

The effect of Strength-Based Talent Management on employee performance: The impact of employees' Ability, Motivation and Opportunity to perform

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Abstract

Background – Due to the increasing popularity of a strength-based approach to talent management, organizations require more insight into the way such an approach impacts employee's performance. Prior research findings have shown that the strength-based approach positively influences employees through positive affect, well-being and job-fit (Meyers & van Woerkom, 2017; Roetert Steenbruggen, 2017). These results suggest however that the strength-based approach itself does not influence employee performance but rather impacts other individual characteristics that decrease or enhance someone's likelihood they perform in their role. The current research uses the holistic AMO-model of HRM to assess how the strength-based approach impacts employee's ability, motivation and opportunity to perform as these constructs together are thought to be strong and full predictors of employee performance (Siemsen, Roth & Balasubramanian, 2008).

Purpose – This research wants to provide insight into the way the strength-based approach to talent management impacts employee performance. The related research question is: To what degree does the AMO-framework explain the effect of strength-based approach on employee performance?

Methodology – The data is obtained from a cross-sectional, convenience sample (N = 143) using an online survey. The participants were asked to rate the degree of strength-based approach in their organization, their ability, motivation and opportunity to perform and their performance.

Conclusion – The results partially supported our hypotheses. The strength-based approach positively impacted employee's ability to perform and their work engagement but no impact was found on opportunity to perform. Additionally only ability to perform played a mediating role in the effect of strength-based talent management on task performance or organizational citizenship behaviors.

Keywords: Strength-based approach; AMO-model; Ability; Motivation; Opportunity; Employee performance

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Introduction

Organizations are subject to disruptive changes like globalization and digitalization that greatly impact the way they are set-up for success (Deloitte University Press, 2017). They therefore need to adapt their strategies to win and change the rules and procedures they had in place that made them competitive (Tucker, Kao, & Verma, 2005). Employing people with the agility, skills and mindset to deal with the disruptive changes in our society is considered key for organizations to achieve their goals, as many organizations list their people to be their most crucial business-asset (Nilsson & Elström, 2012). Organizations therefore place a great amount of resources on the activities to manage, develop and retain key people (Collings & Melahi, 2009) and leverage their capabilities as a source of competitive advantage (Becker & Huselid, 2006; Schuler & Jackson, 1987). Yet an overwhelming number of human resource management ('HRM') practitioners around the world have said to believe that the activities to attract, identify, develop, and retain these key individuals that have contributed most to the organizational goals, is one of the most demanding human capital challenges faced by twenty-first century organizations (Boston Consulting Group, 2007; Dries, 2013; Collings & Mellahi, 2009). And despite decades of debate about the 'war for talent' (Michaels, Handfield-Jones & Axelrod, 2001) and the growing popularity of talent management, many organizations struggle to develop and implement effective talent management programs or practices (Vaiman, Scullion & Collings, 2012).

Academic research has tried to shed light on the complexity of talent management and its effects on people, their performance and on organizations. A complicating factor in this however seems to be the lack of consensus on the exact meaning of talent management (Vaiman et al., 2012). An increasing number of organizations believe that in order to fully leverage their entire workforce, they have to make use of the unique qualities of *all* their employees instead of the strengths of a select group of employees. Therefore there is a call for more research into inclusive talent management or the strength-based approach – directed at the whole workforce (Gallardo-Gallardo & Thunnissen, 2016).

This strength-based approach is grounded in positive psychology and is based on the belief that employees and organizations can best flourish by focusing on the positive qualities or the talents of each individual (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). By enabling employees to identify and use their strengths in their job this approach believes individual contribution to the organizational goals can be enhanced (Peterson & Park 2006; Linley & Harrington 2006; Peterson & Seligman 2004). Putting in place a bundle of HRM practices that supports employees in identifying and using their strengths, is frequently what the implementation of strength-based approach to talent management looks like in organizations (Meyers & van Woerkom, 2014). Much research has been aimed towards identifying

how these practices influence employees and their performance. For example Meyers and van Woerkom (2017) and Roetert Steenbruggen (2017) have shown how respectively the strength-based approach positively influence employee's well-being, employee's positive affect and employee performance through job-fit. What these results suggest however is that the strength-based approach itself does not influence employee performance but rather impacts it through individual characteristics, like well-being or job-fit, that decrease or enhance someone's likelihood they perform in their role. This also seems quite intuitive as knowing what your strengths are or having the opportunity to use them in your job does not necessarily mean you are able to deliver on expectations. Therefore if we want to investigate how the strength-based approach to talent management impacts employee performance, we should assess what the impact is on determinants of employee performance. A widely recognized model to assess employee performance due to its holistic assessment of factors influencing employee performance is the AMO-model. This model states that someone's performance in their job is based on their ability, motivation and opportunity to perform. These three constructs serve as large buckets that cover the large variety of factors that are researched to impact employee performance and together are thought to be strong predictors for employee performance.

As there is a need from organizations to gain insights on the impact of the strength-based approach on employees and organizations, we argue that we should assess how the strength-based approach impacts employee's ability, motivation and opportunity to perform as these constructs together are strong predictors of employee performance (Siemsen, Roth & Balasubramanian, 2008). The related research question is:

To what degree does the AMO-framework explain the effect of strength-based approach on employee performance?

In the following sections we will elaborate on the theoretical constructs on which we based our research like the strength-based approach to talent management, employee performance and the AMO-model. Subsequently we will address the specific hypotheses that will be tested using survey-data gathered among employees. In the methods and results section the data-gathering and data-analysis is explained in more detail. This is followed by a conclusion and discussion section that holds the interpretation of the results in line with our hypotheses. This thesis closes with an elaboration on the limitations of this study and opportunities for future research.

Theoretical Framework

Strength-based approach

Talent Management has become an important part of many multinational's HRM practice as it is believed that human capital can represent a source of sustained competitive advantage in the highly dynamic market environment of the 21st century (Scullion, Collings & Calligiuri, 2010; Farndale, Scullion & Sparrow, 2010; Collings & Melahi, 2009). Yet not all people are considered an equal source of competitive advantage (Al Ariss, Cascio & Paauwe, 2014). To attract, identify, develop and retain those people who are seen as the greatest providers of competitive advantage, or 'talents', organizations systematically use certain HRM practices (Meyers & van Woerkom, 2014). Which people organizations consider to be a talent has a huge impact on what bundle of HRM practices they choose to implement (Meyers & van Woerkom, 2014). This construct has been labeled the 'talent philosophy' and is defined by Meyers and van Woerkom (2014, p. 192) as *'the fundamental assumptions and beliefs about the nature, value, and instrumentality of talent that are held by a firm's key decision makers'*. Even though the concept and practice of Talent Management has been widely acknowledge, ambiguities regarding definitions, theoretical frameworks and empirically validated recommendations for the use of talent management in practice remain common (Collings & Mellahi, 2009; Lewis & Heckman, 2006). Many of these ambiguities can be traced back to the different talent philosophies used by organizations and in research. To assess in more detail what the impact is of a talent philosophy on talent management, Meyers and van Woerkom (2014) have created a talent philosophy matrix based on two major tensions in the assumptions and beliefs about talent. The first tension is whether talent is seen as an inclusive characteristic, everyone possess a certain talent, or an exclusive one where only a select group of people has a talent. The second tension is whether talent is seen as a stable or developable characteristic (see Figure 1).

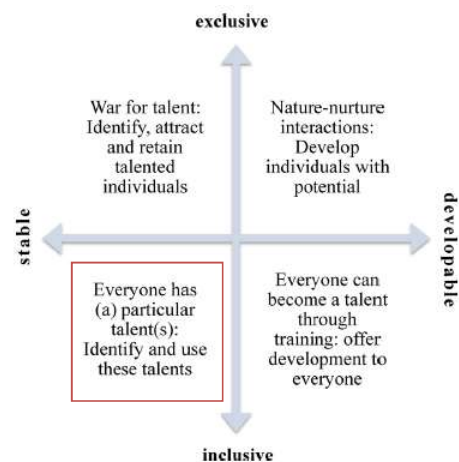


Figure 1: Talent management philosophy matrix of Meyers & van Woerkom (2014)

The matrix of these two tensions show four different types of talent philosophies: Exclusive – Stable, Exclusive – Developable, Inclusive – Stable and Inclusive-Developable. As was discussed earlier, more and more organizations and scholars advocate for an inclusive approach (Gallardo-Gallardo & Thunnissen, 2016) as they believe that all employees contribute to the overall performance of the company. The inclusive-stable philosophy is based on the believe that employees and organizations can best flourish by focusing on the positive qualities or the talents of each person (Peterson & Park, 2006). In contrast to the exclusive philosophy, talent is thus seen as universal, meaning that everyone possesses certain positive traits or strengths (Peterson & Seligman, 2004; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Therefore this approach is also often referred to as the strength-based approach to talent management.

