



Engagement at a higher level: The effects of public value on employee engagement, the organization, and society

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Abstract

We investigate whether an organization's social contribution is associated with positive consequences for both the organization and its employees by building on the growing body of research that aims to bridge the gap between micro-level and macro-level phenomena. Specifically, we theorize and empirically show that public value can increase the engagement of employees, while employee engagement mediates the effect of public value on job satisfaction, affective commitment, life satisfaction, and intention to quit. To test our hypotheses, we conduct a large-scale representative online survey ($N = 1383$). We use organizational public value as a comprehensive conceptualization of the social contribution of organizations and measure employee engagement by creating and validating a German-language version of Shuck et al.'s (2017a) employee engagement scale. Our findings indicate that both external and internal benefits for the organization and its employees may need to be considered when an organization decides on how to balance or integrate profit and social contribution. Additionally, we demonstrate that the experiences of employees regarding not only their work role but also their role as members of their organization, i.e., their perception of their organization's public value, are relevant for a more comprehensive understanding of what affects and engages employees.

Keywords Employee engagement · Job satisfaction · Life satisfaction · Public value · Corporate social responsibility (CSR) · Turnover intention · Affective commitment

Today's organizations, more than ever, find themselves confronted with a two-fold responsibility: they need to pursue their own interests and must operate under a social contract with the society in which they are embedded (Campbell, 2007; Mathews, 1994). An organization's continued existence depends on its ability to create value for the public and thereby fulfill its part of the social contract (Shocker & Sethi, 1973). Over the last decades, new fields and topics of research – e.g., Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Sustainability, Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG)

criteria, or Corporate Purpose – have developed as part of an endeavor to realign the goals of businesses with those of society. Complementing governmental initiatives, efforts of "bringing the public interest back into the private domain" (Brammer et al., 2012, p. 20) through self-regulatory initiatives of businesses (e.g., the United Nations' Global Compact initiative, Sustainable Development Goals) are now becoming more widespread. However, even with both the public and private sectors tackling grand challenges in society and contributing to the common good, the public is still concerned about whether considerable progress is being made. In a representative study on the common good, 81% of respondents in Germany and 73% in Switzerland expressed that too little consideration is being given to the common good (Public Value Atlas, 2019a, 2019b). At the same time, 82% of respondents in Germany and 86% in Switzerland forwarded the belief that private companies have a high level of responsibility to contribute to the public sphere (Public Value Atlas, 2019a, b).

To assume responsibility, contribute to the common good, and thus create public value, practitioners and scholars alike

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have proposed that businesses should sacrifice some of their profit. In practice, when private organizations act on their social responsibility, these actions are largely externally driven, e.g., by stakeholder interests, the press, or activists (Aguinis & Glavas, 2012). Given that businesses face both social and economic imperatives, the necessity of conforming to external expectations has sparked repeated debate surrounding the extent to which organizations' own interests and social responsibilities are reconcilable with each other (Margolis & Walsh, 2003). Regarding CSR activities of businesses in particular, it has been implied that either one's own economic interests must be conceded or, at best, only a marginally positive effect on financial performance can be expected (Margolis et al., 2007).

Traditionally, questions of social responsibility have been addressed at an organizational or institutional level rather than at a micro-level (Aguinis & Glavas, 2012). With the focus having been set on external drivers, research has only recently begun to consider potential benefits of public value stemming from positive changes within the organization (e.g., Brieger et al., 2020; Jia et al., 2019). Given that human resources are being thought of as an essential link between organizations acting on their social responsibilities and organizational consequences (De Stefano et al., 2018; Surroca et al., 2010), we examine whether an organization's public value may affect its employees and could be associated with positive internal consequences for the organization and the employees themselves. This proposition follows in the footsteps of a growing number of publications that aim to bridge the gap between micro- and macro-levels with regard to CSR or public value (e.g., Brieger et al., 2020; Frynas & Yamahaki, 2016). In particular, we focus on the concept of employee engagement as it is of growing interest to researchers and practitioners alike, given that engagement is related to a variety of organizational and non-organizational consequences such as job satisfaction, affective commitment, turnover intention, and life satisfaction (e.g., Attridge, 2009; Bailey et al., 2017; Biswas & Bhatnagar, 2013; Christian et al., 2011; Saks, 2019; Shuck, Osam, et al., 2017).

To examine the proposed relationships, we use Meynhardt's (2009, 2015) conceptualization of public value to relate macro-level organizational public value to the micro-level experiences of the organization's employees. For employee engagement, we choose a relatively recent conceptualization by Shuck, Adelson, et al. (2017) which accounts not only for an employee's micro-level work role, but also their macro-level role as members of the organization. We then conduct a sequential mediation analysis including public value, employee engagement, and job satisfaction, affective commitment, turnover intention, and life satisfaction.

Accordingly, we see our contributions as three-fold: first, by using Meynhardt's (2009, 2015) conceptualization of public value, we can present evidence that across a variety

of industries and not only for institutions that have a clear social purpose in their core business (e.g., fire departments) or specifically launch CSR initiatives (e.g., Grant, 2008; Jia et al., 2019), public value is associated with positive consequences for the organization and its employees. Second, we thereby show that, in the weighing of interests between profit and public value, organizational decision-makers should not just consider external expectations. Rather, they may make use of previously-untapped potential by understanding which beneficial internal consequences an organization's public value may be associated with and, as a result, may decide that their organization should create more public value.

Third, we contribute to the engagement literature by demonstrating that not only phenomena relating to an employee's work role but also their role as a member of their organization (i.e., organizational public value) must be considered for a comprehensive understanding of their engagement. We thus act on criticism that engagement research and practice are "failing to address the social, economic, and political conditions that contribute to and contain powerlessness in the workplace" (Fineman, 2006, p. 277). For this purpose, we provide an initial translation and validation of the multidimensional employee engagement scale by Shuck, Adelson, et al. (2017), thereby wishing to enrich and diversify the toolkit of the German-speaking engagement research community.

Theoretical Background

Public Value

We aim to capture an organization's value contribution to society through the construct of organizational public value. The term *public value* and the idea of public value as an organization's contribution to society came into being through the work of Moore (1995) and have since then evolved into multiple formal theories – the most widespread being those of Bozeman (2002, 2007), Benington (2011, 2015), and Meynhardt (2009, 2015).

Bozeman (2002) extended the concept beyond the public managers that had been the focus of Moore's (1995) work, stating that both the public and private sectors must assume responsibility for society. In a positivist and normative approach, Bozeman (2007) outlined that every society holds a set of agreed-upon public values that are imperative for its functioning. As a first attempt to provide the concept of public value with an empirical basis, Jørgensen and Bozeman (2007) identified nine public values characteristics of a western society. Benington (2011, 2015) added to the discourse through the abstract idea of the *public sphere* as the space within which public value is created by social actors. Importantly, only that which is regarded as valuable by the public (as the result of

a constant democratic contest) can contribute to the public sphere and can thus create public value (Benington, 2011).

