EMPLOYEE WORK ENGAGEMENT: MYTH OR REALITY

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Abstract

Work engagement, a rising construct in organizational psychology has sparked considerable interest lately following the advent of positive psychology which emphasizes optimal flourishing of both the individuals and organizations. Engagement, broadly conceptualized as a way people organize themselves in their work, such that they completely commit their energy physically, mentally and affectionately to their work roles have helped to gain understanding of how positive organizational results such as dedication, proactive behavior, extra-role behavior, increased productivity, satisfaction etc could be achieved. Even though engagement is related to and founded on the groundwork of previous concepts like satisfaction, commitment and citizenship behavior, it is quite distinctive and encompassing, and broader in scope. As evidence kept evolving demonstrating that work engagement is a distinct construct, researchers began to formulate specific instruments to empirically measure the construct. With the existence of refined instruments to measure it, evidence has accumulated showing that the construct is a behavior that is real and exists in organizations and can be scientifically observed and measured. Empirically, both job and personal capacities have been indicated as major antecedents of engagement, and the results shown that engaged employees are more result-oriented and fitter health wise; add to company gains; show stronger customer relationship; exhibit positive job attitudes; and think less of quitting their jobs. Thus, given the theoretical and empirical conceptualization and its distinctiveness as organizational psychology construct, it has proven that the construct is a reality and not a myth.

Keywords: Employee work engagement, organization psychology, myth, reality, organization.

Introduction

The advent of positive psychology shifted the interest of organizational research from pathological organizational issues to optimum performance of both organization and its members (Seligman & Csikzentmihalyi, 2000). Before now, the traditional approach in psychology has been dominated by mental illness focusing on what is wrong with human beings such as disorder, disease, dysfunction and damage (Bakker & Schaufeli, 2008) instead of focusing on human capacity and well-being. Even though occupational health psychology has been preoccupied with how psychology can be used to promote quality of work and wellness of workers, literature suggests that articles published in the Journal of Occupational Psychology from 1996 to 2004 have been dominated by unpleasant issues concerning psychology (Schaufeli & Salanova, 2007).

Thus, the focus has been trying to identify and fix problems, a kind of reactionary measure which do not necessarily allow for thriving and successful positive state. The new movement called positive psychology takes care of the positive state such as engaged workforce and how it can be obtained and sustained. Therefore, the questions in organizational psychology become: How can issues such as creative thinking and commitment be encouraged? What kinds of work setting support the retention of employees? What kind of work settings bring about the thriving of employees and flourishing of organizations? Are they benefits derived from satisfied and engaged workers?

Positive psychology is therefore concerned with the issues of positive experiences like work engagement. The objective of positive psychology according to Seligman and Csikzentmihalyi (2000) is to fast track changes in building and fostering positive and good capabilities among human beings instead being preoccupied with correcting dysfunctional and disease aspect of human beings. Instead of emphasizing the negative aspect of human beings, positive psychology focuses on how to obtain and sustain optimum functioning which requires a new approach to organizations. As the name suggests, positive psychology focuses on how beneficial outcomes in organizations like satisfaction, happiness or work engagement can be achieved.

Work engagement, one of the outcomes of positive psychology has sparked a considerable interest lately because of its valuable organizational outcomes. The increasing work demands and stress and need to change the pattern of organizational process to be line with the needs of modern organization has necessitated the need for engaged employees. Ulrich (1997) sums up the importance of engaged workforce when he said: "employee contribution becomes a critical business issue because in trying to produce more output with less employee input, companies have no choice but to try to engage not only the body but the mind and soul of every employee" (p. 125). Engagement has helped to gain insight into how positive organizational results such as dedication, proactive behavior, citizenship behavior, greater productivity, job satisfaction etc could be achieved (Wefald & Downey, 2009; Salanova & Schaufeli, 2008; Shimazu *et al*., 2008).

Conceptualization of Work Engagement

Even though interest in work engagement is fairly recent, the construct has been conceptualized in several ways.

Kahn's (1990) Concept of Work Engagement: In 1990, Kahn came up with the concept of engagement as a situation whereby employees organize themselves to discharge their work roles such that they exert their physical, mental and emotional energies into performing the work roles. Although, Kahn believes that Goffman (1961) is instrumental to the idea of his research; he offered a different and important dimension to engagement and disengagement at workplace and stated that engagement is a situation whereby individuals invest their physical, mental and emotional energy when performing assigned tasks in organization. According to Kahn (1990), "people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances" by their physical, mental and emotional involvement into the work (p.694). It is therefore a kind of effort, commitment, concentration, close attention, and inner satisfaction experienced when performing work roles. Engaged people put in more effort into their work because they identify with it.

