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An investigation into how social learning in a  
hybrid, corporate environment impacts people  
managers, in role less than two years

By

Sacha Dekker



Griffith College

Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements  
for MA in Education and Learning Development (QQI)

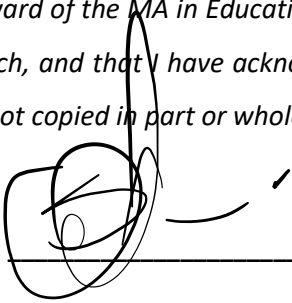
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## Declaration Page

*I hereby certify that this material, which I now submit for assessment on the programme of study leading to the award of the MA in Education Learning and Development, is my own; based on my personal study and/or research, and that I have acknowledged all material and sources used in its preparation. I also certify that I have not copied in part or whole or otherwise plagiarised the work of anyone else, including other learners.*

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

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Dated: 15 July 2023

# Abstract

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*“Learning would be exceedingly laborious, not to mention hazardous, if people had to solely rely on the effects of their own actions to inform them what to do” (Bandura, 1977 p22)*

Since the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, a growing number of companies are looking to implement a hybrid working model. With employees being in the office at different times, if at all, how people interact and share best practices has changed. This study explores how people managers, in role for less than two years, learn from each other. Through the use of a mixed methods questionnaire, it aims to understand what impact social learning, meaning how people learn with each other and from each other, in a corporate, hybrid environment has on that group. The research takes anonymised data from 232 people managers, in all major global regions, and looks at how social learning influences self-efficacy, sense of belonging and building connections with peers.

The initial data in this study supports the following key findings:

- People managers who spend dedicated time with peers in onboarding and those who had peers sharing best practices during onboarding have a higher sense of self-efficacy, a stronger sense of belonging and a stronger sense of connection with their peers.
- People managers who went through a fully in-person onboarding have a slightly stronger sense of belonging than those who went through fully on-line onboarding.
- Connecting, being interested, and open & transparent communication are the top three things mentioned by participants when asked how their manager contributes to their sense of belonging.
- 69% of participants find the tools their company has put in place to connect with and learn from peers, quite to very effective.
- Informal 1:1 conversations, best practice sharing, and observation are the most important ways participants have found themselves to learn from their peers in a hybrid environment.
- 67.3% of participants find learning from peers more valuable than going through formal training.

# Acknowledgements

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Completing a master's and writing a dissertation, next to a full-time job, requires perseverance and dedication. More importantly, though, it requires support from those around you to get to the finish line. In August 2015 I was informed that, as the result of a very severe brain injury, I would spend my life in a wheelchair in a nursing home, unlikely to ever walk, work or live independently again. Completing this dissertation is one of the proudest moments and biggest achievements of my life.

First and foremost, I wish to acknowledge my supervisor Dr. Joanne Malone, who, through her kindness and dedication, pushed me to be the best I could be, while always ensuring I kept my passion for the topic of social learning.

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# Chapter 1 - Introduction

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## 1. Introduction

*“Tell me and I forget. Teach me and I remember. Involve me and I learn”*

- Xun Kuang (818 AD) -

“Involve me and I learn”. That, in a nutshell, is Albert Bandura’s (1977) social learning theory.

### 1.1 Background

In 1977 psychologist Albert Bandura introduced an idea that forms the basis of my research. Contrary to the behaviourist way of thinking, prevalent at the time, that stated all learning is done through first-hand experience, Bandura (1977) claimed learning also occurs through observation. As he states in his book ‘Social Learning Theory’: *“Learning would be exceedingly laborious, not to mention hazardous if people had to rely solely on the effects of their own actions to inform them what to do”* (p.22).

In education, this concept of, ‘*learning with each other and from each other*’ can be observed in students working together on projects and in study groups (Matthews *et al.*, 2011). In corporate environments, before Covid19 when the majority of people were physically working together in the office, social learning took place among peers during lunchroom chats, at conferences, at in-person training and through the so called ‘water cooler conversations’. Reed *et al.*, (2010) posit that learning ‘what good looks like’ from more experienced peers, is a significant part of social learning, which, according to them, at its core is rooted in the idea that it should be spontaneous and informal, occurring ‘on-the-go’.

Back in the 1990’s McCall, Lombardo and Eichinger, at the Center for Creative Leadership, looked at the impact of informal learning too, as they developed their 70:20:10 learning model for which they surveyed over 200 leaders, assessing the way they learn best (CCL, 2022). According to this model, 20% of learning comes from interacting with others, like working together on a project or best practice sharing during a team meeting. A further 70% comes from on-the-job experience like reflection and assignments and only 10% comes from formal learning interventions (CCL, 2022). It is perhaps articulated best in this quote

from Winston Churchill (1952, p2): *"I'm always ready to learn although I do not always like being taught"*.

In March 2020 the global Covid19 pandemic hit, and companies were forced to have staff work from home (Hern, 2020). Gone were the quick pre-meeting sense-checks with colleagues to ensure one was fully prepared. Gone was the lunchroom banter that created a sense of belonging with a group sharing the same goals and challenges. Gone, also, was the opportunity to quickly tap a colleague on the shoulder and ask for advice, knowing they'd dealt with a similar situation before. It's not that virtual tools like Zoom or MS Teams didn't allow people to connect with others in many of the same ways, it's just that to most, they didn't feel the same. According to Lee (2020) virtual meetings are perceived as being psychologically less safe and some people, mainly those who identify as introverts, feel they can easily get lost behind a screen, where body language and facial expressions are harder to read.

Taylor (2022) claims that as we move forward from the Covid-19 pandemic, *"hybrid working is the new norm"*. Stewart (2021) describes hybrid working as a model in which an employee works from an employer designated location part of the time and from home, or a self-chosen location, the rest of the time. Microsoft was one of the first Global companies to announce continued hybrid working for its employees after the pandemic, and as reported by Smith (2022), companies like Salesforce, SAP and Google have followed suite. In fact, according to a 2023 survey by Irish Tech News, three out of four companies in the Tech, Accounting and Finance sector are fully remote or hybrid, with over 50% of employees working from home for a minimum of two days a week (Leonard, 2023).

While research by the World Economic Forum found this caters to what employees are looking for, their research also shows people have a huge need to stay socially connected and to keep learning from each other, across industries, especially in larger companies where this happens less organically (Broom, 2022, 2023, Wood, 2022).

According to Bailey (2022) people managers are increasingly important to facilitate this new way of working and learning in a hybrid environment, and to ensure continuous social connection. Research done by her recruitment company Humu found that effective people managers have 22% higher employee engagement, and create 78% more psychological safety, which is a key indicator of team effectiveness.

As this study focuses on those people managers, a clear definition of the term ‘people manager’ is needed. For this research, the [CIPD definition](#), which states that people managers “*have responsibility for directly managing individual employees or teams*” is used (Quilliam, 2023).

With this knowledge of how important people managers are, it is essential to understand how people managers obtain the tools to become effective. Where do they turn to for best practices and examples of what good looks like? After all, as Watkins and Marsick (2021) argue, the hybrid working model has interrupted the opportunity to informally learn from peers for people managers as much, if not more, as for individual contributors.

As someone who’s been in senior roles in the L&D/Enablement space for 15+ years and with the above in mind, the motivation for this research is twofold. Primarily, the main objective is to contribute to what little literature there currently is on the impact of social learning in a hybrid, corporate environment. More specifically I will research how social learning in this hybrid world impacts people managers who are in role for less than two years.

Secondly, the goal is for this research to provide a more thorough understanding of the extent to which social learning should be used as part of people manager development, starting with onboarding, as well as the social learning tools in place for people managers and the effectiveness of these. A mixed methods survey of at least 100 people managers who are in role for less than two years will be used to achieve this.

For the purpose of this research two groups of managers will be looked at: first time people managers, in role less than two years and experienced people managers, in role less than two 2 years. The next section will look at the research questions this study will address.

### **1.3 Research questions**

For both groups the research questions are as follows:

- How do participants view social learning and its importance?
- What is participants’ level of self-efficacy and how does this relate to social learning?
- What does onboarding look like for participants from a social learning point of view?
- Which tools do participants have to learn from peers and how effective are these?
- What does participants’ sense of belonging look like as it relates to social learning?

The next chapter will discuss the relevant literature regarding social learning, how it has changed since the start of the pandemic and the place it now takes in L&D. As part of this, self-efficacy, which is a critical component of Bandura's (1977, 1995) social learning theory, that looks at a person's belief in their ability to successfully perform behaviour leading to the desired outcome, will also be reviewed. Then, the methodology employed to assess the research questions as well as its possible limitations will be described. After this the analysis of the selected variables and their respective data sources will be explained as well as the results of this data. Finally, some suggestions for further research, recommendations and final remarks will be offered.

# Chapter 2 - Literature review

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## 2.1 Introduction

In this chapter a review of the available literature that seeks to explore social learning will be presented. It reviews the different learning theories and where social learning stands in relation to these. This chapter will also present an overview of the literature exploring self-efficacy, which is regarded as one of the main tenets of social learning (Bandura, 1977, 1995) and explore the literature on social learning as a learning theory in the workplace in general, and for people managers in particular. In the context of social learning for that group, this chapter will critically review the available literature around working in a hybrid environment. A review of the literature around 70:20:10, another learning model, relevant to the study, will be presented, as well as the role social learning plays in onboarding. A conclusion will bring this chapter together.

## 2.2 Learning theories

A substantial amount of literature has been published on learning theories over the years. According to Pritchard (2009), learning psychologists like Watson, Vygotsky, Bandura, and Piaget have defined learning differently and debated about the best way to develop both children and adult learners. With the development of the various learning theories, these psychologists aimed to provide clarity around the way they saw learners develop themselves, and in doing so give teachers guidance on how to accommodate students. See Figure 2.1 below for a timeline, created by researcher, of learning theory development. The literature on learning theories shows these continue to evolve. In the 1980's Malcolm Knowles introduced andragogy and more recently, Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is receiving attention. While the latter was created back in 1984 by Rose and Meyer, according to Flood and Banks (2021) the theory is now gaining momentum and making its way into higher education. Per the timeline below, the first theory reviewed will be behaviourism.

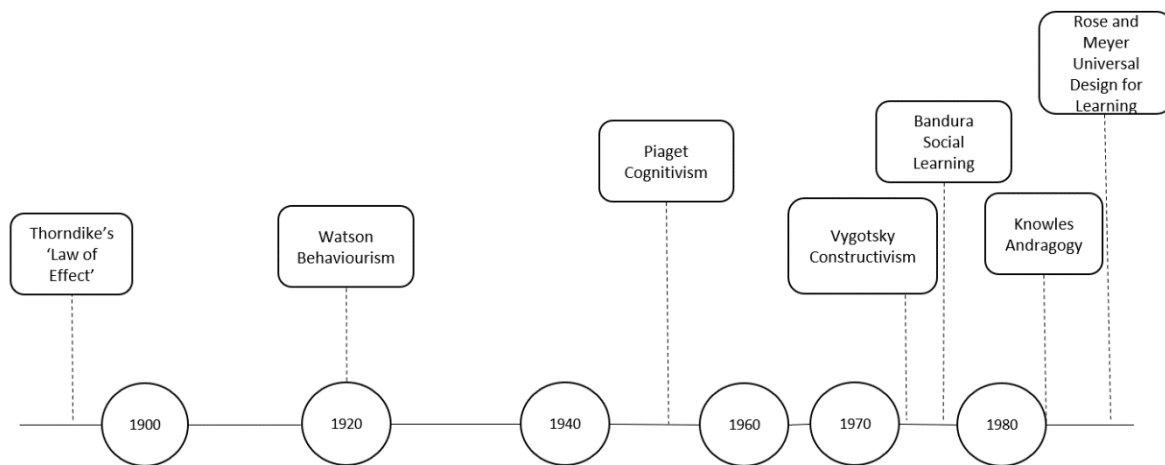


Figure 2.1: Learning theories timeline

### 2.2.1 Behaviourism

McLeod (2003) claims that, simply put, behaviourism is a psychological theory of human development that states all humans can be trained, or conditioned, to respond in certain ways to certain stimuli. Bates (2019), states that the groundwork for the learning theory that later led to operant conditioning, was done by Edward Thorndike (1898). In his article 'Animal Intelligence – An experimental study of the associate processes in animals', Thorndike (1898) describes how, through a process of trial and error, cats would either escape and achieve a rewarding outcome or stay trapped which would be a profitless outcome. As the cat learned which options led to escape, the amounts of trial and error would decrease. Thorndike repeated this experiment with other animals, like dogs and chicks, and concluded that, if they belong to the same action, a series of stimulus-reward connections can be linked together. He also writes that with practice, connections become stronger (the amounts of trial and error decreased) and when practice is discontinued, these connections weaken again. In an article in *The American Journal of Psychology*, Thorndike (1927) introduces the principle of 'law of effect'. In this article he states: "*The alleged law of effect, that what comes after a connection acts upon it to alter its strength*". Simply put; the likelihood a learned response to a stimulus is repeated depends on the consequences of the response, and only responses with a satisfactory response are strengthened.

While Thorndike may have laid the foundations of the theory, according to Gilles (2014), John Watson (1913) is generally considered the father of the school of behaviourism. Moore (2011) addresses how Watson's experiments, in which he works with nine-month-old

baby Albert, would undoubtedly be considered highly unethical today. Watson and Rayner (1920) describe how, in these experiments, Albert is exposed to a neutral stimulus, in the form of animals, for which Albert shows no fear. In a separate series of tests, Watson makes loud noises which upset the baby. He then pairs the two tests, combining the baby's upset of loud noises with the, initially harmless, animals. Eventually, Watson goes on to describes, even without the noises, the baby is conditioned to be afraid of the animals. Gilles (2014) claims that Watson became a fervent advocate of the nurture vs nature debate, based on his baby Albert, and subsequent research with children, and believed children could be conditioned to be absolutely anything depending on the environment they were exposed to.

According to Bates (2019), Ivan Pavlov (1897) established the principle of classical conditioning with his, now famous, experiment using dogs. In this experiment he tied a biologically potent stimulus (food) to a previously neutral stimulus (a bell). Tully (2003) states Pavlov noticed that after several repetitions the behaviour of the dogs changed in such a way that they started salivating whenever they heard the bell. Pavlov (1955) concluded, based on this experiment, that learning is a change in behaviour that comes about as the result of the association of two different stimuli in time.

Following on from Pavlov's earlier work, B.F. Skinner (1951) came up with the model of operant conditioning, which McLeod (2023) argues, is based on Thorndike's (1927) earlier mentioned 'law of effect'. Skinner (1951) experimented with animals like rats and pigeons, locked in a box, later called the 'Skinner box'. According to Nickerson (2023) depending on their behaviour, these animals received a reward in the form of food, when they pushed the lever or button, or were punished with a noise when they tried to press something else.

Much of the more recent literature on conditioning and behaviourism (Syed Ahmad *et al.*, 2019, Landers *et al.*, 2015, El-Hilly *et al.*, 2016) pays particular attention to its use in gamification for training purposes. Clint (2017) states that gamification is all about conditioning through positive and negative consequences. Points, levels, and badges reinforce positive behaviour, leading to operant conditioning. Gamification is also increasingly popular to increase employee engagement and performance according to Fallon (2023) and offered by companies like [Central](#) and [Unily](#).

The literature on learning theories agrees that starting in the 1950's, out of dissatisfaction with the behaviourist approach, a counter movement started. In the next section cognitivism, which followed behaviourism, will be discussed.

### **2.2.2 Cognitive Learning Theory**

According to Schunk (2014), critics argued that rather than developing an individual's potential, the behaviourist theory was only concerned with a specific outcome. While popularised in the late 1950s, literature on the topic generally credits Jean Piaget (1964) as the father of cognitivist learning theory based on his work with children in the 1930s (Hughes, 2022, Ahmed, 2022, McPheat, 2023). Piaget (1964) suggested that the behaviourist idea of stimulus and response, where only observable behaviour matters, was too simplistic. Yilmaz (2011) states that opposed to behaviourists, cognitivists are interested in what learning is and how it occurs. Furthermore, Yilmaz (2011) continues, the cognitive learning theory focuses on semantics and meaning. An important component of the theory, according to Codilla (2012) is how information is stored, retrieved, and activated by the learner during various phases of the learning process. As such, Codilla (2012) argues, learning is a very active process that develops within the learner.

Piaget (1964, 1968) did most of his work with children and observed how they build new knowledge upon existing knowledge. Piaget (1971, p6-7) broke this acquisition of knowledge down into a single unit and called this a schema. He stated these continue to build and evolve over the course of one's life as needed and describes one as follows (1992, p7): *"a cohesive, repeatable action sequence possessing component actions that are tightly interconnected and governed by a core meaning."* According to Clark (2018) the idea of schemata is a key tenet in the cognitivist learning theory: cognitivists believe that to gain new knowledge it must build upon existing knowledge. Learning subsequently takes place, Clark (2018) continues, when there is a change in this, mentally organised, existing knowledge.

Guney and Al (2012) posit that because the learner is seen as such an active component in the learning process, it's important they are stimulated to experiment and find their own answers, rather than sit and merely listen to lectures. Piaget (1968) argued it's impossible for learners to instantly understand new information. As part of his theory of children being "little scientists", he stated that when new information is presented to us, we internalise this

by tying it to an already existing piece of knowledge or experience, through which we then construct new knowledge. Piaget (1964) called this process assimilation and accommodation and identified four different stages of development in children (figure 2.2, below).

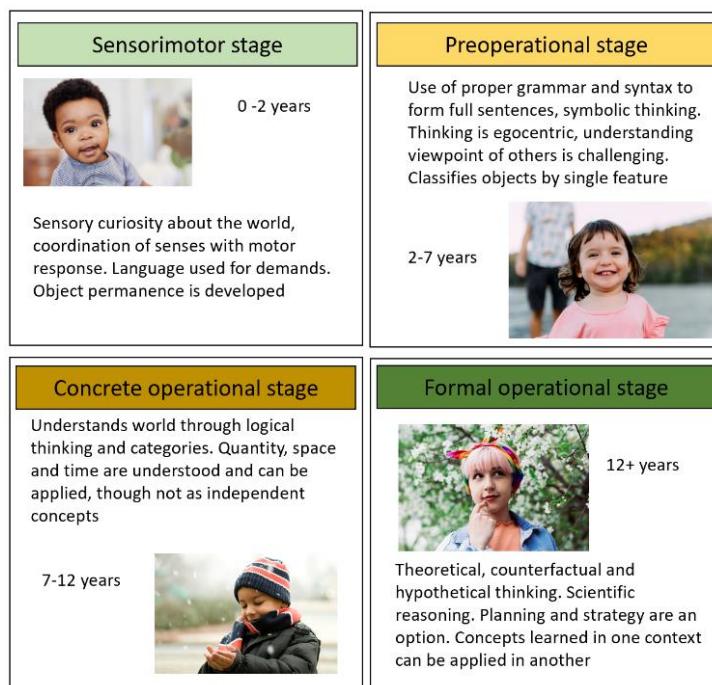


Figure 2.2: Piaget's stages of development

Recent literature on cognitivism has focused more on education, especially its applicability in primary and secondary education (Sriastutu and Masing, 2022, Zhang, 2022). Al-Jarrah *et al.*, (2018, 207) make a case for this, as “*problem-solving skills cannot be taught, they must be discovered*”. While there is very little literature that looks at cognitivism in corporate education, Yilmaz (2011) argues for its use in case-based learning. Developing cognitive abilities of learners is the objective of case studies and as such cognitivism, she argues, is the best approach.

