

## Chapter 5

# A Systematic Review of the Correlates and Outcomes of Employee Engagement

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### ABSTRACT

*Engagement is a concept that is hard to define and easy to realize. Engagement is motivational, and this motivation helps individuals to allocate their resources for their job performance and use those resources intensively and consistently. So, one can say that employee engagement should have been correlated with some variables related with work and organization. In the academic literature, engagement is a relatively high focused area, and it is said to be related to but distinct from other constructs in organizational behavior. Engagement's casual and correlational relationships with the various concepts such as burnout, job demands and resources, organizational commitment, job involvement, workaholism, job satisfaction, for example, are much researched. However, researches indicate different results. This chapter aims to systematically review the aforementioned concepts relationship to engagement and eventually put forward, if any, conflicts and resemblances among previous researches.*

### INTRODUCTION

For many years, studies on psychology have mainly focused on negative psychological conditions. However, in the 2000s, the attention turned towards the strengths and ideal functioning levels of the people. It can be said, studies on positive psychological conditions are conducted with a perspective that the strengths and psychological capacities of individuals can be measured, improved and managed effectively. Employee engagement, which helps to increase individual and organizational performance through a positive mood felt by the employee about his/her job, is considered within the context of positive organizational behaviors. This is because, engagement increases performance by helping employees become wholly absorbed in their jobs and perform their tasks more vigorously. On the other hand, employee engagement results in positive outcomes such as increased levels of organizational commitment and

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organizational citizenship behavior, as well as improving psychological well-being. Due to the strategic nature of human resources, organizations attach great importance to employees' efforts to work towards organizational goals in full and on their own initiative. In other words, since personal characteristics of employees differentiate organizations from each other and ensure sustainable competition, value given to employees in current business life increases over time. For this reason, organizations are striving to provide conditions that enable them to make the best use of their employees' capacities, knowledge and skills. In this process, employee engagement plays a critical role since it allows employees to use their qualifications on their own will and to feel an inner motivation for their jobs. In addition, job engagement leads to proactive behavior in the development and improvement of organizational processes, by providing employees with a high-level of energy and desire for their jobs (Luthans, 2002; Schaufeli et al., 2006; Bakker & Schaufeli, 2008; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2014).

## **BACKGROUND**

### **Employee Engagement Concept**

The second half of the 90s faced with talent wars in which companies had difficult times to keep talented employees and transform them into engaged employees. However, talent wars are still present today because the problem of labor force and the problem of shortage of employees having a desired level of competence and skill. Therefore, the way to retain talented employees is to turn them into wholeheartedly engaged employees (Jamrog, 2004).

It is seen that the studies about the definition, measurement and determination of the dimensions of concept of engagement have spread over time. In these studies, researchers admit that engagement is a multidimensional concept, but they fail to reach a consensus on the dimensions of this concept and to decide on a valid measurement model in this regard (Rothbard & Patil, 2012). Therefore, in the area of positive organizational behavior, different definitions are made about the concept of engagement, and it is addressed from different perspectives conceptually by various researchers.

William Kahn has been the first to use the concept of engagement in the academic arena. The conditions that favorably or negatively affect the employee engagement of individuals have been investigated in an empirical study by Kahn in 1990 (Kahn, 1990). In line with this, it has been argued that employees do not make any extra effort except performing tasks assigned to them in a simple manner. Whereas, those who are engaged to their jobs have been reported to be able to express themselves and be fully integrated into organizational roles. Kahn defines the concept of engagement as employees' commitment on their work roles. Engagement has been largely defined as the transformation of the energy of an individual into physical, cognitive, and emotional labor, in other words, employee engagement has been argued to be achieved through physical, emotional and cognitive factors.

Kahn claims that there are three psychological conditions that affect employee engagement:

- **Meaningfulness:** Refers to feeling valuable at work, believing to make a difference, meaningful perception of work
- **Safety:** Employee's feel of confidence psychologically, certainty in the work to be done, the predictability and clearness of the work and positive perceptions regarding the work

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