Meynhardt's (2009, 2015) conceptualization of public value shares key assumptions with Bozeman (2002, 2007) and Benington (2011, 2015): the extended responsibilities of the private and public sector alike and the prerequisite of holding value for society to create public value. However, in contrast with Bozeman (2007), Meynhardt's public value is defined by the relation between the object and the observer, i.e., between society and individuals, and is thus subjective and non-normative. In more detail, the assessment of what is valuable for society according to Meynhardt is based on psychological need theory, i.e., on the human needs identified in Epstein's (1989, 2003) cognitive-experiential self-theory. These human needs are matched with four public value dimensions: moral-ethical, hedonistic-aesthetical, utilitarian-instrumental, and political-social (Meynhardt, 2009). Accordingly, in assessing the social contribution of organizations, Meynhardt goes beyond the moral-ethical dimension that is central to related concepts such as CSR, specifically also including the organization's core business, and thus invites a broader portfolio of organizational actions to be considered as potentially common good oriented. According to Meynhardt's (2015) public value operationalization, an individual evaluates to what extent the four public value dimensions are being catered to by the organization to determine the organization's contribution to the common good (micro-foundation). Along these lines, public value theory provides a systematic link between individual basic needs and value created for society. "Public value reflects basic needs, and basic needs provide the psychological basis for public value" (Meynhardt & Gomez, 2019, p. 406). Meynhardt defined public value as "[a]ny impact on shared experience about the quality of the relationship between the individual and 'society'" (Meynhardt, 2009, p. 212). More concretely, public value creation "is situated in relationships between the individual and 'society,' founded in individuals, constituted by subjective evaluations against basic needs, activated by and realized in emotional-motivational states, and produced and reproduced in experience-intense practices" (Meynhardt, 2009, p. 212). Thereby, the public value conceptualization of Meynhardt (2009, 2015) provides an organizational lens and allows us to integrate the micro- and macro-level, as our research question necessitates.

Employee Engagement

In the work that arguably gave rise to the field of engagement research, Kahn (1990, p. 700) defined engagement as "the simultaneous employment and expression of a person's 'preferred self' in task behaviors that promote connections to work and to others, personal presence (physical, cognitive, and emotional), and active, full role performances." Kahn (1990, p. 718) further proposed that the physical, cognitive,

and emotional states related to engagement are dependent on "multiple levels of influences—individual, interpersonal, group, intergroup, and organizational." However, despite Kahn's (1990) explicit mention of different levels of influence, engagement research has historically placed far greater focus on individual factors, i.e., on the work role of employees, than situational or contextual factors (Bailey et al., 2017). In search of antecedents of engagement, job design research had been consulted, and well-designed jobs were found to be related to higher levels of engagement (Truss et al., 2013). Originally starting with the five job characteristics of Hackman and Oldham (1975), the field of job design, and with it engagement research, has then successively experienced a broadening of scope to not only include characteristics specific to the job, but also contextual factors (Bailey et al., 2017; Christian et al., 2011; Humphrey et al., 2007).

So far, managerial and organizational literature has not reached a definite consensus on the definition, measurement, and dimensionality of engagement which has made it increasingly difficult for researchers to select the optimal engagement conceptualization for their research question, in part due to not clearly defined conceptual boundaries between different conceptualizations (Bailey et al., 2017; Macey & Schneider, 2008; Shuck, Osam, et al., 2017). Perhaps the most popular conceptualization of engagement, work engagement (Schaufeli et al., 2002, p. 74) describes engaged employees as experiencing "a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption." However, authors such as Levitats and Vigoda-Gadot (2020, p. 4) have proposed that being an engaged employee, specifically as a public servant, "means not only to manifest vigor, dedication, and absorption within one's work role and organization, but also to be cognitively and behaviorally engaged to serve the social community and to outperform formal job demands with the intent of serving the organization's mission." More in line with Levitats and Vigoda-Gadot's (2020) notion of employee engagement as a multi-level construct, Saks (2019, p. 20) postulated that employees have not one, but "at least two roles – their work role and their role as a member of their organization." Job engagement captures engagement at the individual level, while organization engagement describes the engagement of employees as members of their organization. Saks's (2006) bidimensional conceptualization of engagement was therein fundamentally different from Schaufeli et al.'s (2002) work engagement construct, as it was not centered around the individual level but considered two "related, but distinct" (Saks, 2006, p. 613) factors pertaining to both the work role and organizational role of employees. At its core, Saks's concept of engagement focuses on the emotional and attachment-like state of engagement. However, employee engagement is preceded by a cognitive appraisal framework that involves two decision-making aspects, affective and cognitive, which then

lead to the formation of intentions and resulting behaviors (e.g., Shuck et al., 2013; Zigarmi et al., 2011). Consequently, and as previously stated by Kahn (1990), employee engagement is not only composed of emotional aspects, but cognitive and behavioral aspects, too, which the conceptualization by Saks (2006) may possibly not be able to capture (Saks & Gruman, 2014; Shuck, Osam, et al., 2017).

Accordingly, from the diverse engagement constructs available to us, we specifically choose Shuck, Osam, et al. (2017) conceptualization of employee engagement. Shuck, Adelson, et al. (2017), p. 954 defined employee engagement as “a positive, active, work-related psychological state operationalized by the maintenance, intensity, and direction of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral energy” and accounted for multiple levels of influence in its subdimensions: the individual/job level (micro-level; work role), the group and intergroup levels (meso-level; group and intergroup roles), and the organizational level (macro-level; role as a member of the organization). We suggest that, by making use of the additional lenses that the conceptualization of Shuck, Osam, et al. (2017) provides beyond the often-in-focus work role of employees, we can now better understand changes in employee engagement in scenarios when both micro-level and macro-level phenomena are involved. Thereby, our study also acts on criticism of Bailey et al., (2017, p. 46) that “the vast [engagement] research has been at the individual level” and further studies should investigate engagement at different levels – individual, work group/team, and organizational. Additionally, by linking multi-level employee engagement to organizational public value, we can thus pursue the idea that the engagement of employees, not only in public but also private sector organizations, is best understood when further considering an organization’s contribution to society (Levitats & Vigoda-Gadot, 2020).

Consequences of Public Value and Employee Engagement

To illustrate our research question, we considered the following hypothetical scenario: two employees work the same jobs at two organizations that are identical in every aspect but one: the employing organization of one is perceived to contribute more to society (i.e., has a higher organizational public value) than the other. Would these two employees, e.g., an accountant for a tobacco company and an accountant for a national newspaper, experience different levels of engagement? In turn, would they show more or less commitment to their organization, satisfaction with their jobs, and even satisfaction with their lives?

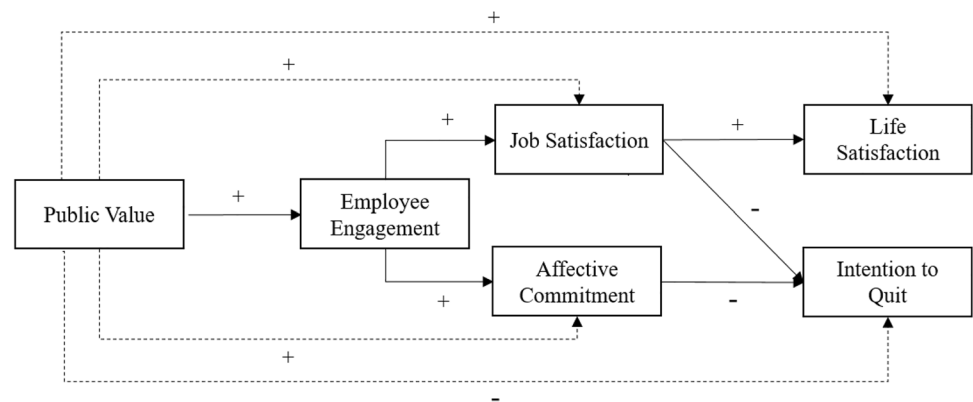
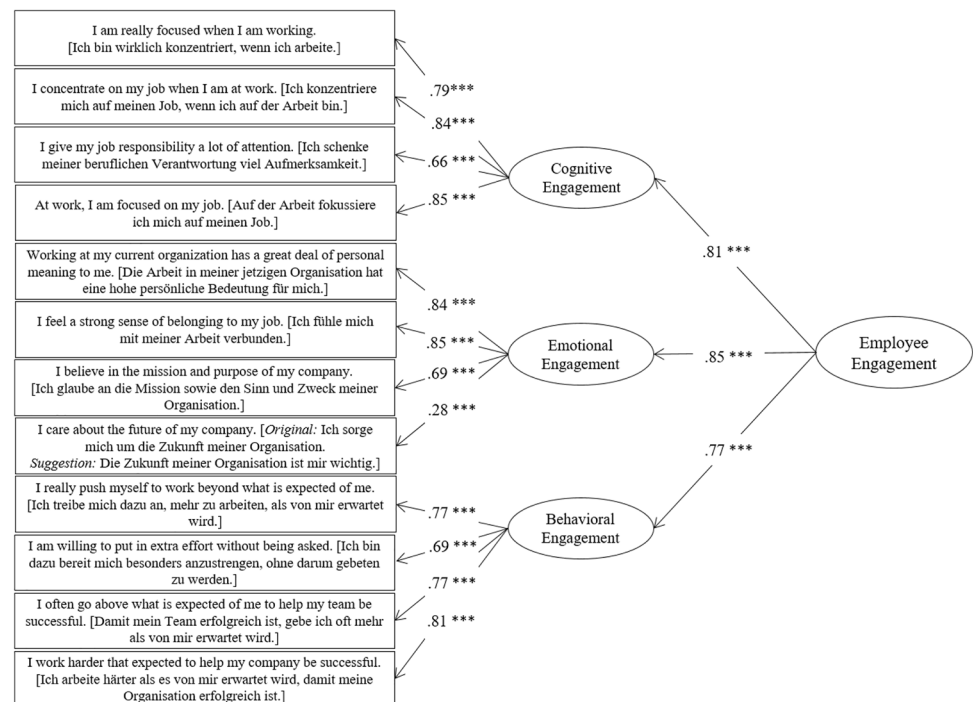
We address these questions about the relationship between organizational public value, employee engagement, and consequences through a conceptual model based on social identity theory and a synthesis of prominent employee engagement literature (Bailey et al., 2017). According to social identity theory, individuals strive for a positive social identity