Kahn (1990) argued that there is a connection between engagement and Hackman and Oldham's (1980) three psychological states (availability, meaningfulness, safety) which affects employees' motivation at work. Availability is the individuals' sense of having the expected personal skill sets necessary to execute the job; meaningfulness is the sense of satisfaction and meaning derived from investing personal resources in work role; and safety is the belief of absence of reprimand or negative consequences associated with expressing genuine self and interest at work (Kahn, 1990; Zhu *et al*., 2009). Generally, the three psychological states is concerned with the importance of a supportive workplace which exists when individuals perceive organizations as trusting, safe, reliable, and open in terms of outcomes of behaviors (Rich, Lepine & Crawford, 2010). The experiences is as a result of organizational support and encouragement, trusting relationship, and power over work such that employees are free from harm for expressing true selves and embarking on new ventures without expecting unpleasant outcomes (Kahn, 1990). The presence or absence of these three critical mental states will determine the extent of employees' engagement at work.

Maslach and Leiter's (1997) Concept of Work Engagement: It is believed that research on engagement is actually rooted in burnout research which started when issues of care-giving and help-related occupations were begun (Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter, 2001). Helping profession such as health workers, teachers, police officers and other attendants are frequently faced with stress and challenges relating with clients which is likely to lead to burnout. To cope with the mental weariness associated with burnout, it was postulated that these persons may often keep away from their clients (depersonalization). Maslach and Jackson (1986) formulated Maslach Inventory (MBI) to study burnout in care-giving and help-related profession. Burnout, believed to be as a result of prolonged stress associated with work is characterized by mental weariness, feeling of incapacitation regarding work role, and sense of powerlessness and inability to take charge. This is commonly experienced among people in the care-giving professions (e.g. teacher, health officers, therapists, social workers, police officers etc) who may experience frustration following their inability to take care of people as adequately as they would want.

Beyond helping profession, burnout inventory has been applied to other occupations with the introduction of Maslach Burnout Inventory-General Survey (MBI-GS) by Schaufeli *et al* (1996). The MBI-GS is concerned more with rating aspects of jobs than on the relationships or

interaction of the client with the job which is an essential feature of the initial MBI. The MBI-GS has three facets, namely exhaustion, cynicism, and lack of personal efficacy. Exhaustion is the feeling of fatigue or worn out associated with job; cynicism is the feeling of indifference towards work; while personal efficacy is a measure of occupational accomplishments. Burnout which is usually a reaction from long-term experience of stress with the associated common symptoms of fatigue and trouble getting along with people has been found to be associated with decreased performance, increased ill-health such as insomnia, vexation, recurrent colds, stomach troubles, alcohol or drug abuse (Maslach *et al.*, 2001). An individual with report of burn out may suddenly quit a job, detach from family and friends, and fall into depression (Maslach & Jackson, 1986). Thus, burnout has been described as mental weariness and decline in engagement with work, with serious weakening and loss of energy, lack of participation, and ineffectiveness. Burnout is therefore is regarded as direct opposite of work engagement.

Thus, it was research on burnout that motivated interest in most contemporary work on work engagement which is regarded as the direct opposite of burnout (Bakker *et al.*, 2008). The implication is that engagement is measured in opposite direction of scores of the three facets of MBI-GS reflecting low scores on emotional weariness and cynicism, and personal efficacy. This is because engagement is reflected by vigor, dedication, and engrossment, which are the perfect opposite of the three dimensions of burnout: exhaustion, cynicism, and reduced efficacy (Maslch & Leiter, 1997; Maslach *et al.*, 2001). According to Schaufeli *et al* (2002), burnout and engagement are inversely related and share about one quarter to one third of variance in common. In contrast with burnout individuals who manifest mental weariness, detachment from others, and professional inadequacy; engaged workers are energetic, dedicated and fully immersed at performing work assignment, and perceive their work as stimulating and interesting (Bakker *et al.*, 2014).

Schaufeli et al's (2002) Concept of Work Engagement: Schaufeli *et al* (2002) opined that absence of burn out in individuals does not mean that the persons are engaged. Also, absence of exhaustion in individuals does not mean that they are energized; and not being cynical means that they are dedicated. Schaufeli *et al* (2002, p. 702) defined work engagement as "a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind characterized by vigor, dedication and absorption" and therefore developed an instrument to measure engagement called Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES). *Vigor* refers to active energy in execution of work task, readiness to commit effort, and tenacity to withstand challenges. *Dedication* is concerned with loyalty and allegiance to work and experiences of relevance, ebullience, self-respect and personal worth. *Absorption* refers to absolute concentration and happy engrossment without noticing as time passes. Similarly, May, Gilson and Harter (2004) conceptualized engagement as having cognitive, emotional and physical facets which are similar to absorption, dedication and vigor respectively. According to May and colleagues, the three dimensions could be summed up to reflect the aggregate measure of engagement which is similar to the Kahn's concept of engagement regarding three mental states of handiness, meaningfulness, and safety. Comparing the three constructs, they found that mental state of meaningfulness demonstrated the most potent relationship with engagement. However, research suggests that the concept of engagement as conceptualized by May and colleague has not been found in other published works.

In contrast with individuals who are burnt out, engaged individuals are energetic and effective in performing their work roles and have the sense efficacy that can help them cope with the demands of work (Schaufeli & Salanova, 2007). According to Salanova and Schaufeli (2008), engagement indicates intrinsic work motivation, a kind of inner satisfaction and contentment free from any external inducement or reward.

