

12

Burnout, Boredom and Engagement in the Workplace

WILMAR B. SCHAUFELI AND MARISA SALANOVA

Chapter Objectives

After studying this chapter, you should be able to:

- define and *assess* job burnout, boredom at work and work engagement;
- *differentiate* between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ ways of working hard;
- identify the main *drivers* of engagement as well as the causes of burnout and boredom;
- identify the major *consequences* of burnout, boredom and engagement;
- understand the *psychological mechanisms* that are involved in employee affective well-being.

This chapter is about how employees feel at work. In other words, it is concerned with their psychological well-being, which can be either negative or positive. For instance, employees may feel worn out, cynical or bored, or in contrast, they may feel enthused and full of pep. The way employees feel has not only to do with ‘who they are’ – i.e. their personality – but also with ‘where they are’ – i.e. in their jobs. In essence, employee well-being results from the interaction between person and (work) environment. It depends on the interplay of person-related factors such as temperament and past experiences, and job-related factors such as job characteristics and interpersonal relations at work. More particularly, this chapter

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focuses on job burnout, boredom at work and work engagement. After a brief historical overview (Section 12.1), these three types of employee well-being are described in greater detail (Section 12.2) and a taxonomy is presented that allows a differentiation with workaholism and job satisfaction (Section 12.3). Next, the antecedents, consequences and correlates of burnout, boredom and engagement are discussed (Section 12.4), as well the role of individual differences (Section 12.5). Finally, psychological explanations for burnout, boredom and work engagement are discussed (Section 12.6), and the chapter closes with some overall conclusions (Section 12.7).

12.1 A Brief History

The practical and scientific interest in employee feelings at work developed relatively recently, although the first accounts date back over a century ago. Historically speaking the interest in employee feelings is intertwined with stress, in this context loosely defined as a physical, mental or emotional response to events or demands that cause bodily or mental tension. Strange as it may seem, both World Wars have contributed much to the interest in employee feelings. During World War I (1914–1918), the British government commissioned the Industrial Fatigue Research Board to come up with solutions to tackle the problem of industrial fatigue in ammunition factories, which caused many injuries and fatal accidents. At about the same time army physicians described ‘shell shock’, an acute stress-reaction that resulted from the extreme demands to which soldiers were exposed in combat situations. During World War II (1940–1945), for the first time quantitative studies of the impact of war on the mental and emotional life of individuals (i.e. soldiers and civilians) were carried out (Stouffer, Suchman, de Vinney, Stra, & Williams, 1949). In the 1940s and 1950s the US Air Force funded a large laboratory research programme about the effects of stress on task performance. This programme was led by Richard Lazarus, who later developed his renowned stress and coping theory (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Throughout the 1960s and 1970s the field was dominated by the Institute of Social Research of the University of Michigan, where Kornhauser (1965) carried out a ground-breaking survey on the mental health of automotive workers. In Europe the British Tavistock Institute played a major role with a landmark study in the late 1940s on stress in British coalmines that uncovered the role of social and organizational factors, such as group norms. In the 1970s and 1980s Scandinavian job stress research was highly influential, particularly the work of Karasek and Theorell (1990), who conceived the well-known Demand–Control–Support Model (see Chapter 3).

Initially, no sharp distinction was made between different kinds of mental strain and ill-being, and omnibus measures were used for their assessment. This changed, however, in the late 1970s when *job burnout* appeared on the scene. This notion entered science through the backdoor, so to speak. ‘Burnout’ is a metaphor that was used by professionals, particularly those working in the human services such as health care, social work, psychotherapy and law enforcement, to describe a state of mental exhaustion. It has been argued that the emergence of burnout is rooted

in the social and cultural changes that have taken place since the 1960s, such as the growth and bureaucratization of welfare institutions and the weakening of professional authority, both of which put considerable strain on human services professionals (Schaufeli, Leiter, & Maslach, 2009). In fact, the history of burnout developed along two lines: a practical, interventionist tradition that focused on the assessment, prevention and treatment of burnout, and an academic research tradition that focused on identifying its causes and consequences, and uncovering its psychological underpinnings. Quite remarkably, both traditions developed relatively independently and only occasional overlap, for instance in case of the practical use of validated burnout measures and the scientific evaluation of interventions to prevent or to combat burnout. Meanwhile, ‘burnout business’ is booming and over 6,600 scientific articles have been published on the subject.

Although *boredom at work* was recognized as a topic worthy of scientific inquiry by the pioneer of applied psychology Hugo Münsterberg back in 1913, it is still investigated only occasionally. Traditionally boredom, which is conceived as a state of low arousal and dissatisfaction due to an unchallenging work situation, is investigated in relation to monotonous and repetitive work, for instance at assembly lines. The first empirical studies on boredom were carried out before and during World War II using a human factors perspective and focused on task performance in a laboratory setting. Boredom in organizations was not studied until the 1960s and 1970s, and currently fewer than 400 scientific studies have appeared.

Since the turn of the century, *work engagement* has emerged as the opposite of burnout, namely a state of mental energy. Like burnout, the notion of engagement was first used in practice in business settings by human resources-professionals and consultants because an organization’s mental capital, that is, the cognitive and emotional fortitude and strength of its employees, is nowadays of increasing economic significance. For modern organizations, employees’ *mental* fitness rather than their mere physical fitness provides a decisive competitive advantage. From a scientific point of view, the emergence of work engagement has been fostered by the rise of positive psychology, which studies human strength and optimal functioning, since the turn of the century. From 2000 till 2012 over 1,100 scientific publications were published on work or employee engagement (these terms are used interchangeably).

12.2 Defining and Assessing Burnout, Boredom and Engagement

In this section we will describe how the three different indicators of psychological well-being are generally defined and assessed.

Burnout

As mentioned earlier, burnout is a metaphor that is commonly used to describe a state or process of mental exhaustion, similar to the smothering of a fire or the extinguishing of a candle. The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines ‘to burn out’

as ‘to fail, wear out, or become exhausted by making excessive demands on energy, strength, or resources’.

Although various definitions of burnout exist, the most often cited academic definition comes from Maslach, Jackson and Leiter (1986, p. 1): ‘Burnout is a syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment that can occur among individuals who do “people work” of some kind.’ So burnout consists of three dimensions in this definition. Emotional exhaustion refers to the depletion or draining of emotional resources caused by interpersonal demands. Depersonalization points to the development of negative, callous and cynical attitudes towards the recipients of one’s services. The term ‘depersonalization’ may cause some confusion since it is used in a completely different sense in psychiatry, namely to denote a person’s extreme alienation from self and the world. However, in Maslach and Jackson’s definition, depersonalization refers to an impersonal and dehumanized perception of *recipients*, rather than to an impersonal view of *self*. Finally, lack of personal accomplishment is the tendency to evaluate one’s work with recipients negatively. Burned-out professionals believe that their objectives are not achieved, which is accompanied by feelings of insufficiency and poor professional self-esteem. For a description of burnout see the story of Peter – a burned-out teacher (Work Psychology in Action box).