Next in the evolution of learning theories is the social learning theory (SLT), developed by Albert Bandura in 1977 and renamed social cognitive theory by him in 1986 (Tadayon Nabavi and Bijandi, 2023). The next section will review the literature around this theory that also forms the basis for this study.

### 2.2.3 Social learning Theory

According to Schunk (2014, p183) this theory is based on the premise that a large part of human learning takes place in a social setting. Bandura (1977 p11-13) argues that through observation of others, people obtain knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, skills, rules, and strategies. Furthermore, Bandura (1977) posits that personal and environmental factors determine each other, rather than functioning independent of each other. As such, he states: *“it is largely through their actions that people produce the environmental conditions that affect their behavior in a reciprocal fashion”* (1977,p9) (see figure 2.3, below). Bandura describes in his book (p22) a process of learning through modelling influences. Role modelling supports understanding of the appropriateness of certain behaviours as well as its consequences. Individuals will subsequently act in agreement with their own beliefs about their capabilities and their expectations of the outcomes of their actions.

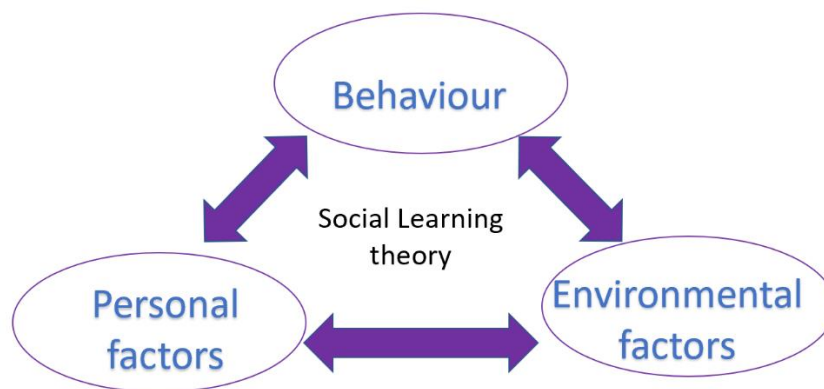


Figure 2.3: Bandura's Social Learning Theory

Bandura (1961) gained a lot of his insights through his 'Bobo doll experiment', which he carried out with Dorrie and Sheila Ross. He describes the experiment and observations in his article *'Transmission of Aggression Through Imitation of Aggressive Models'* (1961). The aim was to understand the extent to which children would imitate behaviour they observed from adults. For this purpose, 24 children were divided into three groups. One group was exposed to adults playing aggressively with an inflatable Bobo doll, one group observed non-aggressive playing with the Bobo doll by adults and a third group wasn't exposed to any role models. Additionally, half the children in groups one and two observed same sex models and the other half observed opposite sex models interacting with the Bobo doll. Bandura goes on to describe how they subsequently assessed the children for imitative and

non-imitative aggressive behaviour performed away from the models in a new environment. The results showed, children who were exposed to models playing aggressively with the Bobo doll, displaying significantly higher amounts of aggressive behaviour than children who observed the non-aggressive models as well as those in the control group. Additionally, the sex of the model observed was influential in the extent to which the children imitated the model, with boys displaying more aggression than girls after observing the male model.

Literature in the past twenty years is more critical of both the connection between media and aggression in general, as well as Bandura's Bobo doll experiment specifically, than it was in the 1980s. Ferguson (2020) states that the Bobo doll experiment mainly teaches us about imitation of behaviour and that it's far more likely the children would have thought it was a game and wanted to please the models. Everaert (2014), however, claims that based on research done so far on role modelling and violence, eventually a correlation is likely to be found.

Bandura (1977) didn't revolve his social learning theory entirely around the Bobo doll experiment and aggression, though. He states people learn behaviour from their environment through observation, imitation, and modelling. He claims that social learning and reinforcement occurs either vicariously, meaning by observing the experiences of others, or enactive, meaning through one's own experiences (Bandura, Ross & Ross, 1963). In enactive learning, people learn from the consequences of their actions. People who are rewarded for a task or succeed, Bandura (1963) claims, feel they have done well and will want to repeat that behaviour. When they are punished or fail, they know they've done something wrong and will either want to cease their behaviour or modify it. As such, Bandura (1963) continues, behaviours that lead to successful consequences are reinforced and those that fail are either dismissed or refined. Bandura (1963) further claims that through vicarious sources learning is accelerated, as the need for the learner to personally experience every behaviour is removed. Finally, he stated, vicarious learning also saves people from unpleasant experiences as they can read and hear about it or watch it on tv.

The main difference with Skinner and his operant conditioning, according to Schunk (2014, p187) is that Skinner claimed cognitions do not influence behaviour change but merely

accompany it. Social cognitive theory, on the other hand, states that behavioural consequences serve as sources of information and motivation (Bandura, 1977, p10). People will strive for and are motivated to learn behaviour with favourable consequences and avoid learning behaviour that is unsatisfactory or punished. Learning, as a result, is affected by people’s cognition, not consequences (Bandura, 1977, p11).

According to Schunk (2014, p213) common sources of vicarious learning, which is how much of human learning occurs, are observation and listening. He suggests this can take place in person, electronic (television, computer) and in print (magazine, book) but also symbolic or non-human (cartoon characters, talking animals on tv).

Vicarious learning seems to be particularly useful in training in the medical field (Bresman, 2013, Myers, 2022). According to Stegmann *et al* (2012, p1001) “*Vicarious learning led to greater knowledge of doctor–patient communication scores than learning by doing.*”

Bandura (1977 p22-29) claimed that for modelling to work well, four key factors had to be in place (see figure 2.4 below). These are:

- Attention
- Retention
- Reproduction
- Motivation

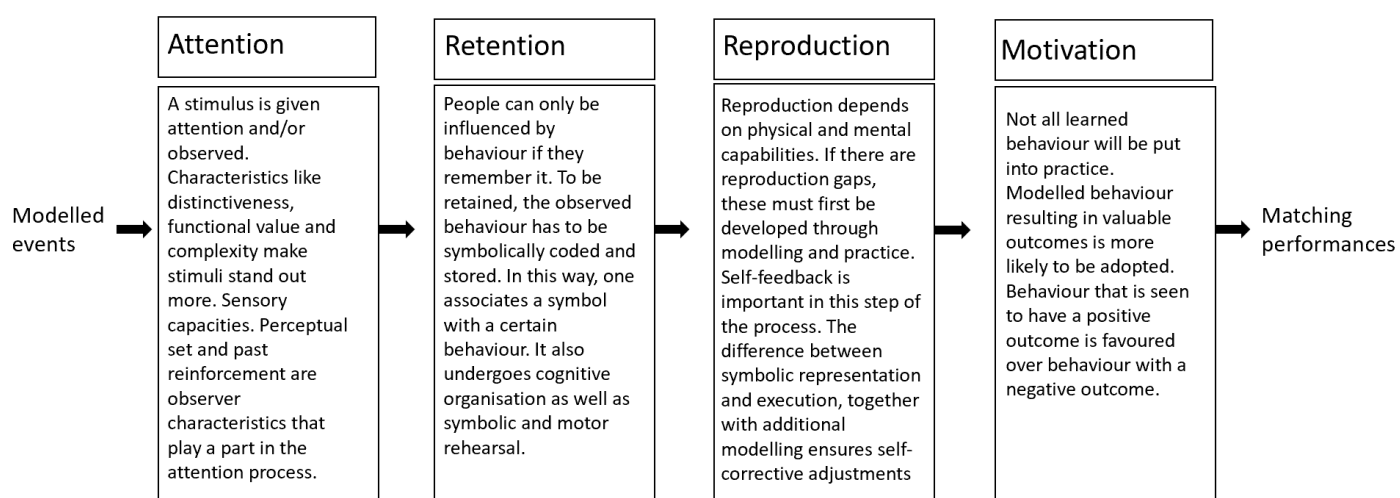


Figure 2.4: Bandura’s Social Learning observational process (1977, p23)

Cognitivism was followed by the constructivism learning theory, which also has a strong social component, further building on Piaget's (1964) work and establishing that of Lev Vygotsky (1978).

#### **2.2.4 Constructivism Theory**

According to Demicheli (2020), at the core of constructivism is the idea that knowledge is actively constructed by learners, rather than passively received. Kurt (2021) argues learning takes place when learners reflect on experiences and combine new ideas with previously gained knowledge. Like in cognitivism, learners then develop schemas to organise their acquired knowledge. While cognitivism and constructivism are similar in many respects, Ertmer and Newby (2013) suggest there are a number of significant differences. According to Jonassen (1991) constructivism operates under the assumption that the mind filters input from its environment to create its own unique reality, whereas the cognitivism theory assumes the mind is a reference tool to the real world.

Vygotsky (1962) focused on the social aspects of constructivism. Like Bandura, he suggested one learns best through interacting with others. The main difference in Vygotsky's (1962) theory, according to Brau (2020) is that the latter believed that culture played a key role in cognitive development. According to Akpan *et al* (2020) social constructivism sees culture and language as frameworks through which people understand reality, communicate, and have experiences. Language and culture to construct schemas requires a group of people, and as such, knowledge is not only constructed, but socially constructed. As part of his theory, Vygotsky (1978) introduced the concept of the 'zone of proximal development' (figure 2.5 overleaf). According to Vygotsky (1978), immediate potential for cognitive growth is bound on one end to what one can do completely independently and on the other end by what one can accomplish with the help of a more knowledgeable or skilled individual, like a peer or teacher. Vygotsky (1978) describes the part in between, as the 'zone of proximal development', which is where instruction is most helpful, as proximal refers to the skill within the learner's grasp of mastering.

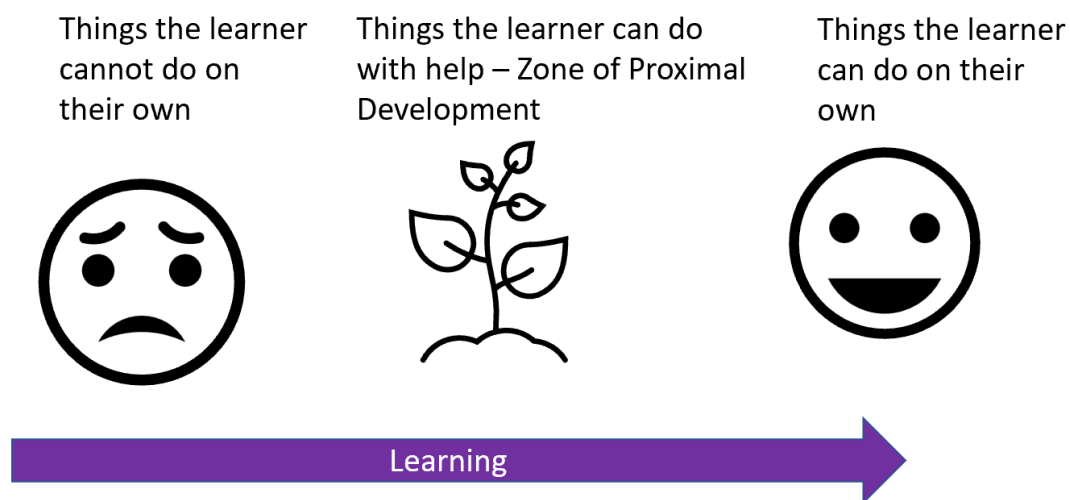


Figure 2.5: Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development

While both Vygotsky(1978) and Bandura(1977) argued learning is a social and interactive process, there are some key differences as listed in table 2.1 below (Mendez Vargas, 2013 and Bas, 2021)

<b>Table 2.1: Comparison social learning and social constructivism</b>	
<b>Bandura – Social Learning Theory</b>	<b>Vygotsky – Social Constructivism Theory</b>
Based on behavioural and cognitive development	Based on cognitive and language development
States you can learn by observing others	States you can learn by being guided by a more skilled or knowledgeable other (Zone of Proximal Development)
Places a large emphasis on motivation to put learned behaviour in practice	Suggests that social interaction is the key to further development

Table 2.1: comparison table Social Learning and Constructivism. Adapted from Mendez Vargas (2013) and Bas (2021)

Some of the literature on constructivism debates it is more of an epistemological mindset regarding the nature of learning than an actual learning theory (Hyslop-Margison & Strobel, 2008). As such, McLeod (2022) argues, it underpins various learner-centric teaching methodologies and is mentioned in literature on instructional design, pedagogy, and

teaching in general (Tam, 2000 and Shah, 2019). Erbil (2020) also mentions it as the supporting theory for the flipped classroom method, frequently used in corporate learning.

An important part of Social Learning Theory and one that sees a growing amount of literature, is the concept of self-efficacy. Given its importance in Bandura's (1977, 1995) theory and this study, this chapter will dedicate a separate section on it.

### 2.3 Self-efficacy

Bandura (1977) introduced his self-efficacy theory in his article 'Self-efficacy: Toward a Unifying Theory of Behavioral Change'. In this article Bandura describes that while people might have an expectation certain behaviours will produce a particular outcome, this does not mean they believe they are capable of performing said behaviour leading to that outcome (Figure 2.6 below).

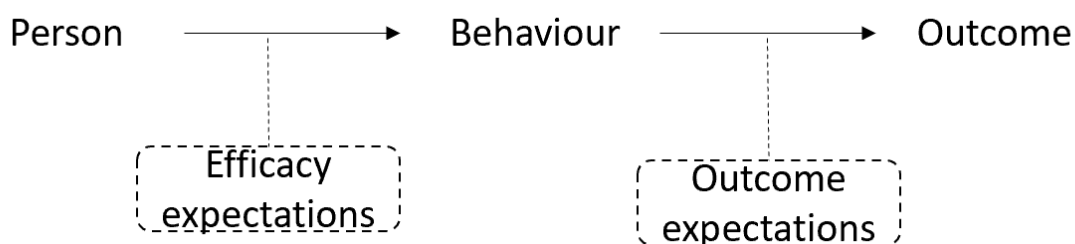


Figure 2.6: Bandura's diagrammatic representation of the difference between efficacy and outcome expectations

Bandura (1977) further argues that the concept of self-efficacy affects both initiation of behaviour as well as the persistence of one's coping behaviour. As such, people will be likely to choose behavioural situations based on the level of their self-efficacy. As Bandura (1977, p193) puts it: *"The strength of people's convictions in their own effectiveness is likely to affect whether they will even try to cope with given situations."*

More recent literature has explored whether the perception of self-efficacy can be generalised to various tasks or if they are more domain specific. Asher Green (2022) found that moderate and high levels of generalised self-efficacy may gradually fuse into domain specific self-efficacy. Wilde and Hsu (2019) tied self-efficacy to vicarious learning. They found that participants with low general self-efficacy found the vicarious learning experience less useful for their self-efficacy when completing a specific task, compared to those with

higher self-efficacy. The latter group in their study were more likely to disregard any information they regarded as negative.

The next section will look at social learning in the workplace. First how it's used in general in that setting and then, more specifically, in a hybrid environment, during onboarding and by the target audience of this study, people managers.

## 2.4 Social learning in the workplace

A review of the literature on social learning in the workplace highlights this is still a developing area for most companies. Carruthers (2023) argues that corporate Learning & Development still predominantly focuses on individual learning and does so for data purposes. It's easier to track if an employee has watched a video or completed an e-learning than to measure if they adopted new behaviour by observing a colleague. Consultancy firm McKinsey found that companies, globally, spend up to \$100 billion a year on employee training to improve performance skills (de Smet *et al.*, 2010). Yet only a quarter of respondents to their survey said the training measurably improved performance results if they cared to measure at all.

Olcelli (2021) suggests that social learning helps employees understand "[what good looks like](#)" and is complimentary to formal training. Her viewpoint is that "[as long as it's collective and shared, it's social learning](#)". Bingham and Conner (2015, p7) state that social learning mainly happens using social media tools. Furthermore, they argue that as these social tools allow for a new way of sharing information, they enable corporate learning in a way that can be transformational.

With the arrival of the global Covid19 pandemic in 2020, that saw over 100 countries enforce either a full or partial lockdown within the first six months (Dunford *et al.*, 2020), companies had to change to a remote working model that, for many, evolved into a hybrid-working model. As companies returned to the office, many have included a hybrid-working option for employees, according to Koeva (2022), with multinationals like Google, Salesforce, Nike and J.P. Morgan embracing the hybrid-working model long term. McKendrick (2022) claims that 74% of companies in the US offer a hybrid-working model and, according to a 2023 survey by recruitment agency Prosperity, 43.7% of Irish respondents work in a hybrid environment (Dercz, 2023). With that in mind, the next section will cover an overview of the literature on social learning in a hybrid environment.

### **2.4.1 Social learning in a hybrid environment**

The available literature post 2020 suggests that after an initial struggle with employee development in a remote environment, social learning became a viable alternative. According to Yarberry and Sims (2021) mentoring is effective because it allows for observing, which is one of the ways people learn. Their 2021 study also found some participants had the ability to develop self-efficacy with support of peers and managers. Wentworth (2022) posits that peer learning in a hybrid environment can also be used to create a community. Carden (2023) claims storytelling is an engaging way of learning for gen Z in a hybrid environment and Olcelli (2021) suggests that most of the ways people connected and learned socially face-to-face, will also work virtually. She argues that whether it's coaching and mentoring, job-shadowing, events, or social networking, all can be done online, with the intention of knowledge enhancement. According to the 2021 CIPD 'Learning and Skills at Work' report 28% of companies are using social learning (up from 19% in 2020) (Crowley and Overton, 2021). Review of the literature on social learning in a hybrid environment highlights the gap in research done in this area to date.

With hybrid-working looking like it's here to stay (Tsipursky, 2021), onboarding will continue to be a part of that. The Oxford dictionary defines onboarding as *'the action or process of integrating a new employee into an organisation'* and the next section will cover social learning in the onboarding process.

