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POSITION PAPER

Work engagement: An emerging concept in occupational health psychology

Arnold B. Bakker[a], Wilmar B. Schaufeli[b], Michael P. Leiter[c] and Toon W. Taris[d]

[a]*Institute of Psychology, Erasmus University Rotterdam, The Netherlands;* [b]*Department of Social and Organizational Psychology, Utrecht University, The Netherlands;* [c]*Department of Psychology, Acadia University, Canada;* [d]*Behavioral Science Institute, Department of Work and Organizational Psychology, Radboud University Nijmegen, The Netherlands*

This position paper introduces the emerging concept of work engagement: a positive, fulfilling, affective-motivational state of work-related well-being that is characterized by vigour, dedication, and absorption. Although there are different views of work engagement, most scholars agree that engaged employees have high levels of energy and identify strongly with their work. The most often used instrument to measure engagement is the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale, a self-report instrument that has been validated in many countries across the world. Research on engagement has investigated how engagement differs from related concepts (e.g., workaholism, organizational commitment), and has focused on the most important predictors of work engagement. These studies have revealed that engagement is a unique concept that is best predicted by job resources (e.g., autonomy, supervisory coaching, performance feedback) and personal resources (e.g., optimism, self-efficacy, self-esteem). Moreover, the first studies have shown that work engagement is predictive of job performance and client satisfaction. The paper closes with an account of what we do *not* know about work engagement, and offers a brief research agenda for future work.

Keywords: burnout; job resources; performance; workaholism; work engagement

Introduction

Recently, psychology has been criticized as primarily dedicated to addressing mental illness rather than mental "wellness." This prevailing negative bias of psychology is illustrated by the fact that the number of publications on negative states exceeds that on positive states by a ratio of 14:1 (Myers, 2000). The purpose of Positive Psychology is ". . . to begin to catalyze a change in the focus of psychology from pre-occupation only with repairing the worst things in life to also building positive qualities" (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000, p. 5). This advocated positive turn is also relevant for occupational health psychology. Failing to recognize the positive aspects of work is inappropriate and, as Turner, Barling, and Zacharatos (2002, p. 715) have argued, ". . . it is time to extend our research focus and explore more fully the positive sides, so as to gain full understanding of the meaning and effects of working."

This special issue responds to the call for more research into positive psychology by focusing on work engagement: a positive, fulfilling, affective-motivational state of work-related

*Corresponding author. Email: bakker@fsw.eur.nl

well-being that can be seen as the antipode of job burnout. Engaged employees have high levels of energy, are enthusiastic about their work, and they are often fully immersed in their job so that time flies (Macey & Schneider, 2008; May, Gilson, & Harter, 2004; Schaufeli & Bakker, in press). Whereas research on burnout has produced thousands of articles during the past three decades, research on work engagement has just begun to emerge. This is curious, in that modern organizations expect their employees to be proactive and show initiative, take responsibility for their own professional development, and to be committed to high quality performance standards. Thus, they need employees who feel energetic and dedicated, and who are absorbed by their work, i.e., who are engaged with their work (Bakker & Schaufeli, 2008). As we will see in this article, work engagement can make a true difference for employees and may offer organizations a competitive advantage (see also Bakker, in press; Demerouti & Cropanzano, in press).

Different views on work engagement

Interestingly, it is research on burnout that has stimulated most contemporary research on work engagement. Contrary to those who suffer from burnout, engaged employees have a sense of energetic and effective connection with their work, and instead of stressful and demanding they look upon their work as challenging. Two different but related schools of thought exist that consider work engagement as a positive, work-related state of well-being or fulfilment. According to Maslach and Leiter (1997), engagement is characterized by energy, involvement, and efficacy, the direct opposites of the three burnout dimensions. They argue that, in the case of burnout, energy turns into exhaustion, involvement into cynicism, and efficacy into ineffectiveness. By implication, engagement is assessed by the opposite pattern of scores on the three dimensions of the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI; Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996): low scores on exhaustion and cynicism, and high scores on professional efficacy.

