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PUTTING THE EMOTION BACK: EXPLORING THE ROLE OF EMOTION IN DISENGAGEMENT

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Abstract

This chapter explores the nature of disengagement and the role played by emotions and in doing so will disentangle the overlapping theories and definitions of both engagement and disengagement. The research that forms the basis for the chapter comes from two related studies exploring engagement and disengagement in 10 large UK public and private sector organisations. Both studies used an interpretive approach involving 75 managers and employees. The chapter suggests the that emotions play a mediating role in the process of disengagement and the emotional reaction involved provides a distinction to being 'not engaged'. It highlights the confusion that different approaches bring to distinguishing engagement and disengagement from other job attitudes.

Introduction

Engagement has become an increasing focus of academic research after many years in the practitioner and consultancy domain, although the nature of engagement remains contested (Albrecht, 2010; Schneider, Macey, Barbera & Martin, 2009; Saks, 2006). The developing interest in and articulation of current definitions of engagement has mostly taken place during a time of relative prosperity when the retention of key staff has been a major issue for organisations (Salanova & Schaufeli, 2008; Macey & Schneider, 2008). The recent context of recession in the Western economies highlights a growing need to understand what has been seen as the other side of the construct. Disengagement has been developed as complementary construct to engagement (Kahn, 1990; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). However, there is even less understanding of the nature of disengagement than there is of the construct of engagement.

Early definitions of engagement included an affective component (Kahn, 1990; Truss et al., 2006; Gibbons, 2006) which now appears to have been somewhat marginalised as different theoretical bases have been employed to explain and measure different aspects of the construct. This has raised theoretical issues regarding the relationship of the two constructs of engagement and disengagement, including the question of whether disengagement is the opposite of engagement, such as a motivation, or its absence, (Macey & Schneider, 2008; Meyer, Gagne, & Parfyonova, 2010). It also raises the question of whether the same theories used to explain engagement would also explain disengagement and whether emotions play a similar role. There is general agreement that engagement is a job-related attitude but the question remains whether it is a distinct construct or whether it refers to some combination of organisation commitment, job involvement, job

satisfaction, job affect and positive affect (Albrecht, 2010; Newman & Harrison, 2008), with the charge that it may just be a 'new blend of old wines' (Macey & Schneider, 2008: p10). Understanding the nature of disengagement will thus provide insights to clarify the construct of engagement.

Organisations have taken away many of the physical benefits from employees as they cut costs in the wake of the recession including pay freezes, removing benefits, changing pension terms, creating the feeling of job insecurity. Just as interest in organisational commitment was predicted to wane as a result of lower expectations of job security and organisational support following the aftermath of earlier recessions (Baruch, 1998 cited in Blenkinsopp, 2007), it could be expected that disengagement may become more prevalent and interest in the construct could increase.

In this chapter we seek to develop the understanding of the nature of employee disengagement and consider whether 'not being engaged' is different from 'being disengaged', as well as the extent to which theories that explain engagement also enable us to understand disengagement, and finally to explore the role played by emotions.

Current thinking

The current interest in engagement first emerged from the work of Kahn in 1990 and was largely consultant and practitioner driven until the last decade. Academic interest is growing but rigorous empirical research is still limited with many contested issues debated in the emerging literature (Albrecht, 2010; Schneider et al., 2009; Saks, 2006). This chimes with Macey and Schneider's (2008) reminder that other important constructs have suffered from lack of precision

at the early stages of their development. The studies that focus on disengagement however are limited. Scholars relate engagement to a number of existing theories in their search for an agreed definition. Albrecht (2010) argues that although the different definitions are underpinned by overlapping constructs, they all refer to positive, work-related psychological states and that engagement is a unique construct.

A number of different approaches to the nature of engagement are revealed in the literature. In terms of types of engagement Kahn (1990) distinguished between the cognitive, emotional and physical components and his framework, including the identification of meaningfulness, safety, and availability as three psychological conditions or sources of engagement, has been influential in later studies (May, Gilson, & Harter, 2004; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Salanova, Agut & Peiro, 2005). However there are other approaches. Macey and Schneider (2008) distinguish between state, trait and behavioural engagement while for Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzales-Roma and Bakker (2002) vigour, dedication and absorption are overlapping but distinct components of work engagement. A further area of difference relates to the focus of engagement either on the job or on the organisation (Albrecht, 2010; Kahn, 1990; Truss et al., 2006).

