

LOVE FOR WORK AS THE WAY TOWARD WELL-BEING

Love means deep caring for others and it makes life worth living, in other words, love is an emotion of strong affection and personal attachment. Furthermore, love can be seen as a virtue or strength representing human kindness, compassion, and affection (e.g., Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005) and it has many definitions. What about love for work? Is it “love” and how could it be defined? Not only spend people a substantial portion of their life at work but some of them also enjoy working and are enthusiastic about it. Love for work can be fascinating and liberating or oppressive and compelling. Love for work may develop into an addiction but it can provide enormous satisfaction as well. More often, however, we tend to situate love in other areas of life than in work. Today’s working life poses continuous efficiency and development pressures to all employees regardless of the occupation. Therefore, surviving in the riptide of modern working life has become demanding, not to mention succeeding in it. Would it, thus, be reasonable to contemplate for a moment the idea of love for work: what kinds of elements it could consist of? Positive emotions support problem-solving skills and the ability to act in an innovative way and thus human well-being. The importance and potential of this may seem surprising as the feelings of happiness are so simple and common in nature (Isen, 2006). However, experience has already shown that the healthier and more satisfied the employees are the better they work (Rissa, 2007).

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF WORK

Still in the 1990s, the role of feelings at work was almost ignored by focusing almost exclusively on only two constructs: namely stress and satisfaction (see Briber, 1999). Nowadays, developing interventions to increase happiness is a major focus of positive psychology (Schiffirin & Nelson, 2010). At the personal level, positive psychology concentrates on subjective experiences, well-being, satisfaction, flow, joy, pleasure, and happiness, as well as on optimistic and hopeful attitude and confidence in the future. Furthermore, love has been defined as one of the people’s basic strengths within the virtue of humanity (see Seligman et al., 2005). At the group level, the interest of positive psychology is in the civil skills and institutions that turn individuals into better citizens—responsible, flexible, and ethical workers (Seligman, 2002).

Those characteristics of work that enhance efficient and engaged working have been illustrated in many ways. For example, Hackman and Oldham’s (1976) job characteristics model describes meaningful work relating to jobs with characteristics such as task variety, identity and significance, feedback, and autonomy. However, individuals’ perceptions of their jobs do not depend entirely on the objective

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characteristics of the job: for example, high-quality leadership has the potential to positively influence employees' perceptions of the meaning of their work and thus to affect also their psychological well-being (Arnold, Turner, Barling, Kelloway, & McKee, 2007; Gilbreath & Benson, 2004). According to Arnold et al. (2007), humanistic work values – in other words, the normative beliefs individuals hold about whether work should be meaningful – have an important influence on the likelihood of finding meaning in current work and psychological well-being. This kind of idea of humanistic work values are in line with the definition of healthy work as well:

Healthy work exists where people feel good, achieve high performance, and have high levels of well-being (Quick, 1999, p. 123).

Thus, healthy work does not rest solely on the above mentioned objective characteristics but positive feeling is also important. That is why we want to focus attention toward love for work in this article.

THE AIM OF THIS ARTICLE

In this article, our aim is to dissect the concept of love for work. It can be defined as a part of a broader emotion 'liking' but can easily be associated with attraction and romantic relationships at a work place (Briber, 1999). However, in this article our aim is to analyze love 'for' work not 'at' work—although the latter could make one feel love for work and, indeed, love for work is experienced at work but presumably the feeling keeps up at home as well. Therefore, love can be seen as a particular strength of character which is robustly associated with work satisfaction across a range of occupation types and positions (Peterson & Park, 2006). First, we consider the phenomenon from the point of view of employees' love for work: how can love for work be defined and what elements does it consist of? Secondly, we dissect the phenomenon from leaders' perspective: what does love for work as well as fostering that attitude and transmitting it to followers mean for leadership? Furthermore, our purpose is to connect love for work with vocational education and in-service training: what their role is in the genesis of love for work and how they could enhance it. As love is one of the fundamental concepts of positive psychology, our review is strongly tinted by this theoretical perspective.