### **2.4.2 Social learning in onboarding**

Laurano's (2015) research on onboarding has proven the significance of a robust onboarding process: It can lead to an improvement in new employee retention of 82% and in productivity by over 70%. A recent study of Human Resource professionals shows 94% had new hires who have only interacted with colleagues virtually, and of these, 31% find it challenging to build connections (King, 2021). Part of the literature on social learning in onboarding focuses specifically on observation. Pulvino (2019) suggests that social learning can play a role in onboarding by having new hires observe how others act, not just on the job, but also regarding the culture of the company. By doing so, Pulvino (2019) claims that, in line with Bandura's (1977) theory that positive behaviour will be rewarded and is thus more likely to be imitated, new employees will be motivated to act alike and will eventually identify with said company culture. Brown (2022) mentions telling organisational stories,

assigning culture heroes, mentorship programmes and rituals and ceremonies as some effective ways for new employees to learn the company culture. Irish company CluneTech, who has consistently been in the top 20 of the 'Best Places to Work' for the past seven years, places great emphasis on collaboration and feedback (Stoney, 2023). Woo *et al.*, (2023) found in their research with new hires that organising “*virtual small talk*” sessions were helpful to recreate the in-office ‘water cooler conversations’. Heathfield (2020) claims that culture is shaped by people and learned through interaction with others. Tran (2022) argues that virtual watercooler conversations aren’t just a source of informal best practice sharing, they also create a sense of community, encourage productivity, and strengthen creativity. Bingham and Conner (2015, p176) state that the time it takes for a new hire to build a network in a company and become influential in those networks, can be drastically shortened when companies have processes in place and the networks of high performers can be replicated. A blog post by Workhuman (2023) suggests that what new hires want most is a strong sense of connection and belonging and that pairing them up with someone to learn from will help with this. According to Bauer (2016) social learning also helps create a sense of belonging. To quote this, community built, AI generated, LinkedIn article (2023): “*facilitate opportunities for them to learn from each other and have fun together*”.

Stein and Christiansen (2010), Finn (2020), Usanmaz (2022) and Brower (2023) all highlight the importance of managers in the onboarding process. In fact, research done by the [Workforce Institute at UKG](#) (2023) found that people managers have a bigger impact on employees’ mental health than their therapist and as big an impact as their partner. Majercsik (2023) argues that, given people managers’ importance in the employee experience, companies should teach managers how to manage and give them role models to learn from. The next section explores the literature on social learning for people managers.

### **2.4.3 Social learning for people managers**

A review of the literature on social learning highlights that much is written about the influence of people leaders on social learning through their commitment to create informal learning opportunities, act as mentors and coaches (Ellinger, 2004) or create a learning culture (Beattie, 2002). While the literature reveals a gap where it concerns social learning for people managers themselves, the available literature, however, highlights the positive aspects of it. Noe *et al.*, (2017) research among 180 managers in the US, found goal

orientation, job climate and autonomy all had a positive correlation with social learning. Research by Zhang *et al.*, (2023) shows employees are more likely to acknowledge mistakes if they see leaders do so. Beaupre (2022) argues social learning skills are essential for leaders to enable high performing teams.

A review of the literature on self-efficacy for managers shows this topic is of increasing interest. McLysaght (2019) argues that leaders with high self-efficacy are not only more effective, they are also more likely to be more strategic and creative and have a positive influence on the self-efficacy of the team they manage. Research by Korman *et al.*, (2022) indicates a correlation between self-efficacy and hierarchy, with those in more senior positions having a stronger sense of self-efficacy.

If social learning looks at how people learn, the 70-20-10 learning model, according to Hutchinson (2019), looks at where people get their learning from. Developed by the Center for Creative Leadership, it has ties with social learning and will be covered in the next section.

#### **2.4.4 The 70-20-10 learning model**

According to the Centre for Creative Leadership (2022), where the 70-20-10 model was developed in the 1990's by Eichinger, Lombardo and McCall, its underlying assumption is that ["leadership can be learned – that leaders are made, not born"](#). The CCL researchers surveyed 200 senior leaders and found learning occurs through three different modalities (Arets *et al.*, 2020) Figure 2.7, overleaf, gives examples of how each of these can take place:

- 70% from on-the-job assignments and hands-on experience
- 20% from interactions with others
- 10% from formal training

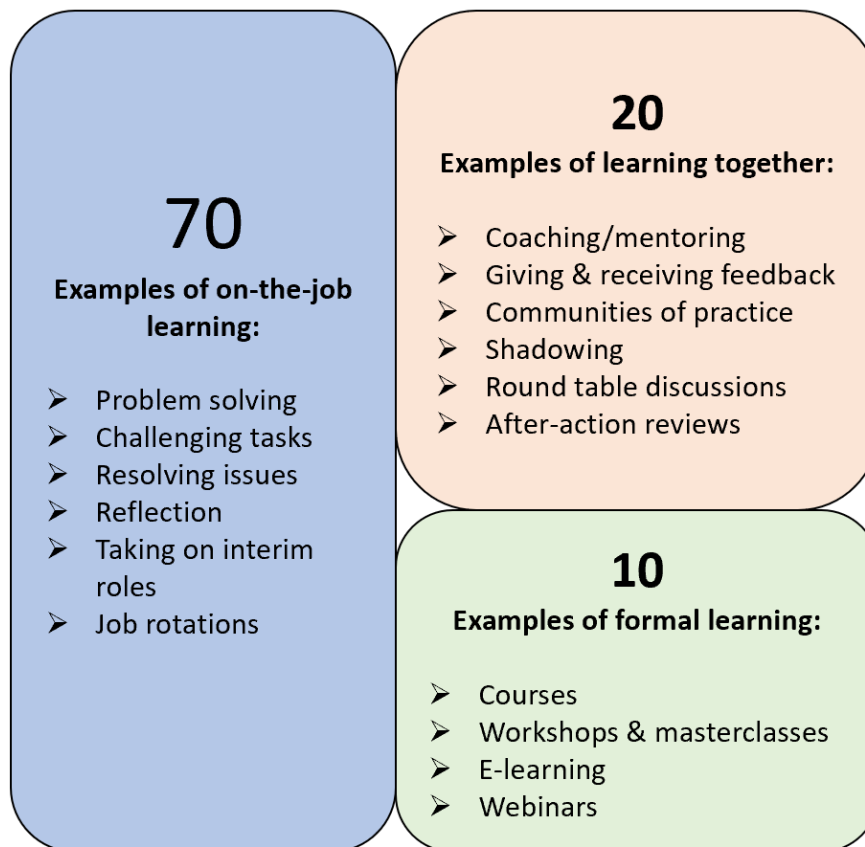


Figure 2.7: 70:20:10 model (CCL, 2022)

Much of the literature on the model consists of blogposts, many written by training agencies. A large part of the criticism on the model, according to Clarity consultants (2016), is the lack of empirical data. Kajewski and Madsen (2012, p7) argue there is “a lack of empirical data supporting 70:20:10” Another blogpost, by learning tech company Busuu (2023), suggests that the numbers are particularly incorrect for those in leading and executive roles. For this group, the social learning element would make up as much as 50%.

Post pandemic, according to Olcelli (2022), the 20% of learning that is done through learning with others, has become increasingly important. Gupta (2022) argues that the model is still relevant in a hybrid environment if companies adapt and implement tools like gamification, employee forums and mentors. According to Martin-Woodgate (2023) the model can promote a culture of learning in a hybrid environment, with opportunities for peer learning and online training.

After reviewing the main learning theories and looking at the literature for social learning related to the research questions, the next section will offer a conclusion for the chapter.

## **2.5 Conclusion**

This chapter has endeavoured to give a comprehensive overview of the literature available on Bandura's (1977) social learning theory as well as the other major learning theories and how social learning theory relates to these. It has also explored the literature surrounding social learning in today's hybrid working environment, as well as its pertinence to onboarding and people managers. The latter being the focus of research in this dissertation. Furthermore, it has tried to show the gaps as they exist in the current literature, especially around social learning in a hybrid environment and social learning for people managers.

The next chapter will cover the chosen methodology for this study, as well as sampling and the pilot.

# Chapter 3 - Methodology

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## 3.1 Introduction

This chapter will provide a clear overview of the methodology chosen for this study. The purpose of the study will be explained, and the research question will be elaborated upon. Using Saunders and Tosey's (2012) research onion, the choice of methodology for this study will be presented, together with an overview of the different research philosophies and reasoning for a pragmatist approach for this study.

Furthermore, this chapter will provide an overview of the research method used and its limitations. It will outline the piloting and sampling process for this study and cover validity and reliability for mixed method studies as described in the literature and address any potential concerns.

Finally, a definition of ethics concerning research will be provided as well as a full understanding of the ethics for this study.

## 3.2 Purpose of the research

The primary purpose of this research is to investigate what social learning looks like for people managers, in a corporate, hybrid environment, who have been in their current role less than two years, and the importance social learning has for this group. The study will also endeavour to gain understanding of what onboarding for people managers looks like in a hybrid environment and the extent to which they are exposed to peers during this time and how this impacts their sense of connection and belonging. Furthermore, it's looking to examine people managers' sense of belonging in a hybrid environment and the tools they have to connect with and learn from peers. Finally, it aims to study people managers' self-efficacy, which is a key tenet of social learning that examines confidence to succeed in one's role.

The above will be achieved with the following research questions:

- How do participants view social learning and its importance?
- What is participants' level of self-efficacy and how does this relate to social learning?
- What does onboarding look like for participants from a social learning point of view?
- Which tools do participants have to learn from peers and how effective are these?
- What does participants' sense of belonging look like as it relates to social learning?

According to Dawson (2019) once you're clear on the purpose of your research and research questions are established, the next step is to choose the appropriate methodology. The next section will explore the different methodologies and reason for choosing a pragmatist approach for this study.

### 3.3 Research methodology

After reading several books and articles on the topic, like Dawson's 'Introduction to Research Methods' (2019), Creswell & Creswell's 'Research Designs' (2018) and Woods' 'Research papers for Dummies' (2002), as a first time researcher, I found Saunders and Tosey's (2012) research onion, figure 3.1 below, particularly helpful in understanding how to approach research and ensuring all steps are taken to obtain high quality data that best suits the nature of the study.

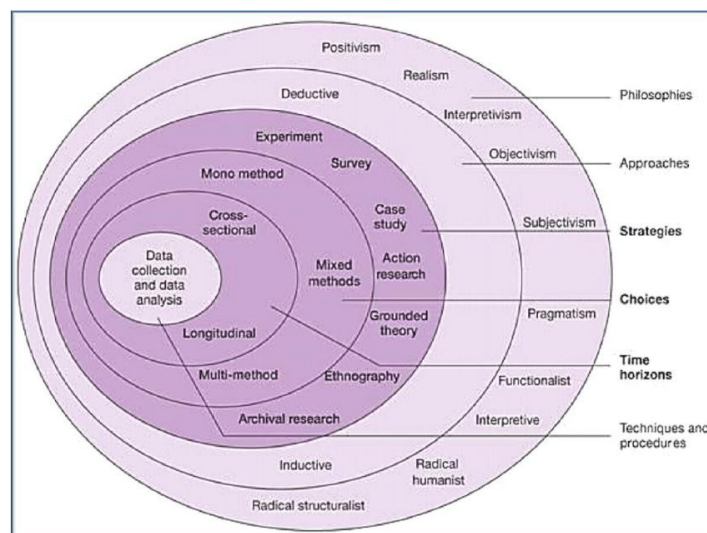


Figure 3.1: Research Onion Saunders and Tosey (2012)

Starting with the outside layer and working to the core, where data analysis takes place, Saunders and Bristow (2015) argue it's helpful to understand the four primary research philosophies. This supports a researcher's understanding in what techniques to apply that best suit the purpose of the study.

### **3.3.1 Positivism**

According to Park *et al.*, (2020), positivists take the most scientific approach of the four paradigms. Rehman & Alharthi (2016) state this philosophy assumes there is an absolute reality, not linked to human senses and ruled by immutable laws. As such, the researcher's role is to be completely objective in their collection and interpretation of data. Clark *et al.*, (2008) argue that researchers who use a positivist approach for their study distance themselves from any personal values in conducting their research and are objective data analysts.

### **3.3.2 Realism**

Hasa (2019) suggests that while realists also take a scientific approach to research, the main difference between this philosophy and positivism is that realists see the world as a collection of objects that can be sensed. We can use our senses to gather data and connect these to thinking and memory.

Saunders & Tosey (2012) claim a split can be observed here, as direct realists state that our sensory representation provides an accurate reflection. A critical realist, according to them, however, argues that subjectivity takes over because the initial sensory experience is subsequently processed by the mind, which cannot provide objective data.

### **3.3.3 Interpretivism**

Nickerson (2023) points out that contrary to positivism and realism, that assume objective truth and data, interpretivism is based on the hypothesis that reality is socially constructed and subjective. Because different people experience and perceive the 'objective reality'

differently, the subsequent data as an output of that reality will be tainted by the meaning given to it by those people (Alharahsheh and Pius, 2020).

### **3.3.4 Pragmatism**

Finally, there is the pragmatist philosophy or paradigm. Clarke and Visser (2019) posit that pragmatists mainly concern themselves with the practical consequences of their research and how their findings can be applied. This type of researcher tends to take the view that no single viewpoint can provide the full picture, though, according to Saunders and Tosey (2012), this doesn't necessarily also mean a researcher adopting a pragmatist philosophy also uses a multitude of data collection techniques and analysis procedures.

For this research I've chosen a pragmatist approach. One of the main tenets of the pragmatist paradigm, according to Kaushik & Walsh (2019) is that reality in itself is not static, yet it changes at every turn of events. Furthermore, they state, the world, also not static, is changed through action and action is a way to change existence. Lund *et al* (2021) argue that the Covid19 pandemic has been one of the biggest changes for the global workforce and has driven action around new working procedures in a way we won't be able to fully grasp for many years to come. As such, it makes sense that research looking into how people learn from each other in a changing world, benefits from a paradigm that assumes action drives change.

With the choice of research methodology made, the next step is to select the method best suited for the study. The next section will provide an overview of available methods and reasoning for selecting a mixed methods approach.

### **3.4 Research method**

Staying true to Saunders and Tosey's (2012) research onion, before selecting a research method, understanding whether to take an inductive or deductive approach, is the next step towards obtaining high quality data.

The generally accepted idea, according to Rothchild (2006) regarding the difference between these two logical paths to knowledge, is that in the case of induction a

generalisation is formed as the result of the examination of a set of data. Deduction, on the other hand, is the identification of an unknown element, based on its similarity to a known data set. For example, if we ask enough people to pet a puppy, we can generalise that puppies are a source of joy (induction). If it's raining outside and someone comes running in, dripping wet, we can conclude from our knowledge of the weather that they were just outside (deduction). Decoo (1996) argues that the main difference between induction and deduction, when relating it back to research, is that inductive research seeks to develop a theory, whereas deductive research aims to test an existing theory. This study builds upon Bandura's (1977) social learning theory and therefore uses a deductive approach.

### **3.4.1 Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods research**

Sekaran & Bougie (2013) argue that quantitative research relies on deduction and is based on the premise that the topic of the study can be measured. According to Watson (2015) it involves a variety of methods concerned with the structured investigation of events, using statistical or numerical data, and Clark *et al.*, (2021, p271) claim it "*views social reality as an external and objective reality*". Compared to qualitative research, quantitative research calls for larger sample sizes, and relies on specific research design that allows for a focus of describing, explaining, and predicting phenomena (Cooper & Schindler, 2006). Data collection for this type of research comes from surveys, quantifiable observation, statistics, and checklists (Goertzen, 2017).

According to Sekaran & Bougie (2013) qualitative research seeks to obtain in-depth knowledge of human behaviour and the rationale for the existence of that behaviour and relies. Qualitative research is, associated with interpretivism, as its main purpose is deep interpretation of phenomena as opposed to generalisation (Cooper & Schindler, 2006). Given those purposes, Cooper & Schindler (2006) argue it uses smaller sample sizes and different data collection and analyses compared to quantitative research. Polkinghorne (2005) notes that structured interviews, questionnaires, focus groups, observations and document studies are the main categories of data collection in qualitative research.

Johnson & Onwuegbuzie (2004) introduced the idea of mixed method research as the third paradigm, next to, not instead of, qualitative and quantitative research. They state that the

premise of mixed methods research is based on combining the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative research and minimising its weaknesses. As such, argue Tashakkori and Creswell (2007), both collection and analysis of data, as well as drawing inferences and integrating findings are done using both methods. The reasons for conducting mixed method research are diverse, as are the benefits. Greene *et al.*, (1989) identified five primary reasons:

1. Triangulation – corroboration between qualitative and quantitative research allows for greater validity.
2. Complementarity – using a combination of research methods provides a more comprehensive overview of the study phenomenon.
3. Development – utilising the results of one method to develop or inform the other.
4. Initiation – two different methods allow for contrasting results and new perspectives of frameworks.
5. Expansion – using two methods expand the range and breadth of the study.

The choice of methodology for this study was guided by the purpose of the investigation and the need to answer the research questions as effectively as possible. A mixed method methodology was deemed most appropriate. The rationale for this choice is outlined below.

The quantitative part of this investigation, through closed questions in a survey, provides data that gives insight into the ‘what’ regarding informal learning for people managers. To fully grasp its impact, though, further understanding of the ‘how’ is needed through qualitative research, done via open-ended questions in the same survey. Through a mixed methods approach, this study will benefit from what Bryman (2006, p110) calls “illustration”. The answers to the open questions will put, as he calls it, “*meat on the bone of dry quantitative findings*”.

With the right methodology and method in place, the next step in peeling the research onion, is to select a strategy to obtain data. For this study a questionnaire was selected.

### 3.4.2 Questionnaires

Dawson (2019) argues the first step for every researcher is to question if a questionnaire is the appropriate tool to obtain the required data. Apart from being able to reach a large sample within a relatively short amount of time, Preisendörfer and Wolter (2014) suggest participants also find it easier to be more truthful in self-completion surveys than in researcher conducted interviews. However, Fricker and Schonlau (2002) argue, low response rates may be the biggest disadvantage. Should a questionnaire indeed be the right tool, the next step is to design the questions. Thom (2007) cautions questions cannot appear to be leading and steer participants in a certain direction. Using already validated questions that explore the research topic is the recommended approach to take, especially for a first-time researcher, as these have already been tested and proven to be valid and reliable (Marshall, 2005).

The questionnaire for this study contains 37 questions, of which 19 are validated, 31 are closed, using a Likert scale or multiple-choice answers, and six are open. The full questionnaire can be found in Appendix 1.

