Work Engagement. What Do We Know and Where Do We Go?

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Work engagement is a popular concept, both in business contexts as well as in academia. The term first appeared in the 1990s and meanwhile over 200 scientific publications have appeared on the subject. So it seems that it is time to take stock. The current paper has two main objectives, first to present a brief overview about our current knowledge on engagement (*What do we know?*) and second to draft a future research agenda (*Where do we go?*). More specifically, the research literature is summarized on five key issues: (1) the meaning and measurement of work engagement; (2) the antecedents of engagement; (3) the consequences of engagement; (4) state work engagement; and (5) building work engagement. As far as the future research agenda on work engagement is concerned, seven main issues are proposed: (1) conceptualization and measurement (e.g., the use of qualitative methods and peer-ratings); (2) theoretical understanding (e.g., developing unique explanatory frameworks); (3) antecedents and consequences (e.g., focusing on the paths that lead from work engagement to performance); (4) epidemiology (e.g., using national representative samples); (5) cross-cultural validity (e.g., comparing engagement-levels across cultures); (6) the waxing and waning of engagement across time (e.g., studying engagement in changing organizations); and (7) the collective nature of work engagement (e.g., team-level engagement). It is concluded that work engagement is a viable concept for both science and practice and that it needs further focused attention.

Keywords work engagement, review, measurement, antecedents, consequences

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Work Engagement in Everyday Life, Business, and Academia

In everyday life, "engagement" refers to involvement, commitment, passion, enthusiasm, absorption, focused effort, and energy. For instance, Merriam-Webster dictionary describes engagement as "emotional involvement or commitment" and as "the state of being in gear."

Employee engagement first emerged in business. Although the origin of the term is not entirely clear, it was first used in the 1990s by the Gallup organization. According to a global survey among CEO's, engaging employees is one of the top-five most important challenges for organizations (Wah, 1999). Not surprisingly, therefore, international business consulting companies have developed their own engagement concepts and proprietary survey tools. Based on large, international databases, covering various industries, these companies estimate that roughly 20% of all employees are highly engaged at their work, whereas another 20% are actively disengaged. The remaining group of about 60% is moderately engaged (Attridge, 2009). And what is more, these consultancy firms claim that employee engagement drives business success.

Although the definitions that are used by consulting companies differ at first glance, employee engagement is essentially conceived in terms of: (1) *organizational commitment*, more particularly affective commitment (i.e., the emotional attachment to the organization) and continuance commitment (i.e., the desire to stay with the organization), and (2) *extra-role behavior* (i.e., discretionary behavior that promotes the effective functioning of the organization). Conceptualized this way, employee engagement constitutes a blend of two existing psychological concepts. Hence, it looks like most consultancy firms put new engagement wine in old commitment and extra-role bottles.

The first scholar who conceptualized engagement at work was Kahn (1990), an ethnographic researcher, who described it as the "…harnessing of organization members' selves to their work roles: in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, emotionally, and mentally during role performances" (p. 694). In other words, engaged employees put a lot effort in their work because they identify with it. In its turn,

according to Kahn, engagement is assumed to produce positive outcomes, both at the individual level (personal growth and development) as well as the organizational level (performance quality).

Work engagement is also considered as the positive antithesis of burnout. Contrary to those who suffer from burnout, engaged employees have a sense of energetic and effective connection with their work; instead of stressful and demanding they look upon their work as challenging. Accordingly, engagement is characterized by energy, involvement and efficacy, which constitute the direct opposites of the three burnout dimensions – exhaustion, cynicism, and reduced accomplishment (Maslach & Leiter, 1997). In this view, engagement and burnout are inherently linked and can therefore be assessed with the same instrument.

Alternatively, engagement is regarded as an independent, distinct concept that is negatively related to burnout. It is defined in its own right as "…a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption" (Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzàlez-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. Finally, 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.

