



SPARKING LEADERSHIP FOR ENGAGED EMPLOYEES AND PASSIONATE ORGANIZATIONS – SPARKING LEADERSHIP SCALE (SLS) DEVELOPMENT AND VALIDATION

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Elif Bilginoglu¹, Ugur Yozgat²

¹Istanbul, Turkey.

elifb@ada.net.tr, ORCID: 0000-0003-1481-0170

²Istanbul Kultur University, 34140, İstanbul, Turkey

u.yozgat@iku.edu.tr, ORCID: 0000-0001-9893-3551

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ABSTRACT

Purpose- Today the challenge facing the leaders is not how to engage employees; it is how to keep the fires of passion burning. Nevertheless most studies neither link the two constructs nor explain how the leaders may make an influence on the disengaged employees to turn them into a passionate workforce. The aim of this paper is to shed light on how sparking leaders ignite passion into the disengaged employees and translate them into a passionate workforce.

Methodology- There are no empirically validated measures to assess sparking leadership. This paper introduces a theoretical framework for sparking leadership and develops a scale “Sparking Leadership Scale (SLS)” to measure it.

Findings- The proposed model on sparking leaders, unengaged employees and passionate organizations relationship provides a conceptual framework in an area where little prior research that relies on anecdotal evidence has been done

Conclusion- This conceptual model which is based on insights from the previous research and the propositions emerging from it imply a rich agenda for future research.

Keywords: Sparking leadership, engagement at work, disengaged employees, passion at work, passionate organizations.

JEL Codes: M00, M12, O15

1. INTRODUCTION

Leadership is a vital ingredient in developing the purpose and strategy of organizations because strategic management is concerned with the way forward for an organization (Hannagan, 2002, p. 164). As upper echelons theory proposes; the specific knowledge, experience, values, and preferences of top managers influence their assessment of the environment and the strategic decisions they make (Hambrick & Mason, 1984). Leadership which is a craft that is perfected through the focused dedication of time, attention, and self-awareness, is particularly important in organizations trying to meet the challenges of changing environment. The leaders should invest the time and effort to become the best leader they can be (Byham & Wellins, 2015, p. 243; Daft, 2003, p. 532).

Michelangelo notes “Inside every block of stone there dwells a masterpiece; all one must do is remove the excess stone to reveal a gift.” Considering that every employee is different, with their own set of experiences, values, cultural backgrounds, influences and beliefs; the best leaders are those that can identify and appreciate the differences that one brings to the table and knows how to put them to full use. These leaders are those who enable the full potential in each of their employees. They know how to take the employees out of their comfort zone to put their potential to the test and to observe whether they accept the challenges or not (Llopis, 2014).

Through the years, the view on what leadership is and who can exercise it has changed considerably. Today, successfully leading

lasting change in any organization is more complicated than ever before. As the 21st century presents many new challenges for both employees and organizational leaders, they all need to learn cognitive flexibility and divergent thinking in this interconnected, fast moving world. New theories of leadership are different from those in “the typical leadership study” (Hunter, Bedell-Avers, & Mumford, 2007) and they view leadership as extremely complex (Bennis & Nanus, 2005; Gleeson, 2017; Greenberg, 2012; Riggio, 2010). They emphasize the emotional side of leadership and claim that soul, spirit, faith and hope belong at the heart of leadership (Bolman & Deal, 2011, p.10). They also state that the 21st century leader must have the ability to make the most out of every situation. The leader should be courageous and not afraid to challenge the status quo and furthermore push the boundaries to make things better. He / she should know how to get the most out of people and enable the full potential in others (Llopis, 2014).

The research reveals that the world has an employee engagement crisis, with serious and potentially lasting repercussions for the global economy (Mann & Harter, 2016). It is a fact that in today’s competitive organizational environment and rapidly evolving world of work, organizations should continuously develop a robust portfolio of leaders who are ready to engage their employees (Global Human Capital Trends, 2015).

Although disengagement at work is the widespread and passion at work is deemed more important than disengagement (Denning, 2014) even crucial, most studies neither link the two constructs nor explain how the leaders may make an influence on the disengaged employees to turn them into a passionate workforce. The aim of this paper is to shed light on how sparking leaders ignite passion into the disengaged employees and translate them into a passionate workforce.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Sparking Leadership

One of the primary goals of a leader is most likely to attract and keep motivated employees (Vogan, 2006) and to focus on being a coach, a sergeant, an encourager and a leader to them by displaying specific qualities that inspire, motivate, develop and empower them to want to perform (Guess, 2018).