Initially, Maslach and Jackson claimed that burnout exclusively occurs among professionals who deal with recipients (e.g. students, pupils, clients, patients or delinquents) face-to-face. Hence, in their view burnout is restricted to the helping professions, at least initially. But in the 1990s the concept of burnout was broadened and defined as a crisis in one’s relationship with work *in general* and not necessarily as a crisis in one’s relationship with *people* at work (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001). From that time onwards burnout was also investigated outside the human services. For that purpose, the three original burnout dimensions were redefined: *exhaustion* refers to fatigue irrespective of its cause, *cynicism* reflects an indifferent or distant attitude towards work instead of other people and *lack of professional efficacy* encompasses both social and non-social aspects of occupational accomplishment. In other words, burnout is a multidimensional construct that includes a stress reaction (exhaustion or fatigue), a mental distancing response (depersonalization or cynicism) and a negative belief (lack of accomplishment or efficacy).

Psychologically speaking these three components are related (see also Section 12.6). Exhaustion results from exposure to chronic stressors at work (e.g. work overload, emotional demands, interpersonal conflicts). In an attempt to prevent further energy depletion, employees distance themselves mentally from their work by developing depersonalizing or cynical attitudes. In doing so, their work performance is likely to diminish and as a result they may feel incompetent and inefficacious. This dynamic interplay is illustrated by a study that showed that the depersonalizing and cynical attitudes of Dutch physicians towards their patients negatively affected the doctor–patient relationship (Bakker, Schaufeli, Sixma, Bosveld, & van Dierendonck, 2000). In its turn, this poor and demanding relationship led to higher levels of burnout, including reduced accomplishment. Seen from this perspective, excessive mental distancing is an inadequate strategy to deal

Work Psychology in Action: Peter – a burned-out teacher

During the past two years, Peter, a 48-year-old teacher, has played a crucial role in the merging of his school with another school. It has been a very hectic and busy time because he was one of the advocates and active agents who promoted the merger. After the merger was concluded Peter felt very disappointed since he was not promoted to the newly created job as department coordinator in the new school. Instead, the job he hoped to receive was offered to a younger colleague who had always been sceptical of the merger. Peter felt hurt, resentful and unfairly treated; in his opinion he had put much more time and effort into reorganizing the school than his younger colleague, yet he was denied the appropriate reward. Soon after this event Peter feels extremely tired and anxious, and it takes an extreme effort for him to take on anything. He is no longer able to perform his job at school and consequently he is on sick leave. Peter sleeps till ten o'clock in the morning and he feels tired all day long. Although he would have enough time now to pursue his hobbies (refurbishing antique furniture and playing bridge), he lacks the energy and doesn't fancy it. Instead, he worries a lot and has problems concentrating (e.g. after reading some lines in the newspaper he has forgotten what he has read previously). Moreover, he suffers from headaches and pain in the neck, and feels depressed and restless. Peter feels particularly uncomfortable in social situations and, as a consequence, he avoids others and becomes more and more isolated. If things do not work out properly or when somebody is unkind, Peter gets upset. He is irritable and easily hurt, which strains his family, especially his two teenage daughters. But perhaps the most frightening of all is that Peter doesn't recognize himself anymore, he feels powerless and totally out of control. He cannot understand what has happened to him.

Source: Based on a real case, reported by Schaap, Schaufeli and Hoogduin (1995).

with emotional strain. Schaufeli and Taris (2005) argued that exhaustion and mental distancing constitute the core of burnout and that rather than being a constituting dimension, professional efficacy should be a consequence of exhaustion and distancing. As far as burnout is concerned, the *inability* to spend effort (because of being exhausted) and the *unwillingness* to spend effort (because of distancing and withdrawal) are two sides of the same coin.

The most widely used instrument to assess burnout is the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI; Maslach et al., 1996), which includes three subscales reflecting the three dimensions, i.e. (emotional) exhaustion, depersonalization or cynicism,

and reduced accomplishment or efficacy. In fact, three versions of the MBI exist, a general version that can be used in every occupational context and specific versions for human service professionals and educators, respectively. However, other questionnaires also exist that either tap the exhaustion dimension only or include the mental distancing dimension as well (see Maslach, Leiter, & Schaufeli, 2008). Examples of items are ‘I feel emotionally drained by my work’ (exhaustion), ‘I doubt the significance of my work’ (cynicism) and ‘I can effectively solve the problems that arise in my work’ (efficacy; this last item is reversely scored).

Based on a large epidemiological study among around 12,000 Dutch employees, it is estimated that about 16% of the Dutch working population is at risk of burnout and that each year 6% of the Dutch workforce develops serious burnout complaints (Kant, Jansen, van Amelsfoort, Mohren, & Swaen, 2004). From this it is calculated that, on average, burnout symptoms last 2.5 years, which makes it a chronic condition. The highest levels of burnout are found among teachers and those with higher education. Although in general no systematic gender differences are found, occasionally higher levels of burnout are reported for women aged between 35 and 45. Males sometimes exhibit higher levels of cynicism than females, but this is probably caused by sex-role socialization. For instance, boys learn to distance themselves emotionally more than girls (‘boys do not cry’).

Boredom

Whereas much current psychological research focuses on the causes and consequences of overstimulation at work, including burnout, the problem of under-stimulation (boredom) has largely been neglected. Interestingly, the Merriam-Webster dictionary describes boredom as ‘the state of being weary and restless through lack of interest’. First, this suggests that the effects of overstimulation (burnout) and under-stimulation (boredom) seem to overlap to some extent since both are characterized by feeling worn out. Traditionally, two schools of thought exist when it comes to defining boredom. According to the first approach, boredom is associated with conducting monotonous and repetitive tasks (O’Hanlon, 1981). Second, it is suggested that the experience of boredom at work is due to an internal need for high stimulation; the greater this internal need, the more susceptible one would be to feeling bored (Farmer & Sundberg, 1986). Both perspectives define boredom in terms of its antecedents, so these definitions are circular: employees feel bored because they work in boring (monotonous) jobs or because they are boredom-prone by nature. In order to avoid this circularity, Loukidou, Loan-Clake and Daniels (2009, p. 383) define boredom simply as an ‘unpleasant and deactivated affect’. However, this description is rather narrow and unspecific because it limits boredom to a mere affect and does not refer to the work context. We therefore propose to follow Mikulas and Vodanovich (1993, p.3) and define boredom at work as an unpleasant state of relatively low arousal and dissatisfaction, which is attributed to an inadequately stimulating work situation. For a description of boredom see the story of Geoff – a bored assistant (Work Psychology in Action box).

Work Psychology in Action: Geoff – a bored assistant

‘I’ve had a few boring jobs in my day, but the most depressing one was my first job out of college. I was bored stiff, and I didn’t want to be. It was an exciting job for a then 22-year-old. I had landed a job as an office production assistant, working at the studios of 20th Century Fox. One of my highlights was looking out a window into a parking lot one afternoon and seeing Sean Connery get out of the car. I had arrived, sort of. But while the office needed help, it turned out that they didn’t need all that much help. Within a few days, I had organized the filing cabinets, run several errands and helped get the television production office running smoothly. But I was an assistant of an assistant, and after about a week there, it started to become apparent that there was no longer much for me to do. Every day became more and more boring, and I became more and more desperate to look busy. I think it worked too well. When I resorted to polishing the picture frames on the wall, the assistant came over to me and said, ‘I think we both know what has to happen...’ So I was ‘let go’, but given two week’s severance pay, which was really very decent of them. And then I promptly found a job where I was even more bored, and the location – an office building miles and miles from Hollywood – wasn’t exciting either.’

