

7

Positive Occupational Health Psychology

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CHAPTER OUTLINE

This chapter introduces positive occupational health psychology (POHP). We discuss the negativity bias, and consider why a focus on positive job characteristics, well-being, and positive behaviours is important. After introducing the emerging concept of work engagement, we describe research findings on several POHP-topics, including the design of jobs to do good, job crafting, and positive spillover from work to home. Additionally, we review the first positive interventions in occupational health psychology.

Introduction

Imagine you are working as a waiter in a restaurant. Today at work you have served many customers who complained about their dish. This is absolutely not your day, and the bad thing about it is that you have had such days regularly during the past few months. Complaining customers mean more (and more difficult) work and less time to talk to your colleagues. You start to wonder whether you should continue with this job, given that work has become rather stressful.

In Chapter 3, Mike O'Driscoll and Paula Brough discussed the wealth of occupational health psychology research that has examined the associations between work organization and health. It is notable that most research has focused on risk factors in the workplace such as high job demands and resulting stress-related diseases (for example, burnout and cardiovascular diseases). In Chapter 4, Raymond Randall and Karina Nielsen similarly observed that the vast majority of intervention research and practice concerns the detection and amelioration of

occupational health problems rather than the measurement and reinforcement of positive aspects of work. In this chapter we respond to this situation by advocating an integrated approach which balances attention between positive and negative aspects of work and well-being. Specifically, this chapter is devoted to *positive* occupational health psychology (POHP) and the presentation of insights into optimal functioning at work. If occupational health psychology (OHP) researchers and practitioners wish to improve working conditions, it is not enough to help those who experience stress. The majority of 'normal' employees also need examples and advice to reach a richer and more fulfilling existence (see Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Thus, to return to our restaurant example, waiters may learn to be optimistic through training, and become self-efficacious through the use of positive emotions in customer interactions.

The chapter consists of three parts. In the first part, we discuss the negativity bias in psychology, and the emerging positive psychology approach. We describe why a focus on positive job characteristics, well-being, and positive behaviours is important. In the second part, we give examples of positive occupational health phenomena and research, including work engagement, job resources, psychological capital, positive job design, job crafting, and positive spillover. In the third part, we review positive interventions in occupational health psychology.

From Negative to Positive

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Why is there a negativity bias in psychology?

What is Positive Psychology?

Why is Positive Occupational Health Psychology important?

Negativity bias in psychology

For centuries, the focus in the field of psychology has been on negative aspects in human beings and society at large (Seligman, 2002). Whereas clinical psychologists spent most of their time on the study, diagnosis, and treatment of pathologies, social psychologists focused on illusions, biases, and errors of the human being. In a similar vein, evolutionary psychologists emphasized the selfishness in our battle to survive, and some cultural psychologists have been creative in interpreting helping behaviour as a selfish act – arguing that true altruism does not exist.

In general, people (with or without a background in psychology) are inclined to look at the dark side of life. Moreover, phenomena that are positive at first glance can quite easily be interpreted as negative. For example, when a neighbour offers to help rebuild our house, we may be suspicious and look for hidden motives. We simply seem poor at accepting and appreciating help from others without wondering why they are offering help and what they want from us in return.

It is evident that organizational life has been influenced by this negativity bias as well. Human resource departments and occupational health services try to 'help'

sick employees to return quickly to work in order to reduce absence costs; they offer training programmes to fix individual shortcomings. Moreover, if employees lack certain competencies, it may often seem easier to replace them than to invest in tailor-made training programmes. Competent managers who are able to provide constructive and positive feedback are scarce. People often just forget to say positive things or take them for granted. It seems difficult to compliment employees for good work or progression. Being critical is sometimes confused with being negative and discouraging.

However, in the competitive battle between organizations, 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. Obviously, this goal is not achieved with the prevailing four Ds approach (damage, disease, disorder, and dysfunction) that focuses on preventing poor performance, low motivation, unwell-being, ill-health, and disengagement (Bakker & Schaufeli, 2008). Additionally, employees' expectations of their job have changed as well. The best employers are no longer those that promise lifetime employment and a good retirement fund, but rather those that provide their employees with opportunities, resources, and flexibility for sustainable growth (Luthans, Youssef, & Avolio, 2007).

Origin of the negative

What is the origin of the negativity bias? Why are positive emotions neglected relative to negative emotions? First, and perhaps most important, there are evolutionary reasons. The evolutionary value of negative emotions is clear and well known. But until recently it was not clear how positive emotions fit in. Negative emotions lead to immediate action: anger creates the urge to attack, and fear the urge to escape. These urges indicate physiological readiness of the body that enables the individual to act immediately. Negative emotions have adaptive value in that they narrow our thought-action repertoire to those that best promoted our ancestor's survival in life-threatening situations (Fredrickson, 2003). In other words, these repertoires are 'programmed' in our brain to recurrent problems that our ancestors faced. This all occurs automatically and unconsciously.

Second, it is important to note that there are more negative emotions than positive. Consider, for example, the six cross-culturally identified facial expressions resembling basic emotions (Ekman, 1973; Ekman, Friesen, & Ellsworth, 1982). These 'Big 6' are: anger, disgust, fear, joy, sadness, and surprise. The balance between good and bad is on the negative side. Also, the names and words people use to describe negative emotions exceed the ones for positive emotions. This indicates that negative emotions are more salient in society than positive ones. It should of course be noted that negative emotions signal potentially severe problems for individuals and society. These problems may range from depression, violence, eating disorders, and phobias, to stress-related physical disorders

(Fredrickson, 2004). In contrast, positive emotions do not so easily generate societal problems, and the positive problems that do exist (e.g., excessive mania) have lower priority in the research field.

The context of positive emotions is generally speaking not a life-threatening one. The facial expressions and urges to act are not that specific or obviously relevant to survival. The question that remained unanswered for a long time is: if positive emotions do not directly contribute to the survival of our ancestors, why do they exist at all? Barbara Fredrickson is a pioneer in the field of positive psychology who has outlined the value of positive emotions using her *broaden-and-build theory* (Fredrickson, 2001). She argues that positive emotions solve problems concerning personal growth and development. The broaden-and-build theory states that positive emotions broaden an individual's momentary mindset, and by doing so help to bring about enduring personal resources (Fredrickson, 2003). It is important to note that personal resources acquired during this process are enduring and long lasting. Through experiencing positive emotions like joy, gratitude, and hope, people become more resilient, creative, knowledgeable, socially integrated, healthy individuals (Fredrickson, 2001). One step ahead is the *undoing hypothesis* which states that positive emotions are not only capable of helping people deal with negative emotions and reducing the resonance of a particular unpleasant event by placing it in a broader context, but also may 'correct' or 'undo' the after effects of negative emotions. See Research Close-Up 7.1 for a detailed description of the experimental research Barbara Fredrickson conducted on this topic.

RESEARCH CLOSE-UP 7.1 An Experimental Test of the Undoing Hypothesis

Source: Fredrickson, B. L., Mancuso, R. A., Branigan, C., & Tugade, M. M. (2000). The undoing effect of positive emotions. *Motivation and Emotion*, 24, 237–258.