and, as employees, identify with the actions and image of their organizations, especially if these organizations are perceived positively by others (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Relatedly, yet with their focus on the public sector, Hameduddin and Lee (2021) argue that the under-researched relationship between employee engagement and an organization’s social environment may be better understood by considering internal and external perceptions of the organization’s image. Being an employee of an organization that contributes greatly to the common good may facilitate employees’ identifying with the organization and thereby positively affect both the self-image of employees as well as their sense of belonging to the organization, organizational pride, and perceived meaning in work (Brieger et al., 2020; Jia et al., 2019; Meynhardt et al., 2018). Factors associated with organizational identification and perceived meaning in work, in turn, are known antecedents of engagement (Bailey et al., 2017; Shuck, Adelson, et al., 2017). Consequently, we expect employees who work for an organization with greater public value to identify more with their organization, experience antecedents of engagement, and thus ultimately also have greater employee engagement.

Hypothesis 1: Public value has a positive effect on employee engagement.

Identifying with the organization to a greater extent and experiencing a positive state of engagement more frequently and/or to a greater extent may, in turn, facilitate more positive attitudes toward the job and organization. Bailey et al., (2017, p. 44) concluded in their synthesis paper that employee engagement has several associations with organizationally-valuable consequences: most strongly with job satisfaction and organizational commitment, moderately with turnover intention, and weakly with life satisfaction. Building on these findings, we also expect organizational public value, mediated by employee engagement, to be associated with more job satisfaction, greater affective commitment to the organization, lower turnover intentions, and higher life satisfaction of employees (see Fig. 1).

Job Satisfaction describes the degree of satisfaction or dissatisfaction felt toward one’s job or related aspects of one’s job (Spector, 1997). Job satisfaction stems from both affects and cognitions about one’s job and is based on the evaluation of an emotional state (Judge & Ilies, 2004). While employee engagement describes an active psychological state, job satisfaction is a rather static assessment of fulfillment with one’s job (Macey & Schneider, 2008). However, as both develop under similar circumstances, highly engaged employees, when reflecting on their psychological state, are likely to evaluate their affects, cognitions, and emotions as positive, resulting in a high degree of job satisfaction (Shuck, Adelson, et al., 2017). For example, Biswas and Bhatnagar (2013) showed employee engagement to fully

Fig. 1 Visualization of the conceptual model**Fig. 2** Visualization of the factor structure of the German-language version of the employee engagement scale. Manifest variables (items) are shown in squares, latent variables in ovals. The validated German translations are shown in square brackets. Item 8 is presented with the proposed alternative wording. The arrows indicate causal relationships and run from cause (latent factor) to effect (manifest variable). Standardized loadings are noted at the arrows. *** $p < .001$ 

mediate the relationship between organizational support and job satisfaction. Yet, as organizational public value is a more extensive construct than organizational support, we expect employee engagement to mediate the relationship between public value and job satisfaction only partially. It is assumed in this very engagement that individuals both experience and co-create organizational public value and, as a consequence, feel satisfied. Following Meynhardt, public value is enacted in relationships and thus engagement is a medium for this; it is the engagement where basic needs (micro) and public value (macro) “meet” and intertwine. Similarly, as public value holistically measures the fulfillment of human needs in four different dimensions, we expect it to have a positive influence on job satisfaction beyond what is captured by employee engagement. Supporting this line of argumentation, Ali et al. (2020) found employee engagement to

partially mediate the relationship between perceived corporate social responsibility and employee performance.

Affective Commitment is a psychological state which describes the “emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organization,” and is part of a three-component conceptualization of organizational commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1991, p. 67). Affective commitment expresses an employee’s desire to work for an organization because he or she actively wants to and feels a sense of belonging to the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Grant (2007, 2008) proposed that professionals with a significant direct impact on beneficiaries, i.e., in jobs with a high task significance (firefighters, lifeguards, and fundraiser for a charity), are more aware of their positive social impact and experience positive consequences, e.g., increased job dedication and perceptions of social worth. We argue that

employees without direct impact also experience these positive consequences if they are employees of an organization with high public value as indirectly, through their contribution, the organization does significantly impact beneficiaries. As a result, the engagement and perceived significance of employees increases, resulting in consequences that constitute positive work experiences and show that their personal characteristics regarding social worth and social impact can be catered to by their organizational environment. These ideas also expand on the work of Albrecht and Marty (2020): not only individual-level and job-level, but also organizational-level characteristics, mediated by engagement, could be associated with affective commitment and, in turn, turnover intentions.

Hypothesis 2: Employee Engagement mediates the positive effect of public value on job satisfaction (*a*) and affective commitment (*b*).

“Most adults spend the majority of their waking hours at work, which often serves as a primary source of purpose, belongingness, and identity” (Michaelson et al., 2014, p. 77). Accordingly, job satisfaction often correlates strongly with individuals' general well-being, i.e., their life satisfaction (Unanue et al., 2017). *Life Satisfaction* is the result of the cognitive process of assessing one's quality of life (Diener et al., 1985). Although the exact mechanisms between life satisfaction and job satisfaction are still subject to debate, recent evidence suggests that the relationship may most likely be bidirectionally positive but additionally also influenced by basic need fulfillment (Unanue et al., 2017). Relatedly, Meynhardt et al. (2018) found work engagement to mediate the relationship between perceived basic need fulfillment of society, as measured by organizational public value, and life satisfaction. We anticipate replicating the findings about the relationship between public value and life satisfaction when this relationship is mediated by employee engagement instead of work engagement and thereby specifically also focuses on the role of employees as members of their organization. Similarly, being a member of an organization that scores high in basic need fulfillment for society, i.e., high organizational public value, may increase the life satisfaction as a resulting more positive self-image according to social identity theory, would lead to more frequent positive evaluations of the job due to high engagement.

Hypothesis 3a: Employee engagement and job satisfaction mediate the positive effect of public value on life satisfaction.

