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PROFESSIONAL ENGAGEMENT IN A PSYCHOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

ZANGAŻOWANIE ZAWODOWE
W PERSPEKTYWIE PSYCHOLOGICZNEJ

ПРОФЕСІЙНА АКТИВНІСТЬ
ІЗ ПСИХОЛОГІЧНОЇ ТОЧКИ ЗОРУ

1. Introduction

Professional engagement constitutes one of the key constructs in contemporary work and organizational psychology, serving as a significant predictor of effectiveness, well-being, and the durability of the employee-organization relationship. The psychological aspects of professional engagement encompass both intrapersonal factors – such as personality, self-efficacy, values, and needs – and interpersonal and organizational factors, which include leadership style, the quality of relations with supervisors and coworkers, organizational climate, and access to job resources. Empirical research indicates that a properly structured work environment – providing autonomy, social support, development opportunities, and adequate task load – fosters the formation of a high level of engagement, which in turn translates into lower absenteeism, higher productivity, and greater job satisfaction. In the context of increasing labor market demands and the intensification of organizational processes, the analysis of the psychological determinants of professional engagement acquires particular significance. Understanding the

mechanisms underlying it allows not only for the design of interventions aimed at increasing employee effectiveness but also for building a work environment conducive to their well-being and long-term development. Consequently, this issue remains one of the key areas of interest for contemporary researchers and human resource management practitioners.

2. The phenomenon of professional engagement – an attempt at definition

Engagement is a concept that can pertain to various areas of life and be directed toward many objects. One of these is engagement in an employee's professional activity, which often constitutes a key element of a company's functioning. Managers are most often interested in the significance of engagement for organizational effectiveness, its positive consequences, and the methods by which they can contribute to increasing the engagement of subordinates (Schaufeli, 2012). Furthermore, beyond its impact on company results, it also significantly influences the employee themselves, their mood, well-being, self-development, and fulfillment (Kopertyńska, Kmiotek, 2014).

The concept of work engagement first appeared in the 1990s. Since then, numerous scientific publications have appeared on this subject. The term is most frequently used in a business and organizational context (Schaufeli, 2012). In the subject literature, it is treated as a motivational construct reflecting the degree to which an individual invests their personal resources - such as energy, competence, and emotional involvement - into the realization of professional duties (Lubrańska, 2017). Professional engagement arises as a result of the interaction between individual and organizational factors. Research indicates that a high level of engagement favors increased effectiveness, proactivity, better psychosocial functioning, and lower susceptibility to occupational burnout (Maslach, Leiter, 2011). It is also the opposite of exhaustion, indicating the employee's good mental condition, fulfillment in the profession, and possession of appropriate skills related to the work performed (Bartkowiak, 2009).

3. Selected Concepts of Work Engagement

There are many concepts discussing the subject of professional activity and the issue of employee engagement in work. Meyer and Allen's (1991) theory regarding employee commitment to the organization is a model consisting of three factors. These are: affective commitment, expressing emotional attachment to work and deep identification with the professional role; continuance commitment, which

results from a calculation of the costs of leaving and an analysis of available alternatives in the labor market; and normative commitment, which is based on a sense of duty to remain in the role resulting from values, norms, or loyalty to the organization. Although this model did not originally concern work engagement in the strict sense, it constitutes a significant point of reference in research on motivation and the employee-organization relationship.

Another important concept, most frequently appearing in the subject literature, is the concept of work engagement authored by Schaufeli and Bakker (2004). They identify its three basic components: vigor, dedication, and absorption. Vigor describes a high level of energy and mental resilience while working. Dedication reflects a strong sense of enthusiasm, inspiration, and significance attributed to the professional role. Absorption, in turn, is defined as full concentration and immersion in tasks, often associated with difficulty in detaching oneself from work. The authors indicate that engagement is not merely the opposite of occupational burnout, but a distinct, positive psychological construct.

Work engagement is a complex construct explained on the grounds of many psychological and organizational theories. Regardless of the adopted model, most approaches emphasize its positive, energizing character and the significance of the interaction between individual traits and work environment conditions. Contemporary research also accentuates the weight of organizational and social resources, which can strengthen engagement and counteract negative phenomena, such as occupational burnout (Rakowska, 2021).

4. Stages of Work Engagement

Professional engagement is a dynamic process, subject to change over time under the influence of employee experiences and organizational conditions. Kahn (1990), who was one of the first to propose a conceptual framework for engagement, pointed to a sequence of psychological states enabling full engagement in a professional role. The first stage constitutes the assessment of meaningfulness, in which the employee analyzes whether the performed tasks have value and purpose, and whether they correspond to their competencies and professional aspirations. The second stage is the assessment of psychological safety, meaning the sense that the individual can engage their emotional, cognitive, and physical resources without the risk of negative interpersonal or organizational consequences. The third stage encompasses the assessment of resource availability, that is, the degree to which the individual possesses the energy, support, time, and competencies necessary to fully engage in work. In newer models, including the

Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) framework, the engagement process is viewed in a dual-path manner. The stages include: (1) assessment of job demands, which allows for the determination of the level of burden and potential stress, (2) identification of job resources conducive to goal achievement and development, (3) activation of the motivational process, leading to an increase in energy, dedication, and action effectiveness. Such an approach emphasizes the cyclical nature of engagement, indicating that its intensity may increase or weaken depending on the relationship between demands and resources (Bakker, Demerouti, 2007). Furthermore, engagement in work and engagement in the organization are most often recognized as particularly significant forms of engagement. The first concerns the realization of tasks, identifying with them, and the attitude towards performing them. The second type of engagement involves participation in the life and affairs of the organization, identifying with its goals and values, and undertaking actions on its behalf (Kupczyk, Pietrakowski, 2018).