In conclusion, for Kahn (1990) the key reference of engagement is the work *role*, whereas for those who consider engagement as the antipode of burnout it is the employee's work *activity*, or the work itself. In business contexts, the reference is neither the work role nor the work activity but the *organization*. Furthermore, both academic conceptualizations that define engagement in its own right and agree that it entails a behavioral-energetic (vigor), an emotional (dedication), and a cognitive (absorption) component.

In an attempt to integrate the business and academic views on engagement, Macey and Schneider (2008) used a very broad description of engagement as "… a desirable condition [that] has an organizational purpose, and connotes involvement, commitment, passion, enthusiasm, focused effort, and energy" (p. 4). Their comprehensive framework for understanding engagement includes: (1) positive views of life and work, or "trait engagement" (e.g., conscientiousness, trait positive affect, proactive personality); (2) feelings of energy and absorption or "state engagement" (e.g., satisfaction, involvement, empowerment); and (3) extra-role behavior or "behavioral engagement" (e.g., organizational citizenship behavior, personal initiative, role expansion).

The first aim of this paper is to present a brief overview about our current knowledge on engagement (*What do we know?*). So far, engagement research has mainly focused on (1) the meaning and measurement of work engagement; (2) the antecedents of engagement; (3) the consequences of engagement; (4) state work engagement; and (5) building work engagement. The second aim is to draft a future research agenda on engagement (*Where do we go?*).

What do we Know?

A literature search using PsychLit revealed that to date (February 2012), 227 scientific publications have appeared with either "work engagement" or "employee engagement" in the title. It is needless to say that it goes beyond the scope of this paper to discuss this entire body of knowledge. Instead, I will use a large brush and focus on the five most important issues. In doing so, I will refer as much as possible, to comprehensive literature reviews and meta-analyses. The interested reader may also consult recent volumes on the subject; Bakker and Leiter (2010), and Albrecht (2010).

Meaning and Measurement of Work Engagement
Work engagement may be assessed with short self-report questionnaires. The most extensively researched questionnaire that is used in business contexts is Gallup's Q^{12}, which has been designed as a management tool (Harter, Schmidt, Killham, & Asplund, 2006). However, rather than assessing the experience of engagement as a psychological state, the Q^{12} taps its antecedents in terms of perceived job resources such as role clarity (*"Do you know what is expected from you at your work?"*), social support ("*Do you have a best friend at work?*"), and feedback ("*In the last six months, has someone at work talked about your progress?*"). Based on this information, managers may improve job resources.

The most often used instrument to measure engagement as a distinct psychological state is the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES; Schaufeli et al., 2002) that includes three subscales: vigor, dedication, and absorption. The UWES has been validated in Europe, but also in North America, Africa, Asia, and Australia (for a recent overview see Schaufeli & Bakker, 2010). Confirmatory factor analyses have consistently shown that the fit of the hypothesized three-factor structure to the data is superior to that of alternative factor models. In addition, the internal consistencies of the three subscales are sufficient. Schaufeli, Bakker and Salanova (2006) developed a short nine-item version of the UWES, and provided evidence for its cross-national validity. The three engagement dimensions are moderately strong and positively related so that a total score can also be used as an overall indicator of work engagement. Generally speaking, scores on the UWES are relatively stable across time, ranging between .82 and .86 across a three-year time interval (Seppälä et al., 2009).

A study using a national representative Dutch sample of about 4,000 employees (Smulders, 2006) found that levels of engagement are higher among those with complex, professional jobs with high levels of job control (e.g., entrepreneurs, managers, farmers, teachers, and artists) as compared to those with less skilled and autonomous jobs (e.g., blue collar workers, home care staff, and retail workers). No systematic gender differences seem to exist, but older workers are slightly more engaged than their younger colleagues. Also, it seems that levels of engagement are lower in Asian countries (especially Japan) as compared to other regions (Shimazu, Miyanaka, & Schaufeli, 2010).