The strength-based approach is grounded in positive psychology which is focused on people and/or experiences that positively deviate from (socially constructed) norms (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). This branch of psychology operationalizes a talent as a strength or characteristic of a person that allows them to perform well or at their personal best (Wood, Linley, Maltby, Kashdan, & Hurling, 2011). Research has shown that when people use their personal strengths it not only drives performance, but people also find it intrinsically motivating, enjoyable, engaging, satisfying, and energizing (Peterson & Park 2006; Linley & Harrington 2006; Peterson & Seligman 2004). An inclusive talent management approach has thus been referred to as *‘the art of recognizing where each employee’s areas of natural talent lie, and figuring out how to help each employee develop the job-specific skills and knowledge to turn those talents into real performance’* (Buckingham & Vosburgh, 2001, p. 22).

In this regard, strength-based talent management has three major tasks: identifying people’s strengths, stimulating people to use and refine their strengths and managing around weaknesses (Meyers & van Woerkom, 2014).

This first task is about uncovering what a person’s strengths are, so distinguishing which characteristic(s) positively deviate from the norm (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) and allow people to optimally contribute to the organization’s goals (Wood et al., 2011). Research has shown that when people become aware of and are able to use their strengths, they have a stronger position to deliver on their potential (Clifton & Harper, 2003) and likely experience enhanced individual well-being and happiness (e.g., Mitchell, Stanimirovic, Klein, & Vella-Brodrick, 2009; Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005). Regularly used methods in organizations to help employees identify their strength are providing strengths questionnaires or strong feedback and coaching practices (Meyers & van Woerkom, 2017).

The second task of the strength-based approach is to stimulate people to use and refine their strengths. That could be done by educating people in which situation to use their strengths and how to use it (Meyers & van Woerkom, 2017). Another possibility suggested by Meyers and van Woerkom (2014) is to increase the fit between a person's strengths and his/her job. Roetert Steenbruggen (2017) indeed showed in her research how person-job fit is a significant mediator between strength-based practices and employee performance.

The third task of a strength-based approach is to overcome any poor performance (Meyers & van Woerkom, 2014). Managing weaknesses can be done by training or coaching employees who perform weak on critical tasks (Buckingham, 2005; Linley & Harrington, 2006), by partnering employees with complementary strength to allow one partner to take over those tasks that belong to the weaknesses of the other partner (Buckingham, 2005; Linley & Harrington, 2006) or by providing strength-interventions to specify how, how often, when, and in which situations people plan to use their strengths (Meyers & van Woerkom, 2017).

Research has shown that organizations today aren't optimally organized to use their employees' unique strengths (Peterson & Park 2006). Many people struggle to pinpoint their own strengths (Kaplan & Kaiser 2010; Buckingham & Clifton 2001), let alone apply these in their work environment (Buckingham, 2007). Providing solid HRM practices to help employees identify their strengths, use them in their job and manage around their weaknesses can help organizations to optimally make use of their employees. Yet these three core activities depend on each other for their effectiveness, as for example knowing what your strengths are but having limited opportunities to use them in your job won't equip you to perform at your best. Therefore these three practices are seen as a bundle of HRM practices with the goal to optimize each employee's contribution to organizational goals. Organizations should therefore make sure that all three practices are developed to a certain amount as solely spending resources on identifying the strengths of your employees won't help to optimize their contribution to the organizational goals. They also need to be able to deploy their strengths during their work and be catered in their weaknesses before employees can actually increase their contribution.

As many researchers have shown before, focusing on people's strengths can have significant contributions to positive employee outcomes like feelings of happiness, authenticity, motivation to learn and perform and even increased levels of in-role and extra-role performance (Linley & Harrington, 2006b; Peterson & Seligman, 2004; van Woerkom & Meyers, 2014). An important

construct here is employee performance. In the following section we will further elucidate on this construct.

Employee performance

From an organizational perspective, optimizing the performance of employees is key to become more efficient and effective in achieving organizational goals. In the past decades therefore many models of employee performance and its determinants were created. The Work performance theory for example defined performance as behaviors associated with the accomplishment of expected, specified, or formal role requirements (Cummings & Schwab, 1973; Campbell, 1990). Key in this definition is the fact that performance has something to do with delivering or fulfilling the requirements that are expected in a certain job. Yet following a trend in the empirical literature, performance is more than only the proficiency to fulfill the core activities of the role. It also covers the contributions to the organizational, social and psychological work-environment of the employee and the organization (van Woerkom & Meyers, 2014). These types of behaviors are called extra-role behaviors. Van Woerkom and Meyers (2014) for example distinguished organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB) - behaviors of an employee that are not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal reward system but do promote the effective and efficient functioning of the organization (Organ, Podsakoff, & MacKenzie, 2006, p. 3) - and behaviors that show dedication to one's job as examples of extra-role performance behaviors. Together the in-role and extra-role behaviors of an employee are thought to give a representative image of the performance of an employee.

Job performance is however an intricate construct that has been addressed by many streams of academic research. The definitions and measures of performance mentioned above are predominantly to measure the degree to which employees perform, yet there is also an entire branch of research that focuses more on the contributing factors that eventually lead to performance. The previously mentioned AMO-model of HRM is such an approach that is regularly used in research to analyze the performance of individuals. This framework is based on the assumption that the performance of employees depends on their ability, motivation and opportunity to do so (Jiang, Lepak, Hu & Baer, 2012; Lepak, Liao, Chung & Harde, 2006). In the next chapter this model will be explained in further detail.

AMO - model

The key idea of the AMO model of HRM is that employee performance is a function of an employee's ability (A), motivation (M) and opportunity (O) to perform. These three components are considered to have a synergetic effect on performance (Bos-Nehles, van Riemsdijk & Looise, 2013), meaning that the three components together explain more variance than the sum of the separate effects. Yet it is not the case that it is a simple additive function and thus that a high rating on one of the components can compensate for the lack of another. Take for example the situation in which someone has the skills and motivation to perform but no opportunity to showcase this, in this situation it is not likely this person will reach high levels of performance. Such complementarity implies that all components need to be present in some degree for employees to perform certain tasks and also that neither ability, motivation or opportunity by themselves can ensure performance (Bos-Nehles et al., 2013). Depending on the highest needs of the organization or of an individual, an organization's HRM department can choose to implement or focus on practices that increase the ability, motivation or opportunity to perform. In the following sections we will elucidate how these three components are defined in existing literature.

The first determinant of employee performance is an employees' *ability* to perform which consists of someone's knowledge, skills, and abilities to perform in their role. In every role other knowledge, skills and abilities are required for people to deliver on the expectations of that role and for every person it depends to what amount they possess the knowledge, skills or abilities required. When organizations want to ensure their people have the ability to perform they can do that by acquiring people that already have the needed ability by using strict selection and hiring practices (Bos-Nehles et al., 2013; Lepak et al., 2006). Another possibility is to help employees develop the skills they need by facilitating formal and/or informal training, performance feedback and coaching and stimulating people to gain the knowledge and skills they need by paying for performance (Bos-Nehles et al., 2013; Lepak et al., 2006; Meyers & van Woerkom, 2014).

An employees' *motivation* to perform is the second determinant of performance. According to Lepak et al. (2006) motivation to perform manifests itself in someone's choices to exert effort to reach a certain goal and also to what degree or duration they do this. This view on motivation relates to Bos-Nehles et al.' (2013) definition on motivation as someone's desire and willingness to perform. Both definitions rely on the fact that motivation is a relatively controllable decision by a person to direct energy towards a certain outcome (Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner & Shaufeli, 2001; Mackay, Allen &

Landis, 2017; Schaufeli, Bakker & Salanova, 2006). What factors play role in such a decision can however differ widely per person and per situation. Yet Kahn (1990) states that the engagement someone feels towards their job is an important, overlapping determinant of the degree to which someone invests their physical, cognitive, and emotional energies into their role performance (Mackay et al., 2017). This construct, quantified by the vigor, dedication and absorption someone has towards their job, has even been shown to explain more variance in employee effectiveness than the aggregate of job satisfaction, job involvement, and organizational commitment (Mackay et al., 2017). Such positive affective states towards work are shown to protect employees from (emotional) exhaustion and reduced feelings of personal accomplishments (Demerouti et al, 2001; Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzalez-Homa & Bakker, 2002) which overlap considerably with job stressors like fatigue, job-related depression, role problems, turnover intention and absenteeism (Demerouti et al, 2001). In all these examples of job stressors it seems likely that someone is less prone to exert effort to achieve a certain goal because of lower levels of energy and/or dedication towards a certain goal. So due to the positive affective states work engagement reflects and the protective function it has on negative affective states (Mackay et al., 2017), work engagement is seen as a key predictor of motivation to perform.