Source: Williams (2008).

To date, boredom at work is measured ‘objectively’ by referring to the repetitiveness of the job or by assessing the levels of employee boredom proneness or by a single item that refers to the emotion of feeling bored (for subjective and objective measurement, see also Chapter 5). Recently, a short multi-item questionnaire – the Dutch Boredom Scale (DUBS) – has been proposed that is based on the definition mentioned above (Reijseger et al., 2012). Example items are ‘I feel bored at my job’ and ‘At work, time goes by very slowly’. Unfortunately, to date, no information is available about the prevalence of boredom at work.

Engagement

In contrast to burnout and boredom, everyday connotations of engagement are positive in nature. It is associated with involvement, commitment, passion, enthusiasm, focused effort and energy. In a similar vein, the Merriam-Webster dictionary describes engagement as ‘emotional involvement or commitment’ and ‘the state of being in gear’. In the academic literature work engagement is either considered as the positive antithesis of burnout or as a distinct concept in its own right. According to the first perspective engagement is characterized by energy, involvement and perceived efficacy. In fact, they are the direct opposites of the three burnout dimensions (Maslach & Leiter, 1997). Put differently, burnout is

seen as an erosion of engagement; energy turns into exhaustion, involvement turns into cynicism and perceived efficacy turns into ineffectiveness. By implication, engagement is assessed by the opposite pattern of scores on the three dimensions of the MBI: low scores on exhaustion and cynicism, and high scores on professional efficacy.

Alternatively, according to the second perspective work engagement is defined independently from burnout as ‘...a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication and absorption’ (Schaufeli, Salanova, González-Romá, & Bakker, 2002, p. 74). Vigor 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, finally, is characterized by focused attention, being fully concentrated and happily engrossed in one’s work, whereby time passes quickly and one has difficulties detaching oneself from work. Even though engagement is conceptualized as the ‘opposite’ of burnout, there is not the presumption that it is expressed by the opposite profile of MBI scores. For a description of engagement see the story of Mary – an engaged secretary (Work Psychology in Action box).

To assess work engagement in its own right a self-report questionnaire has been developed – the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES; Schaufeli, Bakker, & Salanova, 2006). It includes items such as ‘I feel strong and vigorous in my job’ (vigor), ‘I’m enthusiastic about my job’ (dedication) and ‘I feel happy when I’m engrossed in my work’ (absorption). Although no reliable scientific estimates exist about the prevalence of work engagement, various surveys of global consultancy firms suggest that roughly about 25% of the North American workforce can be considered ‘engaged’, against only 15% of European employees (Attridge, 2009). No systematic gender differences are found in levels of work engagement. Executives, managers, artists, farmers and teachers seem to be most engaged professional groups, whereas blue-collar workers, police officers, retail workers and homecare staff seem to be least engaged.

Replay

- Burnout includes exhaustion, mental distancing (cynicism or depersonalization) and lack of professional efficacy.
- Exhaustion and mental distancing constitute the core of burnout.
- Burnout can apply to people working in a wide range of occupations. It is *not* limited to professionals who work with other people.
- Boredom at work is characterized by low arousal and dissatisfaction, which result from under-stimulation.
- Work engagement includes vigor, dedication and absorption.
- Burnout, boredom and engagement can be assessed by short self-report questionnaires.
- Engagement is inversely related to burnout and boredom.

Work Psychology in Action: Mary – an engaged secretary

After finishing school Mary worked for a couple of years in several administrative jobs. She worked hard and liked her work a lot. After her first child was born she quit her job but remained active as a volunteer in the community (e.g. at school and in the local library). Currently she is still engaged in volunteer work: as a member of the board of the community centre, as treasurer of the parent–teacher–student association of her children’s school and as a board member of a charity. Mary is a very energetic woman who likes to do something meaningful for other people. It is difficult for her not to be active and not participate in her community ‘because there is always something to do’.

In her current job she is very proactive and shows personal initiative. She took up her working career again after her second child started primary school. After caring for her children for about eight years it was difficult for her to find a new proper job. So she started with a temporary job to clean up and rearrange the archive of a homecare institution. After a short while she suggested that the manager set up a completely new archive that would suit the needs of professionals much better. He liked the idea, so Mary did the job and she did it very well. As a result she was offered a steady job as a secretary. Initially her job was rather simple but because Mary likes to take on new challenges her work became increasingly varied and responsible. She has learned a lot of new things, for instance to work with sophisticated software that is used for personnel planning and bookkeeping. She is acknowledged by the professionals for her efficiency, customer friendliness and cooperation, and her boss values her work greatly. Her commitment and helpfulness are illustrated by the fact that once she cleaned up the room of an elderly woman because the regular helper was unable to come. As a matter of fact, Mary is only responsible for the planning and financing of household help and not for the actual work itself. Many customers rely on Mary and share their ups and downs with her so she gets to know them quite well. Mary is a strong-minded, independent and assertive woman with a strong drive to make a difference for others.

Source: Based on an interview reported in Schaufeli and Bakker (2007).

12.3 A Taxonomy of Employee Well-being

Various types of work-related well-being, including burnout, boredom and engagement, can be mapped using the so-called circumplex model of emotions (Russell, 1980). This model assumes that all human emotions may be plotted on

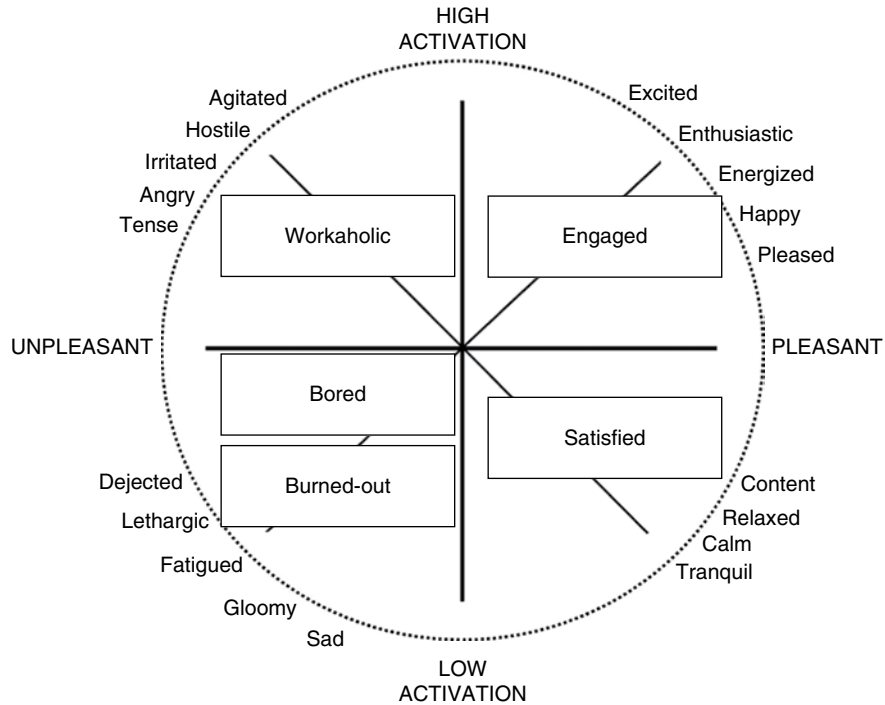


Figure 12.1 A taxonomy of work-related well-being (adapted from Russell, 1980).

