Chapter 4
Do Organizations Really Gain Without Pain?
The Dark Side of Employee Engagement

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ABSTRACT
The positive psychology movement involves putting an emphasis on investigating positive qualities of individuals. The movement has also affected work psychology domain. One of the most outstanding topics in the work psychology domain has been work engagement. Work engagement, defined as a positive state of mind, characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption, has been studied in relation to individual resources and performance indicators. Primary objective of this chapter is to provide assumptions on the dark side of work engagement. In this respect, the dark side of employee engagement, which has not received great attention in the literature, will be discussed in order to inspire a more balanced focus for future studies and organizational settings. The recommendation section includes avenues for future studies and suggestions for gatekeepers/managers.

INTRODUCTION
Positive job attitudes (i.e. job satisfaction, organizational commitment) and employee motivation have been largely conceptualized as necessary antecedents of individual and organizational performance (Brown and Peterson, 1993; Iaffaldano and Muchinsky, 1985). Literature is capable of providing proof for the strong relations among positively formed attitudes and productivity. So far, it has been proved that organizational citizens- also known as good soldiers- are high performers (Allen and Rush, 1998). Engaged workforce means higher performance (Bakker and Bal, 2010). The links among satisfaction, commitment and performance have been confirmed many times. The question is: if workplace positivity have been overly romanticized, do researchers- still have a realistic view of work life? Is it all win-win with doing good feeling good or is there a payback? In this line of thought, investigation of the potential dark side of positive work attitudes deserves attention.

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Consulting firms and academicians have been conducting research on work engagement and there is a rich literature on the causes and consequences (Lawler III, 2018). Literature on employee engagement mostly conceptualize it as an outcome variable, and an antecedent of high performance. What are the managerial, organizational and personal characteristics that contribute to employee engagement? Those kind of questions, asked, investigated and revealed that employee engagement; a state of intrinsic motivation with energy, involvement and efficacy (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004) could be a key employee characteristic, associated with productivity (Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Demerouti & Schaufeli, 2009). The gap in the literature calls for asking: What kind of negative consequences do engaged employees and their work group face as a result of being highly dedicated to work?

In this line of thought, primary objective of this chapter is to balance the positive view on work engagement by setting assumptions to be tested in future studies. The primary objective is to be fullfilled by providing a qualitative analysis section of the assumptions related with the dark side of employee engagement. Those assumptions are formed based on the insight gained from studies dealing with the relationship among work engagement and workaholism, the possibility of engaged employees becoming low performers, overengagement as a path to detachment, overengaged employees becoming victims of social loafing and candidates of job creep.

Since work engagement is conceptualized as a positive organizational behavior construct; it has been associated with positive antecedents and desired outcomes. The literature puts emphasis on the bright side of work engagement. This chapter will provide a literature review section to present the current state of research on work engagement. In this respect; theoretical framework will cover the definitions, drivers and outcomes of employee engagement to provide the current state of research and academic standpoint. Characteristics of highly engaged employees will also be discussed. One can believe it is essential to differentiate high-engagers from others, because they are the main subjects who could experience the negative consequences of work engagement. Later, the chapter will summarize the negative consequences of employee engagement with a qualitative analysis section related with the assumptions on the dark side of engagement. The propositions listed in this section were inspired by relevant literature and insight gained from studies investigating the dark side of bright variables such as organizational citizenship behaviors. The assumptions set forth by this chapter needs to be tested with future studies. Suggestions for future research and organizations are listed at the recommendations section. The chapter ends with a conclusion hoping that a realistic and balanced research view would be established in future research and organizational settings.

BACKGROUND

Defining Work Engagement

Psychology, as a discipline has been criticized as being dedicated to address mental illness rather than mental wellness. The ill-focused trend of studies has effected occupational psychology, as well. Recent years; with the emergence of positive organizational behavior and perspective shift, repairing the worst things has shifted into building positive qualities and this shift has lead to an increase in studies examining meaning and effects of work in positive terms (Bakker, Schaufeli, Leiter & Taris, 2008). Since the shift, one of the most popular positive “research topic” has emerged as work engagement.
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