



IO chat group Christchurch 13 Oct 2021

# Engagement: what is it and what do we do with it?

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## Engagement – definition

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### § Kahn (1990):

- “harnessing of organization members’ selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances” (p. 694).

### § Maslach & Leiter (1997)

- Engagement opposite of burnout (and measured as absence of burnout): Energy, involvement, and efficacy

### § Schaufeli et al. (2002)

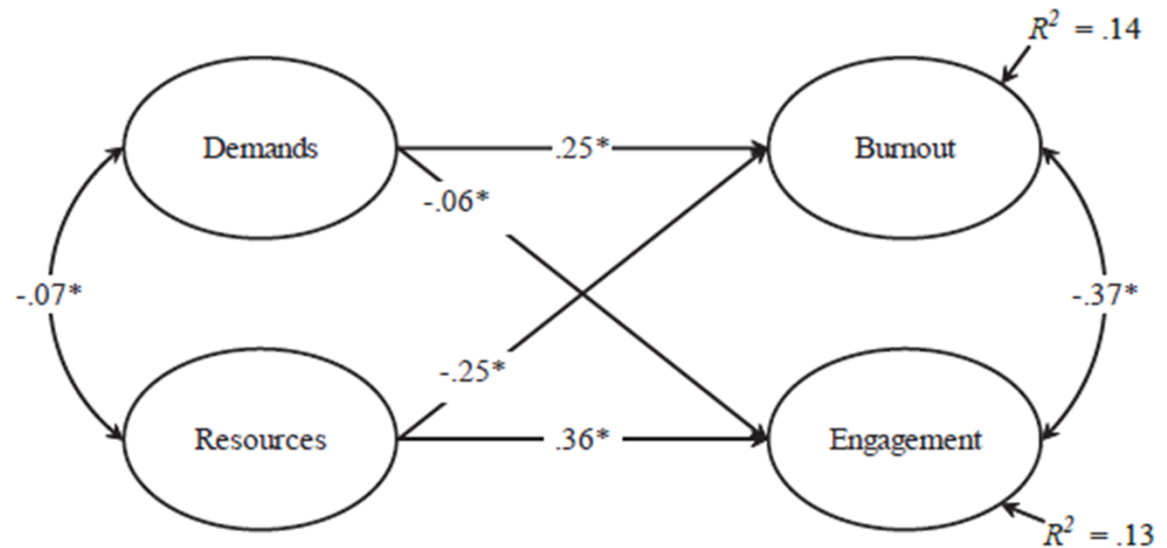
- Engagement independent (but negatively related to) burnout: “a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption” (p. 74)

### § Summary: positive attitude toward work and willingness to invest personal effort to get it done



# Predictors

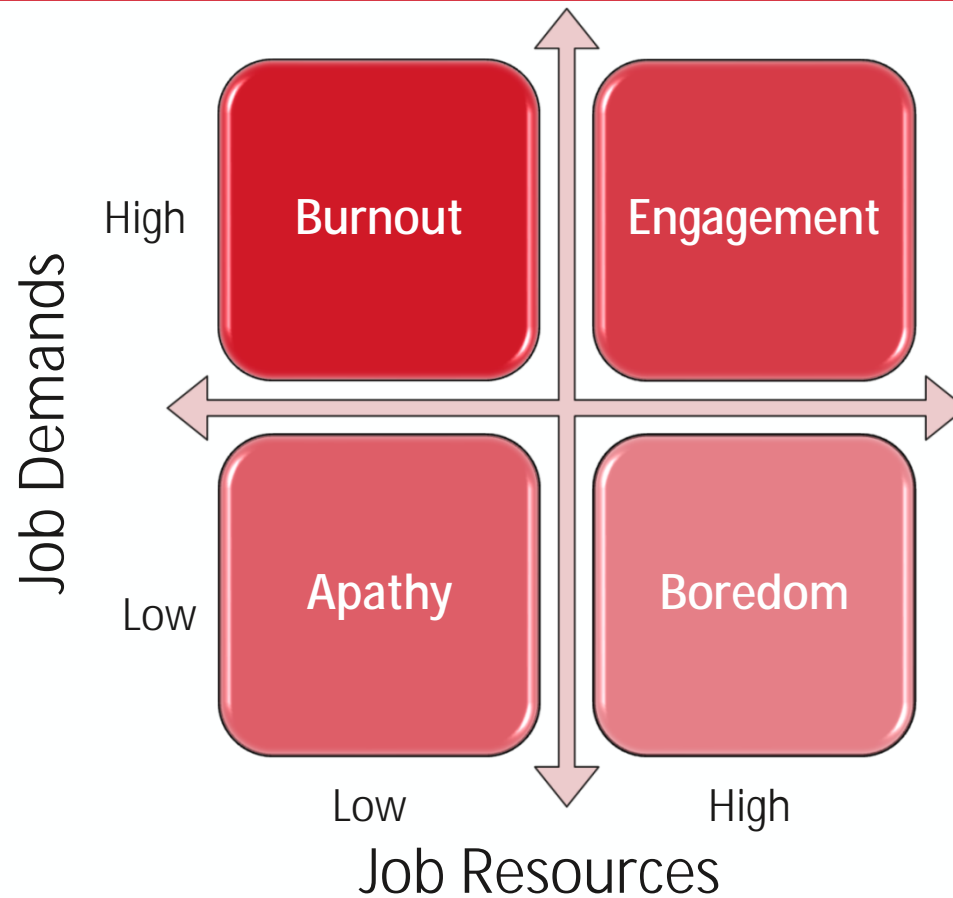
- § Kahn: meaning of work, psychological safety, efficacy perceptions
- § Rich et al. (2010): value congruence, org support, core self-evaluations
- § Schaufeli: job resources (autonomy, goal clarity, leadership support, feedback)



