

DISSERTATION

EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT: CRITIQUE, THEORY, AND MODEL

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## ABSTRACT

### EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT: CRITIQUE THEORY AND MODEL

Organizational behavior researchers fail to critically evaluate the congruence between their conceptualizations, definitions, and measures of employee engagement. Three manuscripts are presented to illuminate this unrecognized confusion in employee engagement research. The first manuscript explored the employee engagement, motivation, and performance literature, and presented a definition of employee engagement necessary for the three constructs to fall within the same nomological network. The definition was unique and counter to the most prevalent conceptualization of employee engagement. It was shown, for employee engagement to provide organizational value, it should be defined to include physical behaviors aligned with the goals of the organization. This positions employee engagement as a motivated state, contrary to the most prolific conceptualization, which describes employee engagement as a motivational state.

The second manuscript explored the motivation and employee engagement literature to develop a Motivation Model of Engagement (MMOE). It was shown traditional motivation theories focus on ‘why’ someone is motivated. However, the MMOE elucidates ‘how’ someone becomes motivated. The MMOE described how employees become engaged and what influences the likelihood of engagement. The MMOE is unique and strengthens motivation theory by filling in common gaps in existing theories and showcases how existing motivation theories complement each other.

The third manuscript illuminated the incongruence of current employee engagement research designs, and presented a heuristic model, which aligns conceptualization, definition, and

measure. A measurement model was presented, which described influencers of employee engagement. A conceptual measurement instrument was presented, which captures the likelihood of employees engaging in behaviors beneficial to the organization and illuminates potential interventions to increase the likelihood of employees engaging.

The manuscripts were presented such that each built on the one preceding. However, each was intended to be applicable to research and practice on its own. Implications for research and practice were discussed, as well as potential applications. Further, suggestions for future research were proposed to entice, strengthen, and grow organizational behavior research.

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## DEDICATION

*I dedicate this to my family. They provide an immeasurable amount of support and inspiration. To Marion, whose positivity and perseverance I strive to emulate. I wish you were around to call me Dr. Stampka. To my mother Ruth, who has taught me kindness and forgivingness. To my father Gary, who has taught me a work ethic and generosity. To my brother Jeff, who I have learned thoughtfulness and creativity. To Erin and Landon. You are amazing and have inspired awe in me; more than you will ever know. I am blessed, proud, and honored to be your father. To my wife Kristin, for the tremendous support, encouragement, and pushing to help me complete this journey. To all of you, I say Thank You!*

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## DEFINITION OF TERMS

*Antecedent.* Antecedents are variables that influence, affect, or predict another. (Barrick et al., 2015; Rich et al., 2010; Saks, 2006). As used in this study, an antecedent is a variable which causes a change in another variable.

*Behavior.* Cognitive, affective, and physical activities employed by the employee.

*Conceptual framework.* As described on the Walden University Library website, conceptual framework “includes one or more formal theories (in part or whole) as well as other concepts and empirical findings from the literature. It is used to show relationships among these ideas and how they relate to the research study” (n.d.). As used in this study, conceptual framework is defined as an illustration of the relationships among one or more formal theories and other concepts to guide research.

*Extra-role behavior.* Discretionary behavior “not an enforceable requirement of the role or the job description” (Organ, 1997, p. 86)

*In-role behavior.* Behavior activity “related to employees’ formal role requirements” (Kim, Kolb, & Kim, 2013, p. 252)

*Measurement model.* Fung (2016) describes a model as “detailed illustration on how the constructs/variables & their connectivity are related (sometimes embedded with hypotheses).” Jaccard and Jacoby (2020) describes a measurement model as “the portion of the diagram with arrows from the latent constructs to the observed measures” (p. 183). As used in this study, measurement model will be defined as a detailed illustration of how constructs and variables are related, indicated by arrows between the latent constructs and the observed measures.

*Mechanism.* The process by which some input (antecedent) generates, or contributes to, a specific outcome (Hedström & Swedberg, 1996).

*Motivation.* The desire or willingness to do or achieve something (en.oxforddictionaries.com, 2018).

*Motivational.* To promote the desire or willingness to do or achieve something (en.oxforddictionaries.com, 2018).

*Outcome.* The result or effect of an action, situation, or event (Cambridge Academic Content Dictionary, n.d.).

*Performance.* “Behavior with an evaluative component, behavior that can be evaluated as positive or negative for individual or organizational effectiveness” (Motowidlo et al., 1997, pp. 72-73).

*Theory.* “A set of statements about the relationship(s) between two or more concepts or constructs” (Jaccard & Jacoby, 2020, p. 28).

## CHAPTER 1 – OVERVIEW OF CONCERN

There is general confusion and conflation in the employee engagement academic literature (Shuck, Osam, et al., 2017) as to the meanings, definitions, and measurements of employee engagement. It is disconcerting for academic research, after nearly three decades since Kahn (1990) introduced the term engagement, and over three thousand published academic articles and dissertations, there is still uncertainty about the meaning, antecedents, and outcomes of employee engagement. Bailey et al. (2017) concluded their synthesis of the meaning, antecedents, and outcomes of employee engagement by stating, “Despite the number of studies, there is in fact still very little about engagement that can be asserted with any degree of certainty. We do not really know what engagement means, how to measure it, what its outcomes are, or what drives up levels of engagement” (p. 47). If we do not know these things, then what utility does employee engagement have? If we do not know what engagement means or how to measure it, then how can research be performed, which will inform the practice of creating an engaged workforce leading to desired organizational outcomes?

Next is a discussion of engagement confusion regarding its measures, its outcomes, and drivers. Subsequently, an overview is presented of three manuscripts, which defines employee engagement in alignment with motivation and performance, creates a motivation model of engagement, and presents a heuristic measurement model for employee engagement, respectively, to address the confusion. The intention is to bring clarity for future investigations of employee engagement and informed utility for organizational leadership.

## Engagement Confusion

Part of the confusion is whether engagement is a trait, state, or behavior (Stumpf et al., 2013). Some researchers argued engagement is a state due to its transient nature (Dalal et al., 2008). However, there are significant temporal incongruencies in how 'state' is described. Kahn (1990) described engagement as a momentary motivated state. Schaufeli et al. (2002) defined engagement as a non-focused motivational state. Schaufeli et al. (2002) described engagement with trait-like characteristics as “[r]ather than a momentary and specific state, engagement refers to a more persistent and pervasive affective-cognitive state that is not focused on any particular object, event, individual, or behavior” (p. 74). Other researchers suggested engagement is a behavior but differ on whether it entails extra-role (Macey & Schneider, 2008) or just in-role (Newman & Harrison, 2008; Saks, 2008) behaviors. They further advocate engagement as a behavior since it is ultimately the desired organizational outcome. Adding to the confusion, some researchers claim trait engagement moderates state engagement (Fletcher et al., 2018), which is an antecedent to behavioral engagement (Macey & Schneider, 2008).

There is further confusion in the meaning attributed to engagement and the label used to describe it. Researchers often use and interchange various terms to represent employee engagement. Often terms such as job engagement, work engagement, role engagement, task engagement, psychological engagement, and employee engagement are substituted to infer the same construct. Shuck, Osam, et al. (2017) argue these conceptualizations of engagement are different due to being grounded in different frameworks. However, many of them are grounded in Kahn's original conceptualization of personal engagement. A review of the measurement instruments clearly shows an attempt to measure the same experiential state, regardless of label.

See Table 1 as evidence of nearly identical scale items from various measures purported to be derived from different frameworks.

**Table 1**

*Engagement Measures with Similar Scale Items*

Measurement Scale	Scale Item	Author
Employee Engagement Scale (EES)	“I concentrate on <b>my job</b> when I am at work”	Shuck, Adelson et al., 2017, p.16
Job Engagement Scale (JES)	“At work I concentrate on <b>my job</b> ”	Rich et al., 2010, p. 634
Psychological Engagement	“I often think about other things when performing <b>my job</b> ” (reverse scored)	May et al, 2004, p. 36
Job Engagement	“My mind often wanders and I think of other things when doing <b>my job</b> ” (reverse scored)	Saks, 2006, p. 617
Employee Engagement Scale (EES)	“I am really focused when <b>I am working</b> ”	Shuck, Adelson et al., 2017, p.16
Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES)	“When <b>I am working</b> I forget everything else around me”	Schaufeli et al., 2002, p. 89
Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES)	“I am immersed in <b>my work</b> ”	Schaufeli et al., 2002, p. 90
Intellectual Social Affective (ISA) Engagement Scale	“I concentrate on <b>my work</b> ”	Soane et al., 2012, p. 547
Work Engagement	“I concentrate a lot on <b>my work</b> ”	Rothbard, 2001, p. 684

Additionally, Christian et al. (2011) performed a meta-analysis by aggregating items from different engagement measures ( $N = 6$ ) to describe the relationship between a unitary engagement conceptualization and employee performance. They aggregated items from work engagement, psychological engagement, and job engagement measures. Christian et al. (2011) is an oft cited article as evidence engagement leads to performance. This further shows, regardless of the label, conceptualizations of engagement are treated as the same.

The confusion around engagement does not stop with the label—job, work, task, role, or employee, many more descriptors of engagement have been used. For example, Macey and Schneider (2008) used 12 different terms to describe engagement. They add the descriptors: active, behavioral, dispositional, emotional, personal, psychological, self, state, and trait. Others have added cognitive engagement (Rich et al., 2010; Shuck, Adelson, et al., 2017); intellectual, social, affective engagement (Soane et al., 2012); and felt engagement (Stumpf et al., 2013).

It is understandable to suggest work engagement, job engagement, and employee engagement are different conceptualizations of engagement; however, it is clear each is trying to capture the same experiential state of employees while at work. From a pragmatic perspective, they should all be the same since the goal of organizations is to have an engaged workforce leading to positive organizational value (Richman, 2006). If there are 19 different types of engagement, then which one leads to the competitive advantage? It would be very difficult for organizations to try to influence employees' engagement independent from employees' job engagement or employees' work engagement. Additionally, it would be very difficult, costly, and resource intensive for an organization to try to influence 19 different types of engagement to gain a competitive advantage. Organizational leaders need a unitary construct, which informs them about how to influence employees' behaviors leading to positive work outcomes. It seems reasonable to suggest organizational engagement (Saks, 2006) is different than employee/work/job engagement since the former is an experiential state of employees and the organization, while the latter is the experiential state of employees and their work. However, treating the same experiential state as separate conceptualizations muddies the water.

## **Measures of Engagement**

Although there are essentially two underpinnings of employee engagement, antipode of burnout and personal engagement, all identified engagement instruments were developed based on the same measurement model. Each instrument uses reflective indicators to represent employee engagement. The specified indicators are different for each instrument; however, they all reflect a general latent construct (employee engagement).

### ***Cognitive-Affective Measurement***

The most prevalent conceptualization underlying the engagement measurement instruments is a cognitive-affective state (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004); or a latent psychological (cognitive/affective) state manifested by cognitive, affective, and physical dimensions (Rich et al., 2010; Shuck, Osam et al., 2017). Shuck, Osam, et al. (2017) described engagement as an intention to act, but not the act itself. This viewpoint treats engagement as an attitudinal (cognitive/affective) state leading to desired physical behaviors. Presumably, these instruments were derived based on the belief cognitive and affective dimensions were enough to capture employees' perceived levels of engagement, with the inherent assumption high levels of engagement lead to desired behaviors.

However, if researchers measure a cognitive-affective psychological state, independent of physical behavior, then how do they know what desired behaviors will follow? Engagement as a cognitive-affective motivational state, independent of behavior, does not ensure action will follow. "One can be physiologically aroused without demonstrating physical movement and action" (Byrne, 2015, p. 16). Researchers attempted to address this issue through correlational analysis of proposed outcomes of engagement (Christian et al., 2011; Rich et al., 2010).

However, this only indicated relationships between the measures of engagement and physical behavior, it does not indicate the direction.

Research fails to address what level of engagement (score) leads to the desired physical behavior and organizational value. Do low engagement scores associate with ‘some’ desired physical behavior and high scores correspond with ‘total’ desired physical behavior? How can organizational leaders know when employees’ intentions to act (attitude) are aligned with the organization’s desired actions?

### ***Reflective Indicators***

Rather than answering these questions, researchers confound the issue by incorporating reflective behavioral indicators, and scale items, in their measurement of employee engagement. The identified instruments used in employee engagement research each include behavioral indicators. This creates confusion. If the conceptualization does not include behavior, how can its measure? How do the interactions get captured if engagement follows a cognitive→affective→physical sequence, but all indicators are measured simultaneously as reflective of the same state? Should the ‘physical’ indicator be enough to capture engagement since it is last in the sequence? Other conceptualizations (May et al., 2004; Stumpf et al., 2013) do not have this same confusion since they described engagement as the simultaneous expression of cognitive, affective, and physical energies. However, these instruments nevertheless use general reflective indicators of employee engagement, which does not agree with Kahn’s (1990) conceptualization. Kahn’s is a formative conceptualization, formed by the expression of cognitive, affective, and physical energies during work role performance.

### ***Measurement Validity***

Further, some researchers have challenged the validity of cognitive-affective engagement instruments. Harrison et al. (2006), Newman and Harrison (2008), and Newman et al. (2010) argued employee engagement as measured as a cognitive-affective state is simply a higher order (or aggregate) job attitude construct. They claim engagement as a cognitive-affective state is redundant to their A-factor of job attitudes, which is a higher order construct reflecting the “covariation among job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and job involvement” (Newman & Harrison, 2008, p. 32). Newman et al. (2010) conducted an item analysis comparing engagement (as a cognitive/affective state) to satisfaction and showed the two measured the same construct and were “virtually interchangeable” (p. 56)

The results of the empirical study by Cole et al. (2012) between burnout’s Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) and engagement’s Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) led them to conclude “researchers interested in advancing contemporary thinking on engagement should avoid treating the UWES as if it were tapping a distinct, independent phenomenon” (p. 1576). It is unclear if measuring engagement as a cognitive-affective state provides unique value beyond other current constructs (Christian et al., 2011; Hallberg & Schaufeli, 2006; Macey & Schneider, 2008; Newman & Harrison, 2008).

### ***General State Measurement***

Each engagement instrument is used as a reflective measure of a general state, which one perceives to occupy. The instruments are very close to measuring trait-like attributes. The situational components are broad referring to ‘my job’, ‘my work’, or ‘my company’. There are a lack of definitions regarding job or work, so it is left to individual interpretation. It is clear from review of the scale items, if one’s work, job, or company stays the same, then an

employee's level of engagement should stay the same. Thus, significant structural changes would be necessary to influence employee engagement.

The engagement instruments measure general levels of individual engagement at a point in time, which gets aggregated to the collective. The aggregated general engagement score offers the potential to establish relationships, however, it provides little utility for organizational leadership to identify how to influence employee engagement to achieve a competitive advantage. It seems more (higher score) is better in engagement research but there is no discussion regarding the optimal expected score. One might expect a de facto maximum since it would be unreasonable for employees to answer 'strongly agree' or 'always' to every scale item unless it was capturing trait-like characteristics. Other than telling organizational leaders the level of engagement within their organization at a point in time, the scores offer little insight into how to make effective change.

### ***Transient State Measurement***

The engagement instruments were designed to measure general states employees perceive to occupy. However, researchers used the same instruments to measure transient states (Bakker & Bal, 2010; Bledow et al., 2011; Fletcher et al., 2018; Ouweneel et al., 2012; Reina-Tamayo et al., 2017; Sonnentag, 2003; Sonnentag & Kühnel, 2016). Using an instrument designed to measure a general stable state to measure a transient state presents a significant problem. Some researchers changed the reference point of the items, and/or the scale anchors, to align the survey with the temporal conceptualization being studied. However, there is an unaddressed, and unacknowledged, issue if a measure designed with a scale of 'never' (0) to 'always' (6) has the same validity when changed to 'I fully disagree' (1) to 'I fully agree' (5), 'no, that is not correct' (0) to 'yes, that is correct' (6), or 'not at all' (1) to 'to a great extent' (7). The threshold for one

to choose ‘always’ (6) is different (and arguably higher) than for one to choose ‘yes, that is correct’ (6).

The engagement measurement tools all seem to measure the same general experiential state of employees and their work. However, there is confusion regarding the boundaries of the instruments and whether the state being measured is a cognitive/affective/physical state or only a cognitive/affective state. Some researchers use instruments designed for the measurement of general states to measure transient states. The cognitive-affective conceptualizations are detached from physical behaviors and are assumed to lead to physical behaviors. However, there is no suggestion about what level of engagement leads to what level of behavior.

Clarification of the confusion is necessary to advance the engagement construct and to inform practice. Confusion associated with the instruments will cause confusion in the interpretation of results. This makes it difficult to research the relationships associated with employee engagement and inform practice in possible ways to influence employees’ engagement.

### **Outcomes of Engagement**

Another struggle in the academic community is if employee engagement has any practical utility beyond existing constructs already in use (Newman et al., 2010). Most of the academic research focuses on engagement as a mediating variable between antecedents and positive work outcomes. While the number of reported antecedents to engagement is immense the number of reported outcomes is far fewer. Engagement has been primarily correlated to the outcomes of job attitudes (i.e., job satisfaction, organizational commitment, turnover intention) (Cole et al., 2012; Saks, 2006; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004) and job performance (i.e., task performance and contextual performance) (Bakker & Bal, 2010; Rich et al., 2010).

### ***Attitudinal Outcomes***

Employee engagement is predominantly conceptualized as a cognitive-affective (attitudinal) state, often described as leading to other attitudes like job satisfaction and organizational commitment. However, this leads to confusion. Some researchers claim job satisfaction, job involvement, and organizational commitment are antecedents to engagement (Abraham, 2012; Brunetto et al., 2012; Harrison et al., 2006; Newman et al., 2010; Shuck et al., 2021), while others claim they are outcomes from employee engagement (Fleck & Inceoglu, 2010; Saks, 2006). Little rigor has been applied to explain why one work related attitude (employee engagement) would lead to another work related attitude (job satisfaction, organizational commitment, or job involvement) other than the general assertion engagement leads to positive emotions (Jawahar & Liu, 2017; Karatepe & Karadas, 2015; Yeh, 2013), which results in job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Regardless, there is additional debate over whether job attitudes have a direct link to specific behaviors (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1974; Kruglanski et al., 2015; Schneider et al., 2003).

### ***Behavioral Outcomes***

Engagement research assumes employee engagement leads to positive individual level outcomes (Christian et al., 2011; Fleck & Inceoglu, 2010; Macey & Schneider, 2008; Rich et al., 2010). “When employees are more engaged, they are in turn expected to perform more frequently a range of behaviors that are beneficial for the organization” (Fleck & Inceoglu, 2010, p. 32). However, there is disagreement regarding what is considered beneficial behaviors. Some claim organizations benefit when employees do what is asked of them (Newman & Harrison, 2008), while others claim extra-role behavior is the desired outcome (Macey & Schneider, 2008). Either way, the research findings are contradictory. For example, using the same measures for

engagement and organization citizenship behavior (OCB) (contextual performance), with the only difference being the referent of the OCB measure, Tims et al. (2015) found engagement not related to OCB, while Demerouti et al. (2015) found engagement related to OCB. Additionally, Tims et al. (2015) found a very weak positive correlation between engagement and in-role performance. The results associated with the outcomes of engagement remain controversial even though there are numerous studies cited as evidence engagement leads to positive employee and/or organizational outcomes (Halbesleben & Wheeler, 2008; Harter et al., 2002; Rich et al., 2010; Salanova et al., 2005; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Xanthopoulou et al., 2009). This is a result of researchers using correlational analysis to support the hypothesized direction of causality. While the authors argue their methodology is consistent with previous theory and research, their studies predominantly use cross-sectional and self-reported data, no causal inferences should or can be made. Byrne (2015) indicated she “could find no research reporting experimental data that would provide evidence confirming that engagement actually predicts job performance” (p. 103).

There is an additional assumption positive employee performance aggregates to lead to positive organizational value. “An organization where a larger proportion of employees more frequently engage in contributory/positive behaviors is more likely to see a positive impact on metrics such as revenue, profitability, turnover, and customer satisfaction” (Fleck & Inceoglu, 2010, p. 33). However, there has been no experimental research supporting that individual outcomes aggregate to organizational value and competitive advantage. Pugh and Dietz (2008) argued that sufficient composition theory (aggregating one level of analysis to a higher level) is lacking in the current research and is needed to extend the engagement construct to a higher level

of analysis. They suggest existing engagement measures need to shift the referent from the individual to unit-level rather than aggregating individual level data.

### **Drivers of Engagement**

Nearly every study describes employee engagement as a motivational construct. However, there is ambiguity in the meaning of ‘motivational’. It is unclear if researchers are referring to a motivational state or a motivated state. Some researchers claim employee engagement is a *motivational* state leading to desired organizational behavior/actions (Bakker et al., 2011; Christian et al., 2011; Eldor & Harpaz, 2016; Gordon et al., 2015; Rich et al., 2010; Shantz et al., 2013). They conceptualize engagement as a cognitive-affective state, which “motivates beneficial behaviours” (Soane et al., 2012, p. 536). Other researchers claim engagement is a cognitive-affective, *motivated* state (Byrne, 2015; Fleck & Inceoglu, 2010). To further confuse things, some described engagement as motivational, while concurrently labeling it a motivated, activated, or aroused state (Byrne, 2015; Inceoglu & Fleck, 2010; Rich et al., 2010). For example, Byrne (2015) stated “. . . employee engagement is a motivational state . . .” (p. 122), while defining engagement as “a moment-to-moment state of motivation . . .” (p. 15). Similarly, Inceoglu and Fleck (2010) claimed “. . . engagement is a motivational construct . . .” (p. 77), while arguing “engagement is a positive cognitive-affective state that is activated (i.e., involving higher arousal levels) and is likely to result in activated (“motivated”) work behavior” (p. 77). Since there is confusion about what engagement is, it is not surprising there is confusion regarding what drives it.

Wollard and Shuck (2011) described 42 individual and organizational antecedents to employee engagement. However, many of these are also described in other studies as outcomes of engagement. This paradox causes confusion regarding the drivers of engagement. This is a

consequence of the lack of clarity regarding where engagement fits within the motivation sequence. It is difficult to study drivers of engagement if it is unclear where engagement fits within the research design.

Additionally, the stable nature of engagement measures makes it difficult to determine the strength of a driver. For example, in their study of Finnish dentists, Seppälä et al. (2015) found engagement to be stable over a seven-year study (2003-2010). Their 2003 data showed vigor to be 4.68 (compared to 4.68 in 2010), 2003 dedication was 4.94 (compared to 4.91 in 2010), and 2003 absorption of 4.21 (compared to 4.31 in 2010) (p. 366). Additionally, Van Steenbergen et al. (2018) showed work engagement to be stable over twelve months (4.19 compared to 4.20 twelve months later) (p. 751). Interestingly, some researchers suggested the stability makes it difficult for the predictor variable to account for additional variance (Ângelo & Chambel, 2015); while others suggested the stability may hide a fluctuating state, which explains the poor relationship to the predictor variable (Innstrand, 2016).

### **Study Problem Statement**

Organizational leaders desire an engaged workforce, but it is not clear 1) what engagement is, 2) how to measure engagement, 3) how engagement leads to desired behavior and organizational value, and 4) how to influence employee engagement to increase productivity and performance. How do organizational leaders 1) recognize an engaged employee, 2) capture the likelihood employees will engage, 3) ensure engagement leads to desired organizational outcomes, and 4) develop motivational strategies to influence the likelihood employees will engage?

To address these problems, the following study is presented in three manuscripts.

1. Developing a definition of employee engagement when integrated and aligned with the definitions and frameworks of motivation and performance. This manuscript examines what engagement must be to fit within the constructs of motivation and performance.
2. Deriving a Motivation Model of Engagement (MMOE), which describes the mechanisms of how employees become engaged. This manuscript examines what influences/motivates employee engagement and how each employee is uniquely affected by potential influencers.
3. Presenting a heuristic model, which aligns employee engagement definition, conceptualization, and measurement. This manuscript presents a conceptual measurement instrument to capture the likelihood of employees engaging in work activities and illuminates potential interventions to positively affect employee engagement.

### **Aligning Employee Engagement with Motivation and Performance**

Chapter 2 reviews engagement, motivation, and performance academic literature to identify conceptualizations used to support the assertion employee engagement is a motivation construct leading to positive individual performance. The review focuses on the foundational definitions, frameworks, and measurement tools, which underlie these conceptualizations.

Researchers have accepted the assumption employees' engagement leads to positive individual performance and positive organizational results. To support this assumption, researchers claim engagement is a motivation construct and use higher-order relationships to explain why engagement should cause positive individual performance. This assumption is

repeated so often that little academic rigor is undertaken to ensure the variables are aligned during studies of the integrated constructs.

When researchers describe engagement as a motivation construct, it is unclear if they are treating engagement as the source of motivation or the outcome of being motivated. Researchers often interchange the two. This confounds cause with effect since engagement as motivational would be a cause and engagement as motivated would be an effect. This mismatch gets worse when adding in the measurement tools used. Researchers often use the same engagement measurement tool, and study design, regardless of if they describe engagement as motivational or motivated.

Additionally, researchers fail to challenge the nomological validity of their engagement conceptualization as it relates to their study variables or investigate the boundaries where their assumptions may fail. For example, many researchers define engagement as a ‘general’ state and place it within the framework of motivation and performance. However, motivation is described as having a direction, intensity, and duration (Ambrose & Kulik, 1999; Kanfer & Chen, 2016; Latham & Pinder, 2005; Locke & Latham, 2004) and performance is described as the evaluation of directed behavior (McCloy et al., 1994; Motowidlo et al., 1997). Both refer to ‘directed’ activity. No attention is paid to how a general state causes directed behavior.

There is a dearth of research exploring the validity of the integration of motivation, engagement, and performance. Chapter 2 explores the definitions, conceptualizations, assumptions, and measurement tools of these constructs to derive a definition for employee engagement, which has nomological validity when integrated with motivation and performance. This definition is unique since no other engagement definitions aligned with motivation and performance were identified. It shows employee engagement, to align with motivation and

performance, should be viewed as a motivated state, thus clarifying where engagement sits within the motivational sequence.

### **Value to Knowledge**

Current academic definitions and conceptualizations of employee engagement are atheoretical. There are essentially two underpinning conceptualizations most often used for employee engagement: personal engagement and burnout. Neither was based on a theoretical design. Personal engagement was derived from a qualitative exploratory study looking to identify the conditions in which employees engage while at work. Engagement via burnout was based on the declaration, ‘engagement is the opposite of burnout’.

Chapter 2 develops a definition of engagement, grounded in motivation theory, situated within the integrated frameworks of performance and motivation. There have been no studies identified, which purport to align employee engagement with performance and motivation theory. New definitions (Shuck, Osam, et al., 2017) appear to be based on existing literature, which lack a theoretical foundation.

Chapter 2 provides value by presenting a definition of engagement derived by integrating the frameworks and definitions of motivation and performance. Many researchers describe engagement with a perfunctory reference to motivation and performance. Little rigor is taken to define motivation and performance or explain how their frameworks fit with the context of the research study. The new definition clarifies how these constructs fit together and bring clarity to researchers for future study designs. Additionally, this new definition eliminates the confusion in the academic and practitioner communities about what engagement is and what it looks like. This informs organizational leaders on how to recognize engaged employees and the characteristics of engagement necessary to produce desired organizational outcomes. Lastly, this

definition creates a foundation to build an integrated motivation, engagement, and performance model to advance research efforts. This definition creates a foundation to develop measurement models used to evaluate employee engagement as integrated with motivation and performance.

### **Motivation Model of Engagement**

Chapter 3 reviews psychological motivational research to derive a model which describes the mechanisms of how employees become engaged. A Motivation Model of Engagement (MMOE) is presented, which details the lower-order mechanisms (processes) leading to motivated behaviors and discusses the factors which inform the mechanisms. The new model is an extension and improvement of Kahn's Psychological Presence model (Kahn, 1992). This study uniquely positions engagement within a model of motivation.

There are no identified articles in employee engagement research integrating motivation and engagement. However, the outcome of Kahn's (1990) research, where he describes conditions leading to engagement, can be used as a foundation for a motivation model. While Kahn did not describe his conceptualization in terms of motivation, his conceptualization is more aligned to motivation theory than any other engagement conceptualization. Kahn's personal engagement conceptualization can be built upon to provide a comprehensive, and pragmatic, motivation model encapsulating employees' engagement.