the surface of a circle that is defined by two orthogonal dimensions that run from pleasure to displeasure and from activation to deactivation (see Figure 12.1). Put differently, each and every emotion is a combination of varying degrees of pleasure and activation. For instance, excitement is a pleasant and active emotion, whereas sadness is an unpleasant and inactive emotion. Additionally, calmness is pleasant and inactive, while hostility is unpleasant and active.

In a similar vein, these two fundamental dimensions may also constitute employee well-being, that is, employees who experience mainly negative emotions may suffer from burnout, boredom or workaholism, whereas employees who experience mainly positive emotions may feel satisfied or engaged. In addition, employees may either feel activated, as in workaholism and engagement, or deactivated, as in burnout, boredom and satisfaction. This way, engaged employees are placed in the upper right quadrant of Figure 12.1, satisfied employees in the lower right quadrant, bored or burned-out employees in the lower left quadrant and finally workaholics in the upper left quadrant. Moreover, the intensity of the experience increases when moving from the centre to the surface of the circle along both diagonals. For instance, burned-out employees will feel more negative and less active than bored employees. Likewise, levels of engagement, satisfaction and workaholism may differ in intensity, depending on the distance from the centre of the circle.

This taxonomy allows us to discuss the differences between the various types of employee well-being more systematically. For instance, Figure 12.1 illustrates why studies consistently show that engagement and satisfaction, as well as burnout

and workaholism, are positively associated with each other, whereas burnout and engagement are negatively related (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2010). The reason is that engagement and satisfaction are positive states, and burnout and workaholism are negative states. So far, only one study (Reijseger et al., 2012) has shown that boredom is positively related to burnout and negatively to engagement, which is also consistent with Figure 12.1. Using a similar circumplex model, Warr and Inceoglu (2012) showed that engagement is an energized motivational state with strong activating potential that is associated with *poor* person–job fit. This signifies that engaged employees want more from their job than they actually perceive; they are eager and look for new challenges. Satisfied employees, on the other hand, are satiated and lack that typical drive of their engaged colleagues; they are contented and experience a *good* fit with their job. Not surprisingly, engaged employees perform better than merely satisfied employees. A meta-analysis (Christian, Garza, & Slaughter, 2011) showed that work engagement was stronger related to performance than satisfaction and that the positive effect of work engagement on performance was still significant after controlling for satisfaction. In other words, engagement had an impact on performance over and beyond satisfaction. In essence, this illustrates the more ‘active’ nature of work engagement as compared to satisfaction.

Unlike work engagement and job satisfaction, workaholism is a negative state that is defined as a strong inner drive to work excessively hard (Taris, Schaufeli, & Shimazu, 2010). Workaholics have the compulsive drive to work incessantly and therefore tend to allocate an exceptional amount of time to work. By doing so they neglect other life domains, such as leisure and family. Their obsession with work motivates them to be very active, but at the same time workaholics do not enjoy their work, as illustrated by many studies (Ng, Sorensen, & Feldman, 2007). Like engaged employees, workaholics are active and work very hard but their underlying motivation differs fundamentally. A study by van Beek, Hu, Schaufeli, Taris and Schreurs (2012) among Chinese healthcare professionals showed that the former are positively and intrinsically motivated, for them work is inherently enjoyable and gratifying (‘work is fun’). In contrast, workaholics are negatively motivated by the fear of not being able to meet their self-imposed, excessively high performance standards (‘work is a must’). These standards result from internalization processes by which external standards of self-worth and social approval are adopted. In other words, workaholics do not work so hard because they like their work, but because they feel that they have to because otherwise they may fail and as a consequence feel very bad about themselves. Seen from this perspective, workaholism is a ‘bad’ type of working hard and engagement is a ‘good’ type of working hard. This is also illustrated by the fact that workaholism is positively and engagement is negatively related to burnout (van Beek, Taris, & Schaufeli, 2011).

Hence, it can be concluded that different psychological processes seem to underlie the different types of employee-related well-being that are included in Figure 12.1. Moreover, it is important to note that various psychometrical studies have shown that the questionnaires that are used to tap various forms of employee well-being, such as the MBI (burnout), DUBS (boredom) and UWES

(engagement), can be discriminated from each other as well as from measures of workaholism and job satisfaction (e.g. Reijseger et al., 2012; Schaufeli, Taris, & van Rhenen, 2008).

Replay

- The nature of employee well-being varies along two dimensions: pleasure–displeasure and activation–deactivation.
- Engaged employees are willing to go the extra mile, whereas satisfied employees are satiated.
- Engagement and workaholism are both characterized by a strong drive, but the nature of that drive differs.
- Burnout (resulting from overstimulation) and boredom (resulting from understimulation) are the opposites of engagement.
- All five types of employee well-being can be assessed independently from each other.

12.4 Antecedents and Consequences of Burnout, Boredom and Work Engagement

As indicated previously, by the end of 2012 approximately 8,000 publications had appeared on burnout, boredom and engagement at work. It is beyond the scope of the current chapter to discuss this massive body of knowledge. Rather, we briefly summarize the main antecedents, consequences and correlates in a number of tables, which are based on reviews and meta-analyses. It is important to note that the vast majority of empirical studies are cross-sectional in nature, which means that all variables are measured at the same point in time (see also Chapter 2). Evidently, this does not allow us to draw any conclusions about causes and effects. For instance, a significant relation between work overload and burnout – measured at the same time – could mean that overload is an antecedent that causes burnout, but also that it is a consequence because employees who are exhausted are more likely to experience their job as highly demanding. Additionally, an increasing number of longitudinal studies, which include two or more measurement occasions, suggest that reciprocal relations exist. In other words and following our example, work overload may act as an antecedent as well as a consequence of burnout. This implies that in reality relations may be more complicated than assumed by the simple sequence: antecedents → employee well-being → consequences. For that reason we will refer to ‘potential’ antecedents and consequences.

Another complicating factor is that various antecedents may interact with each other. For instance, negative effects of job demands, such as work overload or role problems, may be buffered by job resources, such as job control and social support, which may ‘neutralize’ this effect and thus protect employees from burning out (see also Chapter 7). In a similar vein, these job resources might boost employee engagement, particularly when job demands are high and jobs are challenging.