Leadership is about fire. Minds, which are alit with new ideas, spark other minds to even vaster potential (Brown, 2002). However, a fire does not light itself. After setting out the wood in a little arrangement of logs and carefully watching it, it will not suddenly burst into flames. It has to be lit. Much the same applies to one as a leader of an organization. A leader has to light the fire with all the people he / she interacts with. He / she should ignite their passions and let them show what they’re capable of. It is a part of his / her responsibility (Doyle, 2016). In line with this John Buchan noted, “The task of leadership is not to put greatness into humanity, but to elicit it, for the greatness is already there.” (Adair, 2012), whilst Kathy Austin stated, “Managers light a fire under people; leaders light a fire in people.” (Brenig Jones & Dowdall, 2018, p. 118).

The leaders should focus on lighting the little spark inside the employees. It may be a spark of enthusiasm, a flicker of unrealized potential, a flash of determination, a first flame of raw talent, or a kindling of interest. These beginnings, internal motivations, can either be ignited or they can be immediately doused with indignities and put out (Calvert, 2013). The leaders should bring on the fire and use their own passion to inflame the passions of others, not to quench their spirits (Lucas, 1999, p. 66).

Some leaders fan the flames, whilst others spark the fire. They inspire the people around them to be just a little better than they are. These unique leaders are called the “fire starters” (Davis, Palokoff & Eder, 2018, p. 13) or the “sparking leaders”. They are the ones who provide the spark for the employees to create the fire (Chester, 2015).

2.2. Disengaged Employees

Employees hate Mondays. The thought of another week at work evokes everything from dread to boredom for many. The miseries of work, the boss, the pay all constitute an endless list of pain (Chakravarty, 2012).

Disengagement is an umbrella term for a variety of issues, such as burnout, stress, boredom or workplace conflict (Brown, 2016), in contrast to engagement which is a concept that underlines the positive instead of the negative side of a relationship and entailing passion, commitment, involvement, energy, dedication and pleasantness (Imperatori, 2017, p. 1).

Engagement is energy. The engaged employee is positively charged, passionate, optimistic, and brimming with ideas, whilst the disengaged is negatively charged, complains, spreads discontent, and causes conflict. Hence, employee engagement is a real vehicle for measuring the health and potential of any company (Byham & Wellins, 2015, p. 135; Thompson, 2009). To compete effectively, it is not enough for the organizations to recruit the top talent, but they must also inspire their employees to apply their full capabilities to their work. Otherwise, part of that rare and expensive resource remains unavailable. As work engagement can make a true difference for employees and may offer organizations a competitive advantage (Leiter & Bakker, 2010, p.1; Zigarmi, Houson, Witt & Diehl, 2011), modern organizations need employees who feel energetic and dedicated, who are engaged with their work.

However, research reveals that only 15% of employees worldwide are engaged at work and although engagement levels vary considerably by country and region, in no country does the proportion of the employed residents who are engaged at work exceed about four in 10 (Gallup, 2017). Besides; 88% of employees and 80% of senior managers do not have passion for their work, and so they don't contribute their full potential (Hagel, Brown, Ranjan & Byler, 2014) Furthermore, 1 out of 3 employees quit their job because their job was not compatible with their passion (Jobstreet.com, 2015).

The research reveals that the world has an employee engagement crisis, with serious and potentially lasting repercussions for the global economy (Mann & Harter, 2016). As a result, the leaders are spending a lot of time, energy and money attempting to move all these disengaged employees up. However, today in order to succeed in the rapidly changing world, engaging the disengaged might no longer be enough for the organizations. They will need to focus on passion plus engagement to develop and retain the talent they will need to navigate and succeed (Hagel, Brown, Wooll & Ranjan, 2017). Today the organizations need passionate employees because it is the passionate employees who take the biggest risks, the biggest responsibilities and help make the biggest leaps forward within teams and organizations. Hence, they are the ones who can drive extreme and sustained performance improvement. The leaders should consider moving all the employees (not only the disengaged, but also the already engaged ones) to a higher tier (Hagel et al., 2014; Imperatori, 2017, p. 2; Morgan, 2015; Myler, 2013). Whilst it is the engaged minds which build the employees' performance, it is the engaged hearts which build their passion. The leader ignites passion and connects employee hearts and minds (Colan, 2009, p. 153). Thus, the challenge facing the leaders is not how to engage employees; it is how to keep the fires of passion burning (Chester, 2015).