As pointed out, Schaufeli, Taris and Bakker (2006) argue that work engagement is different from workaholism which is concerned with factors associated with excessive and compulsive work. Even though work engagement is associated with excess work factor, is has no relationship with compulsive work factor (Schaufeli *et al.,* 2006). While work engagement was discovered to be positively correlated with health and wellness, workaholism was discovered to bear inverse relationship health and wellness (Schaufeli *et al.,* 2006).

Macey and Schneider's (2008) Concept of Work Engagement: Macey and Schneider (2008) conceptualize engagement into three distinct constructs: trait, state, and behavioral. Trait engagement refers to personal dispositions or characteristics of individuals having positive view of work and life which is likely to make one more inclined to experience engagement; state engagement is a transient psychological state of energy, absorption, commitment, and satisfaction; while behavioral engagement is observable actions such as task performance, in-role and extra-role behaviors. Macey and Schneider (2008) went further to identify different antecedents of engagement as well as their important moderators. They argued that attributes of job such as skill variety, feedback, and job autonomy can directly predict engagement whereas leadership style such as transformational leadership that excites intellectually and considers others personally can indirectly impact engagement.

Macey and Schneider further observed that even though engagement can be likened to other work-related concepts such as satisfaction, dedication, involvement, positive affectivity etc, they are distinct constructs. They argued that factors that foster engagement may be different from those that foster traditional job-related concepts like contentment and loyalty (Macey *et al.*, 2009). To them, work engagement is a holistic and comprehensive concept that extends beyond previous one like satisfaction.

In sum, literatures suggest that the conceptualization of work engagement as espoused by Schaufeli *et al* (2002) seems to be the most attractive and often-cited in research. Also, the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) developed by Schaufeli *et al* (2002) to measure work engagement has demonstrated excellent proof of validity and reliability as well as factor structure. Every other conceptualization have missing link which is covered by that of Schaufeli *et al* (2002). However, Maslach and Leiter (1997) argue that in as much as burnout and engagement are opposite to each other, burnout does not align with the tenets of positive psychology. Even though the opposite of damage is repair, repair does not indicate optimum functioning.

Engagement and Other Related Constructs
Within the academic domain, although engagement is seen as related to and established on the foundation of earlier concepts in organizational psychology, it is believed to be a distinct construct. For instance, Robinson *et al* (2004) argue that engagement consists of several

elements of commitment and discretionary behavior (OCB), but by no means a perfect match to either of the two. Engagement differs from commitment because commitment is a kind of attitude and bond employees have towards their company while engagement is a behavior and the extent to which a worker is immersed at performing work roles. In addition, OCB is volitional, informal and extra-role behavior necessary for survival of organization while engagement is concerned with formal in-role behavior rather than discretionary behavior.

Even though engagement is related to involvement, there are quite distinct. May, Gilson and Harter (2004) suggest that involvement is the outcome of cognitive appraisal of the need fulfilling features of the job that comes from the way a person views him/herself. Also, Rich (2006) pointed out the differences between job involvement and engagement by suggesting that involvement comes before the bodily exertion of energy that characterizes engagement. Again, Macey and Schneider (2008) opine that involvement is only an aspect of mental disposition of engagement. Engagement is not the same as involvement in that the latter is more concerned with how employees are immersed and totally engrossed in their jobs; while the former is concerned with emotional state. According to Saks (2006), engagement can be regarded as a predictor of involvement as the individuals who are deeply engaged in their work ought to identify with their jobs.

Again, engagement and satisfaction seems similar, but they are not the same thing. Several researchers (e.g. Blizzard, 2004; Rich, 2006; Macey & Schneider, 2008; Frese, 2008) believe that engagement and job satisfaction are two different construct. For example, Rich (2006) refers to satisfaction with job as the good feelings emanating from the job but not necessarily from deployment of positive energies to the job. Consistent with the Rich's (2006) assertion, Macey and Schneider (2008) disagree with the idea of using the criterion of job satisfaction to measure engagement by arguing that such approach would need an inferential leap. Similarly, Frese (2008) state that persistence, energy, absorption and enthusiasm which are the hallmark of engagement are not found in job satisfaction.

Markos and Sridevi (2010) explain that even though engagement is established on the groundwork of former concepts like job satisfaction, organizational commitment and organizational citizenship behavior, it bears a relation that go beyond these concepts and tends to be broader in scope. The authors further argue that engagement predicts beneficial results in organization better than other related concepts which is a clear indication of a symbiotic relationship between employer and employee in comparison with satisfaction, commitment and OCB. Engaged workers are mentally and affectionately connected and involved and tend to go extra length beyond the formal employment contract in executing their work roles (Markos & Sridevi, 2010).