Work engagement differs from other psychological states such as job satisfaction, and workaholism. In contrast to engagement that connotes activation

(enthusiasm, alertness, excitement, elation), satisfaction connotes satiation (contentment, calmness, serenity, relaxation). Research confirms that engaged employees outperform satisfied employees, probably for that very reason (Rich, Lepine, & Crawford, 2010). Although at first glance some similarities may exist between workaholics and engaged employees, their underlying motivation differs fundamentally (Van Beek, Hu, Schaufeli, Taris, & Schreurs, 2012). Essentially, engaged employees work hard because for them work is challenging and fun, whereas workaholics are motivated by a compulsive inner drive they cannot resist. Or put differently, the former are intrinsically motivated and the latter are extrinsically motivated; more specifically, workaholics strive to meet external standards of self-worth and social approval, which they have internalized.

Antecedents of Work Engagement

Previous studies have consistently shown that job resources and personal resources are positively associated with work engagement (for recent overviews see: Christian, Garza & Slaughter, 2011; Halbesleben, 2010; Mauno, Kinnunen, Mäkikangas, & Feldt, 2010). *Job resources* refer to those physical, social, or organizational aspects of the job that may: (a) reduce job demands and the associated physiological and psychological costs; (b) be functional in achieving work goals; or (c) stimulate personal growth, learning, and development (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008). Personal resources are positive self-evaluations that are linked to resiliency and refer to individuals' sense of their ability to successfully control and have an impact on their environment (Hobfoll, Johnson, Ennis, & Jackson, 2003). Job resources that predict work engagement may differ per organization. Important resources are opportunities for development, performance feedback, autonomy, skill variety, transformational leadership, justice, and social support from colleagues and supervisors. In addition, it has been shown that personal resources like self-efficacy, hope, optimism, organizational-based self-esteem, and the abilities to perceive and regulate emotions are antecedents of work engagement. Finally, engagement is weakly positively related to job demands that are stressful but also appeal to employees' curiosity, competence, and thoroughness – so-called job challenges – such as job responsibility, workload, cognitive demands, and time urgency (Crawford, LePine, & Rich, 2010).

The Job Demands – Resources (JD-R) Model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008) is one of the most often used models to explain engagement (see Schaufeli & Taris, in press, for an overview). According to the JD-R Model, job and personal resources become more salient and gain their motivational potential when employees are confronted with high job demands. Such conditions represent so-called "active jobs", in which employees become motivated to learn and develop their skills. Research has shown that job resources like variability in the required professional skills and appreciation from colleagues are most predictive of work engagement under conditions of high job demands (e.g., high workload, emotionally demanding interactions with clients).

Consequences of Work Engagement

The possible consequences of engagement pertain to positive job-related attitudes, health and well-being, extra-role behavior, and job performance (for overviews see: Schaufeli & Salanova, 2008; Christian et al., 2011; Halbesleben, 2010). Compared to those we do not feel engaged, those who are engaged feel more committed to the organization, are less often absent, and they do not intend to leave the organization. Also, engaged employees experience positive emotions, and enjoy very good mental and psychosomatic health, particularly when compared with workaholics. Furthermore, they exhibit personal initiative and have a strong motivation to learn. Taken together, this suggests that engaged workers seem to be able and willing "to go the extra mile".

Those who are engaged perform better (Rich et al, 2010; Halbesleben, 2010). For instance, engaged employees deliver superior service quality, as perceived by their customers. They also report less errors, are less often involved in occupational injuries and accidents, show more innovative work behaviors, and are better rated by their supervisors in terms of effectiveness and job performance than their less engaged colleagues. A meta-analysis that included almost 8,000 business-units of 36 companies (Harter, Schmidt, & Hayes, 2002) revealed that levels of engagement are positively related to business-unit performance (i.e., customer satisfaction and loyalty, profitability, productivity, turnover, and safety). This suggests that engaged workers can indeed offer a competitive advantage to organizations.