Additionally, motivation theories focus on higher order 'why' relationships between causes and motivated behavior and are limited in their use to explain the lower order mechanisms of 'how' behavior is influenced. Motivation theories articulate general prescribed factors (depending on the underlying theory) as the cause of motivated behavior. The motivation literature focuses on higher-order relationships without specifying the lower-order mechanisms necessary to explain the relationships. Table 2 showcases the motivational drivers and expected

behavioral outcomes prescribed by various motivation theories. Goal Setting Theory, Intrapersonal Motivation Theory, and Expectancy Theory each essentially describe why behavior is determined by the likelihood of desired outcomes. The Job Characteristics Model postulates job characteristics (skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback) produce positive affect, which incentivizes employees to perform well. The High Performance Cycle claims high goals and high self-efficacy lead people to exert more effort and to “persist in the face of difficulty” resulting in high performance (Locke & Latham, 1990, p. 242). Self-Determination Theory posits the fulfillment of competence, autonomy, and relatedness (which are proclaimed to be basic and universal needs) results in intrinsic motivation. Social Exchange Theory states employees, given a resource (i.e., positive organizational support), will feel obligated to reciprocate by performing beneficial behaviors (i.e., organizational citizenship behavior). Researchers go to great lengths to describe the higher-order relationships of ‘why’ one’s behavior should be shaped by the prescribed factors. However, there is little discussion regarding the mechanisms of ‘how’ those factors affect an employee and influence behavior; or what may inhibit the effect.

Each motivation theory espouses its own prescribed dispositions/traits and general prescribed factors. It seems like a goal of motivation research is to identify the ideal universal ‘soup’ of traits and factors. However, experience tells us the right mixture of traits and factors may be unique depending on the individual, organization, and job requirements. Consider how narcissism and external locus of control may be beneficial for a salesperson but may hinder an engineer.

**Table 2***Motivation Theories, Drivers, and Expected Outcomes*

Motivation Theory	Motivating Potential	State of Motivation	Outcome
Expectancy Theory	Expectancy of successful outcome + value of outcome	Effort/Satisfaction	Work performance
Goal Setting Theory	Specific goal	Choice/Direction/Effort/ Persistence/Plan	High work performance
High Performing Cycle	High specific goal + high expectancy + high self-efficacy	Effort/Persistence/Direction/ Task strategies (referred to as mechanisms)	High work performance (i.e., productivity)
Interpersonal (Attribution) Theory	Cognitive/affective evaluation of prior outcome	Motivated psychological state	Positive/negative behavioral response
Job Characteristics Model	Skill variety/Task identity/Task significance/Autonomy/Feedback	Experienced meaningfulness/ Experienced responsibility/ Knowledge of results	Work performance/Job satisfaction/Low absenteeism/Low turnover
Self Determination Theory	Competence/Autonomy/Relatedness	Intrinsic/Extrinsic motivation	Psychological well-being/High quality performance
Social Exchange Theory	Received benefit	Cognitive/affective sense of obligation	Organizational citizenship behavior/High job performance/Organizational commitment

There is little discussion to reconcile the individualistic nature of motivation with the general prescribed factors. For example, Hackman and Oldham (1976) imply everyone wants three psychological states (experienced meaningfulness, experienced responsibility, and knowledge of results) and everyone needs five prescribed job characteristics to get there. Missing is a discussion about ‘how’ job characteristics affect the psychological conditions. Plenty of attention is given to ‘why’ job characteristics should cause the psychological conditions, but little attention is given to ‘how’.

The purpose of the presented model is to identify mechanisms that may lead to motivated behaviors, while taking into consideration the moderating factors such as basic human needs,

traits/dispositions, and lived experiences. The model does not attempt to identify an ideal set of factors and traits.

### **Value to Knowledge**

There is confusion if employee engagement is a motivational construct or motivated construct in research. This is due to a void of theory integrating motivation with engagement. The presented model: 1) clarifies the relationship between motivation and engagement; 2) clarifies where engagement fits within the cause-effect sequence; 3) explains the low-level mechanisms necessary to describe ‘how’ employees become engaged; and 4) describes where behavior and performance fit within the motivation sequence. This helps researchers as they design future studies to place measures in the most appropriate sequence to test and explain a phenomenon. Currently, researchers use atheoretical frameworks to base their research design.

Additionally, the model showcases factors (motivators), which influence the mechanisms toward desired behaviors. Even if there is a finite set of influencers, employees will not be affected by them equally. Chapter 3 discusses how each influencer may uniquely affect each employee at a given time. This knowledge should stimulate new research designs to uncover the individualistic drivers of behavior, rather than assuming a prescribed set of factors lead to certain behaviors.

### **Heuristic Model and Conceptual Engagement Instrument**

Chapter 4 explores how measurement tools should align within research design to match definitions and conceptualizations. The chapter culminates in the presentation of a conceptual measurement instrument intended to capture the influencers likely to lead to employee engagement in work activities (based on the motivation model from Chapter 3).

Engagement is treated as a general state and existing measures are reflective in their attempt to identify employees' level of engagement. However, with the existing measures it is essentially impossible to discern what affected the level of engagement and how long it will last.

Motivators and hindrances will be unique and contextual to each employee. Previous studies and measurement tools treat every employee as the same. The inherent assumption is everyone is aroused by the same stimuli. Correlation after correlation is used to defend this belief, however, experiences show this to be untrue. Chapter 4 examines how to identify/capture the individualism of motivation and employee engagement. Studies have correlated prescribed antecedent variables with engagement measures to validate the theories advocated. However, attention has not been afforded to the expected value placed on a given driver by an employee. To understand the individualistic nature of employee engagement, research must seek to recognize differences between the expected value of a variable for the employee versus the value ascribed by the organization. This understanding will elucidate the propensity for one to engage, rather than simply identifying the level of engagement.

Motivation is an individualistic phenomenon which changes over time and circumstance (Kanfer et al., 2008). What motivates now, may not motivate a month from now. Engagement, as the outcome of motivational episodes, will change over time. Existing research does not explore this reality. Researchers treat engagement as a static construct and assume once a driver for an individual is identified it remains a motivator indefinitely. Chapter 4 explores how the influencers of engagement change overtime and how they can be identified. Rather than using a general reflective measure to identify the level of engagement, the chapter presents a formative measurement model, which identifies the likelihood one will engage at a point in time. General measures of employee engagement only tell the state of engagement of the individual. They do

not predict if the level of engagement will change; nor do they predict the outcomes of organization development efforts.

### **Value to Knowledge**

Scholars will be able to: 1) study how situational and individual differences influence the motivational mechanisms; 2) capture the ascribed importance of a driver for each employee; 3) study drivers of employee behavior and how different types of feedback influence those drivers; and 4) understand why various motivators may not lead to desired behavior.

Further refinement of the proposed conceptual measurement instrument described in Chapter 4 may provide organizational leadership: 1) the opportunity to predict future employee engagement; 2) identify how organizational changes may influence employee engagement; and 3) determine what is necessary to increase the likelihood of employee engagement.

### **Study Delimitations**

The study, presented by three manuscripts, is limited to reviewing articles and dissertations published in English or translated to English. Although the MMOE presented in Chapter 3 may be applicable to the collective level, the derivation is based on the individualistic nature of all components. The model may be applicable to situations outside of the work domain, such as explaining the motivation mechanisms to start exercising or to quit smoking; however, the model was derived to explain employee behavior while at work.

### **Assumptions**

The following are the author's declared assumptions:

1. Most employees, especially new employees, do not know how their individual work behavior affects organizational outcomes.

2. Employee engagement (as defined in academic research) does not automatically lead to positive individual performance.
3. Employee engagement (as defined in academic research) does not automatically lead to positive organizational outcomes.
4. Each employee is unique, with unique circumstances and challenges, and thus their motivators are unique.
5. Every organization has at least one goal.
6. Organizations expect every employee to provide value to the organization to meet their goal(s).
7. Organizations add new employees because the organization believes their incremental value contributed is larger than the added incremental cost.
8. Every organization must have more income than costs to stay in business.
9. It is an organizational leader's responsibility to provide the resources/training necessary for employees to be successful.
10. It is an organizational leader's responsibility to motivate employees.

### **Researcher's Perspective**

The author has been in leadership roles for over 25 years. While he has been predominantly in the construction, engineering, and energy industries, he has led employees with diverse roles and responsibilities at various levels. The author has been involved, as employee and leader, in numerous corporate engagement surveys. The author has compared engagement score trends over time to business unit and organization outcomes and observed few direct relationships. It appears outside factors influence engagement and results differently, thus obscuring most perceived direct relationships.

The author does not believe individuals can sustain long periods of motivation as factors outside of an individual's work role influence their motivation for/at work. Human beings are emotional creatures and do not effectively compartmentalize external nonwork-related emotion inducing situations from affecting work role activities. Further, the author believes physiological factors influence employees' motivation and behavior.

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## CHAPTER 2 – CRITIQUE OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

### **Overview**

The foundational conceptualizations of employee engagement were atheoretical and derived independent of the constructs of motivation and performance. However, academic research has unquestionably accepted employee engagement as a motivational construct leading to positive personal and organizational performance. There is a void of research exploring the theoretical relationships between employee engagement, motivation, and performance. Failure to critically examine these relationships, and identify how they fit together, can lead to misguided research and misguided practitioner interventions. This paper explores the employee engagement, motivation, and performance literature, and presents a definition of employee engagement necessary for these three constructs to fall within the same nomological network. This definition is unique and counter to the most prevalent conceptualization of employee engagement. To provide organizational value, employee engagement should be defined to include physical behavior aligned with the goals of the organization. This means engagement is a motivated state. It is tenuous to assume employee engagement as a motivational state will lead to either personal performance or organizational performance. This research is important, and necessary, to help guide future research, and explore appropriate organizational interventions to improve employee performance.

### **Introduction**

Employee engagement is widely accepted as a connotation of positive value. It is accepted as good for the employee and good for the organization. It is seldom questioned, except to ask if there can be too much engagement (Halbesleben et al., 2009). To support this

position, there is a prevalent assertion in the academic literature engagement is a motivation construct. However, 'motivation' is used indiscriminately. Researchers often confound motivation, motivational, and motivated. It is unclear if the researcher is describing engagement as motivation, motivational, or motivated. This omitted nuance is very important for research design. Little rigor is taken to describe how the use of 'motivation' fits within the researchers' definitions and study designs for engagement.

There are essentially two conceptual foundations used to describe employee engagement in the academic literature, personal engagement and burnout. Both conceptualizations are atheoretical. Engagement based on personal engagement was derived from an ethnographic study and the other (burnout) was simply declared the antipode to burnout. Researchers have a propensity to conflate these two conceptualizations and fail to recognize they are quite distinct from each other. Personal engagement is described as motivated behavior. Engagement via burnout is described as an affective motivational state. Researchers will reference both foundations simultaneously while they frame their studies. It is unacknowledged these concepts are temporally different from each other. One (burnout) precedes behavior/action while the other (personal engagement) includes behavior/action. There is a dearth of research exploring this difference. Understanding and considering the difference is critical in shaping study design. One is the initiator of behavior/action and the other *is* the behavior/action. Personal engagement should not be used as an antecedent variable to describe behavior/action since it includes behavior/action. Engagement through burnout should not be used as an outcome variable if the goal is to describe behavior/action since it is an antecedent to behavior/action.

Similarly, researchers confound behavior and performance. Researchers often use them indiscriminately to describe the same phenomenon. Like motivation, performance is seldom

defined and unquestioningly assumed to be the outcome of employee engagement. Unexplored is how performance aligns with the two conceptualizations of engagement. If behavior is synonymous with performance, then engagement via burnout would be an antecedent to performance and personal engagement would *be* performance. If performance is described as the outcome of behavior, then personal engagement would be an antecedent to performance, where engagement via burnout would not have a direct relationship with performance.

There is a dearth of research aligning the relationships between engagement, motivation, and performance. The relationship between these constructs is often assumed. What follows is an exploration of these constructs and development of a definition of engagement to align with motivation and performance. This is unique since similar research could not be identified. This provides heuristic value for future research studies by bringing to light the importance of understanding how conceptualizations, definitions, and measures must align for successful research design.

### **Employee Engagement Perceived Value**

Employee engagement has become a very popular construct in academic research. The reason for this is due to the little questioned acceptance that employee engagement leads to positive individual and organizational outcomes. Using “work engagement” or “employee engagement” as keywords, queries in Academic Search Premier, ERIC, PsycArticles, and PsycINFO databases shows 3,078 articles, and 791 dissertations, published from 1990 through 2022. Articles reviewed from 2015 and 2016 ( $n = 511$ ), for example, produced 396 variables correlated with employee engagement. One hundred fifteen of the variables were outcome variables where employee engagement was the antecedent. Ninety-two percent of these outcome variables can be described as: employee behaviors, performance, satisfaction, health/wellbeing,

or turnover intention (TI). The remaining eight percent can be described as: commitment (3 percent), resources, supervisor support, work family relations, person-job fit, and willingness to deploy.

The other 281 variables, from the 2015 and 2016 studies, were antecedents to engagement. Approximately 77 percent of the antecedent variables can be categorized as: job characteristics, job/personal resources, leadership, meaningful work, or personality. An additional four percent of the antecedents were other organizational development constructs like job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Even though employee engagement is the outcome variable, the coinciding attitudinal state and/or behavior is said to lead to organization value (Keating & Heslin, 2015; Men & Hung-Baesecke, 2015).

The 2015 and 2016 studies are not unique. The premise behind the studies in employee engagement research is an associated positive attitudinal and/or behavioral state leading to positive individual and organizational outcomes. This is likely a byproduct from the practitioner community where there are claims and correlational evidence indicating employee engagement leads to positive organization outcomes such as: higher total shareholder return, reduced healthcare costs, and increased revenue (Aon Hewitt, 2014; Bates, 2004; Richman, 2006; Robinson et al., 2004). Aon Hewitt (2014), for example, claims companies in the highest quartile of engagement scores, out perform the average company by four percent annual sales growth and total shareholder return. The prevalent assertion is engaged employees go above and beyond the requirements of their jobs and give discretionary effort.

### **Emerging Themes**

While exploring academic literature to uncover why employee engagement is valuable, two themes emerged. The first theme is engaged employees behave in a manner benefiting the

organization. The second theme is engagement as a motivation construct leading to valuable behaviors.

### **Engagement Leads to Positive Organization Outcomes**

Engagement research assumes individual level outcomes aggregate to provide value to the organization (Fleck & Inceoglu, 2010; Macey & Schneider, 2008; Rich et al., 2010). “When employees are more engaged, they are in turn expected to perform more frequently a range of behaviors that are beneficial for the organization” (Fleck & Inceoglu, 2010, p. 32). “An organization where a larger proportion of employees more frequently engage in contributory/positive behaviors is more likely to see a positive impact on metrics such as revenue, profitability, turnover, and customer satisfaction” (Fleck & Inceoglu, 2010, p. 33). The assumption is employee engagement leads to positive employee performance, which in turn leads to positive organizational value. Two articles often cited to support the engagement → performance → organizational value relationships are Christian et al. (2011) and Rich et al. (2010). Christian et al. (2011) performed a meta-analysis of engagement measures, which contained at least two of the conceptual dimensions of engagement (physical, cognitive, and emotional). Ninety-one studies ( $N = 91$ ) were included in their analysis. Their analysis showed a positive correlation between engagement and task and contextual performance. Rich et al. (2010) performed a study of 245 firefighters, over four municipalities, indicating engagement was correlated to task performance and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB). The premise from these studies was employee performance, as a result of employee engagement, resulted in organizational value.

Two other articles often cited as evidence engagement led to organization success are Harter et al. (2002) and Xanthopoulou et al. (2009). Harter et al. (2002) performed an analysis

of job satisfaction (represented as engagement) and business outcomes for 7,939 business units in 36 companies. Their analysis showed positive correlations between their engagement measure and organizational profitability (profit) and productivity (revenue), as well as with other outcomes like safety, turnover, and customer satisfaction-loyalty. Xanthopoulou et al. (2009) investigated the relationship between work engagement and financial return for three branches of a fast-food company. They conducted a five-day study which showed daily work engagement partially mediated the relationship between the antecedent variable *coaching* and the outcome variable *financial returns*.

### **Engagement as a Motivation Construct**

Exploring the literature to uncover why and/or how engagement leads to positive performance reveals a common assumption employee engagement is a ‘motivation’ construct. The most prevalent conceptualization of engagement is a *motivational* construct (Ahmetoglu et al., 2015; Eldor & Harpaz, 2016; Inceoglu & Fleck, 2010; Kane-Frieder et al., 2014; Shuck et al., 2013); often described as an affective-motivational state (Inceoglue & Warr, 2011; Maslach et al., 2001; Schmitt et al., 2016). However, engagement is also conceptualized as a *motivated* construct (Bryne, 2015; Chalofsky & Krishna, 2009; Ugwu et al., 2014; Valero & Hirschi, 2016); often described as an activated or aroused state.

### **Employee Engagement Conceptualizations and Measurement Instruments**

To uncover the mechanisms necessary for engagement to lead to organization value and as a motivation construct, a detailed literature review was performed to identify conceptualizations and measurement instruments used in the extant research.

## **Employee Engagement Conceptualizations**

On a basic level, employee engagement has evolved from two independent conceptualizations: personal engagement and burnout.

### ***Personal Engagement***

Kahn (1990) pioneered the term engagement, specifically, personal engagement, after his ethnographic studies of camp counselors ( $n = 16$ ) and employees in an architecture firm ( $n = 16$ ). He determined engagement was the expressing of employee's true self in work role tasks. Individuals would choose to invest themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally in role performances based on three psychological conditions, namely: meaningfulness, safety, and availability. Psychological meaningfulness is viewed as "receiving a return on investments of one's self in a currency of physical, cognitive, or emotional energy" (Kahn, 1990, pp. 703-704). In essence, "people experienced such meaningfulness when they felt worthwhile, useful and valuable" (p. 704). Psychological safety is when an employee can "show and employ one's self without fear of negative consequences to self-image, status, or career" (p. 708). Employees engage when they trust they will not suffer as a consequence of doing so. Psychological availability is "the sense of having the physical, emotional, or psychological resources to personally engage at a particular moment" (p. 714). Thus, employees unconsciously ask themselves a series of questions to determine if they are physically able, have the emotional energy, and are secure enough in themselves to engage in a particular role performance.

Kahn defined "personal engagement as the harnessing of organization members' selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performance" (Kahn, 1990, p. 694). On the opposite end of the spectrum, Kahn claimed when "people leave out their personal selves during work role

performances” (p. 694) they were disengaged. He defined personal disengagement “as the uncoupling of selves from work roles; in disengagement, people withdraw and defend themselves physically, cognitively, or emotionally during role performances” (p. 694). Kahn made clear he focused on “the moments in which people bring themselves into or remove themselves from particular task behaviors” (p. 692). He distinguished engagement from other organizational behavior constructs, job involvement and organizational commitment, as examples, by asserting the latter constructs focus on “generalized states that organization members occupy” (p. 693). He compared these constructs to still photographs, which show “people maintaining average levels of commitment and involvement over time” (p. 693). Kahn focused on the psychological conditions associated with “momentary rather than static circumstances of people’s experiences that shape behaviors” (1990, p. 703). Engagement from this lens is situational where employees choose to engage during task performances. Kahn conceptualized personal engagement as a motivated state with work task as the focus.

### ***Burnout***

The second underpinning of engagement comes from the burnout literature. Maslach had been researching burnout since the 1970s (Maslach & Kahn, 1978). Maslach and Jackson (1981) theorized burnout as “a syndrome of emotional exhaustion and cynicism . . .” (p. 99). Maslach et al. (2001) described burnout as “a prolonged response to chronic emotional and interpersonal stressors on the job, and is defined by the three dimensions of exhaustion, cynicism, and inefficacy” (p. 397). To shift focus to *positive* psychology, burnout was rephrased “. . . as an erosion of engagement with the job. What started out as important, meaningful, and challenging work becomes unpleasant, unfulfilling, and meaningless” (Maslach et al., 2001, p. 416). Maslach et al. characterized engagement as the positive antithesis of burnout and

proceeded to indicate it could be assessed as the opposite, or negative scoring, of the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI). Thus, engagement would be distinguished by energy, involvement, and efficacy, which are the direct opposites of the burnout dimensions of exhaustion, cynicism, and inefficacy.

Schaufeli et al. (2002) agreed with Maslach that engagement and burnout are opposite antipodes. However, they argued engagement should be measured independently from burnout. Schaufeli et al. (2002) stated using the MBI for engagement (i.e., reverse scoring of burnout) would make it “. . . impossible to study its relationship with burnout empirically. Since both concepts are considered to be opposite poles of a continuum that is covered by one single instrument, the MBI” (p. 74). Subsequently, they characterized engagement by vigor, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Vigor is considered the direct opposite of exhaustion and was described as “high levels of energy and mental resilience while working” (p. 74). Dedication is the direct opposite of cynicism and described as a “sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, and challenge” (p. 74). They acknowledged their conceptualization of dedication is similar to involvement but delineated it by declaring “dedication refers to a particularly strong involvement that goes one step further than the usual level of identification” (p. 74). To make work engagement unique from the opposite of burnout, Schaufeli et al. (2002) added an absorption component, which was not considered the direct opposite of inefficacy. Schaufeli et al. (2002) focused on an enduring state independent of any particular task or role activity. Their engagement conceptualization was characterized by pervasive high levels of positive energy. Ultimately, they defined engagement as “a positive, fulfilling, work related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption. Rather than a momentary and specific state, engagement refers to a more persistent and

pervasive affective-cognitive state that is not focused on any particular object, event, individual, or behavior” (Schaufeli et al., 2002, p. 74). It is clear, Schaufeli et al. (2002) were describing engagement as an affective state preceding behavior.

### **Engagement Measurement Instruments**

Consistent with the two general underpinnings of engagement, personal engagement and burnout, there are generally two conceptualizations underlying engagement measurement instruments cited in academic research. The first, consistent with Kahn’s (1990) conceptualization, incorporates cognitive, affective, and physical components. The second, consistent with burnout, focuses on cognitive and affective factors.

#### ***Cognitive-Affective-Physical***

Although Kahn (1990) pioneered the term engagement, he did not operationalize it in a measurement tool. Subsequent researchers attempted to operationalize Kahn’s construct (May et al., 2004; Rich et al., 2010) or used his construct as a foundation for their measurement tools (Saks, 2006; Soane et al., 2012; Stumpf et al., 2013). Even though these measurement instruments are grounded in the earliest conceptualization of engagement, they have been used in only a few studies.

#### ***Cognitive-Affective***

The second conceptualization comes primarily from the burnout literature. These measurement instruments focus on measuring cognitive-affective states (Halbesleben & Demerouti, 2005; Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Rothbard, 2001; Schaufeli et al., 2002). One of these measures, the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES), has become the most reported tool in the scholarly literature (Schaufeli & Salanova, 2011). Ninety percent of the previously mentioned studies published in 2015 and 2016 used the UWES as a measure of engagement.

This compares to research by Bailey et al. (2017) who found eighty six percent of the studies, meeting their selection criteria, used the UWES. It is important to note they excluded studies which used partial scales of the UWES. Had they included those studies, the percentage of studies using the UWES (in some form) would be larger.

The UWES is based on the antipode of burnout. The accompanying definition of engagement for the UWES is “a positive fulfilling work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption” (Schaufeli et al., 2002, p. 74) The ‘state’ of engagement is clarified as “[r]ather than a momentary and specific state, engagement refers to a more persistent and pervasive affective-cognitive state that is not focused on any particular object, event, individual, or behavior” (Schaufeli et al., 2002, p. 74). The UWES is said to measure three factors of engagement, namely, vigor, dedication, and absorption. Vigor is described as “high levels of energy and mental resilience while working” (p. 74). Dedication is described as a “sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, and challenge” (p. 74). Absorption is “characterized by being fully concentrated and deeply engrossed in one’s work, whereby time passes quickly and one has difficulties with detaching oneself from work” (p. 74). Most studies aggregated the scores from each factor into an overall engagement score. The aggregated scores, typically, range from never (0) to always (6). Rather than reporting a continuum from unengaged to engaged it indicates one’s perception of being engaged ranging from never to always.

### **Employee Engagement Misalignments**

While exploring the engagement, motivation, and performance literature to identify the conceptualizations and measurement instruments used in academic research, numerous misalignments emerged. Next will be a discussion of the misalignments, which are grouped in

the following categories: 1) employee engagement - motivation, 2) burnout - engagement, 3) behavior - performance/results, and 4) measurements - conceptualizations.

### **Employee Engagement and Motivation**

On a basic level, motivation can be characterized by stimulus→organism→response (Maehr & Braskamp, 1986; Naylor et al., 1980). Stimulus is an external factor, or event, imposed upon an organism. Since motivation is considered an individual phenomenon (Goodman, 1971), the organism is a person. Response is a person's behavior. However, motivation is more than a person responding to a stimulus. On a deeper level, the process can be described as stimuli acting on a person, who has thoughts and emotions, and chooses to invest in certain behavior (Maehr & Braskamp, 1986).

Motivation is loosely defined as a psychological process that energizes/arouses voluntary behavior (Mitchell, 1982; Staw, 1983). However, most researchers operationally define it as having direction, vigor/amplitude, and persistence (Atkinson, 1964; Campbell & Pritchard, 1976) or direction, intensity, and duration (Ambrose & Kulik, 1999; Kanfer & Chen, 2016; Latham & Pinder, 2005; Locke & Latham, 2004).

Motivation is considered an individual phenomenon where one chooses to invest their energies toward a given activity, act, or task (Goodman, 1971; Maehr & Braskamp, 1986; Mitchell, 1982; Staw, 1983). Maehr and Braskamp wrote, “[behavior patterns] all indicate how and the degree to which individuals are investing themselves in a given activity. As we observe individuals apparently making choices, persisting at tasks, and exhibiting varying levels of intensity” (1986, p. 6). Naylor et al. (1980) described motivation as including an amplitude and direction toward various acts. A common agreement among these researchers is motivation is episodic. The length of the episode can vary but it is typically described as a task, activity, or

act. A motivated person puts forth directed effort toward a task, activity, or act for as long as the task, activity, or act takes place.

### ***Employee Engagement as Motivation***

Some researchers claimed employee engagement is a *motivational* state leading to desired organizational behavior/actions (Bakker, Albrecht & Leiter, 2011; Christian et al., 2011; Eldor & Harpaz, 2016; Gordon et al., 2015; Rich et al., 2010; Shantz et al., 2013). Often described as an affective-motivational state (Bakker et al., 2008) these motivational process models described employee engagement as a mediating variable resulting in behaviors/actions. These process models indicated one must become engaged before behavior/actions ensue.

Other researchers claimed engagement is a cognitive-affective, *motivated* state (Bryne, 2015; Fleck & Inceoglu, 2010). Physical behavior is an outcome of an activated, aroused, or motivated state (Bryne, 2015; Inceoglu & Fleck, 2010). Engagement, from this lens, is an activated psychological (Kulikowski & Sedlak, 2017; Neff et al., 2015; Rich et al., 2010; Shuck et al., 2017; Truss et al., 2013) and/or physiological (Bryne, 2015) intermediary state between stimulus and action.

**Motivational.** Maehr and Braskamp (1986) described the motivation process as: external factors → mediating internal (psychological) factors → personal investment (p. 10). Ignoring the conflating use of motivational and motivated to describe employee engagement in the preceding paragraphs, both conceptualizations of employee engagement seem to fit within the motivation framework, placing the affective (or cognitive-affective) state at the ‘mediating internal factor’ position.

However, there are a few concerns with this conclusion. From the motivation model, the *stimulus* (external factors) is the ‘motivational’ component. Describing employee engagement as

‘motivational’ would describe it as the stimulus. However, most studies ascribed antecedents to employee engagement (see Wollard & Shuck, 2011, p. 433, for a list of 42 individual and organizational antecedents). Seventy-one percent of the variables ( $n = 281$ ), of the 396 variables published in the 2015 and 2016 literature, were antecedents to employee engagement.

Engagement described as an affective/cognitive-affective state (mediating internal factors) is a reaction to the stimulus. This suggests a misalignment of engagement as motivational (stimulus). If the antecedent variables to engagement are equivalent to ‘external factors’, then it is clear engagement (as mediating internal factor) would be a response to them. The outcome of the antecedent variables would be engagement, and as such would not be a motivational state, but a motivated state.

One of the most used models to frame engagement, the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model, places engagement within the following motivational process: Job Resources → Engagement → Turnover Intention (TI) (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Within this model, job resources are described as motivational (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Bakker et al., 2008; Crawford et al., 2010; Ouweneel et al., 2012; Reina-Tamayo et al., 2017; Schaufeli, 2017; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Van Steenbergen et al., 2018). Once again, this suggests a misalignment of engagement as motivational. As a linear model, ‘resources’ and ‘engagement’ cannot both be motivational. If resources (as external factors) are motivational, then they are the stimulus and engagement is the response to them. Subsequently, engagement would then be a motivated state.