Introduction

Fredrickson (1998) argued in her broaden-and-build theory that positive emotions may promote survival in the long run by building resources that can be drawn on when coping with inevitable threats in the future. Whereas negative emotions narrow thought-action repertoires, positive emotions do the opposite. They broaden thought-action repertoires leading to a wider range of thoughts and actions than is typical (e.g., play, explore). The *undoing hypothesis* (Fredrickson & Levenson, 1998) states that positive

emotions may undo or correct the after effects of negative emotions. In other words, positive emotions can promote cardiovascular recovery and down-regulate lingering negative emotions and the psychological and physiological preparation for specific action that they generate (Fredrickson, Mancuso, Branigan, & Tugade, 2000). The researchers set up an experiment to test whether positive emotions can speed recovery from the cardiovascular reactivity that remains after experiencing a negative emotion.

Method

Participants

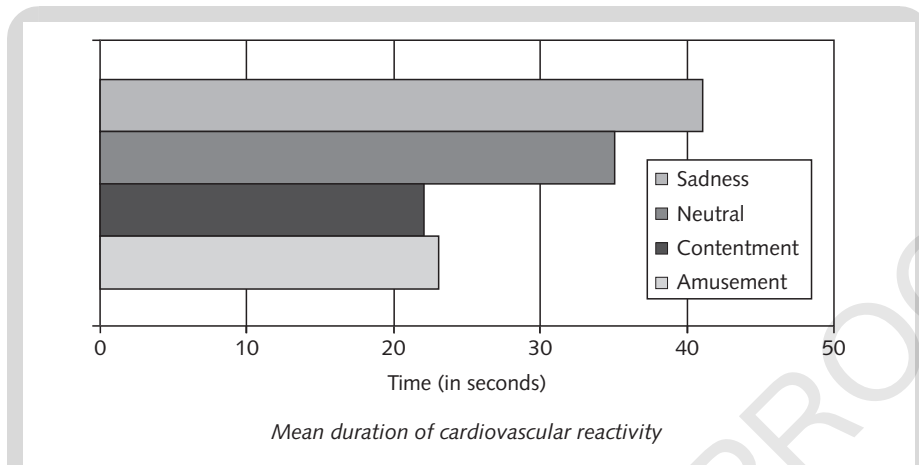
The sample included 95 university students (50% women) recruited for a study on emotions. 71 were European American and 24 were African American.

Design and procedure

Participants were given 60 seconds to prepare a 3-minute speech on 'why you are a good friend'. They were also told that there was a 50% chance that 'the computer' would select them as the lucky one to deliver their speech. If so, a 3-minute timer would appear on the video monitor, cueing them to look straight into the camera and begin their speech, speaking loud and clear. The taped speeches would later be shown to and evaluated by students in another study. If 'by chance' they were not selected, a video clip would start on the monitor. Here the manipulation started. Two film clips elicited two distinct positive emotions. 'Waves' showed ocean waves breaking on the beach, which elicited contentment. 'Puppy' showed a small dog playing with a flower, which elicited amusement. 'Cry' showed a young boy crying over the death of his father, triggering sadness. Finally, 'Sticks' showed an abstract dynamic display of coloured sticks, which elicited virtually no emotion (control condition). The film was followed by a blank screen for 3 minutes. The participants were videotaped during the entire experiment and their bodily reactions were monitored using physiological sensors. The duration of cardiovascular reactivity was measured as the time elapsed (in seconds) from the start of the film clip until the cardiovascular arousal on each measure returned to the defined baseline for that participant.

Results

As predicted, both positive emotion groups exhibited faster recovery than the sadness group and the neutral group. The difference between contentment and amusement was not significant.



Discussion

These findings support the undoing hypothesis for two distinct types of positive emotions: a low activation pleasant state of contentment and a higher activation pleasant state of amusement. These positive emotions – although distinct in their phenomenology and activation level – share the ability to regulate lingering negative emotional arousal that can be health damaging.

Positive psychology

Positive psychology emerged in the late 1990s with a renewed emphasis on what is right with people in contrast to the preoccupation psychology has had over the years with what is wrong with people (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Snyder & Lopez, 2002). This approach rehabilitated the focus on positivity and people's strengths and virtues (Peterson & Seligman, 2004), and was specifically initiated by Martin Seligman's presidential address at the American Psychological Association in 1998 (Seligman, 1998a).

Positive psychology is an attempt to adopt a more open and appreciative perspective regarding human potentials, motives, and capacities (Sheldon & King, 2001). Positive psychology and organizational theory merge in the new approach of positive organizational behaviour (POB) defined as 'the study and application of positively oriented human resource strengths and psychological capacities that can be measured, developed, and effectively managed for performance improvement in today's workplace' (Luthans, 2002, p. 59; see also Bakker & Schaufeli, 2008; Cooper & Nelson, 2006; Wright, 2003). For psychological capacities and strengths to be included in this concept they have to meet certain criteria. Specifically, they must be positive and relatively unique to the field of organizational behaviour, they must be theory- and research-based, measurable, state-like or developmental, and related to work performance outcomes (Luthans, Youssef, & Avolio, 2007).

Typically, POB involves the study of individual positive psychological conditions and human resource strengths that are – in one way or another – related to employee well-being or performance improvement. Research may focus, for example, on the cognitive capacities of creativity and wisdom, and the affective capacities of work engagement and humor in the workplace. POB studies also examine the role of states like self-efficacy, optimism, hope, resilience, and other personal resources utilized in coping with organizational demands or in fostering performance. Further, POB researchers are interested in peak performance in organizations (like work-related flow), and examine the conditions under which employees thrive.

Researchers who simultaneously started the *Positive Organizational Scholarship* (POS) movement have provided a conceptual framework for organizing and integrating their research on positive organizations (Cameron, Dutton & Quinn, 2003). POS is defined as:

the study of that which is positive, flourishing, and life-giving in organizations. Positive refers to the elevating processes and outcomes in organizations. Organizational refers to the interpersonal and structural dynamics activated in and through organizations, specifically taking into account the context in which positive phenomena occur. Scholarship refers to the scientific, theoretically derived, and rigorous investigation of that which is positive in organizational settings. (Cameron & Caza, 2004, p. 731)

Similar to POB, but different from positive psychology, the primary emphasis of POS is on the workplace and on the accomplishment of work-related outcomes. Although partly overlapping, POB is primarily concerned with individual psychological states and human strengths that influence employee performance (Luthans, 2002), whereas POS is primarily concerned with the positive aspects of the organizational context that influence employees' ability to thrive (Cameron, 2005).