On the other hand, Bobinski (2011) claims that motivation is a fire lit from within and a leader cannot light that fire, but he / she can create the conditions for that fire to burn brightly, whilst Stallard, Dewing-Hommes and Pankau (2007, p.xiii) claim that people generally enter the organizations fired up, but over time most work environments reduce that inner fire from a flame to a flicker.

When the leader takes the right steps, this often results in more than simple engagement and rather an ongoing cycle of on-fire commitment to the job, to the colleagues and to the organization. When employees are on fire, they are filled with more energy, which leads to an increase in their productivity, motivation, creativity and performance. And when the people who work for a leader are on fire, they have no intention to leave the organization. Instead, they will want to stay longer, and the leader will want to reward them, promote them and invest more in them. This is called the "on-fire cycle" (Chester, 2015).

2.3. Passionate Organizations

Passion is defined as "a strong inclination toward an activity that people like, find important, and in which they invest significant time and energy" (Vallerand, Mageau, Ratelle, Leonard, Blanchard, Koestner & Gagne, 2003, p. 756) or "personal intensity, or the underlying force that fuels our strongest emotions" (Chang, 2001, p. 5).

Michael Dell suggested "Passion should be the fire that drives your life's work" (Chowdhury, 2014). Employee work passion refers to "an individual's persistent, emotionally positive, meaning-based, state of well-being, stemming from reoccurring cognitive and affective appraisals of various job and organizational situations that result in consistent, constructive, work intentions and behaviors" (Zigarmi, Nimon, Houson, Witt, & Diehl, 2009, p. 310).

Passionate individuals desire to engage in their chosen work, thus resulting in a fairly uniform pattern of behavior. Passion fills the employees with energy and excitement. Passionate employees are happier, more productive, more creative, and eager to come to work each day. Because they are invested emotionally, they are also loyal. They are committed on a deeper level to the organization and its success. Passion stimulates the employees to learn new skills, drive them to apply their inherent talent in creative ways, and cause them to pursue and obtain new knowledge. Passion is the spark that helps them to be their best and most authentic self (Byham & Wellins, 2015, pp. 137-138; Chang, 2001, p. 190; Love & Cugnon, 2009, p. 20; Perrewe, Hochwarter, Ferris, McAllister & Harris, 2014, p. 146).

In line with the Confucius saying, "Choose a job you love, and you will never have to work a day in your life", by nourishing a harmonious passion toward work, people's work can make their life most worth living (Forest et al., 2011, p. 37).

Lucas (1999, p.4) states that there is nothing like passion and adds that one untrained but passionate novice, given a little time and some resources and encouragement, will rise above any ten trained but dispassionate experts as surely as the passionate upstart organization will bring its rational entrenched competitors to their knees.

As Colan (2014) claims; passionate employees are made through thoughtful leadership. In a similar vein, Brown (2002) states that a leader is measured by his extolled influence as he takes people enslaved to old ideas and liberates them to burn passionately about new ideas with great promise. If organizations want their employees to be passionate about their work, they must be passionate about helping them work (Chang, 2001, p. 186). The leader should know how to spark the fire in the employees who are less than excited about their work. Klein and House (1995, p.183) takes fire a metaphor for the

phenomenon of leadership and formulates, the leader as the “spark”, the followers as the “fuel” and the circumstances as the “oxygen”, where all three components create and maintain the “fire”.

Passion is a key part of being a great leader. It is the leader’s passion which inspires the employees to take on new and very dangerous challenges. To build an extraordinary team, a leader has to light the fire in the employees’ bellies, to get them to feel passion about the organization and connect to the leader’s vision.

Passion is contagious (Vogan, 2006). Research also reveals that based on the theory of emotional contagion there is a positive association between a leader’s work passion and employee’s work passion (Li, Zhang & Yang, 2017).

The leaders spark a team of ordinary people who, combined, do extraordinary things (Brown, 2002). The leader’s passion fuels new initiatives that the team embraces. Sparked by that passion, team members become more creative and effective, adding their own ideas and executing the details far better than they would if they were simply handed a task list (Thompson, 2009, p. 91).

Although the leaders should bring on the fire and use their own passion to inflame the passions of others (Lucas, 1999, p. 66), too often leaders fail to analyze what drives the passion of their employees. Leaders who focus on the negative usually fail to excite passion and the critical culture kills the fire within employees. The inherent employee passion can either be ignited in the workplace, promoting success; or it can be extinguished, destroying the great potential that employee passion brings to the organization (Hardgrove & Howard, 2015, p. 16).