The term flow in organizational behavior is another concept that bears strong relationship with engagement. Csikszentmihalyi (1975) conceptualizes flow as the totality of feeling experienced when an individual invest high level of energy in performance of work roles. Also, flow can be regarded as a situation in which individuals are so engrossed and committed in a venture that nothing else seems to matter; and the feeling itself is so satisfying that the individual will carry out the task again even at greater odd for the sheer quest of doing it (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Again, it can be regarded as a state in which individuals' skills are

so adequate to the extent that they can handle the demands of the job in a purposeful and professional manner that depicts the performance of work roles. In atmosphere of flow, it becomes difficult to detach self from the surrounding environment. Also, when an individual is in atmosphere of flow, behavior becomes effortless. There is intense and absolute concentration such that there is no little or no time left to think about anything outside the issue at hand. When individuals experience state of flow, self-awareness is lost and time passes without noticing it. According to Csikszentmihalyi (1990), processes that initiate the experiences of flow is so satisfying that one becomes intrinsically motivated to carry it out for its own sake without expecting external reward even when it is difficult or dangerous to embark on such venture.

In fact, a parallel exist between the concept of flow and engagement. In the opinions of Steele and Fullagar (2009), engagement is highly related to the concept of flow seen as having four dimensions, namely, equitable match between effort and skills, clear goals, clear knowledge of results, and self-determination. However, there are still specific distinct features defining both constructs. While some (e.g. Salanova & Schaufeli, 2008; Schaufeli, Bakker & Salanova, 2006; Shimazu & Schaufeli, 2008) approach engagement from a relatively enduring point of view, flow is a momentary experience that is short-lived instead of a relatively enduring experience characteristic of engagement. According to Schaufeli and Bakker (2004), engagement is a long time connection to work as against flow which is more of short time peak experience of work.

Assessment of Work Engagement

The onset of work engagement saw many attempts by many researchers to use instrument meant for other positive job outcomes like job fulfillment to assess it (e.g. Macey & Schneider, 2008; Rich, 2006). However, as evidence kept evolving demonstrating that work engagement is a separate and independent positive organizational construct, researchers began to develop specific instrument to empirically measure it. With the existence of refined instruments to measure the construct, evidence has accumulated to the fact that the construct is a behavior that really exists in organization and can be empirically and scientifically observed and measured.

The earliest measuring instrument of work engagement was Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) formulated by Maslach and Jackson (1986). The scale consists of 22 items designed to measure the three domains of burnout (exhaustion, cynicism, professional efficacy), with low score on exhaustion depicting energy, low score on cynicism indicating involvement, and high score on efficacy showing professional efficacy. Each dimension is measured with its corresponding scale and scored separately which are not combined into one single measure of burnout (Maslach & Jackson, 1986). Later, Schaufeli *et al* (2002) pointed out that burnout and engagement cannot be assessed with the same instrument; and that it is improper to assume that both measures are absolutely and inversely correlated. In other words, if a person is not having burnout, it does not mean that the individual is engaged. In contrast, that an individual is not engaged does mean that the individual is experiencing burnout. Again, they explained that the relationship between burnout and engagement cannot be assessed scientifically when the same instrument is used to measure them. For example, both constructs cannot be included at the same time in a model so as to assess their concurrent validity.

Consequently, Schaufeli *et al* (2002) formulated Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) to assess the three facets of engagement, namely absorption, dedication and vigor. The abridged form of UWES (UWES-9) is made up of 9-items while the original version of UWES (UWES-17) has 17-items reflecting the three segments of engagement, namely: vigor (6-items), dedication (5-items), and absorption (6- items). The scales have encouraging psychometric properties with the internal consistencies (Cronbach's alpha) of 0.79, 0.88, and 0.80 for vigor, dedication, and absorption respectively, and 0.93 for the composite scales (Schaufeli *et al* 2002). The inventory is designed along 7-point responses of Likert-type starting from the range of 1 "*Strongly Disagree*" to 7 "*Strongly Agree*".

The UWES has demonstrated a considerable acceptance in research and has been adapted and certified good in many counties such as Finland (Hakanen, 2002), Japan (Shimazu et al., 2008), China (Yi-Wen & Yi-Qun, 2005), Spain (Schaufeli et al., 2002), the Netherlands (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003; Schaufeli et al., 2002), Nigeria (Ugwu, 2013), South Africa (Storm & Rothman, 2003). In validating the instrument, confirmatory factor analysis was employed and the result proved that the three-factor structure proposed by the authors fit the data better than any other structure. Thus, the instrument has demonstrated excellent psychometric properties across culture thereby indicating its acceptability globally.

An alternative measure to assess work engagement is the Oldenburg Burnout Inventory (OLBI) (Demerouti & Bakker, 2006; Demerouti *et al.*, 2002). The inventory was initially designed to measure mental fatigue and contained items that are worded in positive and inverse direction and can therefore be employed to assess engagement as well (Gonzalez-Roma *et al.*, 2006). In using OLBI to assess work engagement, researchers are expected to reword the negative items to make it suitable to assess work engagement. The scale was designed in two directions in which one is measuring engagement from the range of mental fatigue to vigor, and the other assessing engagement from the range of disengagement to dedication. The psychometric properties of the instrument have been ascertained in researches carried out in many countries like Greece, Germany, the USA, the Netherlands, South Africa (Demerouti & Bakker, 2008). Results of confirmatory factor analyses indicated clearly the fit of two-variable model than any other alternative model.