The definition of engagement associated with the most commonly used engagement measurement instrument (UWES) is “a positive, fulfilling, work related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and adsorption. Rather than a momentary and specific state,

engagement refers to a more persistent and pervasive affective-cognitive state that is not focused on any particular object, event, individual, or behavior” (Schaufeli et al., 2002, p. 74). Recall, motivation theory is described as having direction, intensity, and duration. Defining engagement as persistent and not focused creates a misalignment between engagement and motivation theory, particularly regarding the ‘duration’ and ‘direction’ components.

**Motivated.** Motivation cannot be observed. Observing where and how one invests their time and talent is the only indication of motivation. Behavior, which has direction, intensity, and duration, is an indication of motivation. One is said to be motivated when they are directing their energies toward a chosen act. Framing engagement as a cognitive-affective motivated state, independent of behavior, does not ensure action will follow. “One can be physiologically aroused without demonstrating physical movement and action” (Bryne, 2015, p 16). If the outcome from being motivated is behavior/action, then for engagement to be a motivated state, it would accompany behavior.

Researchers seem to indiscriminately use the terms motivation, motivated, and motivational. Bakker (2011) stated “engagement is different from motivation, in that it also refers to cognition (absorption) and affect (vigor) – in addition to motivation (dedication)” (p. 265). Other researchers describe engagement as motivational, while concurrently labeling it as a motivated, activated, or aroused state (Bryne, 2015; Inceoglu & Fleck, 2010; Rich et al., 2010). For example, Bryne (2015) stated “. . . employee engagement is a motivational state . . .” (p. 122), while defining engagement as “a moment-to-moment state of motivation . . .” (p. 15). Similarly, Inceoglu and Fleck (2010) claimed “. . . engagement is a motivational construct . . .” (p. 77), while arguing “engagement is a positive cognitive-affective state that is activated (that is,

involving higher arousal levels) and is likely to result in activated (“motivated”) work behavior” (p. 77).

### **Burnout and Employee Engagement**

In a shift to positive psychology, researchers declared the opposite of burnout should be described as engagement (Maslach et al., 2001). Subsequently, engagement was characterized by energy, involvement, and efficacy, which were the opposites of the burnout dimensions (exhaustion, cynicism, and inefficacy). Schaufeli et al. (2002) defined engagement as being comprised of vigor, dedication, and absorption. Vigor (energy) is considered the direct opposite of exhaustion. Dedication (involvement) is the direct opposite of cynicism. Absorption was added to make engagement unique from burnout. These three factors were assumed to occur simultaneously, and the same antecedent variables were shown to influence each of them (Schaufeli et al., 2006).

Of importance is the temporal nature of burnout. The dimensions do not occur simultaneously. The burnout dimensions (exhaustion, cynicism, and inefficacy) are believed to occur sequentially. “[T]he research on burnout has established the sequential link from exhaustion to cynicism” (Maslach et al., 2001, p. 405). Exhaustion is a response to individual job stressors. It represents being “depleted of one’s emotional and physical resources” (Maslach et al., 2001, p. 399). Cynicism is part of a coping mechanism to address exhaustion. Cynicism is a response to exhaustion and lags exhaustion by some amount of time. If one copes with exhaustion by distancing themselves from their work, they have entered the second dimension of burnout, cynicism. Inefficacy is an evaluative dimension leading one to feel incompetent as their effectiveness decreases due to overwhelming demands or lack of relevant resources.

Researchers are divided if inefficacy occurs sequentially or simultaneously (Maslach et al., 2001). However, when the three dimensions are present, one is said to be burned out.

There is no foundational theory regarding the process of how one comes to be engaged. A level of engagement is determined by the simultaneous presence of vigor, dedication, and absorption; however, there is a dearth of research describing how one becomes vigorous, dedicated, and absorbed. There has not been an attempt to reconcile the temporal disconnect between the burnout dimensions and the factors of engagement. As purported opposites, one would expect if there is a sequential process of burnout there would be a sequential process to engagement. However, based on the literature, engaged employees may sequentially become burned out with no sequential return to engagement. It happens or one remains in a burned out state.

### **Employee Behavior, Performance, and Organization Results**

Employee performance is defined “as behavior or actions that are relevant to the goals of the organization in question” (McCloy et al., 1994, p. 493). “Performance is behavior with an evaluative component, behavior that can be evaluated as positive or negative for individual or organizational effectiveness” (Motowidlo et al., 1997, pp. 72-73). Therefore, positive employee performance is behavior beneficial to the organization, while negative employee performance is behavior not valuable to the organization.

Employee engagement is asserted to lead to positive employee performance. For engagement to result in positive performance, it would have to be behavior, or cause behavior, aligned with the goals of the organization. The unexplored question is how would employees know if their behavior is aligned with the goals of the organization? Organizational goals “are

not necessarily known or agreed upon by all organizational members” (Motowidlo et al., 1997, p. 74).

Employee behavior generally falls within two categories: role behavior and extra-role behavior. Role behavior is actions “that transform raw materials into the goods and services that are the organization’s products” (Motowidlo et al., 1997, p. 75) (the technical core), and/or those actions that maintain and service the technical core of an organization. Researchers characterize extra-role behavior, whether calling it organizational citizenship behavior or contextual performance, as discretionary behavior not enforceable or rewarded in the formal requirements of the job description (Bateman & Organ, 1983; Motowidlo et al., 1997; Organ, 1997; Smith et al., 1983; Sulea et al., 2012).

In the case of role behavior, the employees would not have to know the goals of the organization, they would simply follow the tasks prescribed by their supervisor to result in positive performance. However, it is not as straight forward with extra-role behavior. To declare employee engagement leads to extra-role behavior (and if aligned with the goals of the organization would be considered positive employee performance) assumes the employee knows what types of behavior are valuable and has the knowledge, skills, and ability to perform the actions effectively. If these behaviors are not specified, or expected, within the job description, then how would an employee know which behaviors are valued? This is especially relevant for new employees. How would a new employee have the knowledge, skills, and ability to perform the actions as well as the understanding of how those actions advance the goals of the organization? New employees can be engaged but their actions and performance could be vastly different from seasoned employees. This is not explored in reported research.

For engagement to purposefully result in positive employee performance, it should be defined as behaviors (or causing behaviors) aligned with the goals of the organization. Engagement researchers assume this relationship; however, they do not define the construct this way. For example, Rich et al. (2010) suggested “[a]t a general level, employees who are highly engaged in their work roles not only focus their physical effort on the pursuit of role-related goals, but are also cognitively vigilant and emotionally connected to the endeavor” (p. 619); but defined engagement as a “multidimensional motivational concept reflecting the simultaneous investment of an individual’s physical, cognitive, and emotional energy in active, full work performance” (p. 619). Shuck and Wollard (2010) defined engagement as directed toward organizational goals, but later Shuck et al. (2017) defined engagement as “an active work-related positive psychological state” (p. 2) and operationalized it as a general state. It is possible a generalized activated, engaged, state will lead to positive performance, but only if an employee knows how, and has the skills and ability to exhibit behavior deemed valuable to the organization. Otherwise, it could be considered luck. Focused, directed, behavior can intentionally lead to positive performance. Bryne (2015) “could find no research reporting experimental data that would provide evidence confirming that engagement actually predicts job performance” (p. 103). It is tenuous to assume engagement as a general state results in positive performance.

Further, performance is not the same as results. Performance is evaluated behavior. “Results are states or conditions of people or things that are changed by performance” (Motowidlo et al., 1997, p 72). Researchers often conflate the two by treating them as synonymous. This is evident in Bakker’s (2011) claim that in “most organizations performance is the result of collaborative effort...” (p. 267). The oft-cited study of Harter et al. (2002) labeled

business unit results as performance. Similarly, Xanthopoulou et al. (2009) used restaurant financial returns as indication of positive individual job performance. In both cases, the performance criteria were business results. Aside from being correlational studies, they made the inherent assumption individual behavior, which was previously defined as ‘performance’, aggregated to positive organizational results (which they referred to as performance).

There is a dearth of experimental studies supporting that individual outcomes aggregate to organizational value and competitive advantage (Rich et al., 2010). Pugh and Dietz (2008) argued that sufficient composition theory (aggregating one level of analysis to a higher level) is lacking currently and is needed to extend the engagement construct to a higher level of analysis. They posited existing engagement measures need to shift the referent from the individual to a unit-level. However, this presents another problem. Motivation and performance are individual phenomena. For engagement to be aligned with either of them, it would need to be individual as well. Changing the referent may require a new conceptualization.

### **Employee Engagement Measurement and Conceptualizations**

The Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) is by far the most prevalent tool reported in academic research measuring employee engagement. Exploring the literature, it appears the UWES is chosen due to popularity or perhaps accessibility. Other than citing the definition accompanying the UWES, researchers do not explore why the UWES is appropriate for their studies and seem to accept it as the correct tool. Similarly, other measurement tools, which are proposed to measure attributes associated with different conceptualizations of employee engagement, and unique definitions, appear to be used indiscriminately as well. Independent of measurement tool choice, it is unclear if researchers evaluated the suitability of fit between study, definition, conceptualization, and measurement.

### ***Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES)***

There are several issues associated with the use of the UWES to measure employee (or work) engagement. The UWES is defined as measuring a persistent and pervasive state while described as measuring a *motivational* state. This misalignment was discussed earlier. The UWES was developed based on the antipode of burnout (which is a *response* to stressors) further suggesting a misalignment with measuring a *motivational* state. The UWES is described as measuring a motivational state, while concurrently used in the JD-R model to support the motivational aspects of job resources.

The UWES is claimed to measure three aspects of job engagement (vigor, dedication, and absorption), however the factorial validity is in question. It is unclear if the three factors are distinct or combine to represent a unidimensional construct (Byrne, 2015; Kulikowski, 2017; Schaufeli et al., 2006; Sonnentag, 2003). Subsequently, some researchers question the validity of the measure, as well as the validity of the engagement factors vigor, dedication, and absorption (Bailey et al., 2017; Cole et al., 2012; Kulikowski, 2017). Additionally, some researchers suggest eliminating the ‘absorption’ factor, claiming it is a result of engagement (Salanova & Schaufeli, 2008). Regardless, there are other concerns with the UWES, which are separate from whether absorption should be excluded.

As noted previously, engagement as defined under the UWES is not a momentary state but a persistent/pervasive state (Schaufeli et al., 2006). Studies supporting this found engagement to be “a chronic rather than a transient state” (Schaufeli et al., 2006, p. 712) and “a highly stable state of mind” (Seppälä et al., 2015, p. 371). Over a seven-year study (2003-2010) of Finnish dentists, Seppälä et al. (2015) found the stable component of engagement “specifically accounted for 69-77% of the variance of dentists’ work engagement” (p. 371). Their 2003 data

showed vigor to be 4.68 (compared to 4.68 in 2010), 2003 dedication was 4.94 (compared to 4.91 in 2010), and 2003 absorption of 4.21 (compared to 4.31 in 2010) (p. 366). Additionally, in a study of a Dutch financial service provider transitioning to flexible work arrangements, Van Steenbergen et al. (2018) showed work engagement to be stable over twelve months (4.19 compared to 4.20 twelve months later) (p. 751). It appears the UWES measures trait-like attributes; however, this has not prevented researchers from using the UWES to measure transient states of engagement (Bakker & Bal, 2010; Bledow et al., 2011; Ouweneel et al., 2012; Reina-Tamayo et al., 2017; Sonnentag, 2003; Sonnentag & Kühnel, 2016).

Researchers used a measurement tool assumingly designed to measure stable states as a measure for transient states. Some researchers changed the reference point of the items, and/or the scale anchors, to align the survey with the temporal conceptualization being studied (see Table 3). An unacknowledged concern is if a measure designed with a scale of 0 (never) to 6 (always) has the same validity when changed to 1 (I fully disagree) to 5 (I fully agree), 0 (no, that is not correct) to 6 (yes, that is correct), or 1 (not at all) to 7 (to a great extent). The threshold for one to choose 6 (always) is different (and arguably higher) than for one to choose 6 (yes, that is correct).

The UWES, developed to measure a general state "...not focused on any particular object, event or behavior" (Salanova & Schaufeli, 2008, p. 218), is used to measure a state antecedent to performance. As described earlier, performance is the evaluation of directed behavior. For there to be positive performance, the behavior needs to be directed at acts deemed valuable by the organization. The UWES measures a general state with the items referring to 'my work' or 'my job'. This presents another issue – using a measure for a general state to explain directed work behavior. It seems appropriate to study the relationships between a

general state and general behavior; however, one should question the nomological validity of measuring a general state and directed behavior.

**Table 3**

*Changes to the UWES to Facilitate Transient State Measurement*

Authors	Transient State	Item Reference Point	Measurement Scale
Bakker & Bal, 2010	Weekly - Every Friday (5-week study)	Added "Last Week" i.e., "Last week, I was enthusiastic about my work" (p. 194)	UWES-9 0 (no, that is not correct) - 6 (yes, that is correct)
Bledow et al., 2011	Daily (2x per day) 11:00am and 3:00pm (9-day study)	Instructed to indicate the level of experience before filling out the survey.  Changed item wording from "job" to "work" i.e., "I am enthusiastic about my work" (p. 1249)	UWES-5 1 (Does not apply at all) - 7 (fully applies)
Ouweneel et al., 2012	Daily (2x per day) Once before work and once after work (5-day study)	Baseline work engagement: Original UWES items  Daily work engagement: Added "Today" i.e., "I felt energetic at work today" (p. 1137)	Baseline: UWES-9 0 (never) - 6 (always)  Daily: UWES-6 1 (not at all) - 7 (to a great extent)
Reina-Tamayo et al., 2017	Episodic (Random times throughout the day) (5-day study)	General work engagement: Original UWES items  Episodic work engagement: Added "During this activity" i.e., "During this activity, I feel enthusiastic about what I do" (p. 130)	General: UWES-9 0 (never) - 6 (always)  Episodic: UWES-3 1 (not at all) - 7 (very much)
Sonnentag, 2003	Daily (1x per day) (5-day study)	Instructed to fill out daily	UWES-16 1 (never) - 7 (everyday)
Sonnentag & Kühnel, 2016	Daily (2x per day) 10:00am and 4:00pm (2 workweek study)	Added "During the past hours" i.e., "During the past hours, I felt strong and vigorous" (p. 4)	UWES-8 1 (I fully disagree) - 5 (I fully agree)

***Other Measurement Instruments***

While other measurement tools are used far less frequently, they exhibit similar issues as the UWES when studying engagement. The instruments reviewed (May et al., 2004; Rich et al., 2010; Rothbard, 2001; Saks, 2006; Shuck et al., 2017; Soane et al., 2012; Stumpf et al., 2013) each measure a general state. The questions either refer to ‘my work’ or ‘my job’. As

previously discussed, this presents two issues: 1) measuring a general state while claiming to measure a motivational (or motivated) construct, and 2) measuring a general state to explain directed behavior.

There does not appear to be a measure that identifies the extent one's engagement is relevant to organizational goals. They all seem to measure a generalized state, which one perceives to occupy. This is conceivably one reason why there are generally weak relationships between engagement and performance (Byrne, 2015; Halbesleben & Wheeler, 2008; Kim et al., 2013).

### **Emerging Definition of Employee Engagement**

Researchers declare engagement is unique while at the same time they report it to be a ubiquitous construct of all that is positive (Harter et al., 2002; Macey & Schneider, 2008). They claim it to be motivational and motivated. They assert it leads to positive performance and positive outcomes. However, it cannot be everything. Researchers must understand, and be clear about, what they are trying to study. This confounding is a result of failing to explore and understand the foundational theories used to support the various conceptualizations of engagement. Tools are often accepted based on reported psychometric properties without consideration if the underlying theory is sound and appropriate. Failing to understand what one is studying, and subsequently measuring, only confounds the construct.

As discussed earlier, the most reported measure of employee engagement, the UWES (Bailey et al., 2017; Schaufeli & Salanova, 2011), does not measure a motivational state. It is possible the UWES measures a motivated state, but as a general state it would be more aligned to the A-factor (“a higher-order attitude factor...that underlies job satisfaction, affective commitment, and job involvement”, p. 43) advocated by Newman et al. (2010). Further support

for this relationship is the UWES measures a cognitive-affective state of mind (Schaufeli et al., 2002). This suggests it is a measure of an attitudinal state. Even as a motivated attitudinal state, there would be no guarantee the perceived behaviors would lead to actions valued by the organization. An “attitude towards an object [work] is but one variable that influences behavior with respect to that object” (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1974, p. 60).

Rather than a general state, a better way to describe engagement (consistent with espoused relationships) is the behavioral outcome of being motivated, having a direction, intensity, and duration. This would place engagement in alignment with motivation and performance. Coincidentally, this description is consistent with Kahn’s (1990) conceptualization of engagement with ‘behavioral’ including cognitive, emotional, and physical components.

An accompanying definition, to this description, is proposed as: *employee engagement is an individual employee’s cognitive, emotional, and physical energies directed toward activities relevant to the goals of the organization.* This is very similar, with a slight modification, to Shuck and Wollard’s (2010) definition, which was “an individual employee’s cognitive, emotional, and behavioral state directed toward desired organizational outcomes” (p. 103). The difference is primarily in the characterization of ‘behavior’. Shuck and Wollard seem to equate behavior with physical activity, where the preceding definition (consistent with Kahn, 1990) equates behavior with all three (physical, cognitive, and emotional) components.

With engagement as a cognitive-affective-physical, motivated, state directed at organizational goals, then the most fitting conceptualization is Kahn’s (1990). Kahn described engagement as investing one’s emotional, cognitive, and physical energies in pursuit of tasks. Kahn’s straight forward conceptualization for employee engagement should be used as foundational theory. This would remove most of the current confounding and conflating

appearing in employee engagement research. The appropriate accompanying definition is *an individual employee's cognitive, emotional, and physical energies directed toward activities relevant to the goals of the organization*. This definition aligns with Kahn's conceptualization and is aligned with motivation and performance. The inherent assumption is it primarily refers to task completion. For an employee to contribute to an organization's goals, they must demonstrate positive performance (episodic behavior aligned with the organization). This conceptualization and definition eliminate the argument about if engagement is in-role or extra-role behavior. The distinction does not matter. Any time an employee invests energies toward the goals of the organization, they are engaged. This suggests engagement is a binary construct (engaged or not engaged). The level of engagement is immaterial. It would be tenuous to differentiate the comparative level of energies of each employee and it would provide little value. Employees are evaluated on their performance rather than the level of their physical, cognitive, and affective energies.

### **Summary**

The preceding discussion explored the conceptualizations espoused by engagement researchers and showed a misalignment of the most prevalent engagement conceptualization as to theory, definition, and measurement. This should encourage researchers to investigate alternative theories and redesign of employee engagement, rather than perpetuating the existing, flawed, model. Researchers tend to study a concept, even when faced with compelling counter information, unless a new concept (model) is available to guide their inquiry (Kuhn & Hacking, 2012). As such, a new definition was presented, which is aligned with motivation and performance.

The distinction of whether engagement is motivational or motivated is very important, even though it has received little attention. ‘Motivational’ and ‘motivated’ occur at different places in the motivation sequence. Recognizing this difference is critical in framing research design, and identifying associated variable relationships (antecedents and outcomes) and measurement tools.

The takeaway from this analysis is engagement is a response to a stimulus and as such is not causative. It is not a motivational construct. The stimulus initiated aroused state, accompanied by physical behavior, is engagement. For employee engagement to provide organizational value, it must be defined to include physical behaviors. It would be tenuous to describe a sedentary person as motivated, even if their heart rate, breathing, and brain activity are elevated. The response (behavior) of the person describes if they are motivated. Would an organization desire to have cognitive-affective, activated, employees who do little or nothing? Obviously, the answer is no. An accountant analyzing a spreadsheet, or a software engineer trying to find a bug in the code, is still doing something (engaged), even if the manifestation of the physical component is small.

Further, for engagement to align with motivation and performance, it must be episodic and directed. Only engaged activities, directed toward the goals of the organization, can purposefully lead to positive employee performance and organizational value.

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## CHAPTER 3 – MOTIVATION MODEL OF ENGAGEMENT

### **Overview**

This paper explores the motivation and employee engagement literature to develop a Motivation Model of Engagement (MMOE). This paper discusses how traditional motivation theories focus on ‘why’ someone is motivated. However, the MMOE helps to elucidate ‘how’ someone becomes motivated. For employee engagement to provide organizational value, it should be conceptualized as a motivated state. Thus, the MMOE describes how employees become engaged and what influences the likelihood of engagement. The MMOE is unique and strengthens motivation theory by filling in common gaps in existing theories and showcases how existing motivation theories complement each other. This paper provides value to organizational behavior research by exploring the psychological processes leading to engaged employee behavior, helps researchers frame future studies regarding level of analysis and relationships of variables, and elucidates where organizational behavior constructs fit in a motivational cycle. This paper informs practice by offering a simple model clarifying variables potentially influencing employees’ motivation to engage in beneficial behaviors; and discusses what organizations may do to increase the likelihood of employee engagement.

### **Introduction**

Organizational researchers strive to understand what leads an employee to engage in beneficial behaviors at work. This quest has not been solved through decades of research. There is a current effort, in organizational behavior research, to place employee engagement as the construct solving the quest. Most often, employee engagement is posited as the motivational source causing employees to behave in beneficial ways toward the organization. However, as

will be discussed, for employee engagement to provide organizational value it should be conceptualized as a motivated state, the result from being motivated, not a motivational state.

The following paper presents the development of a Motivation Model of Engagement (MMOE). The model is an extension of Kahn's (1992) psychological presence model. The paper starts with an overview of employee engagement and motivation, followed by a discussion of Kahn's (1990) personal engagement conceptualization. Next is a discussion of necessary additions to extend Kahn's conceptualization, which improves its comprehensiveness to explain employee behavior. The subsequent section showcases the development of the MMOE, followed by a discussion of the relationships of various organizational behavior constructs. Lastly, are discussions regarding implications for practice and research, followed by conceptual limitations of the MMOE.

### **Employee Engagement**

Employee engagement is espoused to lead to beneficial work behaviors. However, there is a lack of theoretical foundations to reach this conclusion. The two primary conceptualizations of employee engagement (personal engagement and burnout) are atheoretical. One conceptualization (personal engagement) was based on an ethnographic study of camp counselors and architects (Kahn, 1990), and the other was introduced as the opposite of burnout (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Although many researchers cite both conceptualizations in support of their studies, these two conceptualizations have fundamental differences. Kahn's conceptualization is described as a motivated state with work role tasks as the focus (1990). Schaufeli et al. described engagement as a motivational state not focused on any particular matter (2002). Further, Kahn described engagement as a momentary state, while Schaufeli et al. described their conceptualization as a general state. Describing one as a motivational state and

the other as a motivated state presents a temporal disconnect between the two conceptualizations. Schaufeli et al.'s concept precedes behavior, where Kahn's includes behavior.

It is reasonable to assume the most prevalent conceptualization of employee engagement is of a latent cognitive-affective state. The state is said to be an 'activated', 'active', or 'aroused' state (Byrne, 2015; Inceoglu & Fleck, 2010; Rich et al., 2010). This assumption is based on the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) as the most frequently used measurement instrument for engagement research. Bailey et al. (2017) showed the UWES was used in 86% ( $N = 148$ ) of their reported studies. The definition of engagement accompanying the UWES refers to a cognitive-affective state. Therefore, one would assume researchers using the UWES would define employee engagement as such, otherwise they risk a misalignment between conceptualization and the scale used. The purported cognitive-affective state is espoused to lead to extra-role behavior (Eldor & Harpaz, 2016). The process model associated with this conceptualization is input→employee engagement→behavior.

Motivation theory is described as stimulus→organism→response. If 'response' is considered behavior, then the cognitive-affective engagement process model would seem to be an appropriate model of motivation. The stimuli are the 'inputs', and the organism is an employee in a cognitive-affective activated state. This appears to be straight forward. However, there is confusion because Schaufeli et al. described engagement as a motivational state (2002). If something is 'motivational', then it is the reason for (or cause of) behaving in a certain way (Dictionary.com, n.d.). The process model indicates 'input' would cause engagement and then engagement would cause behavior. Which one is motivational? The cause of engagement or the cause of behavior? Without the 'input', there would be no engagement and thus no behavior. This conundrum is apparent in the Job Demand Resource (JD-R) model, where

resources→engagement→turnover intention. Resources are claimed to be motivational (Bakker & Bal, 2010) while simultaneously describing engagement as motivational (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Which is motivational? This leads to methodological problems among employee engagement definitions, conceptualizations, and measures. If employee engagement is an activated state, then it should be conceptualized as a ‘motivated’ state and consequently would be an outcome.

If the input→employee engagement→behavior process model is incorporated in various theories of motivation, it would lead to the conclusion that ‘inputs’ would be needs, goals, a bestowed benefit, or the expectation of value (depending on the chosen motivation theory). Two of the theories, need theory and equity theory, claim employee behavior is the result of being in a state of tension. Need theory claims the frustration of unmet needs drives behavior and equity theory claims an employee’s behavior is a result of internal tension associated with an inequitable exchange.

Engagement researchers define engagement as a positive state (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Defining engagement as a positive state would make it incompatible with need theory and equity theory. Defining engagement as a positive state removes the possibility behavior can be attributed to frustration. Engagement researchers argue frustrated employees are not the desired outcome of their positive psychology premise. This leads to the question, what is the desired goal of employee engagement? Do organizations want positive cognitive-affective employees (which is arguably ‘satisfaction’)? Or do they want employees behaving in a manner benefiting the organization? It is contended here, organizations want employees whose behaviors are aligned with the goals of the organization, who are subsequently benefitted/rewarded in shared success, and are satisfied as a result of this alignment. If this is what organizations want, then

what process is necessary to accomplish it? Stated another way, ‘how’ do organizations motivate their employees to engage in beneficial behaviors?

### **Motivation**

There are many theories of motivation, however they essentially fall in four groups: need theories, expectancy theories, goal setting theories, and equity theories. It is recognized each of these theories are incomplete, so some scholars have attempted to combine theories to create an integrated comprehensive theory to advance the motivation construct (Klein, 1989; Locke, 1997; Locke & Latham, 2004). Most motivation theories explain ‘why’ relationships of motivation.

Motivation theories describe why an employee acts, but the theories fail to explain how an employee becomes motivated to act in a manner benefitting the organization. Need theory (Alderfer, 1969) posits either frustration or fulfillment of a need motivates an individual toward or away from the need. ‘Why’ is this so? Because according to Alderfer (1969), “a human being has three core needs that [they] strive to meet” (p. 145). These include existence, relatedness, and growth. There is a lack of explanation about ‘how’ the frustration or satisfaction of a need motivates certain behaviors. It is not clear what the resulting behavior would be. As an example, if pay level (existence need) is not being satisfied, what is the likely resultant behavior? Will the employee steal from the company? Will the employee work harder? Will the employee leave the company for a better paying job? All we know from Alderfer is the employee’s desire for pay will increase.

Next is a discussion on four groups of motivation theories (expectancy, goal setting, need, equity). It is not intended to be a comprehensive review of these motivation theories or the current state of motivation research. There are many published articles an interested reader can review, which offer in depth reviews of motivation research.

## **Expectancy Theories**

Expectancy theories posit an individual is motivated based on expectations of a given level of effort resulting in the performance of activities, which leads to a desired reward. Thus, motivation is the combination of expectancy, instrumentality, and valence. Expectancy is “the subjective probability that a given act will be followed by a given outcome” (Reinhardt & Wahba, 1975, p. 522). Instrumentality is “the degree to which a person sees the outcome in question as leading to the attainment of other outcomes” (Reinhardt & Wahba, 1975, p. 522). Valence is the value ascribed to the given outcome. This theory is based on a ‘why’ explanation. Why will an individual be motivated to act? Because they believe their effort will lead to desired rewards. It is unclear ‘how’ individuals become motivated to act or how they are able to achieve desired organizational outcomes.

There is uncertainty about ‘how’ the expectancy of a given outcome would lead the employee to engage in behavior beneficial for the organization. There are many inherent, unaddressed, assumptions embedded in the answer. For example, the outcome has value to the employee (which is not always the case in a work setting). The employee would have to know if the outcome they expect is aligned with the goals of the organization. The employee would require the knowledge, skills, energy, and time to produce the expected outcome. The employee would have the resources necessary to produce the expected outcome and feels safe trying for the expected outcome. These assumptions are seldom explored in expectancy research.