State Work Engagement

Most studies to date have looked at differences between individuals regarding work engagement, and the possible reasons for these differences, for example, work characteristics and personal resources. However, recent studies have shown that engagement may also fluctuate within persons from day to day. Depending on what happens during the day, employees show higher or lower levels of engagement in their work activities. State work engagement concerns within-person fluctuations of vigor, dedication, and absorption over short periods of time (e.g., days or weeks; Sonnentag, Dormann, & Demerouti, 2010). Within-person variations are commonly measured with diary designs that allow capturing the short-term dynamics of the experience. Research has shown that on average about 40% of the variance in engagement may be attributed to such within-person fluctuations. Although general engagement levels have a positive relationship with state work engagement, typically, most variance in engagement is explained by daily events, like supportive interactions with colleagues, the daily experience of autonomy, and positive feedback from clients.

Building Work Engagement

Organizations may increase employee engagement by using particular HRM-strategies (for overviews, see Bakker, Oerlemans, & Ten Brummelhuis, in press; Schaufeli & Salanova, 2008, 2010). For instance, employee engagement can be improved through better job design by using the motivating potential of job resources. Also job rotation and changing jobs might result in higher engagement levels because it challenges employees, increases their motivation, and stimulates learning and professional development.

Because of the "contagious" nature of work engagement (Bakker, Van Emmerik & Euwema, 2006), leaders have a special role in fostering engagement. Particularly transformational leadership that provides a clear vision, inspires and motivates, offers intellectual challenges, and shows interest in the needs of the employees, is successful in accomplishing this. In addition, management should focus on employee strengths instead of weaknesses.

Training programs in organizations that aim at increasing work engagement should focus on building efficacy beliefs. High levels of self-efficacy set in motion an upward gain-spiral that boosts engagement and subsequent performance, which, in its turn, increases efficacy beliefs, and so on (Salanova, Schaufeli, Xanthopoulou, & Bakker, 2010). To the extent that employees are able to keep developing themselves throughout their careers, their levels of engagement are likely to remain high. Career planning and development boils down to increasing employee's employability by ensuring continuous personal and professional development.

Engaged employees actively change their work environment, if needed. This can be done by modifying the content or design of the job, by selecting particular tasks rather than others, by negotiating different job contents, or by assigning more meaning to the work tasks. This process of employees actively shaping their jobs has been referred to as "job crafting" (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). And it appears that engaged workers are most likely to employ job crafting as strategy to improve their jobs (Bakker, 2011). As a consequence, they improve their person–job fit and experience their jobs to be more meaningful for them – and thus to further build their own work engagement.

Where do we go?

Although academic research on work engagement is booming this does not guarantee that our knowledge is increasing likewise. For this to happen we need to follow a research agenda that covers the most important issues, instead of producing more of the same. Below a research agenda on work engagement is drafted that focuses on seven main themes: (1) conceptualization and measurement; (2) theoretical understanding; (3) antecedents and consequences; (4) epidemiology; (5) cross cultural validity; (6) the waxing and waning of across time; and (7) the collective nature of work engagement. Of course this list is not exhaustive and it reflects a personal view on where we should go with engagement research in the years to come.

Conceptualization and Measurement

Despite the fact that the pioneering study of Kahn (1990) was qualitative in nature, virtually all subsequent studies on work engagement have been quantitative in nature. Kahn used an assortment of qualitative methods (i.e., observation, document analysis, self-reflection, and in-depth interviews) to investigate a small group of counselors of a summer camp, whereby he played the role of participant (being the head counselor) as well as observer (being the researcher). Following-up this qualitative approach it would be interesting to study prototypical highly engaged people such as artists, scientists, entrepreneurs, and managers in order to see if their profiles – both in terms of personal and job resources – matches with our current understanding of engagement. For the same purpose, employees who score very high on an engagement questionnaire (e.g. the top 5%) could be studied in-depth using qualitative methods. Most likely such studies would uncover unique personal and work-related characteristics of highly engaged people.

Instead of exclusively using self-report questionnaires also peer-ratings of supervisors, co-workers, and/or partners could be employed to assess work engagement. Such peer ratings could be based on behaviorally anchored rating scales and may eventually result in a valid observation-based tool that can be used in practice, for instance, in assessment centers.