A certain cyclicity can also be observed in professional engagement (Royal, Agnew, 2012; as cited in: Sewastianik, 2014). Six consecutive phases of engagement are listed: I. Induction phase, II. Adjustment phase, III. Learning phase, IV. Creation phase, V. Discouragement phase, VI. Occupational burnout phase. The most desirable period in our lives is the one filled with productivity and creativity in problem-solving.

Moreover, individuals who are already engaged are exposed to the risk of transitioning into workaholism or occupational burnout. These are primarily perfectionist employees, characterized by a high need for development, success, influence, and autonomy. With the increase in engagement, the above threat may also rise; therefore, at the stage of engagement, one must constantly care for its appropriate level and take into account the expectations and capabilities of employees, as well as the balance between work and rest (Stankiewicz, Moczulska, 2014).

The shaping of employee attitudes itself, and consequently the work on building their engagement, begins from the moment a given person is employed in the organization (Rogozińska-Pawelczyk, 2014).

5. Determinants and Consequences of Professional Engagement

Among the personal factors influencing the level of engagement, individual determinants are indicated, which include personality traits such as extraversion, conscientiousness, and proactivity, which favor intensive engagement in work (Pyrkosz-Pacyna, 2020). A significant role is also played by self-efficacy and

psychological autonomy, enabling the employee greater control over performed tasks and their results (Rakowska, 2021). Research demonstrates that employees possessing a high level of personal resources, such as optimism or psychological resilience, more frequently display durable and stable engagement (Różycka, 2023). Another group consists of organizational determinants, such as supervisor support, autonomy, development opportunities, feedback, and role clarity. These resources favor the activation of motivational processes and a positive assessment of professional demands. Additionally, organizational justice, a sense of psychological safety, and satisfaction with social relationships in the workplace strengthen the employee's readiness to invest energy in performed tasks. Furthermore, the significance of the quality of interpersonal relationships and organizational support is emphasized. Perceived support from the organization leads to increased engagement through the mechanism of reciprocity, which relies on the fact that employees receiving support feel obligated to exhibit positive behaviors towards the organization. Relations with the supervisor and coworkers, based on trust and mutual respect, favor the creation of a climate conducive to engagement.

Professional engagement is a construct embedded in the positive current of work and organizational psychology, encompassing energy (vigor), dedication, and full concentration on performed tasks (absorption). It constitutes the effect of a dynamic interaction between the employee's individual resources and the conditions of the work environment. An analysis of the consequences of professional engagement indicates a wide spectrum of outcomes covering psychological, behavioral, and organizational spheres.

Individual Consequences:

- **Positive psychological well-being**

Employees with a high level of engagement demonstrate greater job satisfaction, a sense of autonomy and agency, and a higher level of intrinsic motivation. Empirical research confirms that engagement favors experiencing positive emotions, such as enthusiasm or professional pride, which in turn increases psychological resilience and cognitive flexibility (Czerw, 2017).

- **Development of competence and increase in personal effectiveness**

Engaged individuals more willingly undertake developmental actions, show greater initiative in raising qualifications, and more frequently engage in workplace learning. This fosters long-term competence growth and increases the possibilities of achieving professional goals (Noworol, Cz., 2011).

- **Negative consequences resulting from excessive engagement**

The literature emphasizes that engagement, while generally beneficial, can have an ambivalent character. A high level of identification with work and

a tendency to intensively invest personal resources can lead to a disturbance of the work-life balance, excessive burden, and in extreme cases, to occupational burnout (Maslach, Leiter, 2011). This phenomenon is particularly observed in work environments with high time pressure and high task variability.

Organizational consequences and factors moderating the consequences of engagement (Rożnowski, Fortuna, 2020, pp. 229–396).

- **Increase in work effectiveness and productivity**

Engaged employees work faster, more accurately, and more creatively. They show a tendency to exceed required standards and search for innovative solutions. In organizations where the level of engagement is high, greater adaptive flexibility and more effective implementation of changes are observed (Chirkowska-Smolak, Grobelny, 2020)85.

- **Organizational Citizenship Behaviors (OCB)**

A high level of engagement favors undertaking actions not directly resulting from formal duties, such as helping coworkers, initiating improvements, or caring for positive interpersonal relations. These behaviors influence the organizational climate and improve team functioning.