Antecedents and consequences of burnout

Table 12.1 summarizes the most important possible antecedents of burnout and is based on various qualitative reviews (Halbesleben & Buckley, 2004; Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998; Shirom, 2002) as well as two recent meta-analyses (Alarcon, 2011; Crawford, LePine, & Rich, 2010).

The most consistent finding is that quantitative demands (e.g. too much work to do, time pressure, long work hours and frequent contact with customers or clients; see Chapter 5) as well as qualitative job demands (e.g. conflicting work roles, inadequate information to fulfil the work role, emotionally charged situations, imbalance between work and home; see Chapter 6) may lead to burnout. The reason is that such job demands activate an energy depletion process whereby an employee's sustained increases in effort to meet these demands drain his or her energy backup (see Chapter 8). An illustrative study in more than 200 Pennsylvania hospitals showed that an unfavourable patient-to-nurse ratio, which caused nurses to use more effort to do their jobs, was positively related to burnout (Aiken, Clarke, Sloane, Sochalski, & Silber, 2002). It appeared that an increase of one patient per nurse in a hospital's staffing level increased nurse burnout by 23% and patient mortality by 7% (after controlling for patient and hospital characteristics, such as severity of the illness and size of the hospital). Moreover, burnout is also likely to occur when interpersonal resources (e.g. social support from colleagues and supervisors) or other resources (e.g. feedback, participation in decision making and job control) that are instrumental in achieving one's work goals are lacking. For instance, Neveux (2007) found among French prison guards that depletion of resources such as co-worker support, participation and skill utilization led to burnout and, in turn, to depression and sickness absence.

Table 12.2 summarizes the most important possible consequences of burnout and is largely based on the same sources as Table 12.1, as well as on a meta-analysis by Swider and Zimmerman (2010).

Burnout has negative consequences for the individual employee as well as for the organization he or she is working for. Individual consequences pertain

Table 12.1 Potential antecedents of burnout.

Job demands
• Work overload
• Time pressure
• Number of work hours
• Number of clients, recipients, etc.
• Role problems
• Work-home interference
• Emotional demands
Job resources
• Lack of social support from colleagues and supervisor
• Lack of feedback
• Poor participation in decision making
• Lack of job control

Table 12.2 Potential consequences of burnout.

Employee health
• Anxiety and depression
• Psychosomatic and cardiovascular complaints
• Sleep disturbances
• Common infections
Organizational outcomes
• Poor organizational commitment
• Turnover (intention)
• Sickness absence
• Job performance

particularly to the employee's mental health (i.e. anxiety, depression, poor sleep and psychosomatic symptoms such as headaches, nausea and hypertension) as well as physical health (i.e. cardiovascular disease and common infections like flu, cold and gastroenteritis). For instance, a recent longitudinal study among Finnish dentists spanning eight years found that burnout predicted depression, instead of the other way around (Hakanen & Schaufeli, 2012). Although burnout has been related to poor physical health, the underlying psychological mechanism is still unknown. This is illustrated by a recent meta-analysis that concluded that 'no potential biomarkers for burnout were found' (Danhof-Pont, van Veen, & Zitman, 2011; p. 505). Burnout therefore does not lead to poor health via physiological changes that are indicated by biological markers such as particular hormones or blood cells. Negative consequences of burnout for the organization typically reflect the employees' withdrawal, either mentally (e.g. poor commitment and loyalty) or physically (e.g. turnover and frequent sickness absence). A meta-analysis showed – not surprisingly – that burnout is more strongly related to work performance when this is self-assessed, as compared to supervisor ratings or objective measures (Taris, 2006). This is probably caused by common method bias (see Chapter 2), which inflates correlations.

Antecedents and consequences of boredom

As indicated above, research on boredom at work is still rather scarce compared to that on burnout and engagement. Table 12.3 is therefore based on the relatively few studies that have been reviewed by Loukidou et al. (2009), and van der Heijden, Schepers and Nijssen (2012).

Not surprisingly, the clearest and most straightforward antecedent of boredom is carrying out monotonous and short-cycle repetitive work tasks, as are often found in, for instance, mechanical assembly, inspection and monitoring jobs. In a somewhat similar vein, boredom at work has also been associated with mental underload (e.g. 'mindless' jobs) and when employee abilities exceed their task demands (i.e. skill under-utilization). Behavioural constraints that result from bureaucratization and standardization may also result in

Table 12.3 Potential antecedents and consequences of boredom at work.

Antecedents
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monotonous and repetitive work • Mental underload and poor skill utilization • Behavioural constraints • Absence of meaning
Consequences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distress (e.g. dissatisfaction, hostility) • Alcohol and drug abuse • Injuries and accidents • Sickness absence • Turnover (intention) • Poor performance • Counterproductive work behaviour

boredom. For instance, helping professionals might feel bored when, instead of helping clients, they find themselves filling out forms and writing reports most of their time: their professional helping skills are not properly utilized. In one way or another, all antecedents of boredom mentioned so far refer to a lack of stimulation or challenge at work. However, research findings are not always consistent because, for instance, it has also been found that some workers enjoy repetitiveness.

As can be seen from Table 12.3, the negative consequences of boredom are similar to those of burnout (e.g. distress, sickness absence, turnover, poor performance). In addition, occasional alcohol and drug abuse have been mentioned as well as work-related injuries and accidents. Probably the most typical consequence of boredom is the display of counterproductive work behaviours (see also Chapter 13). For instance, Bruursema, Kessler and Spector (2011) conducted a study in which they found that employees who were bored were also more likely to misbehave, that is, bored employees exhibit harmful and nasty behaviours that affect other people (abuse), they purposely do the job incorrectly (production deviance), they destroy the physical environment (sabotage), they avoid work through being absent or late (withdrawal) and they steal. The authors assume that boredom at work leads to negative emotions, particularly anger, hostility and aggression, which provoke this damaging and destructive behaviour.

Antecedents and consequences of work engagement

Tables 12.4 and 12.5 display the antecedents and consequences of work engagement, respectively, and are based on three reviews (Schaufeli & Salanova, 2008; Simpson, 2009; Mauno, Kinnunen, Mäkikangas, & Feldt, 2010) as well as two meta-analyses (Christian, Garza, & Slaughter, 2011; Halbesleben, 2010).

Although engagement is most strongly and consistently associated with job resources, so-called challenge demands (i.e. workload, time urgency, mental demands and responsibility) may foster work engagement as well (see also Chapter 6). These

Table 12.4 Potential antecedents of work engagement.

Challenge demands
• Workload
• Time urgency
• Mental demands
• Responsibility
Job resources
• Job control
• Social support
• Performance feedback
• Task variety
• Opportunities to develop
• Transformational leadership

Table 12.5 Potential consequences of work engagement.

Attitudes and behaviours
• Organizational commitment
• Personal initiative
• Low turnover (intention)
• Low sickness absence
Performance
• Job/task performance
• Service quality
• Innovativeness
• Business unit performance

are demands that have the potential to promote mastery, growth or future gains. This is in contrast to hindrance demands (see Chapter 6), which thwart personal growth, learning and goal-attainment (e.g. interpersonal conflict, emotional demands, role problems). Like challenge demands, job resources have an inherent motivational potential and may therefore act as antecedents of engagement. Such resources may be located at the task level (i.e. job control, feedback and task variety), interpersonal level (i.e. social support from co-workers and supervisor, including recognition and rewards) and organizational level (opportunities for learning and development, and transformational leadership that focuses on coaching, inspiration and stimulation).