2.4. Sparking Leadership for Engaged Employees and Passionate Organizations

Although there are no certain ways to motivate the unmotivated employees, there are steps a leader can take to improve his / her odds. It is suggested that the management pulls the right levers to get them want to do the job. The leader should first know the employees as individuals in order to understand why they aren’t working up to their potential and what is it that is standing between ability and execution. The leader should be fully conscious of personal and team dynamics. The leader should find assignments that appeal because by finding the right match that sparks an employee’s interest, the results can be surprising and exceptional. And finally, the leader should state clearly his / her own expectations (Lipman, 2014). Malone (2004) notes that in order to identify each employee’s fire, the leader should first identify the work passions that drive the members of a team and to encourage them to move into these areas. A leader should find out what the employees like to do, what they don’t like to do, where they seem to shine, and where they have the greatest organizational impact. Then he / she may encourage these employees to take initiative in the areas where their fire exists and will enable them to move in areas of strength.

Once a leader notices that the employees are disengaged from work, he / she should take an active role in getting them engaged and keeping them that way. They should make themselves available for constant dialogue with employees. That is the way of re-igniting the spark in them (Brown, 2016; Whitehurst, 2015).

A leader can also increase employee engagement by letting the employees know that they are appreciated and encouraged to grow, by offering them a meaningful work and by creating a positive environment. These three factors get to the heart of what really matters to people and how they feel about their jobs (Byham & Wellins, 2015, pp. 137-138)

Another way to light the fire inside the employees and to get them reengaged with their jobs is to understand what motivates them, to set them loose, to emphasize their strengths and to choose leaders carefully (Reisinger, 2015).

Colan (2014) states that the key to passionate performance is found within the hearts and minds of employees where their basic human needs are fulfilled. He adds that the formula is to fulfill their needs. Then they are engaged and perform at their maximum. Otherwise they are disengaged which means they are frustrated, out of control, unfocused, and disconnected. To meet these needs, leaders must first acknowledge and understand them. The leaders should create a compelling cause for their teams to fight for, create connections with them in a natural and reliable way and show his / her appreciation in a sincere and specific way.

But first and foremost, for the leaders who want to spark passion in the employees, it is suggested that their motivation comes from a genuine desire to improve the morale and well-being of the entire workplace, not only from a desire for financial or organizational success (Miller, 2017).

These methods may hold true for the employees who have lost their passion or have never shared the core passions of the organization for they will need guidance and encouragement in discovering and developing passion on a personal level (Chang, 2001, p. 185).

In conclusion, passion makes the difference. People want to be passionate about what they do, and they want to be surrounded by people who are also passionate about what they do (Whitehurst, 2016). But it is also important to keep in mind that passion is not just an internal force and at its highest level, passion reaches out, absorbing others in its fire and generating fires about us

in others' hearts (Lucas, 1999, p. 170). This fire can be pleasant and warming, it can fade slowly, it can die suddenly, or it can blaze up and destroy everything in its path (Popper, 2001, p. 43).

3. SCALE DEVELOPMENT

We followed the established procedures to develop a scale (Churchill, 1979; Rossiter, 2002; Devellis, 2012; Johnson and Morgan, 2016)). This study develops the scale to measure *Sparking Leadership (SL)* in three stages: generation of scale items, scale purification, and scale validation.

3.1. Item Generation

The items for measuring SL were generated by deductive and inductive approach. As recommended in measure development (Hinkin, 1995; Hinkin, 1998), the researchers first conducted a review of the theoretical and empirical literature on the meaning and measurement of sparking leadership. The aim of this was to describe the range of work around the concept and to identify common and divergent themes. This provides a contextual background to the present study to develop a measure of sparking leadership in organizations. Moreover, as an inductive source, six doctoral students (three males and three females), and four human resources management department managers (two males and two females) involved in management and leadership research issues were interviewed as a one-to-one basis. Each unstructured interview lasted approx. 30 minutes (min. 21, max. 42 min.). In the interview, after describing the concept of sparking leadership used in this study, the interviewees were asked to draw up items to measure sparking leadership. We paid close attention to their vernacular to be able to accurately formulate potential items.

After eliminating ambiguous and redundant items generated initial pool containing 23 items were discussed with five academicians from different universities (three professors and two associate professors) well known as experts in leadership field. All items were reanalyzed to include only those items that have a potential to transform into actionable short-form scale. This led to a final pool of 12 items.