**Table 3.1: Research questionnaire with data sources**

Research objective	Survey question	Data source
Views on social learning	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. I believe I can improve in my role by hearing from my peers how they work.</li> <li>2. Not being in the office full-time means I have fewer opportunities to learn best practices from my peers.</li> <li>3. Learning best practices from my peers is more valuable than going through a training.</li> <li>4. I believe best practice sharing is as valuable virtually as in person.</li> <li>5. I feel comfortable sharing my own best practices, both successes and failures, with peers I haven't met in person.</li> <li>6. I'm interested in learning best practices from peers in similar roles, even if they aren't top performers.</li> <li>7. I have sufficient opportunities in my role to learn from my peers</li> </ol>	Dimensions of social learning questionnaire (Vrieling-Teunter, Vermeulen and de Vreugd, 2022)

Self-efficacy in the role	8. I remain calm when facing difficulties in my role because I can rely on my abilities. 9. When I'm confronted with a problem in my job I know who to turn to for advice 10. Whatever comes my way in my job, I can usually handle it. 11. My past job experiences have prepared me well for my current job. 12. I meet the goals I set for myself in the job. 13. I feel prepared for most of the demands in my job.	Occupational self efficacy scale (Rigotti, Schyns, Mohr, 2008)
Sense of belonging in the role	14. How well do people at your company know you as a person? 15. How connected do you feel to your peers at your company? 16. How much do you feel you matter to people at your company? 17. How fulfilling do you find your current role? 18. How 'at home' do you feel at your current company? 19. Overall, how much do you feel you 'belong' at your company?	Sense of belonging survey Imperial College London (2021)

Table 3.1: Table of survey questions with data source

Having decided upon method, methodology and strategy, the next step is to look at whom to collect data from.

### 3.4.3 Sample

Data is essential for a researcher and as it is impossible to gather data from the entire population, a researcher may choose to select a representative sample to collect data from (Taherdoost, 2016).

A sampling frame, which must represent the general population, lists all eligible participants of interest (Khalifa, 2020) and for this research the sampling frame was defined as follows:

- Role - people leader
- Tenure - in current role for less than 2 years
- Experience – first time and experienced people managers
- Office location – hybrid or remote
- Industry – corporate (not education)
- Work location - global

The sampling frame did not include gender, age, income, education, and industry or company size.

This study has used probability sampling, which, according to Clark *et al.*, (2021), simply speaking means using some form of random selection and as such allows for every member of the population to be selected. They argue this method aims to limit sampling error, which is the difference between the general population and the sample and is generally assumed more likely to produce a representative result.

Sampling for this study was done through an anonymous survey that was posted on social media and sent to Learning and Development and Human Resource leaders in various companies across industries and regions. The aim was to get a minimum sample of 100, of which 50 would be first time managers and 50 experienced managers. The survey was launched on SurveyMonkey on 19 March 2023 and closed a month later, on 21 April.

Before launching the survey to collect data from the selected sample, a short pilot ran to ensure validity. The next section will explore what piloting for this study looked like.

#### **3.4.4 Piloting**

According to van Teijlingen & Hundley (2001) the most essential reason to pilot research is to understand if the proposed instrument will achieve the desired outcome. They claim pilot studies can also reveal a challenge in finding sufficient participants and in distributing the survey.

A draft of the initial survey was piloted with twenty participants across Europe, North America and Asia Pacific. Its main purpose was checking clarity of questions, accessibility of language for non-native speakers, and format. The aim of the pilot was also to expose any ambiguities in questions and ensure the length of the survey was appropriate.

Feedback from the pilot supported rephrasing of two open questions to improve access for non-native English participants and led to the addition of one question.

Understanding how valid and reliable research is before launching a data collecting method is key, according to Kimberlin and Winterstein (2008). The next section will look into both of these.

### **3.5 Validity and reliability**

Vogel and Draper-Rodi (2017) argue validity and reliability are two requisite components when collecting data and a main reason for running a pilot.

When a questionnaire examines the full span of the research questions in a balanced way, it can be said to be 'valid' (Williams, 2003). It is, however, important to note that validity is not a property of the questionnaire itself. Kimberlin and Winterstein, (2008) state the interpretations of the results of the questionnaire and the extent to which these are warranted instead are the true definition of validity.

Designing a reliable questionnaire means it is repeatable, consistent, and stable (Rattray and Jones, 2007). In simple terms it means we'd get the same results from a study if we'd perform it under the same circumstances.

This questionnaire was informed by the research questions, the unpinning theoretical framework, and validated questionnaires. The possibility of getting a poor response rate outside of EMEA and AMER posed a threat to the reliability of the global nature of this research.

Being critical about the limitations of one's research is important, and the next section will outline the limitations of this study.

### **3.6 Limitations**

According to Shipman (2014) there is no research without limitations and this one is no different. As a first-time researcher and it being part of my master's in Education, Learning & Development, thus not being a full-time project, experience and time should be considered limitations.

A second limitation is the diversity of participants. While aimed to make this a global study, due to my location and that of my network, most participants are based in Europe and North America. Latin America and Asia Pacific are underrepresented in this study and understanding the impact on these regions would require further investigation.

Lastly, there's a limitation regarding the literature review. Working in a predominantly hybrid environment is something most companies are still getting used to and there is very little research done in this area yet.

With all essential elements in place to start collecting data and conducting research, the most important part of research, according to Abbas *et al.*, (2012) is the ethical side of it. The next section outlines the ethics of this study.

### **3.7 Ethics**

The Greek word 'ethos', meaning one's character or disposition is where our modern-day word ethics derives from. It has evolved into a branch of philosophy that concerns itself not only with how people should act, but also with judgement about those actions and the development of rules for these actions (Kitchener, 2000).

Ethics in research, according to Coleman and Briggs (2002) focuses on the absence of plagiarism and, mostly, on treating research participants with dignity, respect, and privacy. For this study the researcher ensured to abide by all ethical principles through the following:

- Follow principles of ethics as set out by Griffith College ethics committee.
- Adhere to BERA ethical guidelines.
- Ask all participants for consent before commencing the questionnaire.
- Allow participants to skip any questions.
- Maintain confidentiality around data.

Having covered all necessary parts of the research methodology for this study, the next section will provide a conclusion for this chapter.

### **3.8 Conclusion**

In this chapter the purpose of the study was reiterated, and the research questions were elaborated upon, which informed choosing the research methodology. Using Saunders and Tosey's (2012) analogy of the research onion, it peeled back the different layers and argued the case for a pragmatist approach connected to mixed method research in the form of a survey with closed and open questions. With its overview of the sample of participants and survey questions, this chapter laid the foundation for Chapter 4, in which the data from the survey will be analysed and interpreted.

# Chapter 4 - Findings

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## 4.1 Introduction

In this chapter the findings from the study will be presented. The research questions that the data addresses will be restated and a brief summary on how the study was conducted will be provided. Next the data per research question will be analysed and finally it will provide room for discussion of the data related to the research questions.

## 4.2 Purpose of the research

This study set out to investigate how social learning in a corporate, hybrid environment impacts people managers who are in role for less than two years. It aims to answer the following questions:

- How do participants view social learning and its importance?
- What is participants' level of self-efficacy and how does this relate to social learning?
- What does onboarding look like for participants from a social learning point of view?
- Which tools do participants have to learn from peers and how effective are these?
- What does participants' sense of belonging look like as it relates to social learning?

## 4.3 Summary of research method

The research used a mixed methods approach through a survey with 38 questions in total, including an initial question asking for consent to use the data for research purposes. Of the 37 remaining questions, six were open ended and 31 were Likert scale or multiple choice questions.

An invite was posted on LinkedIn, (see figure 4.1) on 28 March 2023 for a fully anonymous survey. Further participants were obtained through a network of Learning & Development leaders and Human Resource professionals. The survey closed on Friday 21 April with 232 participants having, partially, filled it out. Participants were given the opportunity to skip questions, except for the first one asking for consent to use the data. 169 participants (73%) answered every question and no question got less than 177 responses. Age, gender, and industry were not taken into consideration for this study.



**Sacha Dekker** (She/Her) • You  
Global Learning & Development leader/Motivational speaker  
1mo • Edited •



Hi people managers at every level, both first time and experienced, I need your input!

With the majority of companies moving to a hybrid working environment, your role as people manager is increasingly more important. Research shows that great managers increase employee engagement by 22% and create 78% more psychological safety, which is an indicator for team effectiveness.

So how do you learn to be a great manager? Back when most people were still working in an office environment it appeared to be easier to have a quick sense check before a meeting, share ideas over lunch or validate thoughts while getting a cup of tea.

As part of the dissertation I'm writing for my Master's in Education, Learning & Development, I'm researching how that informal learning for people managers who are in role for less than two years, either first time managers, or experienced managers new to a company, is taking place now. In a hybrid world, how do you learn what good looks like? Who do you turn to when you have a question? How are you connecting with your peers? How do you make sure you still feel you belong?

You can help not just me (which I hugely appreciate) but also other people managers (through the results of the research) by filling out this one time survey (SurveyMonkey estimates it at 12 mins). It's completely anonymous so I won't know who said what about which company: <https://lnkd.in/dvd8T9q6>

Thank you!

Figure 4.1: Survey invitation on LinkedIn

### 4.3 General participant data:

As can be seen in figure 4.2 (n=226), the majority of research participants (55.8%) are based in EMEA (Europe, Middle East, Africa) and the smallest number of participants (6.6%) in this study are from APJ (Asia Pacific and Japan).

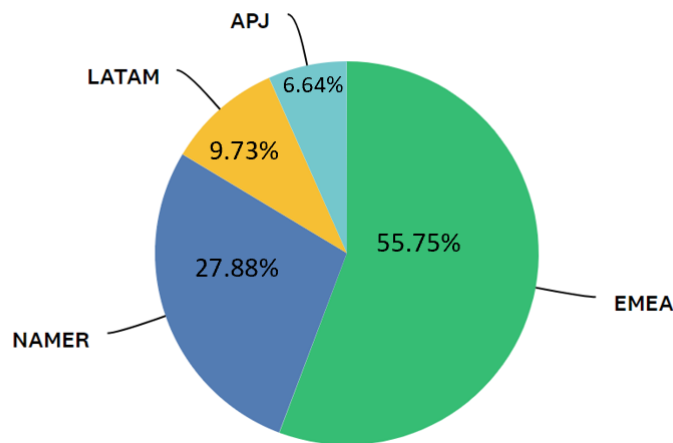


Figure 4.2: Participant representation by region

To understand how this might impact any differences in self-efficacy and belonging, the research aimed to get a mix of first-time and experienced people managers. As figure 4.3 shows, 33% of respondents (n=231) are first-time people managers, with the remaining 67% having experience between 1 and 5+ years.

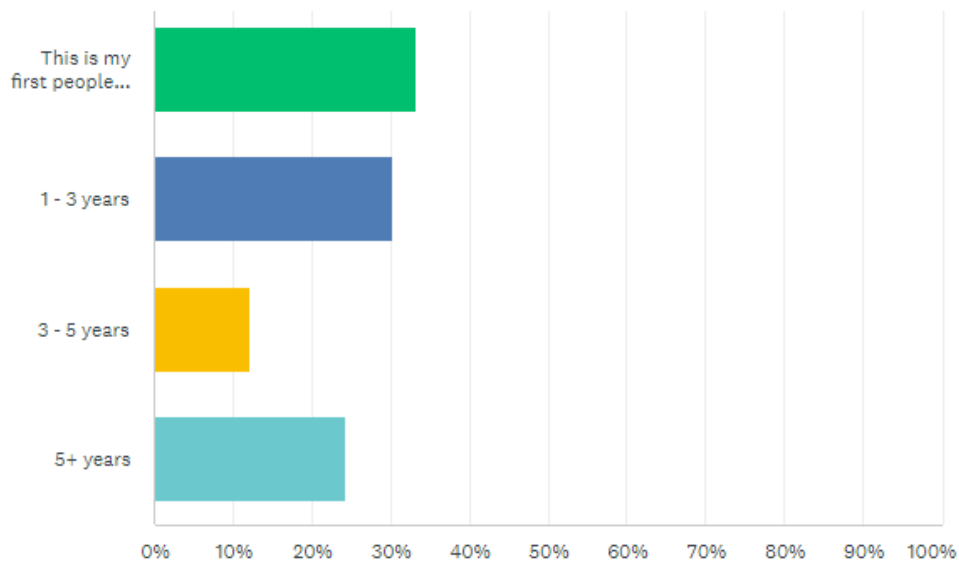


Figure 4.3: Participants' experience as a people manager

The study also endeavoured to understand in what way already working for a company before starting in the role as people manager Vs starting as a new employee, impacted participants' sense of belonging. Per figure 4.4, a combined majority of respondents (61.2%) had been in the company for over a year before starting in their current role.

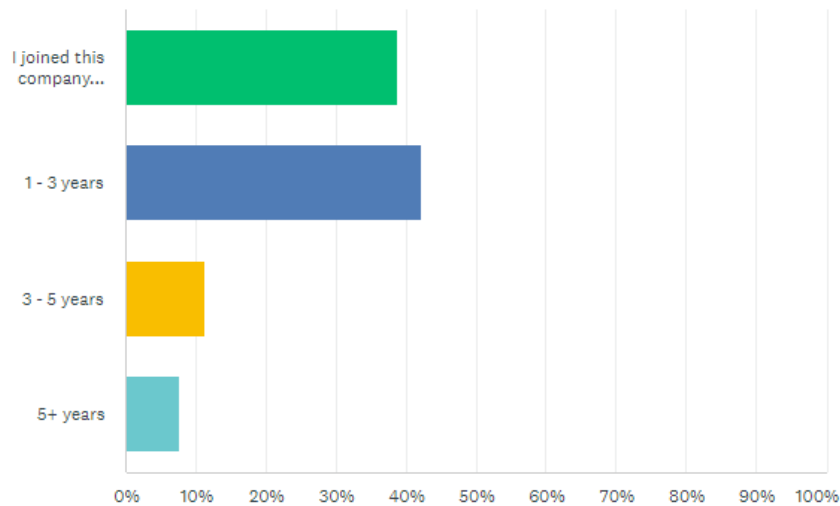


Figure 4.4: Time in company before starting current role as people manager

For deeper data analysis, figure 4.5 shows time in the company, combined with the previous question of experience as a people manager (n=231). What we see here, is that most first time people managers, as well as those early on in their career (1-3 years) already worked in their current company prior to their current role. When tenure as a people manager gets to 3+ years, the number of participants who joined the company specifically for this role exceeds those who were with the company prior to starting in their current role.

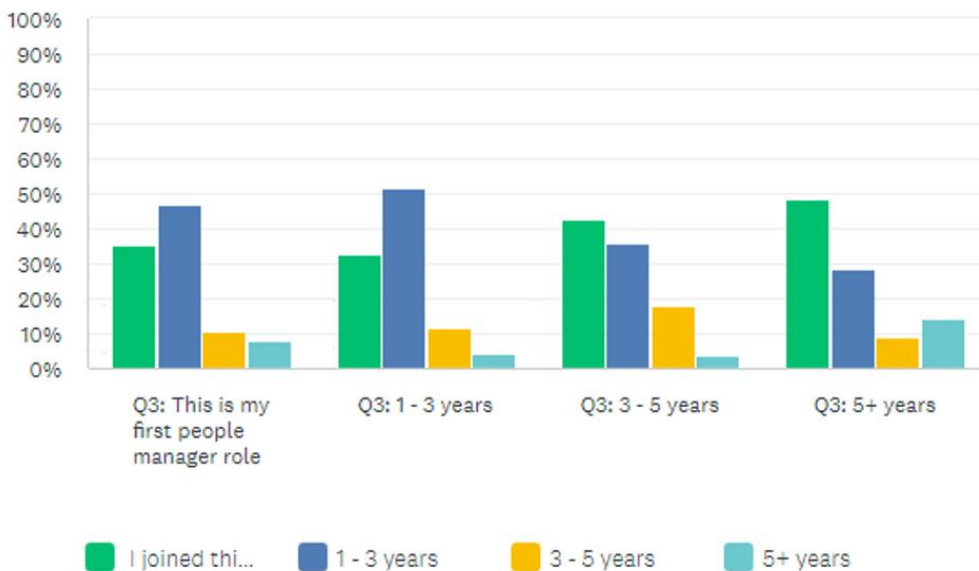


Figure 4.5: Time in company combined with tenure as manager

The analysis of the data begins with the quantitative findings of the survey and will then move to the open-ended questions.

#### 4.4 Onboarding experience

Data shows the majority of respondents (n=211) had a fully online onboarding experience. Responses for the 1.9% that replied 'other' can be read in figure 4.7. Figure 4.6 shows the different onboarding modalities and their respective percentages for this group of participants.

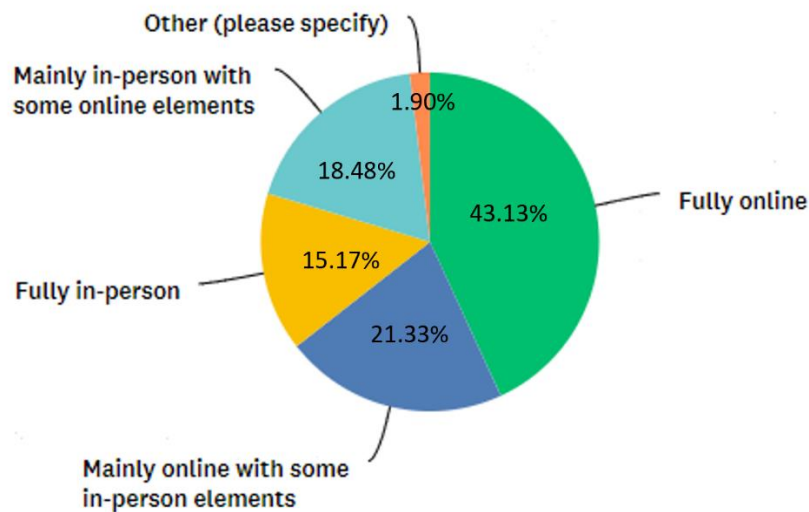


Figure 4.6: Modality of onboarding for current role

'Other' comments:

- Little onboarding done for the new role (part. 0814)
- No onboarding – thrown into the manager role while doing my old role for 6 months (time they took to hire my replacement) – mostly online (part. 3915)
- There was no specific onboarding (part. 0304)

Figure 4.2: 'Other' comments to question "How was your onboarding for this role done?"

The next two questions asked, in open format, first how long the onboarding period for the role was and next how much of that was formalised training.