Perhaps a bigger question is whether engagement is a distinct construct or some combination of, in particular, organisational commitment, job satisfaction and involvement, and job related and positive affect (Newman & Harrison, 2008; Macey and Schneider, 2008) or whether it is an overarching concept of job attitude (Meyer et al., 2010; Newman et al., 2010). The outcomes of behavioural engagement, defined as discretionary behaviour, can also be very similar to 'Organisational Citizenship Behaviour' (Macey and Scheider, 2008). Saks (2008) would argue

that Kahn's original concept, which focusses on the psychological presence within the work role, is similar to Salanova and Schaufeli's proactive behaviour (2008) and to Belshak and den Hartog's affect driven behaviours, which encompass organisational citizenship, affective commitment, counterproductive work behaviours and turnover (2009). Saks (2008) is also concerned that imprecision in defining and measuring engagement using older constructs will increase the view that engagement is merely 'old wine in new bottles'.

There are also conflicting views on the relative stability of engagement over time with Schaufeli et al. (2002) and Macey and Schneider (2008) arguing that it is relatively stable while Kahn (1990) notes its variability. Indeed Kahn (1992) and Sonnetag, Mojza, Binnewies, and Scholl (2008) suggest that a cycle of engagement is important to well-being and that being variously psychologically present, absent or detached helps individuals to reflect, recuperate and to balance their work and home lives. Kahn (2010) also reminds us that engagement is both a fragile and resilient concept depending on an individual's level of vulnerability.

The different approaches to engagement by practitioners and by academics may be illustrated by Kahn's (1992) tap metaphor in which the employee is the water, expected to have the energies and motivation which the organisation just has to know how to turn on, whereas he as an academic researcher focuses on 'what it means to be fully present as a person occupying a particular organizational role such that one's thoughts, feelings, and beliefs are accessible within the context of role performances': (p322). The latter approach is underpinned by the concern on one hand to understand the experience of the individual at work while the former may lead to a focus on being able to measure what are seen as appropriate constructs to allow organisations to

know how to turn on the tap. Thus Wefald and Downey (2009) note the different foci of measurement for practitioners and academics, with practitioners more interested in engagement as an outcome, as evidenced the work of Gallup (Harter, Schmidt & Hayes, 2002), rather than with measuring the different components of engagement as demonstrated by various work engagement measures, such as those developed by Schaufeli et al. (2002).

Similarly the concept of disengagement is seen differently depending on the associated perspective on engagement. Kahn defines disengagement as 'the uncoupling of selves from work roles; in disengagement people withdraw and defend themselves physically, cognitively, or emotionally during role performances' (1990: p.694) often caused by lack of meaningful work, not being asked to participate and not knowing what is expected of them. For Kahn (1990) engagement happens when individuals harness themselves in their social roles and disengagement occurs when they uncouple themselves from these roles in a conscious act in withdrawal and defence. Disengagement is thus seen for Kahn as the opposite of engagement while for Macey and Schneider 'non engagement' is more likely to be the opposite to engagement (2008) than disengagement. However they recognise the difficulty of achieving sustained levels of engagement, agreeing with Kahn that the personal level of effort required for continued psychological presence can be very draining, but they argue that job satisfaction is invariable (Macey & Schneider, 2008). Kahn (1992) provides a further insight into his meaning of disengagement as he describes the contrast to psychological presence as psychological absence or alienation from work. He illustrates this citing the works of Blauner, Seeman, Hochschild and Goffman to show people estranged from themselves and others, appearing robotic as they detach themselves from their emotions and personally disconnect from the roles they play (1992).

From the work engagement perspective, the opposite pole of engagement is more commonly seen as stress and burnout, defined as emotional exhaustion, cynicism and reduced personal accomplishment or efficacy, and while may be seen as alienation the research of Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner & Ebbinghaus (2002) suggests that disengagement, seen as cynical attitudes and distancing oneself from work, is more related to satiation, monotony and to feeling stressed. Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) equally found burnout was not the other end of the same dimension as engagement. Instead exhaustion was related to vigour, cynicism to dedication and professional efficacy to engagement rather than burnout as suggested by Sweetman and Luthans, (2010). However they, along with Albrecht (2010), propose that the outcomes of self-efficacy are relevant to work engagement by recognising that those high in self-efficacy have the same elements of task mastery, vicarious learning, positive feedback and motivation through emotional arousal that they would expect to lead to increased vigour and energy (Sweetman & Luthans, 2010).