- **Reduction in employee fluctuation (turnover) and absenteeism**

Research indicates an inverse relationship between the level of engagement and the propensity to leave the job. Strongly engaged individuals rarely seek alternative places of employment and show lower sickness absenteeism, which translates directly into the operational stability of the enterprise.

- **Building the organization's competitive advantage**

In a strategic perspective, employee engagement influences the organization's image as an employer, increases its attractiveness in the labor market, and enables effective human capital management. Organizations with a high level of engagement are more innovative, capable of faster reaction to market changes, and achieve higher financial indicators.

The effects of professional engagement are not homogeneous and are subject to modulation by various factors:

- **Organizational resources** (supervisor support, clear communication, development opportunities).
- **Personal resources of employees** (self-efficacy, psychological resilience, optimism).
- **Leadership style** (especially transformational and servant leadership).
- **Person–organization and person–job fit.**

According to the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model, the positive consequences of engagement are revealed in conditions of balance between demands

and resources, whereas their deficit can lead to psychological and behavioral costs (Adamska-Chudzińska, 2016).

Employee engagement contributes to an increase in motivation to achieve results significantly higher than average, which translates into a higher level of their effectiveness (Klinkosz, 2013). The significance of engagement is also noticeable in the quality of work performed by them. Consequently, the consequences of appropriate professional engagement of employees include results achieved by the organization and the pace of any changes occurring within it.

6. Conclusion

The analysis of professional engagement in a psychological perspective portrays it as a complex, multidimensional construct, the dynamics of which result from the interaction of the individual with their work environment. In light of the presented considerations, professional engagement can be treated both as an indicator of the employee's psychological well-being and as an important predictor of organizational effectiveness. The identified psychological mechanisms - including intrinsic motivation, a sense of autonomy, competence, and relatedness - play a key role in shaping durable, authentic engagement, distinguishing it from related phenomena such as job satisfaction or addictive forms of excessive work engagement. It should be emphasized that professional engagement is not exclusively an individual trait, but the resultant of the mutual interaction of individual, organizational, and social factors. For this reason, its development requires multi-level actions, encompassing both interventions aimed at strengthening employees' personal resources and creating a work environment conducive to a sense of meaning, agency, and mutual support. Organizations that consciously shape a work culture based on trust, transparent communication, and development opportunities can durably raise the level of engagement of their employees.

These conclusions indicate the necessity for further research, especially of a longitudinal nature, allowing for a better understanding of the variability of engagement over time and the identification of protective and risk factors related to its maintenance. Understanding the psychological determinants of professional engagement constitutes a significant step towards designing solutions conducive to employee well-being and increasing organizational effectiveness, which makes this issue not only current but also strategically important in the context of the contemporary labor market.

SUMMARY: The article presents an analysis of professional engagement in a psychological perspective, portraying it as a multidimensional construct encompassing energetic, cognitive, and emotional components. Key psychological mechanisms conditioning the level of engagement, such as intrinsic motivation, a sense of autonomy, competence, and social support, were discussed. Attention was drawn to the significance of the interaction of individual and organizational factors in shaping durable engagement and to its role as a significant predictor of employee well-being and organizational effectiveness. Areas requiring further research were also indicated, particularly concerning the dynamics of engagement and factors conducive to its long-term maintenance.

KEYWORDS: professional engagement, work psychology, well-being, satisfaction

STRESZCZENIE: Artykuł prezentuje analizę zaangażowania zawodowego w perspektywie psychologicznej, ukazując je jako wielowymiarowy konstrukt obejmujący komponenty energetyczne, poznawcze i emocjonalne. Omówiono kluczowe mechanizmy psychologiczne warunkujące poziom zaangażowania, takie jak motywacja wewnętrzna, poczucie autonomii, kompetencji oraz wsparcie społeczne. Zwrócono uwagę na znaczenie interakcji czynników indywidualnych i organizacyjnych w kształtowaniu trwałego zaangażowania oraz na jego rolę jako istotnego predyktora dobrostanu pracowników i efektywności organizacyjnej. Wskazano również obszary wymagające dalszych badań, w szczególności dotyczących dynamiki zaangażowania i czynników sprzyjających jego długofalowemu utrzymaniu.

SŁOWA KLUCZE: zaangażowanie zawodowe, psychologia pracy, dobrostan, satysfakcja

АНОТАЦІЯ: У статті представлено аналіз професійної залученості з психологічної точки зору, показуючи її як багатовимірну конструкцію, що включає енергетичні, когнітивні та емоційні компоненти. Обговорюються ключові психологічні механізми, що визначають рівень залученості, такі як внутрішня мотивація, відчуття автономії, компетентність і соціальна підтримка. Приділяється увага важливості взаємодії індивідуальних та організаційних чинників у формуванні тривалої взаємодії та її ролі як важливого предиктора добробуту працівників і ефективності організації. Також визначено напрями для подальших досліджень, зокрема динаміка взаємодії та чинники, що сприяють довгостроковому підтриманню сатисфакції.

КЛЮЧОВІ СЛОВА: професійна відданість, психологія праці, добробут, сатисфакція

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