Crawford et al. 2010 (meta-analysis)



# Job Demands-Resources Model



Source: adapted from anything by Bakker and/or Demerouti

# Outcomes of engagement

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## § Higher engagement related to

- Better health
- More positive emotions
- More creative
- More enthusiastic
- More willing to learn
- Better cognitive processes (not sure if empirically supported)
- Happier partners

## § Higher engagement related to job outcomes

- Higher task and contextual performance – possibly due to the above outcomes of engagement
- Client satisfaction
- Organisational performance



## Measuring engagement – the drama begins!

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- § Operationalisations focus of different stages of the process
  - § Some measure the predictors/drivers of engagement
  - § Some focus on the actual experience of engagement
  - § Which do you think is more appropriate?
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- § For different examples, have a look at Paul Spector's website (great sources of good scales):  
<https://paulspector.com/assessments/assessment-archive/job-attitudes/>



# Measuring the experience of engagement

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§ Rich et al 2010 (following Kahn's definition):

- Physical (I devote a lot of energy to my job); Emotional (I am enthusiastic in my job), cognitive (At work, I devote a lot of attention to my job)

§ Schaufeli, UWES:

- Vigor (At my work, I feel bursting with energy); Dedication (I am enthusiastic about my job); Absorption: (I am immersed in my work)

§ Saks (2006):

- Organisational (Being a member of this organisation is very captivating); Job (I am highly engaged in this job)

§ Gagné: Motivation at work - intrinsic and extrinsic

§ Rothbard 2001: Work and family engagement, Attention and absorption in each domain



# Measuring the drivers/predictors of engagement

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§ Gallup: focuses on working conditions, such as

- “I know what is expected of me at work”;
- “In the last seven days, I have received recognition or praise for doing good work”;
- “My supervisor, or someone at work, seems to care about me as a person”;
- “At work, my opinions seem to count”; “In the past six months, someone at work has talked to me about my progress”

§ Scott Barry Kaufman: The “Full potential index”: questions about meaningful work, values, growth mindset, flow, autonomy, etc





## Your views! Results from the survey

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- § 11 participants
  - 6 practitioners, 3 academics, 2 students
- § Asked to define engagement (unspecified, could be work, org, employee)
- § Asked to rate items in terms of match to own definition
- § Asked how they capture engagement
- § Asked to comment on how they "work with" engagement
- § Asked for 3-5 words to describe engagement (instructions were not followed)



## 3-5 words

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§ I wanted to do a word cloud, but it got difficult.  
Here are the responses:

- Motivating Energizing Fulfilling  
(Say/Stay/Strive)?
- Enjoying work and feeling committed to it  
because it's important and I'm effective at it.
- Useful, but not a single source of 'truth'
- How connected you are to your work and  
organisation
- Immersed, energetic, aligned, effortful
- Belonging to your team (for a client) .
- Passion, interest, absorption, immersion, flow
- Active involvement from an individual or group
- Can't do it .. it's a complex phenomenon which  
needs careful explication - not Twitter-like BS.



## How well do the items match the definition?

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- § Items were from the long UWES and from Saks (2006). I didn't include Rich et al., (2010)
- § Items were rated on a 5 point scale in terms of how well they matched the definition provided by the rater
- § Scores ranged between 2.11 and 3.89
- § Scores were recoded so that 3-5 indicated good match and 1-2 indicated poor match, allowed for a "percentage of good match"



## Best and worst items

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Lowest scores	
Oe03 - I am really not into the “goings-on” in this organization.	22%
Vi04 - I can continue working for very long periods at a time.	33%
Vi05 - At my job, I am very resilient, mentally.	33%
Je04 - My mind often wanders and I think of other things when doing my job (R).	33%
Ab03 - I feel happy when I am working intensely.	44%

## Best and worst items

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Highest scores	
De02 - I am enthusiastic about my job.	78%
De03 - My job inspires me.	78%
De04 - I am proud of the work that I do.	78%
Ab04 - I am immersed in my work.	78%
Oe06 - I am highly engaged in this organization.	78%
De01 - I find the work that I do full of meaning and purpose.	89%
Vi03 - When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work.	89%
Je05 - I am highly engaged in this job.	89%

## Middle scores

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Middle scores	
Vi01 - At my work, I feel bursting with energy.	67%
Ab01 - Time flies when I am working.	67%
Vi02 - At my job, I feel strong and vigorous.	67%
Ab02 - When I am working, I forget everything else around me.	67%
De05 - To me, my job is challenging.	67%
Vi06 - At my work, I always persevere, even when things do not go well.	67%
Oe10 - Being a member of this organisation is very captivating	67%
Oe02 - One of the most exciting things for me is being involved with things happening in this organisation	67%
Je02 - ometimes I am o into my job that I lose track of time.	67%

## How do you capture engagement?

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- § Engagement surveys with items like "say/stay/strive" or other research based scales
- § Depends on what it is for. Try and figure out what is really meant, like job satisfaction/involvement/rewarding work/performance
- § Listening, pulse checks
- § Measure outcomes from company records, e.g., sick leave, turnover, exit surveys, feedback to managers
- § Don't capture it because it can't be captured as an individual quality



## How do you "work with" engagement

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- § Responses varied, some did not address the question directly but offered thoughts on engagement and how it is treated
- § For some it is a core part of their work, for others it is sort of a predictor of other things of interest
- § Many measure it in some way, and report to clients or in research
- § One response simply said "I don't"

