

EDITORIAL

Positive organizational psychology – a hope for Romanian organizations

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If, in the 90's, the topic of occupational stress was one of the favorites of researchers and practitioners in organizational psychology, the 2000's have opened a new chapter for them; namely positive psychology applied in organizations. Although, in the past 10 years, positive organizational psychology gained notoriety in Western Europe and America, in Romania it had a shy impact on organizational research and practice. Next, we will discuss some of the contributions of Romanian researchers to strengthen the position of positive organizational psychology.

The transition from human resources management to human capital management at the organizational level also has changed the way of understanding the relationship between the individual and the organization. The organizations innovate and technologies and markets change constantly. To keep up with these changes, the employees – human capital – must develop as by acquiring new skills and abilities (Vîrgă, 2007). Here come into play the specific concepts of positive organizational psychology: *hope*, as a starting point, *positive emotions* and *emotional intelligence* in the workplace and *psychological capital*, which is related to individual and organizational performance (Froman, 2010). Resilience is an especially concept which involves the ability to cope with adversity and personal failures and is required to employees to adapt successfully to occupational stress.

Positive psychology – overview

Positive psychology is a remarkable opportunity to do things differently, to ask adequate questions about the human condition and to provide appropriate responses. Positive psychology, as a generic orientation in psychology, has been described in the introduction to an especially issue of American Psychologist journal by Kennon Sheldon and Laura King (2001) as follows: "...Positive psychology is thus an attempt to urge psychologists to adopt a more open and appreciative perspective regarding human potentials, motives, and capacities" (p. 216). More recently, Sarah Lewis (2011) described positive psychology in this way: "Positive Psychology is about accruing a body of knowledge that is useful to people who want to live good, long, happy and productive lives, while positive thinking is about persuading people that what happens to them is their own fault (p. 3)".

Extending the study of positive psychology issues in the organizational environment came naturally and strengthened over time.

Positive organizational psychology

Paradoxically or not, the number of researches in the field of positive organizational psychology has increased even in years when the economic crisis has marked the world economy. During this period, the organizations wanted more than ever, efficient employees, to be motivated and

engaged in work, but also to adapt successfully to organizational changes, in a positive organizational environment. In simple terms, organizational positive psychology can be considered positive psychology focused on work and organizational issue (Donaldson & Ko, 2009). According to Peterson (2006), organizational positive psychology topics are founded on three pillars. The first pillar involves positive subjective experience which includes happiness, well-being, hope, optimism and positive emotions. The second pillar is represented by the positive traits, including interests, talents, creativity, values, traits of character, and courage. The last pillar is reserved for positive institutions that facilitate the first two pillars and promotes personal development.

In 2009, Donaldson and Ko realized the content analysis of articles from especially journals that had positive organizational psychology topics published during 2001-2008. It was found that the most common topics in contemporary literature were: positive psychology and work, development and positive organizational change, and positive leadership. In total, 78 journals included articles in this area; the most popular titles are the following: *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *Academy of Management Review*, *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, *Journal of Organizational Behavior Management*, *OD Practitioner*, *Journal of Positive Psychology* and *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science* (Donaldson & Ko, 2009).

But positive psychology, in general, and positive organizational psychology, in particular, have been criticized in connection with poor empirical evidences substantiating a vision we can live better based on "new psychology of happiness" (Layard, 2006). Therefore, it takes in the future positive organizational psychology to gather more empirical evidence to be stronger and even exceed the negative aspects to be considered as having a significant contribution to organizational science.

An interesting model, studied in the context of positive organizational psychology is the Job Demands-Resources Model (Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, &

Schaufeli, 2001) that allows studying together the positive and negative aspects of work: job demands and job resources and different outcomes, respectively work engagement as a positive outcome and burnout as negative outcome.

Work engagement

Nowadays, organizations expect employees to be proactive and demonstrate initiative, to collaborate easily with others, to take responsibility for their own development and to be employed in achieving high standards of performance (Bakker & Schaufeli, 2008). Thus, organizations have need employees who are dedicated and energetic, which are absorbed by their work, namely employees engaged in their work. But, will an engage employee develop positive or negative extra-role behaviors? The answer to this question is provided by the study conducted by Sulea, Virgă, Maricuțoiu, Schaufeli, Zaborilă - Dumitru, & Sava (2012), based on the Job Demands-Resources Model (Demerouti et al, 2001). This study, conducted on 258 Romanian employees, has identified the partial mediating role of work engagement between job resources and civic-participative behaviors. In addition, work engagement partially mediated, less intense, the relation between job demands and counter-productive behaviors. The study revealed the expanding role of job characteristics on extra-role behaviors. Also, the study highlighted the role of conscientiousness as antecedent of civic-participative behaviors and counterproductive behaviors. In addition, increasing employee happiness status - including employee engagement - can be obtained by focusing on improving the quality of social relationships at work (Schaufeli & Salanova, 2007, 2010).