The alternative view considers work engagement as an independent, distinct concept that is related negatively to burnout. Consequently, work engagement is defined and operationalized in its own right as "...a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigour, dedication, and absorption" (Schaufeli, Salanova, González-Romá, & Bakker, 2002, p. 74). That is, in engagement, fulfilment exists in contrast to the voids of life that leave people feeling empty as in burnout. Vigour is characterized by high levels of energy and mental resilience while working, the willingness to invest effort in one's work, and persistence even in the face of difficulties. Dedication refers to being strongly involved in one's work, and experiencing a sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, and challenge. Absorption is characterized by being fully concentrated and happily engrossed in one's work, whereby time passes quickly and one has difficulties with detaching oneself from work. Accordingly, vigour and dedication are considered direct opposites of exhaustion and cynicism, respectively, the two core symptoms of burnout. The continuum that is spanned by exhaustion and vigour has been labelled "energy," whereas the continuum that is spanned by cynicism and dedication has been labelled "identification" (González-Roma, Schaufeli, Bakker, & Lloret, 2006). Hence, work engagement is characterized by a high level of energy and strong identification with one's work, whereas burnout is characterized by the opposite: a low level of energy and poor identification with one's work (see also Demerouti & Bakker, 2008). In addition, based on in-depth interviews (Schaufeli, Taris, Le Blanc, Peeters, Bakker, & De Jonge, 2001), absorption was included as the third constituting aspect of work engagement.

Kahn (1990) took a different approach when he conceptualized engagement as the "... harnessing of organization member's selves to their work roles: in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, emotionally and mentally during role performances" (p. 694). Thus, engaged employees put much effort into their work because they identify with it. According to Kahn (1990, 1990) a dynamic, dialectical relationship exists between the person who drives personal energies (physical, cognitive, emotional, and mental) into his or her work role on the one hand, and the work role that allows this person to express him or herself on the other hand. Kahn (1992) differentiated the concept of engagement from psychological presence or the experience of "being fully there," namely when "... people feel and are attentive, connected, integrated, and focused in their role performance" (p. 322). Put differently, here engagement as behaviour (driving energy in one's work role) is considered as the manifestation of psychological presence, a particular mental state. In its turn, engagement is assumed to produce positive outcomes, both at the individual level (personal growth and development) as well as at the organizational level (performance quality).

Inspired by the work of Kahn (1990, 1992), Rothbard (2001) took a slightly different perspective and defined engagement as a two-dimensional motivational construct that includes attention ("... the cognitive availability and the amount of time one spends thinking about a role"; p. 656) and absorption ("... the intensity of one's focus on a role"; p. 656). It is important to note that the key reference of engagement for Kahn (1990, 1992) is the work *role*, whereas for those who consider engagement as the positive antithesis of burnout it is the employee's work *activity*, or the work itself.

Most scholars agree that engagement includes an energy dimension and an identification dimension. Work engagement is characterized by a high level of energy and strong identification with one's work. The perspective of this special issue is that the field is served best by a consistent construct for work engagement, one that focuses on employees' experience of work activity. Unfortunately, the broad exploration of constructs over the past decade has not produced consensus about its meaning. In contrast, a recent review of Macey and Schneider (2008) documented the proliferation of various definitions of engagement, many of them being old wine in new bottles. These authors try to "solve" the conceptual confusion by proposing employee engagement as an all-inclusive umbrella term that contains different types of engagement (i.e., trait engagement, state engagement, and behavioural engagement), each of which entails various conceptualizations; e.g., proactive personality (trait engagement), involvement (state engagement), and organizational citizenship behaviour (behavioural engagement). In contrast, we advocate the use of engagement as a specific, well-defined, and properly operationalized psychological state that is open to empirical research and practical application. This special issue documents the fruitfulness of this approach.

Measurement

There are several instruments that can be used to assess work engagement (see Schaufeli & Bakker, in press), but we will concentrate on the instruments that have been validated more extensively. Those who follow Maslach and Leiter's (1997, 2008) approach can use the MBI (Maslach et al., 1996) to assess energy (low score on exhaustion), involvement (low score on cynicism), and professional efficacy (high score on efficacy). An alternative instrument for the assessment of work engagement is the Oldenburg Burnout Inventory (OLBI; Demerouti & Bakker, 2008; Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Ebbinghaus, 2002). This instrument was developed originally to assess burnout, but includes both positively and negatively phrased items, and hence it can be used to assess work engagement as well

(see González-Roma et al., 2006). Researchers interested in assessing work engagement with the OLBI may recode the negatively framed items. The OLBI includes two dimensions: one ranging from exhaustion to vigour and a second ranging from cynicism (disengagement) to dedication. The reliability and factorial validity of the OLBI has been confirmed in studies conducted in Germany, Greece, the Netherlands, the USA, and South Africa (Demerouti & Bakker, 2008). Results of these studies clearly showed that a two-factor structure with vigour and dedication (referred to as exhaustion and disengagement in several of these studies) as the underlying factors fitted better to the data of several occupational groups than alternative factor structures.