The framework Mackay et al. (2017) and Schaufeli et al. (2002) have created to quantify Kahn's (1990) view of work engagement is based on someone's vigor, dedication, and absorption towards their work. Vigor then refers to high levels of energy, the willingness to invest effort, and persistence at work-related tasks (Shirom, 2003; Schaufeli et al, 2006; Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter, 2001). Dedication relates to feelings of involvement in one's work and the experience of enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, and challenge (Schaufeli et al., 2002). And third, absorption is characterized by full concentration, immersion, and engrossment in one's work whereby time passes quickly and one has difficulties detaching oneself from work (Schaufeli et al., 2002; Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

Even though employees have the ability and are motivated to work towards organizational goals, without the appropriate *opportunities* to showcase this, people are not able to deliver on expectations in their. There is no clear cut description of what these opportunities are or what they should look like but scholars mention the structure of work and the level of employee involvement and empowerment to matter in creating opportunities to perform (Lepak et al., 2006). Blumberg & Pringle (1982) gave as example of an opportunity to perform whether an employee has the tools and equipment one needs to perform and whether the working conditions and culture at the company promote the behaviors one needs to perform. From an individual's perspective however, the perception of opportunity to perform relies on the balance between job demands and job resources (Demerouti et al., 2001). When someone perceives to have sufficient resources (e.g. skills, tools, energy, time, support) to meet the

demands in their job, someone is likely to feel more equipped to perform in their role than when someone feels he/she does not have the time, tools or support he needs to be deliver on expectations. Bolino & Turnley (2005) have referred to a construct called 'role overload' (Baruch, Grace, Biener & Barnett, 1985; Rapoport & Rapoport, 1977) to quantify the degree to which an employee experiences a balance or imbalance between the job demands and job resources available. High levels of role overload thereby indicate an imbalance between job demands and job resources in such a way that someone does not have sufficient job resources to deal with the job demands. This forces people to stretch their attention, effort, and resources thinly to cover overwhelming demands (Brown, Jones & Leigh, 2005). This is proven to reduce the likelihood of someone performing highly in their job as it impairs even high performers' estimates of self-efficacy, acceptance of challenging personal goals and subsequent performance levels (Brown et al., 2005). Therefore ensuring there is a balance between job demands and job resources is important for someone's experience of opportunity to perform.

Looking back to the overall AMO-model, both ability, motivation and opportunity need to be present in a certain amount for someone to perform in their role (Bos-Nehles et al., 2013). So not only having the knowledge and skills required in a job, but also the energy, willingness and ability to spend energy and other resources are needed to deliver on the expectations in your job. Yet depending on the needs of the organization or of a certain individual, an organization's HRM department can choose to implement or focus on practices that increase ability, motivation or opportunity to perform. Yet it goes without question that all three factors need to be present in some way for employees to be able to perform in a suitable fashion. In the following section we will dive deeper into the complex relationship of Ability, Motivation and Opportunity, employee performance and the role of the strength-based approach to talent management.

Hypotheses

The strength-based talent management approach we've been discussing in this thesis is a bundle HRM practices aimed to identify and promote the use of the strengths of employees. The ultimate organizational goal of such activities are to maximize the contribution and performance of each and every employee by identifying and promoting their strengths. Prior research has already shown that when people are able to use their personal strengths it drives their performance (Peterson & Park 2006; Linley & Harrington 2006; Peterson & Seligman 2004). Yet researchers in the effect of the strength-based approach on performance have indicated that other factors, like positive affect and job-fit (Meyers & van Woerkom, 2017; Roetert Steenbruggen, 2017), play a mediating role in this effect. Based on these results and the believe that HRM practices are not likely to impact employee

performance directly, we argue that individual determinants of employee performance like Ability, Motivation and Opportunity play a role in explaining the effect of the strength-based approach on performance. In the following section we will address our specific hypotheses.

The strength-based approach to talent management revolves around identifying and promoting the use of those abilities that make individuals perform well or at their personal best, wherefore the influence on someone's ability to perform seems obvious. Facilitating activities that help employees identify those skills and/or abilities they excel at and stimulating or enabling them to use these in their jobs will increase someone's awareness of what they are or are not good at. Such awareness enables employees to make a better judgment on whether they have the knowledge, skills and abilities they need to perform in their role and also where they might lack these and should develop or ask colleagues for help (Clifton & Harper, 2003). This leads to the first hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: The strength-based approach positively relates to employees' ability to perform

Furthermore we expect the strength-based approach to impact employees' motivation to perform. Motivation was seen as someone's willingness to invest effort to achieve certain goals, strongly predicted by the positive effects of engagement someone has to their work. Linley and Harrington (2006b) proclaimed that when people use their strengths their energy levels rise. Additionally van Woerkom and Meyers (2014) added that when people feel appreciated because of their unique strengths and where those strengths can be put to work, it will evoke feelings of competence, significance, self-worth, and respect. Such results of using one's strengths closely resemble the vigor, dedication and absorption we believe are important determinants of engagement. So facilitating activities that help employees to identify and use their strengths are expected to positively influence the energy, enthusiasm and involvement someone has towards their job wherefore our second hypothesis is:

Hypothesis 2: The strength-based approach positively relates to employees' motivation to perform

The third component of the AMO-model is opportunity to perform, or the balance or imbalance between job demands and job resources. As was mentioned in the ability-section, helping someone to identify their strengths makes people more aware of their unique abilities. By itself this activity however is not expected to impact someone's opportunity to perform as being aware of your strengths does not directly change anything regarding either the demands in the job or the available resources. The two other key tasks of the strength-based approach, deploying strengths and managing around

weaknesses, are aimed more at actually changing something to optimize the contribution of people through their strengths, thereby having the potential to impact the balance or imbalance in demands and resources someone experiences. Enabling people to increasingly use their strengths in their job for example, might lead to stronger feelings of skill and support to do their job. Also strengths are usually characteristics that come natural, or effortless, to someone, making it likely someone spends less time and effort to do their job when strengths and job requirements are better aligned. Similarly also the task of managing around weaknesses gives employees the opportunity to drop or collaborate on tasks they are not good at and therefore potentially time- and energy consuming. Such practices are believed to positively impact the job resources someone has available to do their job. Increasing someone's job resources reduces the chance of a negative imbalance between job demands and job resources (e.g. too many demands in relation to job resources)(Brown et al., 2005). Therefore the third hypothesis is:

Hypothesis 3: The strength-based approach positively relates to employees' opportunity to perform

These three hypotheses indicate how we expect the strength-based approach will relate to the three components of the AMO-model. The fourth hypothesis revolves around how we expect the strength-based approach will relate to employee performance. As we argued in the beginning of this thesis, the strength-based approach is a bundle of HRM practices aimed to maximize the contribution of all employees through identifying and promoting the use of their strengths. This bundle of HRM practices thus enables employees to identify their strengths and apply these in their jobs and therefore potentially maximize their contribution to organizational goals. Whether this latter happens however, does not rely on the activities from the strength-based approach but rather on what someone does with the knowledge gained during those activities. For example, performing activities to help identify your strengths does not necessarily mean you are able to deliver on what is expected of you in your job. Whether someone is able to translate the activities of strength-based approach into actual increased performance in their job, depends on individual determinants of employee performance, like Ability, Motivation and Opportunity. Therefore we hypothesize that the strength-based approach does not directly impact employee performance, but is mediated by the AMO-model.