3.2. Scale Purification

The 12-item instrument was pretested with a convenience sample of 165 employees working in different sectors (Sample 1). We excluded responses where > 10 % of values were missing (Newman, 2003). We compared the means and the variances of early vs. late respondents using t-test which did not reveal evidence for a non-response bias (Armstrong & Overton, 1977).

To extract the principal dimensions and further reduction of items into a feasible number, a series of EFAs with principal components analysis and varimax rotation were successfully carried out (Netemeyer Bearden & Sharma, 2003; Spector, 1992). Items with factor loadings lower than the recommended threshold of 0.65 were eliminated (Hair, Black, Babin & Anderson, 2009).

One factor solution with eight items having eigenvalue 5.41, accounting 64.23% of the total variance, with loading of all items higher than .71 was emerged. Final 8-item measure Cronbach's alpha value .925 was above the recommended threshold value of .70 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Composite reliabilities (CR) was above .70 and the average variance extracted (AVE) exceeded .50 suggested convergent validity (Fornell and Lackner, 1981). Eight items of Sparking Leadership Scale (SLS) were given in Table 1.

Single-factor 8-item model was tested using LISREL. The result displayed a good model fit ($\chi^2(20) = 82.716$, $\chi^2/df = 4.04$, GFI = .913, CFI = .933, RMR = .069; RMSEA = 0.036).

Table 1: Sparking Leadership Scale (SLS)

Item	<i>My supervisor ...</i>
SP1	... motivates the employees.
SP2	... builds a motivational environment.
SP3	... ignites the employees' passions and let them show what they are capable of.
SP4	... inspires others to be better.
SP5	... guides and enables the employees' full potential.
SP6	... brings a unique perspective to the employees' development and pushes them to see their own capabilities that they have never seen or understood before.
SP7	... embodies his / her passions and becomes a role model for the employees.
SP8	... inspires the employees to bear on their toughest business challenges.

3.3. Scale Validation

To demonstrate the validity and practical usefulness of sparking leadership scale (SPL), some degree of predictive validity must be shown (DeVellis, 2012). The relationships between SPL, two dimensions of passion for work (Vallerand et al., 2003) and five dimensions of transformational leadership (Bass & Avalor, 1997, 2000) were taken as the frame of the reference for the study.

The Passion Scale developed by Vallerand et al. (2003) composed of two subscales for assessing harmonious (HP) and obsessive (OP) passion.

Multifactor Leadership Scale (MLQ) developed by Bass and Avalor (1997) composed of five dimensions for transformational leadership named as inspirational motivation (IM), idealized influence attributed (IIa), idealized influence behavior (IIb), intellectual stimulation (IS), and individualized consideration (IC).

The questionnaire containing the 8-item Sparking Leadership Scale, 14-item Passion Scale, 20-item Transformational Leadership Scale and demographic questions distributed to 200 employees working in different sectors (Sample 2) using convenience sampling method. After deleting the semi-filled ones remaining 139 questionnaires were analyzed using LISREL and SPSS statistical programs.

The respondents, of which 40.3 percent were females, had an average tenure of 11.75 years and were between 18 and 67 (mean = 31.27) years old. All scales were measured on a six-point Likert scale ranging from 1 "strongly disagree" to 6 "strongly agree".

The discriminant validity of our eight variables (sparking leadership, harmonious passion, obsessive passion, inspirational motivation, idealized influence attributed, idealized influence behavior, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration) with 47 items was examined using LISREL. Overall, the eight variables model demonstrated a reasonably good fit to the data: $\chi^2(998) = 1636.279$, $\chi^2/df = 1.64$, GFI = .921, CFI = .914, RMR = .065, RMSEA = .061. Several alternative measurement models were examined, but these models showed an unsatisfactory and/or a poorer fit. Thus, we treated the eight variables of our study as being distinct in subsequent analyses.

Principal components analysis and varimax rotation were successfully carried out. All items factor loadings were over than the recommended threshold of 0.65. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy is .891 and Bartlett's test of sphericity is significant. Item correlations between distinct variables are lower than .38. Cronbach's alpha values of the dimensions varied between .86 and .96, composite reliabilities (CR) between .826 and .922 the average variance extracted (AVE) between .544 and .622 suggested convergent validity.