The most often used instrument to measure engagement is the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES; Schaufeli & Bakker, in press; Schaufeli et al., 2002) that includes three subscales: vigour, dedication, and absorption. The UWES has been validated in several countries, including China (Yi-Wen & Yi-Qun, 2005), Finland (Hakanen, 2002), Greece (Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Demerouti, & Kantas, in press), Japan (Shimazu et al., 2008), South Africa (Storm & Rothmann, 2003), Spain (Schaufeli et al., 2002), and the Netherlands (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003; Schaufeli et al., 2002). All investigations used confirmatory factor analyses and showed that the fit of the hypothesized three-factor structure to the data was superior to that of alternative factor models. In addition, the internal consistencies of the three subscales proved to be sufficient in each study. It should be noted, however, that some studies failed to replicate the three-factor structure of work engagement (e.g., Shimazu et al., 2008; Sonnentag, 2003). This may be attributed partly to translation problems when it comes to items that contain metaphors (e.g., "Time flies when I am working"). Furthermore, Schaufeli and Bakker (in press) have argued that the overall score for work engagement may sometimes be more useful in empirical research than the scores on the three separate dimensions of the UWES. Schaufeli, Bakker, and Salanova (2006) developed a 9-item version of the UWES, and provided evidence for its cross-national validity. They showed that the three engagement dimensions are moderately strongly related.

What we know about work engagement

Previous research on work engagement has primarily used the well-validated UWES, and focused on the predictors of work engagement (job and personal resources), outcomes (performance), and differences from related concepts (e.g., workaholism, and organizational commitment). In this section, we briefly review the available evidence, and then we turn to a research agenda for work engagement.

Work engagement is not the same as workaholism

Workaholics spend a great deal of time in work activities when given the discretion to choose whether to do so; they are excessively hard workers. In addition, workaholics are reluctant to disengage from work and they persistently and frequently think about work when they are not at work. This suggests that workaholics are obsessed with their work; they are compulsive workers (Schaufeli, Taris, & Bakker, 2006; Scott, Moore, & Miceli, 1997). Engaged employees work hard (vigour), are involved (dedicated), and feel happily engrossed (absorbed) in their work. In this sense, they seem similar to workaholics. However, in contrast to workaholics, engaged workers lack the typical compulsive drive. For them work is fun, not an addiction, as was concluded from a qualitative study among 15 engaged workers (Schaufeli et al., 2001). Engaged employees work hard because they like it and not because they are driven by a

strong inner urge they cannot resist. For workaholics, their need to work is so exaggerated that it endangers their health, reduces their happiness, and deteriorates their interpersonal relations and social functioning (e.g., Bakker, Demerouti, & Burke, in press). In short, work engagement can be discriminated from workaholism (Taris, Schaufeli, & Shimazu, in press). Previous studies have also shown that work engagement can be discriminated from Type-A behaviour (Hallberg, Johansson, & Schaufeli, 2007), and from job involvement and organizational commitment (Hallberg & Schaufeli, 2006). In addition, Halbesleben and Wheeler (2008) have shown that work engagement can be distinguished from job embeddedness.

Job resources facilitate engagement

Previous studies have consistently shown that job resources such as social support from colleagues and supervisors, performance feedback, skill variety, autonomy, and learning opportunities are positively associated with work engagement (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008; Halbesleben, in press; Schaufeli & Salanova, 2007). Job resources refer to those physical, social, or organizational aspects of the job that may: (1) reduce job demands and the associated physiological and psychological costs; (2) be functional in achieving work goals; or (3) stimulate personal growth, learning, and development (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004).

Job resources either play an intrinsic motivational role because they foster employees' growth, learning, and development, or they play an extrinsic motivational role because they are instrumental in achieving work goals. In the former case, job resources fulfil basic human needs, such as the needs for autonomy, relatedness, and competence (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Frederick, 1997; Van den Broeck, Vansteenkiste, De Witte, & Lens, 2008). For instance, proper feedback fosters learning, thereby increasing job competence, whereas decision latitude and social support satisfy the need for autonomy and the need to belong, respectively. Job resources may also play an extrinsic motivational role, because work environments that offer many resources foster the willingness to dedicate one's efforts and abilities to the work task (Meijman & Mulder, 1998). In such environments it is likely that the task will be completed successfully and that the work goal will be attained. For instance, supportive colleagues and performance feedback increase the likelihood of being successful in achieving one's work goals. In either case, be it through the satisfaction of basic needs or through the achievement of work goals, the outcome is positive and engagement is likely to occur (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Schaufeli & Salanova, 2007).