The part that emotions play has been demonstrated in the different approaches to engagement based on Kahn's original concept of emotional engagement (1990), including the links to affective commitment and positive affectivity in trait engagement (Macey & Schneider, 2008; Meyer et al., 2010) and there has also been support for a link between positive emotions and discretionary effort (Lyubomirsky, King and Diener, cited in Barsade & Gibson, 2007). The involvement of emotions is also seen as part of the interpersonal, meaning creating process (Antonacopoulou and Gabriel cited by Vince, 2004) which reinforces Kahn's identification of meaningfulness as a psychological condition of engagement. Similarly Tiedens and Leach

provide a relational view of emotions, drawing from Sartre's view, seeing emotion 'as being defined by and defining social relationships' (2004, p3) rather than just the discrete or primary emotions such as love, anger, joy or fright. This relational view supports Kahn's description of the engaged as

> 'empathically connected to others in the service of the work they are doing in ways that display what they think and feel, their creativity, their beliefs and values, and their personal connections to others' (1990 p700).

Sweetman and Luthans (2010) suggest that negative emotions or low self-efficacy could lead to disengagement or lack of engagement depending how the employee interprets the situation or their level of self-efficacy. They also cite Fredrickson and colleagues' work on an appropriate balance between the experiencing of positive and negative emotions to demonstrate that without negative emotions, there would be no conception of the benefits of positive emotions. In disengagement emotions play a mediating role in potentially stressful situations, such as role conflict and ambiguity, interpersonal conflict and situational constraints, depending in an individual's perception of those situations and their affective disposition and in extremis an emotional response can lead to counterproductive work behaviours, the opposite of organisational citizenship, with outcomes such as anger and aggression, bullying and anti-social behaviour or wreaking revenge on the organisation in a more deviant way (Fox, Spector and Miles, 2001).

It would seem that the work engagement approach appears to have lost the explicit emotional element but another explanation for the differing approaches to engagement may also be the theoretical roots: Kahn's approach, based upon role theory that proposes that social roles are

defined by societal norms and expectations, which he sees as the extent to which individuals 'bring in or leave out their personal selves during work role performances' (1990, p694).

The work engagement approach utilises the concept of the job demands – resources model (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Job demands are seen as the physical, social, psychological or organisational aspects of a job that deplete energy, requiring continual physical and psychological effort, while job resources are the supporting aspects of a job that enable the individual to respond through reducing job demands, helping in the achievement of work goals, or stimulating personal growth, learning and development. Job resources can also be seen from the perspective of motivation by addressing basic needs, which have been conceptualised through self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Van den Broeck, Vansteenkiste, De Witte & Lens, 2008; Meyer et al., 2010) which focuses on the psychological need for autonomy, belonging and competence. From this perspective the presence of job resources are predicted to contribute to engagement whereas the existence of job demands and lack of job resources are predicted to relate to disengagement in terms of burnout or mental weariness (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Van den Broeck et al., 2008; Hakanen & Rocot, 2010). For Demerouti and Bakker (2008) job demands were seen as the antecedents of exhaustion but in contrast the job resources aspects of lack of autonomy and social support were seen as the crucial predictors of disengagement.

These three approaches seem to be the most theoretically well-developed links to engagement through research, but other theories are also potentially relevant. Social exchange theory: where individuals develop reciprocity as they interact with each other and the organisation over time feeling that they ought to reciprocate to what has been received in equal terms at some point in

the future (Blau, 1983, Eisenberger, Armeli, Rexwinkel, Lynch & Rhoades, 2001, Gouldner, 1960). From this it could be suggested that individuals will become engaged when they are involved in an individual relationship with their line manager or organisation that is characterised by trust and loyalty where these are seen as reciprocal, whereas should this reciprocity be violated it is expected that disengagement would follow. Social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Ashforth & Mael, 1989) takes a more collective perspective focussing on the identification, rather than exchange, of the individual with being a member of a social group and how they take their identity from membership of that group. Taking this perspective engagement could be the result of an individual's identification with a particular work group or organisation, while lack of identification may lead to disengagement.