Positive Occupational Health Psychology (POHP) includes both approaches – POB and POS – and has its own specific emphasis. Occupational health and well-being are central to the POHP approach, but of course, researchers and organizations are simultaneously interested in causes of occupational health (e.g., job design) and possible consequences (e.g., performance). Important is that the focus is – again – on the positive side of work life, and not limited to the negative side (e.g., risk factors, job demands, burnout). The original definition of OHP proposed by the US National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) captures the field rather well; accordingly, OHP concerns 'the application of psychology to improving the quality of work life, and to protecting and promoting the safety, health, and well-being of workers' (Schaufeli, 2004, p. 503). Although this definition focuses on the positive side of OHP by mentioning quality of work life, and the promotion of safety, health and well-being, research has typically followed the four Ds approach instead. This approach examines

damage, disease, disorder, and dysfunction and focuses on preventing poor performance, low motivation, impaired well-being, ill-health, and disengagement. According to Bakker and Schaufeli (2008), OHP needs a radical shift away from the four Ds. A focus on POHP illuminates how work contexts (such as jobs, units, work groups, professions, and organizations) affect, and are affected by positive relationships, positive emotions, and positive meanings (see Fredrickson & Dutton, 2008). In sum, POHP is the study and application of optimal functioning in the workplace. It promotes occupational health and flourishing, and examines how positive phenomena (contexts, personal resources) can be used to protect against occupational risks.

Usefulness of the positive

Failing to recognize the positive aspects of work is neglectful, and as Turner, Barling, and Zachartos (2002, p. 715) have argued 'it is time to extend our research focus and explore more fully the positive sides, so as to gain full understanding of the meaning and effects of working.' However, in order to make a substantive contribution to organizational science, POHP will need to show the added value of the positive over and above the negative. Moreover, we agree with Tetrick (2002), who convincingly argued that it is very unlikely that the same mechanisms that underlie employee ill-health and malfunctioning constitute employee health and optimal functioning. Hence, POHP may contribute by supplementing the traditional negative model with a distinct wellness model that focuses on the positive. By not exclusively focusing on the positive side but by taking a more comprehensive perspective that includes positive *as well as* negative aspects, criticisms of positive psychology's one-sided positivity bias and its separating positive from negative experiences and emotions are counteracted (Fineman, 2006).

A ground-breaking study making this point in an organizational setting is Fredrickson and Losada's (2005) study among business teams. They empirically demonstrated that positive communication and expressions of support among team members distinguished flourishing teams over languishing teams. Specifically, in their observational research with sixty management teams, the authors identified fifteen teams that clearly produced better results (as indicated by profitability; customer satisfaction; and 360-degree evaluations by superiors, peers, and subordinates) based upon their speech acts. Positive speech was coded for encouragement, support, and appreciation, while negative speech was coded for disapproval, cynicism, and sarcasm. Sixteen teams with mixed verbal interactions had average performance, while nineteen teams with negative verbal interactions showed inferior performance. Moreover, results showed that the successful teams exhibited verbalization of more positive affect and a wider range of ideas and initiatives, while teams with average or no success were more constrained in range of affect and ideas. The poorest performing teams were tightly bounded, uncreative and generally negative in outlook. In conclusion, this study illustrates how positive

organizational behaviour can outweigh negative behaviour. Such a theoretical approach clearly adds to our overall knowledge regarding organizational behaviour and its outcomes.

Meanwhile, recent studies in the organizational and occupational (health) psychology domain have convincingly shown that positive organizational phenomena can make a unique contribution to explaining organizational outcomes over and above negative ones. In the second part of this chapter, we will discuss several of these POHP studies.

Summary

The focus of psychology has long been on the negative aspects of life. Broaden-and-build theory posits that positive emotions play a central role in people's lives because such emotions contribute to personal growth and development. Positive Occupational Health Psychology is the study and application of optimal functioning in the workplace. It promotes occupational health and flourishing, and examines how positive phenomena (contexts, personal resources) can be used to protect against occupational risks.

Examples of Positive Occupational Health Psychology

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What is work engagement?

What roles do job resources have?

Which components of psychological capital can be distinguished?

What is job crafting, and why is it important

From burnout to engagement

Ironically, it is research on burnout that stimulated most contemporary research on work engagement. In contrast to those who suffer from burnout, engaged employees have a sense of energetic and effective connection with their work, and instead of stressful and demanding they look upon their work as challenging. Two different but related schools of thought exist that consider work engagement as a positive, work-related state of well-being or fulfilment. According to Maslach and Leiter (1997), engagement is characterized by energy, involvement, and efficacy – the direct opposite of the three burnout dimensions. They argue that in the case of burnout energy turns into exhaustion, involvement into cynicism, and efficacy into ineffectiveness. By implication, engagement is assessed by the opposite pattern of scores on the three dimensions of the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI; Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996): low scores on exhaustion and cynicism, and high scores on professional efficacy.

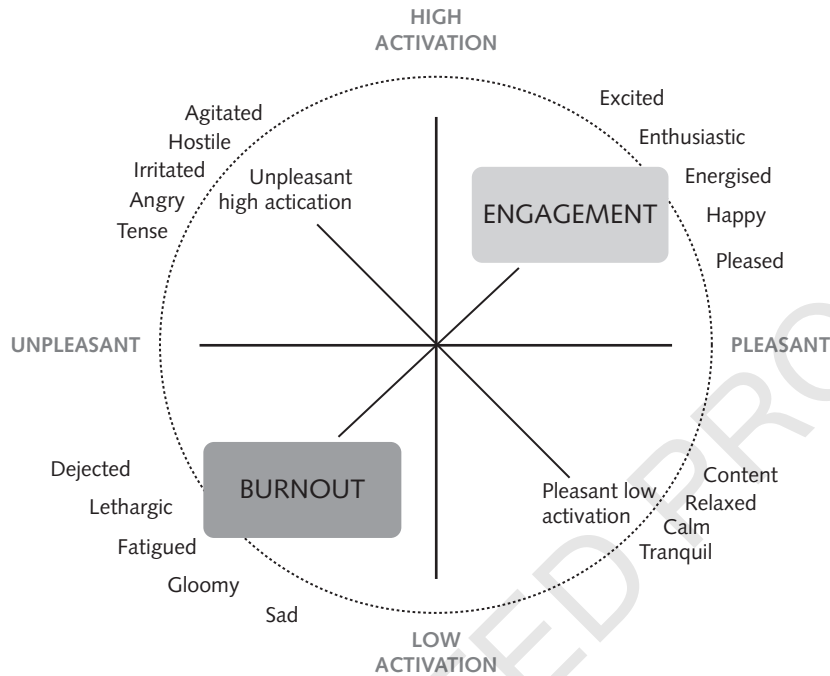


Figure 7.1 Burnout versus work engagement (adapted from Russell & Carroll, 1999).

The alternative view considers work engagement as an independent, distinct concept that is negatively related to burnout. Consequently, work engagement is defined and operationalized in its own right as ‘a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigour, dedication, and absorption’ (Schaufeli, Salanova, González-Romá, & Bakker, 2002, p. 74; see also Schaufeli & Bakker, 2009). That is, in engagement, fulfilment exists in contrast to the voids of life that leave people feeling empty as in burnout. Vigour is characterized by high levels of energy and mental resilience while working, the willingness to invest effort in one’s work, and persistence even in the face of difficulties. Dedication refers to being strongly involved in one’s work, and experiencing a sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, and challenge. Absorption 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. See Figure 7.1 for a graphical display of the conceptualization of burnout and work engagement in a circumplex of emotions (Russell & Carroll, 1999).