## **Goal Setting Theories**

Goal Setting theory contends setting specific, difficult, goals will act through four mechanisms (direction, effort, persistence, and task strategies) to result in positive employee performance (Locke & Latham, 2002; Locke et al., 1981). Since motivation is described as

having direction, intensity, and duration (Latham & Pinder, 2005) and because goal setting theory is said to direct behavior (direction), lead to greater effort (intensity), and affect persistence (duration), goal setting theory is said to be a motivational process (Locke et al., 1981). Locke and Latham (2002) claim “goal-setting theory is among the most valid and practical theories of employee motivation in organizational psychology” (p. 714) and is “. . . recognized explicitly or implicitly in virtually every theory of and approach to work motivation” (Locke et al., 1981, p. 148). It is claimed goal setting theory is so robust that “[f]ailures to replicate [the effects] are usually due to errors, such as not matching the goal to the performance measure, not providing feedback, not getting goal commitment, not measuring the person’s personal (self-set) goals, not conveying task knowledge, setting a performance goal when a specific high-learning goal is required, not setting proximal goals when the environment is characterized by uncertainty, or including a sufficient range of goal difficulty levels” (Locke & Latham, 2002, p. 714). There are at least twelve variables to be controlled when investigating the goal-performance relationships in goal setting theory. They are specificity, difficulty, complexity, conflict, acceptance, intensity, commitment, feedback, discrepancy, clarity, choice, and regulation of behavior (Locke et al., 1981)

“A basic assumption of goal setting research is that the individual accepts (is actually trying for) the goal that was assigned or was set” (Lock et al., 1981, p. 147). However, it is unclear why an individual accepts a goal. To explain this, goal setting researchers turn to expectancy theory, which suggests a goal is accepted because there is value for the individual to attain the goal, and there is a high expectancy of success in attaining the goal. This muddies the water. Is the process associated with goal acceptance the motivational component or the process

post-goal acceptance? Goal setting theory is focused on the latter, while expectancy theory is focused on the former. As such, expectancy would come first.

It is unclear how a goal motivates an employee to behave in a manner benefitting the organization. Goal setting researchers argue organizational value is a result of directed effortful behavior, persistence, and task strategy. However, these mechanisms describe how an employee can achieve positive performance, but they do not describe how the employee becomes motivated in the first place. Simply giving an employee a goal will not ensure action and beneficial outcome. Thus, it is tenuous to assume goals are separately motivational. Goal setting theory does a good job explaining the behavior→performance relationship (post goal acceptance), but does a poor job explaining the process prior to goal acceptance. Goals are important for increasing the likelihood employees will produce valuable results/performance, but there are mechanisms missing from the theory, which precede employee behavior.

Aside from all the variables needed to be controlled while investigating the goal-performance relationship, there are other inherent assumptions not identified while exploring how a goal leads to a motivated employee behaving in a manner beneficial to an organization. If the goal is set by the organization, then presumably it would be aligned with organizational goals. However, if the goal is employee set, the employee would need to know how the goal is aligned with the goals of the organization. Additional assumptions include: the goal having value for the employee; the employee has the knowledge, skills, tools, understanding, time, energy, and autonomy to achieve the goal; and the employee can work toward the goal even if they may fail without the fear of negative repercussions.

## Need Theories

Need theories are generally based on the premise employees' direct actions to address unsatisfied needs. The needs are claimed to be common to each employee, however the strength of the need varies among persons. There is no agreed upon base of needs. Each theory espouses its own set of needs. Maslow (1943) espoused five need hierarchies (physiological, safety, love, esteem, and self-actualization). Alderfer (1969) proclaimed the core needs for existence, relatedness, and growth. Herzberg (1974) claimed six motivator needs (achievement, recognition, work itself, responsibility, advancement, and growth). McClelland (1987) claimed everyone had the needs for achievement, affiliation, and power. Deci and Ryan (2000) claimed there are three universal basic needs (autonomy, relatedness, and competence).

Needs are also referred to as implicit motives or drives. Unmet needs create an internal force, which drives employees to satisfy the unmet need. While Maslow and Alderfer included physiological needs, most needs equate to personal traits or dispositions, which reside in everyone to different degrees. Some needs are said to be unconscious to the actor. For example, McClelland (1985) suggested physiological processes are associated with the social motives of his theory (i.e., need for power) and can only be uncovered through unconscious means like the Thematic Aptitude Test (TAT). Each theory on human needs, even Maslow's need hierarchy, suggests an individual will be in simultaneous pursuit to satisfy multiple needs. Each need has a different motive strength unique to each individual's circumstances.

“Need-based theories explain why a person must act; they do not explain why specific actions are chosen in specific situations to obtain specific outcomes” (Latham & Pinder, 2005, p. 488). It is unclear how an organization can influence specific behaviors or actions. It would seem, organizations could deprive employees' needs as a means to motivate the employees, since

unmet needs are drivers of behavior. Organizations can work to meet employees' needs, but will not know what actions will result or if actions will cease once a need is satisfied. Additionally, organizational leaders may not know what needs to address since implicit needs are subconscious and even employees may be unaware of them.

Meeting a need usually results in an affective reaction (i.e., satisfaction), which in turn is believed to lead to positive employee performance. It is unclear 'how' an employee's drive to meet a need results in positive performance. Lacking in need theory analysis is the incorporation of employees' abilities, skills, and knowledge. Individual differences primarily pertain to the need make up of each individual. Thus, there is no difference in employee performance when controlling for need satisfaction. Further, satisfaction of a need should align with the goals of the organization and the employee should feel safe trying to satisfy the need without fear of reprisal.

### **Equity Theories**

Based on cognitive dissonance, equity theory claims individuals evaluate inputs and outcomes (in an exchange with an 'other') to maintain equitable proportionality. Individuals compare themselves with others as reference points to base the level of equity in an exchange. Because equity theory is based on cognitive dissonance, employees feel internal tension regardless of whether they are equity deficient or equity abundant. Employees will have a drive to reduce internal tension (Adams, 1963). The strength of the driver is proportional to the magnitude of the tension (inequity) present. Employees who feel they are under paid (comparing their input/outcomes to similar others) may respond by working harder, working less, asking for a raise, quitting, or distorting the evaluation of the inputs/outcomes to make the exchange perceived as equitable. Employees who feel they are overpaid may address the tension by working harder, lowering their pay (highly unlikely), lowering their output (if paid by

piecework), or distorting the evaluation of the inputs/outcomes to make them equitable.

However, it is not clear which behavior an employee will choose.

Although not based on cognitive dissonance, Social Exchange Theory (SET) will be grouped in the equity theory category. SET postulates there are rules, norms, and/or moral codes, which guide reciprocity in a social exchange (Gouldner, 1960). The premise of SET is if one receives a benefit, they will feel obligated to reciprocate in-kind a benefit to the bestower. As an example, if an employee is paid more, they will feel obligated to work harder.

Like the other motivation theories, equity theory is a ‘why’ theory. Why is an employee motivated to act—to repay an obligated debt or address an internal tension associated with an inequitable exchange. From evaluating the existing research to understand ‘how’ an inequitable exchange leads an employee to act in a manner benefiting the company, it becomes clear there are unaddressed assumptions present. These assumptions include the employee: has the knowledge, skills, energy, and time to align their modified behavior; knows how their modified behavior aligns with the goals of the organization; feels safe in their behavior modification; has resources necessary to produce positive behavior; and knows which behavior modifications are valuable.

Asking ‘what leads to engagement’ (pervasive in engagement research) helps to identify potential variable relationships. Asking ‘why something leads to engagement’ provides a general framework for relationships. Asking ‘how’ provides low-level pathways (mechanisms) for the relationships and possible interventions. See Table 4 for a summary of assumptions in each motivation theory when describing how employees become motivated to behave in beneficial ways compared to traditional explanations of why employees become motivated.

**Table 4**

*Summary of Various Motivation Theories Regarding Why Employees Become Motivated and Assumptions in How Employees Become Motivated to Engage.*

Motivation theory	Traditional explanation <u>why</u> employees become motivated	Assumptions associated with <u>how</u> employees become motivated to engage in beneficial behavior
Expectancy Theory	Internal drive to achieve a valuable, desirable, outcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employees have the knowledge, skills, ability, time, energy, and autonomy to perform in a manner benefitting the organization</li> <li>• Employees have resources/tools necessary</li> <li>• Employees know desired organizational outcomes</li> <li>• Employees feel safe trying for expected outcome even if they may fail</li> </ul>
Goal Setting Theory	Specific difficult goal creates a drive to accomplish it	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employees have the knowledge, skills, ability, time, energy, and autonomy to perform in a manner benefitting the organization</li> <li>• Employees have resources/tools necessary</li> <li>• The goal is aligned with the goals of the organization</li> <li>• The goal has value to the employees and organization</li> <li>• Employees know desired organizational outcomes</li> <li>• Employees feel safe trying for goal even if they may fail</li> </ul>
Need Theory	Unmet need creates an internal drive to meet it	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employees have the knowledge, skills, ability, time, energy, and autonomy to perform in a manner benefitting the organization</li> <li>• Employees have the resources/tools necessary</li> <li>• Need is aligned with the goals of the organization</li> <li>• Satisfaction of the need has value to the employees and organization</li> <li>• Employees know the desired organizational outcome</li> <li>• Employees feel safe trying to satisfy the need even if they may fail</li> </ul>
Equity Theory	Internal obligation to reciprocate in-kind	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employees have the knowledge, skills, ability, time, energy, and autonomy to perform in a manner benefitting the organization</li> <li>• Employees have the resources/tools necessary</li> <li>• Employees' behavior is aligned with the goals of the organization</li> <li>• Reciprocated behavior has value to the employees and organization</li> <li>• Employees know desired organizational outcomes</li> <li>• Employees feel safe trying to reciprocate even if they may fail</li> </ul>

## Mechanisms

Kanfer (1987) recognized the lack of 'how' mechanisms associated with motivation theories. Kanfer proposed external, internal, and informational inputs act through three cognitive mechanisms (utility of performance, utility of effort, and perceived effort-performance

relationship) to influence performance motivation. Utility of performance (P-U) and utility of effort (E-U) are said to exert direct motivational effects, while the effort-performance relationship (E-P) influences the motivational force decision. Intended to be a heuristic conceptual model, Kanfer's model was proposed as an integration and extension of expectancy-value, goal-setting theory, and self-regulation conceptualizations. The model focused on the evaluations of effort and performance with the assumption they determine motivation.

Other researchers used the term 'mechanism', but they used it to describe 'why' something is a motivating source. For example, Alderfer (1969) stated, "[a]n additional aspect of the [ERG] theory, however, concerns providing explanatory concepts or mechanisms which lie behind the various propositions. These explanatory concepts are intended to help answer the "why" questions for the various propositions" (p. 148). Similarly, Scholl (1981) identified four commitment mechanisms: investments, reciprocity, lack of alternatives, and identification. Scholl conceptualized commitment as a motivating force. The four mechanisms explained why employees are committed. Employees are committed because they are invested in the organization, they owe commitment to the organization due to received rewards, they do not have alternatives, or their identity is based on involvement with the organization. Although described as motivational mechanisms (Locke et al., 1981), Locke and Latham (2002) describe 'how' goals affect *performance* through four mechanisms: direction, effort, persistence, and task strategies. These mechanisms occur post goal acceptance and help employees achieve high performance (Locke & Latham, 1990). There are presumably other mechanisms, which explain goal choice and goal acceptance and are arguably the motivational components.

'Mechanisms' as used in this paper, are meant to indicate the processes associated with 'how' inputs potentially lead employees to engage in beneficial behaviors. Engagement research

has focused on uncovering ‘what’ leads to employee engagement. There are a considerable number of proclaimed antecedents to employee’s engagement. Wollard and Shuck’s (2011) review of employee engagement literature identified 42 individual and organizational antecedents from 265 studies. There is a paucity of research exploring ‘how’ proposed antecedents lead to employee’s engagement.

What follows is a presentation of a model explaining the processes associated with how employees get to the point of behaving in a manner beneficial to the organization. This model identifies the psychological processes (mechanisms) leading employees to engage in beneficial behaviors and discusses where existing motivation conceptualizations fit within the model. The proposed model is an extension of Kahn’s psychological presence model (1992). Although Kahn’s conceptualization was not described as motivational, his conceptualization provides the foundation to fill gaps identified previously; which are assumed or missing in other conceptualizations of motivation.

The proposed model blends comprehensiveness and simplicity. The comprehensiveness shows where existing organizational behavior constructs fit within the model, describe how the model can be used for different levels of analysis, and explore the psychological processes associated with how employees become motivated to behave in beneficial ways. Simplicity is intended to make the model pragmatically useful for organizational leaders and to help guide future academic research.

There are other comprehensive motivation models available, however they are complex and difficult to use in practice. For example, Naylor et al. (1980) presented a very well thought out, comprehensive, model of motivation. However, the complexity makes it difficult to use in a pragmatic manner. Similarly, Locke and Latham’s (2004) integrated model is very thorough and

ties together many organizational behavior conceptualizations. However, even though Locke and Latham (2004) attempted to reduce cognitive overload by omitting the representation (arrows) of some relationships, it is still very difficult to put into practice. The following discussion presents a useful heuristic for scholars and practitioners alike.

### **Kahn's Personal Engagement Conceptualization**

Kahn (1990) defined personal engagement as “the 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). Kahn’s study indicated that employees’ personal engagement was influenced by three psychological conditions (meaningfulness, safety, and availability). Employees experienced 1) psychological meaningfulness when they felt worthwhile, useful, and valuable; 2) psychological safety when they felt safe from negative consequences associated with their actions; and 3) psychological availability when they have the physical, cognitive, and emotional resources to invest themselves.

According to Kahn, employees unconsciously asked themselves three questions in each situation. “The questions were: (1) How meaningful is it for me to bring myself into this performance? (2) How safe is it to do so? and (3) How available am I to do so?” (1990, p. 703). “People vary their personal engagements according to their perceptions of the benefits, or the meaningfulness, and the guarantees, or safety, they perceive in situations. Engagement also varies according to the resources they perceive themselves to have—their availability” (Kahn, 1990, p. 703).

Kahn’s conceptualization appears to provide a foundation for existing motivation theories and addresses the ‘how’ questions described earlier, which are missing from motivation research.

Table 5 indicates ‘how’ employees become motivated to engage and whether each psychological condition is addressed within each motivation theory. Notice how each theory assumes satisfaction of the meaningfulness condition. The availability condition is basically assumed as well, however, the safety condition is generally unrecognized. From Kahn’s study, and intuitive reflective thinking, it is essential all three conditions are satisfied. If employees are fearful of discipline or negative self-image (safety) or do not have the requisite cognitive, affective, or physical energies (availability), they will likely refrain from striving for an outcome (expectancy), goal, meeting a need, or returning an obligation.

Kahn’s conceptualization provides a foundation for motivation theories; however, it is narrow in focus. Kahn’s conceptualization can be extended to create a comprehensive engagement framework, which forms the basis of the Motivation Model of Engagement (MMOE).

**Table 5***Summary of Existing Motivation Theories for How Employees Become Motivated to Engage.*

Motivation theory	How employees become motivated to engage incorporating the three psychological conditions	Addressed in existing theory?
Expectancy Theory	• Outcome is valuable to the employee (Sense of meaningfulness)	• Yes
	• Employee can strive for the outcome without fear (Sense of safety)	• No
	• Employee has the cognitive, affective, and physical abilities to strive for the outcome (Sense of personal availability)	• Assumed
Goal Setting Theory	• Goal has value for the employee (Sense of meaningfulness)	• Assumed
	• Employee can strive for the goal without fear (Sense of safety)	• No
	• Employee has the cognitive, affective, and physical abilities to strive for the goal (Sense of personal availability)	• Assumed
Need Theory	• Need has value for the employee (Sense of meaningfulness)	• Inherently assumed
	• Employee can strive to fulfill the need without fear (Sense of safety)	• No
	• Employee has the cognitive, affective, and physical abilities to strive to fulfill the need (Sense of personal availability)	• Assumed
Equity Theory	• Valuable for the employee to reciprocate through behavior (Sense of meaningfulness)	• Assumed
	• Safe for the employee to reciprocate (Sense of safety)	• No
	• Employee has the cognitive, affective, and physical abilities to reciprocate (Sense of personal availability)	• Assumed

### **Extended Conceptualization**

Kahn's three psychological conditions can be seen as mechanisms leading to behavioral intention. Employees must experience the three psychological conditions to be motivated to act. What follows are proposed extensions of the three psychological conditions. The extensions elucidate additional variables, which influence the three psychological conditions. These extensions are based on the extant literature and through empirical observations. Experiencing the three psychological conditions is an individual phenomenon and is affected by situational (contextual) dynamics.

## Psychological Meaningfulness

When meaningfulness is used, it is often conferred to answer the existential question ‘Why am I here?’ (Pratt & Ashforth, 2003). Meaningfulness is often accompanied by ‘purpose’; as someone experiences meaningfulness when they are living out their life’s purpose. Kahn’s (1990) conceptualization of meaningfulness does not go that far. His conceptualization is characterized as having a sense of value, worthwhileness, and self-appreciation. Kahn’s conceptualization is similar to what Pratt and Ashforth (2003) describe as meaningfulness *in* work and meaningfulness *at* work. Meaningfulness in work is influenced by the role an employee occupies, while meaningfulness at work is influenced by an employee’s social membership.

Kahn’s conceptualization appears to be the experiential state when an employee is meeting Maslow’s belongingness and esteem needs (1943) or Alderfer’s relatedness and growth needs (1969). Belongingness and relatedness pertain to social memberships and esteem and growth needs pertain to role characteristics. Overlooked is the experience of meaningfulness *from* working, or meaningfulness *of* work often associated with satisfying existence needs.

An individual may experience meaningfulness of work while satisfying an individual existence need or when providing for others. If one requires a job to satisfy an existence need, they will likely take a job even if it fails to match their life’s calling. Their purpose, at that time, is to provide, even if the role fails to deliver on their capable contribution to humanity or is considered ‘dirty’ work. This is captured in Hall et al.’s (2013) description of meaningful work. They describe meaningful work as that which is personally significant and purposeful “and/or valuable and worthwhile” (p. 57). The ‘and/or’ is important. It indicates work can be

meaningful for existential purposes, ‘and/or’ for some other form of value; like satisfying an existence need.

As a psychological condition influencing (motivating) behavior, it is reasonable for meaningfulness to incorporate the value of the job itself. This is supported by Wrzesniewski et al.’s (1997) study of employees of a state university student health services department and non-faculty of a liberal arts college ( $N = 135$ ). Their data showed nearly equal numbers of respondents viewed their work as a ‘job’ ( $n = 44$ ) compared to as a ‘career’ ( $n = 43$ ), and as a ‘calling’ ( $n = 48$ ). Those with a job orientation, viewed it as a means to acquire needed resources.

From a positive psychology perspective, the goal is for employees to pursue their work as a calling. This is suggested to be associated with greater well-being (Wrzesniewski et al., 1997). Although it is a desirable goal to have employees pursuing their calling, the reality is nearly two thirds of employees described their work as a job and/or career. This shows it is equally, if not more, important to understand how to motivate these employees to engage in beneficial work behaviors.

Meaningfulness should be treated as a dynamic evaluation within each individual and may change throughout their development and career. In a review of how person-environment fit influences meaningfulness, Hansen (2013) discussed how the prescribed salience of work environment aspects may change over a person’s career. Similarly, as it related to engagement, Kahn and Fellows (2013) indicated employees have “. . . shifting needs and desires, related to phases in adult development and career progression, . . .” (p. 111). From a comprehensive standpoint, meaningfulness *in* work, meaningfulness *at* work, and meaningfulness *of* work should each be considered, as well as their dynamic nature.

## **Psychological Safety**

Kahn (1990) conceptualized psychological safety “as feeling able to show and employ one’s self without fear of negative consequences to self-image, status, or career” (p. 708).

“Psychological safety was associated with elements of social systems that created more or less nonthreatening, predictable, and consistent social situations in which to engage” (Kahn, 1990, p. 703). Psychological safety is akin to interpersonal trust (Rotter, 1967) and organizational trust (Cummings & Bromiley, 1996), but goes beyond each.

The premise of interpersonal trust is individuals and/or groups can be relied upon (Rotter, 1967). Cummings and Bromiley’s organizational trust is based on good faith, honesty, and lack of opportunism between individuals or groups. Interpersonal trust (Rotter, 1967) and organizational trust (Cummings & Bromiley, 1996) are based on the ‘other’ individual or group being trustworthy and behaving in accordance with implicit and explicit promises and commitments. Kahn’s conceptualization, however, adds the belief an employee can try and fail without fear of negative repercussions or retaliations. This is a significant nuance. Interpersonal trust and organizational trust focus on if the ‘other’ does what they say they will do or behaves consistently against their word. This pertains to the ‘other’ reliably executing their behavior. Psychological safety, however, includes a focus on the other’s response to the employee’s behavior. This is akin to organizational justice.

Organizational justice is comprised of three dimensions. Distributive justice, procedural justice, and interactional justice. Distributive justice, based on equity theory (Adams, 1963), is perceived fairness of outcome allocations (Colquitt, 2012). Procedural justice is the perceived fairness of the process and procedures used for the determination of outcome allocations (Colquitt, 2001; Skarlicki & Folger, 1997). Interactional justice is the perceived quality of the

interpersonal treatment received by an employee (Colquitt et al., 2001; Skarlicki & Folger, 1997), and is said to consist of two elements – interpersonal justice, and informational justice (Yean & Yusof, 2016). Interpersonal justice is the perception of employees being treated with respect, while informational justice is the perception of whether the employer is providing appropriate explanation and information to the employees (Yean & Yusof, 2016).

It is apparent Kahn's (1990) psychological safety is the experiential state associated with an employee's perception of experiencing interpersonal trust, organizational trust, and organizational justice. If employees believe others act with honesty, good faith, and can be relied upon, while receiving quality interpersonal treatment and their fair share of outcomes, they will feel safe in their efforts to engage. However, one thing overlooked in Kahn's conceptualization of psychological safety is the employees' perceptions of physical safety.

Cognitive evaluations of physical safety, leading to affective and behavioral responses is not new. It is the premise which underlies Rogers' (1975) protection motivation theory, Rosenstock et al.'s (1988) Health Belief Model (HBM), and Leventhal et al.'s (1998) illness representations and coping procedures. According to Rogers (1975), behavioral intention is the result of a cognitive evaluation of a fear appeal. Similarly, the HBM indicates health related behavior is based on the perceived susceptibility and severity of a health threat and the value of trying to reduce the threat (Rosenstock et al., 1988). The perceptual-cognitive model of self-regulation by Leventhal et al. (1998) indicates how health threats (illness representations) generate behavioral responses. These all show how the perception of a threat to one's physical safety can influence one's psychological safety. Reflecting on this premise, it makes sense if an employee fears for their physical safety during a task, activity, or job, they are less likely to intend to engage in it.

Like psychological meaningfulness, psychological safety is dynamic, situational, and contextual. Additions and subtractions of organizational members, particularly leadership, can change the social elements influencing employees' psychological safety. Environmental events (pandemics or recessions) and personal events can affect employees' psychological safety through new concerns for their physical safety or the safety of family members. Additionally, employees will experience changes to their interpersonal relationships during career growth or career changes, which impact their evaluation of psychological safety. From a comprehensive standpoint, psychological safety should incorporate interpersonal trust, organizational trust, organizational justice, and physical safety.

### **Psychological Availability**

Kahn (1990) conceptualized psychological availability as employees having physical, intellectual, and emotional energies to engage. Kahn referred to the energies as resources. Physical resources were the strength and energy to engage. Emotional resources were a pool of emotional energy (which can be depleted by other life factors) to engage. Psychological availability was "how ready people are to engage, given the distractions they experience as members of social systems" (Kahn, 1990, p. 714). Kahn's conceptualization of psychological availability was the level of internal resources/energies employees have to commit to a task/activity.

Kahn did not incorporate perceived knowledge, skills, and abilities. However, as an assessment of one's availability to engage in a task/activity, psychological availability should incorporate them. As one evaluates if they have the energies to invest, they will also evaluate how much energy will be needed based on their perceived knowledge, skill, and ability. Intuitively, the likelihood one will invest themselves in an activity will increase if they perceive

they have the requisite knowledge, skill, and/or ability. Even though knowledge, skill, and ability are coupled with available energies, they are not the same. One can have the knowledge, skill, and ability but if their physical and/or emotional energy is depleted due to situational factors, they may become more likely to evaluate their availability as low. Similarly, if one has the physical and emotional energies, but lacks the knowledge, skill, or ability, they will be less likely to engage.

Missing in Kahn's conceptualization of psychological availability are the tools available to employees. Employees will evaluate if they have the tools necessary to engage in a task/activity. Knowledge, skill, and ability can be considered 'internal' tools, but there may be external tools (i.e., equipment) required to engage in the task/activity. Consider a trivial example of one needing to attach two pieces of wood together with a nail. One may have the energies and the knowledge, skill, and ability, but if they do not have a hammer, it would be highly unlikely they will attempt to execute the task/activity. If psychological availability is the evaluation if an employee has the resources to perform a task/activity, then it is reasonable to suggest resources include energies, knowledge, skills, abilities, and accessible appropriate tools. It is important to note, this characterization of resources is more limited than others (such as the Job Demands-Resources Model). The Job Demands-Resources Model (JD-R) has been expanded to include 22 resources (Schaufeli, 2017). Examples include support, participation in decision making, value congruence, and performance feedback.

As with the other two psychological conditions, psychological availability is dynamic. Life events and their distractions are in constant flux. Knowledge, skills, and abilities change with training, practice, and experiences. To understand, comprehensively, where employees regard their psychological availability, it is important to evaluate the internal and external

resources accessible to an employee, as well as the dynamic (situational) nature of them. Table 6 compares Kahn’s (1990) original conceptualization to the proposed extended conceptualization.

**Table 6**

*Kahn’s (1990) Original Conceptualization Compared to the Proposed Extended Conceptualization.*

Psychological conditions	Kahn’s original conceptualization	Proposed extended conceptualization
Meaningfulness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meaningfulness in work</li> <li>• Meaningfulness at work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meaningfulness in work</li> <li>• Meaningfulness at work</li> <li>• Meaningfulness of work</li> </ul>
Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interpersonal trust</li> <li>• Organizational trust</li> <li>• Organizational justice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interpersonal trust</li> <li>• Organizational trust</li> <li>• Organizational justice</li> <li>• Physical safety</li> </ul>
Availability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical energy</li> <li>• Intellectual energy</li> <li>• Emotional energy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical energy</li> <li>• Intellectual energy</li> <li>• Emotional energy</li> <li>• Knowledge, skill, ability</li> <li>• External resources</li> </ul>

### **Development of the Motivation Model of Engagement (MMOE)**

Kahn (1990) originally represented his conceptualization as linear. Kahn later expanded his conceptualization to a psychological presence model, which included outcomes from engagement and a feedback loop (Kahn, 1992). Kahn (1992) described the outcomes from engagement as performance quality, individual experience, and organizational productivity. The feedback loop was explained as formal and informal reinforcements and punishments from organizational members. Although these additions increased the comprehensiveness of his conceptualization, further clarity is necessary.

### **Outcome of Engagement**

Kahn’s characterization of outcomes as performance quality and/or organizational productivity seem incongruent at the ‘individual’ level of analysis. Presumably, organizational

productivity is the output of aggregated individual performance quality. If engagement is the investment of energies (physical, cognitive, and affective) in work tasks (Kahn, 1990), then the outcome would be a work product. The work product can be purely behavioral (i.e., customer service) or a combination of behavior and delivered product (i.e., written report or hole dug).

### **Evaluation of Work Product**

Kahn is not alone in describing the outcome of engagement as ‘performance’. Most theories of motivation describe an outcome as work performance or high work performance (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Hackman & Oldham, 1976; Locke, 1968; Locke & Latham, 1990; Vroom, 1964). However, ‘performance’ is rarely defined, and neither is the process describing it. To increase the explanatory power of Kahn’s (1992) model, improved clarity is necessary for the definition and process associated with performance.

“Performance is behavior with an evaluative component, behavior that can be evaluated as positive or negative for individual or organizational effectiveness” (Motowidlo et al., 1997, pp. 72-73). Therefore, performance is the result of a process of evaluation. The evaluation of the work product would be ‘performance’. A work product can be evaluated by employees themselves, their supervisors, and/or their co-workers. Kahn (1992) termed these evaluations as ‘outcomes’, where they will be referred to as ‘performance’ here.