Personal resources

The Job Demands-Resources Model has been extended to include personal resources, resulting in its extended version (Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Demerouti, & Schaufeli, 2009). Personal resources are positive, flexible self-assessments, which refers to the individual's perception of his

ability to control effectively and influence the personal environment (Bakker, 2011).

Previous studies have examined personal resources as moderators or mediators between job demands and job resources, on one hand, and different forms of employee well-being, on the other hand. But, newest version of JD-R model (Bakker, 2011) included personal resources as antecedent of work engagement, based on empirical evidence generated by other studies.

In 2013, Vîrgă et al. conducted a study that investigated the role of self-efficacy and psychological needs in a relationship with work engagement and burnout (Vîrgă, Pascu, Mioc, Drăguț, Tepeș-Onea, & Petrucă, 2013). Participants in the study were 221 employees in a manufacturing company in Romania. Results showed that a personal resource helps to explain work engagement (vigor, dedication and absorption) and burnout (exhaustion and depersonalization). Thus, self-efficacy was positively associated with work engagement and negatively with burnout, as well as their dimensions, and the need for autonomy and competences have additionally explained work engagement and burnout. Satisfying the personal needs leads to higher energy for employee and to lower burnout. The findings of the study emphasized the importance of the employee's personal resources in adaptation to the dynamics of the organization.

Another recent study that simultaneously studied various forms of well-being (positive and negative) has been realized by Sulea, van Beek, Sârbescu, Vîrgă, & Schaufeli (in press). This study was conducted on a sample of 225 Romanian students and pursued examining the relationships between three different types of well-being - engagement, boredom, and burnout - and personality. It was found that agreeableness and neuroticism were related to each dimension of well-being, whereas conscientiousness was related only to the engagement and (negative) with boredom, extraversion was significantly negatively associated with burnout. It was found that meeting the basic needs has an incremental value over and above personality in explaining these types of well-being. In conclusion, personality factors play a role in

the well-being, but fulfilling the needs of autonomy, competence and networking have additional importance in explaining its forms.

These empirical contributions get together with an increased number of researches focused on personal resources in the JD-R model (see Demerouti & Bakker, 2011). But the personal resources role in the JD-R model is not yet clearly defined. Future research should explore this concept and to identify other personal resources variables that help the employee to adapt better in the organizational context.

The positive organizational psychology research overcome the organizational boundaries and starts to discuss subjects like work-family balance, psychological detachment after work, and recovery opportunities after work. The Romanian research contributed in this topic, as well.

A recovery opportunity after work is a key concept in recent researches on stress. The concept of recovery opportunities was operationalized as “the possibility, in terms of available time, to engage in situations that facilitate the psychological experience of recovery” by Rodriguez-Muñoz, Sanz-Vergel, Demerouti, & Bakker (2012, p. 86). There are very few research focused on the relationship between the recovery opportunities and wellbeing. One study explored incremental value added of recovery opportunities on top of the family and personal resources for employee's well-being (Vîrgă & Macsinga, in press). Well-being was operationalized as work engagement and health. Using a sample of 274 employees in a product organization, the results of hierarchical regression analysis showed that kin support and Neuroticism were related to health, while spouse and kin support and Conscientiousness were related with work engagement. The results underline the importance of increasing both family resources and the level of personal resources in order to create a healthy and engaged workforce. Overall, the findings suggest the presence of the recovery opportunities increase employees well-being, both health and work engagement.

Conclusions

As we can see before, step by step, positive organizational psychology is based more and more on empirical evidence aiming to be stronger and overcome the negative aspects to ensure its contribution to organizational science. The studies presented may be one small step for developing positive organizational psychology in general, but a big step for the scientific community in Romania in this field. The expansion of the research and creation of a scientific community focused on positive organizational psychology issues is a goal for the near future. Also, the transfer of knowledge between research and practice will generate benefits for organizations and their employees by an increased wellbeing, and effectiveness. Implementing active measures at the individual level through interventions focused on employees' personal resources can increase well-being and to decrease the burnout. The use of personality measures related to personnel selection contributes to the early identification of potential employees who will be more involved in the work, avoiding burnout and boredom. In addition, employee participation in activities that help to satisfy their basic needs increase their level of energy and their involvement in the work. The impact of measures at the organizational level is reflected beyond the improvement of the wellbeing by increasing the frequency of civic - participatory behaviors and reduced counterproductive behaviors.

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