Accordingly, vigour and dedication are considered direct opposites of exhaustion and cynicism, respectively, the two core symptoms of burnout. The continuum that is spanned by exhaustion and vigour has been labelled ‘energy’, whereas the continuum that is spanned by cynicism and dedication has been labelled ‘identification’ (González-Romá, Schaufeli, Bakker, & Lloret, 2006). Hence, work engagement is characterized by a high level of energy and strong

identification with one's work, whereas burnout is characterized by the opposite: a low level of energy and poor identification with one's work (see also Demerouti & Bakker, 2008). In addition, based on in-depth interviews (Schaufeli et al., 2001), absorption was identified and included as the third constituting aspect of work engagement.

Various studies have demonstrated associations of employee engagement with meaningful organizational outcomes such as in- and extra-role behaviour (Halbesleben & Wheeler, 2008), intention to leave and organizational commitment (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004), financial turnover at the end of the work shift (Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Demerouti, & Schaufeli, 2009b), reduced sickness absenteeism (Schaufeli, Bakker, & Van Rhenen, 2009), and service quality as rated by customers (Salanova, Agut, & Pieró, 2005). In conclusion, studies on employee engagement add to our understanding of positive organizational processes – also vis-à-vis negative processes – and show the relevance of the concept for organizational outcomes. As such, employee engagement is a promising new avenue for future POHP research (see also, Bakker & Demerouti, 2008; Bakker, Schaufeli, Leiter, & Taris, 2008).

Pioneer Wilmar B. Schaufeli

Wilmar B. Schaufeli (1953–), a pioneer in burnout and engagement research, received his Bachelor and Master degrees in Clinical Psychology at the University of Groningen, The Netherlands. In 1988 he received his PhD on the psychological consequences of unemployment, *cum laude* from that same university. From 1989 to 1994 he worked as assistant and associate professor at Radboud University Nijmegen and was then appointed full-professor of Clinical and Organizational Psychology at Utrecht University. Schaufeli is visiting professor at Jaume I University in Castellón de la Plana, Spain (since 2002), and at Loughborough University Business School (since 2004). He received the Work Wellness Award from North West University, South Africa. His extensive research on burnout formed the basis for research on work engagement. Schaufeli has published more than 300 journal articles and book chapters. Together with Arnold Bakker, he defined work engagement as a positive, fulfilling, affective-motivational state of work-related well-being that is the opposite of job burnout. Based on this conceptualization, the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) was developed that includes three interrelated dimensions: vigour, dedication, and absorption. The UWES is used worldwide and has stimulated engagement research in over 30 countries.

Job demands and resources

Recent POHP-studies have started to investigate how the *combination* of stressful and motivating job characteristics influences negative and positive aspects of well-being. According to the Job Demands–Resources (JDR) model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007) working conditions can be classified in two general categories (i.e., job demands and job resources) that are applicable to virtually all occupations. Job demands require effort and are therefore associated with physiological and psychological costs, such as fatigue, whereas job resources foster personal growth, learning, development, and have motivational qualities. Bakker, Demerouti, and Euwema (2005), in their study among about 1,000 Dutch college teachers, found that job resources buffered the impact of job demands on burnout (exhaustion and cynicism). Specifically, they found that job demands such as work overload, emotional demands, and physical demands did *not* result in high levels of burnout if employees experienced job resources, such as autonomy, performance feedback, social support, or coaching from their supervisor.

Xanthopoulou et al. (2007) reported similar findings in a study among employees from two homecare organizations. The findings revealed, for example, that patient harassment interacted with autonomy and support (both job resources) in predicting exhaustion; and with autonomy, support, and professional development in predicting cynicism. Autonomy proved to be the most important buffer of job demands for both burnout dimensions, followed by support and opportunities for professional development. Conditions where job demands were high and job resources were low resulted in the highest levels of burnout (exhaustion and cynicism). Put differently, in cases where the levels of job resources were high, the effect of job demands on the core dimensions of burnout was significantly reduced. To illustrate, Figure 7.2 displays the interaction between job demands and job resources and well-being.

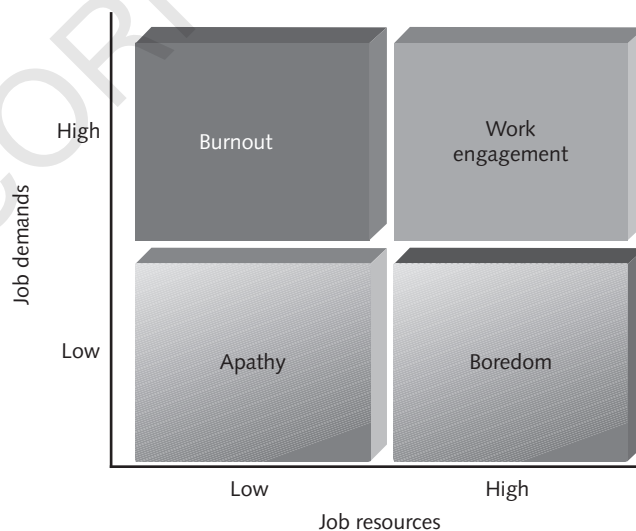


Figure 7.2 The interplay between job demands and job resources.

What is the role of job resources in this burnout process? Job resources are assumed to play either an intrinsic motivational role because they foster employees' growth, learning, and development, or an extrinsic motivational role because they are instrumental in achieving work goals. In the former case, job resources fulfil basic human needs, such as the needs for autonomy, relatedness, and competence (Deci & Ryan, 1985). For instance, proper feedback fosters learning, thereby increasing job competence, whereas decision latitude and social support satisfy the need for autonomy and the need to belong, respectively.

Job resources may also play an *extrinsic* motivational role, because resourceful work environments foster the willingness to dedicate one's efforts and abilities to the work task (Meijman & Mulder, 1998). In such environments it is likely that the task will be completed successfully and that the work goal will be attained. For instance, supportive colleagues and performance feedback increase the likelihood of being successful in achieving one's work goals. In either case, be it through the satisfaction of basic needs or through the achievement of work goals, the outcome is positive and engagement is likely to occur (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004).

Salience of job resources

According to conservation of resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 2001), people seek to obtain, retain, and protect things they value, including, for instance, material, social, personal, or energetic resources. The theory proposes that stress experienced by individuals can be understood in relation to potential or actual loss of resources. More specifically, Hobfoll and Shirom (2000) have argued that: (1) individuals must bring in resources in order to prevent the loss of resources, (2) individuals with a greater pool of resources are less susceptible to resource loss, (3) those individuals who do not have access to strong resource pools are more likely to experience increased loss ('loss spiral'), and (4) strong resource pools lead to a greater likelihood that individuals will seek opportunities to risk resources for increased resource gains ('gain spiral'). Additionally, Hobfoll (2002) argues that resource gain acquires its saliency in the context of resource loss. This suggests that job resources become more salient and gain their motivational potential when employees are confronted with high job demands (e.g., workload, emotional demands, and mental demands) because they can help goal accomplishment.