### **Rewards**

According to Kahn (1992) the performance (or outcome) evaluation is reacted to by others. These reactions create feedback, which reinforce or sanction future behavior. For the sake of clarity, ‘reactions’ will be generically termed ‘rewards’. Since performance can be positive or negative, the rewards can be either positive or negative. Additionally, there is the possibility of not receiving a reward. Thus, the result of the performance evaluation will be

positive, negative, or no reward. Rewards can be derived intrinsically (internal evaluation) or extrinsically (bestowed by others).

### **Reward Evaluation**

Kahn (1992) suggested the reward (or reaction) “. . . may reinforce or sanction [behavior]” (p. 341), which in turn affects future experiences of psychological meaningfulness, safety, and availability. Unaccounted for in Kahn’s model is a very important second evaluation. Prior to reinforcing or sanctioning future behavior, a second important evaluation takes place. A reward can be tangible gift, a pat on the back, or an internal satisfaction of a job well done. The second evaluation is a comparison of the reward received to the desired/expected reward. According to expectancy theory, employees ask themselves if the reward was equal to or greater than expected. According to equity theory, employees ask themselves if the reward was equal to the rewards received by others. According to need theory employees evaluate if their need was met. According to goal setting theory, employees ask themselves if they met the objective of the goal pursuit. These questions are closely coupled, and thus, are suggested to be evaluated concurrently by the overarching question, ‘was the outcome as desired/expected?’ The result of this evaluation is the determination of success or failure, if others can be trusted, and if justice was delivered. This evaluation will determine if their effort allocation (or engagement) was a positive or negative experience.

### **Attributional Process**

Following this evaluation, employees will undertake an attributional process to determine if the result was caused by the employee (locus), is stable or unstable, and within the control of the employee (Weiner, 2000). According to Weiner (2000), the attributional process starts at the conclusion of an event, which is deemed to be a success or failure (positive or negative

outcome). The employee will then try to understand why the outcome happened as it did and what caused the outcome. The employees will seek to determine if the outcome was caused by them or outside factors, if the outcome is stable (will repeat), and if the outcome can be controlled (changed) by them. This exercise will influence employee's future behavior. Depending on how locus, stability, and controllability are determined, employees will either repeat their behavior or alter their behavior. Behavior alterations can be slight adjustments, complete abandonment, or counterproductive work behaviors (Le Roy et al., 2012).

### **Feedback to Psychological Meaningfulness, Safety, and Availability**

The outcome of the attributional process will feed back to influence future behavior through the three psychological conditions. Without embarking on a complete analysis of all the possible combinations associated with the attributional process, a few examples will be explored to explain the interactions.

Suppose an employee attributes the cause of a failure (not getting the desired reward) to their ability (or lack thereof). Further, the employee believes the outcome will likely repeat and is outside of their ability to be altered. If the employee determines the result was caused by internal, stable, and uncontrollable factors, they will have a diminished expectancy of success. This determination will alter the experiences of the three psychological conditions. The employee may determine the reward is not meaningful (reduction in meaningfulness). The employee may determine it is not safe to try for the reward due to risk of hurting their image or career (reduction in safety). The employee may determine they do not have the requisite resources to be successful (reduction of availability). Any combination of these will likely result in reduced behavioral intentions to invest energies toward future similar pursuits. According to equity theory (Adams, 1963), the re-evaluation of meaningfulness, safety, and availability may

lead to employees working harder, working less, distorting the evaluation, or counterproductive work behaviors.

For another example, consider an employee who did not receive an external reward, but felt high intrinsic value associated with the work product (internal reward). If this employee determined the outcome was a result of their resources, is stable, and controllable, their meaningfulness and safety may be enhanced leading to continued investments of energies.

As a third example, consider an employee striving for a goal. If the employee is 'off track' from meeting the goal (failure), the employee will seek to determine the cause (attribution). If the employee determines the cause is due to lack of effort, they will re-evaluate how meaningful it is for them to continue goal pursuit. If they determine it is meaningful, and they have the availability, the employee will increase their effort and focus. However, if an employee determines the cause is a result of co-workers failing to complete their assignments, the employee will re-evaluate the importance of the goal (meaningfulness), evaluate if they are safe to push their co-workers (safety), and evaluate if they have the availability to perform the tasks of the co-workers. The outcome of this re-evaluation will lead the employee to determine if they should adjust the direction of their effort, adjust their level of effort, continue to put in effort, or develop alternate strategies. These goal mechanisms help employees in their efforts to achieve their desired performance (Locke & Latham, 2002; Locke et al., 1981).

Figure 1 depicts the Motivation Model of Engagement (MMOE) based on the extended conceptualization. The model indicates there are variables that influence employees' psychological meaningfulness, safety, and availability. Employees subconsciously ask themselves if it is meaningful to engage, safe to engage, and if they have the availability (resources) to engage. The answers to these questions influence their behavioral intentions and

subsequently their behavior (physical, emotional, and cognitive energies). The outcome of their effort is their work product. Their work product is evaluated (by themselves and/or other organizational members), which determines their performance. Their performance is reacted to by themselves (intrinsic reward) and may or may not be reacted to (rewarded) by others (extrinsic reward). The employee assesses if rewards were expected (success) or less than expected (failure) and performs an attributional evaluation to determine if the outcome is likely to repeat or if they can change (control) future outcomes. The result of the attributional evaluation feeds back to influence their psychological meaningfulness, safety, and availability, which influences future behavior.

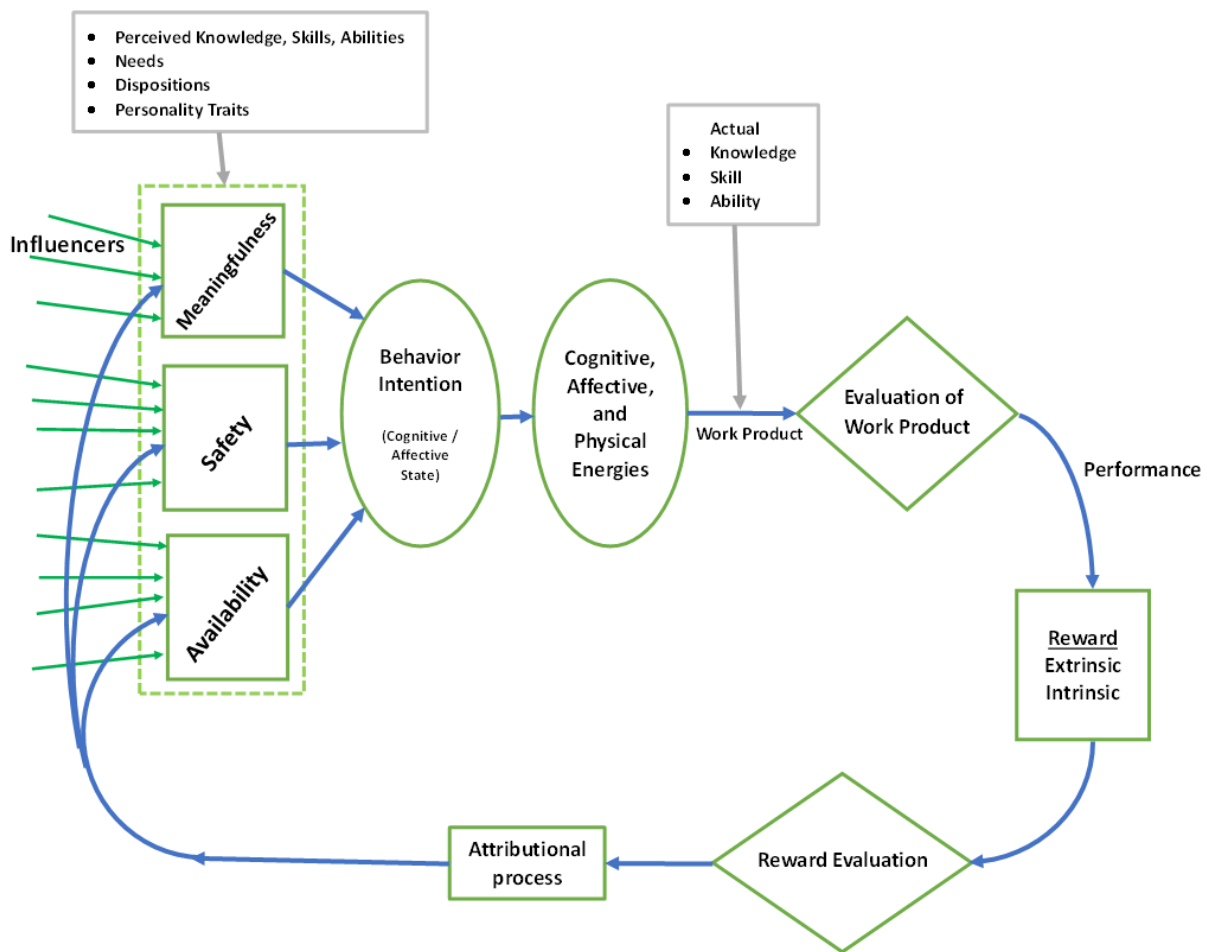


Figure 1. The Motivation Model of Engagement (MMOE).

## **Individual Differences Moderate Meaning, Safety, and Availability**

Most organizational behavior research focuses on general states of employees. Researchers use general correlational study designs along with general measures of variables. While this is likely due to the complexity of analysis, it is important to distinguish how intra- and inter-employee differences affect their motivation. The experiences of psychological meaningfulness, safety, and availability are unique to each employee. Employees differ in their knowledge, skills, and abilities, and have different roles and expectations. Even in same roles, employees have different expectations based on their years of service (tenure). If employees generally have the same needs, the strength of the needs may be different. Employees may have different goals, expectancies of success, and views on equity arrangements. Employees have different perceptions of trust, justice, and concerns for their physical safety. Equally important, many of these are likely to change over the course of their career.

Kahn (1992) proposed individual differences as moderators of behavioral engagement. He claimed employees differ in their engagement even if they experience equivalent levels of meaningfulness, safety, and availability. Here, the opposite is proposed. Individual differences moderate the experiences of meaningfulness, safety, and availability, and employees will not have equivalent levels of them even if they display equivalent levels of behavioral engagement.

Each employee has unique personality traits and dispositions, which affect how situational and external factors influence the three psychological conditions. Employees have different risk tolerances, which affect their evaluation of the three psychological conditions. Taken together, it is evident situational, external, and internal factors affect the experiences of the three psychological conditions, thus supporting the proposed location of the moderating variables in the MMOE.

## **Subconscious Weighting of Meaningfulness, Safety, and Availability**

Kahn (1990) suggested future research should explore how the three psychological conditions coact to influence behaviors. Although there is likely a minimum level of each condition, which must be achieved before motivating an employee to act (Kahn, 1990), it is proposed individual differences impact the subconscious weights of each condition, and the subconscious weighting affects motivation. Consider for example, an employee ascribing very high meaning to a role. This could be due to feelings of increased status, desired group to work for, or belief in the organization's cause. It is likely the employee will engage in the role even if the other conditions are minimally met. Similarly, suppose an employee requires a job (elevated subconscious weight of meaningfulness) and is offered a role they believe they are overqualified (very high subconscious weight of availability). They may accept the role even if they believe the role may hurt their career (low subconscious weight of safety).

The model suggests employees will not engage if any one of the conditions is missing. This would be equivalent to a very large negative subconscious weighting. Consider an employee who has the availability to perform a role and the role is meaningful. However, the organization or supervisor is not trustworthy and there is a culture of blame and opportunism. This employee would not perceive this situation as psychologically safe and would likely not invest in the work activities and may leave the organization.

Situational, contextual, external, and internal factors all affect how employees subconsciously weigh their experiences for each of the three psychological conditions. This subconscious weighting influences their motivation to engage and changes as situational, contextual, external, and internal factors change. Thus, employees are in constant evaluations of

their psychological conditions. In many regards, organizations are chasing moving targets as they try to influence employee engagement.

### **Level of Analysis**

Kahn's (1990) conceptualization was focused on the person-in-role task performances. However, he acknowledged his conceptualization reflected “. . . the simultaneous influence of different levels of variables . . .” (Kahn, 1992, p. 344). The proposed MMOE can explain behavior at different levels of analysis—task, role, job, and career levels. The level of analysis is reflected in the questions asked to evaluate meaningfulness, safety, and availability. Rather than asking how meaningful, safe, and available employees are to perform a given task, they ask themselves how meaningful it is to take on a new (or continued) role, job, or career. Employees may find meaningfulness in the task (i.e., finishing a sculpture), role (i.e., president of the company), or career (i.e., nursing). They ask themselves how safe they are, and if they have the resources, to continue (or discontinue) their role, job, or career. For example, some people may not feel safe to become a truck driver (low safety), and others may not have the visual acuity and reflexes to become a pilot (low availability).

It is expected different levels influence each other, but the relationships become more distal. As the level of analysis shifts up from the task level to the job level (see Figure 2), there are different variables, which influence meaningfulness, safety, and availability. As such, the variables, and analysis, change from detailed to an increasingly general nature. Considering something as familiar as pay, in many organizations formal rewards are allocated once per year. Supervisors reflect on the task work products and task performance evaluations to determine the overall performance of an employee. This overall performance leads to annual salary adjustments. Thus, annual salary may have an association with task behavior, but annual salary

(a job level variable) would be a distal influence on task behaviors (engagement). Alternatively, if an employee is paid on work product (i.e., number of haircuts), then one would expect a more proximate relationship between pay (task level) and engagement (task level).

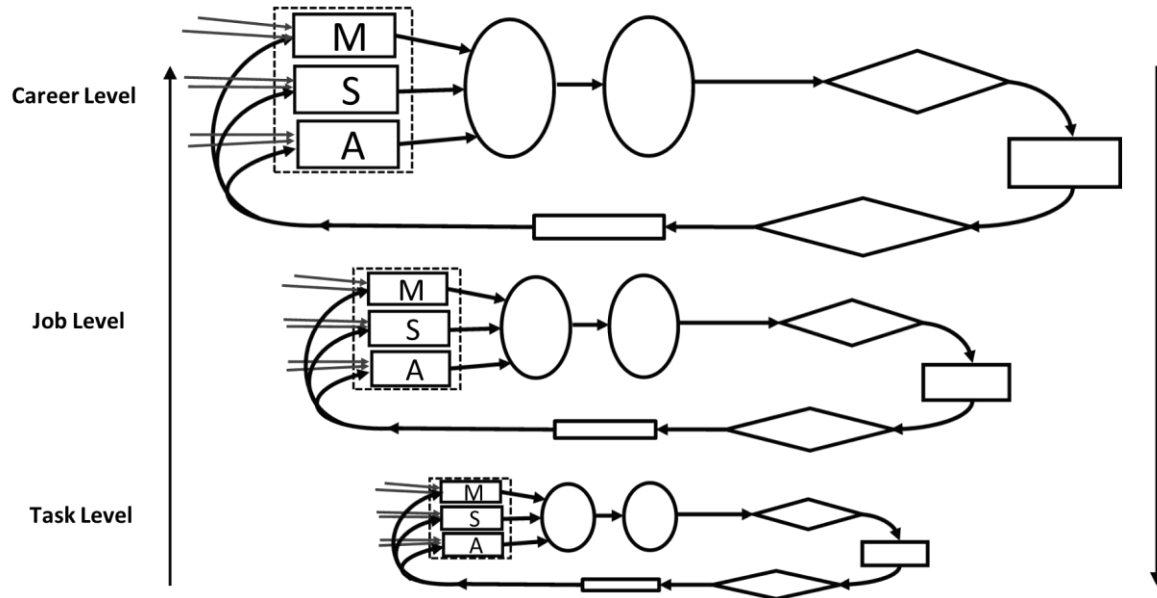


Figure 2. Different Levels of the Motivation Model of Engagement.

### Relationship to Other Organizational Behavior Constructs

The organizational behavior outcomes are different at each level of analysis. At the task level, the behavioral outcome is Kahn's personal engagement (the investment of physical, cognitive, and affective energies). However, at the job level, the outcome may be job satisfaction and/or organizational commitment.

### Cognitive-Affective Employee Engagement

As previously discussed, Kahn's (1990) conceptualization of personal engagement is when employees invest cognitive, affective, and physical energies in work tasks. This conceptualization locates employee engagement after behavioral intention and before work product. This conceptualization inherently co-exists with work product as there is always some

sort of work product from the investment of energies. However, many researchers conceptualized employee engagement as a cognitive-affective state leading to work behaviors. In this case, employee engagement is located after the evaluation of meaningfulness, safety, and availability and before the investment of energies in work tasks. It is important to note these conceptualizations are temporally different. One (Kahn's personal engagement) directly precedes work product, while the other precedes behavior. This is an important distinction and must be addressed in selection of study designs and measurements.

Additional consideration must be given to how the conceptualization of engagement relates to the level of analysis. For example, the conceptualization of engagement espoused by Schaufeli et al. (2002) is of a general cognitive-affective state ". . . not focused on any particular object, event, individual, or behavior" (p. 74). Although it is difficult to ascertain, this conceptualization is presumably at the job level and not at the task level. Clearly, this conceptualization is temporally different from Kahn's (1990) conceptualization and is incongruent at the person-in-role level of analysis. Therefore, the influencers and outcomes are different and not generalizable across both conceptualizations.

### **Job Satisfaction**

Job satisfaction is ". . . the appraisal of an object or situation against the standard of what [one] considers good or beneficial" (Locke, 1970, p. 485). Lawler and Porter's model (1967) shows intrinsic and extrinsic rewards as the outcome of performance, followed by an equitable evaluation to determine satisfaction. "[I]ntrinsic and extrinsic rewards are not directly related to job satisfaction since the relationship is moderated by expected equitable rewards." "Thus, an individual's satisfaction is a function both of the number and amount of the rewards [one] receives as well as what [one] considers to be a fair level of reward" (Lawler & Porter, 1967, p.

24). As task satisfaction pertains to the MMOE, it would follow the equitable (reward) evaluation. Since the reward evaluation is the determination of equitability, the outcome of that evaluation would determine one's task satisfaction.

Although one can be satisfied with the rewards associated with the completion of tasks, job satisfaction is typically evaluated at the job level. This distinction is important. If job satisfaction is ultimately the outcome of performance, then 'performance' would not be task level performance, but job level performance (or aggregated task performances). Based on this logic, we would expect job satisfaction to be remotely related to Kahn's (1990) conceptualization of engagement since they are at different levels of analysis. We would expect a more proximal relationship between Schaufeli et al.'s (2002) work engagement and job satisfaction. However, according to the MMOE, Schaufeli et al.'s work engagement (which precedes behavior) is not a direct determinant of job satisfaction. Evaluations of performance and equity take place between the two.

Some researchers suggest job satisfaction causes engagement (Abraham, 2012; Brunetto et al., 2012; Harrison et al., 2006; Newman et al., 2010; Shuck et al., 2021). The MMOE shows an episode of engagement, performance, and equity evaluation would need to take place prior to satisfaction. As discussed previously, the attributional feedback, concurrent with job satisfaction, influences meaningfulness, safety, and availability, thus one could argue satisfaction influences engagement. However, the MMOE indicates the satisfaction→engagement sequence is not a direct relationship, even if evaluated at the same level.

### **Organizational Commitment**

Although one can be committed to their career (family medical doctor), profession (architect), or customers (salesperson), organizational commitment is typically conceptualized at

the job level. Commitment is a multi-dimensional construct said to be a force, which binds an individual to a course of action (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001). Commitment, as a motivating force, is said to add unique value, compared to exchange relationships (expectancy and equity theories), which are considered positive attitudes or behavioral intentions (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001; Scholl, 1981). Organizational commitment is described as having three forms: affective, continuance, and normative (Allen & Meyer, 1996). Affective commitment is based on an employees' emotional attachment. Thus employees 'want' to stay with an organization. Continuance commitment is based on the perceived high costs associated with leaving an organization. Thus employees 'have' to stay. Normative commitment is based on a sense of obligation and employees feel they 'ought' to stay.

It is proposed, the three forms of commitment are uniquely influenced by job-level evaluations of psychological meaningfulness, psychological safety, and psychological availability. For example, affective commitment is primarily based on a high level of meaningfulness an employee experiences (they want to stay). Continuance commitment is primarily based on the psychological safety of staying with an organization versus the lack of safety with leaving (they need to stay). Normative commitment is a consequence of rewards received and evaluations of psychological meaningfulness and availability. One has the moral obligation (meaningfulness) to use their talents (availability) to benefit the organization (they ought to stay).

As with job satisfaction, organizational commitment would have a distal relationship with Kahn's (1990) personal engagement and more proximal relationship with Schaufeli et al.'s (2002) work engagement. According to the MMOE, both organizational commitment and cognitive-affective work engagement follow the evaluation of the three conditions and precede

behavior. As such, it would be expected for there to be considerable overlap between Schaufeli et al.'s work engagement and organizational commitment.

As proposed by the MMOE, job satisfaction follows the second evaluation while organizational commitment follows the evaluation of the three conditions. Thus, there is not a direct relationship between the two constructs. Both constructs are influenced by the positive experience of meaningfulness, safety, and availability, but at different points in the model. As discussed earlier, satisfaction may influence meaningfulness, safety, and availability, which in turn influences organizational commitment. Additionally, organizational commitment may lead to high job performance in turn influencing job satisfaction. Examining the MMOE, one would expect a circular relationship between job satisfaction and organizational commitment, but the relationship is not direct.

### **Influencers of the Three Psychological Conditions**

There are many variables, which may influence the three psychological conditions; however, each employee is likely not affected by all of them. Each variable has different influence on each employee. Each variable may not affect the psychological conditions of every employee and subsequently will not lead to motivated behavior. A variable becomes a motivator, or driver, of behavior if it affects one, or more, of the three psychological conditions. For example, autonomy may increase some employees' motivation to engage through increased meaningfulness. However, other employees may not want the responsibility associated with autonomy, and thus autonomy may reduce their motivation (through a reduction in psychological safety).

Many influencers of the three psychological conditions are listed alphabetically in Table 7. Although this table is certainly incomplete, there are some intentional omissions. The

variables described as ‘personal resources’ by Mache et al. (2014) are excluded. These are self-efficacy, optimism, pessimism, resilience, and self-esteem. It is proposed here, each of these affect (moderate) the evaluation of one’s psychological availability, such that the subconscious weighting of one’s experienced psychological availability would be altered. For example, self-efficacy is an “individual’s belief about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance” (Judge, et al., 2007, p. 107), or “beliefs regarding one’s capabilities for a particular task endeavor” (Schmidt & DeShon, 2010, p. 572). An employee with high task self-efficacy may subconsciously evaluate their availability as high. The same relationship would hold for task optimism, resilience, and self-esteem, and the opposite relationship would hold for pessimism. One with high levels of pessimism would subconsciously evaluate their availability lower.

Self-efficacy, optimism, pessimism, resilience, and self-esteem each would not solely determine one’s motivation since motivation is affected by all three psychological conditions. However, each of these variables increase (or decrease) the likelihood of becoming motivated since they increase (or decrease) one’s perceived situational availability. Further, they may lower the required level of psychological safety. An employee who is high in task self-efficacy may subconsciously evaluate the risk of negative impact to their career or reputation as low and may need less safety assurance than an employee with low self-efficacy. Thus, self-efficacy, optimism, pessimism, resilience, and self-esteem are moderators of the influencing variables on the evaluations of the psychological conditions.

**Table 7***Influencers of Three Psychological Conditions and Potential Levels of Analysis*

Influencer of psychological condition(s)	Potential level of analysis	Influencer (continued)	Potential level of analysis
Apprenticeships	Task	Peer support	Job/Task
Autonomy	Job/Task	Performance feedback	Job/Task
Career opportunity	Career/Job	Person/Environment fit	Job/Task
Challenge	Job/Task	Practice	Task
Clear direction	Task	Recognition	Career/Job/Task
Clear expectations	Job/Task	Recovery (time off)	Task
Coaching/mentoring/feedback	Career/Job/Task	Respect	Career/Job/Task
Decision making	Job/Task	Rewards	Career/Job/Task
Empowerment	Job/Task	Role ambiguity	Job/Task
Excessive demands	Task	Role clarity	Job/Task
Failure	Career/Job/Task	Role conflict	Job/Task
Human resource policies/procedures	Job/Task	Safety policies/procedures	Career/Job/Task
Inequity/equity	Career/Job/Task	Skill variety	Career/Job/Task
Information	Job/Task	Social responsibility	Career/Job/Task
Interpersonal relationships	Job/Task	Status	career/job
Interpersonal trust	Job/Task	Supervisor support	Job/Task
Job security	Job/Task	Task creativity	Task
Knowledge of results	Job/Task	Task significance	Task
Life issues	Job/Task	Task variety	Task
Opportunities for development	Job	Time pressure	Task
Organizational justice	Job/Task	Tools	Job/Task
Organizational support	Job/Task	Training	Job/Task
Organizational trust	Job/Task	Work frustrations	Job/Task
Organizational vision/mission	Career/Job/Task	Work load	Job/Task
Past results	Task	Work/role fit	Job/Task
Pay	Career/Job/Task		

The personality traits of neuroticism, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness are similarly excluded. These trait variables are general personal aspects of each employee. These are similar to general levels of self-efficacy, optimism, pessimism, resilience, and self-esteem. At the general level, these variables create a base level of the required experience for each of the psychological conditions. For example, employees who are high in trait openness or trait self-efficacy generally assess their resources (psychological availability) as

high, while generally requiring less psychological safety assurance. Thus, their motivation is more dependent on how meaningful the endeavor is, since they already have a high belief in their resources and low concern for their safety; as compared to employees who are low in those traits. Some employees generally perceive the world as unsafe and need more safety assurance than others. In this instance, the need for psychological safety may be significantly more important than the need for meaningfulness or availability. Traits act as general (base) moderators for each employee's experience of their psychological conditions.

Similarly, needs are excluded from the list. As discussed earlier, needs are often described in terms equivalent to personal traits. It is claimed everyone has the same needs, but each person is unique regarding the strength of each need. Although needs are described as motives or drives, like other traits, needs moderate the experiences of each psychological condition, which leads to motivated behavior. For example, pay may have differing effects based on one's need for money. Consider someone needing a job (for money). The meaningfulness associated with getting a job may be very high and the required psychological safety low. As their need for money diminishes, the associated experienced meaningfulness may also diminish. The employee re-evaluates their three psychological conditions and may not accept a job with low psychological safety.

Lastly, perceived knowledge, skills, and abilities moderate the experiences of the three psychological conditions. Perceived knowledge, skills, and abilities primarily affect psychological availability and safety. As an employee evaluates their availability they reflect on their knowledge, skills, and abilities. Their availability is likely proportional to their perceived knowledge, skills, and abilities. Similarly, as an employee evaluates their safety, if they perceive

their knowledge, skills, and abilities to be high, they may reduce their need for safety due to the perceived high probability of success.

It is important to point out, *perceived* knowledge, skills, and abilities moderate the experiences of the three psychological conditions. The evaluations of the three psychological conditions are an individual activity and thus an employee's perceptions of their knowledge, skills, and abilities are what matters when they are evaluating their psychological conditions.

However, *actual* knowledge, skills, and abilities are moderators of the work product.

Employees' actual knowledge, skills, and abilities affects their work outcomes and subsequently their performances.

### **Practice Implications**

How can organizations use the MMOE to motivate employees to behave in alignment with desired organizational goals? Obviously, employees should know how their role execution benefits the organization. However, this is seldom the case. Managers rarely explain how employees' behavior contributes to organizational goals. It is often taken for granted employees know. Do the janitors know how their performance improves morale, lowers absenteeism, and reduces costs, which contributes to operating income improvement? Explaining this to employees, not only ensures behavioral alignment, but helps to increase employees' psychological meaningfulness (Carton, 2018).

Employees should feel safe performing their roles. As shown in Table 5, safety is unacknowledged and unaddressed in current motivation theories. Organizations should ensure their policies and procedures are clear and followed by all organizational members. Organizational leaders should self-assess and receive feedback on how their behaviors encourage or discourage employees' perceived safety.

Employees need the resources to be successful, but they also should perceive they have the resources necessary to be successful. Interventions to help improve employees' self-efficacy increases their perceived availability of resources. This can happen during feedback after a behavioral episode. If employees attribute failure as internal, stable, and uncontrollable, their self-efficacy may decrease. If this determination is accurate, then the employees should be placed in different roles, otherwise, they should be given reassurance the result was unstable and controllable.