Consistent with these notions about the motivational role of job resources, several studies have shown a positive relationship between job resources and work engagement (for a meta-analysis, see Halbesleben, in press). For example, Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) found evidence for a positive relationship between three job resources (performance feedback, social support, and supervisory coaching) and work engagement (vigour, dedication, and absorption) among four samples of Dutch employees. This study was replicated in a sample of over 2000 Finnish teachers (Hakanen, Bakker, & Schaufeli, 2006). Results showed that job control, information, supervisory support, innovative climate, and social climate were all related positively to work engagement. In addition, Koyuncu, Burke, and Fiksenbaum (2006) examined potential antecedents and consequences of work engagement in a sample of women managers and professionals employed by a large Turkish bank. Results showed that of the six areas of work life (Maslach & Leiter, 1997), particularly job control, rewards and recognition, and value fit were significant predictors of all three engagement measures.

Recent longitudinal research has generally confirmed the positive relationship between job resources and work engagement. Mauno, Kinnunen, and Ruokolainen (2007) utilized a 2-year longitudinal design to investigate work engagement and its antecedents among Finnish health care personnel. Job resources predicted work engagement better than job demands. Job control and organization-based self-esteem proved to be the best lagged predictors of the three dimensions of work engagement, after controlling for Time 1 scores on the dimensions of engagement. Further, in their study among managers and executives of a Dutch telecom company, Schaufeli, Bakker, and Van Rhenen (2008) found that changes in job resources were predictive of engagement over a 1-year time period. Specifically, results showed that increases in social support, autonomy, opportunities to learn and to develop, and performance feedback were positive predictors of Time 2 work engagement after controlling for baseline engagement. The two longitudinal studies included in the special issue (de Lange, De Witte, & Notelaers, 2008; Hakanen, Schaufeli, & Ahola, 2008) offer additional evidence for a causal effect of job resources on engagement.

Job resources become salient in the face of high job demands

Hobfoll (2002) has argued that resource gain acquires its saliency in the context of resource loss. This implies that job resources become more salient and gain their motivational potential when employees are confronted with high job demands (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Hakanen, Bakker, and Demerouti (2005) tested this interaction hypothesis in a sample of Finnish dentists employed in the public sector. It was hypothesized that job resources (e.g., variability in the required professional skills and peer contacts) are most beneficial in maintaining work engagement under conditions of high job demands (e.g., workload, unfavourable physical environment). The dentists were split in two random groups in order to cross-validate the findings. A set of hierarchical regression analyses showed that 17 out of 40 possible interactions were statistically significant (43%), showing that variability in professional skills boosted work engagement when qualitative workload was high, and mitigated the negative effect of high qualitative workload on work engagement.

Conceptually similar findings have been reported by Bakker, Hakanen, Demerouti, and Xanthopoulou (2007). In their study among Finnish teachers working in elementary, secondary, and vocational schools, they found that job resources act as buffers and diminish the negative relationship between pupil misbehaviour and work engagement. In addition, they found that job resources particularly influenced work engagement when teachers were confronted with high levels of pupil misconduct. A series of moderated structural equation analyses showed that 14 out of 18 possible two-way interaction effects were statistically significant (78%). Particularly, supervisor support, innovativeness, appreciation, and organizational climate were important job resources for teachers that helped them cope with demanding interactions with students. Taken together, these findings clearly show that job resources may become more salient and gain their motivational potential when employees are confronted with high job demands.

Personal resources facilitate engagement

In addition to job characteristics, several studies have focused on state-like personal resources as predictors of work engagement. *Personal resources* are positive self-evaluations that are linked to resiliency and refer to individuals' sense of their ability to control and impact upon their environment successfully (Hobfoll, Johnson, Ennis, & Jackson, 2003). It has been shown

that such positive self-evaluations predict goal-setting, motivation, performance, job and life satisfaction, and other desirable outcomes (for a review, see Judge, Van Vianen, & De Pater, 2004). The reason for this is that the larger an individual's personal resources, the more positive their self-regard and the more goal self-concordance is expected to be experienced (Judge, Bono, Erez, & Locke, 2005). Individuals with goal self-concordance are intrinsically motivated to pursue their goals, and as a result they trigger higher performance and satisfaction (see also Luthans & Youssef, 2007).