Hakanen, Bakker, and Demerouti (2005) tested this interaction hypothesis in a sample of Finnish dentists employed in the public sector. It was hypothesized that job resources (e.g., variability in required professional skills, peer contacts) are most beneficial in maintaining work engagement under conditions of high job demands (e.g., workload, unfavourable physical environment). The dentists were split in two random groups in order to cross-validate the findings. A set of hierarchical regression analyses resulted in seventeen out of forty significant interactions (40%), showing, for example, that variability in professional skills boosted work engagement when qualitative workload was high, and mitigated the negative effect of qualitative workload on work engagement.

Conceptually similar findings have been reported by Bakker, Hakanen, Demerouti, and Xanthopoulou (2007). In their study among Finnish teachers working in elementary, secondary, and vocational schools, they found that job resources act as buffers and diminish the negative relationship between pupil misbehaviour, representing a demanding aspect of work and work engagement. In addition, they found that job resources particularly influenced work engagement when teachers were confronted with high levels of pupil misconduct. A series of moderated structural equation modeling analyses resulted in fourteen out of eighteen possible two-way interaction effects (78%). In particular, supervisor support, innovativeness, appreciation, and organizational climate were important job resources for teachers that helped them cope with demanding interactions with students. Again, these studies shed light on the fascinating interplay between positive and negative characteristics of the work environment (see Figure 7.2).

Designing jobs to do good

Yet another interesting example of POHP is recent work on how organizations can design jobs that allow employees to make positive contributions to the lives of others, and also to connect with those who benefit from their work. Grant (2007, 2008) argued that in addition to individual differences (e.g., agreeableness, empathy, interpersonal concern, and altruistic personality), contextual forces and situational cues could have a powerful influence on the motivation to do good. An understanding of how work contexts can fulfil and strengthen the motivation to do good is important since the research evidence shows that the motivation to do good can promote behaviours that benefit other people and the organization at large, such as task commitment, effort, persistence, and helping behaviour (Grant, 2007). Additionally, the motivation to do good can benefit the self by promoting increased satisfaction (Lyubomirsky, Sheldon, & Schkade, 2005) and improved health and longevity (Brown, Nesse, Vinokur, & Smith, 2003).

Grant (2008) conducted three studies. In Study 1, he developed a self-report survey that assessed six dimensions of prosocial job characteristics, suitable either for reporting on beneficiaries in general or the specific beneficiaries of a given occupation (e.g., 'guests' for lifeguards, 'citizens' for police officers). The results of confirmatory factor analyses showed that the prosocial job characteristics scale has good psychometric properties. The findings show that it is possible to distinguish job opportunities for impact on beneficiaries (magnitude, frequency, and scope), and job opportunities for contact with beneficiaries (frequency, breadth, and depth). In Study 2, Grant used structural modeling to test the hypothesis that prosocial job characteristics predict a variety of other-focused psychological states, including employees' perceived impact on beneficiaries, their affective commitment to beneficiaries, as well as their prosocial motivation. Finally, in Study 3, he used a multitrait-multimethod approach with job incumbents and observers as sources of information to provide more rigorous evidence for the validity of this new conceptualization of job design. In developing and validating this new

Pioneer Deo J. W. Strümpfer

Deo J. W. Strümpfer (1928–), a pioneer in positive occupational health psychology, is Professor Extraordinary of Psychology, University of Pretoria and Professor Emeritus of Industrial and Organizational Psychology, University of Cape Town, South Africa. He received his Masters degree in Psychology at the University of Potchefstroom, South Africa, and received his PhD in 1959 from Purdue University, West Lafayette, Indiana, USA. He taught at the universities of Potchefstroom (11 years), Port Elizabeth (12 years), Witwatersrand (5 years), and Cape Town (11 years). Strümpfer had visiting posts at the universities of Regina (Canada), Ben Gurion (Israel), and Western Cape. He is one of the scholars who examined the origins of health in the workplace, by following the perspectives of *fortigenesis* and *salutogenesis*. These perspectives focus on factors that support human health and well-being rather than on factors that cause disease (pathogenesis). The terms salutogenesis and fortigenesis come from the Latin *salus* = health and *fortis* = strength, and the Greek *genesis* = origin. Strümpfer's research has focused on flourishing and the role of resilience in coping with organizational stressors.

measure, Grant paved the way for future investigators to discover how organizations might better design jobs to unleash or create employees' motivations to do good, which can both energize the process of work and contribute to individual and group flourishing (Fredrickson & Dutton, 2008).

Psychological capital

Work and how it is carried out in organizations is fundamentally about relationships between the organization and the customer, but also about relationships between organizations and employees (Larson & Luthans, 2006). People make the difference, and therefore it is important to focus on people's self-beliefs. Luthans and colleagues define *psychological capital* (PsyCap) as 'an individual's positive psychological state of development that is characterized by: (1) having confidence (self-efficacy) to take on and put in the necessary effort to succeed at challenging tasks; (2) making a positive attribution (optimism) about succeeding now and in the future; (3) persevering toward goals and, when necessary, redirecting paths to goals (hope) in order to succeed; and (4) when beset by problems and adversity, sustaining and bouncing back and even beyond (resiliency) to attain success' (Luthans, Youssef, & Avolio, 2007, p. 3). They believe that these four core constructs are keys to higher performance. Table 7.1 presents a definition of the four PsyCap components.

One of the inclusion criteria of positive psychological constructs, including Psychological Capital, is that it can be effectively managed for performance

Table 7.1 The four components of PsyCap

<i>PsyCap variables</i>	<i>Definition</i>	<i>Development</i>
Self efficacy	Individuals' confidence about their abilities to mobilize the motivation, cognitive resources, and courses of action needed to successfully execute a specific task within a given context (Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998)	E.g., Enactive mastery, vicarious learning, verbal persuasion
Hope	A cognitive set that is based on a reciprocally-derived sense of successful agency and pathways (Snyder et al., 1991)	E.g., Setting personally valuable, realistic goals, defining sub-goals, creating multiple ways to achieve goals and to work around obstacles
Optimism	An attributional style that explains positive events as personal, permanent, and pervasive and negative events as external, temporary, and situation-specific (Seligman, 1998b)	E.g., ABCDE approach. Identify Adversity, recognize self-defeating Beliefs, realize the Consequences of these beliefs, Dispute counter-productive beliefs, and Experience the Energy
Resilience	One's ability, when faced with adversity, to rebound or 'bounce back' from a setback or failure (Block & Kremen, 1996)	E.g., provide support to recover from adversity, thrive when faced with positive change

improvement. However, the scope of studies measuring the impact of PsyCap on job performance is still very small. Luthans, Avolio, Avey, and Norman (2007) conducted a study to test the hypothesis that an employees' level of PsyCap is positively related to their performance and job satisfaction. The sample consisted of employees of both service and technology manufacturing companies. To measure performance they used actual performance evaluations based on objective data and managerial ratings. Results showed that PsyCap had a positive relationship with both performance and job satisfaction. Furthermore, overall PsyCap showed stronger results for both satisfaction and performance than each of the four individual components, providing evidence for PsyCap as a higher-order construct (Luthans et al., 2007).

