn eerlijk in het beschrijven van hun producten.
6	Pt6	Most repair people will not overcharge people who are ignorant of their specialty.	De meeste monteurs zullen niet teveel in rekening brengen bij mensen die niet bekend zijn met hun diensten.
7	Pt7	Most people answer public opinions polls honestly.	De meeste mensen beantwoorden publieke opinievragen eerlijk.
8	Pt8	Most adults are competent at their jobs.	De meeste volwassenen zijn goed in hun werk.

8.3 Appendix III: Coding scheme control variables

Code	Variable	Questionnaire item	Answer values
Ot	Organizational tenure	Hoe lang werkt u al bij VanDrie Group?	Tenure in years.
Fu	Function	Wat is uw functie?	Productie medewerker =1; Assistent voorman =2.
De	Department	Op welke afdeling werkt u?	1-14, in which every number represents a department.
Jt	Job tenure	Hoe lang werkt u al in deze functie?	Tenure in years.
Tc	Type of contract	Wat voor type contract heeft u?	Vast, fulltime =1; Vast, parttime =2 ; Tijdelijk, fulltime =3; Tijdelijk, parttime =4.
Gn	Gender	Wat is uw geslacht?	Male =0; Female =1.
Fa	Familiarity with the absenteeism policy	Bent u bekend met het verzuimbeleid?	Yes=0; No=1.

8.4 Appendix IV: Interview protocol

Company/department:	HR Professional/Manager:	Interview number:	Date:

My name is Lianne Polman. In the context of my Master thesis I would like to ask you some questions about the absenteeism policy of your organization.

When I ask you question about your situation, it is explicitly about your PERSONAL SITUATION. There are no right or wrong answers. It is about your own opinions and perceptions.

I want to emphasize that the information you provide will be treated highly CONFIDENTIAL. Information will never be provided to third parties.

The interview will take approximately 45 minutes.

I would like to ask for your permission to record this interview, to make sure that the answers are transcribed correctly. After processing the answers, the record will be destroyed.

Background information

1. What is your function? (Official title)

2. What does your job look like? (Job tasks, activities, and responsibilities)

3. What work experience do you have within the organization? (Development within company)

HRM-as-intended

1. What do you think the absenteeism policy is designed to achieve? (Intended goal, purpose)

2. What do you think is the reason for the absenteeism policy to be in place? (Managerial reasons)

HRM-as-composed

3. What do you think are the guidelines that govern the use of the absenteeism policy? (Guidelines, intentions)

HRM-in-use

4. How do you use the absenteeism policy in practice? (Use on a daily basis)

5. What do you think the consequences of the absenteeism policy are? (Consequences associated with the absenteeism policy)

HRM integration

6. What do you think is the role of the absenteeism policy in the total HRM? (Positioning)

8.5 Appendix V: Example check-coding

natuurlijk ook of je hulpmiddel aan kan bieden, afhankelijk van de aard van de klacht. Het is niet alleen communiceren, maar ook middelen bieden om re-integratie makkelijker te maken.

HRM in use

Het verzuim beperken wij door te investeren in de verbetering van de werkomstandigheden. De zware werkplekken worden eruit gehaald, het werk wordt makkelijker gemaakt. Twee jaar geleden hebben we bijvoorbeeld een investering gedaan om het werk lichter te maken. Hierdoor hoeven mensen minder te tillen, door allerlei grijpmachines en hangsystemen te installeren. We hebben ook bordessen gemaakt waarmee mensen de juiste stahoogte in kunnen stellen. Het spreiden van huiden gaat nu ook met een machine. Eigenlijk is het hele proces aangepast, er is enorm geïnvesteerd.

Verzuim proberen we ook goed te begeleiden, door te kijken of we een helpende hand kunnen bieden of werkzaamheden kunnen aanpassen waardoor ze zo snel mogelijk weer in de productie kunnen werken. Vorig jaar heeft een bedrijfsleider een bedrijfsongeval gehad, daardoor is hij langdurig uit het proces geweest. Inmiddels is hij langzaam aan het terug komen. Een voorman moet veel bij de productie zijn, dingen bekijken en aansturen. Dit houdt in dat hij veel trap moet lopen, maar dat kan hij op dit moment in ieder geval niet door zijn lichamelijke beperkingen. We zijn aan het kijken hoe we zijn takenpakket aan kunnen passen of er andere taken naar hem toe kunnen. Of dat hij misschien bij de Ekro aan het werk kan, maar om hem in ieder geval binnen het bedrijf te houden. We proberen hem toch een zinvol takenpakket te geven die wel anders is dan zijn oude takenpakket. Hij zal waarschijnlijk geen voorman blijven, maar we gaan een andere functie voor hem creëren. De eerste communicatie gaat via mijn voormannen. Langdurige ziektegevallen worden tijdens het wekelijks overleg besproken, dan bespreken we de stand van zaken en of er eventuele mogelijkheden zijn om weer aan het werk te gaan. Ik heb alleen direct contact met de voormannen en het kantoorpersoneel wanneer zij ziek zijn, maar dat gebeurt gelukkig niet vaak.