EMPLOYEES' LOVE FOR WORK

Happiness and satisfaction must be understood as the outcome of an interaction process between individual characteristics and aspirations on the one side, and social relations and macro-social structures on the other side (Haller & Hadler, 2006). Happy people perform better at work than those who report low well-being. Furthermore, happy workers are better organizational citizens, because they help other people at work in various ways (see Diener & Seligman, 2004). Kaye (2010)

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points out that happiness can be directly translated into engagement, productivity, and satisfaction—the wide definition of productive work (see Prewitt, 2003). Likewise, according to Lyubomirsky et al. (2005), positive affect is associated with multiple positive outcomes including better performance ratings at work, higher salaries, and improved health.

Furthermore, there is evidence that successful employees do also have a positive and optimistic attitude toward work—downright love—and they experience work satisfaction, joy of work, and work drive (see Uusiautti, 2008).

Kinjerski and Skrypnek (2006) have listed factors that are associated with individuals' experiences of spirit at work. These factors can be considered essential also when defining love for work:

1. Leaders and senior members who inspire employees through their leadership and their example;
2. a strong organizational foundation that includes a shared vision, mission, purpose, and an intention to contribute to the overall good of society;
3. organizational integrity and work that is aligned with its mission and purpose;
4. positive workplace culture including a positive physical space for employees to work in;
5. positive connections among all members and a sense of community in the organization;
6. opportunities for members to pursue professional and personal growth and to fulfill their own personal mission through work; and
7. appreciation and regard for the contributions made by its members (Kinjerski & Skrypnek, 2006, pp. 290–291).

Kinjerski's and Skrypnek's description is interesting as it presents only one reference on physical working conditions (the positive physical space for employees to work in) while the others refer to inspiration, mission and purpose, good intention, integrity as well as to positive culture and inter-worker connections including appreciation. Opportunities to develop oneself professionally and personally, for their part, strengthen the positive feeling toward work as well.

Love for work resembles voluntary altruistic or helpful acts that have the potential to enhance organizations and that are called organizational citizenship behavior (see Spector & Fox, 2002). Individuals may make voluntary contributions that go beyond specific task performance or the psychological contract with the employer and these behaviors are intended to help either people or the organization. Furthermore, people who are empathetic by nature will tend to help others, while people experience being fairly treated will tend to help the organization.

LOVING LEADERS AND LEADERS' LOVE FOR WORK

The role of emotions in the leadership process has attracted increasing interest in recent years and leaders' emotional expressions are typically more important to

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followers than the objective content of their communication (see Glasø & Einarsen, 2008). Emotions and emotional intelligence have even been considered as the heart of effective leadership (Arnold et al., 2007).

Furthermore, an ethic of caring establishes, instead of guiding principles to blindly follow, a moral touchstone for decision making (Hoyle, 2002). When leaders consistently exhibit love, forgiveness, and trust in relationships, their employees respond with increased commitment and loyalty.

Bass (2000) describes the important role that emotions play in contemporary leadership, by contrasting “transactional” leaders with “transformational” leaders. Traditional transactional leaders rather focus on mutual transactions and the exchange of rewards for performance and efforts between employee and employer instead of considering affective experiences. Transformational leaders project a vision that their followers believe in, they inspire and support the followers, and make them feel wanted and valuable to the organization. The latter leader type corresponds to our conception of a loving leader.

The present understanding, that well-being is not only valuable because it feels good but also because it has beneficial consequences, makes loving management imperative at work places. According to Rego, Ribeiro, Pina, and Jesuino (2011) fostering organizational virtuousness (e.g., through honesty, interpersonal respect, and compassion; combining high standards of performance with a culture of forgiveness and learning from mistakes) improves employees’ affective well-being and promotes a more committed workforce. Considering these findings and mirroring the growing contributions of the positive psychology (e.g. Gable & Haidt, 2005; Buss, 2000; Seligman et al., 2005), it seems clear that a “positive-people-management” perspective should be considered, both by practitioners and scholars internationally (see Calori, 1995).