The reason to work with the AMO-model is that its key strength is that it is a holistic approach to predicting employee performance. This means that even though there is an almost endless list of varieties of factors that might influence someone's performance, the three buckets of the AMO-model are considered to cover them all. As example we take two factors found in prior research to play a role in the effect of the strength-based approach on employee performance: positive affect (Meyers & van

Woerkmom, 2017) and job-fit (Roetert Steenbruggen, 2017). Positive affect was defined as the extent to which a person feels enthusiastic, active, and alert, which is covered by our definition of motivation to perform. Job-fit, the mediating factor Roetert Steenbruggen (2017) found between the strength-based approach and employee performance, was defined as the match between an employee's abilities and the requirements of the job on the one hand, and the desires of an employee and the attributes of a job on the other hand (Mulki, Jaramillo & Locander, 2006). This definition shows great overlap with our definition of ability to perform – having the skills, knowledge and abilities one needs to perform in their role – but also with motivation – reflecting the positive affective states, like desire and willingness to work towards goals in their job. The alleged full-coverage by the AMO-model of all factors that impact employee performance, lead us hypothesize that no other factors remain that could explain how the strength-based approach impacts employee performance. Our fourth hypothesis therefore becomes:

Hypothesis 4: The effect of the strength-based approach on Employee Performance is fully mediated by an employees' ability, motivation and opportunity to perform.

In the following section we will explain how the research was conducted.

Method

To obtain some answers in this descriptive study, data was gathered using a survey among employees of various companies. The choice for a survey was made in order to obtain a quantitative, scaled dataset. The research question we want to answer and its related constructs rely on a person's unique experience of HRM practices provided by their company and their performance in their role. In order to draw any conclusions on unique experiences of people, it is important that they rate these experiences on a certain, common scale to quantify them. A survey with Likert-scale items is a useful and effective way to achieve this. Also the decision was made for employees to rate all constructs in the survey, because of the subjective nature of the constructs. Especially the strength-based approach and someone's motivation and opportunity to perform are highly subjective experiences that cannot be judged by anyone else. Whereas ability to perform and actual job performance are less subjective, Harris & Schaubroeck (1988) have shown that self- and supervisor rated performance show a significant correlation. For convenience reasons therefore all constructs were self-rated. Also for convenience reason no specific companies were targeted.

The survey was distributed using various social media channels and networks, based on a convenience and snowball sampling method (Bryman & Bell, 2007), to gather a representative sample of the working community in the Netherlands. The sole requirement for participation in the research was employment.

Sample

The convenience sample consisted of 143 employees. 18 respondents responded only to the demographic items in the survey wherefore they were excluded from the sample. 14 other respondents failed to finish the survey but did complete sufficient items to be taken along in the analysis. Of the remaining 125 respondents, 36% was male, 64% was female. The mean age of the sample was 29,1 year (Min = 18; Max = 65; \bar{G} = 9.02), they worked in their role on average 3.38 years (Min = 0.00; Max = 30.0; \bar{G} = 5.51) and 75% of the sample worked full-time. 88% of the respondents were highly educated (HBO or WO), 9% had a MBO education and 3% completed middelbaar or basis onderwijs. This demographic information shows that our sample is skewed towards young, highly educated females which could be due to the chosen distribution method of the survey.

The sample worked for a variety of companies of which 37,6% is in the public sector and 62,3% in the private sector. The data further showed that 52% of the respondents worked at a big company (over 250 employees), 18% at a medium-sized company (< 250 employees), 25% at a small company (< 50 employees) and 5% at a micro-sized company (< 10 employees).

Measures

Strength-based approach

As discussed earlier, a strength-based talent management approach has three major tasks: identifying people's strengths, stimulating people to use and refine their strengths and managing around weaknesses (Meyers & van Woerkom, 2014). These three core activities are seen as a bundle of HRM practices wherefore the presence (or lack) of one of these practices, could affect the impact of the others. Therefore Roetert Steenbruggen (2017) has designed an instrument consisting of 16 items to measure the overall degree to which an organization has a strength-based approach to talent management. The instrument based its items on the following definitions of the three major tasks:

- Strength identification (Meyers, 2016): "Organizational activities aimed at detecting and identifying employee strengths"
- Deploying strengths (van Woerkom et al., 2016) : "Organizational activities aimed at stimulating employees to use their strengths more and refine them"
- Managing weaknesses (Roetert Steenbruggen, 2017): "Organizational activities aimed at expanding employee strengths and making weaknesses less relevant"

Leveraging prior work done by Meyers (2016) and Van Woerkom, Mostert, Els, Bakker, de Beer & Rothmann (2016) on strength identification and deployment but also designing and testing items to measure 'manage weaknesses', Roetert Steenbruggen (2017) reported a reliability of .896 on her instrument. Based on her analysis and reported reliability we chose to rely on this established method.

For all tasks several items were included like: 'The organization I work for gives me the chance to learn what my talents are', 'the organization I work for allows me to do my job in a manner that best suits my abilities' and 'the organization I work for stimulates to let colleagues with complementary strength profiles join forces, such that they can complement each other's unique strengths'. Employees rated the items on a 5-point Likert scale (Disagree – Agree). A full overview of the items included in the survey is provided in Appendix I.

A factor analysis was conducted to assess if the items indeed measured the proposed constructs. The 16 items gave a Kaiser-Meyers-Olkin score of Sample Adequacy of .873 and a Bartlett's score of Sphericity of $p < 0.001$ indicating that the sample of items had sufficient overlap to do a factor analysis. The communality of all 16 items exceeded .40 wherefore all items could be taken into account in the factor analysis. The factor analysis itself, using a Varimax rotation because no correlation between the constructs was expected, indicated the presence of four components with an eigenvalue above 1 that together explained 65.1% of the total variance. The loading of items on the different components is indicated in Appendix II.

The factor analysis indicated that most of the items loaded on the component they were intended to measure. The first component covered items asking about the degree to which organizations help and facilitate employees in getting to know their strengths. This shows strong overlap with our definition of strength identification practices wherefore this component was labeled as the measure for 'strength identification' ($\alpha = .824$). The second component shown by the factor analysis covered items asking about the degree to which organizations let people use their strengths and is interested in what the employee is good at or motivated by. Those topics reflect what Van Woerkom et al. (2016) defined as strength deployment: organizational activities aimed at stimulating employees to use their strengths more and refine them. Therefore the second component was listed as the measure for strength deployment ($\alpha = .901$). The third component covered two items assessing to what degree employees can drop or let someone take over tasks they are no good at. The fourth component contained two items regarding collaboration with colleagues. Both these components make up a part of to what degree an organization facilitates activities to expand employee strengths and making weaknesses less relevant. Wherefore both component three and four were labeled as managing weaknesses (KMO-measure .500; Bartlett's value $p=0.018$; communality all exceeding .40; $\alpha = .512$).

Because of the co-dependency of these three constructs in impacting the strength-based approach, another factor analysis was conducted. This factor analysis had to indicate whether the three components that were found in the prior factor analyses together (strength identification, strength deployment and managing weaknesses) could be seen as a reliable measure for the strength-based approach. This analysis with a Direct Oblimin rotation (KMO-measure .557; Bartlett's value $p<0.00$; communality all exceeding .40) showed a single component with eigenvalue above 1 that explains 62% of the variance. Subsequently the measure 'Strength-based approach' was constructed that will indicate the degree to which an employee considers their organization has a strength-based approach to talent management ($\alpha = .681$).

Employee Performance

Based on the theoretical constructs handled in the literature, our conceptualization of employee performance consists of both in-role performance (Williams & Andersons, 1991) and extra-role performance (Lee & Allen, 2002).

The in-role performance component is constructed using Williams and Anderson's (1991) measure of task performance to determine the degree to which respondents deliver on the requirements that are expected in a certain job. The items of Williams and Anderson's (1991) instrument were rewritten as self-report items instead of supervisor-rated performance. Five items were included in the survey to

measure task performance, for example: 'I adequately fulfill the responsibilities that are specified in my job description'. Respondents were asked to rate the items on a 5-point Likert scale (Disagree – Agree).

The extra-role performance component was constructed using Lee and Allen's (2002) measure of organizational citizenship behaviors ('OCB') towards both individuals and the organization. Five items were included to measure OCB towards individuals and five items to measure OCB towards organizations. Example of items included are: 'I willingly give time to help colleagues who have work-related problems' and 'I participate in non-mandatory activities to positively influence the organizational image'. Respondents were asked to rate the items on a 5-point Likert scale (Disagree – Agree).

A factor analysis showed that the sample of items had sufficient overlap (KMO-score of Sample Adequacy of .623 and a Bartlett's score of Sphericity of $p < 0.001$). Also all items showed a communality higher than .40 wherefore all 15 items were taken along. The factor analysis itself, using a Varimax rotation, indicated the presence of a surprising number of five components with an eigenvalue above 1 that together explained 66.1% of the total variance. The loading of items on the different components is indicated in Appendix III.