Engagement Behavior, Drivers, and Outcomes
Research have identified specific behaviors characteristics of engaged employees, factors and attributes of work fostering engagement as well as the outcomes or gains of engaged workforce. Attempt at reviewing the actions of engaged individuals, what drives engagement, and results will shade light on its benefit for both the employers and employees.
Behavior of Engaged Employees

Engaged workers are known by certain types of behavior. For instance, the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) assumes that the behaviors of engaged worker is ascertained by their expressions of energy, commitment and immersion in carrying out assigned task in organization. In other words, energetic behavior, allegiance, and engrossment are examples of behaviors common with engaged workforce. The items in the UWES assess and capture these three types of behavior.

A research conducted by Gallup (2006) shows that engaged workers put up high level of work performance, are passionate about work, show more creativity and are more result-oriented than others, are open to learning and growth which help to meet the changing needs of customers. Organizations derive benefits from such employees' behavior as it helps to achieve competitive advantage in the global market environment. However, employees' work engagement behavior is fostered by some factors associated with the characteristics work.

Drivers of Work Engagement

Drivers or antecedents of engaged workforce in organizations align with Hackman and Oldham (1980) Job Characteristic framework and Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model (Demerouti *et al.,* 2001; Bakker & Demerouti, 2007) especially in area of job resources. The Job Characteristics model argues that some attributes of job are motivational especially at the stage of task performance by offering knowledge of result and being in charge of the job. The model recognizes the intrinsic motivational role job resources can play since ideal work situations motivate employees to put in their best to task performance. In such setting, the task will be successfully accomplished as well as goals attained. For example, co-worker support and knowledge of result can lead to the probability of successful accomplishment of task performance. Whichever way, be it fulfillment of essential needs or achievement of objectives of the work, the result is encouraging and it will tend to foster engagement (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Schaufeli & Salanova, 2007).

The JD-R model divides work status into two parts, namely: job demands and job resources; with job demands impacting health adversely and job resources initiating interest and enthusiasm in executing the assigned duties (Bakker *et al.,* 2014). The framework argues that highly demanding jobs (such as high workload, conflict and ambiguity in executing work, family-work conflict) may bring about mental weariness and energy loss which impairs health of workers while the presence of job resources (supportive leadership, co-worker support, supervisors' support) may foster motivation that will lead to dedication and high level of performance (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Xanthopoulou *et al.,* 2007). Availability of capacities tends to activate personal advancement, learning and growth that may play an essential part that may help worker contend with job demands (Bakker *et al.,* 2014). For example, Salanova, Agut and Peiro (2005) indicate that learning and job control regarded as organizational resources significantly predicted work engagement among service employees. Thus, the model especially job capacities have largely been responsible for predicting work engagement and can be regarded as its major drivers or antecedents.

Job resources is concerned with the physical and mental aspect of work that help employees perform effectively and efficiently at work as well as help reduce the difficult nature of the job and the resultant physical and mental impacts thereby activating personal advancement, understanding, and growth (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). To Bakker *et al* (2008), job resources are quite critical in fostering work engagement especially in situations where challenges of the job are high. Within the organizational domain, job resources may come in form of salary, career growth and advancements; at the level of interpersonal and social relationships, it may come in form of supports from managers and colleagues; within the domain of work organization, it is seen in form of role clarity and participatory decision; while at the level of

task performance, it is seen in form of knowledge of result, skill variety, task clarity (Bakker *et al.*, 2008).

Other studies report similar antecedents of work engagement to include support from managers, trusting and healthy relationship between employers and employees; assisting workers tackle problems relating to work; showing integrity and empathizing with employees; collaborative management; and organizing jobs to reduce mental and physical stress among others (e.g. Bates, 2004; May *et al.*,2004). Mastrangelo (2009) argues that employees' work engagement is fostered by specific individual elements such as individual growth, how supervisors are seen, and knowledge of performance as well as organizational elements such as leadership style, true communication, and being hopeful about the success of organization. Similarly, Jacob *et al* (2008) identified job control, learning opportunities, supervisory support, co-worker support, participatory decision, and flexible workplace as organizational variables strongly correlated with work engagement, job fulfillment, and employees' retention. Thus, a good number of job resources remain the major antecedents of work engagement, and understanding them is necessary for promoting effective organization.