While job and life satisfaction were chosen in this paper to link public value and employee engagement to consequences

relevant to employees and society at large, intention to quit is specifically of interest to organizations. Similarly, Mor Barak and Daya (2013, p. 4) reinforce the idea that an organization benefits from operating with “a dual focus, simultaneously internal and external, that results from acknowledging its responsibility to the wider community.” For the inclusive workplace model in which Mor Barak and Daya (2013) integrate this principle, it is essential that organizations recognize the well-being of its employees and the satisfaction of its surrounding social community as directly related to organizational performance. *Intention to Quit* describes the desire of employees to resign from an organization, resulting in employee turnover (Baillod, 1992). High employee turnover puts stress on an organization, as it necessitates costly recruiting, inducting, and training of new employees, and diffuses organizational knowledge, ultimately diminishing organizational productivity and financial performance (O'Connell and Kung 2007). While engagement has been shown to be associated with intention to quit (Albrecht & Marty, 2020), in line with the findings of Wefald et al. (2012), we argue that intention to quit is not directly affected by employee engagement, but rather also depends on the evaluation of one's job satisfaction (George & Jones, 1996) which was shown to be one of the strongest predictors of turnover intentions (e.g., Tett & Meyer, 1993).

Hypothesis 3b: Employee engagement and job satisfaction mediate the negative effect on intention to quit.

Whether people consider leaving their employer may, however, not only depend on job satisfaction, but also strongly on how emotionally committed employees are to their employer (Meyer et al., 2002). Gyensare et al. (2017), for example, revealed that leaders who guide employees towards long-term, overarching goals (as measured by transformational leadership) increase employee engagement which leads to higher affective commitment, resulting in decreased turnover intention. In the same vein, we expect that when organizations provide employees with a platform to co-create collective value (i.e., organizational public value) and motivate employees to be engaged parts of this process, the affective commitment of employees increases and they are, in turn, less likely to quit.

Hypothesis 4: Employee engagement and affective commitment mediate the negative effect of public value on intention to quit.

Method

Participants & Procedure

We conducted a large-scale representative online survey in cooperation with the independent Swiss market research

institute intervista (intervista.ch); Swiss German-speaking citizens were invited to participate in this survey in exchange for bonus points that are redeemable for vouchers. The final sample consisted of 1,383 Swiss participants, aged between 18 and 78 ($M = 43.71$, $SD = 12.61$), of whom 47.9% were female and 43.7% had a college degree or higher. All participants were working at the time of the survey; 78.8% of them were employees, 9.2% were civil servants, and 8.6% were self-employed. 12.9% worked in the health sector, 8.5% in public administration, 8% in the finance sector, and 7% in the education sector. Participants rated organizations anonymously, and thus no clear assignment of employees to specific organizations was possible. The participants had been working in their organization for an average of 11.12 years ($SD = 10.61$). Overall, this distribution of socioeconomic characteristics is similar to the distribution of the Swiss population, indicating a comparably representative sample. After collecting the demographic data (e.g., age, gender, education), we asked the participants to complete the survey, which included instruments to validate the employee engagement scale (i.e., cognitive work appraisal, organization engagement) and instruments to test our four hypotheses (i.e., public value, job satisfaction, affective commitment, life satisfaction and intention to quit).

Survey Instruments

Employee Engagement was measured using the German-language version of the employee engagement scale (EES) of Shuck, Adelson, et al. (2017), p. 968). The EES consists of 12 items and three sub-factors ($\alpha > 0.90$), namely *cognitive engagement* (four items, e.g., "I concentrate on my job when I am at work"), *emotional engagement* (four items, e.g., "I believe in the mission and purpose of my company"), and *behavioral engagement* (four items, e.g., "I really push myself to work beyond what is expected of me"). All items were measured on a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree. We translated the employee engagement scale into German using the parallel back-translation procedure (Brislin, 1986). Two bilingual native German-speaking academics translated the scale into German, following which two bilingual native English-speaking academics retranslated it from German to English. A bilingual panel with in-depth knowledge of the research constructs in question reviewed the results to perform minor adjustments and create a consolidated German translation of the scale.

Public Value was measured using the short version of the public value scale (Meynhardt & Jasinenko, 2020; four items, e.g., "The organization I work for behaves decently"; $\alpha = 0.86$). All items were measured on a 6-point Likert scale, where 1 = disagree and 6 = agree.

Job Satisfaction was measured using the job satisfaction scale (Cammann et al., 2002; three items, e.g., "Overall, I

enjoy working here"; $\alpha = 0.82$). All items were measured on a 6-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree; 6 = strongly agree).

Affective Commitment was measured using the affective commitment scale (Felfe et al., 2014; five items, e.g., "I am proud to belong to this organization"; $\alpha = 0.84$). All items were measured on a 6-point Likert scale, where 1 = strongly disagree and 6 = strongly agree.

Life Satisfaction was measured using the single item "Overall, how satisfied are you with your life?" (e.g., Cheung & Lucas, 2014). The item was measured on a 6-point Likert scale, where 1 = completely dissatisfied and 6 = completely satisfied.

Intention to Quit was measured using the single item "How often do you think about leaving your job?" of the three-item scale by Baillod (1992). The item was measured on a 6-point Likert scale (1 = "never"; 6 = "nearly always/regularly"). The resulting mean values of all instruments, standard deviations, Cronbach's alpha values and correlations are displayed in Table 1.

Analysis & Results

The data analysis of our study had two main objectives: first, to verify the three-factor structure postulated by Shuck, Adelson, et al. (2017) for the German-language version of the EES and to then assess the construct validity of the scale. Secondly, we set out to examine whether employee engagement mediates the effect of a company's organizational public value on various consequences for employees.

Factor Structure of the Employee Engagement Scale

To verify the factor structure for the German-language version of the EES, we performed a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) in R using the package lavaan. Based on the findings by Shuck, Adelson, et al. (2017), we assumed a higher-order factor model (employee engagement) with three sub-factors (emotional engagement, cognitive engagement, behavioral engagement) each consisting of four items (Model A). Additionally, we tested a single-factor model (Model B, employee engagement), a three-factor model with no higher-order factor (Model C; cognitive, emotional, and behavioral engagement), and two different two-factor models (Model D; non-behavioral engagement and behavioral engagement; Model E; non-emotional engagement and emotional engagement). We used the maximum likelihood method (ML) as the estimation method and calculated standard errors based on a bootstrap method (Efron, 1987). To assess the model fit, we used the following five indices: chi-square/df ratio (χ^2/df), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Root-Mean-Square-Error of Approximation (RMSEA), and Standardized Root-Mean-Square-Residual (SRMR). The χ^2

Table 1 Means (M), standard deviations (SD), Cronbach's alpha (α) and Pearson's correlations (N = 1383)

	M	SD	α	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. PV	5.04	.91	.82	1										
2. EE	4.00	.64	.89	.389***	1									
3. EE _C	4.24	.67	.86	.327***	.838***	1								
4. EE _E	3.83	.80	.74	.434***	.860***	.600***	1							
5. EE _B	3.94	.78	.84	.226***	.850***	.579***	.569***	1						
6. CWA	4.16	.62	.88	.508***	.615***	.563***	.628***	.380***	1					
7. OE	3.87	.82	.75	.515***	.556***	.424***	.615***	.370***	.677***	1				
8. AC	4.52	.15	.87	.561***	.624***	.463***	.687***	.429***	.693***	.727***	1			
9. JS	5.06	1.02	.81	.459***	.535***	.444***	.583***	.332***	.717***	.621***	.728***	1		
10. Quit	2.54	1.52	-. ^d	.407***	-.389***	-.322***	-.427***	-.239***	-.586***	-.521***	-.663***	-.672***	1	
11. LS	4.93	.85	-. ^d	.244***	.275***	.279***	.261***	.166***	.445***	.339***	.326***	.384***	-.282***	1

*** $p < 0.001$. ^d single item. Public value (PV); employee engagement (EE) and its subdimensions cognitive (EE_C), emotional (EE_E), and behavioral (EE_B) engagement; cognitive work appraisal (CWA); organization engagement (OE), affective commitment (AC), job satisfaction (JS), intention to quit (Quit) and life satisfaction (LS)

test verifies the assumption that the specified model fits well with the observed data. A rejection of the null hypothesis is equivalent to a rejection of the model. However, the χ^2 test is strongly dependent on samples, meaning that even minimal misspecifications become significant with increasing sample size. Therefore, the rule of thumb applies, specifically that the ratio of χ^2 value to its degrees of freedom should be less than, or equal to, 2.5 (Baumgartner & Homburg, 1993). The RMSEA is less affected by sample size. According to Brown (2015), a value smaller than 0.05 indicates a good model fit and values above 0.1 are not acceptable. The SRMR is defined as the standardized difference between the observed correlation and the predicted correlation. The SRMR should not exceed the 0.8 threshold. The CFI and TLI compare the target model with a more restrictive model. The incremental fit thresholds to assume a model fit are values ≥ 0.9 (Brown, 2015).