The first component covered three items regarding adequately fulfilling expected tasks, wherefore this component closely fits our definition of task performance. The second component covered two items about meeting formal performance requirements, which also relates to task performance. It therefore seems that both components reflect a factor of task performance, one covering a more subjective, personal reflection on meeting requirements in one's job whereas the second contains a reference to a formal performance system. As both make up an important part of task performance, a second factor analysis was conducted to assess if both constructs could make up the measure of task performance. The outcomes of this factor analysis showed that this indeed can be assumed (KMO-measure .500; Bartlett's value $p < 0.00$; communality all exceeding .40), wherefore our measure of Task Performance explains a variance of 69,15% with an α of .543.

The third construct covered all five items that were included as a measure for organizational citizenship behaviors towards individuals. Covering to what degree employees spend time on helping their colleagues, this construct was labeled as the measure for organizational citizenship behaviors towards individuals ($\alpha = .760$).

The fourth and fifth item both covered items that were included in the survey to measure organizational citizenship behaviors towards the organization. Again we looked for the overarching content of the items making up the constructs to assess whether to include the constructs in the analysis. The fourth construct covered items about participating in activities to positively influence the organizational image, defending the organization from criticism and showing pride to work for the

organization. These items all reflect an external perspective to helping the organization in contrast to the items of the fifth construct that all reflect an internal perspective (offering ideas to improve the functioning of the organization and protecting it from potential problems). The distinction between external and internal perspective of organizational citizenship behaviors towards the organization (OCB-O) seems logic wherefore both components are thought to measure OCB-O. A second factor analysis showed that the two constructs could make up a single measure for OCB-O (KMO-measure .500; Bartlett's value $p=0.034$; communality all exceeding .40) with an α of .335. Unfortunately this α shows low reliability of the measure wherefore it was decided to no longer take OCB-O into account in creating the measure for employee performance.

To assess whether Task Performance and OCB-I together made up a reliable measure for employee performance another factor analysis was conducted. This analysis showed an insignificant Bartlett's value of Sphericity (KMO-measure .500; Bartlett's value $p=0.070$) meaning the items did not have sufficient overlap to make up a single measure. These results made us to decide to continue our research using two measures for employee performance, namely Task Performance and Organizational Citizenship Behaviors towards Individuals.

AMO

The three components of the AMO-model (Ability, Motivation and Opportunity to perform) were measured using different items. In the sections below, the operationalization of each component is explained in more detail.

Ability to perform

Ability to perform was measured using an occupational self-efficacy scale. Rigotti, Schyns & Mohr (2008) defined this construct as the confidence an individual has in their knowledge, skill and ability to successfully fulfill a task or to cope with difficulties. Even though this scale measures someone's confidence in whether they are able to perform and not their actual ability, Stajkovic and Luthans (1998) have shown that a judgement of self-efficacy on knowledge, skills and abilities correlates to actual ability to perform.

We've used the short version of the occupational self-efficacy scale that was created by Schyns and von Collani (2002). The scale consisted of 8 items respondents needed to rate on a 5-point Likert Scale (Disagree- Agree). Again we conducted a factor analysis to assess whether the different items measured the same construct. The analysis of communalities between the items showed that one of the items 'My past experiences in my job have prepared me well for the work I will do in the future' lacked communality with the other items and will therefore be excluded from the analysis. The factor

analysis of the remaining 7 items (KMO measure of sample adequacy of .770; Bartlett's test of Sphericity $p < 0.001$) showed the presence of two constructs (eigenvalue > 1) that together explained 58% of the variance. The content of the items loading on the two constructs suggested the presence of two distinct features of ability, namely resourcefulness and meeting demands. The resourcefulness component reflects someone's ability to come up with quick and clever ways to overcome difficulties, whereas the meeting demands component reflects someone's ability to meet the current demands in their work. Based on this, two components were created after which a second factor analysis was conducted (KMO measure of sample adequacy of .500; Bartlett's test of Sphericity $p < 0.001$, communality $> .4$) showing the presence of one component that explained 67.2% of the variance. This component was created representing the degree to which someone believes he/she has the ability to perform in their job on a scale from 1 to 5 ($\alpha = .506$). On average respondents indicated a score of 3.86 in their ability to perform ($N = 116$; min = 2.35; max = 5.00; $\bar{6} = .452$).

Motivation to perform

Motivation to perform was quantified using the work-engagement framework of Mackay et al. (2017) consisting of:

- Vigor: High levels of energy, the willingness to invest effort, and persistence at work-related tasks (Shirom, 2003; Schaufeli et al, 2006; Maslach, et al., 2001).
- Dedication: feelings of involvement in one's work and the experience of enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, and challenge (Schaufeli et al., 2002)
- Absorption: full concentration, immersion, and engrossment in one's work whereby time passes quickly and one has difficulties detaching oneself from work (Schaufeli et al., 2002; Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

The UWES-9 questionnaire (Utrecht Work Engagement Scale - shortened) was used to rate employee's work engagement (Schaufeli, Bakker & Salanova, 2006). The scale consists of 9 items that need to be rated on a 5-point Likert scale (Never – Always). A factor analysis (Direct Oblimin rotation; KMO measure of sample adequacy of .902; Bartlett's test of Sphericity $p < 0.001$; communality of all items > 0.4) showed the presence of a single construct with an eigenvalue above 1, explaining 57,3% of the variance. The factor loadings are indicated in Appendix V. Based on these outcomes, a single component was created by taking the average of the 9 items ($\alpha = .903$) that represents the motivation of respondents to perform in their jobs (scale 1 – 5, higher score indicating higher level of motivation; $N = 117$; $M = 3.86$; min = 1.78; max = 4.89; $\bar{6} = .632$).

Opportunity to perform

Opportunity to perform was measured as role overload: the degree in which employees feel that there are too many responsibilities or activities expected of them in light of the time available, their abilities, and other constraints (Rizzo, House, & Lirtzman, 1970). A three-item scale created by Schaubroeck, Cotton, and Jennings (1989) and Beehr, Walsh, and Taber (1976) was used. The items like 'The amount of work I am expected to do is too great' were rated on a 5-point Likert scale (disagree – agree). Because high levels of role-overload are indicative of low opportunity to perform, we rescaled the answer on the items. The factor analysis (KMO measure of sample adequacy of .738; Bartlett's test of Sphericity $p < 0.001$; communality of all items > 0.4) indicated the presence of one component (eigenvalue > 1) that explained 82,1% of the variance. Based on that analysis a single construct was created to measure respondents opportunity to perform ($\alpha = .891$; $M = 3.11$; $Min = 1$, $Max = 5$; $\alpha = .946$).

Control variables

In order to make sure any of the effects of the strength-based approach are not impacted by third variables, we included several control variables in our survey.

Age: We expect that in general younger people are more focused on identifying and developing their skills than older people. Therefore their perception of the degree to which an organizations offers activities to help them in identifying and developing their skills might deviate from the perception of more elder people. Elder people also have had the opportunity to spend more time on identifying and developing their skills, wherefore they might have more knowledge on how to perform in their role.

Tenure: Also tenure, the duration of which someone works for their organization, we argue to be affected by strength-based talent management and affect ability in a similar fashion as age. When someone has been with a company for a shorter amount of time, there might be a higher need for activities to help identify and deploy someone's strength in their role wherefore the perception of those activities that are present might deviate based on the need for those activities. Also when tenure increases and employees get more familiar with their organization, they might know better what behaviors are expected of them and how deploy such behaviors in their role and organization, enabling them to perform.

Gender: Another control variable was gender as, in general, the type of job men and women hold may have distinct characteristics and therefore also places a distinct need for strength-based talent management activities. Another possible influence of gender is the way women and men need and/or respond to HR practices.

Education: Additionally we want to control for education. Again the specific characteristics of the job people with a high, medium or lower education have and the organization that offers these job, might impact the degree to which organizations offer strength-based talent management activities.

Company size: We also want to control for company size as larger companies in general have access to more resources wherefore they also can spend more resources on strength-based talent management activities. Additionally they also likely have a more developed and delineated view of what it constitutes to perform in their organizations then smaller companies do. This can give employees a clearer idea of what behaviors they need to perform, increasing their chances to perform well in their role.

Sector: A final control variables we want to account for is the sector, public or private, in which the organization operates. In general, the competition and pressure to have an effective and efficient organization among organizations operating in the public sector is higher than those in the private sector. This might place a higher demand on maximizing the contributions of all their employees.