Several authors have investigated the relationships between personal resources and work engagement. For example, Rothmann and Storm (2003) conducted a cross-sectional study among 1910 South African police officers, and found that engaged police officers had an active coping style. They were problem-focused, taking active steps to attempt to remove or rearrange stressors. Further, in their study among highly skilled Dutch technicians, Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Demerouti, and Schaufeli (2007) examined the role of three personal resources (self-efficacy, organizational-based self-esteem, and optimism) in predicting work engagement. Results showed that engaged employees are highly self-efficacious; they believe they are able to meet the demands they face in a broad array of contexts. In addition, engaged workers believe that they will generally experience good outcomes in life (optimistic), and believe they can satisfy their needs by participating in roles within the organization (organizational-based self-esteem; see also Mauno et al., 2007).

These findings were replicated and expanded in a 2-year follow-up study (Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Demerouti, & Schaufeli, 2008). The findings indicated that self-efficacy, organizational-based self-esteem, and optimism make a unique contribution to explaining variance in work engagement over time, over and above the impact of job resources and previous levels of engagement. As a final example, Bakker, Gierveld, and Van Rijswijk (2006) in their study among female school principals found that those with most personal resources scored highest on work engagement. Particularly resilience, self-efficacy, and optimism contributed to work engagement, and were able to explain unique variance in engagement scores (in addition to social support from team members and colleague principals, opportunities for development, and social support from the intimate partner). Thus, resilience is another personal resource that may facilitate work engagement.

In conclusion, job and personal resources are important antecedents of work engagement. Job resources reduce the impact of job demands on strain, are functional in achieving work goals, and stimulate personal growth, learning, and development. These resources particularly have motivational potential in the face of high job demands. Further, engaged employees seem to differ from other employees in terms of their personal resources, including optimism, self-efficacy, self-esteem, resilience, and an active coping style. These resources seem to help engaged workers to control and impact upon their work environment successfully (see also Luthans, Norman, Avolio, & Avey, 2008).

Relationship with performance

Bakker (in press) mentions four reasons why engaged workers perform better than non-engaged workers. Engaged employees: (1) often experience positive emotions, including happiness, joy, and enthusiasm; (2) experience better psychological and physical health; (3) create their own job and personal resources (e.g., support from others); and (4) transfer their engagement to others. Whereas positive emotions broaden people's thought-action repertoire (Fredrickson, 2003), good health facilitates performance because individuals can use all their mental and physical resources (skills, abilities, knowledge, etc.). Further, employees who

create their own resources are better able to deal with their job demands and to achieve their work goals (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Finally, in most organizations performance is the result of the combined effort of individual employees. It is therefore conceivable that the crossover of engagement among members of the same work team increases performance.

Only a few studies have examined the relationship between work engagement and job performance (see Bakker & Demerouti, 2008). Nevertheless, the results obtained so far look promising. Bakker, Demerouti, and Verbeke (2004) showed that engaged employees received higher ratings from their colleagues on in-role and extra-role performance, indicating that engaged employees perform well and are willing to go the extra mile. Further, in their survey among Dutch employees from a wide range of occupations, Schaufeli, Taris, and Bakker (2006) found that work engagement is related positively to in-role performance. These findings were expanded in another study among secretaries; Gierveld and Bakker (2005) found that engaged secretaries scored higher on in-role and extra-role performance. In addition, results suggested that engaged secretaries had more influence on daily business. They were more often asked to carry out additional tasks, including personnel pre-selection, the organization of trade exhibitions and conventions, and website maintenance.

Salanova, Agut, and Peiró (2005) conducted an important study among personnel working in Spanish restaurants and hotels. Contact employees from over 100 service units (hotel front desks and restaurants) provided information about organizational resources, engagement, and service climate. Furthermore, customers from these units provided information on employee performance and customer loyalty. Structural equation modelling analyses were consistent with a full mediation model in which organizational resources and work engagement predicted service climate, which in turn predicted employee performance and then customer loyalty. Finally, Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Demerouti, and Schaufeli (in press) conducted a diary study among employees working in a Greek fast-food restaurant, and found that daily levels of work engagement were predictive of objective daily financial returns.

We can conclude that research supports the link between work engagement and performance. Employees who feel vital and strong, and who are enthusiastic about their work, show better in-role and extra-role performance. As a consequence, engaged workers realize better financial results, and have more satisfied clients and customers.

What we don't know about work engagement: a brief research agenda

Since research on work engagement has just started, there are many questions that still need to be answered. Below we discuss five topics that seem highly relevant for further progress in the emerging field of work engagement.