The results presented in Table 2 indicate a better fit of the three-factor solution than the one-factor and two-factor solutions. The fit indices for the three-factor model with no higher-order factor are identical to those for the model without higher-order factor. Based on theoretical considerations and the findings by Shuck, Adelson, et al. (2017), we chose the higher-order model with three sub-factors. Confirmatory factor analysis converged automatically after 42 iterations. All items load significantly ($p < 0.001$) on the specified factor (see Fig. 2). Factor loadings are generally high (≥ 0.66), except for item 8 (0.28). The ratio between the χ^2 value and the degrees of freedom is 11.73, and as such does not conform to the rule of thumb for a well-adapted model. However, the SRMR value of 0.07 is below the required threshold value of 0.08. Moreover, the RMSEA (0.09), CFI (0.94) and TLI (0.92) indicate a good model fit.

Table 2 Results of the confirmatory factor analysis including chi-square/df ratio (χ^2/df), comparative fit index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis index (TLI), root-mean-square-error of approximation (RMSEA), and standardized root-mean-square-residual (SRMR)

	Model A	Model B	Model C	Model D	Model E
χ^2/df	11.73	37.43	11.73	24.49	28.77
CFI	.94	.77	.94	.85	.83
TLI	.92	.72	.92	.81	.78
RMSEA	.09	.16	.09	.13	.14
SRMR	.07	.09	.07	.07	.08

Model A (one higher-order factor, i.e., employee engagement and three lower-order factors, i.e., cognitive, emotional, and behavioral engagement), model B (one factor, i.e., employee engagement), model C (three factors, i.e., cognitive, emotional, and behavioral engagement), model D (two factors, i.e., non-behavioral engagement and behavioral engagement) and model E (two factors, i.e., non-emotional engagement and emotional engagement)

In summary, the quality of the modified model can be classified as good. Furthermore, we tested reliability using Cronbach's alpha with values above 0.8 being assumed to be good (Cohen, 1988). The EES ($\alpha = 0.89$) and each of its subscales (i.e., cognitive engagement $\alpha = 0.86$; emotional engagement $\alpha = 0.74$; behavioral engagement $\alpha = 0.84$) exhibit moderate to high internal consistency.

Construct Validity of the Employee Engagement Scale

To assess the construct validity of the German-language version of the EES, we conducted partial correlations and bivariate regression analysis in SPSS. We calculated the mean value for each scale and set the error probability to $\alpha = 0.05$. Correlation coefficients greater than 0.6 indicate a

high relationship (Cohen, 1988). We first examined the relationship with a commonly identified antecedent of employee engagement, as measured by the cognitive work appraisal scale (Shuck, Adelson, et al., 2017; 11 items, e.g., “I feel safe at work”; $\alpha=0.87$). Results indicate a significant positive impact of cognitive work appraisal on employee engagement ($\beta=0.62$; $t=28.95$; $p<0.001$). Second, and as suggested by Shuck, Adelson, et al. (2017), we examined the relationship between the EES and the organizational engagement subscale (OES; Saks, 2006; six items, e.g., “Being a member of this organization is very captivating”; $\alpha=0.90$) to test convergent validity. The OES is strongly correlated with employee engagement ($r=0.52$; $p<0.001$). Additionally, we expected the OES to be more strongly related to the emotional engagement dimension of the EES than to the non-emotional engagement dimensions (i.e., cognitive and behavioral engagement), since the items of the emotional engagement dimension most discernibly address the employees’ roles as members of the organization (Saks, 2006; Shuck, Adelson, et al., 2017). For this purpose, we calculated a new mean across all items related to non-emotional engagement. Subsequently, we compared the magnitude of its correlation with OES with the magnitude of the correlation of emotional engagement and OES. As anticipated, the OES is more strongly correlated with the emotional engagement dimension ($r=0.56$; $p<0.001$) than with the non-emotional dimensions ($r=0.42$; $p<0.001$; difference $z=4.86$; $p<0.001$).

The Positive Effect of Public Value on Employee Engagement

Prior to the analysis, we tested for key assumptions on which regression analyses are based (Hayes, 2018). We confirmed linearity using partial plots and homoscedasticity by plotting the studentized residuals against the unstandardized predicted values. The Shapiro–Wilk and Kolmogorov–Smirnov tests indicate a violation of the normal distribution. However, according to Hayes (2018), that is one of the least important requirements for mediation models, especially when samples are large. Furthermore, we checked for multicollinearity, indexed by the variance inflation factor (VIF). VIF values should not exceed 5 and ideally ought to be close to or below 3 (Hair, 2010). As required, the VIF values of all constructs are close to 3 or lower.

Since the evaluation of the assumptions proved satisfactory, we conducted bivariate regression analyses in SPSS to test our first hypothesis, specifically that public value has a positive impact on employee engagement. We defined public value as the independent variable and employee engagement as the dependent variable. The results indicate a positive association between public value and employee engagement ($\beta=0.40$; $t=15.45$; $p<0.001$; $\Delta R^2=0.15$; $\Delta F=238.63$; $p<0.001$), thus supporting *hypothesis 1*.

The Mediating Effect of Employee Engagement in the Relationship between Public Value and Job Satisfaction as well as that between Public Value and Affective Commitment

To test our second hypothesis, i.e., whether employee engagement partially mediates the positive effect of public value on job satisfaction (*H2a*) and affective commitment (*H2b*), we conducted mediation analysis using the Process macro by Hayes (2018, Model 4). The method uses ordinary least squares regression, yielding unstandardized and standardized path coefficients for total, direct, and indirect effects. We computed 95%-confidence intervals and inferential statistics using bootstrapping with 5,000 samples, together with heteroscedasticity consistent standard errors (Davidson & MacKinnon, 1993). Following prior literature, we consider mediation effects to be significant if zero is not included in the 95%-confidence interval (Hayes, 2018). We tested two separate mediation models for the two dependent variables job satisfaction (*H2a*) and affective commitment (*H2b*). In each model, we defined the public value as the independent variable and employee engagement as the mediator. The indirect effects of public value over employee engagement on job satisfaction (completely standardized indirect effect = 0.17; 95%-CI = [0.1390; 0.1892]), as well as on affective commitment (completely standardized indirect effect = 0.19; 95%-CI = [0.1581; 0.2179]), are significant. Accordingly, these results corroborate our second hypothesis. Moreover, the total effects of public value on job satisfaction ($\beta=0.46$; $b=0.51$; $t=18.89$; $p<0.001$; 95%-CI = [0.4575; 0.5635]) and affective commitment ($\beta=0.56$; $b=0.56$; $t=24.76$; $p<0.001$; 95%-CI = [0.6462; 0.7574]) are significant. The direct effects of public value on job satisfaction ($\beta=0.29$; $b=0.33$; $t=12.32$; $p<0.001$; 95%-CI = [0.2718; 0.3747]) as well as on affective commitment ($\beta=0.37$; $b=0.47$; $t=17.98$; $p<0.001$; 95%-CI = [0.4166; 0.5186]) also remain significant. Because previous literature suggests that engagement may be influenced by sociodemographic variables (e.g., Langelan et al., 2006), we retested the models while controlling for age, gender, and education. Results remain stable and statistically significant for both models: the model including job satisfaction (completely standardized controlled indirect effect = 0.15; 95%-CI = [0.1238; 0.1788]) and the model with affective commitment as the dependent variable (completely standardized controlled indirect effect = 0.17; 95%-CI = [0.1386; 0.1958]).