Work engagement (Table 12.5) might lead to positive attitudes and behaviours that point to high motivation such as commitment, initiative and presence (i.e. low turnover and sickness absence).

In addition, work engagement seems to lead to better performance, including extra-role performance that goes beyond the formal job requirements ('going the extra mile') and qualitative performance such as better service quality and innovativeness. Companies may also benefit from engaged workers. For instance, a

meta-analysis across almost 8,000 business units of 36 companies showed that, compared to units with fewer engaged employees, the more engaged units had more loyal and satisfied customers, were more productive, had better safety records and were more profitable (Harter, Schmidt, & Hayes, 2002).

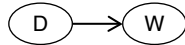
Replay

- The main antecedents of burnout are high quantitative and qualitative job demands as well as poor job resources.
- Burnout has a negative impact on the individual (health) and on the organization (performance, sickness absence).
- Monotonous, repetitive, unchallenging and meaningless jobs foster boredom at work.
- The negative effects of boredom are similar to those of burnout, except that counterproductive work behaviour is more salient.
- Challenging job demands and job resources boost work engagement.
- The personal and organizational effects of engagement are opposite to those of burnout.
- Burnout mainly affects employee health, whereas engagement mainly affects employee motivation.

12.5 Individual Differences in Employee Well-being

The role that individual differences play in employee well-being is complex, as is illustrated by Figure 12.2. Perhaps the most obvious role is that certain personality traits, such as emotional instability, may act as a vulnerability factor for developing burnout. On the contrary, emotional stability may act as a resistance factor that promotes work engagement. In both cases a causal relation is assumed between a particular individual difference factor and employee well-being (Figure 12.2a). However, employees may also select particular professions that match with their personality. For instance, ‘feeling types’ who are responsive to the needs of others, may choose a highly stressful job as a nurse and therefore burn out. In that case instead of a causal relationship an indirect relationship exists between personality and well-being. That means that people with a particular personality profile may choose a particular kind of job, which, in its turn, fosters unwell-being (Figure 12.2b). Individual differences may also act as a ‘third variable’ (Figure 12.2c). For instance, self-efficacious employees might perceive more job resources and challenges than their non-efficacious colleagues. At the same time, self-efficacy is positively related to work engagement. In this case, the positive relation between job resources and engagement (see above) is explained by an individual difference (self-efficacy) that is related to resources as well as engagement. Finally, individual differences might moderate the relation between job characteristics and well-being (Figure 12.2d). For instance, when exposed to high job demands employees with high levels of neuroticism (i.e. who are emotional instable) are more prone to burnout than those with lower levels. Alternatively,

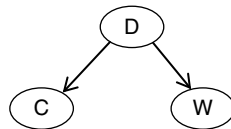
(a) Direct effect of individual differences (D) on well-being (W)



(b) Indirect effect of individual differences (D) on well-being (W) via choice of a particular job (J)



(c) Simultaneous effect of individual differences (D) as the third variable on both job characteristics (C) and well-being (W)



(d) Moderator effect of individual differences on the relationship between job characteristics (C) and well-being (W)

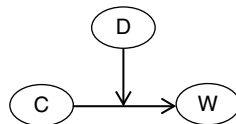


Figure 12.2 Various effects of individual differences on employee well-being.

extraverts are more engaged when they work in resourceful jobs than non-extraverts because they are quite energetic by nature. Hence, individual differences may also play a stress buffering or facilitating role.

Common individual differences

Table 12.6 presents an overview of the main individual differences that have been associated with burnout, boredom and work engagement. This table is based on the same sources as the previous tables as well as on two meta-analysis (Alcaron, Eschleman, & Bowling, 2009; Swider & Zimmerman, 2010).

It does not come as a surprise that burnout and engagement occur in employees with opposite personality profiles, as far as core individual differences are concerned. Burnout is associated with emotional instability, low levels of extraversion and negative dispositional affect, whereas work engagement is associated with emotional stability, extraversion and positive affect. This is illustrated by a study that mapped burned-out and engaged employees in a two-dimensional space that is defined by two orthogonal axes representing extraversion and emotional stability (Langelaan, Bakker, van Doornen, & Schaufeli, 2006). Burned-out employees clustered in the instability-low extraversion quadrant, whilst the engaged employees clustered in the opposite stability-high extraversion quadrant. There are also some indications that extraverts feel bored while doing monotonous and

Table 12.6 Individual differences and employee well-being.

Core individual differences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotional stability • Extraversion • Positive/negative affect
Beliefs and core self-evaluations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-efficacy • Self-esteem • Optimism
Inactivity (burnout)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • External locus of control • Lack of hardiness • Passive coping style
Need for stimulation (boredom)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sensation seeking • Boredom proneness
Drive (work engagement)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need for achievement • Conscientiousness

repetitive work tasks. This makes sense because, as noted before, feeling energetic is one of the hallmarks of extraversion.

In a similar vein, opposite patterns of basic beliefs and core self-evaluations are observed for burnout and work engagement. While burnout is associated with low levels of self-efficacy, self-esteem and optimism, the reverse is true for engagement. So far, research has not linked these beliefs and evaluations to boredom at work.

Specific individual differences

Earlier, common – albeit mirrored – relations of burnout and engagement with core individual differences, beliefs and self-evaluations were discussed. However, more typical relations are also observed of individual differences with each of the aspects of employee well-being. For instance, burnout is associated with dispositional indicators that reflect inactivity, such as external locus of control (i.e. the tendency to attribute outcomes of events to external circumstances, such as bad luck and powerful others rather than to one's own actions), lack of hardiness (i.e. the tendency not to interpret demanding situations in terms of commitment, control and challenge, but instead as stressful, uncontrollable and threatening) and a passive coping style (e.g. avoidance, denial). It is easy to see that such dispositions promote inactivity in employees, which undermines their attempts to deal successfully with high job demands and lacking job resources.

Boredom has been associated with dispositional factors that reflect the need for external or internal stimulation. The idea is that individuals differ in the amount of stimuli required to maintain an optimal level of arousal. Sensation seekers have a high need for varied, novel and complex experiences, and are willing to take

considerable risks to experience such situations. They look for adventures and thrills, and are easily bored when their work is unchallenging, repetitive and lacks variety. In a similar vein, boredom-proneness has been associated with boredom at work. Boredom-proneness is a somewhat more comprehensive concept than boredom that also includes the need for internal stimulation, that is, the ability to keep oneself interested and entertained.

Finally, work engagement is linked with dispositional factors that underlie the employee's strong drive. More specifically, engaged employees are characterized by a high need for achievement. That means that engaged employees have a strong desire for significant accomplishment and mastering of skills, and pursue high performance standards. In fact, need for achievement is a facet of conscientiousness, which is a more comprehensive personality trait that also includes self-discipline, thoroughness, carefulness and self-organization. Since conscientiousness has consistently been shown to be related to job performance (Barrick & Mount; 1991), it might act as a so-called 'third variable' that explains the engagement-performance nexus.