Employees should be protected from physical, emotional, and cognitive exhaustion. Long hours may be unavoidable; however, organizations should pay close attention to employee exhaustion since it reduces employee availability and reduces their sense of safety. Reduced physical, emotional, or cognitive energies can lead to burnout and subsequently employee turnover.

It is important to re-emphasize, the influencers in Table 7 affect employees differently and may influence more than one psychological condition. For example, a challenging opportunity may enhance the sense of meaningfulness for one employee, while lowering the sense of safety of another. Similarly, investing in employees through increased training, technology, or role expansion may positively influence employees' meaningfulness and safety, while increasing their availability. Organizational leaders should understand the personalities and needs of their employees to be affective motivating them. Simply giving employees more of something may not have the intended effect. "On some occasions, excessive supplies (i.e., too much of a good thing) can actually increase strain" (Hansen, 2013, p. 42).

The MMOE shows the relationships between rewards and future behavior motivation. Organizational leaders should reward desired behaviors. However, rewards are subjectively

received. Organizational leaders should understand the expectations of employees. If the employees are expecting monetary bonuses but they get a hat or jacket instead, the reward may not have the desired effect even if given with the best intentions. Sometimes a ‘thank you’ note is enough. It is up to the employees’ supervisors to know the differences.

Organizational leaders should make sure employees believe they have control of their success. If employees believe success is unobtainable, and/or experience repeated failures, they are likely to experience learned helplessness (Harvey & Martinko, 2009), which diminishes their motivation to invest in beneficial behaviors.

### **Research Implications**

Each motivation theory has received considerable criticism and is said to be limited in applicability (Landy & Becker, 1987; Mitchell, 1997). Some authors suggest it is doubtful for there to be a grand theory of motivation, and research should focus on selecting the best theory as it pertains to a given motivation scenario or variables of interest (Landy & Becker, 1987; Mitchell, 1997). However, the MMOE shows each motivation theory compliments the others and has a unique position within the MMOE cycle. Rather than selecting one theory over the other, researchers may use the MMOE to frame the variable relationships appropriate for their study. The proximity of each variable is based on the level of analysis and the location within the MMOE cycle. For example, the MMOE illustrates needs have a distal relationship with performance, while goals have a more proximal relationship with performance. However, to study goal acceptance, one should include the moderating effect of needs. According to Landy and Becker (1987), “[t]here is no reason to believe that the same theory that will explain career choice will also explain the absence or work-related effort of an individual” (pp. 2-3). As

discussed, the MMOE, as an extension of Kahn's (1990) conceptualization, has the capability to explain both.

To provide conceptual clarity, different levels of analysis were co-mingled during the discussion of the MMOE. However, organizational behavior researchers should undertake the rigor necessary to ensure their variables of study are at the same level if they intend to study direct relationships. Similarly, variable measures should be at the desired level of analysis. For example, one should be cautious when using a job level (general) measure to explain task level performance.

The MMOE elucidates the individualistic nature of employee motivation. Although it is difficult to measure and influence individual employee motivation, research should focus on the individual rather than general relationships. This increases the understanding of various interventions. General interventions may positively affect a limited subset of the workforce and could negatively affect others.

The MMOE illuminates avenues for research. Motivation research tends to focus on the direct relationship between effort and performance; such that an increase in effort results in an increase in performance. However, there is a lack of conceptual clarity of performance. The MMOE indicates effort and performance are not directly related. According to the MMOE, an employee puts forth effort, which results in a work product. The work product is moderated by the employee's knowledge, skills, and abilities. The work product is evaluated to determine the employee's performance. Thus, one may associate effort with motivation, however it would be tenuous to use performance as an indication of motivation. The MMOE shows there is a relationship, but it may be weak depending on the evaluation of performance.

Different sections of the MMOE can be used for research. For example, research can be performed to understand how the equity evaluation and attributional process affects employees perceived psychological meaningfulness, safety, and availability. Researchers can seek to understand how positive/negative rewards, and associated feedback, affect the psychological conditions of employees who are approach (or avoidant) oriented. Researchers can explore how situational, and/or individual, differences affect the experiences of employees' psychological conditions.

Further, research can explore if/how engagement increases through cycles of the MMOE. Current research treats engagement as a static indicator of employee's level of engagement. Unlike the process leading to burnout, there is no identified process to become (or return to being) engaged. Engagement appears to simply exist at some level for each employee.

### **Limitations**

While the MMOE was developed based on the extant organizational behavior literature, it is not without limitations. First, the MMOE was derived based on organizational behavior research. While it appears to be applicable to other behaviors in life (i.e., smoking cessation or financial investing), it was not developed to explain those behaviors. Second, the MMOE does not explain how various personality traits and dispositions affect the experiences of the psychological conditions. The MMOE shows internal attributes (i.e., personality traits, needs, and values) affect (moderate) the subconscious weighting of the psychological conditions, however, the MMOE fails to go into much detail of this regard. Internal attributes change over time (Mitchell, 1997), and organizations presumably have little control over them. Therefore, focus was directed toward what organization can do to influence employee motivation independent of the make-up of internal attributes of employees. Third, the MMOE fails to

address the possibility the evaluations of the three psychological conditions take place in a defined sequence. The MMOE presupposes all three evaluations happen simultaneously. There is a possibility the evaluations take place in a prescribed order. Fourth, the MMOE does not address the link between behavioral intention and actual behavior. The MMOE suggests behavioral intention, and the subsequent investment of energies, is the outcome of the evaluation of the psychological conditions. However, there is no guarantee of the desired employee behavior. An “attitude towards an object [work] is but one variable that influences behavior with respect to that object” (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1974, p. 60). While there is no assurance of behavior, fulfilling the three psychological conditions substantially increases the likelihood of behaviors. As discussed earlier, even if one of the conditions is not met, the likelihood of engaged behavior is reduced. Last, the MMOE suggests the subconscious weight of any one psychological condition may dominate over the other two. However, there may be a defined hierarchy associated with the psychological conditions, such that one must be satisfied first (at some level) before the others have motivational implications.

### **Conclusion**

This paper examined the psychological mechanisms associated with how employees become engaged in beneficial behaviors for an organization. A motivation model of engagement was presented, which recognizes the individualistic nature of motivation and what influences employee motivation, and their subsequent engagement. The model was intended to blend simplicity with comprehensiveness and to be a useful heuristic for both practitioners and researchers.

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## CHAPTER 4 – APPLICATION OF FORMATIVE ENGAGEMENT MODEL

### **Overview**

Organizational behavior researchers fail to critically evaluate the congruence between their conceptualizations, definitions, and measures of employee engagement. There are essentially two conceptualizations of employee engagement. Based on their accompanying definitions, they are distinct and temporally different. One of the conceptualizations precedes behavior, and the other includes behavior. However, this is overlooked in employee engagement research, and often researchers cite both conceptualizations to support their research study. The most prevalent conceptualization of employee engagement is a cognitive-affective state. This conceptualization precedes behavior with the assumption behavior follows. However, the measurement instruments include general reflective behavior indicators. There is a lack of explanation (and analysis) regarding how reflective behavior indicators can be used to represent a conceptualization, which does not include behavior. This paper illuminates the incongruence of current employee engagement research and presents a heuristic model that aligns conceptualization, definition, and measure. The measurement model showcases the influencers of employee engagement. Further, a conceptual measurement instrument is presented, which captures the likelihood of employees engaging in behaviors beneficial to the organization and illuminates potential interventions to increase the likelihood of employees engaging.

### **Introduction**

Employee engagement research is in an unrecognized state of confusion. Researchers unwittingly confound conceptually distinct constructs. Researchers fail to recognize the two primary foundations for employee engagement (Kahn, 1990; Schaufeli et al., 2002) are

conceptually distinct. One is a general, non-focused, motivational state preceding behavior (Schaufeli et al., 2002). The other is an episodic, focused, motivated state including behavior (Kahn, 1990). One is reflected by vigor, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli et al., 2002) and the other is formed by the expression of physical, affective, and cognitive energies (Kahn, 1990). Further, research, and accompanying measurement instruments, continue to proliferate without regard to this distinction. This paper illuminates the confusion and presents a heuristic to resolve the confusion. A measurement model and conceptual instrument are offered to aid future research.

### **Employee Engagement Confusion**

Although there are thousands of articles written on employee engagement, researchers seem to indiscriminately choose definitions, study designs, and measures when studying employee engagement (Shuck, Osam et al., 2017). There are essentially two conceptualizations underpinning employee engagement—work engagement, as the opposite of burnout (Schaufeli et al., 2002) and personal engagement (Kahn, 1990). Often, both conceptualizations are included by researchers without regard to each concept being distinct from the other. This inhibits progress for organizational behavior research. Little rigor is undertaken to understand the substantial differences between the two conceptualizations. There appears to be a need for critical evaluation of the conceptualizations, definitions, and variable relationships of employee engagement.

### **Confounding Motivational and Motivated**

Employee engagement research concurrently describes employee engagement as a motivational state and a motivated state. Little distinction/clarity between the two is offered. Often, both are stated in support of the researcher's proposed conceptualization, definition, and

study design. Confounding ‘motivational’ with ‘motivated’ creates a considerable issue for organizational behavior research. Describing engagement as motivational (Ahmetoglu et al., 2015; Eldor & Harpaz, 2016; Inceoglu & Fleck, 2010; Kane-Frieder et al., 2014; Shuck et al., 2013), versus describing it as motivated (Byrne, 2015; Chalofsky & Krishna, 2009; Ugwu et al., 2014; Valero & Hirschi, 2016) changes engagement’s place in the cause and effect sequence. Employee engagement as motivational would precede behavior, where employee engagement as motivated would include behavior. In the former case, organizations would want to engage employees to motivate them, where in the latter case, organizations would want to motivate employees to engage. These are substantially different conceptualizations with subsequently different study designs and measurement tools. This difference is overlooked in the current employee engagement research.

### **Confounding Structural Models**

There are two foundational conceptualizations of employee engagement, personal engagement (Kahn, 1990) and the antipode of burnout (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Researchers attempt to equate the two, however, they are conceptually distinct. See Table 8 for the differences between the two conceptualizations. Schaufeli et al.’s (2002) is a general state, not focused and precedes behavior. Kahn’s (1990) is an episodic state, focused on task activities, and includes behavior. If one conceptualization precedes behavior and the other includes behavior, their relationships with other constructs/variables could be different. However, researchers attempt to demonstrate the same variable/construct relationships. Regardless of which conceptualization is chosen, researchers use similar study designs and measurement models. Figure 3 is a typical structural model (A) used in employee engagement research. Both conceptualizations are placed in the middle circle. However, the structural model should look

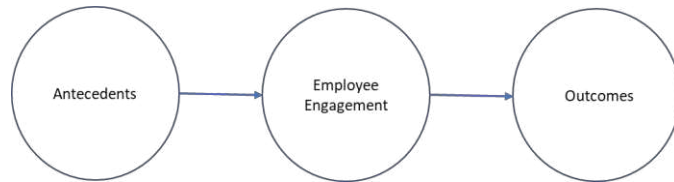
like B in Figure 3. The second circle from the left in B coincides with Schaufeli et al.'s (2002) conceptualization, where the third circle from the left coincides with Kahn's (1990) conceptualization. It is important to note, Kahn (1992) describes the equivalent of the second circle as psychological presence.

**Table 8**

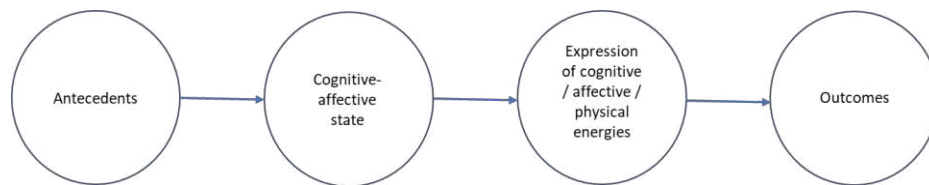
*Comparison of Two Employee Engagement Conceptualizations*

Conceptualization	Behavioral State	Focus	Temporal Aspect
Antipode of Burnout (Schaufeli et al., 2002)	General cognitive/affective state	Not focused on anything	Precedes physical behavior
Personal Engagement (Kahn, 1990)	Targeted, episodic, cognitive, affective, and physical state	Focused on task activities	Includes physical behavior

**A**



**B**



*Figure 3. Structural Models for Employee Engagement Research.*

Panel A: Example of typical structural model used in employee engagement research. Panel B: Recommended structural model with distinct employee engagement conceptualizations.

Organizational research typically describes the ‘outcomes’ of employee engagement as behavior and performance. Examples of outcomes of employee engagement include extra-role behavior, in-role behavior, contextual performance, and task performance. However, behavior

and performance are distinct from each other. Performance is evaluated behavior. Referring to B in Figure 3, the outcome of Schaufeli et al.'s engagement is the expression of cognitive, affective, and physical energies. The outcome of Kahn's engagement is a work product. The work product is typically a combination of intangible and tangible deliverables. The evaluation of the work product is employee performance. This simple analysis shows different study designs and measurement models should be used in evaluating each conceptualization. However, this is not the case in current reported employee engagement research.

### **Misaligned Measurement Models**

Measurement models used in employee engagement research appear to use reflective measures as indicators of employee engagement. See Table 9 for a list of instruments derived for employee engagement research. The researchers conceptualized employee engagement as a latent state, represented by various reflective indicators. These indicators 'reflect' the latent construct. Since the indicators are reflections of the latent construct, each should be affected by changes to the latent construct (Diamantopoulos & Siguaaw, 2006; Edwards & Bagozzi, 2000; MacKenzie et al., 2005). Thus, the indicators should be correlated, and all affected by the same antecedents.

This is seemingly at odds with Kahn's (1990) conceptualization, which most of the measures are based on (See Table 9). Kahn's conceptualization of employee engagement is determined by the expression of cognitive, affective, and physical energies focused on task activities. For this conceptualization, employee engagement is 'formed' by cognitive, affective, and physical indicators. This conceptualization is distinct from employee engagement as a cognitive-affective state. Unique measurement models should be used to capture each

conceptualization. Study designs and measures should be different for each conceptualization. This distinction is overlooked in employee engagement research.

**Table 9**

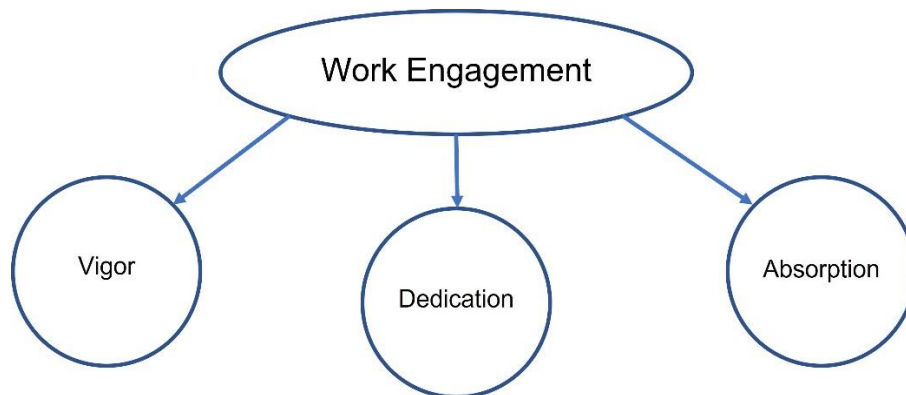
*Existing Engagement Measures Derived for Employee Engagement Research*

Measure	Indicators	Number of Scale Items	Conceptualization Basis
Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) (Schaufeli et al., 2002)	Vigor	6	Antipode of Burnout (Schaufeli et al., 2002)
	Dedication	5	
	Absorption	6	
Employee Engagement Scale (Shuck, Adelson et al., 2017)	Cognitive engagement	4	Personal Engagement (Kahn, 1990)
	Emotional engagement	4	
	Physical engagement	4	
Work Engagement (Rothbard, 2001)	Attention	4	Personal Engagement (Kahn, 1990)
	Absorption	5	
Intellectual, Social, and Affective Engagement (Soane et al., 2012)	Intellectual	3	Personal Engagement (Kahn, 1990)
	Social	3	
	Affective	3	
Job Engagement Scale (Rich et al., 2010)	Physical engagement	6	Personal Engagement (Kahn, 1990)
	Emotional engagement	6	
	Cognitive engagement	6	
Felt and Behavioral Engagement (Stumpf et al., 2013)	Felt engagement	5	Psychological, Behavioral, and Trait Engagement (Macey & Schneider, 2008)
	Behavioral engagement	9	
Job Engagement (Saks, 2006)	None	5	Personal Engagement (Kahn, 1990)
	Psychological Engagement (May et al., 2004)	Cognitive engagement	4
	Emotional engagement	4	
	Physical engagement	5	

Independent of the chosen conceptualization, all engagement measures appear to target the same phenomenon. Although Shuck, Osam, et al. (2017) claim each measurement instrument is grounded in a different framework, a review of the survey items shows they are each attempting to measure the same experiential state. It is questionable if there is a distinct difference between ‘I concentrate on my work’ versus ‘I concentrate on my job’. It is doubtful a survey respondent would make a distinction between them. The indicators for each measure are

intended to be reflective of the same latent construct. The predominant assertion is employee engagement is a latent cognitive-affective state. This causes further unacknowledged confusion for employee engagement research.

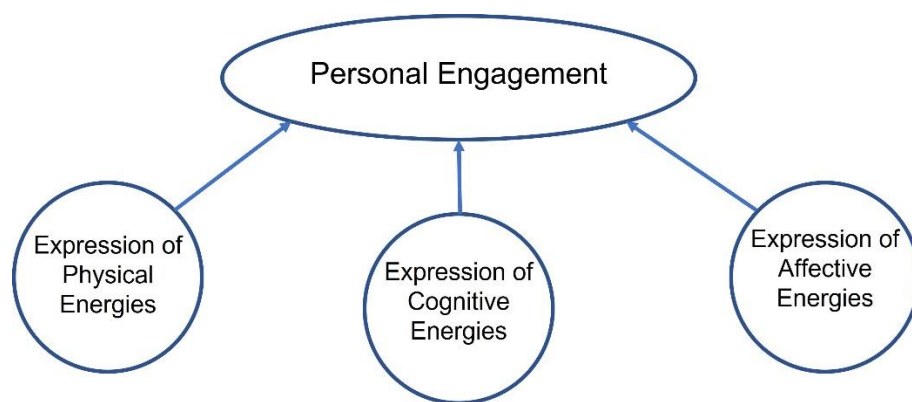
Schaufeli et al. (2002) described engagement as a cognitive-affective state. Their measure, Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES), used the reflective indicators of vigor, dedication, and absorption. A reflective measurement model, by design, suggests changes in the latent construct (engagement) are reflected in changes in the indicators. Since all indicators are reflective of employee engagement, changes in employee engagement causes changes in vigor, dedication, and absorption. Figure 4 shows the measurement model associated with Schaufeli et al.'s (2002) conceptualization. Therefore, a reduction in engagement, for example, is reflected as reductions of all three (vigor, dedication, and absorption) indicators.



*Figure 4.* Measurement Model Associated with Schaufeli et al.'s Conceptualization.

Conversely, Kahn (1990) described engagement as the expression of cognitive, affective, physical energies. For this model, employee engagement was a formative construct. Employee engagement was formed by the expression of cognitive, affective, and physical energies. Figure 5 shows the measurement model associated with Kahn's (1990) conceptualization. Each indicator is unique and independent of the other two. The combination of the three indicators

determines one's engagement. Thus, if there is a reduction in one of the three indicators, employee engagement is reduced. However, there is no requirement for the other two indicators to be reduced. For reflective models, all three indicators change due to a change in the focal latent construct. However, for formative models, the focal latent construct changes due to changes in the indicators (singularly or in combination) (Diamantopoulos & Siguaaw, 2006; Edwards & Bagozzi, 2000; MacKenzie et al., 2005). This difference is not acknowledged in employee engagement research.



*Figure 5.* Measurement Model Associated with Kahn's Conceptualization.

### **Misaligned Engagement Indicators**

Employee engagement conceptualized as a cognitive-affective state would precede behavior and assumes desired behavior follows. "Employee engagement concerns a forward moving intention of energy, but it is not the physical, observable behavior itself" (Shuck, Osam et al., 2017, p. 269). However, it is debatable if job attitudes (cognitive-affective states) have direct links to specific behaviors (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1974; Kruglanski et al., 2015; Schneider et al., 2003). "One can be physiologically aroused without demonstrating physical movement and action" (Byrne, 2015, p. 16). Thus, there is no guarantee employee engagement as a cognitive-

affective state leads to behavior. A review of the available measures, however, shows each includes reflective behavioral indicators. This presents extensive issues.

If engagement is a cognitive-affective state, then are there times when one is engaged without the exhibition of behavior? If the answer is 'no', then it would lead to the conclusion all behavior is the result of being engaged. For this conclusion, researchers would only need to observe one's behavior to determine one's engagement. As such, one's engagement is reflected by one's behavior. As a logical follow up, if one only exhibits behavior while being engaged, then engagement should be conceptualized as including behavior, which would agree with Kahn's (1990) conceptualization. If, however, one can be engaged without exhibiting behavior, then how can reflective behavioral indicators be used to describe one's level of engagement? The instruments identified in Table 9 each have reflective behavioral indicators/survey items.

Three of the instruments presented in Table 9 describe their indicators as cognitive engagement, emotional engagement, and physical engagement. This unintentionally causes confusion. As reflective indicators of a latent cognitive-affective construct, they share common variance and are not independent. If one's physical engagement decreases, due to a reduction of the latent construct (employee engagement), then emotional engagement and cognitive engagement must decrease as well since they too are reflective indicators of the same latent construct. For this measurement model, a reduction in the latent construct is reflected by reductions in the three indicators. However, it is different with a formative measurement model. With formative indicators, each indicator can vary independently of the others. If one's physical engagement decreases, their emotional engagement and cognitive engagement may remain the same. In both situations, employee engagement decreased, however, with reflective indicators,

all indicators would decrease, where with formative indicators only a reduction in one indicator is necessary.

This indicator analysis shows confusion in employee engagement research. If engagement is conceptualized as a cognitive-affective state, then the use of behavioral indicators is questionable since there is no guarantee behavior follows. Otherwise, employee engagement should be conceptualized to include behavior. It is tenuous to use behavioral reflective indicators when engagement is conceptualized as a cognitive-affective state. For engagement conceptualized as a cognitive-affective state, it would seem more fitting to characterize cognitive-affective engagement as a state of intention and use reflective indicators representing an employee's 'willingness to' or 'intention to' invest behaviors. This would improve the alignment between the indicators and the chosen conceptualization of employee engagement.

### **Lack of Specificity in Existing Engagement Measures**

Other concerns with the available measures revolve around their specificity and usefulness. Engagement researchers use general survey items to determine one's perceived level of engagement. The survey items require respondents to reflect on when they are 'at work', 'working', or performing their 'job'. There is a lack of context, other than 'at work' or 'on the job', so the items only describe one's general level of engagement. The general state is analogous to measuring trait-like attributes since the survey items elicit stable responses. Thus, it is doubtful participants' responses will change unless there is a considerable change to their work or job. See Table 10 for examples of survey items from available measures. The items are generic and require participants' responses based on their perceived general state while at work. Thus, it is unclear what 'state' is being captured. Do the measures capture one's level of engagement, one's likely level of engagement, or one's general attitude about their work or job?

**Table 10***Existing Engagement Measures and Example Survey Items*

Measure	Example Survey Item
Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) (Schaufeli et al., 2002)	"I am proud of the work I do" (p. 89)
Employee Engagement Scale (Shuck, Adelson et al., 2017)	"I concentrate on my job when I am at work" (p. 16)
Work Engagement (Rothbard, 2001)	"I concentrate a lot on my work" (p. 684)
Intellectual, Social, and Affective (Soane et al., 2012)	"I concentrate on my work" (p. 547)
Job Engagement Scale (Rich et al., 2010)	"At work I concentrate on my job" (p. 634)
Felt and Behavioral Engagement (Stumpf et al., 2013)	"I am enthusiastic about my work" (p. 258)
Job Engagement (Saks, 2006)	"I really throw myself into my job" (p. 617)
Psychological Engagement (May et al., 2004)	"I exert a lot of energy performing my job" (p. 36)

Further, it is questionable if general level measures provide pragmatic utility. It is difficult to use a general measure to determine what affected the level of the focal construct or what can be done to alter the level of the focal construct. General measures using reflective indicators of the focal construct are rearward looking. They are intended to reflect the general state of the focal construct. This makes it difficult to determine what affected the level of the indicated state, or what interventions can be introduced to alter the level of the indicated state. Examination at the survey item level fails to provide clarity. It is indiscernible why a respondent chose '3', for example, for the items 'I concentrate on my job' or 'I exert a lot of energy on my job'. The possible reasons for their responses are vast, prohibiting any inferences for why. Therefore, it would be difficult to ascertain how to influence employee engagement using general level measures.

The available instruments measure trait-like attributes regarding one's work or job. The survey items fail to provide insight into why an employee, and population, score the way they do. This makes it very difficult to design interventions to affect the population's level of engagement. The survey items fail to inquire about aspects of the employees' work or job. Therefore, it is questionable if scores of levels of engagement will change without a considerable change to respondents' job or work.

### **Unexplored Respondent Heterogeneity**

The survey items of the measures typically get aggregated to a composite engagement score for each respondent. Subsequently, all respondents get aggregated to a population level engagement score. The population score is used in structural analysis to indicate relationships between engagement and other variables/constructs. This nomothetic study design treats the population as homogeneous. However, the population is extremely heterogeneous. There is heterogeneity in inter-individual motivation, and heterogeneity in intra-individual motivation. Employees differ in their financial situation, tenure with the company, role and responsibilities, health, marital status, family member health, age, number of dependents, and level in the organization. Additionally, employees are in a constant state of change. They gain knowledge indirectly through success/failure and directly through coaching/training. Employees' roles and responsibilities change, their financial and health situations change, and their personal lives change. Thus, it is tenuous to assume a homogeneous population or a static state for the population.

Even though the indicators are assumed to represent a homogeneous population, it is evident they should represent the heterogeneity of the sample. However, this presents a problem. If the measure indicators have small standard deviations, they fail to represent the heterogeneity

of the population and the validity of the measure would be in question. If, however, the indicators have large standard deviations, then one would question the use of a nomothetic approach, since the aggregated (averaged) indicator fails to be an adequate representation of the respondents. It is questionable if the survey items have the specificity to capture the heterogeneity of the sample. For example, 'I concentrate on my work' (a typical survey item), is likely to reveal a homogeneous response (small standard deviation) regardless of the employees' jobs, expertise, roles, responsibilities, or personal situations.

### **Heuristic Measurement Model**

Employee engagement research is in confusion. Researchers are unsure if employee engagement is motivational or motivated. Researchers fail to discern between Kahn's (1990) construct versus Schaufeli et al.'s (2002) construct. Kahn's construct is formative and includes behavior. Schaufeli et al.'s is reflective and precedes behavior. Kahn's is an episodic motivated state. Schaufeli et al.'s is a general motivational state. Variable relationships will differ between the two constructs. Regardless of the conceptualization cited, researchers use general reflective measures. These measures include behavioral indicators due to the belief employee engagement affects behavior. However, if employee engagement is a cognitive-affective state, there is no assurance behavior will follow and questionable if behavior can be used as a reflective indicator.

It is clear, existing survey instruments are measuring a general level of employee engagement. As discussed, general measures fail to indicate why an employee (or population) is at the indicated level of engagement, what affected the level of engagement, or what interventions should be implemented to affect the level of engagement. Therefore, organizations should question the usefulness of the available measurement instruments. Presumably,

organizations want to know more than the general level of employee engagement for their organization.

Organizations want employees behaving in a manner benefitting the organization. It is dubious to assume employee engagement as a general cognitive-affective state will meet this objective since there is no guarantee directed behavior follows. For employee engagement to provide organizational value, it should be defined as “*an individual employee’s cognitive, emotional, and physical energies directed toward activities relevant to the goals of the organization*” (Stampka & Makela, 2023a, p. 55). This is aligned with Kahn’s (1990) conceptualization. If engaged employees are directing their energies toward the goals of the organization, then organizations would benefit by influencing the likelihood for their employees to engage.

A heuristic model is presented to help capture the likelihood of employee engagement, while providing insights into potential interventions, which may be enacted to increase the likelihood of employees engaging. The measurement model is based on the Motivation Model of Engagement (MMOE) (Stampka & Makela, 2023b). The MMOE shows the pathway to employee engagement is through experiencing three psychological conditions. Employees are likely to engage if they experience psychological meaningfulness, psychological availability, and psychological safety (MSA). Thus, the proposed measurement model captures the employees’ experiential states of these conditions and identifies what organizations can focus on to positively influence these conditions for their employees. This paper blends idiographic and nomothetic approaches to offer a heuristic to capture insights into the likelihood employees will engage, and what can be done to influence, and increase, the likelihood of employees engaging. Since motivation and employee engagement are individual level constructs, the influencers will

be unique for each employee. Recognizing the difficulty for organizations to enact unique individual level interventions, this paper presents a way to identify team level interventions based on findings from the individual level.