The Sequential Indirect Path from Public Value via Employee Engagement and Job Satisfaction to Life Satisfaction and Intention to Quit

To analyze the sequential mediating effects of employee engagement and job satisfaction in the relationship between public value and life satisfaction (*H3a*), as well as intention

to quit (*H3b*), we conducted a sequential mediation analysis using the Process macro by Hayes (2018, Model 6). We tested two separate mediation models for the two dependent variables life satisfaction (*H3a*) and intention to quit (*H3b*). In each model, we defined public value as the independent variable, employee engagement as the first mediator, and job satisfaction as the second mediator. Results indicate significant sequential mediations for both models, namely the model including life satisfaction (completely standardized sequential indirect effect = 0.0520; 95%-CI = [0.0379; 0.0674]), and the model including intention to quit as the dependent variable (completely standardized sequential indirect effect = -0.1041; 95%-CI = [-0.1270; -0.0836]). These results corroborate our third hypothesis that the effect of public value on life satisfaction (*H3a*) and intention to quit (*H3b*) is sequentially mediated by employee engagement and job satisfaction. Furthermore, results indicate that the total effect of public value on life satisfaction ($\beta=0.24$; $b=0.23$; $t=9.17$; $p<0.001$; 95%-CI = [0.1794; 0.2770]) and intention to quit ($\beta=-0.41$; $b=-0.68$; $t=-16.28$; $p<0.001$; 95%-CI = [-0.7585; -0.5953]) is significant. The direct

effect of public value on life satisfaction ($\beta=0.08$; $b=0.07$; $t=2.68$; $p<0.01$; 95%-CI = [0.0193; 0.1245]) as well as on intention to quit ($\beta=-0.12$; $b=0.20$; $t=-65.28$; $p<0.001$; 95%-CI = [-0.2750; -0.1260]) also remains significant (see Table 3). All results tested within our hypotheses remain stable and statistically significant when controlling for age, education, and gender (see Table 4). The separate indirect effects of public value over employee engagement on the dependent variables are not significant. Only if we look at the sequential mediations do the indirect effects become significant, thus further supporting our hypothesized sequential mediation.

The Sequential Indirect Path from Public Value via Employee Engagement and Affective Commitment to Intention to Quit

To analyze our fourth hypothesis, we conducted a third sequential mediation analysis using the Process macro by Hayes (2018, Model 6). We defined public value as the independent variable, employee engagement as the first

(Model 1 and 2) or affective commitment (Model 3) the second mediator, and either life satisfaction (Model 1) or intention to quit (Model 2 and 3) the dependent variable

Table 3 Unstandardized (b) and standardized (β) path coefficients, and the completely standardized indirect effects of the sequential mediation models. Public value represents the independent variable, employee engagement the first mediator, either job satisfaction

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
<i>Second Mediator</i>	Job Satisfaction	Job Satisfaction	Affective Commitment
<i>Dependent Variable</i>	Life Satisfaction	Intention to Quit	Intention to Quit
<i>Path</i>	<i>b/β (t)</i>	<i>b/β (t)</i>	<i>b/β (t)</i>
Public value → employee engagement	.265/.381 (15.038)***	.269/.389 (15.448)***	.270/.389 (15.448)***
Public value → second mediator	.316/.284 (11.999)***	.323/.290 (12.322)***	.468/.374 (17.985)***
Employee engagement → second mediator	.696/.435 (18.385)***	.694/.433 (18.348)***	.868/.481 (23.157)***
Public value → dependent variable (direct)	.072/.077 (2.682)***	-.201/-.120 (-5.280)***	-.086/-.052 (-2.097)*
Public value → dependent variable (total)	.228/.244 (9.176)***	-.680/-.407 (-16.279)***	-.677/-.407 (-16.279)***
Employee engagement → dependent variable	.091/.067 (2.225)*	-.014/.006 (-.237)	.112/.047 (1.779)
Second mediator → dependent variable	.264/.314 (9.958)***	-.926/-.619 (-24.682)***	-.885/-.665 (-22.847)***
	<i>Effect [95%-CI]</i>	<i>Effect [95%-CI]</i>	<i>Effect [95%-CI]</i>
<i>Total of indirect effects</i>	.167 [.1323; .2040]	-.286 [-.3286; -.2454]	-.355 [-.3921; -.3171]
<i>Indirect effect 1: Public value → employee engagement → dependent variable</i>	.026 [.0022; .0508]	-.002 [-.0222; .0165]	.018 [-.0026; .0395]
<i>Indirect effect 2: Public value → second mediator → dependent variable</i>	.089 [.0637; .1182]	-.180 [-.2188; .1430]	-.249 [-.2856; -.2101]
<i>Sequential mediation effect: Public value → employee engagement → second mediator → dependent variable</i>	.052 [.0379; .0674]	-.104 [-.1270; -.0836]	-.125 [-.1485; -.1032]

* $p<.05$, ** $p<.01$, *** $p<.001$

Table 4 Unstandardized (b) and standardized (β) path coefficients, and the completely standardized indirect effects of the sequential mediation models. Public value represents the independent variable, employee engagement the first mediator, either job satisfaction

(Model 1 and 2) or affective commitment (Model 3) the second mediator, and either life satisfaction (Model 1) or intention to quit (Model 2 and 3) the dependent variable. Controls: age, gender, education

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
<i>Second Mediator</i>	Job Satisfaction	Job Satisfaction	Affective Commitment
<i>Dependent Variable</i>	Life Satisfaction	Intention to Quit	Intention to Quit
<i>Path</i>	<i>b/β (t)</i>	<i>b/β (t)</i>	<i>b/β (t)</i>
Public value → employee engagement	.246/.355 (14.091)***	.252/.363 (14.491)***	.252/.363 (14.491)***
Public value → second mediator	.308/.277 (11.698)***	.315/.282 (11.981)***	.465/.372 (17.996)***
Employee engagement → second mediator	.669/.418 (17.348)***	.668/.416 (17.359)***	.828/.459 (21.865)***
Public value → dependent variable (direct)	.069/.073 (2.584)**	-.203/-.123 (-5.350)***	-.085/-.051 (-2.065)*
Public value → dependent variable (total)	.203/.216 (8.200)***	-.641/-.385 (-15.424)***	-.641/-.385 (-15.424)***
Employee engagement → dependent variable	.062/.046 (1.497)	.018/.008 (.307)	.128/.054 (2.036)*
Second mediator → dependent variable	.251/.299 (9.528)***	-.916/-.612 (-14.417)***	-.872/-.656 (-22.289)***
	<i>Effect [95%-CI]</i>	<i>Effect [95%-CI]</i>	<i>Effect [95%-CI]</i>
<i>Total of indirect effects</i>	.143 [.1098;.1784]	-.263 [-.3035;-.2236]	-.334 [-.3715;-.2953]
<i>Indirect effect 1: Public value → employee engagement → dependent variable</i>	.016 [-.0062;.0398]	.003 [-.0160;.0280]	.019 [.0003;.0389]
<i>Indirect effect 2: Public value → second mediator → dependent variable</i>	.083 [.0571;.1107]	-.173 [-.2117;-.1355]	-.244 [-.2809;-.2068]
<i>Sequential mediation effect: Public value → employee engagement → second mediator → dependent variable</i>	.044 [.0314;.0583]	-.093 [-.1127;-.0738]	-.109 [-.1309;-.0884]