Descriptive statistics, Cronbach's alpha values, composite reliabilities, average variances extracted and correlations among all study variables were shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics, Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability, Average Variance Extracted and Correlations among Study Variables

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. SL	4.03	1.20	(.96)							
2. HP	4.26	1.07	.42***	(.92)						
3. OP	3.18	1.13	.24**	.27**	(.91)					
4. IM	4.26	1.06	.61***	.34***	.11	(.92)				
5. IIa	4.02	1.24	.70***	.36***	.23**	.55***	(.88)			
6. IIb	4.20	1.02	.50***	.28**	.18*	.58***	.43***	(.88)		
7. IS	3.89	1.18	.55***	.33***	.16	.45***	.58***	.40***	(.90)	
8. IC	3.79	1.11	.48***	.35***	.22*	.37***	.47***	.24**	.50***	(.86)
CR			.922	.917	.920	.850	.826	.849	.848	.850
AVE			.599	.613	.622	.587	.544	.584	.583	.587

Notes: SL = Sparking Leadership; HP = Harmonious Passion; OP = Obsessive Passion; IM = Inspirational Motivation (IM); IIa = Idealized Influence attributed; IIb = Idealized Influence behavior; IS = Intellectual Stimulation; IC = Individualized Consideration. CR = Composite reliability; AVE = Average Variance Explained. Values on the diagonal represent Cronbach's alpha coefficients. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$ (two-tailed tests); $N=139$.

There were found significant positive correlations between sparking leadership and passion at work; harmonious passion (.42***) and obsessive passion (.24**). All sub dimensions of transformational leadership also correlates with harmonious passion but only idealized influence attributed, idealized influence behavior and individualized consideration correlates with obsessive passion. All dimensions showed lower correlation with obsessive passion compared to harmonious passion.

Higher correlation values between sparking leadership and passion at work compared the others shows the strategic importance of sparking leadership.

4. CONCLUSION

A leader is the one who inspires people to pursue a greater purpose and ultimately a vision. As the research shows, most employees dislike their jobs and since they are doing something they dislike on average 40 hours per week, it is quite normal that they get burned out and disengaged. A leader should recognize the signs that an employee is becoming unmotivated and help to inspire him / her before the problem gets worse. A leader should set the example and be passionate and energetic about the work. He / she should be a source of inspiration for the employees and do his best to revitalize them.

The concept of leadership continues to evolve as the needs of the organizations change (Daft, 2003, p. 514). Therefore, as Bennis (1998) states, change will be one of the key challenges facing leaders in the 21st century and it means for leaders that they are going to have to keep recomposing and reinventing their leadership. To be able to run an organization in a turbulent world, tomorrow's leaders will have to learn how to create an environment that embraces change and they should have enough self-awareness and self-esteem to be able to sense when a different repertoire of competencies will be needed, without being threatened by the need to change.

In times of widespread disengagement at work, the great leaders could be best described as "sparking leaders" because these leaders know that it is their responsibility to provide an organizational environment that drives employee engagement. They know that today's employees want their work to mean something and furthermore they want to be part of something that makes a difference. Hence these leaders know that they need to organize work so that it is inspiring, challenging and meaningful. They know how to use their emotional energy to activate the passions and desires among the employees and so to drive others toward desired results. Inspiring passion throughout their organization is an essential priority for them so they work very intentionally to spark as much passion as they can among their teams. They know how a person's passions can ignite other people's passions and bring energy into their lives. They know that in this way a single spark can ignite a firestorm. Therefore, they spark a team of disengaged people who, combined, form a fired-up team and a passionate organization. The sparking leaders shape their organizations' focus on engaging the heads and hearts of employees. As a result, they build passionate organizations. Just like Lucas (1999, p. 170) states that a passionate organization is a dominant competing force, in the end they harness the energy it creates to achieve sustainable business results.

Along with introducing a theoretical framework for sparking leadership, the present paper also develops a scale "*Sparking Leadership Scale (SLS)*" to measure it, as there are no empirically validated measures to assess the construct.

This research also has a limitation, since all data were collected cross-sectional using self-reports, which could lead to common method variance issues.

The proposed model on sparking leaders, unengaged employees and passionate organizations relationship provides a conceptual framework in an area where little prior research that relies on anecdotal evidence has been done. This conceptual model which is based on insights from the previous research and the propositions emerging from it imply a rich agenda for future research. Therefore, the future research should focus on measuring empirically whether sparking leaders can really ignite the fire in unengaged employees and build passionate organizations, as proposed in the present paper.

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