Daily work engagement

Most previous studies on work engagement have used a between-person design and cannot explain why engaged employees sometimes show below average or poor performance. Even engaged employees may have their off-days, and researchers have therefore begun to examine daily changes in work engagement. An important advantage of diary research is that it relies less on retrospective recall than regular surveys, since the questions relate to individuals' perceptions and feelings on a certain day. Additionally, daily changes in work engagement within persons can be related causally to daily changes in performance. Diary research may

also reveal what the day-to-day triggers are of state engagement (Sonnentag, Dormann, & Demerouti, in press).

Short- vs. long-term consequences of engagement

The available research evidence suggests that work engagement has positive effects in the short- (Sonnentag, 2003; Xanthopoulou et al., in press) and the long-term (Mauno et al., 2007; Schaufeli et al., 2008). However, a relevant question is whether there is also a dark side of engagement. Can the level of engagement be too high if employees are in a continuous state of high engagement (see Sonnentag, Mojza, Binnewies, & Scholl, 2008)? Engagement may give new energy, but does it take energy in the end? Can engaged employees finally burn out? What is the role of recovery in this process? Future studies may use multiple waves with short and longer periods between the waves of data collection to examine the short- and long-term consequences of work engagement. There is particularly a dearth of research on the relationship between engagement and health.

Interventions

Future research on work engagement would benefit from a resolute focus on interventions. This research would make the most valuable contribution by not only focusing on something positive, but also working directly on increasing the prevalence of positive relationships with work. Moreover, from a theoretical perspective it would be interesting and important to test the hypothesis that fostering engagement goes beyond preventing burnout. A disappointment of the extensive research on job burnout is the dearth of research that explicitly tests interventions to alleviate the syndrome (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001). The research literature is supplied abundantly with cross-sectional studies demonstrating burnout's correlates and too few demonstrating planned change. We urge researchers to go beyond investigating work engagement's causes and consequences. The greatest contribution will come from systematic studies that evaluate the impact of new management procedures or personal routines on work engagement. Interesting questions are whether engagement can be trained, and whether the engagement frame facilitates interventions.

Self-regulation

How do people manage their own work engagement? According to self-regulation theories, individuals use strategies that enable them to guide their goal-directed activities over time and across changing circumstances. For instance, regulatory focus theory (Higgins, 2000) discriminates between two regulatory foci among individuals. When *promotion focused*, individuals are motivated by growth and development needs, have strong ideals, and prefer gain to the avoidance of losses. When *prevention focused*, individuals are responsive to security needs, the responsibility for safety and protection, have strong emphasis on obligations, and prefer the avoidance of loss to gains. The regulatory focus that people apply is a matter of individual differences but can also be influenced by the environment (Higgins, 2000). It would be interesting to examine the impact of regulatory foci on work engagement and vice versa. Do work environments that emphasize growth and resources foster a promotion focus and work engagement? Promotion-focused employees may successfully balance such environments with themselves using eagerness and approach strategies (Brockner & Higgins, 2001). In contrast, environments that emphasize duties and

demands may foster a prevention focus. Prevention-focused employees may be engaged and function successfully in such environments using vigilance and avoidance strategies. In short, future studies could investigate whether engagement is highest when people encounter *regulatory fit* between their chronic (preferred focus) and task-induced regulatory state.

Conceptual development and integration

Further progress in research would be more effective if there were broad agreement on the meaning of work engagement. As noted above, there is broad consensus on two dimensions of work engagement: energy and involvement/identification, both of which are included in the OLBI (Demerouti & Bakker, 2008), the MBI (Maslach et al., 1996), and the UWES (Schaufeli et al., 2002). As far as the dimensions of work engagement are concerned, further work is needed to consider whether absorption is a core aspect of work engagement or an outcome of energy and identification, and on the role of professional efficacy. Resolving these questions requires further development in theory and measurement. Based on theoretical analyses and research on the construct and concurrent validity, relationships between engagement and other established constructs such as satisfaction, organizational commitment, and organizational citizenship behaviour should be specified. In this way, the added value of the recently emerged concept of work engagement should be demonstrated.

Conclusion

In this paper we have shown that research on work engagement may broaden our view of the meaning and effects of working (see Turner et al., 2002). Employees with high levels of energy and identification with their work have many resources available and seem to perform better. It is even conceivable that engaged workers create their own job resources over time. Our overview suggests that a focus on work engagement may not only benefit the individual but also offer organizations a competitive advantage. We hope that the research agenda that we have outlined above will be a useful resource for occupational health psychologists and will stimulate future research on work engagement.

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