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

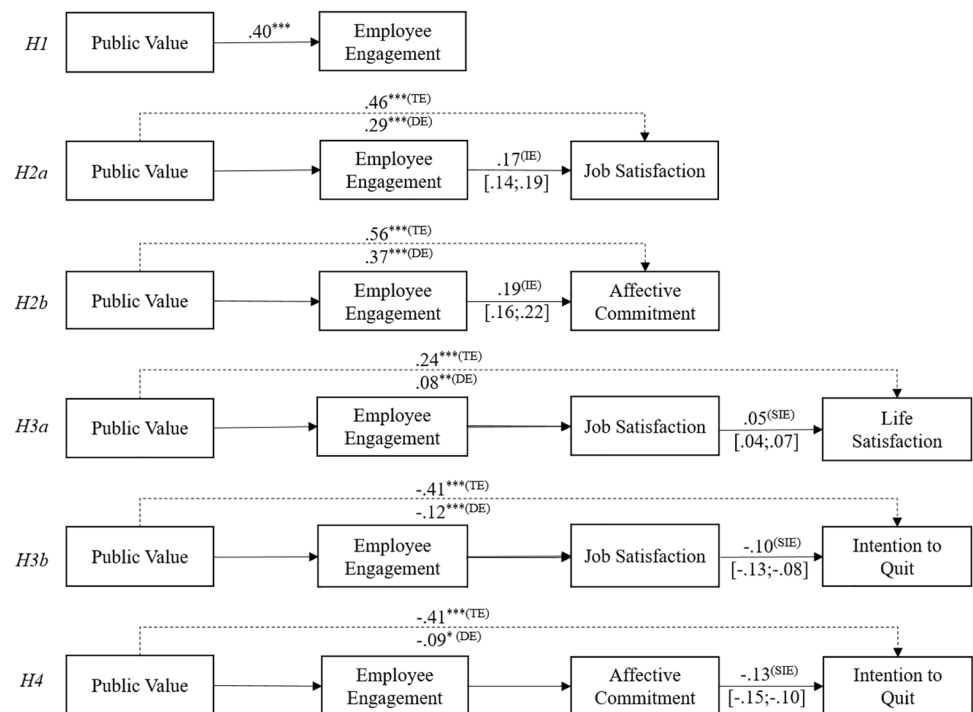
mediator, affective commitment as the second mediator, and intention to quit as the dependent variable. Employee engagement and affective commitment sequentially mediate the effect of public value on intention to quit (completely standardized sequential indirect effect = -0.125; 95%-CI = [-0.1485; -0.1032]), thus corroborating *hypothesis 4*. As illustrated in the previous analysis, results show a significant negative total effect of public value on intention to quit ($\beta = -0.41$; $b = -0.68$; $t = -16.28$; $p < 0.001$; 95%-CI = [-0.7585; -0.5953]). The direct effect of public value on intention to quit ($\beta = -0.09$; $b = 0.05$; $t = -2.10$; $p < 0.05$; 95%-CI = [-0.2750; -0.1260]) is small and weakly significant (see Table 3). All results tested within our hypotheses remain stable and statistically significant when controlling for age, education, and gender (see Table 4).

Alternative Path Directions

Investigating theoretically plausible alternative models to explain the phenomenon being investigated is a crucial step in testing the robustness of the results. Because the literature

does not illustrate a clear empirical consensus on whether job satisfaction and organizational commitment are antecedents or consequences of employee engagement (Bailey et al., 2017; Yalabik et al., 2013), we took a final step to test alternative path directions, while controlling for age, education and gender (see Fig. 3). First, we tested whether the effect of public value on life satisfaction as well as intention to quit is sequentially mediated by affective commitment (first mediator), job satisfaction (second mediator), and employee engagement (third mediator). Second, we reversed the position of affective commitment and job satisfaction in the sequential mediation model. The completely standardized sequential indirect effects are not significant (for the models including life satisfaction as the dependent variable) or smaller (for intention to quit) compared to the effects resulting from the initial models tested within our hypotheses. Third, we tested whether only job satisfaction conditions employee engagement, while we also removed affective commitment as a mediator from the sequential mediation model. However, the completely standardized sequential indirect effects from public value over job satisfaction (first

Fig. 3 Visualization of the tested models including completely standardized total effects (TE), indirect effects (IE), direct effects (DE) and sequential indirect effects (SEI)
*** $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$



mediator) and employee engagement (second mediator) on intention to quit, as well as life satisfaction, are not significant. In a last step, we removed job satisfaction as a mediator and tested the sequential mediation from public value over affective commitment (first mediator) and employee engagement (second mediator) on life satisfaction and intention to quit. The completely standardized sequential indirect effect on life satisfaction is significant but much smaller compared to our initial results. Interestingly, the completely standardized sequential indirect effect on intention to quit becomes positive, even though the effect is very small. In summary, the results support the assumption that job satisfaction and affective commitment can rather be considered as consequences of employee engagement and thereby sustain the relationships hypothesized and empirically proven in the context of the present study. Table 5

displays all completely standardized sequential indirect effects while controlling for age, gender, and education.

Discussion

Today's organizations not only have to strategically pursue their own interests, but are also becoming increasingly more involved in contributing to the public sphere (Benington, 2011; Brammer et al., 2012). While numerous studies have focused on the positive impact of organizational social behavior with regards to external drivers, potential benefits of public value stemming from positive changes within the organization have only started to garner attention in recent years. In line with the latter stream of research, we

Table 5 Completely standardized indirect effects of the alternative sequential mediation models controlled for age, gender, and education

Path	Dependent Variable	
	Life Satisfaction	Intention to Quit
	Effect [95%-CI]	Effect [95%-CI]
Public value → affective commitment → job satisfaction → employee engagement → dependent variable	.003 [-.0014; .0079]	.007 [.0032; .0123]
Public value → job satisfaction → affective commitment → employee engagement → dependent variable	.005 [-.0025; .0129]	.013 [.0069; .0193]
Public value → job satisfaction → employee engagement → dependent variable	.008 [-.0033; .0208]	-.001 [-.0083; .0112]
Public value → affective commitment → employee engagement → dependent variable	.026 [.0045; .0468]	.017 [.0007; .0336]

theoretically argue and empirically test whether an organization's public value is beneficial on multiple levels (individual, organizational, and societal) and thus aim to bridge the gap between micro- and macro-level phenomena while considering both potential internal and external consequences. Specifically, we show that organizational public value is associated with higher employee engagement not only at the job level but also at an organizational level, which increases affective commitment and job satisfaction, and results in higher life satisfaction and lower turnover intention.

First, we complement the research on organizational social behavior and engagement, both having previously focused largely on studies on public interest industries and corporate social responsibility (e.g., Grant, 2008; Jia et al., 2019). In particular, by measuring an organization's social contribution as the fulfillment of four basic needs dimensions in society following Meynhardt's (2009, 2015) conceptualization of public value, we can investigate the positive consequences of organizational common good orientation even for organizations that do not clearly have a social purpose embedded in their core business. Additionally, while most empirical investigations of value and value co-creation focus on either the individual or the collective, Meynhardt's perspective allows to integrate both the micro- and macro-level.

Second, we contribute to the literature on the consequences of organizational common good contribution. Specifically, our findings indicate positive consequences of organizations' public value on multiple levels. On the one hand, our results highlight internal consequences that may help to explain how social contributions could lead to beneficial organizational outcomes, most prominently (slightly) increased corporate financial performance by leading to a sustainable competitive advantage or reducing turnover costs (Surroca et al., 2010; O'Connell and Kung 2007). On the other hand, we demonstrated that public value and employee engagement are also related to an external consequence, i.e., life satisfaction of employees, and could thus reproduce and contextualize previous findings (Meynhardt et al., 2018). As a result, public value may not only be an answer to external expectations or a means to potentially improve corporate financial performance; it may also allow the organization to create additional value for the public and thereby further fulfill its part of the social contract by improving the job and life satisfaction of its employees (Shocker & Sethi, 1973). Furthermore, our findings may help establish employee engagement in its mediating role as linking public value and job satisfaction to a broader concept of activity, i.e., by acting as a mechanism of integrating the individual and society. In other words: it is (also) the workplace where private and public spheres interrelate and mutually reinforce each other. Society is not just an environment in which people act, but is also enacted via engagement. More precisely,

engagement as an active psychological state, as an activity, may be conceptualized as a key element in how people internalize societal expectations and feel connected to a social entity (Mead, 1934; Vygotskij, 1978). Our findings would support this line of thinking which opens up new avenues for research on both employee engagement and public value.

