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## Commentary on “The Circumplex Model of Occupational Well-Being: Its Relation with Personality”

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The article “The Circumplex Model of Occupational Well-being: Its Relation with Personality” uses person-oriented methods to make a valuable contribution to the literature on occupational health psychology. Previous research on occupational well-being has often taken the circumplex model of subjective well-being in general as a point of departure and noted that well-being may be classified on the basis of the dimensions of pleasantness and arousal. In the occupational context, the combination of high activation and high pleasure has been referred to as work engagement, while burnout represents its counterpart (deactivation and displeasure); the combination of pleasure and deactivation has been proposed to represent job satisfaction while the state combining high arousal and displeasure would be characteristic of workaholism.

In contrast to prior research, Anne Mäkikangas and her colleagues use a person-oriented approach in their attempt to empirically test the circumplex model. Using data from the Finnish Jyväskylä Longitudinal Study of Personality and Social Development (from the age 50 data collection) and applying Latent Profile Analysis, Anne Mäkikangas and her colleagues find support for two of the proposed types of occupational well-being – the patterns of “engaged” and “burned-out” employees. Whereas the other two hypothesized types were not supported by the data, the authors find support for two other patterns – “ordinary” (around mean levels of burnout, engagement, workaholism, and job satisfaction) and “bored-out” (mainly characterized by low satisfaction). Although the empirical patterns were only partly in accordance with predictions, the article indicates that the circumplex model perhaps needs to be supplemented by a pattern representing average levels of all states (i.e., the “ordinary” employees) and suggests that, in addition to the “burned-out” type, there may be also another pattern characterized by deactivation and displeasure (i.e., the “bored-out”).

The authors also make use of personality profiles – based on combinations of the Five-Factor Model of Personality traits – and link these profiles to the patterns of occupational well-being. They convincingly show that a variable approach to personality is less successful than a person-oriented approach in explaining the occupational well-being patterns. In doing so they go beyond existing research on the effects of personality variables on work engagement and burnout, and show that a resilient personality profile (with high levels of conscientiousness and extraversion, low levels of neuroticism, and average levels of openness and agreeableness) tends to be more important for the engagement pattern of well-being. While the results of the present study await replication using larger samples from other countries, Mäkikangas and her colleagues provide valuable insights into the nature of occupational well-being. A fruitful avenue of future research, as noted by the authors, would be to also take characteristics of the psychosocial environment into consideration in understanding how patterns of occupational well-being are formed – perhaps by considering the interaction between individual and environmental characteristics.