Recently, other similar constructs emerged such as "energy at work" (Cole, Bruch & Vogel, 2011), "vigor at work" (Shirom, 2003), "harmonious and obsessive passion" (Vallerand et al., 2003), "zest at work" (Peterson, Park, Hall, Seligman, 2009), "thriving at work" (Porath et al., 2012), and "spirit at work" (Kinjerski & Skrypnek, 2008). Although it is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss these concepts in detail, it is clear that conceptual and empirical overlap with work engagement is likely to exist. So in order to cut dead wood, psychometric research is necessary on the quality and on the convergent and discriminant validity of questionnaires that tap various positive, work related state of mind.

From the outset it has been maintained that work engagement is incompatible with burnout and is, in fact, to be seen as its positive anti-thesis (González-Romá, Schaufeli, Bakker, & Lloret., 2006). Despite the intuitive appeal of this claim, correlations are much less than -1.00 and range between -.24 and -.65 (Halbesleben, 2010). There exists an alternative, under-researched state of mind that may act as the counterpart of work engagement as well: boredom at work. Feeling bored refers to a displeasurable-deactivating affect, whereas feeling engaged refers to a pleasurable-activating affect. This means that boredom and engagement are located diametrically opposite each other in Russell's (2003) circumplex model of emotions. As expected, Reijseger et al. (in press), found that boredom is negatively related with engagement ($r = -.46$) and positively related with burnout ($r = .40$). The authors defined boredom at work as a state of relatively low arousal and dissatisfaction that is due to an under-stimulating work environment. Moreover, their study showed that compared to work engagement boredom is inversely related to job demands, job resources, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and turnover intention. Future research should further elucidate in how far boredom at work is indeed the counterpart of work engagement.

In the past decade, engagement has not only been studied as a more or less enduring pattern of affective and cognitive responses to a challenging work environment in field studies, but also as a more dynamic and temporal construct in dairy and laboratory studies. This inspired Schaufeli and Salanova (2011) to distinguish two types of work engagement depending on their object: (1) *habitual engagement* which refers to the job in general and (2) *task engagement* which refers to the task at hand. Jobs consist of several tasks, and employees might feel more engaged while performing some tasks rather than other tasks.

Hence, the study of task engagement would allow a more fine-grained analysis of the specific tasks that constitute jobs. For instance, laboratory studies showed that *task engagement* is positively related to the individual's *task resources* (Llorens, Schaufeli, Bakker, & Salanova, 2007). Moreover, studies on day-level engagement showed that levels of absorption or "flow" were highest for tasks performed in the early morning and in the evening, with the lowest levels for task performance between 14-16 hours (Rodríguez, Schaufeli, Salanova, Cifre, & Sonnenschein, 2011). In short, adding the task-level to the engagement concept opens another intriguing avenue for research.

Theoretical Perspectives

So far, engagement has mainly been studied within the framework of the JD-R Model (for an overview see Schaufeli & Taris, in press). More specifically, the JD-R Model assumes that challenging jobs that are characterized by an abundance of job resources promote work engagement, which, in its turn, leads to a variety of positive outcomes such as organizational commitment, job performance, and low levels of sickness absence and turnover. In other words, engagement mediates the relationship between job resources and organizational outcomes. In terms of the JD-R model this is called the motivational process, in which personal resources (e.g., self-efficacy, optimism, self-esteem) and challenging job demands (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008) play a role as additional antecedents of engagement.