Luthans, Norman, Avolio and Avey (2008) examined whether PsyCap can mediate the relationship between supportive organizational climate and performance. They defined supportive organizational climate as 'the overall amount of perceived support employees receive from their immediate peers, other departments and their supervisor that they view as helping them to successfully perform their work' (Luthans et al., 2008, p. 225). This can, in the light of the Job Demands-Resources model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007), also be interpreted as providing extra job resources in the capacity of social support. Luthans and colleagues hypothesized a positive relationship between PsyCap and performance.

Additionally, they expected that PsyCap would fully mediate the relationship between supportive organizational climate and performance. They used two separate samples to test these hypotheses: one student sample with self-reports of performance and an employee sample with objective measures of performance based on figures and managerial ratings. The results showed a positive relationship between PsyCap and performance in both samples. Additionally, Luthans et al. found initial evidence for a full mediation of PsyCap in the supportive organizational climate and employee performance relationship.

Xanthopoulou and her colleagues examined *daily* PsyCap. In their diary study among flight attendants, Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Heuven, Demerouti, and Schaufeli (2008) examined whether daily fluctuations in colleague support predicted day-levels of job performance through self-efficacy (one PsyCap component) and work engagement. Forty-four flight attendants filled in a questionnaire and a diary booklet before and after consecutive flights to three intercontinental destinations. Results of multi-level analyses revealed that both colleague support and self-efficacy had an indirect effect on in-role performance through work engagement.

In a similar vein, Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Demerouti, and Schaufeli (2009b) investigated how daily fluctuations in job resources (i.e., autonomy, coaching, and team climate) were related to daily changes in employee's self-efficacy, self-esteem, and optimism (i.e., daily PsyCap; they call this personal resources), work engagement, and company financial returns. Forty-two employees working in three branches of a fast food company completed a questionnaire and a diary booklet over five consecutive workdays. Consistent with hypotheses, multi-level analyses revealed that day-level job resources had an effect on work engagement through day-level PsyCap, after controlling for general levels of personal resources and engagement (Figure 7.3). Day-level work engagement, in turn, had a positive relationship with daily financial returns. Additionally, previous days' coaching had a positive, lagged effect on following days' work engagement (through following days' optimism), and on following days' financial returns. Thus, when supervisors communicated to their subordinates how well they performed on their assigned tasks, and suggested better ways for doing so, employees' optimism was boosted, and consequently they were likely to become more engaged and productive.

Taken together, these studies show that psychological capital is positively related to performance. People make the difference, particularly when they are self-efficacious, optimistic, hopeful, and resilient.

Job crafting

Many studies in the field of OHP assume that working conditions can have a major impact on employees. However, employees are not necessarily passive recipients but may influence their own work environment. Employees may actively change the design of their jobs by choosing tasks, negotiating different job content, and assigning meaning to their tasks or jobs (Parker & Ohly, 2008). This process of employees shaping their jobs has been referred to as job crafting (Wrzesniewski &

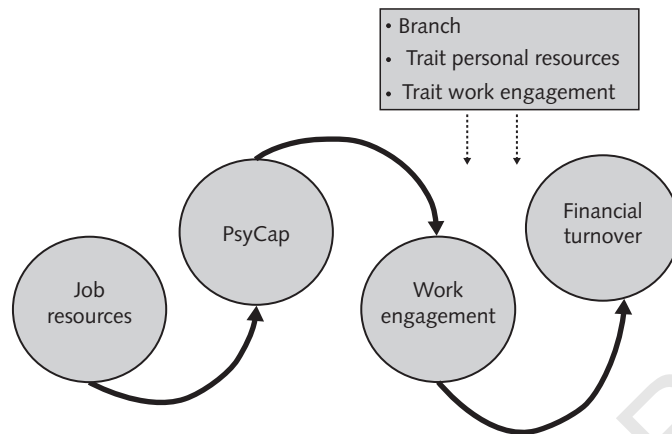


Figure 7.3 Psychological Capital (PsyCap) at work (see Xanthopoulou et al., 2009b).

Dutton, 2001). It is defined as the physical and cognitive changes individuals make in the task or relational boundaries. Physical changes refer to changes in the form, scope or number of job tasks, whereas cognitive changes refer to changing how one sees the job. Changing relational boundaries means that individuals have discretion over whom they interact with while doing the job. As a consequence of job crafting people may be able to increase their person-job fit.

Wrzesniewski, McCauley, Rozin, and Schwartz (1997) suggest that employees who view their work as a calling are more likely to engage in job crafting because work is more central in their lives. There is indeed some research showing that engaged employees are the most active job crafters. For example, Hakanen, Perhoniemi, and Toppinen-Tanner (2008) conducted a two-wave 3-year panel study among 2,555 Finnish dentists to examine the effect of work engagement on personal initiative and job resources. Among other things, their results showed that work engagement had a positive impact on personal initiative and job resources. Thus, engaged workers are more inclined to tailor their jobs in line with their needs than non-engaged workers.

Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Demerouti, and Schaufeli (2009a) carried out a two-wave longitudinal study among 163 employees with a 2-year time interval. It was hypothesized that job and personal resources, and work engagement, are reciprocal over time. Indeed, results showed that resources and work engagement are mutually related. Thus, personal resources (i.e., self-efficacy, self-esteem, and optimism) and job resources (i.e., job autonomy, supervisory coaching, performance feedback, and opportunities for professional development) had a positive influence on work engagement. Work engagement, in turn, had a positive impact on personal and job resources. All effects (causal and reversed-causal) were equally strong. These findings support the notion that engaged employees' successfully adapt their work environment.

As a final example, Bakker and Bal (2009) tested a model of *weekly* work engagement. Teachers were asked to fill in a weekly questionnaire every Friday during five consecutive weeks. Results largely confirmed the hypotheses, by showing that week-levels of autonomy, exchange with the supervisor, and opportunities for development (but not social support) were positively related to weekly engagement, which, in turn, was positively related to weekly job performance. Moreover, momentary work engagement was positively related to job resources in the subsequent week. These findings show how intra-individual variability in employees' engagement can predict weekly changes in job characteristics.

RESEARCH CLOSE-UP

7.2 A Diary Study on Recovery, Work Engagement, and Proactive Behaviour

Source: Sonnentag, S. (2003). Recovery, work engagement, and proactive behaviour: A new look at the interface between nonwork and work. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 88, 518–528.