Sensitive and loving leaders develop a culture that demonstrates concern for individual needs at the work place (Fairholm & Fairholm, 2000) but they pay attention to and support their followers’ personal life as well (Ransford, Crouter, & McHale, 2008). Yet, an organization where employees are happy should also make profit in economic sense. However, these two factors do not exclude each other. It has been shown that effective leaders are sensitive and responsive to their followers’ needs by providing advice, guidance, as well as emotional and instrumental resources, by supporting employees’ creativity, initiative, and autonomy as well as desire to meet new challenges and develop and acquire new professional skills and thus enhance their self-worth and self-efficacy (e.g., Popper & Amit, 2009). Happiness not only produces a quantitative improvement by increasing efficiency but also a qualitative one by making a better product or outcome by the virtue of pride, belief, and commitment to one’s job. Happy employees exhibit higher levels of jobrelated performance behaviors than do unhappy employees (Wright, 2004).

Therefore, emotions are also given prominence in leadership (Campbell, 2007). It has been also stated that authentic leaders are

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as guided by the qualities of the heart (passion and compassion) as by the qualities of the mind (Avolio et al., 2004, p. 805).

Love in leaders' work can also be considered from the point of view of the interpersonal nature of emotions. According to Fischer and van Kleef (2010), it is an indisputable fact that emotions are mostly reactions to other people, that emotions take place in settings where other people are present, that emotions are expressed toward other people and regulated because of other people: therefore, the elicitation of love by understanding other people as the cause, target, or third-party observer of these emotions is necessary for leaders.

CAN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IGNITE AND IN-SERVICE TRAINING SUSTAIN LOVE FOR WORK?

If individual strengths and virtues as well as loving leadership enhanced love for work, would vocational education have the role for igniting future leaders' and employees' loving and caring attitude toward work? Does vocational education provide students with learning settings that enhance the emergence of the positive emotions toward work?

It has been suggested that education should include training that increase positive emotion through training and activities on savoring and mindfulness, gratitude, optimism and resilience, such as stress reductions skills training, life-planning and goal-setting skills training, problem-solving skills training as well as training aiming at identifying students' (future employees') signature strengths and having them employ these strengths in their daily lives (Maddux, 2002).

Consequently, it can be argued that in-service training could sustain or enhance the emergence of love for work and therefore, in-service training has a special role as well. In the modern society, people has to be ready to learn new all the time but education and training in adulthood also shape employees' lives individually and strengthen their subjectivity (Kilpeläinen, 2004). Employees who want to develop themselves and their work appreciate the opportunities produced by inservice training (Uusiautti, 2008; Uusiautti & Määttä, 2010). Thus, in-service training can function as a booster of love for work: it strengthens it as employees notice their increasing and improving proficiency and provide them with the feeling of mastery and self-fulfillment. Caring as the principle of professional development can even lead to "perfect storm" that can lead to a much deeper and more personal engagement (see e.g., Flint, Kurumada, Fisher, & Zisook, 2011).

CONCLUSION

The predictive strength of affective reactions depends on social-contextual factors, such as the nature of the interpersonal relationship (e.g., cooperative or competitive), prevailing (cultural) norms (e.g., "display rules"), and the way the emotion are

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expressed (Fischer & van Kleef, 2010). Based on our review, love for work can be studied both from personal and interpersonal perspectives. Love for work is not just something that an individual employee or a leader can experience but what they can spread in the work community and what can be enhanced through education as well.

Love for work consists of the following elements as well: persistence, enthusiasm, commitment, optimistic and reactive attitude as well as willingness to develop one's proficiency. Furthermore, according to our studies, all these features epitomized successful Finnish employees (see Uusiautti & Määttä, 2010). This conclusion raises inevitably a question: Does love for work also lead to (or enhance) success at work? It could, as for example according to Rimé (2009), positive emotions enhance individual well-being in two different ways: by the increase of the level of positive affect that they entail and by the positive feedback that a successful experience brings to the knowledge base and the self.

In work context, love and caring emphasize the connection through responsibility to others rather than tight rules and discipline. Indeed, Cadwell and Dixon (2009) have defined love, forgiveness, and trust as organizational constructs that are freedom producing empowering, and vital to enhancing employees' self-efficacy.

To expand our analysis further, it can be pointed out that emotions, such as love, can be utilized for the common good. We live our lives with other people and we experience ourselves choosing and feeling in relation to other people and events, in other words, acknowledging human interdependence (Oatley, 2010). In the work context, it can be stated that if a workplace that operates on the highest ethical plane is the goal, one should work for creating a happy people's work place with engaged employees who have fun at work and who find ways to make their work of profound service to others.