However, as Schaufeli and Taris (in press) argue, in fact, the JD-R model is a heuristic and descriptive framework, rather than a theoretical and explanatory framework. As a consequence, additional theories are needed to explain the underlying psychological mechanisms that are involved in the linkage of work engagement with demands, resources, and outcomes. So far Conservation of Resources Theory (Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Demerouti, & Schaufeli, 2009), Broaden-and-Build Theory (Ouweneel, Le Blanc, & Schaufeli, 2011), Social Cognitive Theory (Salanova, Llorens, & Schaufeli, 2011), Self-Determination Theory (Van den Broeck, Vansteenkiste, De Witte, & Lens, 2008), and theoretical notions such as emotional contagion (Bakker, Westman, & Schaufeli, 2007) and job crafting (Bakker, 2010) have been used to explain work engagement in the context of the JD-R Model. However, instead of unique explanatory frameworks these are existing theories that are merely applied to work engagement. An exception to this rule is the recently proposed "affective shift model". This model assumes that work engagement emerges from the dynamic interplay of positive and negative affect (Bledow, Schmitt, Frese, & Kühnel, 2011). More specifically, the affective shift model, that was successfully tested at day-level using experience sampling methods, posits that negative affect is positively related to work engagement if negative affect is followed by positive affect. Future theorizing should increase our understanding of the unique psychological processes that are involved in work engagement.

Antecedents and Consequences

Although the list of possible antecedents and consequences of work engagement looks rather impressive at first glance, these are often based on cross-sectional research. Despite the fact that the number of longitudinal studies is rising more research is needed, particularly with three or more waves so that the mediating effect of engagement can be studied and advanced techniques for data-analyses can be applied (e.g., latent growth curve modeling, stability and change modeling).

In addition, the non-work antecedents and consequences of work engagement have been neglected, such as poor home resources and spill-over to leisure and private life. An exception is the longitudinal study of Hakanen, Schaufeli, and Ahola (2008), who included home demands and home resources but unfortunately failed to show a significant effect on work engagement. This calls for more research. Although several studies have been carried out on the cross-over of work engagement among couples – usually based on the emotional contagion hypothesis (Bakker et al.2007) – no studies have been conducted to the spill-over of work engagement to non-work domains.

A particular important consequence of engagement is job performance because of its relevance for organizations. Even though a number of studies has shown that work engagement is associated with superior job performance (see Christian et al., 2012, for a review), it is not clear yet *why* engagement leads to performance. It might be speculated that least six pathways may be involved (cf. Bakker, 2011; Reiseger, Schaufeli, Peeters & Taris, in press). First, engaged employees often experience positive emotions, such as happiness, joy, and enthusiasm. These active positive emotions seem to broaden people's thought-action repertoire, implying the acquisition of new knowledge and skills. This, in turn, would facilitate their performance. Second, engaged workers experience better health. That means that they are less absent from work and may be able to better focus on their job, so that they are more productive. Third, engaged employees craft their own jobs. As a result their jobs fit their personal needs and values, which boosts their motivation and hence their performance. Fourth, engagement is likely to foster cognitive open-mindedness and behavioral readiness. The former improves information processing, whereas the latter manifests itself in personal initiative, both of which are conducive for superior performance. Fifth, engaged workers exhibit prosocial behavior (e.g., helping others, being kind, and cooperative), which is likely to be reciprocated by their colleagues. So prosocial behavior is likely to create a positive social climate that fosters collaboration, information sharing, and mutual assistance – and thus team performance. Finally, engaged workers transfer their engagement to others in their immediate environment by a process of emotional contagion; i.e., the crossover of emotions from one team-member to the other. Since in most organizations performance is the result of collaborative effort, the engagement of one person may transfer to others and thus indirectly improve team performance. So far, we can only speculate about these pathways, future research should evaluate their viability.

Epidemiology

With one notable exception in the Netherlands (Smulders, 2006), epidemiological studies are lacking that include national representative samples that cover all occupational groups. Such studies are necessary in order to obtain normative scores that can be used as national or occupation-specific benchmarks against which individual or aggregated engagement scores can be compared. That way, individual employees, teams, departments, organizations, or occupational groups can be identified with "(very) low", "average" or "(very) high" levels of work engagement.

Cross-cultural issues

Unfortunately, also valid comparisons of engagement-levels across countries cannot be made as well because national representative samples are lacking. Nevertheless, it seems that Japanese employees are considerably less engaged compared to those in other countries. It has been suggested that this is caused by the pervasive tendency in Japan to suppress the expression of positive affect, which is ubiquitous in that country (Shimazu et al., 2010). For cultural reasons, suppressing one´s positive emotions represents a moral distinction and is socially desirable in Japanese society. This leads to a common bias in cross-cultural comparison given the positive framing of the engagement items.