The answers to the question "*How long was the onboarding period for this role?*" varied from "*There was no onboarding period for this role*" (participant 4648) to "*For about two years*" (participant 0167). Through coding of the answers, the following data was retrieved (n=209):

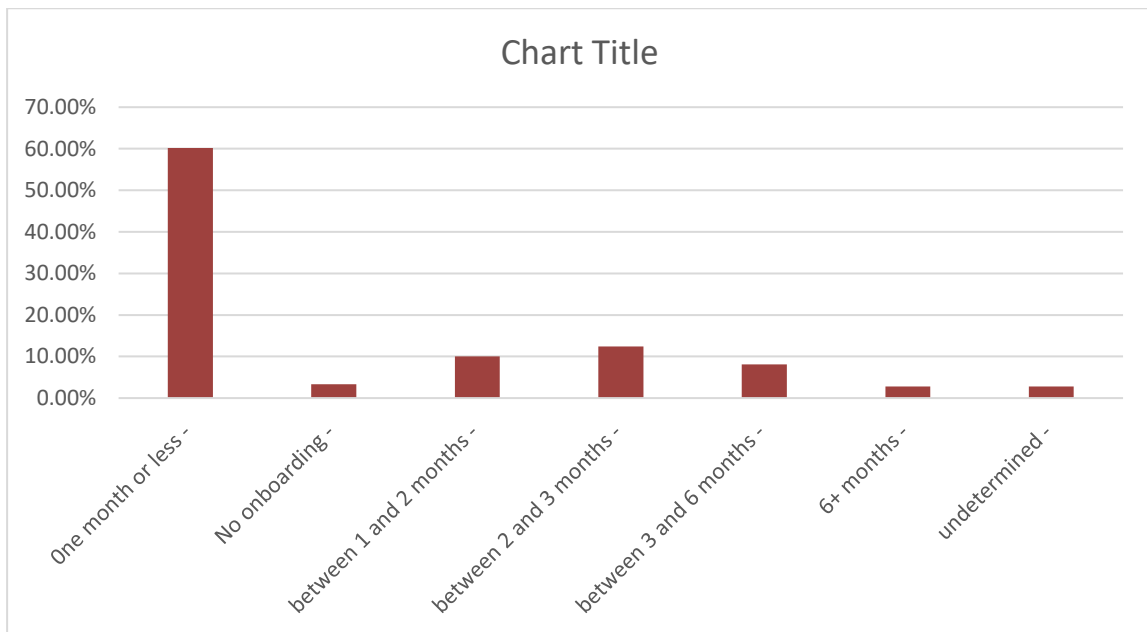


Figure 4.8: Length of onboarding for the role

Noteworthy replies to this question:

- “Officially one month but my manager reduced this to 2 weeks” (part. 5282)
- “6 months into the role, I am still onboarding” (part. 3915)
- “no onboarding just an email with a series of links” (part. 1871)

Figure 4.9: noteworthy replies to the question: “How long was the onboarding period for this role?”

The answers to the next question “How much of that onboarding was formalised training?” varied from “all of it” (participant 1324) to “none of it” (participant 9468).

Through coding the following percentages of formalised training as part of the duration of onboarding were retrieved (n=209):

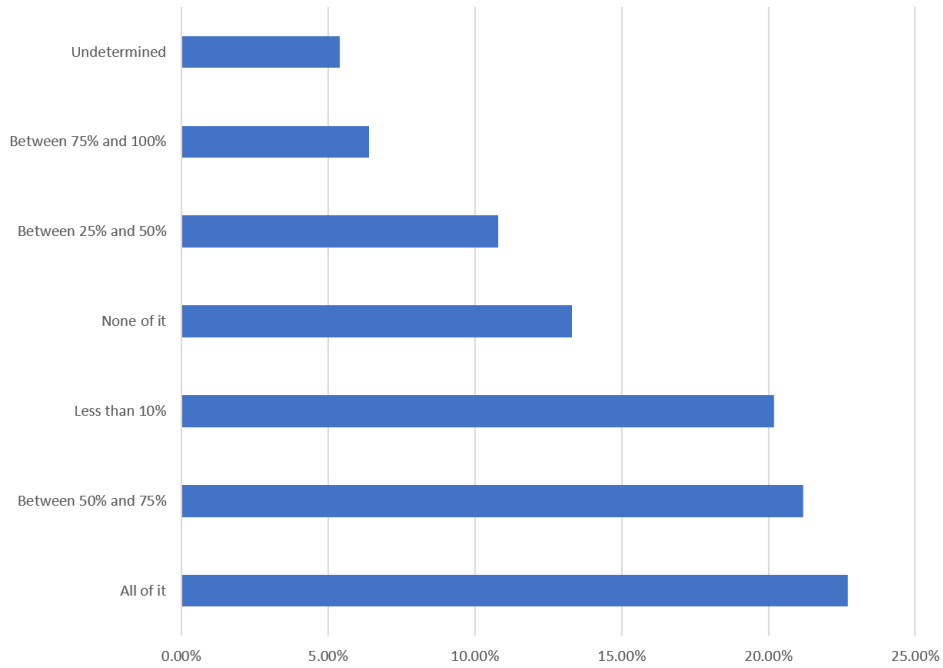


Figure 4.3: Time of formalised training as part of onboarding

#### Noteworthy replies to this question:

- *“It wasn’t formal at all, it required a lot of reading though.”* (part. 9545)
- *“50% as an estimate - I supplemented with my own learning/reading and working with my manager and peers”* (part. 1210)
- *“Only introductory training like GDPR, fire safety, etc”* (part. 7523)

Figure 4.4: noteworthy replies to the question “How much of your onboarding was formalised training?”

The data revealed only a quarter of respondents (n=208) went through a fully dedicated people manager programme and 37.5% had no dedicated people manager programme at all (see figure 4.12).

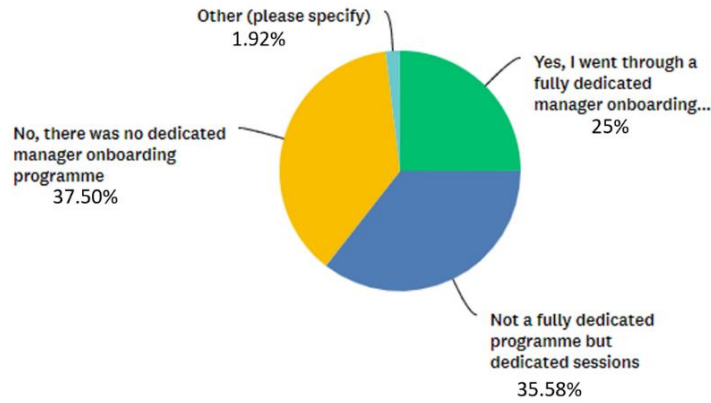


Figure 4.5: Percentage of participants going through a dedicated people manager onboarding programme

Those replying ‘other’, commented the following:

- “Not exactly. On onboarding information is completed day one of being hired, and you have ‘on the job training’ for your first month.” (part. 5292)
- “They existed, but not for my role” (part. 4509)
- “Informal onboarding with existing manager” (Part. 8913)
- “Brief 1 day course – very non-specific content” (part. 4764)

Figure 4.6: ‘Other’ comments on question 8 “Did you go through a dedicated people manager onboarding programme?”

As figure 4.14 shows, the overall majority of participants (n=208) had, some, dedicated time to connect with peers in similar roles during onboarding. One in four participants (26%), however, had no dedicated time in onboarding for this.

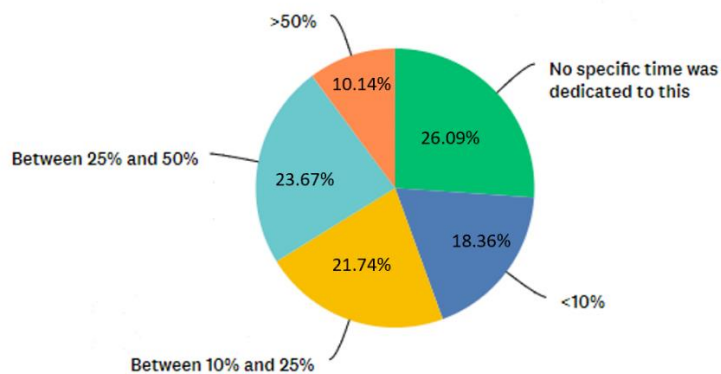


Figure 4.7: Percentage of dedicated time to connect with peers during onboarding

Looking at dedicated time to connect with one’s manager during onboarding, only 16% reported having no dedicated time to do so (n=206).

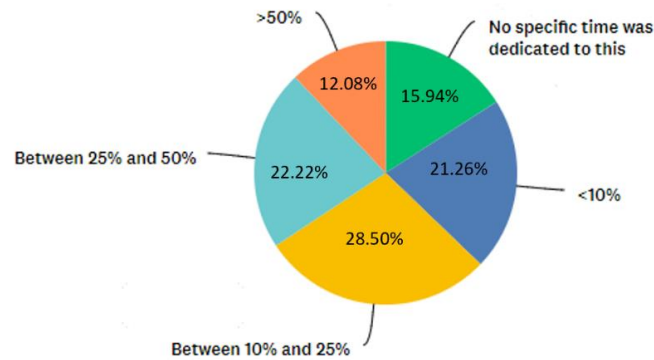


Figure 4.8: Percentage of dedicated time to connect with manager during onboarding

According to Bauer (2016) there's a clear link between confidence and sense of connection and organisations can support new hires and maximise their success in the company by designing connection-based onboarding.

The data showed that with a weighted average of respectively 3.52 Vs 3.04, those who went through a fully in-person onboarding programme (n=31) felt a slightly stronger sense of connection than those who went through onboarding fully on-line (n=89). This is in line with research showing that new hires who've only interacted with colleagues virtually find it more challenging to build connections (King, 2021). The disparity in sample sizes for both groups has to be noted here, though.

Figure 4.16 combines the data from question 9, looking at dedicated time to connect with peers during onboarding and question 11, the extent to which onboarding provided a sense of connection to others in the role. The following can be observed:

- The tipping point where 'agree' outweighs disagree and 'neither agree nor disagree', is when participants spent between 10% and 25% dedicated time connecting with peers during onboarding.
- Of those participants who spent more than 25% dedicated time connecting with peers during onboarding, none disagree or strongly disagree that onboarding made them feel connected to others in their role.

- There is a 45.7% difference in sense of connection to others as a result of onboarding (agree and strongly agree) between those who had no dedicated time with peers during onboarding (n=54) and those who had between 25% and 50% dedicated time with peers (n=49).

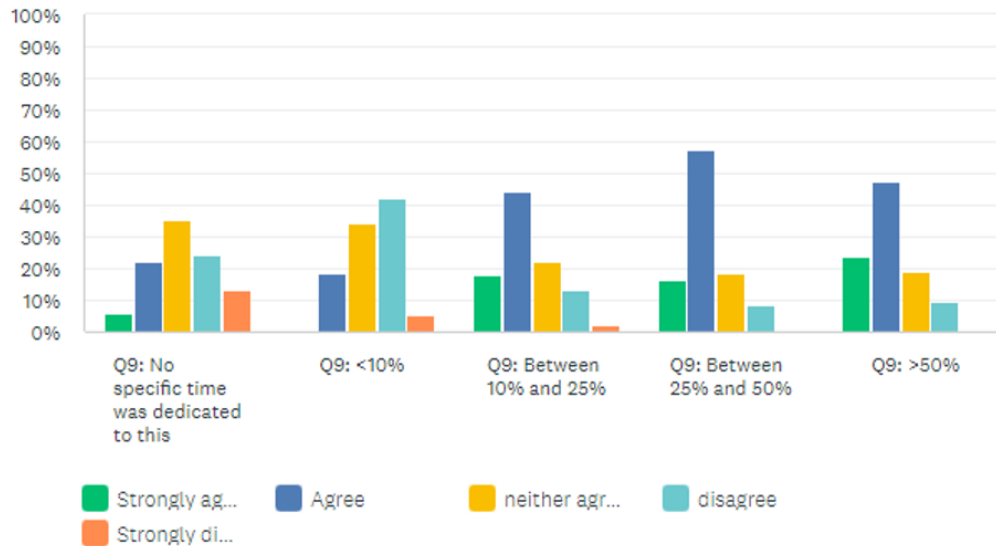


Figure 4.16: Time to connect with peers in onboarding combined with feeling connected to others

The data also shows that participants who went through a fully dedicated manager programme (n=52) felt a stronger sense of connection (weighted average of 3.73 Vs 3.01) as a result of onboarding than those who didn't go through a fully dedicated manager onboarding programme (n=77).

Going back to Olcelli (2021) who suggests that social learning is complimentary to formal training and helps employees understand “*what good looks like*”, figure 4.17 shows that a majority of participants (53%) were exposed to peers who shared best practices with them (n=207).

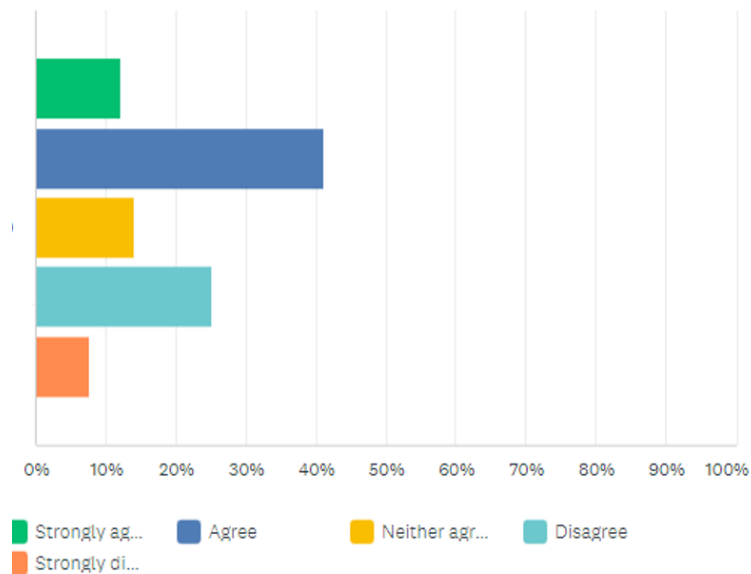


Figure 4.17: Exposure to peers sharing best practices

Research by Billan (2022) shows that a sense of belonging leads to higher productivity at work and onboarding is where it begins.

Overall, a majority of participants (62%) agrees or strongly agrees that onboarding contributed to their sense of belonging. Figure 4.18 shows the data for the question whether onboarding contributed to participants' sense of belonging, by group depending on how much dedicated time they spent with peers (n=207). Two things stand out here:

- The group that had between 25% and 50% dedicated time with peers (n=49), feels a higher sense of belonging (77.5% agree/strongly agree) Vs the group that had no dedicated time with peers (n=54, 40.7% agree/strongly agree).
- The group that had between 25% and 50% dedicated time with peers scored much lower in the disagree/strongly disagree category (6%) than the group that had no dedicated time with peers (29.6%).

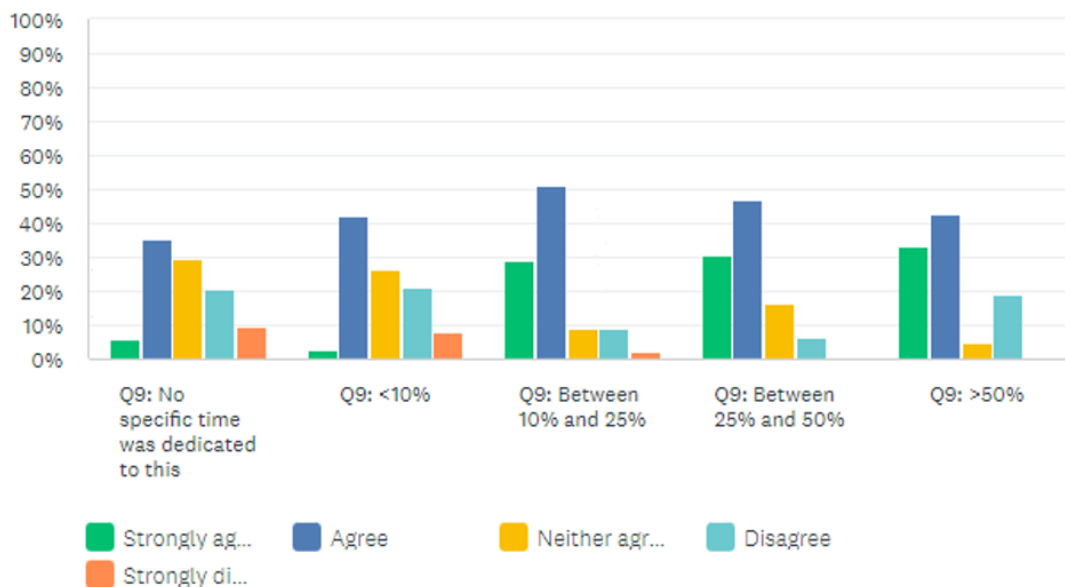


Figure 4.18: Sense of belonging as a result of onboarding combined with dedicated time with peers in onboarding

Figure 4.19 shows sense of belonging for each group depending on whether they were (strongly agree) or weren't (strongly disagree) exposed to peers sharing best practices during onboarding (n=207). It's important to note that the data sets for each of the extremes, the group that strongly disagreed (n=16) and the group that strongly agreed(n=25) are too small to be representative, compared to the group that agreed (n=85) and the group that disagreed (n=52).

Considering this, the data shows that those who were exposed to best practices from peers during onboarding overall indicated a stronger sense of belonging as a result of onboarding than those who weren't.

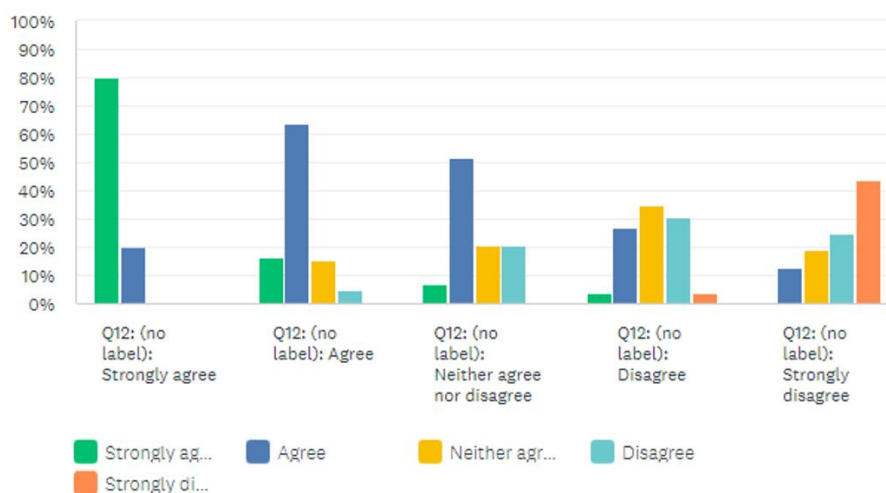


Figure 4.19: Sense of belonging as a result of onboarding combined with exposure to best practices during onboarding

The next section of the survey explored participants' views on social learning, using the social learning questionnaire from Vrieling, Teunter, Vermeulen and de Vreugd (2022).

#### 4.5 Views on social learning

Nearly all respondents (n=205) agreed or strongly agreed that they can improve in their role by hearing from peers, only 2.4% indicated they neither agree nor disagree with this.