The simple descriptives of these demographics like age and education are given at the sample section. Below some deeper level analysis was conducted.

We found a significant, negative correlation between age and education ($r = -.482$; $p < 0.001$), meaning that in our sample younger people were generally higher educated. This is not surprising, as a trend in society is that people go to school longer, yet it might also imply a bias in our sample. Another interesting correlation was visible between age and company size: a negative correlation indicating that younger people worked for smaller companies than older people ($r = -.193$; $p = .031$). Table 1 also shows that older people were longer in their positions than younger people and more frequently worked part time (respectively $r = .774$; $p < .001$; $r = .201$; $p = .025$) and that women were more often working part time than men ($r = .259$; $p = .004$); 9% of the men worked part time against 34% of the women.

Analysis

After the data collection, the data was analyzed using SPSS. The first step was to run various factor analyses (CFA) to assess whether various measures of main variables could be constructed based on the items from the survey. In the 'Measures' section those results were reflected for the main variables in this study. In these section also the reliability (Cronbach's alpha) of the measures were indicated.

Subsequently various descriptive analyses were conducted in order to extract some first insights on the data and demographics of the respondents. The means, standard deviations and correlations were calculated. These results are reflected in Table 1.

To test our hypotheses we've performed various linear regression analyses using SPSS. In these analyses we controlled for the impact of the control variables, thereby extracting only the effect of our main variables. In Table 2 these results are presented.

To test our mediation hypothesis, we've leveraged the functionalities of the PROCESS macro from Hayes (2012). This macro allows us to test various complex mediation and moderation models. In our assessment we leveraged model 4 (see Figure 2). The outcomes of this analysis are presented in Table 3. In this research we distinguished the following: strength-based approach as X or the independent variable, Task Performance or OCB-I as Y or the dependent variable and Ability, Motivation and Opportunity to perform as M. Also we controlled for the effects of our control variables

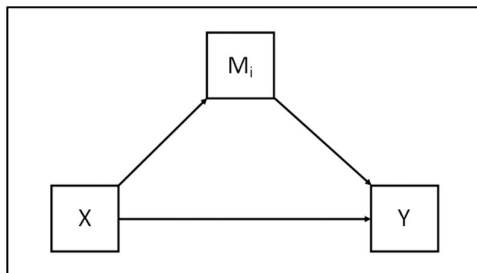


Figure 2: Model 4 from PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2012)

Results

A first impression of the data and relationships between variables was assessed using a correlations table as visible in Table 1. This table already showed some interesting insights about the control variables like age, gender and company size. Following the correlation between age and the strength-based approach, younger people reported lower levels of strength-based talent management practices in their organizations ($r = -.223, p = 0.013$). To assess whether the effect was not caused by any other control variable, a regression analysis with all control variables was conducted showing that the effect of age no longer remained significant, meaning the correlation was likely caused by other factors (model 1: $F(6,117) = 2.229, p = .045$. vs model 2: $F(7,116) = 1.934, p = .07$).

Table 1 also showed a significant, negative correlation between gender and the strength-based approach ($r = -.232, p = 0.033$), suggesting that men tend to experience higher levels of strength-based talent management efforts by their organization than women (men: $M = 3.46, \bar{6} = .341$; women: $M = 3.23, \bar{6} = .510$). After conducting a variance analysis controlling for the other control variables (ANCOVA) the effect however was no longer significant ($F(2, 124) = 3.036, p = .052$).

Gender also correlated with ability to perform ($r = -.343; p < .001$) and Organizational Citizenship behaviors towards individuals ('OCB-I') ($r = .196; p = .040$). The ANCOVA showed that the effect of gender on ability to perform remained significant ($F(2,115) = 5.276, p = .007$). As the correlation was negative, it means females reported lower levels of ability to perform ($M = 3.76, \bar{6} = .46$) than men ($M = 4.05, \bar{6} = .37$). Also for OCB-I the variance analysis showed that the effect remained significant when controlling for the other variables, meaning females reported higher levels of help behaviors to their colleagues than men did ($F(2,110) = 4.997, p = .009$; respectively women $M = 3.88, \bar{6} = .48$; Men $M = 3.71, \bar{6} = .59$).

A final interesting insight from the correlations table was the negative correlation of company size with both measures for employee performance (task performance $r = -.188; p = .048$; OCB-I $r = -.268; p = .004$). After an ANCOVA only the effect on OCB-I remained standing ($F(2,110) = 2.977, p = .035$). This negative relationship means that the bigger the company employees worked for, the higher levels of organizational citizenship behaviors they report (OCB-I: big $M = 3.96, \bar{6} = .51$; medium $M = 3.74, \bar{6} = .64$; small $M = 3.67, \bar{6} = .45$; micro $M = 3.52, \bar{6} = .44$).

The next step in the analysis was to assess how the main variables relate to one another and to test our hypotheses.

Variables	Means	Std.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1. Age	29.1	9.02	1												
2. Gender	1.65	.50	,065	1											
3. Education	4.45	.82	-,482**	-,105	1										
4. Tenure	3.38	5.51	,774**	-,023	-,622**	1									
5. Company size	1.82	.97	-,193*	,021	-,093	-,121	1								
6. Sector	1.62	.49	-,145	-,252**	,244**	-,152	,115	1							
7. Employment type	1.25	.43	,201*	,259**	-,361**	,274**	,047	-,243**	1						
8. Strength Based Approach	3.31	.47	-,223*	-,232**	-,033	-,130	,011	,143	-,058	1					
9. Ability to perform	3.86	.45	,078	-,343**	-,007	,112	-,160	,029	-,003	,294**	1				
10. Motivation to perform	3.86	.63	-,067	-,169	-,174	,009	,049	-,018	,067	,573**	,346**	1			
11. Opportunity to perform	3.11	.95	-,016	-,012	,048	-,023	-,013	-,114	-,049	,068	,114	-,131	1		
12. Task performance	4.10	.41	-,052	-,140	,161	-,036	-,188*	-,065	-,130	,135	,543**	,231*	,104	1	
13. OCB-I	3.82	.56	,132	,196*	-,033	,021	-,268**	,053	,087	,134	,284**	,070	-,043	,173	1

Table 1: Overview of correlations of all variables. Significance levels: ** p < .01; * p < .05

To test our first hypothesis that the strength-based approach positively relates to employee's ability to perform a simple linear regression analysis was conducted (see Table 2). The analysis (DV: ability to perform, IV: strength-based talent management) showed that the overall model (control variables, strength-based approach) had a significant effect on ability to perform ($F(8, 114) = 3.681, p = .001, R^2 = .217$). The individual β 's of the effect also showed that the strength-based approach was a significant predictor of ability to perform ($\beta = .272, p = .004$). This gives us support to accept our first hypothesis that the strength-based approach positively relates to employees' ability to perform. Interestingly also gender was a significant predictor of ability to perform, in both models, even though its explained variance decreased slightly. The increased explained variance of model 2 however (model 1: .154, model 2: .217) shows that the strength-based approach has additional, unique value in influencing ability to perform.

The same analysis was conducted to test hypothesis 2 (DV: motivation to perform, IV: strength-based approach). The analysis showed that the overall model (strength-based approach, control variables) had a significant, positive effect on employee's motivation to perform ($F(8, 115) = 7.748, p < .001, R^2 = .367$). When referring to the individual β 's of the factors included in the model, we found that the strength-based significantly and positively related to motivation ($\beta = .558, p < .001$). Such a positive standardized coefficient indicates that when employees report higher levels of strength-based talent management activities, they have higher levels of vigor, dedication and absorption towards their jobs. With these results we can accept hypothesis 2. The full outcome of the regression analysis is again provided in Table 2.

A third regression analysis (DV: opportunity to perform, IV: strength-based talent management) showed that strength-based talent management did not have a significant effect on role overload ($F(8, 115) = .437, p = \text{n.s.}$). This result leads us to reject hypothesis 3.

To test our fourth hypothesis that the effect of the strength-based approach on employee performance was fully mediated by an employee's ability, motivation and opportunity to perform, we used Hayes' (2013) process-macro for SPSS. Because we had two different measures for employee performance (Task Performance and Organizational Citizenship behaviors towards individuals), the analysis was conducted twice.