Perhaps more challenging than comparing levels of engagement across countries is to investigate relationships with typical, local psychological phenomena such as "guanxi" exchange in China. As the moral principle governing social interactions of related parties, guanxi exchange is deeply rooted in Confucian values and, as such, it is inherent in Chinese work ethics. Contrary to Western social exchange relations, which involve the exchange of equivalent value and timely return, Chinese guanxi exchange goes beyond an equal exchange and may be reciprocated in the long run. Recently, Hu, Schaufeli, and Taris (2012) integrated guanxi exchange into the JD-R model and found that task and social resources partly mediate its relationship with work engagement. Investigating such culture specific notions in relation to work engagement will increase the cross-cultural validity of the construct.

Engagement Across Time

Research shows that work engagement is rather stable across time (Seppälä et al., 2009), which poses a problem in longitudinal research because, after controlling for previous levels of engagement, not much variance is left to be explained by other factors. That means that instead of investigating relatively stable work environments, future research should focus on eventful changes, such as the introduction of hot desking policies, a work space sharing strategy of organizations in which employees outnumber desks. Specifically, Van den Heuvel, Demerouti, Bakker, and Schaufeli (2012) found that work engagement predicted supervisor-rated adaptive performance of employees, as well as their positive attitude to change six months later.

A long standing burning question is: are people "on fire" first before they burn out? In other words, is work engagement a risk factor for developing burnout? Preliminary evidence suggests that this is not the case. In a recent three-wave longitudinal study spanning seven years,

Hakanen and Schaufeli (in press) showed that employee's engagement levels are unrelated to future burnout levels. Hence it seems that one does not have to be on fire first in order to burn out. Interestingly, engagement had a negative impact on depression and a positive impact on life satisfaction, whereas the reverse was true for burnout. Burnout had a positive impact on future depressive symptoms and a negative impact on future life satisfaction. More research is needed, also to investigate other possible negative consequences of work engagement, such as workaholism, or work-family conflict.

Collective Work Engagement

Usually work engagement is studied as an individual-level construct – i.e., employee engagement. But it also exists as a collective construct, for instance, as team engagement. Like individuals, teams may also be energetic (*'While working, my team feels full of energy'*), dedicated (*'My team is enthusiastic about the task they have to accomplish'*), and absorbed (*'While working, we forget everything else around us'*). A recent study that included 62 teams from 13 organizations showed that, as expected, team work engagement played a mediating role between team social resources (e.g., a supportive team climate and proper coordination of tasks) and team performance, as assessed by the supervisor (Torrente, Salanova, Llorens, & Schaufeli, 2012). Thus, when team members perceive that their team can draw upon certain resources they feel that their team is "engaged", and according to their supervisors such engaged teams perform better than less engaged teams. There are indications that a process of emotional contagion is responsible for the emergence of this shared psychological state of team work engagement (Bakker et al., 2006). Although still scare, research on collective engagement looks promising and cannot only be carried out in teams, but also in larger units such as departments or business units, or perhaps even entire organizations. An issue that has been completely neglected so far is the existence of a corporate "engagement culture" that fosters employee's growth and developments and stimulates them to thrive.

Final Note

After about one decade of engagement research there is a lot we that we know. Despite occasional disagreement the meaning of engagement is relatively clear and at least one reliable and valid assessment tool exists. Various (possible) antecedents and consequences have been identified, and research also uncovered different types (i.e., habitual and state) and levels (i.e., individual and collective) of engagement. And what is more, we have begun to find ways to build engagement. But there also remains a lot to be done, and the research agenda outlined above leads the way to where we should go. By taking up the issues of this agenda, we may not only increase our academic knowledge but may also support and inspire those practitioners who struggle to increase engagement organizations.

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