### **Psychological Conditions Required to Engage**

The levels of employees' willingness to engage are determined by their experiences of MSA. Psychological meaningfulness is the evaluation of one's experience of meaningfulness *in, at, and of* work (Stampka & Makela, 2023b). Psychological availability is the evaluation of one's available physical energy, emotional energy, intellectual energy, and perceived availability of resources (Stampka & Makela, 2023b). Psychological safety is the evaluation of one's experience of interpersonal trust, organizational trust, organizational justice, and physical safety (Stampka & Makela, 2023b). The psychological conditions are moderated by employees' needs, dispositions, personality traits, and their perceived knowledge, skills, and abilities (Stampka & Makela, 2023b).

Each employee is unique, with different moderators, therefore their experiences of the three psychological conditions will be different and they will be motivated by different variables. Since organizations have little control/influence over employees' traits, dispositions, and needs, this paper focuses on how to capture the experiential states of the employees' psychological conditions and identify opportunities to improve them. Organizations can seek ways to influence the likelihood of their employees engaging in beneficial work behaviors, while accepting the vast heterogeneity of the workforce.

To increase the likelihood employees engage, organizations should positively influence the employees' experiences of MSA. Organizations can gain insights into the potential for their employees to engage by examining employees' experiences of MSA and discovering what may

be inhibiting employees from fully engaging in benefit to the organization. Organizations can increase the motivation of their employees by improving the employees' experiences of MSA. While there are no guarantees employees will fully invest their energies in their work, it is nearly certain employees will not fully engage if they evaluate their work as meaningless, not safe, or lack the energies and resources to perform the tasks.

### **Capturing Employees' Experiences of Meaningfulness, Safety, and Availability**

Employees experience high levels of MSA prior to fully investing themselves in their work activities. If any of these are missing, the likelihood of engagement in activities beneficial to the organization will be reduced. Thus, to understand the likelihood employees will engage, we want to understand their perceived experiences of the psychological conditions. We are not, however, solely interested in the general levels of each condition. To garner utility, we want to know what is lacking in their experiences, which provides an indication about what can be changed. To accomplish this, a formative approach is taken. The interest lies in those variables forming the experiences of the psychological conditions. Rather than using reflective indicators of MSA, which may only indicate the level of each condition, we want indicators that are separate, unique, and do not simultaneously co-vary with the focal construct (psychological condition). By using a formative approach, each of the variables hypothesized to influence each psychological condition can be evaluated separately.

Figure 6 shows the proposed measurement model. In this model, the likelihood of employee engagement is formed by the experiences of MSA. Meaningfulness, safety, and availability are formed by associated influencers.

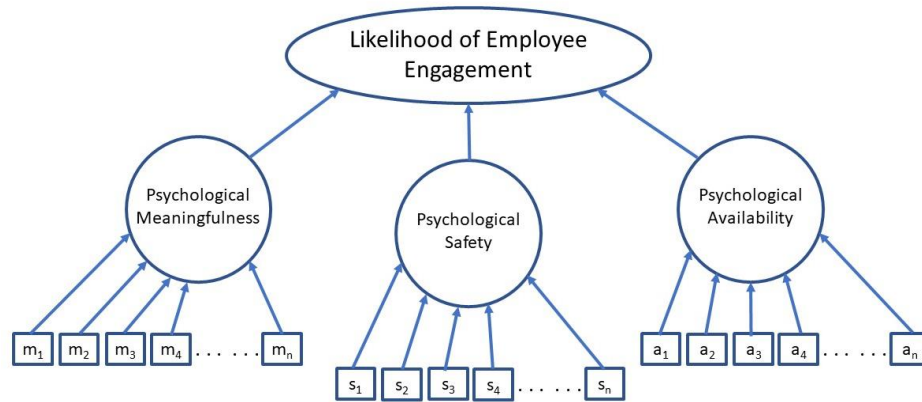


Figure 6. Formative Measurement Model.

### Influencing the Three Psychological Conditions

“If we understand the psychological foundations of engagement, we may be able to better predict why some individuals come to psychologically identify with their jobs” (May et al., 2004, p. 14). Kahn (1990) determined three psychological conditions “. . . defined the experiential conditions whose presence influenced people to personally engage and whose absence influenced them to personally disengage” (p. 703). If the likelihood of employees’ engaging is determined by their experiences of the three psychological conditions, then it is important to understand the variables which influence them. To gain insights into the likelihood of employees engaging in behaviors beneficial to the organization, we should capture the employees’ perspectives of receiving influencers, and how important the influencers are to the employee. This helps to predict the potential influencers on the three psychological conditions.

#### *Influencers of Psychological Meaningfulness*

Psychological meaningfulness is the experiential state of meaningfulness *in* work, meaningfulness *at* work, and meaningfulness *of* work (Stampka & Makela, 2023b).

Psychological meaningfulness is experienced when employees feel valued, worthwhile, and useful. According to Kahn (1990), three factors influence psychological meaningfulness. They

are task characteristics, role characteristics, and work interactions. Task characteristics are described as “[j]obs involving more or less challenge, variety, creativity, autonomy, and clear delineation of procedures and goals” (p. 705). Role characteristics are “[f]ormal positions that offer more or less attractive identities, through fit with preferred self-image, and status and influence” (p. 705). Work interactions “included rewarding interpersonal interactions with co-workers and clients (p. 707). “Meaningful interactions allowed people to feel valuable and valued” (p. 708). In this context, work interactions are the experience of contributing to, or helping, co-workers and clients, and receiving respect and appreciation. This is different than supervisor, co-worker, or organizational support, which is accounted for in the psychological safety discussion.

The three factors which Kahn describes as influencing psychological meaningfulness are tapping into Pratt and Ashforth’s (2003) meaning *in* work and meaning *at* work. These are similar to the factors associated with Shuck and Rose’s (2013) ‘contribution’ and ‘influence’. Missing are the factors associated with meaning *of* work (Stampka & Makela, 2023b), which are similar to the factors associated with Shuck and Rose’s (2013) ‘personal reward’. These factors are those associated with pay, benefits, recognition, advancement, and status (Shuck & Rose, 2013).

Table 11 offers a list of potential influencers encompassing meaningfulness in work, meaningfulness at work, and meaningfulness of work. Although an effort was made to place each influencer in the appropriate category, it is possible, and arguable, a given influencer may fall within a different category depending on one’s perspective. However, each influencer is described in the literature as influencing an employee’s experience of meaningfulness.

**Table 11***Potential Influencers for Psychological Meaningfulness*

Meaning in work	Meaning at work	Meaning of work
<b>Autonomy/Personal Discretion/Freedom to Take Initiative</b> (Kahn, 1990; Saks, 2006; Isaksen, 2000; Rosso et al., 2010)	<b>Belonging</b> (Schnell et al., 2013)	<b>Career Opportunities/Growth</b> (Isaksen, 2000; Saks & Gruman, 2014; Shuck & Rose, 2013)
<b>Being Appreciated</b> (Shuck & Rose, 2013)	<b>Client Relations</b> (May et al., 2004)	<b>Means to an End</b> (Rosso et al., 2010)
<b>Being Needed/Valued</b> (Kahn, 1990)	<b>Having a Voice</b> (Kahn & Fellows, 2013)	<b>Pay</b> (Shuck & Rose, 2013)
<b>Challenge</b> (Kahn & Fellows, 2013; Saks, 2006)	<b>Importance</b> (Kahn, 1990)	<b>Recognition</b> (Shuck & Rose, 2013)
<b>Clear Roles</b> (Kahn, 1990; Kahn & Fellows, 2013)	<b>Influencing the Organization</b> (Kahn, 1990; Shuck & Rose, 2013)	<b>Reward</b> (Shuck & Rose, 2013)
<b>Creativity</b> (Kahn, 1990)	<b>Influencing Others</b> (Kahn, 1990)	<b>Status</b> (Kahn, 1990)
<b>Company Mission</b> (Schnell et al., 2013)	<b>Job Control</b> (Saks & Gruman, 2014)	<b>Work/Life Balance</b> (Rosso et al., 2010)
<b>Contribution / Making a Difference / Organizational Impact</b> (Saks, 2006; Shuck & Rose, 2013)	<b>Social Relations</b> (Kahn & Fellows, 2013; Schnell et al., 2013)	
<b>Learning New Things</b> (Isaksen, 2000)		
<b>Skill Variety</b> (Hackman & Oldham, 1976; Kahn, 1990; Saks, 2006)		
<b>Task Identity</b> (Hackman & Oldham, 1976)		
<b>Task Significance</b> (May et al., 2004; Schnell et al., 2013)		
<b>Work/Role Fit</b> (Kahn & Fellows, 2013; May et al., 2004)		

*Influencers of Psychological Safety*

Psychological safety is the experience of being able “to show and employ one’s self without fear of negative consequences to self-image, status, or career” (Kahn, 1990, p. 708). According to Kahn (1990), four factors influence psychological safety. The four factors are interpersonal relationships, group and intergroup dynamics, management style and process, and organizational norms. Interpersonal relationships are those which are supportive, open, and trusting. Group and intergroup dynamics are unconscious roles employees assume, which reflect

the identity of a group to which they are a member. Management style and process are supportive, competent, predictable, consistent, and clear. Organizational norms are shared expectations about appropriate behaviors and emotions of employees.

The four factors tap into organizational trust, interpersonal trust, and organizational justice. Missing are employees' perceptions of their physical safety (Stampka & Makela, 2023b). Employees will be less likely to engage if they fear for their physical safety. Table 12 describes a list of potential influencers for psychological safety encompassing organizational trust, interpersonal trust, organizational justice, and physical safety. An effort was made to place each influencer in the appropriate category based on existing literature. However, it is possible, and arguable, a given influencer may fall within a different category depending on one's perspective. However, each influencer is described in the literature as influencing a component of the proposed characterization of psychological safety.

### ***Influencers of Psychological Availability***

Psychological availability is the experience of having the physical, emotional, and psychological resources to engage in task activities (Kahn, 1990). Psychological availability indicates "how ready people are to engage, given the distractions they experience as members of social systems" (Kahn, 1990, p. 714). According to Kahn (1990), four types of distractions negatively influence psychological availability. The distractions are depletions of physical and emotional energy, individual insecurity, and outside lives.

**Table 12**

*Potential Influencers for Psychological Safety*

Organizational Trust	Interpersonal Trust	Organizational Justice	Physical Safety
<p><b>Competence/ Ability / Capability</b> (Mayer et al., 1995; Mishra &amp; Spreitzer, 1998; Pirson &amp; Malhotra, 2011; Shockley-Zalabak et al., 2010)</p>	<p><b>The ‘Other’: Acts with Integrity</b> (Dirks, 1999)</p>	<p><b>Accurate / Complete / Truthful Information</b> (Colquitt, 2001; Moorman, 1991; Niehoff &amp; Moorman, 1993)</p>	<p><b>Organization Cares About Employee Wellbeing</b> (Rich et al., 2010)</p>
<p><b>Concern for Employees / Care / Benevolence / Respect</b> (Mayer et al., 1995; Pirson &amp; Malhotra, 2011; Shockley-Zalabak et al., 2010)</p>	<p><b>Cares About Group Interests</b> (Dirks, 1999)</p>	<p><b>Clarifies / Justifies / Discusses Decisions</b> (Niehoff &amp; Moorman, 1993)</p>	<p><b>Perceived Health Risk</b> (Leventhal et al., 1998; Rogers, 1975; Rosenstock et al., 1988)</p>
<p><b>Honesty / Sincerity</b> (Shaw, 1997; Shockley-Zalabak et al., 2010)</p>	<p><b>Cares for Your Interests</b> (Dirks, 1999)</p>	<p><b>Compensation / Rewards / Recognition is Fair</b> (Colquitt, 2001; Jašková, 2015)</p>	<p><b>Perceived Risk of Injury</b> (Rogers, 1975)</p>
<p><b>Integrity</b> (Mayer et al., 1995; Pirson &amp; Malhotra, 2011; Shaw, 1997)</p>	<p><b>Demonstrates Concern</b> (Shaw, 1997)</p>	<p><b>Considers Employees’ Personal Needs</b> (Niehoff &amp; Moorman, 1993)</p>	<p><b>Safety Climate / Culture</b> (Casey et al., 2017; Neal &amp; Griffin, 2002)</p>
<p><b>Reliability / Stability</b> (Hurley, 2012; Mishra &amp; Spreitzer, 1998; Shockley-Zalabak et al., 2010)</p>	<p><b>Is Benevolent</b> (Vanhala et al., 2016)</p>	<p><b>Decisions are Consistent</b> (Moorman, 1991; Niehoff &amp; Moorman, 1993)</p>	
<p><b>Strategy</b> (Hurley, 2012)</p>	<p><b>Is Competent</b> (Dirks, 1999; Feltman, 2009; Vanhala et al., 2016)</p>	<p><b>Equal Opportunities for Advancement</b> (Jašková, 2015)</p>	
<p><b>Support</b> (Hurley, 2012)</p>	<p><b>Is Consistent</b> (Butler &amp; Cantrell, 1984; McAllister, 1995)</p>	<p><b>Opportunity to Appeal / Challenge Decisions</b> (Niehoff &amp; Moorman, 1993)</p>	
<p><b>Transparency/Open Communication/Sharing Critical Information</b> (Mishra &amp; Morrissey, 1990; Mishra &amp; Spreitzer, 1998; Pirson &amp; Malhotra, 2011; Shockley-Zalabak et al., 2010)</p>	<p><b>Is Dependable</b> (Dirks, 1999; McAllister, 1995)</p>	<p><b>Procedures are Accurate</b> (Colquitt, 2001)</p>	
<p><b>Value Congruence / Shared Values</b> (Pirson &amp; Malhotra, 2011; Shockley-Zalabak et al., 2010)</p>	<p><b>Is Honest</b> (Feltman, 2009; Rotter, 1967)</p>	<p><b>Seeks Input / Involvement / Viewpoints</b> (Niehoff &amp; Moorman, 1993)</p>	
	<p><b>Is Loyal</b> (Butler &amp; Cantrell, 1984)</p>	<p><b>Treated Fairly</b> (Ambrose &amp; Schminke, 2009)</p>	
	<p><b>Is Reliable</b> (Vanhala et al., 2016)</p>	<p><b>Treated with Respect / Kindness / Consideration / Dignity / Courtesy</b> (Colquitt, 2001; Niehoff &amp; Moorman, 1993)</p>	
	<p><b>Keeps Word / Promises</b> (Feltman, 2009; Rotter, 1967)</p>	<p><b>Unbiased</b> (Colquitt, 2001; Niehoff &amp; Moorman, 1993)</p>	
		<p><b>Workload / Job Responsibilities are Fair</b> (Niehoff &amp; Moorman, 1993)</p>	

Employees have depletions of energy when they are physically and/or emotionally exhausted. Individual insecurities generate anxiety, which occupies energy that would otherwise be available to the employee. There are three dimensions associated with insecurity—lack of self-confidence, heightened self-consciousness, and ambivalence about fit with the organization. Outside life distractions are those non workplace situations employees are preoccupied with to invest energies in work activities.

Overlooked in Kahn's (1990) conceptualization of psychological availability are the external resources (tools/equipment), and personal resources (knowledge, skill, and ability), necessary for employees to perform their work activities (Stampka & Makela, 2023b). As employees evaluate their availability, they will consider the tools and skills needed to perform the tasks. Employees will have difficulty engaging if they lack necessary tools and skills to perform their work. Perceived knowledge, skills, and abilities act as moderators when employees evaluate their availability. When performing the same task, an employee with a perceived surplus of knowledge, skill, and ability will likely perceive to require less availability (energies) than an employee with a perceived deficit of knowledge, skill, and ability.

Table 13 provides a list of potential influencers of psychological availability. An effort was made to place each influencer in the appropriate category based on existing literature. However, it is possible, and arguable, a given influencer may fall within a different category depending on one's perspective. However, each influencer is described in the literature as influencing a component of the proposed characterization of psychological availability.

**Table 13***Potential Influencers for Psychological Availability*

Physical Energies	Emotional Energies	Knowledge, Skills, Abilities	External Resources
<b>Family Life (New Baby)</b> (Kahn, 1990)	<b>Family Life</b> (DeBaylo & Michel, 2022)	<b>Clear Direction</b> (Kahn, 1990)	<b>Electronics</b> (Hobfoll, 1989)
<b>Number of Hours Worked</b> (Kahn, 1990)	<b>Financial Hardship</b> (Grzywacz & Marks, 2000)	<b>Coaching/Mentoring/Feedback</b> (Stone, 1999)	<b>Hardware</b> (Hobfoll, 1989)
<b>Physical Stamina</b> (Kahn, 1990)	<b>New Relationships</b> (Kahn, 1990)	<b>Experience</b> (Hobfoll, 1989)	<b>Software</b> (Hobfoll, 1989)
<b>Physical Strength to Perform Activities</b> (Kahn, 1990)	<b>Personal Life Stressors (Divorce)</b> (DeBaylo & Michel, 2022; Grzywacz & Marks, 2000)	<b>Job/Person Fit</b> (Kahn, 1990)	<b>Tools/Equipment</b> (Hobfoll, 1989)
<b>Recovery Time</b> (Sonntag, 2003)	<b>Sick Family Member</b> (DeBaylo & Michel, 2022; Grzywacz & Marks, 2000)	<b>Training</b> (Aguinis & Kraiger, 2009)	
<b>Sick Family Member</b> (DeBaylo & Michel, 2022)		<b>Tenure with Organization</b> (Hobfoll, 1989)	
<b>Time Pressure</b> (Kahn, 1990)	<b>Work Frustrations</b> (Kahn, 1990)		
<b>Workload</b> (Kahn, 1990)			

**Importance to the Employee**

Lacking in employee engagement research is the importance/value of an influencer ascribed by employees. Often, it is assumed each employee will assign the same level of importance to a variable. For example, Bakker et al. (2008) imply job resources of autonomy, performance feedback, social support, and skill variety led to increased work engagement. This assumes every employee's engagement will increase if they receive these resources. However, it is doubtful each employee will ascribe high importance to these resources. Stampka and Makela (2023b) discussed situations in which increasing autonomy, for example, may reduce engagement through a reduction in employee's psychological safety. Similarly, increasing coaching or social support may not increase motivation to engage if these 'resources' have minimal importance to the employee, or they are not variables inhibiting employee engagement.

Additionally, increasing coaching or social support may decrease psychological safety if the employee already perceives to be getting adequate amounts of each.

We are interested in the employees' experiences of the three psychological conditions. Therefore, it is important to know if they are having a positive, negative, or ambivalent experience. To uncover this, we want to know more than just how much of a potential 'influencer' the employee is receiving. We want to know how important the influencer is to the employee. For example, without context, employees may indicate they are under paid for the work they produce. However, pay may not be important to every employee. Some employees may be more influenced by the company's mission. Even if they believe they are underpaid, underpayment may not negatively affect their psychological conditions, since they are not influenced by pay.

Additionally, employees perceived levels of equity regarding their work product and their pay may change as their career changes/grows. Employees may feel adequately compensated at the present time but may feel an equity imbalance as they take on more responsibility or grow in their knowledge, skills, and abilities. At one point, pay may become a motivator (or demotivator) if they believe their value exceeds their compensation.

### **Influencer Gap**

The key to understanding their experiences of the psychological conditions is to understand how 'influencers' under the control of the organization (i.e., mission, pay, prestige, security, benefits) align to motivate employees. This is more than just desire. Employees may desire more pay, or a better office, even if they are minimal influencers. There are two components required for organizations to capture the magnitude of the alignment between their offering and the value to employees. Organizations should identify the gap between how much

of an influencer is being received by the employee, compared to the importance ascribed to the influencer by the employee. Individually, each of these offers little insight for the organization. However, they are very insightful in combination. For example, organizations would not expect there to be a motivating (or demotivating) influence if employees feel they are adequately compensated, and compensation is important to them. This balance would not be expected to affect the experience of psychological meaningfulness. However, we would expect the motivating (or demotivating) influence to increase as imbalances increase. For example, a large demotivating influence would be expected if employees feel they are underpaid and compensation is extremely important to them. In this case, a reduction in experienced psychological meaningfulness would be expected. Similarly, tension may be created in employees if they are highly compensated and compensation is not important to them. In this situation, increasing employees' compensation may not influence them, and may create high internal tension resulting in demotivating affects. This could result from many reasons, with one being a reduction in psychological safety. Highly compensated employees may be at a higher risk of losing their job during layoffs, thus some employees may perceive a reduction in job security, which manifests as a reduction in their psychological safety.

It is clear, to capture the employees' experiential states of psychological meaningfulness, safety, and availability, we want to know more than just the general level of a perceived influencer or the desire for the influencer. We want to know how important the influencer is to them. Similarly, capturing the importance alone is not adequate. Solely capturing importance merely describes the relative value an influencer has for the employee. Relative value fails to capture if/how the influencer is being satisfied. Though an employee may evaluate something as extremely important, we would expect low motivating potential if the level received is high.

## Conceptual Survey Instrument

The Appendix provides survey items intended to capture employees' experiences of the three psychological conditions. The items were derived based on the influencers identified in Tables 11, 12, and 13. The first part of the survey (see Appendix items 1-15) captures the experience of psychological meaningfulness. Meaningfulness is typically described as having a sense of value, worthwhileness, importance, significance, contribution, influence, and reward (Hackman & Oldham, 1976; Kahn, 1990; May et al., 2004; Shuck & Rose, 2013). The items were developed to capture an employee's expected experience of meaningfulness in, at, and of work.

The second part of the survey (see Appendix items 16-30) captures the experience of psychological safety. The items were developed to indicate an employee's experience of being able "to show and employ one's self without fear of negative consequences to self-image, status, or career" (Kahn, 1990, p. 708). The items were developed to indicate employees expected experiences of organizational trust, interpersonal trust, organizational justice, and physical safety.

The third part of the survey (see Appendix items 31-45) captures the experience of psychological availability. The items were developed to indicate an employee's experience of "how ready people are to engage, given the distractions they experience as members of social systems" (Kahn, 1990, p. 714).

Although there are many influencers of meaningfulness (described in Table 11), safety (described in Table 12), and availability (described in Table 13), an effort was made to reduce the number of survey items to a manageable subset of potential influencers. Potential influencers

were combined to reduce the number of items while generating insights for potential organizational interventions.

### **Meaningfulness Survey Items**

The survey items in section 1 of the appendix (items 1 – 15) were developed to capture the influencers of psychological meaningfulness identified in Table 11. Items 1 to 4, 7, 14, and 15 capture influencers for meaning in work. Items 5, 6, and 8 capture influencers for meaning at work. Items 9 to 13 capture influencers for meaning of work.

### **Safety Survey Items**

The survey items in section 2 of the appendix (items 16 – 30) were developed to capture the influencers of psychological safety identified in Table 12. Items 18, 19, 22, 23, and 30 capture influencers for organizational trust. Items 17, 21, 24, and 25 capture influencers for interpersonal trust. Items 20 and 26 to 29 capture influencers for organizational justice. Item 16 captures an influencer for physical safety.

### **Availability Survey Items**

The survey items in section 3 of the appendix (items 31 – 45) were developed to capture the influencers of psychological availability identified in Table 13. Items 32, 33, and 35 to 37 capture influencers of physical energies. Items 34 and 44 capture influencers of emotional energies. Items 38 to 43 capture influencers for knowledge, skills, and abilities. Items 31 and 45 capture influencers for external resources.

## **Data Analysis**

The survey items provided in the Appendix are intended to be used to identify deficiencies in employees' experiences of their three psychological conditions. The larger the deficiencies, the less likely employees will fully invest themselves in their work activities.

The survey can be used at the individual employee level, the team or business unit level, or organizational level. Even though it would be extremely valuable to develop individualized interventions, it is assumed most employees would not want to put a personal identifier on the survey. Therefore, what follows is a discussion about how to use the survey to identify areas of focus and respective team/business unit interventions. However, the same analysis can be used at the individual level if employees are willing to participate at that level.

Each influencer is conceptualized as a formative indicator of the experiential state of a psychological condition. Therefore, each is unique in its effect on the psychological condition. An item scale of 0 to 10 is used such that each influencer uniquely contributes to the total score for the respective psychological condition. “A” statements are intended to capture the amount of an influencer received by the employee. “B” statements are intended to capture the importance of the influencer to the employee. Both “A” and “B” statements are given scales of 0 to 10. “A” statements have the anchors of 0 (Not at all) and 10 (To a great extent). “B” statements have anchors of 0 (Not at all) and 10 (Extremely).

The value in the data resides in the gap between how much of an influencer employees perceive to be receiving versus how important each influencer is to employees. Gaps can range from +10 to -10. Since each influencer is unique, a large number of extreme gap scores are unexpected unless the employees are disgruntled. Gap scores are calculated by subtracting the “B” statement score from the “A” statement score. Subsequently, a positive gap score would indicate a surplus of an influencer, and a negative gap score would indicate a deficit of an influencer. The larger the number (in an absolute sense) indicates a greater mismatch between the amount of an influencer received compared to the importance ascribed by the employee. A gap score of “0” would indicate a match. Organizations would want to focus on the largest

negative gaps when considering interventions. These are areas likely inhibiting employees from fully engaging.

### **Level of Analysis**

We propose focusing the analysis on the team (or business unit) level. While organizational level analysis may prove to be insightful, team (or business unit) level interventions may be more effective to improve employee engagement. The following analysis will be described at the team level; however, the organizational level analysis may be the same.

Gap scores for each item should be summed (aggregated) across all employees. The aggregated gap scores for each item should then be ranked starting with the largest negative score. The items with the largest negative scores should be prioritized when determining interventions. Care should be taken to refrain from attempting to take on too many interventions. Addressing too many gaps can be challenging, costly, difficult to implement, and have a higher probability of failure. It may be more advantageous to build on incremental successes.

Similarly, the data can be evaluated for each psychological condition. This will provide insights regarding which psychological condition is predominantly affecting the likelihood of employees fully engaging. This can be accomplished by summing the aggregated gap scores for each psychological condition, and comparing the overall magnitudes of each condition. This will identify which condition is generally the most consequential (largest negative magnitude) in affecting the likelihood of employees engaging.

Additionally, standard deviations should be calculated from the gap scores of each survey item across the team. This will illuminate the level of agreement across the team members. Smaller standard deviations will indicate stronger agreement among the respondents regarding influencer deficiencies. Strong agreement elucidates the requirement for systemic attention.

## **Interventions**

Since each influencer is unique, interventions may be different depending on which items show the largest gaps. However, it is possible an intervention adopted to address one gap may affect other gaps within and across the psychological conditions. Next will be a discussion on potential interventions based on the identified gaps. It is not intended to be a comprehensive list of interventions, but provides examples about how gaps may be used to identify appropriate interventions.

Each gap is based on the perceptions of employees, and the corresponding interventions are intended to benefit employees. However, it is noteworthy to point out, interventions associated with meaningfulness and availability are generally employee focused, where the interventions associated with safety are generally organizationally (or leadership) focused. For example, possible interventions associated with the item “I utilize different skills and learn new things in my current role” (meaningfulness section) may include employee job rotation, job expansion, and training. Similarly, possible interventions associated with the item “My workload is reasonable” (availability section) may include giving the employee help, training, and job re-evaluations. However, possible interventions associated with “My supervisor behaves/responds consistently to questions, issues and surprises” (safety section) are leadership training, coaching, and mentoring.

Although each survey item was developed to represent a unique aspect of each psychological condition, interventions may be implemented which may affect multiple identified gaps. For example, within the meaningfulness condition, items 2, 4, 8, and 15 (see Appendix) can be addressed by an organization providing a clear missions statement, goal clarity, and explaining how the activities of each employee align to the organization’s success. Similarly,

interventions can be affective across the psychological conditions. For example, items 9 (meaningfulness), 20 (safety), and 38 (availability) can be affected by evaluating person/job fit, career progression planning, and employee learning and development efforts.

The survey items were developed to act as the voice for the employees. The identified gaps are based on the perspectives of employees. Whether or not the organization agrees with the findings is immaterial. The negative gaps are areas which are likely preventing employees from fully engaging. Interventions should be developed to enhance employees' perceived experiences of the three psychological conditions.