The mediation analysis with Task Performance as its dependent variable showed that the total mediation model was significant ($F(8, 100) = 2.146, p = .038$), meaning that the strength-based approach together with the AMO components significantly predicted task performance. The analysis

however also indicated that the direct effect of the strength-based approach was not significant ($t(100) = -.4855, p = .628$), whereas the indirect effect was ($\beta = .304, p < .005$). This direct effect refers to the effect of the strength-based approach on Task Performance while the indirect effect refers to the effect strength-based talent management has on task performance *through the mediators*. These results suggest that, as was expected in our hypothesis, the strength-based approach does not impact task performance directly but rather through the AMO components. When we take a deeper look into the individual effects of ability, motivation and opportunity, we do however see that only ability to perform has a significant indirect effect ($\beta = .215, p < .005$). This means that the effect of the strength-based approach on task performance is not fully mediated by an employees' ability, motivation and opportunity to perform but only through an employee's ability to perform.

The same analysis was done to assess mediation for OCB-I. The analysis showed that the total model was again significant ($F(8, 100) = 3.722, p = .001, \beta = .416$), indicating that the strength-based approach together with AMO-components significantly predicted OCB-I. Yet the results also showed that both the direct effect was significant ($t(100) = 2.275, p = .025, \beta = .342$) just as the indirect effect through ability to perform ($\beta = .163, p < .005$). This indicates that, in contrary to the mediation analysis on task performance, Ability does not fully mediate the effect of the strength-based approach on OCB-I.

Based on these latter two results, we need to reject hypothesis 4 ('the effect of Strength-based talent management on Employee Performance is fully mediated by an employee's 'ability to perform, work engagement and role overload') as only Ability to perform fully mediates the effect the strength-based approach has on task performance. Also Ability is the only factor that partially mediates the effect of the strength-based approach on OCB-I.

	Ability to perform		Work engagement		Role-Overload		Task performance			OCB-I		
	Model 1.1	Model 1.2	Model 2.1	Model 2.2	Model 3.1	Model 3.2	Model 4.1	Model 4.2	Model 4.3	Model 5.1	Model 5.2	Model 5.3
<i>Age</i>	.019	.093	-.144	.009	.003	.030	-.083	-.043	-.095	.189	.245	.215
<i>Tenure</i>	.061	.087	-.092	-.040	.015	.024	.113	.127	.086	-.209	-.189	-.222
<i>Gender</i>	-.363**	-.303**	-.215*	-.093	-.028	-.007	-.125	-.093	.081	.199*	.244*	.344*
<i>Education</i>	.023	.099	-.297*	-.142	-.074	.101	.169	.210	.175	-.093	-.035	-.075
<i>Company size</i>	-.141	-.177	-.015	.034	.018	.026	-.153	-.140	-.085	-.293*	-.275*	-.228*
<i>Sector</i>	-.020	-.051	-.017	-.081	-.152	-.163	-.133	-.150	-.104	.175	.151	.149
<i>Employment type</i>	.081	.078	.065	.060	-.057	-.058	-.075	-.077	-.124	.077	.075	.048
Strength-based talent management		.272**		.558**		.099		.146	-.086		.205*	.165
Ability to perform									.527**			.360*
Work engagement									.152			-.088
Role-overload									-.044			.084
R ²	.154*	.217**	.101	.367**	.023	.032	.304	.332	.609**	.157*	.193*	.288**

Table 2: Overview of regression analyses with standardized coefficients. *Significant at $p < .001$ ** Significant at $p < .005$

	B
Task Performance	
Total effect of SBTM on Task Performance	.251*
Direct effect of SBTM on Task Performance	-.053
Total indirect effect	.304**
Strength-based talent management -> Ability -> Task performance	.215*
Strength-based talent management -> Work-Engagement -> Task performance	.087
Strength-based talent management -> Role-overload -> Task performance	.002
Organizational Citizenship behaviors towards individuals	
Total effect of SBTM on OCB-I	.416**
Direct effect of SBTM on OCB-I	.343*
Total indirect effect	.073
Strength-based talent management -> Ability -> OCB-I	.163*
Strength-based talent management -> Work-Engagement -> OCB-I	-.086
Strength-based talent management -> Roal-overload -> OCB-I	-.004

Table 3: Standardized coefficients of direct and in-direct effects in mediation analysis on Task Performance and OCB-I

Discussion

The goal of this study was to shed some light on the effect the strength-based approach to talent management has on employee performance. As this approach to talent management gains more and more attention by scholars and organizations that fully want to leverage their entire workforce, elucidating how these practices contribute to delivering on organizational goals is important for the effectiveness of talent management practices. As was suggested by prior research and the belief that HRM practices do not directly influence the performance of employees, the current research assessed how the strength-based approach impacts employee's ability, motivation and opportunity to perform as these constructs together are thought to be strong predictors of employee performance (Siemsen et al., 2008). The related research question is: To what degree does the AMO-framework explain the effect of strength-based approach on employee performance?

Our results indicate that the strength-based approach is positively related to employee's ability and their motivation to perform, but no support was found for the relationship with opportunity to perform. Additionally our results show that only one component of the AMO model, Ability to perform, plays a mediating role in the effect of strength-based talent management on task performance or organizational citizenship behaviors. These results allow us to formulate an answer to our research questions stating that only ability to perform explains the effect of the strength-based approach on employee performance to the degree that ability fully mediates the effect of the strength-based approach on task performance which was in line with our expectation. For OCB-I however ability to perform only partially mediated the effect, leaving a direct effect of strength-based talent management on OCB-I. These results contradict our assumption that the strength-based approach does not directly influence performance.

The fact that only ability to perform had a significant mediating role, leads us to take a closer look at the specific composition of the AMO-model. The three components in this model were considered to have a synergetic effect on performance (Bos-Nehles et al., 2013), meaning that the three components together explain more variance than the sum of the separate effects. Interestingly though, Bos-Nehles et al. (2013) have argued that the effect of someone's ability, motivation and opportunity to perform aren't identical. They argue that motivation and opportunity by themselves cannot directly influence performance without the necessary ability to perform. Ability is therefore a prerequisite for performance to occur (Bos-Nehles et al., 2013). This insight could explain why no mediating effect of motivation or opportunity to perform was present. An insightful and important extension of this

research could therefore be to investigate the interdependencies between the three AMO-components in impacting employee performance.

The finding that ability to perform fully mediated the effect the strength-based approach had on employee's task performance can be supported by prior findings from Roetert Steenbruggen (2017) who showed that person-job-fit fully mediated the effect of the strength-based approach and employee performance. The role of someone's skills, knowledge and abilities therefore seems prominent in the way the strength-based approach impacts employee's performance. To optimize the impact strength-based practices has on employee's ability to perform, organizations and managers can decide to invest in proper selection and hiring practices, formal and/or informal training, performance feedback and coaching and clear competency frameworks for the roles in their organization (Bos-Nehles et al., 2013; Lepak et al., 2006; Meyers & van Woerkom, 2014). Through these practices both the organization and the individual can strengthen their judgment on whether they have the required knowledge, skills and abilities to meet the requirements in a certain job. What practices an organization focusses on again depends on the specific philosophy on talent and whether talent is seen as something stable or developable.

Another factor that influences the effectiveness of the strength-based talent management approach is characterized by Bowen & Ostroff (2004). They stated that the effectiveness of a bundle of HR practices is determined by the strength of the culture and climate it elicits. Yet in our research no attention was given to the composition of the bundle of strength-based talent management activities and the strength of the climate and culture it elicits. Especially the psychological and organizational climate (respectively someone's individual perception vs. the *shared* perception among employees what the organization is like in terms of practices, policies, procedures, routines, and rewards (Schneider, 2000)) is thought to impact the effectiveness of strength-based talent management practices. Bowen & Ostroff (2004) themselves already indicated that a strengths-based philosophy can only lead to better performance when employees perceive and interpret these principles as they were intended by the employer (Nishii, Lepak & Schneider, 2008; Van Woerkom & Meyers, 2014). So a clear vision on how the organization sees talent and how they provide the opportunity to identify and deploy people's strengths just as manage around their weaknesses together with consistent and organization-wide application these practices, will influence the climate (both psychological and organizational) of the organization. This implies that for HR practitioners it is crucial to not only come up with some practices that help employees identify and deploy their strengths, but they also need to ensure that this aligns with the company philosophy on talent and that all practices are implemented well in the organization. As a company it might therefore make sense to assess the degree to which your

employees perceive that the three core-activities of strength-based talent management complement each other or what your employees your organization sees and deals with 'talent'.