Figure 4.20 shows the opinions on how working in a hybrid environment impacts these opportunities to learn. A small majority (50.2%) agrees or strongly agrees that not being in the office means there are fewer opportunities to learn from peers.

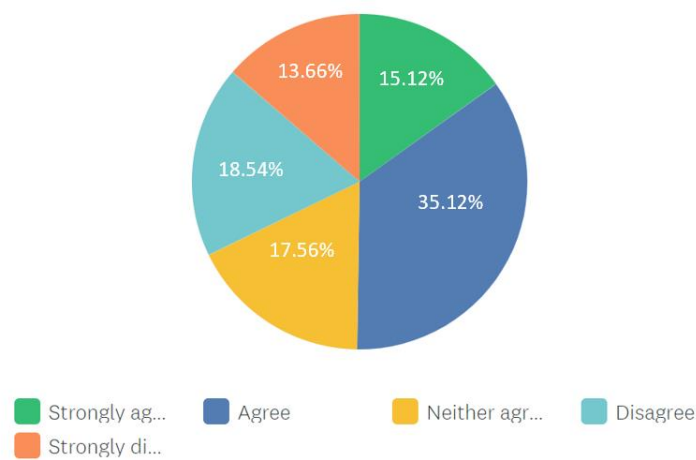


Figure 4.20: Opinions on opportunities to learn from others in hybrid environment

While the 70:20:10 learning model from the CCL (1996) claims 20% of what we learn comes from interactions with others, figure 4.21, shows a significantly higher percentage than that, namely 67.3% of respondents (n=205), agreeing or strongly agreeing learning best practices from peers is more valuable than going through a training.

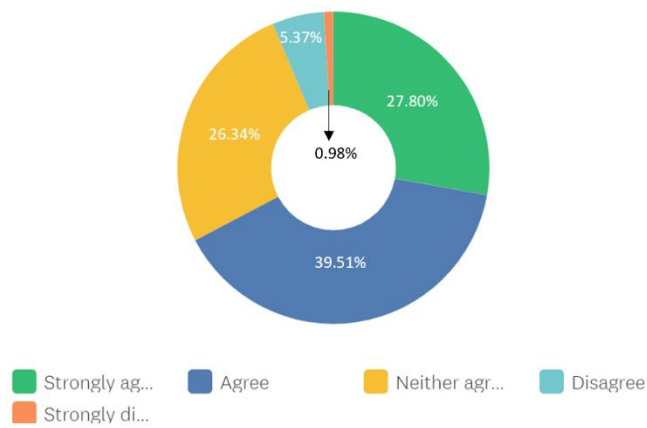


Figure 4.21: Importance of best practice sharing over formal training

A majority (75.6%) of participants agree, or strongly agree that best practice sharing is as valuable online as it is in person, and none strongly disagree. A similar trend can be observed regarding the level of comfort to share these best practices with peers that participants haven't met in person. A vast majority of 85% agrees (n=206) they feel comfortable doing so, none strongly disagree and 5.8% disagree. This data supports the work from Olcelli (2021) who posits that all social learning previously done face-to-face can work virtually as well.

Participants indicate they are interested to learn best practices from others in similar roles, even if these aren't top performers. Again, here none strongly disagree and a majority of 83.4% (strongly) agrees. Only 6.8% disagrees.

When asked if participants have sufficient opportunities to learn from peers, the data shows few differences when broken out by groups. Participants who went through a dedicated manager onboarding programme (n=44) score somewhat higher on this question (88.64% agree/strongly agree) than those who went through a generic onboarding programme (n=53, 54.7% agree/strongly agree).

The next section will look at participants' self-efficacy in their role using the occupational self- efficacy scale (Rigotti, Schyns, Mohr, 2008).

#### 4.6 Self-efficacy in role

Self-efficacy refers to “*the conviction that one can successfully execute the behaviour required to produce the outcome*” (Bandura, 1977 p.79). With a weighted average of 4.16

the majority of participants (n=206) have scored agree or strongly agree on the six questions in the survey related to the topic.

First-time managers (n=68) have a slightly lower weighted average self-efficacy score compared to managers who've been in role for 5+ years (n=48) with 4.12 Vs. 4.23 respectively. They score particularly lower on the question “my past experiences have prepared me well for my current role”. At the same time, as figure 4.22 shows, first time managers score higher than managers with 5+ years' experience (4.31 Vs 3.81 weighted average respectively) on the question “when I'm confronted with a problem in my job, I know who to turn to for advice”. Figure 4.6, overleaf, might offer some explanation here as it showed that first time people managers were more likely to have tenure with the company they current work for, whereas a higher percentage of people managers with 5+ years' experience joined the company for their current role.

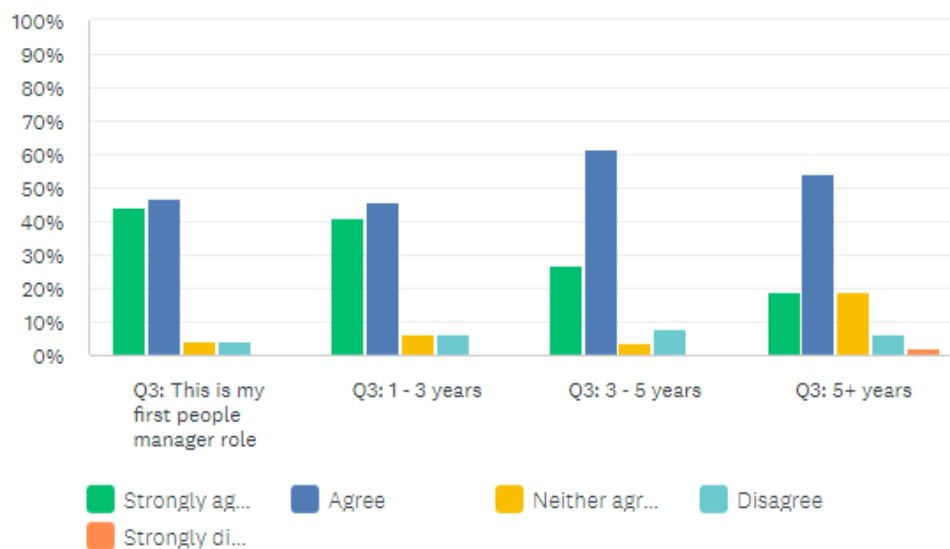


Figure 4.22: Self-efficacy related to experience as manager

When looking at the data related to self-efficacy and comparing it related to exposure to peers sharing best practices during onboarding, there are some clear differences. The group that strongly agreed to having been exposed to best practices from peers during onboarding (n=25) has an overall higher self-efficacy. This group scores a weighted average across all six questions of 4.5 and the group that strongly disagrees to having been exposed to best practices from peers during onboarding scores 3.9 across the same questions. Next to “When I'm confronted with a problem in my job, I know who to turn to for advice” (4.64 Vs 3.13 weighted average), the biggest difference, as figure 4.23 shows,

comes out in the question “*I feel prepared for most of the demands in my job*”. Participants having dedicated time with their manager during onboarding (n=205) also have a slightly higher self-efficacy and score particularly higher on the question “*I feel prepared for most demands in my job*” as can be seen in figure 4.24.

The data also shows a small difference in overall self-efficacy for those who went through a dedicated manager programme (n=52) compared to those who didn’t (n=77). The first group scored an overall weighted average of 4.33 and the second of 4.07. The biggest difference between the groups was observed in the question “*When I’m confronted with a problem in my job, I know who to turn to for advice*” (4.37 Vs 3.95 weighted average). McLysaght (2019) argues that those with a stronger sense of connection and belonging also have higher self-efficacy and the data in this research corroborates that.

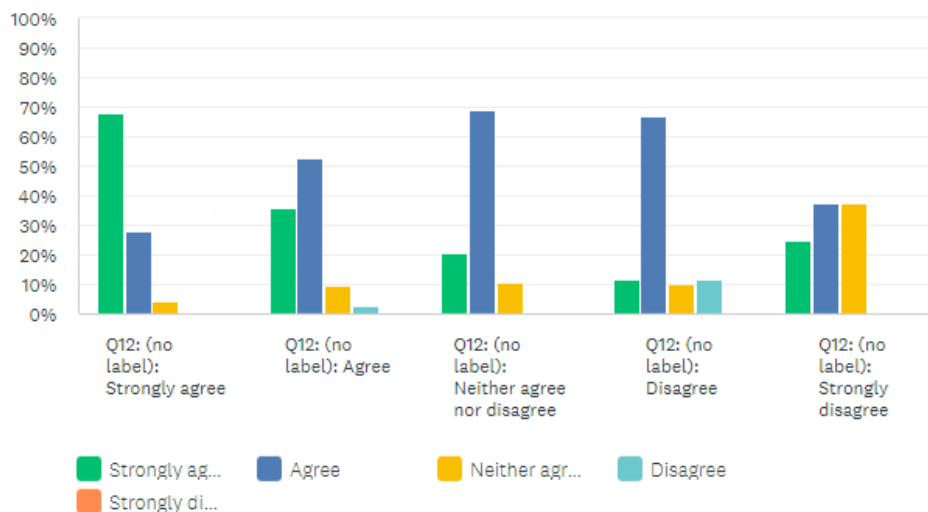


Figure 4.23: Biggest gap in self-efficacy related to exposure to best practices in onboarding

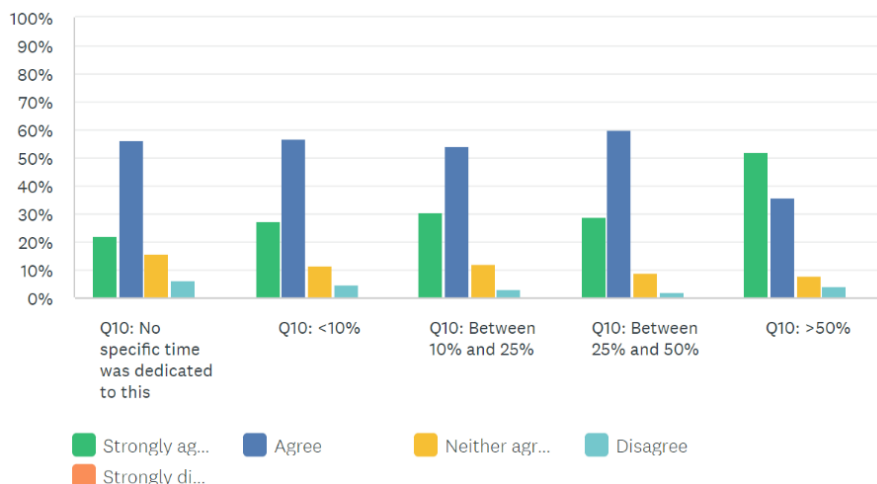


Figure 4.24: Dedicated time with manager in onboarding and self-efficacy

The last part of the survey, before moving to open questions, explored participants' sense of belonging, using an adapted version of the sense of belonging survey from the Imperial College of London.

#### 4.7 Sense of belonging

When asked “*How well do people at your company know you as a person*” there are few extremes and the majority of participants (n=206) answered they feel people know them “a little”, “somewhat” or “quite a bit”. Figure 4.25 has broken this down by group as they spent dedicated time with peers in onboarding. While this shows that with more time spent with peers, participants feel they are better known as a person, there is little difference between the group that spent between 25% and 50% dedicated time with peers in onboarding (n=49) and the group that spent more than 50% dedicated time with peers (n=21). Important to note is that the latter group had a smaller sample size which may have influenced the data.

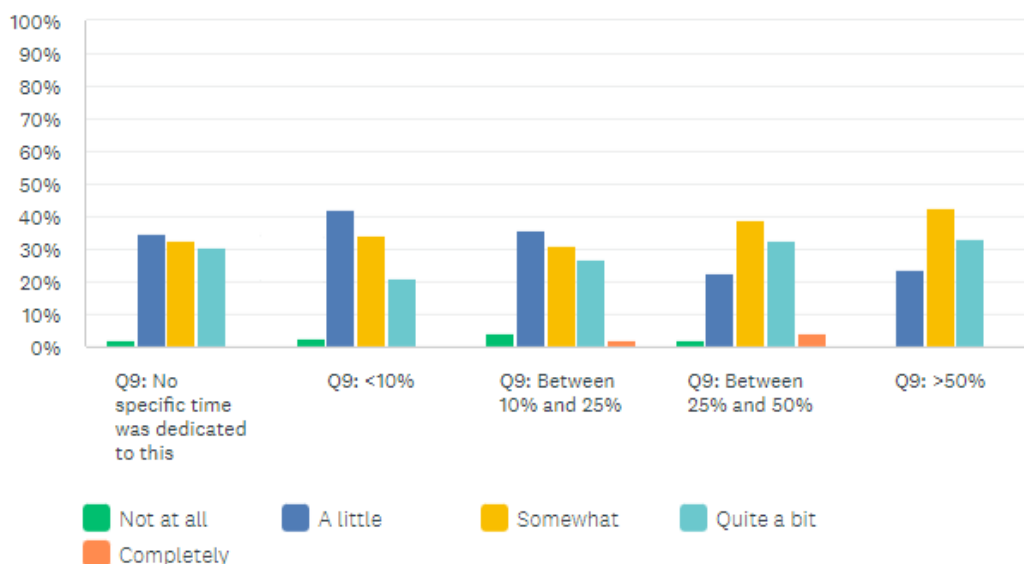


Figure 4.25: How well people feel known as a person

According to Kohll (2018), a successful workforce is built through strong social connections in the workplace. Some of the benefits, he states, are that it increases happiness, reduces stress and ups levels of engagement and loyalty.

Figure 4.26 shows that the more dedicated time participants spent with peers during onboarding, the more connected they feel to their peers later on.

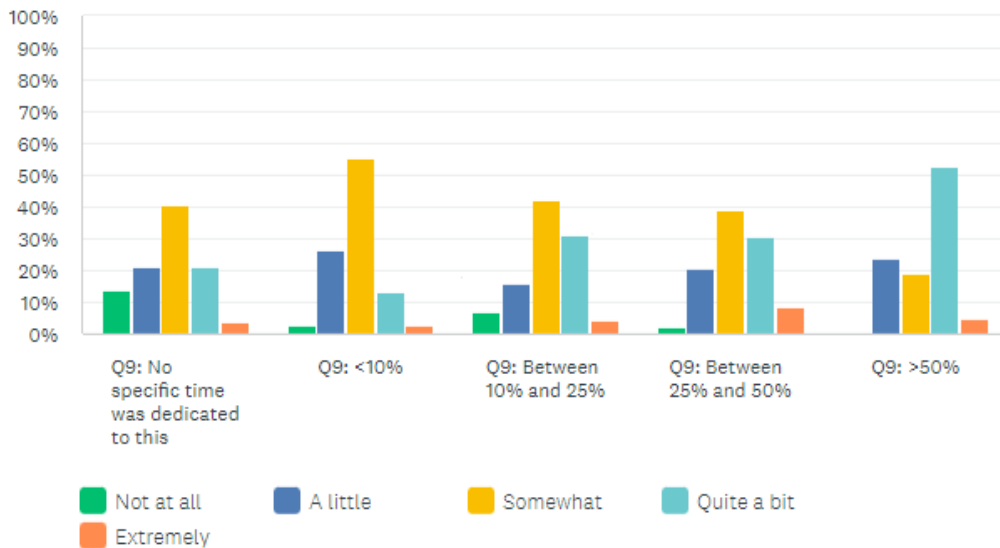


Figure 4.26: Sense of overall connection to peers related to time with peers in onboarding

When asked “How much do you matter to people in your company?” the data again shows that spending time with peers early on, influences participants’ sense of belonging and the weighted average goes up by each group (n=205) as can be seen in figure 4.27. At the same time, while keeping in mind the group that spent more than 50% dedicated time with peers in onboarding had a smaller sample size (n=21), it appears that there is no additional gain for that group compared to those who spent between 25% and 50% dedicated time with peers in onboarding.

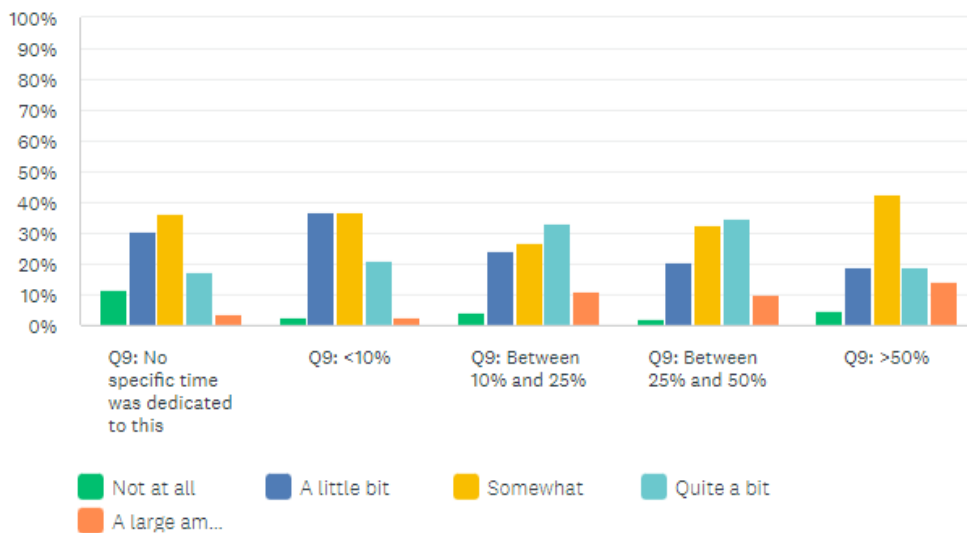


Figure 4.9: How much one feels they matter to others related to dedicated time spent with peers in onboarding

Dedicated time with peers was of no influence when asked “How fulfilling do you find your role?”, with scores fairly the same across all groups (n=205). What does appear to be of

influence on role fulfilment is being exposed to best practices from peers during onboarding and a spending dedicated time with manager during onboarding. With the sample size of those strongly agreeing (n=25) to having been exposed to best practices and those strongly disagreeing (n=16) to this being similar, there is a clear difference between the groups as shown in figure 4.28. The ‘strongly agree’ group has a weighted average of 4.04 on feel fulfilled in their current role, whereas the strongly disagree group scores a 2.75 on that same question. The gap isn’t nearly as big for participants having more than 50% dedicated time with their manager during onboarding (n=25) Vs those that had no time with their manager (n=32) yet worth noting with a weighted average of 3.76 Vs 3.28 respectively.