Two other relevant theories that underpin the role of affect are affective events theory (Ashkanasy & Daus, 2002; Dalal, Lam, Weiss, Welch & Hulin, 2009) which focuses on events at work, such as positive or negative feedback that induce affect which can often lead to helping or confrontational behaviour, and similarly voluntary work behaviour. These both focus on affect that disrupts normal activities and causes the individual to appraise the situation potentially forming a trigger event (Guzzo & Noonan, 1994) for their reaction and are used by Dalal et al. to underpin organisational citizenship and counterproductive work behaviour (2009).

The literature raises a number of questions. Accordingly this chapter will explore the nature and experience of disengagement further: the role that emotions play in both disengagement and engagement; and the relationship of disengagement to engagement with the aim of better understanding engagement by looking at what it is not, here seen as the opposite, disengagement.

The study

The focus of recent studies has been on measuring the construct of engagement, hence the number of quantitative studies. However given the need to understand the nature of disengagement, the study used a more phenomenological approach. Kahn's (1990) original research used grounded theory and it seemed appropriate to follow his lead in undertaking an exploratory approach, with a constructivist stance using qualitative methods and in particular a naturalistic enquiry methodology (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In the same way as Kahn, we entered the setting with an emerging idea of engagement and disengagement which had been mostly built from the few earlier studies and practitioner literature. The data was collected from two separate but similar UK studies both through HR practitioner groups who had commissioned the work.

Engaging and contracting: The prelude to establishing the first study involved several iterations of careful discussion and agreement with the HR practitioner group representing the sponsoring organisations. These discussion groups enabled us to establish what they understood by engagement, leading to the question areas to explore and the agreement of the participant organisations with consent of those involved. The second study emerged from a similar but different group of HR practitioners.

Data collection and participants: the first study involved 6 focus groups and 24 interviews in 6 large public and private sector organisations in two phases. The organisations involved came from local authority and government departments to financial services, retail and telecommunications sectors. There were two focus groups held in each of three organisations, one

of managers and one of employees involving 20 managers and 19 employees in six groups. In a further three organisations we interviewed 8 people, half from perceived averagely engaged teams with the senior manager, line manager and 2 team members and half from a perceived highly engaged team. The groups and interviews followed a semi structured format using the same guide for both the interviews and focus groups, based on the research questions that emerged from the earlier discussions and our review of the literature centred on the individual, their relationship with their manager and the impact of the organisational context focussed on what they understood by engagement and how engaged they felt.

The second study involved 33 interviews in 4 global companies with senior managers and HR practitioners but in their role as employees, chosen by the organisation. The organisations involved came from FMCG, energy and telecommunications sectors. The interviews were mostly conducted face to face on the organisation's premises with a small number being conducted by telephone due to logistical necessity. The semi-structured interviews built on the findings of the previous study and we were able to refine our questions to explore participants' experience of engagement and disengagement (in cognitive, emotional and behavioural terms), with question areas on: the role of the line manager in engagement and disengagement; the role of the job and the organisation; and the impact on the individual.

Analysis and feedback: Each conversation and focus group was audio recorded and these were then transcribed by the investigators before analysis using Atlas.ti for the initial coding. This was followed by a presentation back of the overall findings in both studies to confirm our interpretation of the findings as part of meeting the trustworthiness and credibility criteria

(Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The first study was followed by a quantitative stage with questions based on the qualitative findings.

Findings

The following key themes emerged from the analysis.

Respondents' experience of disengagement can be understood through the themes of cognitive, emotional and behavioural aspects. In discussing the cognitive elements of not being engaged respondents reported that they were playing lip service, not focusing on the job, feeling bored and under stimulated, and they did not believe in the value of the work they were undertaking. From the element of emotional disengagement they expressed feelings of frustration, anger, disappointment and despair, feeling let down and stressed. Their physical disengagement manifested itself in loss of confidence, feeling 'out of the loop' and 'off the radar', tiredness and stress, childlike behaviours, withdrawal, being unable to do their job and not doing anything.

The antecedents to disengagement could be considered in four main groupings: the impact of the line manager; organisational factors; aspects of the work; and personal aspects of the individual.

The line manager emerged as a major factor in disengagement. Respondents reported that often line management was seen as part of a process rather than a relationship with the individual as evidenced by not treating them as individuals, recognising their contribution, presenting work as their own and 'dumping on me'. Respondents often quoted micromanagement as disengaging, as was lack of support, guidance and timely feedback, not sharing information with them or the

team and lack of direction or clarity of objectives. More personal concerns with line management considered the inability to build a relationship with them through frequency of changes or distance as well as issues about honesty, authenticity and competence leading to a lack of trust.