### **Research Implications**

This paper showcased confusion in current employee engagement research, and challenged researchers to question, and critically evaluate, their study designs, definitions, conceptualizations, and measures. Further, this paper presented a heuristic measurement model, which allows research to take place at the individual level as opposed to high level general variable relationships. The model is based on Kahn's (1990) personal engagement conceptualization.

The proposed model allows researchers to evaluate motivation at the employee level and test existing theory. Since motivation and engagement are individual level phenomena, the model can be used to evaluate motivators and demotivators of employee behavior. For example, researchers can analyze how increasing autonomy, social support, or task variety affects the employees' psychological conditions and if most employees respond in the same way.

Researchers may be able to examine how employees change across their careers. Employees are in a constant state of flux. Their needs, non-work stressors, and knowledge and skills change. Researchers will be able to examine if there are gap profiles associated with

certain demographics. This may help to determine if there is a psychological condition hierarchy.

### **Practice Implications**

Pending further refinement and validation, organizations can use the survey to identify which psychological condition(s) is (are) unfulfilled for their employees and strategically tailor interventions to target improvement. The likelihood of the employees fully engaging in beneficial work behaviors is predicated on positive experiences of all three psychological conditions. A deficit in any of the psychological conditions is proposed to reduce the likelihood of employees engaging.

Organizations can evaluate the data at the individual level, team level, or organizational level, using the same process, to identify strategic areas of focus. Since many of the possible interventions are directed at the supervisor level, it is recommended organizations focus on the team or business unit level. Respondents at this level, generally have the same leadership chain and it may help identify leadership strengths and opportunities for improvement. Additionally, interventions can be targeted and unique to each team. Organizations can compare team level gap profiles to determine how pervasive issues are and if an organization wide intervention is necessary.

Organizational leaders should understand if the collective psychological meaningfulness shows large negative gaps, then employees are unlikely to have a sense of value, worthwhileness, significance, and influence. If the collective psychological safety shows large negative gaps, then it is doubtful employees believe they can “show and employ one’s self without fear of negative consequences” (Kahn, 1990, p. 708). If the collective psychological availability is low, then the employees lack the energies to invest themselves physically,

cognitively, or affectively. Each of these will reduce the effectiveness and efficiency of the workforce.

Organizations may be faced with difficult decisions and forced to have difficult conversations. Many of the necessary interventions may increase costs to the organization. Organizational leaders should be open and honest when addressing, or not addressing, the results of the surveys.

### **Limitations**

While the presented analysis and accompanying survey instrument were derived from the extant literature, they are not without limitations. First, the analysis of the psychological conditions suggests each psychological condition has equal weight. It is possible there are distinct weightings for each psychological condition, or weightings change based on context. Additionally, there may be a psychological condition hierarchy, such that one condition must be satisfied first before the others. However, the proposed survey instrument used a scale of 0 to 10 to differentiate the importance ascribed by the employees, and potentially capture differences in weightings. Second, the analysis implied each psychological condition is equally dynamic, relative to the other two. However, it is possible each has different degrees of stability. For example, when conceptualizing employee engagement as an episodic state, psychological meaningfulness and safety may be more stable than psychological availability. Thus, there may be a unique temporal aspect to each condition. Third, the analysis suggested each psychological condition is a unique formative indicator for employee engagement such that each may change independent of the other two. However, there may be instances where one influencer may affect multiple conditions. For example, an employee who perceives to be treated unfairly may experience low psychological safety. However, negative emotions will likely cause a reduction

in their psychological availability. Thus, the unfair treatment affected both conditions. Note, it was unfair treatment affecting both conditions, the reduction in psychological availability was not caused by the reduction of psychological safety. Forth, the analysis discussed the possibility of extreme gap surpluses (large positive magnitudes) causing reductions in a psychological condition. However, the survey items were not written to capture this phenomenon. Last, the analysis suggested the path for employees engaging in beneficial behaviors is through the three psychological conditions; however, there is no assurance of positive behavior even if all conditions are fulfilled.

### **Conclusion**

Researchers are unclear if employee engagement is a motivational state or motivated state. However, the predominate assertion is employee engagement is a latent cognitive-affective state. Researchers use general reflective indicators to capture this state. This paper challenged the consensus, and questioned if the measures capture intended constructs. Particularly questionable is the use of reflective behavior indicators when there is no assurance behavior will follow, and the constructs are not conceptualized to include behavior. This paper discussed the need for employee engagement researchers to align their definitions, conceptualizations, and measures, while presenting a heuristic where all are aligned. A conceptual instrument was presented to help capture the likelihood of employees engaging at work.

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## CHAPTER 5 – CONCLUSION

The preceding manuscripts illuminated the confusion in employee engagement research. Researchers confound motivational and motivated when describing employee engagement, and misalign engagement conceptualizations, definitions, and measures. Researchers fail to recognize the temporal differences among different conceptualizations of employee engagement and will often use the same measurement instrument irrespective of the chosen conceptualization. Little rigor is employed to ensure employee engagement definitions, conceptualizations, and research designs are aligned. This confusion helps to explain as Bailey et al. (2017) concluded their study of the meaning, antecedents, and outcomes of employee engagement by stating, “[d]espite the number of studies, there is in fact still very little about engagement that can be asserted with any degree of certainty. We do not really know what engagement means, how to measure it, what its outcomes are, or what drives up levels of engagement” (p. 47).

### **Discussion**

The manuscripts were presented to bring clarity to employee engagement research. Chapter 2 showcased the derivation of a definition of employee engagement aligned with motivation and performance. Chapter 3 presented the Motivation Model of Engagement (MMOE), which illustrated the mechanisms leading to engaged behavior. Chapter 4 presented a measurement model and conceptual psychological conditions measurement instrument identifying variables preventing employees from fully engaging in positive work behaviors.

## **Defining Employee Engagement**

There is a scarcity of research aligning employee engagement, motivation, and performance. Researchers often perfunctorily use motivation and performance when describing their employee engagement study. However, motivation and performance are seldom defined. To make matters worse, researchers confound ‘motivational’ and ‘motivated’, and often use both terms when describing employee engagement.

Motivation is described as having a direction, intensity, and duration. This suggests motivation is a targeted episodic state. Performance is the evaluation of directed behavior. Both constructs are described including directed activity. The most prevalent conceptualization of employee engagement is of a general cognitive-affective motivational state. It is unquestioningly accepted this state leads to positive employee performance. However, little rigor is undertaken to explain how a general motivational state leads to directed motivated behavior.

It is assumed employee engagement as a motivational cognitive-affective state leads to directed behavior. This assumption is so entrenched that it goes unchallenged. Researchers automatically take for granted employee engagement as a cognitive-affective state leads to beneficial behaviors. Chapter 2 revealed employee engagement as a motivational state fails to ensure action by the employee and subsequently positive performance. If engagement is described as preceding behavior, then there would be times when employees are engaged without doing anything. It is then unlikely the employee would be evaluated as delivering positive performance. Thus, there would be a mismatch between employee engagement and performance. It was illustrated for employee engagement to nomologically align with motivation and performance, it should be described as including episodic behavioral activity

directed toward desired organizational goals. The accompanying definition was *employee engagement is an individual employee's cognitive, emotional, and physical energies directed toward activities relevant to the goals of the organization* (Stampka & Makela, 2023a). The definition was unique since it was specifically derived to align with motivation and performance.

### **Development of a Motivation Model**

Chapter 3 reviewed motivation literature and showed motivation theories each describe 'why' employees engage or are motivated, but each fails to describe 'how' employees become engaged or motivated. Subsequently, it was shown Kahn's (1990) personal engagement conceptualization could be used as a foundation for 'how' employees become engaged. It was proposed Kahn's conceptualization was incomplete and an extension of the conceptualization was presented.

The extended conceptualization was integrated with each motivation theory to create the Motivation Model of Engagement (MMOE). A comprehensive model was presented which illuminated the variables influencing employee engagement. It was shown the influencing variables are unique and contextual for each employee, and are moderated by traits, dispositions, personalities, and needs.

Further, Chapter 3 explained how the MMOE could be used at different levels of analysis and how research designs, definitions, conceptualizations, and measures should be aligned to the appropriate level of analysis. Lastly, it was discussed how other organizational behavior constructs fit within the MMOE and the appropriate level of analysis to study their relationships.

### **Conceptual Application of Formative Engagement Model**

Chapter 4 illuminated confusion in employee engagement research and the lack of congruence between definitions, conceptualizations, and measurement models. Reflective

measurement models are the most prevalent in employee engagement research. Researchers use general reflective indicators to represent the latent employee engagement construct. While there is nothing wrong with using a reflective measurement model, Chapter 4 explained a potential mismatch arises when using a reflective model to study Kahn's (1990) formative conceptualization. Kahn's conceptualization of employee engagement is formed by the expression of cognitive, affective, and physical energies.

Chapter 4 brought to light an issue with using reflective behavioral indicators when measuring a cognitive-affective state. Each identified measurement instrument incorporated reflective behavioral indicators. The most prevalent conceptualization of employee engagement measured is a cognitive-affective state preceding behavior. It is unrecognized in employee engagement research how a behavioral indicator can be used to represent a construct that does not include behavior. Chapter 4 illustrated how behavioral indicators would be appropriate for Kahn's (1990) conceptualization, but tenuous for cognitive-affective conceptualizations, such as Schaufeli et al.'s (2002).

A heuristic was presented to clear up the confusion regarding the incongruence between definitions, conceptualizations, and measurement models. A formative measurement model and accompanying conceptual measurement instrument was presented. The purpose of the instrument was to capture deficiencies in employees' psychological conditions and illuminate what may be preventing them from engaging in beneficial behaviors.

A deficiency was identified by the magnitude of the gap between how much of a variable an employee received versus how important the variable was to the employee. Large deficiencies indicated areas interfering with the employees' willingness to fully invest in beneficial work activities. Deficiency identification illuminated appropriate interventions to

reduce the deficiency gap. This was different from other employee engagement measures, which indicate the general level of employee engagement with no way of determining what influenced the level of engagement.

### **Applications**

The manuscripts were presented such that each built on the preceding one. However, each was intended to be applicable to research and practice on its own. Chapter 2 offered a definition of employee engagement aligned with motivation and performance. This illuminated where engagement fit within the motivational sequence. Currently, researchers have significant incongruencies between their study designs and structural models. The illumination should help researchers align their definitions and conceptualizations and strengthen future research and reduce current confusion.

Chapter 3 presented the Motivation Model of Engagement (MMOE). The MMOE helped illuminate variable relationships and the associated level of analysis. This should help researchers align their structural models with their definitions and conceptualizations, which will strengthen the variables/constructs relationships they intend to study.

Chapter 4 presented a measurement model and conceptual measurement instrument. The measurement model was based on the definition of employee engagement from Chapter 2 and the MMOE from Chapter 3. The conceptual measurement instrument was created to identify the likelihood of employees engaging, while concurrently indicating possible interventions to increase the likelihood of employees engaging in beneficial behaviors. Chapter 4 should help researchers align measurement models with their definitions and conceptualizations, thus strengthening their research study designs.

Together, the manuscripts addressed the incongruencies in employee engagement research and aligned definition, conceptualization, structural model, and measurement model. This provided a foundation to aid researchers as they build study designs for future employee engagement research.

### **Future Research**

The presented manuscripts offered opportunities for future research. Research can be performed to challenge and validate the various models, as well as utilize the models to advance organizational behavior research. There were essentially two models and one conceptual measurement instrument presented. Studies can be performed to test the relationships proposed in each.

### **Validation of MMOE**

While the associated relationships described in the MMOE are based on extant research, the model is unique, and researchers can perform studies to test the relationships described within the model. Care must be taken to ensure a consistent level of analysis for the variables under study. During the presentation of the model in Chapter 3, different levels of analysis were used to describe variable relationships, however, when testing variable relationships, rigor should ensure the variables are representative at the same level of analysis.

### **Validation of Measurement Model**

In Chapter 4, a formative model was presented. The model indicated the likelihood of employees engaging in work activities was determined by their experiences of three psychological conditions. The psychological conditions were each comprised of categories espoused in the extant literature. Psychological meaningfulness was the experiences of meaning in work, meaning at work, and meaning of work (See Table 11). Psychological safety was the

experiences of organization trust, interpersonal trust, organizational justice, and physical safety (See Table 12). Psychological availability was the experience of having the physical energies, emotional energies, knowledge, skills and abilities, and the external resources to perform required work activities (See Table 13). Research can be performed to test the relationships of the respective categories and their respective psychological condition, and the psychological condition and the likelihood of employees engaging. Additionally, it was implied each category had equal influence on its respective psychological condition, and each psychological condition had equal influence on the likelihood of engaging. Research should test the postulated relationships. It is important to note, formative models are inherently unidentified (Diamantopoulos & Siguaw, 2006). As such, research validating the models should include reflective indicators of the latent variable/construct to provide model identification.

### **Validation of Measurement Instrument**

The instrument presented in the Chapter 4 suggested each influencer deficiency gap had equal weight in affecting the associated psychological condition and each psychological condition had equal weight in affecting the likelihood of engaging. However, it is likely some influencers have a larger effect on an employee than others. Similarly, there may be a hierarchy of psychological conditions for each employee. Research can be performed to validate and refine the proposed instrument.

Consider psychological meaningfulness as an example. Although psychological meaningfulness was described as comprised of meaning ‘in’ work, meaning ‘at’ work, and meaning ‘of’ work, the survey items were not evenly distributed between the three categories. There were seven items for meaning ‘in’ work, three items for meaning ‘at’ work, and five items for meaning ‘of’ work. However, all 15 influencer gaps were presented as equally weighted in

affecting psychological meaningfulness. Similar relationships were presented for psychological safety and psychological availability. Research can be performed to evaluate the respective weights of each influencer gap on the associated psychological condition. To help in this determination, researchers can evaluate how each category affects the associated psychological condition. Each category may affect each psychological condition differently, with the potential of a category hierarchy, and subsequent influencer gap hierarchy. Additionally, researchers can investigate if the weight of each influencer gap is contextually based on the career stage of an employee.

Further, researchers can evaluate if each influencer gap affects the described respective psychological condition. Although the influencers for each category were obtained from the extant literature, research should validate relationships with the associated psychological condition. As discussed in Chapter 4, an influencer gap may affect multiple psychological conditions. Research can be performed to determine if the ascribed relationships between influencer gaps and psychological conditions are the most appropriate or if there are better explanations through alternative relationships.

### **Potential Journals**

Chapters 2, 3, and 4 were written as manuscripts in preparation for submission to scholarly journals. The descriptions of the targeted journals are next.

The “mission of [*Academy of Management Review*] is to publish theoretical insights that advance our understanding of management and organizations” (*Academy of Management Review*, 2021, para. 1). Submissions to this journal are expected to “[a]dvance theory or the theory development process in the area of management and organizations through developing new theories, significantly challenging current theory, synthesizing recent advances and ideas

into current theory, initiating a search for new theory by pointing out and carefully delineating a novel type of problem, or crafting ways to improve the process of theory development”

(*Academy of Management Review*, Author Resources, “AMR Submissions Should” section, 2021, para. 1).

“*Human Resource Development Review* is a theory development journal for scholars of human resource development and related disciplines” (*Human Resource Development Review*, Journal Info, “Aims and Scope” section, 2021, para. 1). It encourages submissions which “include syntheses of existing bodies of theory, new substantive theories, exploratory conceptual models, taxonomies and typology developed as foundations for theory, treatise in formal theory construction, papers on the history of theory, critique of theory that includes alternative research propositions, metatheory, and integrative literature reviews with strong theoretical implications” (*Human Resource Development Review*, Journal Info, “Aims and Scope” section, 2021, para. 2).

*Human Resource Management* is presented as a bridge between research and practice. Accepted articles include empirical research, article reviews, and conceptual work. The scope of the journal is to discuss new theories, techniques, and models of significance to practicing human resource managers.

The *Journal of Applied Psychology* gives primary consideration to “empirical and theoretical investigations that enhance understanding of cognitive, motivational, affective, and behavioral psychological phenomena in work and organizational settings” (*Journal of Applied Psychology*, Description, 2021, para. 2). This journal publishes articles devoted to theory development and integrative conceptual reviews “that synthesize literature and create new theory of psychological phenomena that will stimulate novel research” (*Journal of Applied Psychology*, Description, 2022, para. 4). In particular, the integrative conceptual reviews “synthesize relevant

literature, identify significant knowledge gaps, highlight potential synergies between disconnected lines of research, extend theoretical development and propose new directions for research” (*Journal of Applied Psychology*, Manuscript Submission, para. 9).

The *Journal of Organizational Behavior* “aims to publish empirical reports and theoretical reviews of research in the field of organizational behavior” (*Journal of Organizational Behavior*, Author Guidelines, “Aims and Scope” section, 2021, para. 1). It requests “targeted reviews of the scientific literature which make contribution to our understanding of the topic of interest, and highlight significant gaps that require future development of new theory, research methods, and empirical work” (*Journal of Organizational Behavior*, Author Guidelines, “Manuscript Categories and Requirements” section, 2021, para. 3). Conceptual development articles “propose new theoretical relationships between focal constructs..” (*Journal of Organizational Behavior*, Author Guidelines, “Manuscript Categories and Requirements” section, 2021, para. 4). The “[i]ntegrative reviews go beyond descriptive reviews by bridging scholarly work across different theories, domains, and disciplines, in order to make new theoretical contributions” (*Journal of Organizational Behavior*, Author Guidelines, “Manuscript Categories and Requirements” section, 2021, para. 4).

These journals prefer research that critiques existing theories, identifies knowledge gaps, offers new theories, and proposes new directions in research. The presented manuscripts fit well within the requirements of each journal. The manuscripts critique existing organizational behavior conceptualizations and theories, extend existing theories, offer new organizational behavior models, and provide directions for future research.

## Parting Comments

Even if not explicitly stated, there is at least one goal for every organization and organizations want employees engaged in activity/behavior in fulfillment of the goal(s). For employee engagement to provide organizational value, it should be conceptualized as including behaviors directed toward the goals of the organization. However, after thousands of employee engagement articles, the most prevalent conceptualization of employee engagement is a cognitive-affective motivational state preceding physical activity/behavior. It is unquestioningly accepted employee engagement leads to positive performance, which entails physical activity. Available employee engagement measurement instruments include physical behaviors as indicators of employee engagement. However, there is little explanation about how an indicator can be used to measure a construct, which fails to incorporate the indicator.

According to Kuhn and Hacking (2012), new theories only emerge in the presence of persistent counterinstances accompanied by an acceptable alternative theory. Without both present, researchers will continue to confine their research to a given theory. It appears anomalies in research are viewed as unexplained pieces of the accepted conceptualization rather than theory falsification. It is believed “[f]ailure to achieve a solution discredits only the scientist and not the theory” (Kuhn & Hacking, 2012, p. 80), thus researchers continue to seek explanations consistent with the accepted conceptualization. The goal of this study was to make researchers uncomfortable by illuminating confusion in employee engagement research and offer an alternative perspective.

This study challenged current employee engagement definitions, conceptualizations, measures, and study designs in hope to force new questions, and/or abandonment, of existing hypotheses to advance and strengthen organizational behavior research. Accepting anomalies,

and the potential for theory falsification, forces the illumination and exploration of the underlying assumptions used to generate the theory. Questioning assumptions encourages debate and novel research leading to advancement of the employee engagement construct. Challenging established assumptions in behavioral, attitudinal, and motivational literature, this study presented a definition grounded in motivation and performance, presented a motivation model of engagement, presented a heuristic measurement model, and offered a conceptual measurement instrument to entice future organizational behavior research.

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APPENDIX

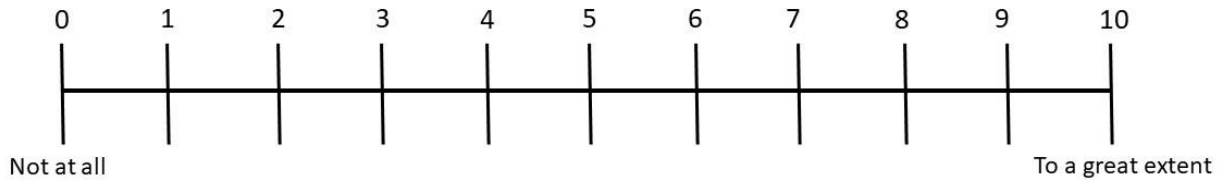
**Survey Items to Capture Employees' Experiences of Psychological Meaningfulness, Safety, and Availability**

Instructions: There are two statements for each item. The 'A' statements indicate your perception of how much of each item you are receiving while at work/working. The scale is arranged from 0 to 10. Zero represents you are not receiving the item at all. Ten represents you are receiving the item to a great extent.

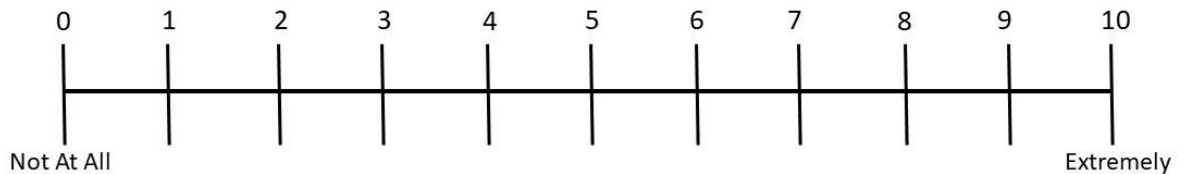
The 'B' statements indicate how important the item is to you while at work/working. The scale is arranged from 0 to 10. Zero represents the item has no importance to you. Ten represents the item is extremely important to you.

Please circle the number which best describes your perceived experience and importance for each respective statement. Since we each have different experiences and ascribed levels of importance, there are no right or wrong answers. Try not to over analyze the items. They are intended to capture your unique experience and importance; therefore this exercise should take less than 20 minutes to complete.

For "A" Statements



For "B" Statements



Psychological Meaningfulness

1) **A)** I utilize different skills and learn new things in my current role.

0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 -- 10

**B)** It is important I utilize different skills and learn new things.

0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 -- 10

2) **A)** My daily work role activities make a positive difference toward the goals of the organization.

0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 -- 10

**B)** It is important I make a positive difference toward the goals of the organization.

0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 -- 10

3) **A)** I am valued and appreciated for my work.

0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 -- 10

**B)** It is important I am valued and appreciated.

0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 – 10

4) **A)** The organization's mission is clear and helps me align my work activities.

0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 -- 10

**B)** It is important knowing the organization's mission.

0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 -- 10

5) **A)** I have a voice and can positively influence others within this organization.

0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 -- 10

**B)** It is important I have a voice within this organization.

0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 -- 10

6) **A)** I have a sense of belonging while at work.

0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 -- 10

**B)** It is important I have belongingness at work.

0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 -- 10

7) **A)** I have the freedom to take initiative.

0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 -- 10

**B)** It is important I have the freedom to take initiative.

0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 -- 10

8) **A)** The work I do is essential for the organization's success.

0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 -- 10

**B)** It is important my work is essential for the organization's success.

0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 -- 10

9) **A)** My job is aligned to my career aspirations.

0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 -- 10

**B)** It is important my job aligns to my career aspirations.

0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 -- 10

10) **A)** I am fairly compensated for the work I perform.

0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 -- 10

**B)** It is important I receive fair compensation.

0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 -- 10

11) **A)** There are career advancement opportunities within this organization.

0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 -- 10

**B)** It is important I have career advancement opportunities.

0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 -- 10

12) **A)** I am recognized for my work contributions.

0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 -- 10

**B)** It is important I receive work recognition.

0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 -- 10

13) **A)** My job provides me with the appropriate work/life balance.

0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 -- 10

**B)** It is important I have work/life balance.

0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 -- 10

14) **A)** My role responsibilities are clear.

0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 -- 10

**B)** It is important I have clear responsibilities.

0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 -- 10

15) **A)** It is clear how my role helps the organization to be successful.

0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 -- 10

**B)** It is important I know how I help the organization be successful.

0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 -- 10

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Psychological Safety

16) **A)** My organization cares about my physical safety and will not ask me to do things which may get me sick or injured.

0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 -- 10

**B)** It is important to me the organization cares about my physical safety.

0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 -- 10

17) **A)** I can count on my supervisor to support me when needed.

0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 -- 10

**B)** It is important I have supervisor support.

0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 -- 10

18) **A)** I share the values of this organization.

0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 -- 10

**B)** It is important my values match the values of the organization.

0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 -- 10

19) **A)** My co-workers share similar values as I do.

0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 -- 10

**B)** It is important I share similar values as my co-workers.

0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 -- 10

20) **A)** My job responsibilities and expectations are fair.

0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 -- 10

**B)** It is important I experience fair job responsibilities and expectations.

0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 – 10

21) **A)** My supervisor behaves/responds consistently to questions, issues, and surprises.

0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 -- 10

**B)** It is important my supervisor behaves/responds consistently.

0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 -- 10

22) **A)** I can try and fail without fear of damage to my reputation, career, or fear of being punished.

0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 -- 10

**B)** It is important I can try and fail without fear.

0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 -- 10

23) **A)** My co-workers are competent in their roles.

0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 – 10

**B)** It is important my co-workers are competent in their roles.

0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 -- 10

24) **A)** My supervisor cares about me as a person.

0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 -- 10

**B)** It is important my supervisor cares about me as a person.

0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 -- 10

25) **A)** I can count on my co-workers to support me no matter what.

0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 -- 10

**B)** It is important I can count on my co-workers no matter what.

0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 – 10

26) **A)** I can speak up (challenge opinions, disagree, offer perspectives, provide input) without fear.

0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 -- 10

**B)** It is important I can speak up without fear.

0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 -- 10

27) **A)** The policies and procedures of this organization are fair.

0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 -- 10

**B)** It is important to have fair policies and procedures.

0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 -- 10

28) **A)** The policies and procedures are consistently applied to everyone in this organization.

0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 -- 10

**B)** It is important policies and procedures are consistently applied to everyone.

0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 -- 10

29) **A)** I receive timely and accurate company information, which keeps me informed of key company information.

0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 -- 10

**B)** It is important I receive timely and accurate company information.

0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 -- 10

30) **A)** I am treated with respect in this organization.

0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 -- 10

**B)** It is important I am treated with respect.

0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 -- 10

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Psychological Availability

31) **A)** I have the necessary tools/equipment to perform my job responsibilities.

0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 -- 10

**B)** It is important I have the tools and equipment to perform my job.

0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 -- 10

32) **A)** I am adequately physically capable to perform my work responsibilities.

0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 -- 10

**B)** It is important I am physical capable to perform my work responsibilities.

0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 -- 10

33) **A)** I have adequate time off between my work shifts.

0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 – 10

**B)** It is important I have adequate rest time between work shifts.

0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 -- 10

34) **A)** I am free from non-work stressors, which impact my energy to perform my work responsibilities.

0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 – 10

**B)** It is important I am free from non-work stressors, which impact my energy.

0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 – 10

35) **A)** I have an adequate amount of time to complete my work, so I do not have to rush.

0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 – 10

**B)** It is important I have adequate time to perform my work.

0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 – 10

36) **A)** My workload is reasonable.

0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 – 10

**B)** It is important my workload is reasonable.

0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 – 10

37) **A)** Regarding my available physical energy, the number of hours I am asked to work each day is appropriate.

0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 – 10

**B)** It is important I have an appropriate number of work hours.

0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 – 10

38) **A)** My work role is a good match with my knowledge, skill, and ability.

0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 – 10

**B)** It is important I have a good match between my role and my knowledge, skill, and ability.

0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 – 10

39) **A)** My organization provides adequate training to help me with my job.

0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 -- 10

**B)** It is important I get appropriate training to help me with my job.

0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 -- 10

40) **A)** I know what I am expected to work on each day.

0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 -- 10

**B)** It is important I have clear daily work tasks.

0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 – 10

41) **A)** My work responsibilities are clear to me.

0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 -- 10

**B)** It is important I have clear work responsibilities.

0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 -- 10

42) **A)** Feedback helps me understand how I am doing regarding my work performance. I receive adequate feedback.

0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 -- 10

**B)** It is important I receive feedback.

0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 -- 10

43) **A)** Coaching helps me improve my knowledge, skill, and ability to perform my work activities. I receive adequate coaching.

0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 -- 10

**B)** It is important I receive coaching.

0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 – 10

44) **A)** I am free from work frustrations which deplete my energy to perform my work responsibilities.

0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 -- 10

**B)** It is important to be free from work frustrations.

0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 -- 10

45) **A)** My company provides the latest technology to help me perform my job responsibilities.

0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 -- 10

**B)** It is important I have the latest technology to perform my job responsibilities.

0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 -- 10