This brings us to the point that managers are crucial in the strength-based talent management approach. As HR practitioners need to rely on line-managers to guide their people in identifying and deploying their strengths and manage around their weaknesses, a manager's quality of providing this to their people impacts the effect of strength-based talent management on the ability, motivation and opportunity of employees (Bos-Nehles et al, 2013). Nohria, Groysberg & Lee (2008) indeed showed that employees attributed as much importance to their line-manager as to the organization's policies in affecting their motivation to perform in their role. Therefore the skill and motivation of line-managers to deploy strength-based talent management practices also needs some more attention.

These latter points put in perspective how this research contributes and relates to the literature on how strength-based talent management can contribute to employee and organizational performance. In the following section we will provide some more opportunities for future research based on the limitations of this research.

Limitations and suggestions for further research

Like all research, this study is subject to a number of limitations. The first limitation has to do with our chosen method to collect data. We relied on a convenience sampling method with the sole restriction for participation being employment. This caused a skewed sample of respondents, heavy on young, highly educated women. This limits the reliability and generalizability of the research and its conclusions. For future research we therefore suggest to leverage a more systematic sampling method assuring for a sample reflective of the target group. A potential way to do this is by targeting a selection of companies or teams within a company as it creates a more delineated target audience. A similar limitations follows from our choice to do a cross-sectional research, measuring the variables only at one point in time. As we deal with highly subjective, complex constructs like ability and motivation to perform, it is not unlikely that these variables change over time. Recommendation therefore is also to investigate how the mediation by the AMO-theory holds over time by choosing a longitudinal research design. This enables us to account for causality.

Another limitation in this research is the way the AMO component opportunity to perform was operationalized and measured. We relied on Bolino & Turnley' (2005) construct of 'role overload' to quantify the degree to which an employee could apply his or her ability and motivation to perform.

We stated that this relies on the degree to which someone experiences a balance or imbalance between the demands of their job and the resources, like ability and motivation, one has available. Part of creating or maintain this balance lies in the hands of the employee him/herself by for example managing one's time well and indicating when one perceives an imbalance. Yet actively changing either the demands or resources one has to do his job, lies in the hands of the organization. The other descriptions of opportunity to perform provided in this research exemplify this: the structure of work, the level of employee involvement and empowerment, having the tools and equipment one needs to perform and the working conditions and culture at the organization (Lepak et al., 2006; Blumberg & Pringle, 1982). Therefore only asking about the amount of work and the available time seems too limiting to measure actual opportunity to perform. For following research we therefore suggest to elaborate the measures used to quantify the degree to which an employee can apply his or her ability and motivation to perform.

A third limitation of the current study was the usage of self-report measures for ability to perform and performance. The choice for self-report was made on the basis of convenience as the other main variables in this research were highly subjective experiences that cannot be judged by anyone else. In support of that decision Harris & Schaubroeck (1988) showed that there is a moderate correlation between self and supervisor measures of performance. However Mabe & West (1982) have showed in their meta-analysis that self-report measures of performance have little validity in predicting actual performance due to subjectivity. Conway & Huffcutt support this conclusion and have also shown that supervisor ratings showed the highest reliability in predicting performance (compared to self, subordinate and peer ratings). Taking that supervisors are more objective than employees in rating their performance and are also in better position to determine performance of employees relative to the organizational goals, having supervisor rate employees' ability to perform and actual performance can increase reliability and validity of the current research.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study has shed light on the way the strength-based approach to talent management impacts employee performance. It has shown that employees' ability to perform fully mediates the effects of the strength-based approach on task performance and that it also partially mediates the effects on organizational citizenship behaviors. Even though some of the hypotheses could not be supported, the results of this research provide ample opportunities for follow-up research into the role ability, motivation and opportunity to perform play in the effect the strength-based approach has on performance.

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Appendices

Appendix I – Survey overview



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Appendix II – Strength Based Approach - factor analysis results

	Aimed construct	Component			
		1*	2*	3*	4*
The organisation I work for gives me the chance to learn what my talents are.	Strength identification		,728		
The organisation I work for makes me aware of my qualities.	Strength identification		,673		
The organisation I work for supports me to discover my strengths.	Strength identification		,787		
The organization I work for focuses on my strengths.	Strength identification		,813		
The organization I work for is interested in the work that drives me.	Strength identification	,647			
The organization I work for focuses on what I am good at.	Strength deployment	,732			
The organization I work for allows me to do my job in a manner that best suits my abilities	Strength deployment	,603			
The organization I work for gives me the opportunity to do what I'm good at.	Strength deployment	,728			
The organization I work for allows me to use my strengths.	Strength deployment	,594	,505		
The organization I work for ensures that my strengths are aligned with my job tasks.	Strength deployment	,828			
The organization I work for makes the most of my talents.	Strength deployment	,709			
The organization I work for applies my abilities	Strength deployment	,768			
The organization I work for gives me the opportunity to let colleagues take over demanding tasks I am not good at	Managing weaknesses			,844	
The organization I work for enables me to drop tasks I'm not good at.	Managing weaknesses			,851	
The organization I work for gives me the opportunity to collaborate minimally with people I do not get along with.	Managing weaknesses				,804
The organization I work for stimulates to let colleagues with complementary strength profiles join forces, such that they can complement each other's unique strengths.	Managing weaknesses				,632

*Component 1: Strength identification; Component 2: Strength deployment; Component 3: Managing weaknesses – dropping tasks; Component 4: Managing weaknesses – collaboration with colleagues

Strength-based approach – factor analysis component 3 and 4	
	Component
	Managing weaknesses
Component 3: Managing weaknesses – dropping tasks	.778
Component 4: Managing weaknesses – collaboration with colleagues	.778

Strength-based approach – Components	
	Component
	Strength based approach
Component 1: Strength identification	.842
Component 2: Strength deployment	.895
Component 3: Managing weaknesses	.592

Appendix III – Employee Performance - factor analysis results

	Aimed construct	Components				
		1	2	3	4	5
I adequately complete the duties I was assigned to	Task performance	,860				
I adequately fulfill the responsibilities that are specified in my job description	Task performance	,696				
I adequately perform the tasks that are expected of me	Task performance	,828				
I meet the formal performance requirements of my job	Task performance		,733			
I engage in activities that will directly affect my performance evaluation	Task performance		,731			
I help colleagues who have been absent	OCB-Individual			-,760		
I willingly give time to help colleagues who have work-related problems	OCB-Individual			-,684		
I go out of my way to make newer employees feel welcome in the work group	OCB-Individual			-,766		
I give up time to help colleagues who have work or non-work problems	OCB-Individual			-,770		
I assist my colleagues with their duties	OCB-Individual			-,492		
I participate in non-mandatory activities to positively influence the organizational image	OCB- Organization				,710	
I defend the organization I work for when others criticize it	OCB- Organization				,808	
I show pride when I represent the organization I work for in public	OCB- Organization				,732	
I offer ideas to improve the functioning of the organization I work for	OCB- Organization					-,914
I take action to protect the organization I work for from potential problems	OCB- Organization					-,897

*Component 1: Performing expected task; component 2: meeting formal performance requirements; component 3: OCB-I; Component 4: OCB-O external; Component 5: OCB-O internal

Employee performance – factor analysis component 1 and 2	
	Component
	Task performance
Component 1: Performing expected task	.832
component 2: Meeting formal performance requirements	.832

Employee performance – factor analysis component 4 and 5	
	Component
	OCB-O
Component 4: OCB-O external	.775
Component 5: OCB-O internal	.775

Appendix IV – Ability to Perform - factor analysis results

	Components	
	Resourcefulness	Meeting demands
Thanks to my resourcefulness I know how to handle unforeseen situations in my job	,796	
If I am in trouble at work, I can usually think of something to do	,759	
I can remain calm when facing difficulties in my job because I can rely on my abilities	,569	,522
When I am confronted with a problem in my job, I can usually find several solutions	,709	
No matter what comes my way in my job, I'm usually able to handle it	,602	
My past experiences in my job have prepared me well for the work I will do in the future		,823
I meet the goals that I set for myself in my job		,719

Appendix V – Work Engagement - factor analysis results

	Component
	Work engagement
At my work I feel bursting with energy	.710
At my job, I feel strong and vigorous	.711
I am enthusiastic about my job	.847
My job inspires me	.810
When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work	.753
I feel happy when I am working intensely	.713
I am proud of the work I do	.764
I am immersed in my work	.768
I get carried away when I am at work	.725

Appendix VI – Role Overload - factor analysis results

	Component
	Role overload
The amount of work I am expected to do is too great	.898
I never seem to have enough time to get everything done at work	.926
It often seems like I have too much work for one person to do	.894