Door de signalering van uitval op bepaalde werkplekken, door bijvoorbeeld pijn in de rug, kunnen we gaan kijken naar verbeteringen. Dan gaan we kijken hoe we deze kans kunnen minimaliseren. Dan gaan we naar het proces kijken waar mogelijke aanpassingen nodig zijn. Het aanpassen van de arbeidsomstandigheden staat nooit stil. Veranderen de inzichten doordat technieken veranderen, dan blijf je dat altijd volgen. Dat probeer je te optimaliseren. De automatisering geeft een grote ontlasting voor de mens. Het zwaardere werk wordt minder, wat je daardoor vaak krijgt is dat kort cyclisch werk toeneemt. Daar krijg je ook weer problemen mee, maar door rouleren is dit op te vangen. Dit doen we door mensen niet de hele dag op dezelfde werkplek te laten staan. Wanneer mensen de hele dag hetzelfde werk uitvoeren, ontstaat er eenzijdige belasting van het lichaam. Vaak staan ze op drie of vier werkplekken per dag, dit wordt ook nog weer door de week heen gerouleerd. Daarmee proberen we eenzijdige belasting te voorkomen.

We zijn mensen beter gaan begeleiden, de werkomstandigheden zijn we gaan optimaliseren. Dat is een traject van jaren, dat kun je niet even snel doen. Dat heeft zijn vruchten zeker afgeworpen, een paar jaar geleden zaten we geloof ik op 3%. Voor dit type werk is dat enorm laag. Nu hebben we twee langdurige ziektegevallen. We zijn totaal met 43 mensen, als er dan al 2 een heel jaar niet zijn is dat percentage meteen weer heel hoog.

De consequenties zijn dat het verzuim beter beheersbaar is en duidelijker inzicht hebt in de problemen binnen het bedrijf. Dus dan is het duidelijk waar bottlenecks kunnen zitten in

natuurlijk ook of je hulpmiddel aan kan bieden, afhankelijk van de aard van de klacht. Het is niet alleen communiceren, maar ook middelen bieden om re-integratie makkelijker te maken.

US-DE

HRM in use

Het verzuim beperken wij door te investeren in de verbetering van de werkomstandigheden. De zware werkplekken worden eruit gehaald, het werk wordt makkelijker gemaakt. Twee jaar geleden hebben we bijvoorbeeld een investering gedaan om het werk lichter te maken. Hierdoor hoeven mensen minder te tillen, door allerlei grijpmachines en hangsystemen te installeren. We hebben ook bordessen gemaakt waarmee mensen de juiste stahoogte in kunnen stellen. Het spreiden van huiden gaat nu ook met een machine. Eigenlijk is het hele proces aangepast, er is enorm geïnvesteerd.

US-WC

Verzuim proberen we ook goed te begeleiden, door te kijken of we een helpende hand kunnen bieden of werkzaamheden kunnen aanpassen waardoor ze zo snel mogelijk weer in de productie kunnen werken. Vorig jaar heeft een bedrijfsleider een bedrijfsongeval gehad, daardoor is hij langdurig uit het proces geweest. Inmiddels is hij langzaam aan het terug komen. Een voorman moet veel bij de productie zijn, dingen bekijken en aansturen. Dit houdt in dat hij veel trap moet lopen, maar dat kan hij op dit moment in ieder geval niet door zijn lichamelijke beperkingen. We zijn aan het kijken hoe we zijn takenpakket aan kunnen passen of er andere taken naar hem toe kunnen. Of dat hij misschien bij de Ekro aan het werk kan, maar om hem in ieder geval binnen het bedrijf te houden. We proberen hem toch een zinvol takenpakket te geven die wel anders is dan zijn oude takenpakket. Hij zal waarschijnlijk geen voorman blijven, maar we gaan een andere functie voor hem creëren.

US-TW

US-RE

De eerste communicatie gaat via mijn voormannen. Langdurige ziektegevallen worden tijdens het wekelijks overleg besproken, dan bespreken we de stand van zaken en of er eventuele mogelijkheden zijn om weer aan het werk te gaan. Ik heb alleen direct contact met de voormannen en het kantoorpersoneel wanneer zij ziek zijn, maar dat gebeurt gelukkig niet vaak.

US-CO

Door de signalering van uitval op bepaalde werkplekken, door bijvoorbeeld pijn in de rug, kunnen we gaan kijken naar verbeteringen. Dan gaan we kijken hoe we deze kans kunnen minimaliseren. Dan gaan we naar het proces kijken waar mogelijke aanpassingen nodig zijn. Het aanpassen van de arbeidsomstandigheden staat nooit stil. Veranderen de inzichten doordat technieken veranderen, dan blijf je dat altijd volgen. Dat probeer je te optimaliseren. De automatisering geeft een grote ontlasting voor de mens. Het zwaardere werk wordt minder, wat je daardoor vaak krijgt is dat kort cyclisch werk toeneemt. Daar krijg je ook weer problemen mee, maar door rouleren is dit op te vangen. Dit doen we door mensen niet de hele dag op dezelfde werkplek te laten staan. Wanneer mensen de hele dag hetzelfde werk uitvoeren, ontstaat er eenzijdige belasting van het lichaam. Vaak staan ze op drie of vier werkplekken per dag, dit wordt ook nog weer door de week heen gerouleerd. Daarmee proberen we eenzijdige belasting te voorkomen.

US-WC

US-RO

We zijn mensen beter gaan begeleiden, de werkomstandigheden zijn we gaan optimaliseren. Dat is een traject van jaren, dat kun je niet even snel doen. Dat heeft zijn vruchten zeker afgeworpen, een paar jaar geleden zaten we geloof ik op 3%. Voor dit type werk is dat enorm laag. Nu hebben we twee langdurige ziektegevallen. We zijn totaal met 43 mensen, als er dan al 2 een heel jaar niet zijn is dat percentage meteen weer heel hoog.

De consequenties zijn dat het verzuim beter beheersbaar is en duidelijker inzicht hebt in de problemen binnen het bedrijf. Dus dan is het duidelijk waar bottlenecks kunnen zitten in

8.6 Appendix VI: Map Ekro, Oukro and Schils

9. References

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