Replay

- Relations between dispositions and employee well-being are complex. Dispositions may directly or indirectly influence well-being, or may act as third variables or moderators that explain relations with job characteristics or outcomes.
- Burnout, boredom and engagement are linked to similar common individual differences and fundamental beliefs and self-evaluations, albeit in different ways.
- Burnout, boredom and engagement are also linked with typical individual differences that refer to inactivity, the need for stimulation and drive, respectively.

12.6 Possible Explanations for Burnout, Boredom and Work Engagement

In this final section we briefly present the most important psychological explanations for the occurrence of burnout, boredom and work engagement.

Burnout

Most individual-level psychological explanations for burnout focus on employee expectations in relation to work. More specifically, it is assumed that the discrepancy between high ideals and aspirations on the one hand, and the harsh reality of everyday working life on the other constitutes the root cause of burnout. Seen from this perspective, burnout is the erosion of initial engagement (see Section 12.2), which is exemplified by the idealistically motivated human services professional. This is illustrated by the phase-model of disillusionment proposed by Edelwich and Brodsky (1980), which distinguishes between enthusiasm (1st phase), stagnation (2nd phase), frustration (3rd phase) and apathy (4th phase). Despite their popularity, such phase models have not been corroborated by empirical research.

In contrast, the interpersonal explanation of burnout received considerably more empirical support (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001). The basic tenet of that approach is that burnout is considered to be a negative experience that results from emotional overload and is embedded in the context of interpersonal relationships at work. More specifically, it is assumed that exhaustion occurs first, leading to the development of cynicism and depersonalization, which leads subsequently to inefficacy (see also Section 12.2). For example, a study of hospital nurses yielded the following sequence: (i) stressful interactions with supervisors increase the nurses' feelings of exhaustion, (ii) high levels of exhaustion lead to cynicism, especially if nurses lack supportive contact with their co-workers, (iii) as cynicism persists, the nurses' feelings of efficacy diminish, although supportive contact with co-workers may help to decelerate this process (Leiter & Maslach, 1988).

But why are interactions with supervisors – or recipients, customers or co-workers, for that matter – so stressful in the first place? The answer is found in evolutionary psychology and has to do with lack of reciprocity (Buunk & Schaufeli, 1999). Humans are social animals who can only survive in groups and reciprocity is the 'psychological glue' that binds these social groups together. Evolutionarily speaking, people are predisposed to strive for balanced social relationships with others that are governed by the principle of reciprocity. But when this principle is violated and the investments in the relationship with others (e.g. time, energy and attention) are not proportional to the outcomes (e.g. recognition, information and support) energy is drained, which eventually may result in exhaustion. In an attempt to restore the balance between give and take, the employee starts to give less, which manifests itself in the withdrawal and mental distancing that are typical for burnout. However, this strategy is counterproductive and bound to be unsuccessful because it further diminishes positive outcomes. This is nicely illustrated by a study among doctors discussed earlier (Section 12.2) that showed that those who invest less in the relationships with their patients run a higher risk of future burnout (Bakker et al., 2000). Such social exchange relationships exist not only at the interpersonal level, but also at team and organizational level, that is, on these levels social exchange relationships exist that might lead to lack of reciprocity when the balance of give and take with the team or with the organization is disturbed (see Figure 12.3).

Following this reasoning and based on several studies, Schaufeli (2006) proposed a social exchange model that explains burnout as the result of an imbalance between investments and outcomes at the interpersonal, team and organizational level. This not only leads to burnout, but also to withdrawal from the team (e.g. isolation from other team members, lack of commitment) and from the organization (e.g. sickness absence, turnover).

Boredom

Only few psychological explanations exist on boredom that revolve around the role of arousal in monotonous tasks (Loukidou et al., 2009). In fact, two contradictory perspectives exist, each of which is supported by some limited empirical evidence. The first perspective assumes that low external stimulation might cause

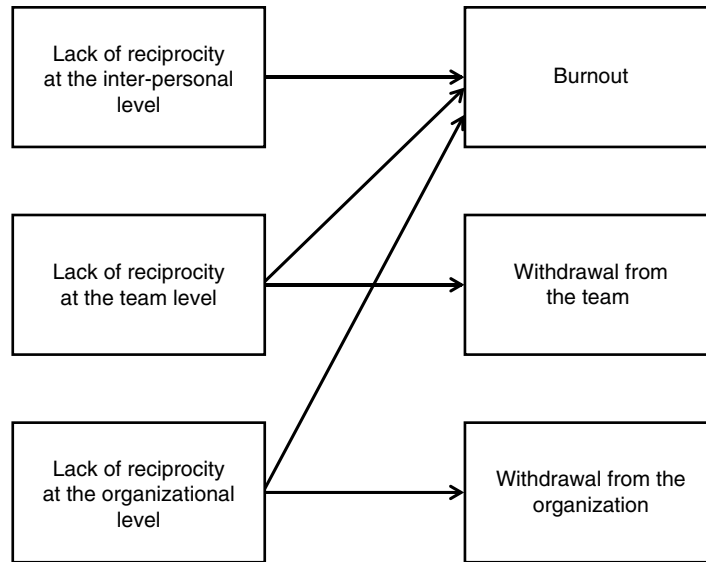


Figure 12.3 Burnout and withdrawal at different levels of social exchange (Schaufeli, 2006).

low internal arousal, which is expressed as inattention, distress, daydreaming and sleepiness, all typical indicators of boredom. In contrast, the rival view assumes that low external arousal has the exact opposite effect, namely a *high* level of internal arousal. This manifests itself by restlessness and the active struggle to remain active in order to compensate for the poorly stimulating work environment. Of course, as we have seen above, people may differ individually in their preferred need for stimulation. Both perspectives agree that monotony affects attention and that this, in its turn, will decrease performance. More specifically, when an uninteresting, unchallenging task has to be performed, attention will deteriorate because of either high or low internal arousal, and consequently performance will suffer.

Work engagement

Essentially, work engagement results from the inherently motivating nature of resources. By their very nature, job resources invigorate employees, encourage their persistence, and make them focus on their efforts, and that is exactly what work engagement is about. In a similar vein to job resources (see Chapter 4), personal resources are functional in accomplishing work goals, and they stimulate personal goals such as growth and development. They are defined as psychological characteristics or aspects of the self that are generally associated with resiliency and that refer to the ability to control and impact one's environment successfully.

Based on the motivating potential of job and personal resources, Bakker and Demerouti (2007) proposed a model of engagement that is displayed in Figure 12.4.