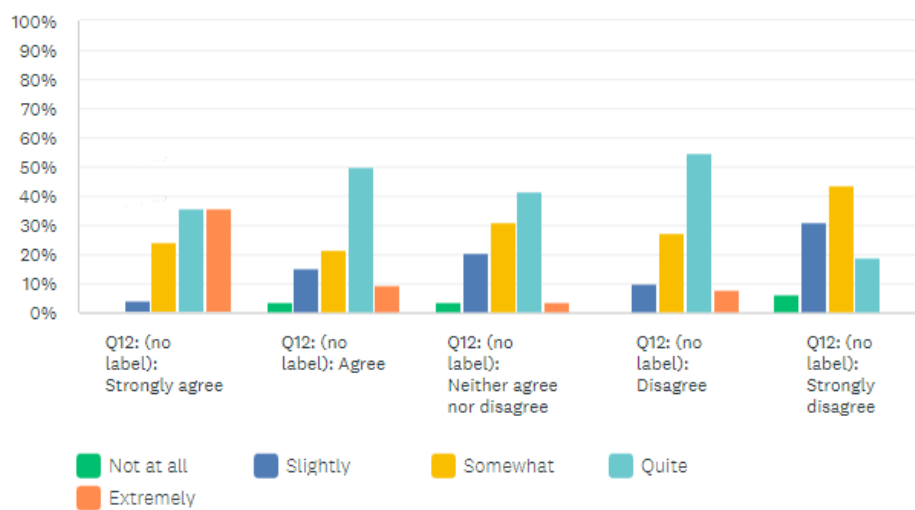


Figure 4.28: Sense of fulfillment in role related to exposure to best practices in onboarding

When looking how ‘at home’ participants feel at their company, both dedicated time with peers in onboarding, and exposure to best practices from peers in onboarding were of influence. As shown in figure 4.29 and 4.30, those who were exposed to best practices and spent more time with peers in onboarding, indicate they feel more at home at their company than those who didn’t (n=205).

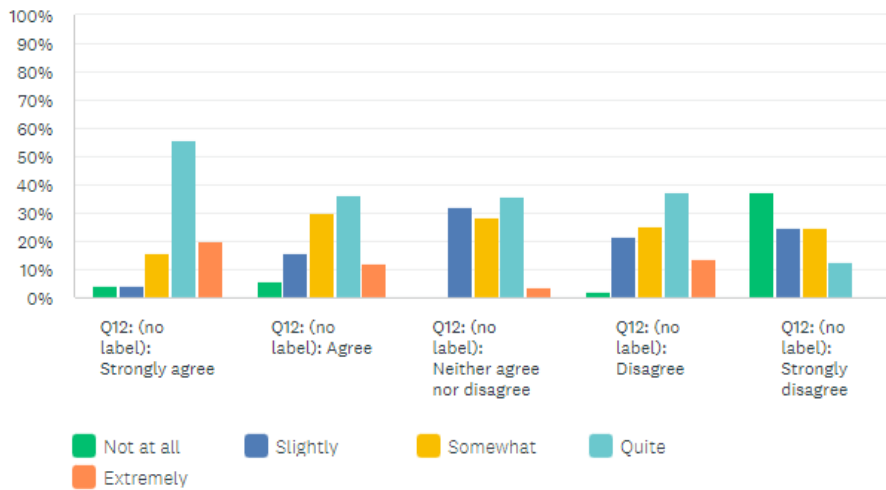


Figure 4.29: Feeling at home in the company related to exposure to best practices in onboarding

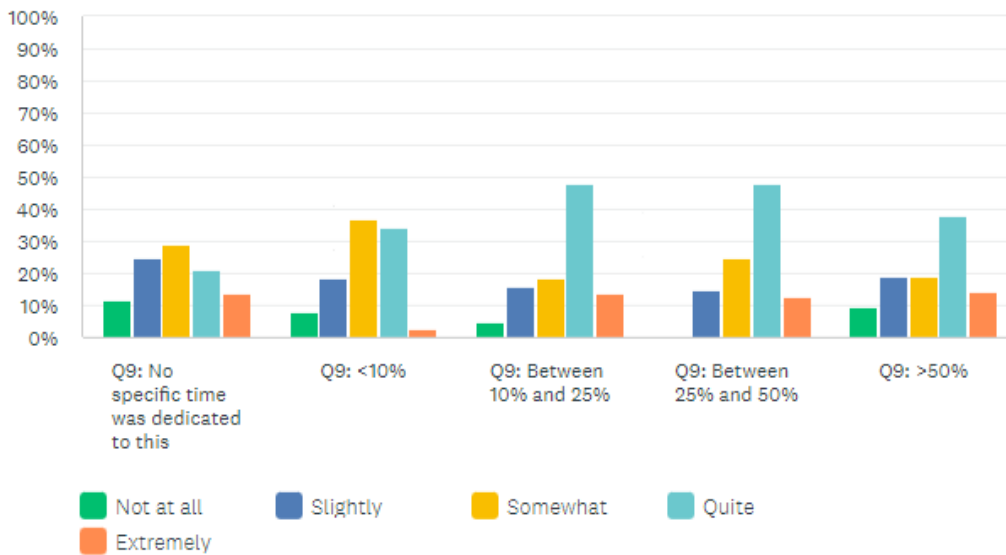


Figure 4.30: Feeling at home in the company related to spending dedicated time with peers in onboarding

Being exposed to best practices from peers appears to make a bigger difference when asked “Overall, how much do you feel you ‘belong’ at your company?” than dedicated time with peers during onboarding does. With both sample sizes being comparable in size (respectively 25 and 16) the group that strongly agreed to being exposed to best practices from peers scored a weighted average of 3.96 on overall sense of belonging and the group that strongly disagreed to being exposed to best practices from peers in onboarding a 2.13. Figure 4.31 shows data for all groups (n=205).

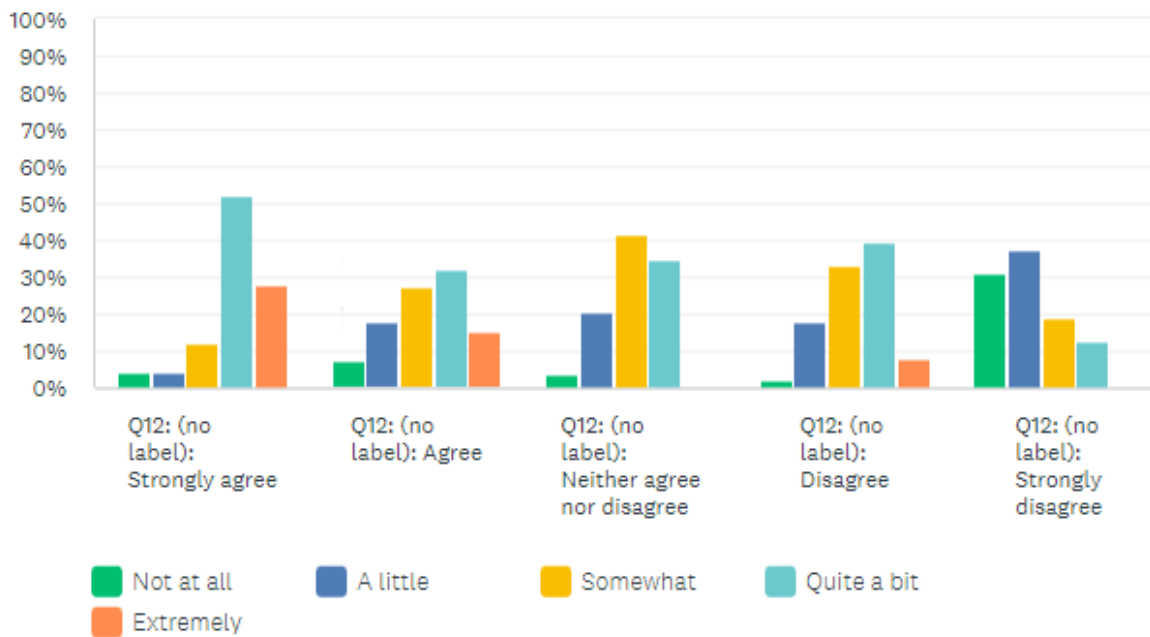


Figure 4.31: Overall sense of belonging at company related to exposure to best practices in onboarding

The research also looked at the data compared by tenure in role and found that first time people managers had the highest sense of belonging, with an overall weighted average across all six questions of 3.32 and people managers in role between 1-3 years the lowest sense of belonging with an overall weighted average of 3.04.

The data showed a potential correlation between sense of belonging and fully in-person onboarding (n=31) Vs fully on-line onboarding (n=89). The latter group scored a weighted average of 3.10 and the former 3.23. The group who went through on-line onboarding with some in-person elements (n=45) also scored higher here with a weighted average of 3.2. Further research would be warranted, though, given the disparity in sample sizes. Finally, data shows that sense of belonging grows as tenure in the company grows, with the group of participants indicating they joined the company specifically for this role (n=83) having the lowest weighted average across all six questions related to sense of belonging.

The next section of the survey goes into open questions, looking at tools companies and managers have put in place to support best practice sharing and how effective these are, as well as examples of how managers contribute to participants' sense of belonging.

#### 4.8 open questions

The research tried to get an idea of how managers contribute to people managers' sense of belonging and asked participants to share examples.

According to Taylor Kennedy (2020), the four elements needed for belonging at work are:

- Feeling seen
- Feeling connected
- Feeling supported
- Feeling proud

The participants in this study mention all of the above, bar 'feeling proud', with 'connecting' as the number one.

Through coding of answers, table 4.1, below, has been put together (n=178), from most mentioned to least mentioned, with examples for those mentioned more than ten times.

**Table 4.1: Examples of managers' contribution to sense of belonging**

Category and definition	Example
<b>Connecting</b> (29.7%): checking in through 1:1s, emails, huddles. Informal chats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• My manager sets up regular 1 to 1 meetings with me (part. 6306)</li> <li>• We have regular online catch ups, coffee meets with other team members and quarterly meets in person (part. 8248)</li> <li>• Chats with me daily to see how I'm getting on (part. 7870)</li> </ul>
<b>Being interested</b> (20.7%): expressing interest in the employee as a person, showing care for life events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We don't only speak about work but we talk about our well-being as well (part. 5318)</li> <li>• Takes time to get to know me as a person outside of work matters. (9385)</li> <li>• My manager took a ton of time with me while I onboarded which really helped me feel safe to be myself and express how I was feeling, doing and getting by. She also makes a point to know me personally which helps in this a lot as well. (part. 9163)</li> </ul>
<b>Open &amp; transparent communication</b> (13.4%): sharing information where possible, involving the employee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• By sharing insights and issues with me (part. 9643)</li> <li>• My manager always makes sure that everybody is onboard in the same way and he is fully transparent in how the things are going (part. 7369)</li> <li>• They ensure I can share my opinion in meetings, they act on my feedback and always inform me of any changes (part. 8452)</li> </ul>
<b>Team connection</b> (12.9%): supporting team collaboration, organising team events, team learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They organise regular in-person and virtual sessions that bring together the wider team and create a sense of collaboration. They also emphasise team KPIs over individual ones (part. 4656)</li> <li>• We often have team buildings to get to know each other and have fun together (part. 6629)</li> <li>• Encouraging teamwork and collaboration by facilitating communication and creating opportunities for employees to work together. (part. 8966)</li> </ul>

<p><b>Networking</b> (11.2%): introductions to others that can be beneficial, including the employee in meetings, bringing them to events</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• She sets up meetings and makes suggestions on who I should meet that will help me in my role and future with the company (part. 5193)</li> <li>• ensuring I know who my peers are in the company and giving me ways to connect with them (part. 0822)</li> <li>• She pushes me to connect with people that I can benefit of, outside of my immediate team and function. (part. 5016)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Recognition</b>(9.5%): internal and external awards, making the employee feel valued, sharing appreciation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• by complimenting my work in a positive way. (part. 6722)</li> <li>• They have put me forwards for external awards thus recognising my efforts and accomplishments (part.4291)</li> <li>• He often talks about how my activities affect the company and how he would see my future in it (part. 1631)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Support</b> (7.8%): gives support and guidance, available for questions, takes time to listen</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• He provides support and guidance when needed. He helps me understand what the norms and approaches are that work in the company (part. 7711)</li> <li>• He always makes sure I'm doing well and am comfortable and not overwhelmed. We always can talk through ways to improve my time at work. (part. 5644)</li> <li>• He is always supportive and available for me to ask questions (part. 7523)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Empowerment</b> (7.3%): empowers employee to come up with their own solutions, to be innovative or to speak up</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• He often tells me that I am always available to improve procedures and not necessarily do things as they have been done in the past. (part. 6978)</li> <li>• He encourages me to be innovative and think outside the box which allows me to connect my ideas with the organization. (part. 1765)</li> <li>• Provides me with reassurance that the decisions I make as a manager are sensible and the best course of action. Doesn't micromanage. Allows me to lead the team and mould the role in my own way. (part. 1657)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Asking for input</b> (6.7%): employee is asked for input on decisions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They share their own insights with me and ask for my own personal input weekly. (part. 3273)</li> <li>• Including me in discussions, asking me for my input during strategy sessions, etc (part. 1703)</li> <li>• My manager contributes to my sense of belonging by involving me in decisions about our team and way of working, and by simply chatting and being curious about me and my experience. (part. 9320)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Advocating</b> (6,2%): advocating for the employee with their peers or more senior leaders in the company</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• My manager is good at praising me to senior leadership and helps my development.(part. 1254)</li> <li>• Brings me to board and subcommittee meetings so they hear directly from me and I get the credit for the successes achieved (part. 0455)</li> <li>• I have experienced situations where she advocated for me even when I wasn't in the room (part. 9189)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Listening</b> (6.1%): taking time to listen</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• My manager meets with me one on one and takes time to listen to what I have to say. (part. 8803)</li> <li>• He's always there to help, or listen or both</li> <li>• Listens to my ideas (part. 3719)</li> </ul>

Table 4.1: Manager contribution to sense of belonging

Other categories that were mentioned less than ten times but more than five, are:

- Feedback
  - *“Honest and open feedback on performance”* (participant 8661)
- Coaching
  - *“Coaching and challenging me on developing and execution of ideas.”* (participant 6775)
- Advice
  - *“He always gives encouraging words and is all the time patient with me. He gives advice on a daily basis”* (participant 4815)
- Development
  - *“distinguishing me through the possibility of additional attractive training”* (participant 6095)
- Authenticity
  - *“He allows me to be myself and express myself in the way I want to express myself”* (participant 6813)

When looking at tools that participants’ manager or company have put in place to help them connect with and learn from peers, the two most common referred to categories were collaboration (42.46%) and virtual collaboration tools (35.75%). The data also reveals that 10.61% of responses mention no tools are put in place. This is significantly lower than the 2021 report from CIPD in which they reported only 28% of companies were using social learning. Through coding of participant responses, table 4.2, below, was put together (n=179)

<b>Table 4.2: Tools put in place by manager/company to connect with and learning from peers</b>	
<b>Category and definition</b>	<b>Example</b>
<b>Collaboration</b> (42.46%): meeting and collaborating with others, either part of the same team or other teams, with the purpose of exchanging information and working together	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• community of practice with others in my position (part. 1728)</li> <li>• Putting me on projects with new staff and people from other areas of the world, though this does not happen often. (part. 2044)</li> <li>• By having a weekly meeting where we share information and learn with each other. (part. 9320)</li> </ul>

<p><b>Virtual collaboration tools (35.7%):</b> online tools that help employees communicate and share information</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mostly online communication tools and private messaging systems, to keep in touch via text, email, voice and video conferencing. (part. 3273)</li> <li>• We use MS Teams and Slack so we can collaborate with even peers from other teams. (6433)</li> <li>• We have Teams, Slacks and online sharing tools to enhance each other's communication and learn from each other. (part. 4724)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Development (19.5%):</b> training, either in-person or online that brings employees together, including mentoring programmes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• my company has a website called llearn we discuss and complete courses we feel we benefit in our line of my work. (part. 0877)</li> <li>• The company host regular workshops where people can network. (part. 6273)</li> <li>• Mentor program, senior leadership trainings (part. 4633)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Best practice sharing (13,9%):</b> learning best practices from peers, e.g. through lunch &amp; learn buddies or projects</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We have meetings twice a week where we literally are encouraged to share the problems we find in our divisions and come up with solutions that can be implemented in other areas (part. 4122)</li> <li>• My manager assigned me to a couple of projects where I could work with someone above me and learn from them (part. 6284)</li> <li>• shared meals with peers, during which we could discuss current problems (part. 6095)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Nothing (10.61%):</b> the company/manager hasn't put any tools n place</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None really. I reach out to other managers to discuss their approaches and techniques (part. 9468)</li> <li>• None, I have done that myself (part. 5911)</li> <li>• Only introductions when I first started, and then it was up to me (part. 7523)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Shadowing (2.79%):</b> shadowing a peer to observe their work</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We have a platform where we communicate, we have in person and virtual meetings, I'm also allowed to shadow my peers. (part. 8582)</li> <li>• Some in person activities so we can spend time together, group trainings and shadowing (part. 9178)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Other (2.97%):</b> answers that could not be categorised in any of the above included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tutorials</li> <li>• Personal relationships</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are many tools but everyone is just too busy. I rely on my personal relationships for advice (part. 6491)</li> <li>• There are plenty of detailed tutorials and guides, as well as being available through chat for questions. (part. 2180)</li> </ul>

Table 4.2: Tools for best practices put in place by company/manager

Many of the examples mentioned above in the 'virtual collaboration tools' align with Bingham and Conner (2015) research on social learning. In their book, they also talk about how company social media tools can create a further sense of community, as stated by participants, next to allowing for enhanced social learning (p120).

When asked, the majority of respondents (68.71%) find the tools they have to be quite to very effective and less than 6% find them not to be effective at all. Of those who don't find them effective, the main reason stated for this is lack of interaction from peers and preferring to meet in person.

Noteworthy responses to this question:

- *“They are only as effective as the people who use them. Not everybody uses them so for the people that don't it's quite difficult to interact with them through Teams” (part. 3019)*
- *“I think these tools helps, but a face to face meeting helps a lot more” (part. 6433)*
- *“Somewhat. But it does not perfectly emulate just a quick poke into someone's office or cubicle” (part. 7995)*

Figure 4.32: Noteworthy responses to the question “How effective are the tools your company/manager put in place to help you learn and connect with others?”