'When a new manager was brought in I felt absolutely at my lowest … he needed to give me the confidence and support I needed. I took my full lunch break and went home at half past five. ' (Manager - focus group)

If people are feeling sick to their stomach and they don't want to come in the morning, and they feel unloved and worthless there's a large part that is probably down to the manager. You're not allowed to do that, sorry. (HR practitioner)

"I feel less engaged when I'm micro-managed, when I'm given work which is intellectually unstimulating, bureaucratic and I don't see the impact it's having (senior manager)

Organisational factors raised by respondents as drivers of disengagement cited issues such as organisational politics and power, the culture including bureaucracy, hierarchy and control. Organisational change especially restructuring brought out concerns of lack of communication and understanding the future for the organisation, however these were expressed in terms of what it means for the individual:

'The organisation is not helping engagement. There is nothing coming from the boss's boss or above. From the recent morale surveys communication is really poor and it's scaring people - they're not starting a family, not buying a car, etc. because they think that there's no job'.(senior manager)

'I was very unengaged; because you don't know where you are, you don't know what you're doing, you don't know what you are doing is the right thing, they're not really giving you any direction, I suppose that's just poor management' (employee focus group).

The work itself emerged from the analysis from two main aspects, those of boring routine work with lack of challenge, stretch and variety or from having too much to do. '*What disengages me completely is the opposite: routine tasks…to satisfy company bureaucracy'* with personal withdrawal *'this other thing that was coming up, despite me complaining and saying give me something to do, I'm bored. I was pretty down about it and I didn't feel like coming into work ...there was nothing I could sink my teeth into' (employee public sector)*

Overworking was often attributed to organisational reasons '*I'm under lots of pressure. Not much support. No clarity of where the business is going… so I ask myself 'why am I going to work?'*, it often resulted in feeling pressured or stressed '*discretionary effort, I put loads more time into that job, but actually it wasn't enjoyable, I was putting time in, because the professional need to know that I'm doing a good job, but the personal stress that that gave me was significant.' (manager focus group)* and also resulting in being physically withdrawn without the emotional element of the opportunity to relate to others '*too much to do and everything feels out of control and you're spending too much time doing things, rather than engaging and talking to people, so you're locked in your office*' *(manager focus group).*

The individual was another key factor particularly when feeling not valued, lack of control and unable to influence events. Personality also influenced other aspects such as not feeling connected to the organisation or a sense of professional pride.

'*It was just to save yourself, because you would have gone mad if you would have stayed, I couldn't have solved it actually, I feel miserable and it also leaves a mark on you, almost a scar … whenever you lose engagement it pushes it one step too far. (Manager FMCG).*

'If you feel personally that cannot influence in any shape or form your future of how you work, or the future of the organisation and drive value, you get to a point where you have to question is it worth being there, is it worth taking your talents and skills elsewhere'.(HR practitioner)

'disengagement was directly linked to the stress of trying to do too much and then being frustrated at myself that I couldn't do it all' (HR practitioner)

'it was very political, keeping me away from key stakeholders, .. not sharing information, not letting me attend key events, … it was competitive in that way, they knew damn well I could do it, but didn't give me the opportunity.' (Telco manager)

A number of further themes that emerged from the interviews have provided some tentative insights on the nature of disengagement. The first supports the aspects of engagement, as originally identified by Kahn, suggesting that unless someone is cognitively engaged and understands their work it is difficult to become emotionally engaged therefore leading to behaviour that reflects the physical engagement '*you feel much more engaged when you*

understand' (professional, FMCG). This has parallels with affective, normative and continuance organisation commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1997) and indeed there also appears to be an element of normative engagement where people felt that they had to be engaged '*it is quite a demanding team so we have to be engaged'* (financial services employee).

It seems that the difference between being disengaged and not engaged is related to the emotional aspects of engagement: the language used when people were engaged or disengaged was that of 'feeling' including relationships, whereas when they were talking about not being engaged it was related to more cognitive aspects of their work *'There was no real excitement there. It was just if you didn't enjoy your job, there was really no point in being there. There was no, you didn't really feel valued, there were no events or things like that went on, that kind of made you feel special, or like you're actually part of something'* (employees focus group)

'my team was so disparate that I didn't see people and again it was management style and what was expected from my manager. So the first year I would say that my engagement wasn't particularly great'. (line manager, Telco).