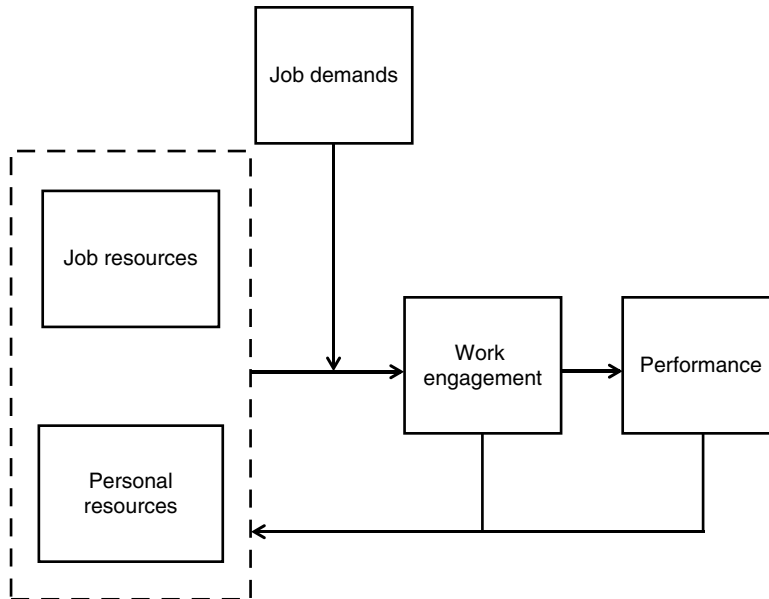


Figure 12.4 A model for work engagement (after Bakker & Demerouti, 2007).

This model, which is supported by a considerable amount of research, assumes that job and personal resources are particularly important when job demands are high. This means that resources become salient and gain their motivational potential when employees are confronted with high job demands. In that case job resources are especially effective in accomplishing work goals and will thus boost engagement. In its turn engagement increases performance, not only because it is associated with energy, persistence and focused effort, but also because it is associated with the appropriate attitudes and behaviours (e.g. organizational commitment, personal initiative and presence; see Table 12.5).

Most importantly, mounting empirical evidence suggests the existence of a feedback loop that runs back from performance and engagement to job and personal resources (Salanova, Schaufeli, Xanthopoulou, & Bakker, 2010). This feedback loop is consistent with notions of resource accumulation after successful performance. For instance, when an engaged employee accomplishes his or her work task, this not only increases his or her level of self-efficacy (a belief that acts as a personal resource), but also leads to positive feedback from one's supervisor (a job resource). Because of its dynamic nature, the model assumes an upward gain spiral that leads to more engagement, better performance and a progressive increase in performance. Indeed, some limited evidence for such a process has been found (see Salanova et al., 2010).

Replay

- The psychological explanation of burnout has to do with lacking reciprocity in social exchange relationships involving other persons, the team and the entire organization.

- The psychological explanation of boredom has to do with the role of internal arousal when carrying out monotonous work tasks. Arousal may be either too high or too low, but in any case performance is hampered.
- The psychological explanation of work engagement has to do with the inherent motivational quality of (job and personal) resources.

12.7 Conclusions

Employees feel different at work, and these feelings matter. In this chapter, three types of employee well-being have been discussed: burnout, boredom and work engagement. Burnout is a reaction to chronic job stress that is characterized particularly by exhaustion and mental distancing. These symptoms, which can be seen as psychological responses to *overstimulation* at work, represent the inability and the unwillingness to spend effort, respectively. Boredom is an unpleasant state of low arousal and dissatisfaction which, in contrast to burnout, results from *understimulation*. Finally, and contrary to burnout and boredom, work engagement is a *pleasant* state that is characterized by energy and involvement – the direct opposites of exhaustion and mental distancing.

Employee well-being is related to the person characteristics as well as to the job characteristics. For instance, burnout, boredom and engagement are linked to typical individual differences that refer to inactivity, need for stimulation and drive, respectively. Furthermore, each of these three types of employee well-being is associated with a specific set of job characteristics. The most important causes of burnout are high job demands and poor job resources, whereas the opposite is true for work engagement. Boredom seems to be caused by monotony and lack of meaning.

The consequences of burnout and boredom are negative, whereas the consequences of work engagement are positive. Burnout and boredom lead to poor employee health and to increased costs for organizations, for instance in terms of sickness absence and deteriorated performance. Burnout and boredom should therefore be prevented. In contrast, work engagement is associated with positive individual and organizational outcomes, and should therefore be fostered. Research has identified various drivers and psychological mechanisms that may constitute the bases for preventing burnout and boredom, and for boosting work engagement. For instance, a mismatch between give and take has been uncovered as an explanation for burnout. This means that in order to decrease burnout the balance between give and take should be restored. Boredom results from unchallenging jobs and thus making jobs more meaningful and challenging would decrease boredom. In a similar vein the motivational potential of resources can be used to promote work engagement.

Discussion Points

1. Burnout and boredom are two negative patterns of employee well-being at work. What (if possible) preventive strategies can organizations use?
2. How far can burnout and engagement be considered each other's opposite poles?

3. Engaged employees are positive and energetic at work, and they are more productive. But can employees also be ‘too engaged’? Is there is an optimal level of engagement?
4. It has been maintained that in order to burn out, one first as to be on fire. Do you agree? Why (not)?
5. Do you think that burnout, engagement and boredom are ‘contagious’, that is that they spread from one employee to another? Why would this (not) be the case?

Learning by Doing

1. Read the stories of Peter, Geoff and Mary closely (Work Psychology in Action boxes). Write down the typical characteristics of burnout for Peter, the typical characteristics of boredom for Geoff and the typical characteristics of engagement for Mary. Do these characteristics overlap? Can you identify lack of reciprocity, under-stimulation and motivating resources in the stories of Peter, Geoff and Mary, respectively?
2. Interview a friend or a family member whom you consider to be ‘engaged’ at work and ask him or her what is energy draining (job demands) and what is energizing at work (job resources). Repeat the same with a friend or a family member whom you consider to be ‘stressed’. Most likely in the former case the number of demands will outweigh the number of resources, whereas in the latter case the reverse will be true. Keep Tables 12.1 and 12.4 in mind while interviewing.
3. Download the short version of the Utrecht Work Engagement scale from [www.wilmarschaufeli.nl> downloads> tests](http://www.wilmarschaufeli.nl/downloads/tests), as well as the test manual from [downloads> test manuals](http://www.wilmarschaufeli.nl/downloads/test-manuals). Ask some friends or family members to fill out the inventory and classify their levels of work engagement using Table 31 of the test manual.
4. Imagine you have to carry out an employee well-being survey for a hospital, for an IT company and for a chemical plant. Based on Tables 12.1–12.6, what aspects would you include and why? Try to design a short but powerful survey that fits the nature of the organization. Keep in mind that in hospitals employees work with people, in IT companies with information and in industrial plants with things.

Further Reading

On burnout

Maslach, C., Schaufeli, W. B., & Leiter, M. P. (2001). Job burnout. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 52, 397–422.

On boredom

Loukidou, L., Loan-Clarke, J., & Daniels, K. (2009). Boredom in the workplace: More than monotonous tasks. *International Journal of Management Reviews*, 11, 381–405.

On work engagement

Bakker, A. B., & Leiter, M. P. (Eds.) (2010). *Work engagement: A handbook of essential theory and research*. New York: Psychology Press.

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