Next to understanding what was put in place formally for participants by their manager or company to learn from peers, the research tried to explore what ways participants have found themselves to build connections and learn from others, informally. The category most mentioned was ‘informal 1:1 conversations’ (28.0%), followed by ‘best practice sharing’ (25.8%) and observations (21.9%). Each of these are examples of vicarious learning as mentioned by Schunk (2014 p187). Table 4.3, below, gives an overview of the categories of answers that received more than ten mentions (n=178). “Informal 1:1 conversations” are named most frequently as a response to this question. This is in line with research done Woo *et al.*, (2023) who claims that “*virtual small talk*” can be helpful to recreate what used to be known as ‘water-cooler conversations’, ‘

**Table 4.3: Informal ways that participants have found to learn from peers**

Category and definition	Example
<b>Informal 1:1 conversations</b> (28.0%): connecting with peers in a 1:1 setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One on one connects and informal connections over lunch or coffee (part. 7711)</li> <li>• Spending time with them over coffee and lunch getting to know them, their work, and their approaches (part. 9643)</li> <li>• Just through being in the office and chatting (part. 0005)</li> </ul>
<b>Best practice sharing</b> (25.8%): understanding what others have done, reviewing work, sharing amongst teams	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning from past practices that they have used and hearing about the successes and failures (part. 3019)</li> <li>• We try to see other peers in person with some retrospective meetings about the projects we are working (part. 6433)</li> <li>• Peer review is another common method of informal learning. This involves having colleagues review and provide feedback on one's work, which can help identify areas for improvement and encourage continuous learning and development. (part. 8966)</li> </ul>

<b>Observation (21.9%):</b> observing the behaviour of others as they do their job	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Watching their behaviour in meetings, group discussions, and emails (part. 9468)</li> <li>• From watching how people do things, I learn (part. 2510)</li> <li>• from watching others in meetings, and how they interact with others. (part. 4492)</li> </ul>
<b>Asking questions (13.4%):</b> asking peers clarifying questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I just ask them questions on how to better handle one thing or another. (part. 5737)</li> <li>• Literally just dropping them a Teams message and asking them (part. 5386)</li> <li>• Just ask questions. I find people volunteer more information now when meeting virtually vs pre-Covid. (part. 7430)</li> </ul>
<b>Networking (11.8%):</b> spending time with peers, sometimes outside of work, that one can learn from	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attending events outside of work (in person and virtual) to meet industry peers and other interesting people with different perspectives and facing different challenges to me (part. 6078)</li> <li>• Informal peer networking (mostly in social settings outside work hours) (part. 6188)</li> <li>• Scheduling recurring catch ups with people outside of my team. New ideas and discoveries always come up. Also following diverse slack channels. (part. 5016)</li> </ul>

Table 4.3: Informal ways participants have found to learn from others

Additional categories that received more than 5 mentions:

- Conferences and training (3.9%)
  - “training with others in my field at conferences” (participant 1728)
- Mentoring (2.8%)
  - “Shadowing and informal mentoring has been important” (participant 4656)

Finally, participants were asked what they see as the biggest contributor to success in their career, outside their personal efforts. Most mentioned (n=177) was ‘Personal development’ (13%), either through formal training, learning from others and experiences along the way, or individually through YouTube or books. This was followed by ‘Colleagues’ and ‘Company’ (each 12.43%). More than a few participants mentioned that ‘luck’ played a role in their career (5%). As one participant put it: *“Luck, as it is random to what opportunities arise, who I know in the company and when they are willing to let me pursue other projects”* (participant 3273). The word cloud below gives an idea of the different responses:



Figure 4.33: Word cloud 'biggest contributor to success'

As a last question, participants were asked if there was anything else they'd like to share, and the *following answers could be considered noteworthy*:

- I believe even virtually you can connect enough with coworkers to ask informal questions (part. 3762)
- Currently struggling with virtual meetings. Certain persons shine on screen and others hide as lack of confidence in engagement in this forum. A lot to be said around corridor and water cooler conversation and learnings. A lot more questions can be answered face to face and the body language piece is some more evident physical than virtually. So many bad manners and lack of respect I've witnessed on line with people continuing to work on emails while so called on training sessions - not giving it 100% focus which is hard for the host! (part. 2048)
- I do not think that virtual professional relationships can replace the power of in-person connection and engagement (part. 9643)
- Social learning is such an important aspect of personal development and I believe many corporates (despite their best intentions) are minimising the opportunities for this due to their hybrid and remote first strategies. Lack of serendipitous social interaction cannot be compensated for through "forced" virtual interventions alone!! My advice to any corporate who limits in person interaction is to consider the impact on learning outcomes and in role personal development on work based outcomes such as retention and job satisfaction instead of seeing in person connection as a cost. The ROI will be reflected on the bottom line! (part. 5282)
- Trust seems important when learning from peers (part. 1804)

Figure 4.34: Noteworthy replies to the question "Is there anything else you'd like to share?"

## 4.9 Discussion

This research aimed to investigate how social learning in a corporate, hybrid environment impacts people managers in role for less than two years. Furthermore, it endeavoured to understand how social learning in this continuing hybrid world impacts self-efficacy and sense of belonging and connection for said people managers.

In summary, results from the research would indicate that people managers who've spent dedicated time with peers during their onboarding and those who've been exposed to peers sharing best practices during onboarding, have both a higher self-efficacy as well as a higher sense of belonging and connection with up to one point higher weighted average in each. This sense of belonging starts in onboarding, as participants for both groups indicate onboarding contributed to their sense of belonging to a larger extent than participants who did not get to spend time with peers or were exposed to best practices. Participants who had more dedicated time with peers also felt more connected to others in their role, both in general and as a result of onboarding.

In this research 34.61% of participants who don't spend time with peers in onboarding, feel no or only a little sense of connection to their peers. An example of that is this quote from a participant: *"I would have liked to have had a more substantial training so my network of peers would have been larger. I would have liked to have a mentor(s), a more senior manager to fall back on and use as a sounding board."* (participant 5381) Research from de Smet *et al.*, (2021) showing that at the height of the pandemic, when companies were still trying to understand how to make hybrid work, 39% of employees found building strong connections with others a challenge, corroborates these findings. When participants do spend time with peers in onboarding, however, that number of 34.61% drops by more than 10 points, to 22.45%, for those having more than 25% dedicated time with peers.

Participants in this research name 'connecting with others', 'being interested' and 'open and transparent communication' as the top three things their manager has done that contributes to their sense of belonging. This is corroborating work done by Prossack (2021), who argues that to build strong connections in a hybrid world, employees must have open communication and connect outside of work.

Examples of what participants are doing to learn from peers informally, like 'informal 1:1 conversations', 'best practice sharing' and 'observation', are all, especially the last one, clear examples of vicarious learning, as mentioned by Schunk (2014).

While the debate on whether onboarding is better done on-line or in-person will not be settled through this research, the data does give some insights. On average, participants who went through a fully on-line onboarding programme (n=89) have a lower overall self-efficacy and lower overall sense of belonging. Those who went through onboarding in-person feel more strongly that it contributed to their sense of belonging. This is in line with Hardwick (2022) who claims in-person onboarding gives employees more opportunities to bond with co-workers and allows them to get a better understanding of the company culture. The data also shows that even when onboarding is done mainly on-line with some in-person elements sense of connection, belonging and self-efficacy go up.

This research looked at participants' views on social learning and found it made little to no difference how much experience participants had in the role of people manager. Both first-time people managers and more experienced ones appear open to learning from others as much as they are willing to share, even when they haven't met their peers in person yet. In the words of this participant: "*Trust seems important when learning from peers*" (participant 1804)

Notably, the research also showed that more isn't necessarily always better. While it's undoubtedly important to take sample size into account here, for both self-efficacy and sense of belonging, dedicated time with peers stopped making a difference once it got over 25%. There was little to no difference between the group that spent 25-50% dedicated time with peers (n=49) and the group that spent more than 50% (n=21).

According to Kodden (2021) higher self-efficacy is the most important indicator for sustainable performance and Friedman (2022) argues feeling connected and sense of belonging go hand-in-hand with efficiency, productivity, and profitability. The research data clearly shows that, next to social learning supporting self-efficacy, belonging and connection in general, there's an advantage to dedicated manager onboarding. Those going through such a programme score higher in each of these areas and indicate they feel better prepared for the demands of the role.

The next chapter will present a conclusion and recommendations for further research.

# Chapter 5 - Conclusion and recommendations

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## 5.1 Introduction

This study set out to investigate how social learning in a hybrid, corporate world impacts people managers in role for less than two years. It used a mixed methods approach, in the form of a questionnaire that was filled out by 232 participants, to gather data from people managers in all major continents. This chapter will first present an overall conclusion and then move on to recommendations for employers and recommendations for further research.

## 5.2 Conclusion

Based on quantitative and qualitative data from 232 participants it can be concluded that social learning impacts people managers positively, in multiple ways. The data shows that spending dedicated time with peers during onboarding has a ripple effect later on. People managers who get to spend between 25% and 50% dedicated time with peers have a higher sense of belonging, feel more connected and have a higher self-efficacy. All these indicators of sustained performance (Kodden, 2021), reduction in turn-over (Rosen Kellerman and Reece, 2023) and increased engagement (Kohll, 2018).

The research shows the same impact, meaning higher self-efficacy, higher sense of belonging and a stronger sense of connection to others for those participants who were exposed to peers showing them 'what good looks like in my role' during onboarding. This group also has a slightly higher sense of fulfilment in their role.

The research also explored participants' view on social learning and not only do all participants agree that learning from peers is valuable, 67.31% even agrees that learning from peers is more valuable than formal training. It's also encouraging to see, in a time when most companies are embracing hybrid working long-term, that the majority of participants (75.61%) feel best practice sharing is as valuable virtually as it is in person.

From participant comments, it can be concluded that just over 90% of participants work in companies that have implemented tools that allow them to connect with and learn from each other. Furthermore, the most frequently mentioned tool that participants are putting in

place themselves to learn from each other informally is 'informal 1:1 conversations', replacing the former, in office, water cooler conversations.

The data opened the door to a wider discussion on onboarding by showing a dedicated people manager onboarding programme impacts sense of belonging and self-efficacy both positively and showing the same data, though with much smaller sample sizes, for in-person Vs on-line onboarding.

As companies will continue to evolve in this hybrid working environment, it is likely how people learn will evolve with it. This research endeavoured to understand what that could look like and if there was a place for a learning methodology that is based on the premise of observation and role modelling (Bandura, 1977). The data in this research reinforces Bandura (1977) research and demonstrates there continues to be a place for social learning. To put it in the words of a participant: "*From watching how people do things, I learn*" (participant 118298962510).

### **5.3 Recommendations**

The following sections outlines the recommendations arising from this research, first for employers and then for further research.

#### **5.3.1 Recommendations for employers**

Participants in this study have indicated that 'connecting with others', 'being interested' and 'open and transparent communication' are the top three things their manager does that supports their sense of connection. This corroborates research done by Prossack (2021) who argues that connection outside of work and open communication are essential to build strong connections in a hybrid world. Next to that, the research also shows that social learning increases sense of belonging, connection, and self-efficacy. Based on this, the following is recommended:

- Implement a dedicated manager onboarding programme.
- Allow new people managers to spend up to 50% dedicated time with peers and their manager during the onboarding process.
- Expose new people managers to peers sharing best practices and showing them what good looks like in their role, for instance through role shadowing and mentoring.

- Ensure managers check in with new hires regularly on a personal and professional level to build a sense of connection and belonging.
- Allow for open and transparent communication; involve new people managers in challenges and ask for their opinion.

### **5.3.2 Recommendations for further research**

Based on both the findings of this study, as well as its limitations, some recommendations to consider:

- There is potential to further investigate sense of belonging and self-efficacy for people managers going through onboarding in-person Vs. on-line. The disparity in sample sizes was too big in this research to draw meaningful conclusions.
- This research did not take gender and industry into account. With more time, it's worth considering looking at both. It would potentially be interesting to see if, for instance, Tech as the industry at the forefront of hybrid working, is further ahead in social learning.
- Findings suggest that more dedicated time with peers at some point wasn't necessarily better. It appeared to peak at between 25% and 50% and didn't go up after that. However, the sample size of the group having more than 50% dedicated time with peers during onboarding was relatively small and it might be worthwhile researching this with a larger sample size.
- This research focused solely on people managers who were in role for less than two years and looked at non-monetary results, like sense of belonging and self-efficacy. If a company were available, it might be worth researching how social learning impacts:
  - Individual contributors.
  - Measurable performance (e.g. quota carrying sales reps).

### **5.4 Personal reflection**

Writing this dissertation has been a huge learning curve for me. Finding the right balance between my passion for social learning and my excitement regarding the findings coming out of the survey on one hand and putting them into the correct academic format on the other has, at times, been challenging. There is, however, no doubt that with the knowledge I have gained and the insights I have now I will myself be a better manager and feel better

equipped to advise others on how to implement a social learning structure in a hybrid working environment. It's an experience that helped me grow, both as a person and a professional, that pushed me out of my comfort zone in many ways and one that I will look back on with huge gratitude and sense of accomplishment.

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# Appendix

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## Questionnaire

Participants in this study were asked to complete a survey in Survey Monkey.

At the top of the page, they would find this message:

Hi people manager,

My name is Sacha Dekker, and I am a student at Griffith College in Dublin, studying for an MA in Education, Learning & Development.

As part of my dissertation, I am researching how social learning in a hybrid, corporate environment impacts people managers who are in role for less than two years.

What does that mean, really?

Well, previously people used to spend a large part of their time in the office together and, as such, had the opportunity to learn informally from each other. They'd have a quick chat to see if they were on the right track before a meeting, have lunch to exchange ideas, or get coffee to validate ideas. In a hybrid working environment, that social learning component has changed. I'm interested in understanding how that is impacting first-time managers who've been in role less than 2 years, and experienced managers who are new to their current company and in role less than 2 years.

The findings of this study might be used to help people managers, such as yourself, have a better onboarding experience and be better set up for success.

As part of my research, I am conducting this anonymous survey. No personal data will be collected. **I am asking for your help by completing the survey.**

If you decide to take part in the study, here's what it looks like:

The first question is to indicate your consent to use the data from this one-time survey.

There will be a series of questions for you to complete.

The first part of the survey will be asking you about social learning and your onboarding experience and how you are set up for success.

The second part of the survey will go into your sense of belonging and something social learning theorists call 'self-efficacy'. What that means in plain terms is how well you think you'll be able to achieve the task set out for you in your job.

The survey has a mix of multiple choice and open questions and should take no more than 15 minutes for you to complete.

Your survey answers will be recorded by SurveyMonkey.com where data is stored in a password protected electronic format. Your responses are confidential as SurveyMonkey does not collect identifiable information such as your name, email or IP address.

Your participation in this survey is voluntary. You can withdraw from the research by closing the SurveyMonkey window at any time without giving a reason.

At a later date, if you have any concerns about the study or your responses to the survey, you can contact me at [sacha.dekker@student.griffith.ie](mailto:sacha.dekker@student.griffith.ie)

I hugely appreciate your help with my research on the impact of social learning on people managers in a hybrid, corporate environment.

Have a great day,  
Sacha

There were 37 questions, and participants could skip any of them, with the exception of the first one.

1. I have read the information on this page and consent to use the answers I give in this survey for research purposes
  - Yes, I agree
2. What region are you based in?
  - EMEA
  - AMER
  - LATAM
  - APJ
3. How long have you been in a people manager role, prior to this one?
  - This is my first people manager role
  - 1 – 3 years
  - 3 – 5 years
  - 5+ years
4. How long have you been with your current company prior to this role?
  - 1 – 3 years
  - 3 – 5 years
  - 5+ years

Let's start by understanding what your onboarding experience for this role looked like (9 questions)

5. How was your onboarding for this role done?
  - Fully online
  - Mainly online with some in-person elements
  - Fully in-person
  - Mainly in-person with some online elements
6. How long was the onboarding period for this role?
7. How much of that was formal training?
8. Did you go through a dedicated people manager onboarding programme?
  - Yes, I went through a fully dedicated people manager onboarding programme
  - Not a fully dedicated programme but dedicated sessions
  - No, there was no dedicated people manager onboarding programme
  - Other (please specify)
9. During your onboarding, how much time was dedicated for you to connect with peers in similar roles?
  - No specific time was dedicated to this
  - <10%
  - Between 10% and 25%
  - Between 25% and 50%
  - >50%
10. During your onboarding, how much time was dedicated for you to connect with your manager?
  - No specific time was dedicated to this
  - <10%
  - Between 10% and 25%
  - Between 25% and 50%
  - >50%
11. My onboarding made me feel connected to others in my role
  - Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Neither agree nor disagree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree

12. During onboarding I was exposed to peers who showed me what good looks like in my role

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

13. My onboarding contributed to my sense of belonging in the company

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

#### 7 Questions about your views on social learning

14. I believe I can improve in my role by hearing from my peers how they work

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

15. Not being in the office full-time, means I have fewer opportunities to learn best practices from my peers

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

16. Learning best practices from peers is more valuable than going through training

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree

- Disagree
  - Strongly disagree
17. I believe best practice sharing is as valuable virtually as in-person
- Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Neither agree nor disagree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree
18. I feel comfortable sharing my own best practices, both successes and failures, with peers I haven't met in person
- Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Neither agree nor disagree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree
19. I'm interested in learning best practices from peers, even if they aren't top performers
- Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Neither agree nor disagree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree
20. I have sufficient opportunities in my role to learn from others
- Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Neither agree nor disagree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree

#### 6 Questions about your confidence to succeed in your role

21. I remain calm when facing difficulties in my role because I can rely on my abilities
- Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Neither agree nor disagree

- Disagree
  - Strongly disagree
22. When I'm confronted with a problem in my job, I know who to turn to for advice
- Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Neither agree nor disagree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree
23. Whatever comes my way in my job I can usually handle it
- Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Neither agree nor disagree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree
24. My past job experiences have prepared me well for my current job
- Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Neither agree nor disagree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree
25. I meet the goals I set for myself in the job
- Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Neither agree nor disagree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree
26. I feel prepared for most of the demands in my job
- Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Neither agree nor disagree
  - Disagree

- Strongly disagree

Almost there, I'd like to understand a bit about your sense of belonging (7 questions)

27. How well do people at your company know you as a person?

- Not at all
- A little
- Somewhat
- Quite a bit
- Completely

28. How connected do you feel to your peers at your company?

- Not at all
- A little
- Somewhat
- Quite a bit
- Extremely

29. How much do you feel you matter to people at your company?

- Not at all
- A little bit
- Somewhat
- Quite a bit
- A large amount

30. How fulfilling do you find your current role?

- Not at all
- Slightly
- Somewhat
- Quite
- Extremely

31. How 'at home' do you feel at your company?

- Not at all
- Slightly
- Somewhat
- Quite

- Extremely
32. Overall, how much do you feel you 'belong' at your company?
- Not at all
  - A little
  - Somewhat
  - Quite a bit
  - Extremely

Finally, some open questions (6). Thank you so much for making the time!

33. Can you please share examples of how your manager contributes to your sense of belonging?
34. What tools has your company/manager put in place to help you connect with and learn from peers?
35. How effective do you find these tools to be successful in your role?
36. In what other ways are you informally learning from peers?
37. What do you see as the biggest contributor to your career, outside of your personal efforts?
38. Is there anything else you'd like to share?

That's it! Thank you so much for your support in filling out this survey! It makes a big difference for me and my opportunity to graduate and for future people managers and how they learn from their peers!