Introduction

How one feels and behaves at work is affected by life outside work. Research has shown that periods of rest from work are important for maintaining well-being at work, decreased work stress, and burnout (e.g., Eden, 2001; Westman & Etzion; 2001). Sonnentag (2003) argues that because the effects of vacations fade quickly, people may need additional opportunities for recovery in the evening after a normal working day. Recovery attained during leisure time in the evening has an effect on how individuals experience the subsequent workday, and is crucial for work engagement. Work engagement is highly relevant for employee well-being and affects work behaviour in a positive way (e.g., Demerouti, Bakker, de Jonge, Janssen, & Schaufeli, 2001). Work engagement can fluctuate on a daily level (Kahn, 1990) and is expected to affect proactive behaviour at work.

Method

Participants

147 employees of six public service organizations returned questionnaires and daily surveys. Sixty-five per cent of the respondents were men, 35% were women. Average age was 39 years.

Design and procedure

The study was based on a within-subjects design and examined whether recovery during leisure time on a specific day had an impact on work engagement and proactive behaviour on the subsequent workday. The daily survey measured day-level recovery, work engagement, and proactive behaviour (pursuit of learning and personal initiative). Participants responded to the daily survey on five subsequent workdays. Each day started with a section to be filled out in the morning, at the beginning of the workday, and a section at the end of the workday.

Results

The effects of recovery on work engagement and proactive behaviour were analysed with multi-level models. Results showed that day-level recovery contributed significantly to the prediction of day-level work engagement, independent of the level of general ('trait') work engagement. Sonnentag also found evidence for day-level work engagement as a mediator in the relationship between day-level recovery and day-level proactive behaviour (both personal initiative and pursuit learning).

Discussion

This study shows that recovery has a positive effect on work engagement and proactive behaviour, with work engagement serving the role of mediator in this relationship. Employees who have recovered sufficiently during evening hours after work experience more work engagement on the next workday. This increase in work engagement, in turn, helps them in taking initiative and pursuing learning goals. These findings illustrate that people benefit from short rest periods that occur in the evening after work. In conclusion, it seems that daily recovery from work-related stress is helpful to supplement the effect of vacations.

Positive spillover

Research in the work-family interface domain has focused almost exclusively on the negative impact of work on the home situation. However, several scholars have argued that workers may also benefit from combining 'work' and 'family' and that these benefits may outweigh the costs (e.g., Hochschild, 1997; Kirchmeyer, 1993). Positive spillover refers to a process whereby experience or participation in one role increases quality or performance in the other role. Work-family enrichment occurs when involvement in work provides benefits such as skill growth, which has a positive effect on the family. Family-work enrichment occurs when involvement

within the family results in the creation of a positive mood, feeling of support, or feeling of success, which can help that individual to function more efficiently and confidently at work.

There is, indeed, ample empirical evidence for this positive spillover process. For example, Crosby (1982) found that married employed women with children were more satisfied with their jobs than single employed women or married employed women without children. In addition, Barnett's (1998) review shows that full-time workers experience better health than their reduced-hours counterparts. In a classic longitudinal study, Moen, Dempster-McClain, and Williams (1992) showed that occupying multiple roles in 1956, participating in volunteer work on an intermittent basis, and belonging to a club or organization were positively related to various measures of health in 1986. In addition, a longitudinal study in the United States showed that white married women who decreased their labor force participation from full-time to low part-time or homemaker reported a significant increase in distress symptoms over a 3-year period (Wethington & Kessler, 1989). Conversely, those women who increased their labor force participation from homemaker or part-time worker to full-time worker reported a significant decrease in emotional distress (see also Barnett & Gareis, 2000; Herold & Waldron, 1985; Verbrugge, 1989).

Summary

Several examples of POHP have been demonstrated in recent studies. The research evidence shows that it makes sense to focus on work engagement, and to supplement the focus on job demands, with a focus on job resources. Additionally, recent POHP studies have focused on positive job design, psychological capital, job crafting, and positive spillover from work to the home domain.

Positive Interventions

What is a micro intervention?

What is a macro intervention?

What are the benefits of positive interventions?

By 'positive interventions' we mean interventions that meet the criteria of positive organizational behaviour (Luthans, 2002). Interventions are positive if they are open to development and change (i.e., state-like as opposed to fixed and trait-like), measurable, and if there is a strong link with performance improvement. It is useful to make a distinction between different levels of impact of an intervention. Micro interventions are usually interventions on the individual level that have relatively little impact on daily organizational life: a short training session, for

example. However, this does not automatically imply that they cannot have long lasting, positive consequences. Interventions on the macro level can involve a whole organization or employment sector.

Leiter and Maslach (2009) argue that there are clear benefits to be yielded by the use of a positive framework. One is motivational, in that people are often more enthusiastic about working to make things better, rather than having to deal with unpleasant problems. Further, they argue that an organization that is focused on engaging its employees, and becoming a workplace of choice, may have a more positive image than one that is grappling with burnout. Indeed, many organizations have found that a focus on burnout poses a liability for them, and so they have avoided acknowledging that there may be problems or that they are undertaking any efforts to deal with it. The opportunity to address these issues by focusing on the positive goal of work engagement provides organizations with a less risky, and potentially more successful, process of change (Leiter & Maslach, 2009).

Micro interventions

Luthans and his colleagues developed a micro-intervention to develop psychological capital (Luthans, Avey, Avolio, Norman, & Combs, 2006). Each PsyCap construct received its own unique approach. For 'hope' development they used a three-folded strategy embedded in a goal-oriented framework. This included goal setting, generating multiple pathways, and managing obstacles. A facilitator explained that an ideal goal entails a concrete end point to measure success, an active framework, and sub-goals to celebrate small wins as well as large ones. The sub-goaling strategy is based on the stepping concept in Snyder's hope training (Snyder, 2000). The authors argued that the development of optimism is fostered within self-efficacy training and the hope programme can also have a positive impact on optimism (Luthans et al., 2006). Bandura (1997) emphasized the importance of goal orientation and framing in building efficacy. Therefore, they integrated the goal exercise for building hope with the sources that are important in building efficacy. In building resilience, participants identified recent personal setbacks within their work domain. They were instructed to write down their spontaneous reactions to the identified setbacks. The facilitator helped in mentally framing the setback in an ideal way and elaborated on examples of a staunch view of reality. This gave the participants more insight into the realistic impact of their setbacks and helped them to see the bigger picture. In comparison with a control group, the experimental group accomplished a significant rise in their psychological capital level. Longitudinal data are still not available which means that at this moment the performance effects cannot be determined (Luthans et al., 2006).

Luthans, Avey, and Patera (2008) questioned whether Psychological Capital could be developed with a short-term, highly focused, *online* intervention. They tested their online intervention with a pre-test, post-test control group experimental design. The intervention consisted of two online sessions which started after the

participants logged in to a website developed for this purpose. The first session consisted of an introductory presentation of the positive capacities of resilience and efficacy and how each capacity is applicable in the workplace in general and their job in particular. Additionally, participants could watch short video fragments displaying examples of resilience and efficacy in dramatized settings. The last phase of the first session entailed a consideration of personal work-related situations in their own organizations (Luthans et al., 2008). In the second session, the focus was on the development of hope and optimism. The participants started by considering personal goals. After that, they watched a presentation by the facilitator on the importance of personal values and the realistic challenge of achieving goals and accomplishing tasks. Then, participants had to write down several tasks that are realistically challenging, applicable to their work situation, and personally valuable. The next task consisted of breaking the main goals into smaller, easier achievable, sub-goals. The pathway component of hope was covered by the identification and generation of multiple ways to accomplish the same goal. The control group received an alternate decision-making exercise. Psychological capital was measured both in advance of the intervention and afterwards using the 24-item PsyCap Questionnaire (Luthans, Avolio, Avey, & Norman, 2007). Results showed that the 'treatment' group experienced a significant increase in their PsyCap, whereas the control group did not. This indicates that it is possible to build PsyCap through a short web-based training intervention (Luthans et al., 2008).

