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Cultivating group cohesiveness: The role of collective energy

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Abstract

Despite the growing research interest both positive psychology and positive organizational scholarship, the studies about collective energy at work remains nascent. In this study, we examine the role of collective energy (in the aspect of affective and behavioral) for enhancing group cohesiveness. Based on a sample of 127 service employees, our findings indicate connectivity is positively related to both affective energy and behavioral energy and both affective energy and behavioral energy is positively related to group cohesiveness. The study contributes the understanding the role of connectivity for enhancing energy in groups. The empirical findings of this study will lead to both scholars and practitioners to better understand collective energy within service industries.

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“Energy is the fuel that makes great organizations run.”

Jane Dutton

1. Introduction

Employees face challenges such as working long hours, unpredictable task demands, and renewed technology in today’s dynamic, competitive and high pressure work places. Under these circumstances most of employees feel exhausted and require energy both engage their family and work. Energy help employees deal with chaos and foster to move. Additionally in today’s turbulent economy organizations need to creativity for surviving and prospering (Rego et.al,2012). Energy and vitality are the components of creative behavior (Atwater and Carmeli, 2009) and elevates employees desire to work harder. Besides the amplifying role of energy, buffering role of energy is essential in organizations especially downsizing or economic crisis. Moreover from the positive organizational scholarship perspective energy can be handled in aspects of broaden and build theory. In line with Fredrickson’s broad and build theory (2001) energy broadens employees momentary thought action and builds their enduring personal resources. The

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effect of positive energy spread through the organization, foster to learn among co-workers and create important work outcomes.

The present study also investigated the quality of connections among group members. Connectedness is rising in the twenty-first century more specifically and organizational research shifting individualism to collectivism. In recent years, scholars give attention to partnerships, networks, high quality connections, community and stakeholder negotiation rather than competition and reductionism (Pavlovich and Krahnke, 2012). This study aims to contribute organizational researches by examining connectivity among group members facilitates creating and spreading affective and behavioral energy.

Accordingly, the paper is structured as follows. First, collective energy is examined. In this section, the concept of energy and collective energy –affective and behavioral-is investigated. Second, the relationship between connectivity and -affective, behavioral- collective energy is explained. Third, the association among collective -affective, behavioral- energy and group cohesiveness is investigated. Then, the empirical results are provided. Lastly, suggestions for future researches and information for practitioners are presented.

2. Literature Review and Hypotheses

2.1. Collective Energy

In recent years scholars emphasize positive work places, positive emotions, positive states, positive institutions and positive relationships among coworkers rather than negative psychological state. After the interest to positive psychology and its reflection on organizations positive organizational behavior and positive organizational scholarship much concept and positive states or emotions has been investigated however interestingly energy construct has been neglected. Although organizational scholars benefit the energy term, they do not define, it is not clear that what exactly energy is and there is no agreement conceptualizing or measuring validated energy. Additionally there is nascent empirical study about energy.

Interest in energy goes back to work ancient Asian cultural traditions (Cole et.al,2012). Energy is widely talked and experienced in daily lives however it is also different from common usage. In organizational studies energy is a renewable resource and contributes both individual and organizational outcomes (Spreitzer et.al, 2005). Work places allow to employees both generate and deplete energy.

Spreitzer et.al. (2012) investigated energy through using different lenses. The first view is “Ego-depletion Theory”. Ego-depletion theory is proposed by social psychologist Baumeister and his colleagues (1998). According to the theory, energy is a physical and biological construct and energy is a limited resource. The empirical studies about theory mostly investigated in laboratories rather than organizational contexts. The second perspective is attention restoration theory (ART). The theory is proposed by environmental psychologists Steven and Rachel Kaplan (1989). The theorists advocate that energy is finite and depletable. Attention restoration theory differs from Ego-depletion theory via examining energy as directed attention. The empirical studies in the workplace about attention restoration theory demonstrate the positive effects of energy. The third theory is self-determination theory and identifies energy as subjective vitality which refers enthusiasm, aliveness and positive energy. The fourth view is namely energetic arousals. Energetic arousal constitutes feelings of enthusiasm, excitement and vitality. Energetic arousal is conceptualized as positive activation. The fifth perspective is interactional ritual chain theory. The theory is based on sociology and is conceptualized energetic arousal, subjective vitality or positive activation. Interactional ritual chain theory focuses specifically on social structure and social cognition. The empirical studies conducted in organizational scholarship indicate the relationship among energetic arousal with creative outcomes, entrepreneurial passion, mood convergence and emotional contagion in groups. The last view is conservation of resources theory. The theory is based on psychology; however it is used on organizational researches frequently.

In organizational studies Katz and Kahn (1966) used energetic term in their study. Specifically development of positive organizational scholarship research fosters using energy in organizations. In organizational researches many concepts encompasses energy such as job engagement, subjective vitality, zest thriving and momentum. For example Rich et. al. (2010), suggested that job engagement encompass physical, cognitive and emotional energy. Job engagement combines three of them in a holistic manner. Subjective vitality refers individual energy and aliveness (Ryan and Fredrick, 1997). Both psychological and physiological factors impact vitality and lead to positive consequences such as well-being. Zest is identified as energy and shows a person’s approach to life (Peterson et.al.,2009). Peterson et. al. (2009) investigated the role of zest in work places and demonstrated empirically the positive association between zest

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