There are good numbers of empirical evidences pointing to the direction that job resources are the major drivers or predictors of work engagement. For instance, De Lange, De Whitte and Notelaers (2008) reported about 16 researches that established significant correlation between job resources and work engagement. In a related development, Demerouti *et al* (2001) reported that performance feedback; supervisor support and job autonomy defined as organizational resources significantly predicted work engagement. Also, Hakanen (2002) carried out a research to examine the role of JD-R model on work engagement among employees of educational establishment and found that demands and resources of the job were significantly correlated with mental fatigue and engagement respectively. Also, among Dutch employees, Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) reported significant correlation between measures of organizational resources – knowledge of results about performance, support from colleagues, and support from supervisor – and work engagement assessed at the level of energy, commitment and immersion. Hakanen, Bakker and Schaufeli (2006) explored JD-R model and its impact on work engagement among teachers and established that job demands correlated with mental weariness and sickness while organizational resources correlated with dedication and absorption.

In a study among nurses in Nigeria, Ugwu (2018) reported that role overload and work-family conflict conceptualized as job demands were inversely associated with work engagement while co-worker support and resilience regarded as organizational and personal capacities respectively were significantly associated with work engagement as well as buffered the relationship between work-family conflict and work engagement but failed to moderate the association between high workload and work engagement. Similarly, Ugwu and Ogbeide (2016) integrated JD-R model and social exchange perspective to investigate the association between organizational justice considered as job resources and work engagement in Nigeria and found that justice in organization correlated with work engagement among employees of private sector which is a demonstration of higher work engagement among workers of private sector than those of public sector.

Beyond job resources, personal capacities have been incorporated into the JD-R model (Demerouti & Bakker, 2011). Personal capacities referred to as positive self-appraisal in terms of resilience and capacity to take charge and deal successfully with one's environments (Hobfoll *et al.*, 2003) can also foster work engagement. Indicated by four state-like capacities namely, self-confidence, expectation, hopeful, and resilience collectively called psychological capital (psycap) are important because they have been reported to be linked with employees' positive coping and wellness (Avey, Luthans, Smith, & Palmer, 2010). According to Luthans and Youssef (2004), they can be gauged, created, and handled effectively leading to various desirable outcomes. In particular, workers possessing high level of these personal resources (psycap) possess extra energy and capabilities to perform their duties, are more hopeful and optimistic even under negative working conditions, believing that things will turn out for the better, and speedily "bounce back" from hindrances (Shen *et al.*, 2014). When aggregated overtime, they become a means of activating energy that catalyze effort to sustain persistent behaviors among employees at work irrespective of circumstances (Wernsing, 2014).

Also, Mäkikangas *et al* (2013) reported that workers who reported high level of personal strengths such as resilience, self-efficacy, optimism, and emotional stability employ a unique approach of handling reality. According to Makikangas and colleagues (2013), "such people tend to interpret their environment basically as benign, expecting things to go well, accepting setbacks and failures as normal, and not as indicative of their own lack of worthiness, and tend to see life as something that can be influenced and acted upon" (p.134). As such, personal strengths can be regarded as a very vital means that can exert a significant effect in buffering the dysfunctional effect of job demands which in turn fosters work engagement.

Van der Schoor (2015) carried out a research that intended to offer insight on the variables that ignite engagement among teachers. The personal variables identified were resilience, hope, optimism, and self-efficacy collectively known as psychological capital. The results of the study indicated that these personal strengths predicted work engagement among the teachers. Importantly, psychological capital buffered the association between job demand and work engagement such that the individuals that possessed high level of the personal strengths displayed high level of engagement in the face of daunting job demands than those who possessed low level of the personal strengths. The study confirmed the impact of personal strengths within the motivational process of JD-R model and hence the importance of developing personal strengths in teachers to keep them motivated and engaged.

Also, Ugwu and Okojie (2016) conducted a study involving commercial bank staff and those of a production company in Nigeria and investigated the link between human resource management strategies and work engagement as well as the mediating role of personal strengths (hope, optimism, self-efficacy, and resilience) in the relationship. Integrating the JD-R model, human resource management practices were regarded as job variables while the psychological capitals were regarded as personal strengths. The authors found that human resource management practices predicted the employees' work engagement. The results further showed that the employees' psychological capital mediated the association between human resource management practice and work engagement.

Hallberg, Johansson and Schaufeli (2007) examined the relationship between Type A behavior defined as goal striving and restlessness and their effect on work engagement. They found that the goal-oriented aspect of Type A behavior predicted work engagement in a positive direction while the restlessness aspect of Type A behavior predicted work engagement in a negative direction. Langelaan, Bakker, van Doornen and Schaufeli (2006) investigated the effect of personal attributes such as neuroticism and extraversion and temperament on burnout and engagement. They found that individuals who scored high on engagement were inclined to manifest distressing emotions such as frustration, fear, or depression while cheerfulness, sociability, excitement etc associated with extraversion. Burned out individuals were reported to have high level of neuroticism. Strength of fervor and strength of suppression did not predict work engagement or burnout; while mobility, i.e. quick response to change predicted work engagement.

