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Abstract

Positive mental health at the workplace: From a perspective of work engagement

Since the beginning of this century, increased attention is paid to what has been coined positive psychology: the scientific study of human strengths and optimal functioning. This recent trend to concentrate on strengths and optimal functioning also aroused attention in organizational psychology. One of these positive states is work engagement.

Work engagement is assumed to be negatively related to burnout. While burnout is usually defined as a syndrome of exhaustion, cynicism, and reduced professional efficacy, engagement is defined as a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption. Engaged employees have a sense of energetic and effective connection with their work activities. Work engagement is a unique concept that is best predicted by job resources (e.g., autonomy, supervisory coaching, and performance feedback) and personal resources (e.g., optimism, self-efficacy, and self-esteem) and is predictive of psychological/physical health, proactive organizational behavior, and job performance.

In my master lecture, I will start with background of why 'positive' mental health at the workplace is getting important. Then, I will introduce the concept and measurement of work engagement, followed by an updated review of empirical findings especially on the relation with health outcomes and performance. Finally, I will refer to organization- and individual-focused approaches to improve work engagement and close with future directions of research and practice.