Whereas disengagement had an emotional element: *'this is disengaging, if you feel there's a big political battle and you're in the line of fire and your manager is not supportive, or doesn't react at all to say this is the way to go, you feel exposed and have to fight'* (manager FMCG), *'will not give them that satisfaction that I feel like I need to go to the loo now, because I'm going to burst into tears - on one side. To the other side even more focused to achieve, to deliver, to prove them wrong...put them back in their box, the whole sort of thing.* (professional, energy sector).

There was also an element of being active or passive to being disengaged or just not engaged that emerged, which also suggested having to have been engaged first in order to become disengaged '*I think where you have been in a situation where you have felt empowered and move into a situation where you don't, then that's when I think you can lose engagement*' (employee focus group).

Discussion

In this chapter we set out to explore the nature and experience of disengagement, the role of emotions, whether the focus of engagement/disengagement is the organisation or the job and the extent of the endurance of the construct.

Overall the outcomes of disengagement from the initial analysis suggest that disengaging work drains an individual of psychological energy and encourages work avoidance strategies, 'just

socialising', taking short cuts, taking time off work and lower productivity. At the individual level the breakdown of trust can precede disengagement and lead to cynicism, negative mindsets and behaviours, lower levels of loyalty and eventually leaving the job or organisation exacerbated by line manager, organisational or job related factors.

Nature of disengagement: Our findings suggest that superficially disengagement and engagement may be seen as the opposite poles of the same concept but as we have seen from the literature review much depends on the different definitions of engagement and theoretical underpinnings. Disengagement seems to have an active nature where it spurs people into active behaviour such as withdrawal, leaving, becoming cynical, as opposed to not being engaged which is a more passive reaction to work. We also found that disengagement seems to be an emotional reaction and for both the reaction has been triggered by a difficult moment illustrating the role of affective event theory (Dalal et al., 2009; Ashkanasy & Daus, 2002). Further analysis also suggests that another factor to consider is the 'engaged individual' building on self-efficacy, self-determination and optimism.

Experience of disengagement: Our findings also support that there may be different levels of disengagement: a healthy transitory level of disengagement where the individual needs to detach and rejuvenate in order to retain their wellbeing to prevent the stress, burnout and alienation (Kahn,1992; Sonnetag et al., 2008; George, 2010); withdrawal to protect the self from a difficult or stressful situation (Kahn, 1990); and burnout where the individual has not been able to protect themselves from harm either physically or behaviourally (Fox & Spector, 1990).

Engagement and disengagement seem to be local to the workplace, the job, the line manager and colleagues rather than the organisation although that sets the environment and in that sense it is different from organisational commitment, reinforcing the view that the focus is the job rather than the organisation.

Conclusions

Our study has provided some tentative insights into the nature of disengagement and the central mediating role of emotions through both emotional engagement and affective events. We have suggested that disengagement, like engagement has more than one facet but with a depth dimension which explains how it can be seen as transitory and more enduring. We have also seen how the various theoretical approaches contribute to understanding engagement and disengagement.

At a practical level this study highlights the role of the line manager in disengagement and the need to attend to the impact of affective events and the nature of the work and workload. As scholars and practitioners we need to understand the role and nature of work in people's lives which are experienced differently. We also need to recognise that disengagement is not always negative for the organisation as disengagement happens when things have gone wrong and need action, and it also provides a balance for the highly engaged individual George (2010). She also provides the caution of needing to understand the costs and sacrifices of high engagement to the individual in terms their personal lives and competing demands.

Our study confirms that disengagement is an important area to research both in its own right but also in contributing to the understanding of engagement by exploring what it is not. It highlights

the need for scholars to be more precise in reference to employee engagement, work and job engagement where they have been used interchangeably. This has perhaps lead to the confusion and the overlapping underpinning constructs as the authors of each of the three sets of approaches discussed in this chapter have defined engagement to fit with their observations and their chosen underlying theories and approaches (Kahn, 1990; Schaufeli et al., 2002; Macey & Schneider, 2008). Their approaches to disengagement are different and support the need for further empirical research to understand the nature of engagement and disengagement more fully.

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