Thus, both organizational and personal strengths have been indicated as the major predictors of work engagement. It is, therefore, necessary to understand these drivers of work engagement so as to ensure positive engagement outcomes.
Outcomes of Work Engagement

Work engagement has attracted much attention in research because of its positive impact on the success of organizations. Research reports have shown that engaged workforce produces more, are safer, and fitter; grow company profit; put up excellent performance individually; show good interactions with customers, display good approaches to job, manifest less absenteeism, exhibit fewer deficiency, and think less of quitting the job as against disengaged individuals (Bakker *et al.*,2005; Coffman & Gonzalez-Molina, 2002; Harter *et al.*,2002; Harter *et al.*,2009; Hoxsey, 2010; Lockwood, 2007; Rich *et al.*, 2010; Saks, 2006; & Schaufeli *et al.*,2008).

Empirical evidence shows that work engagement play critical protective functions against high job demands. For example, research evidence has been established that work engagement activate personal capacities to develop practices and make changes that help nurses confront hardship, and maintain harmony between jobs, values, and the handling of professional responsibilities (Severinsson *et al.*, 2007).

Regarding job contentment, Shimazu *et al* (2008) found that engagement predicted career contentment in a positive direction as well as interpersonal fulfillment, and utilization of ability. Also, Wefald and Downey (2009) reported that engagement predicted strongly fulfillment with education in terms of school, selected major, courses and extracurricular activities among students. Still, Saks (2006) established significant prediction of perceived organizational support by work engagement which in turn led to contentment with job, organizational commitment and thinking of quitting. Also, empirical findings (e.g. Bjarnadottir, 2011; Llorens *et al.*, 2007; Salanova *et al.*, 2011; Xanthopoulou *et al.*, 2007) have established positive correlations between work engagement and factors such as leadership styles, job contentment, and task execution, and importantly, an inverse relationship with mental exhaustion.

In meta-analytic studies by Gallup linking employees' work engagement with business outcomes, Harter *et al* (2003) reported that a workplace that fosters positive employees' work

engagement was significantly correlated with positive organizational outcomes such as minimized intention to quit, increased customer contentment, employees' output, and company gains. Later, Harter *et al* (2009) compared business unit with high and low engaged workforce in terms of engagement outcomes and found that those with highly engaged workforce were rated 60% better in quality (defects), 49% lower in turnover, 49% higher in safety incidents, and 37% lower in absenteeism.

In terms of financial performance, Gallup (2006) studied 40 global businesses and found that business unit that reported having highly engaged workforce was better in financial performance than those with disengaged workforce. The interpretation was that such organizations were 57.5% better in operating margins, 34.4% better in gross margins, and 49.3% higher returns in shareholder within a space of four years (Gallup, 2006). Also, Gallup (2012) found that organizations with report of engaged workforce were 3.9 times better in earnings per share (EPS) growth rate than those with disengaged workforce.

Also, work engagement has been reported to have a significant impact on organization's success. For instance, Philadelphia-based Hay Group reports that 94% of organizations on Fortune's most admired list showed that employees' work engagement were responsible for organization's competitive edge with 94% reporting reduction in intention to quit and 84% reporting enhanced customer contentment and loyalty (Shelly, 2010). Also, Fleming *et al* (2005) report that organizations having engaged workforce recorded more profit and output, low absenteeism, and low intention to quit when compared with those with disengaged workforce.

Also, Gallup (2012) found that organizations with engaged workforce recorded about 12% more in output; 28% faster in growth rate earning per share, while organizations with low engaged workforce experienced 9.4% decline in growth rate earning per share when compared with those with engaged workforce. In addition, Gallup found that organizations with highly disengaged workforce had 62% more accident rate than organizations with highly engaged workforce. Specifically, organizations with engaged workforce achieved 21% higher in output, 22% more in gain, 10% more in customer contentment, 37% lesser in absenteeism, between 25%-65% lesser in intention to quit, 28% less in shrinkage, 48% lesser in safety incidents, 41% fewer patient safety incidents, and 41% fewer quality incidents (defects).

With regards to health issues, Brit, Castro and Adler (2005) found that engagement buffered the association between duration of work and ill-health. They reported that soldiers with high level of engagement showed fewer symptoms in long working hours. They also indicated that engagement played vital moderating impact in the association between role overload and health issues such that soldiers with report of high level of engagement manifested fewer signs of ill-health when workload is high than those with report of low level of engagement. Outcomes of implementing employees' engagement initiatives exist in several specific organizations. For instance:
   i. Caterpillar makes $8.8 million yearly from reduced detritions, habitual absence from work, and extra time; a $2 million rise in gain and a 34% rise in fulfilled customers (Vance, 2006).

ii. Molsom Coor Brewing Company makes over $1.7 million in safety reduction; enhanced gross operation; and over $2.1 million reduction in operational costs of engaged versus disengaged teams (Vance, 2006).

iii. Richfield, Minnesota-based Best Buy reported that when engagement score of a shop rises by a tenth of a point (on a five-point scale); the shop's gains will rise by $100,000 for the year (Shelly, 2010).

Work engagement is also reported to have direct beneficial effects to employees. For example, Pitt-Catsouphes and Matz-Costa (2008) report that engaged workers have fewer stresses, more contentment with personal lives, healthier, and unlikely to take sick leave when compared with disengaged workers. Also, studies show that engaged workers relish good mental health, describe better sense of wellness, function in skillful jobs with good results, and profit from healthy social interactions (Schaufeli *et al.,* 2008).