As a final example of a micro intervention, Fredrickson, Cohn, Coffey, Pek, and Finkel (2008) developed an intervention to test the build hypothesis of broaden-and-build theory (Fredrickson, 2001). The build hypothesis states that positive emotions set people on trajectories of growth that, over time, build consequential personal resources. Fredrickson and her colleagues set up a field experiment with random allocation to the treatment condition or waitlist control condition. The aim of the study was to test whether positive emotions, induced through loving-kindness meditation (LKM), could build consequential personal resources. The researchers also wanted to examine whether these resources hold positive consequences for the person's mental health and overall life satisfaction. In total, 139 information technology professionals filled out an initial survey that assessed their life satisfaction, depressive symptoms, and personal resources. Additionally, both groups completed daily surveys of their emotional experiences and meditation practice for nine weeks (including one week before and one week after the workshops). At the end of the period they filled out a final questionnaire that assessed the same variables as the initial one. The meditation training involved six 60-minute group sessions and was led by a stress management specialist. Participants were instructed to practice LKM at least five days a week at home, using guided recordings. The results confirmed the build hypothesis: increases in positive emotions were associated with higher levels of personal resources; personal resources, in turn, significantly increased life satisfaction and decreased the level of depressive symptoms (Fredrickson et al., 2008). This experiment is the first, to

our knowledge, to empirically prove that experiencing positive emotions can have enduring effects, build resources, and make a true difference in people's lives.

Macro interventions

An example of a macro level intervention can be found in a study on the effects of a healthy work organization intervention (DeJoy, Wilson, Vandenberg, McGrath-Higgins, & Griffin-Blake, 2009). The intervention was designed to build capacity for employee participation and problem solving and to create a healthier work organization. In each intervention store an employee problem-solving team, the ACTION team, was organized. These teams developed action plans using a five stage problem-solving process. In the familiarization stage the roles and responsibilities of the team members were explained and discussed. In the skill-building phase the ground rules for the team were set and the roles determined. The team set a weekly meeting to discuss progress. In the prioritization phase a facilitator helped the team to identify and prioritize problems and issues. A detailed action plan to address the identified priorities and to meet the team goals was developed during the action phase. Finally, in the reaction phase the team members reviewed the action plan, monitored progress, and communicated with each other and the rest of the employees about the steps being taken to refine and adjust the overall plan. Overall, the worksites that received the intervention fared better than the control worksites. Job satisfaction and organizational commitment declined at the same pace in both groups. However, stress levels increased significantly in control companies and stayed relatively stable in the intervention companies. The results showed that employees in the experimental condition considered themselves healthier and safer at work than those in the control condition. Overall, the findings of this study suggest that participatory, capacity building interventions hold promise for improving work organizations.

Schaufeli and Salanova (2008) argue that work engagement in employees can be encouraged through effective human resource management. They describe three HR strategies with a different focus that may enhance work engagement. Note that they have not empirically tested these strategies yet. The first strategy is called *employee development agreement*, the main goal of which is to optimize the fit between the employee and the organization. Schaufeli and Salanova argue that this can be achieved by following three steps: (1) assessing values, preferences, and goals (both professional and personal); (2) subsequently, negotiating a written contract (the agreement) that acknowledges these goals and necessary resources provided by the organization to accomplish them; and (3) monitoring this agreement systematically on goal achievement and discussing re-goaling strategies, if necessary. This strategy might be successful because it focuses both on personal goals and the necessary resources to accomplish these goals (Schaufeli & Salanova, 2008). The second strategy contains a wellness audit. This implies that employer and employee evaluate together the level of wellness experienced by the employee. With this information a decision is facilitated about what improvement measures should

be taken. The third strategy involves the organization of workshops to promote work engagement by augmenting personal resources. The focus of the workshops should be towards optimizing the quality of work and the level of employee functioning (Schaufeli & Salanova, 2008). The common ground that these strategies share is that they all focus on the motivational potential of job resources.

Summary

Positive interventions are state-like, measurable, and developmental. Additionally, there should be a strong link with performance. The benefit of a positive framework is that people are more motivated to make things better instead of fixing things that have gone wrong. Micro interventions focus on the development of psychological capital, whereas macro interventions focus on structural changes in the work environment (e.g., an increase in job resources).

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Let us go back to the example at the start of this chapter. We asked you to imagine that you were working as a waiter in a restaurant, and that you were often confronted with complaining customers. You started to wonder whether you should continue with this job, since work had become rather stressful. Although a focus on the reduction or prevention of stressors continues to be of high importance, we argued that occupational health psychologists should also focus on positive aspects of working life. From a Positive Occupational Health Psychology (POHP) perspective, employees may use optimism and humor to deal with complaining customers. Additionally, organizations can design resourceful workplaces and foster employee engagement. Such positive qualities contribute to employee health, well-being, and job performance. In sum:

- Negative emotions have adaptive value in that they narrow our thought-action repertoires to those that best promoted our ancestor's survival in life-threatening situations.
- Broaden-and-build theory states that positive emotions broaden an individual's mindset and by doing so help to develop enduring personal resources.
- Positive psychology rehabilitated the focus on people's strengths and virtues.
- POHP is the study and application of optimal functioning in the workplace. It promotes occupational health and flourishing, and examines how positive phenomena (contexts, personal resources) can be used to protect against occupational risks.

- POHP is a complementary perspective that takes both positive and negative aspects in consideration.
- Engaged workers are characterized by high levels of energy (vigour), high involvement in their job (dedication), and by being fully concentrated and happily engrossed in their work (absorption).
- Work engagement is associated with numerous positive outcomes; e.g., reduced sickness absenteeism, improved service quality, organizational commitment, and financial turnover.
- Job resources are motivating and can buffer the negative effects of high job demands. Such resources become particularly salient in the context of high job demands.
- Psychological capital (PsyCap) is characterized by self-efficacy, optimism, hope, and resiliency. One of the key inclusion criteria is that it can be effectively managed for performance improvement.
- Organizations may build work engagement by offering job resources. However, employees can also mobilize their own resources and have an impact on the work environment. This is called job crafting.
- Positive spillover refers to a process whereby experience or participation in the work (family) role increases the quality or performance in the family (work) role.
- Positive interventions are state-like, measurable, developmental, and there is a strong link with performance.
- An example of a positive intervention is an online micro intervention to develop overall PsyCap in employees.

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