Bakker (2011) explains that engaged workforce perform better than disengaged ones in the following ways:

i. Engaged workers frequently go through strong feelings (e.g. happiness, excitement) that seem to widen people's knowledge-base and regularly act on personal capacities.

ii. Engaged workers go through improved wellness and can deploy skill and vigor to work.

iii. Engaged workers craft their own jobs and personal capacities.

iv. Engaged workers transfuse engagement (i.e. spillover) to others in the vicinity.

Thus, the actions and behaviors of engaged workforce is significantly different from others. Work engagement is characterized by energy, commitment, and immersion in work, and engaged workforce are described as high work performers, dedicated, and adaptive. Engaged workforce impacts the employees emotionally and physically which translates into organizational productivity and profitability. In organizations, inspiring ethical leaderships that openly communicate with employees and provide feedback, clarify role and make accurate job matches, rely on decision making authority, and properly design job elements have been shown to be the forces driving employees work engagement.

Summary and Conclusion

Close to two decades following the presidential address by Seligman that catalyzed the emergence of positive psychology and positive organizational behavior, work engagement has grown and attracted the interest of organizational researchers. Scholars have conceptualized the construct in several ways; however the most attractive and often cited in research which seems to be the widely acknowledged by various authors is the definition given by Schaufeli *et al* (2002) as "a positive, fulfilling work-related state of mind characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption" (p.702). The instrument, Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) has displayed outstanding psychometric properties and factor validity. Even though many researchers (e.g., Macey & Schneider, 2008; Markos & Sridevi, 2010) unequivocally agree that at least in part engagement is similar and consists of earlier constructs (e.g., commitment, involvement, OCB), it has been established that it is a distinct constructs that can be empirically studied and scientifically measured. Its distinctiveness and promising performance organizational outcomes has led researchers across the globe to

expend effort at examining and establishing its antecedents and outcomes in organizations. Researchers as well as organizational practitioners (e.g., Gallup, 2006; Mastrangelo, 2009; Markos & Sridevi, 2010) affirm that engaged workers are vigorous and excited; passionate about work; dedicated and devoted to duty. Also, engaged employees are reported to be healthier; increase company profitability; maintain good customer relationship, show good predisposition to job, report fewer absence, make fewer mistake, and more inclined to maintain organizational membership than disengaged employees (e.g. Coffman & Gonzalez-Molina, 2002; Gallup, 2012; Harter *et al.,*2002; Harter *et al.,*2009; Hoxsey, 2010; Lockwood, 2007; Rich *et al.,* 2010; Saks, 2006; & Schaufeli *et al.,*2008).

Job resources and personal capacities derived from the tenets of JD-R framework have been indicated as the major antecedents of work engagement. Researchers (e.g., Bakker *et al.,* 2008; Bakker, 2011) affirm that job resources play great roles in fostering work engagement particularly in situations where the demands of the job are high. Supervisory support, a form of job or organizational resources which has the capacity to provide employees with some capacities such as constant knowledge of results especially on ability instead of weak points; commendation and acknowledgement; assistance and encouragement to perform tasks; reasonable and purposeful task; opportunities for healthy social interactions at work etc are all regarded as the major drives work engagement (Cureton, 2014).

As researchers have recorded and continue to record breakthrough in establishing the reality of this relatively brand new constructs in the field of positive organizational psychology with clear-cut lines separating it from earlier motivationally-oriented and related constructs, the argument in some quarters as to whether the construct is truly a unique one or an existing one presented as though it were a new one i.e. a repackaged concept (Saks, 2006) may not hold. One of the core attributes of an established construct is the availability and accessibility of a globally accepted measurement device to gauge such construct. Literatures point to the existence of various measuring instruments developed and standardized and cross-culturally validated to assess work engagement; however, the most appealing one is the UWES designed by Schaufeli *et al* (2002) to assess the three domains of work engagement. Empirical evidence from many countries have shown mutual agreements concerning the structural and construct validity of the UWES instrument. Apart from the UWES instrument, there are other various universally accepted measurement tools such as Job Engagement Scale (JES) (Rich *et al.,* 2010), and OLBI (Demerouti & Bakker, 2008), MBI (Maslach & Jackson, 1986), Nigerian version of UWES (Ugwu, 2013) etc.

With the development of the measuring devices, the concept of engagement has been researched in many countries and results obtained have proven the utility of the construct in organizations resulting in outstanding beneficial organizational and individual performance outcomes. Thus, given the theoretical conceptualization of the construct and empirical evidences establishing its antecedents and outcomes, and its distinctiveness as organizational psychology construct, as well as measuring devices to measure the construct, there is no doubt that the construct of work engagement is a reality and have come to stay. Therefore, the question of whether work engagement is a myth does not arise as available empirical evidences strongly suggest clearly that work engagement is a reality.

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