Third, although the managerial and organizational literature has produced a plethora of theoretical and empirical articles on work engagement, we argue, in line with Saks (2019) and Shuck, Osam, et al. (2017), that employees have in addition to their work role also the role of an organizational member, the latter being relatively new and under-researched in the research on engagement. Accordingly, to capture differences in employee engagement that pertain to an employee's role as a member of their organization while also accounting for their work and team role, we used a recent multidimensional conceptualization of employee engagement (Shuck, Osam, et al., 2017). By providing an initial translation of the EES and conducting the first stages of validation, we wish to enrich and diversify the toolkit of the German-speaking engagement research community. Presently, a single conceptualization and measurement instrument of engagement (Schaufeli et al., 2002) dominate publications in which a German-language scale for engagement was required, although an increasing number of reservations are emerging regarding the settings to which said conceptualization and scale should be applied (Demerouti & Nachreiner, 2019; Höge & Schnell, 2012). Considering the growing interest in organizational level phenomena and research that bridges micro- and macro-levels, we regard a German-language version of the EES as a valuable addition for scholars who require more choices to find the appropriate measurement instrument for their research on engagement.

Looking back at the scenario presented in the introduction, not only does our empirical evidence suggest that organizational public value is positively related to employee engagement, but also can we now explain the relationship through constructs that allow us to specifically integrate micro- and macro-levels. While it has been shown previously that social contribution through the employee's work role, i.e., as a firefighter, lifeguard, or fundraiser for a charity (Grant, 2007, 2008), results in positive consequences for the organization and the employees themselves, examining this relationship regarding an employee's role as a member of their organization is novel. From a social identity perspective, individuals strive for a positive social identity and self-image (Ashforth & Mael, 1989) and employees may find both by identifying with a job role that is high in task significance; Grant (2008) shows task significance to be associated with more awareness of their social impact and social worth. As a result, we would argue that job-level engagement becomes particularly relevant when the profession has a direct impact on beneficiaries (e.g., a firefighter).

Conversely, if the social contribution at the job level is rather indirect, and especially not as tangible for the employee in daily work activities, the behavior of the organization as a whole becomes more relevant. We propose that as employees identify with an organization that may be perceived as more positively impactful than their specific job role (e.g., an accountant), engagement at the organizational level gains greater importance.

This line of reasoning might also help explain why Hameduddin and Lee (2021, p. 19) found no significant positive relationship between the externally construed organizational image and employee engagement, which the authors note to be “a curious finding, especially because it goes contrary to existing theorizing in business and public management research.” Given that the wording of the four items chosen to measure employee engagement (Hameduddin & Lee, 2021, p. 8) implied a focus on job-level engagement, the potentially greater organizational-level engagement stemming from a positive external perception of their organizations might not have been fully captured for these public sector employees.

In summary, the experience of employees pertaining to their role as members of their organization, in this case, their perception of their organization’s public value, is relevant for a more comprehensive understanding of employee engagement (Fineman, 2006). Moreover, our findings demonstrate why, in certain cases, an organization’s economic interests and its social contribution may not be in conflict but rather in symbiosis with each other (De Stefano et al., 2018; Mor Barak & Daya, 2013), even for organizations that do not have a clear public good orientation embedded in their core business.

Practical Implications

The practical implications of our study are two-fold. First, organizations may reconsider how they balance or integrate profit and public value, knowing that an increase in organizational public value is associated with higher levels of employee engagement and linked to positive consequences for both the organization and its employees. Accordingly, organizations need to be aware of potential indirect costs that arise from neglecting the needs of society, for example, through the loss of skilled workers and declining employee engagement.

Secondly, as a managerial practice in human resources, at large with a focus on performance management, employee engagement has proven effective in increasing the economic success of organizations (Attridge, 2009). The better researchers understand what leads to, and results from, employee engagement, while the better practitioners can manage the engagement of employees in their organizations. As a result, human resource executives need to be aware of how much their organization contributes to society and how this contribution is perceived by employees. As

the assessment of organizational public value is based on the perception of individuals, regular communication that reminds employees of the contributions they make to society through their work in the organization can prove to be a good investment in employee engagement. Specifically, both people managers in everyday interactions and executives at a strategic level can emphasize the public value of the organization to internal and external audiences. Moreover, since our findings were based on organizational public value instead of CSR, it becomes clear that good core business, too, is a part of an organization’s social contribution that is appreciated by employees and is deserving of being communicated regularly. Managers may be trained to highlight the link between the day-to-day business and its social relevance to their employees. Similarly, recruiting teams may accentuate the public value of their organization to attract more candidates. As the literature and our findings show, managing the engagement of employees is not just about managing those employees’ work role. Employees care about the wider social context.

Limitations & Avenues for Future Research

Some limitations of our analyses must be addressed. The first relates to our study being single-source and self-reported. Both organizational public value as the *perception* of an organization’s social contribution and employee engagement must, by definition, be self-reported. In the same vein, there are currently no alternative means by which to capture organizational public value, given that other popular ways of determining an organization’s social contribution, e.g., CSR or ESG rating databases, are based on catalogs of criteria rather than the psychological evaluations of different individuals as does require the research topic of this study. Nonetheless, we tried to minimize the effects of potential systematic errors resulting from the necessary study design by, for a start, randomly resorting the individual questions of the survey to follow recommendations on addressing common method bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003), response order bias (Israel & Taylor, 1990), and the tendency toward social desirability (Crowne & Marlowe, 1964). Additionally, participants were assured that the responses would remain anonymous and that there would be no right or wrong answers. Furthermore, we integrated our questionnaire into a larger questionnaire to obscure the purpose of the study. Lastly, we aggregated the data from various employees working for different organizations in Switzerland. However, as beneficial as aggregating data is for the quality of the overall data, it also meant we could not assign respondents to the evaluated organizations. In future research, it would be interesting to consider employees from the same organization and analyze, through multi-level modeling, whether the findings are replicable across individuals and different group levels

within the same organization. By using study designs that allow employees to be matched with their supervisors, future research may also examine a supervisor's influence on the engagement of subordinates and those subordinates' perceptions of an organization's social contribution. Moreover, since all research constructs are based on subjective perceptions and attitudes of respondents, future research should complement the model with distal outcomes (e.g., sales performance, turnover figures). Although statistically significant, the effect size estimates, and particularly the regression coefficients, are rather small ($0.2 < \beta < 0.3$) according to Cohen's (1988) classification. However, in line with the findings of Gignac and Szodorai (2016), these guidelines do not adequately reflect the results in the field of differential psychology. In their investigation of the frequencies of effect sizes in this field of research, r -values greater than 0.5 could only be observed in less than 3% of the study results examined. Therefore, the authors recommend classifying effect sizes up to 0.3 as large.

The chosen cross-sectional study design also comes with limitations. For one, conclusions about directionality can only be made to a limited extent. Despite the theoretical considerations in support of the proposed model, alternative directions between social contributions, employee engagement, and consequences are both imaginable and subject to discussion in the literature (Bailey et al., 2017; Surroca et al., 2010). We have addressed this criticism by testing several alternative path directions overall, thus supporting the robustness of our findings. Nevertheless, additional model specifications are theoretically feasible. For instance, particularly engaged employees could purposefully choose employers who contribute to the common good. Stronger support for the proposed model could be achieved by using a longitudinal or experimental study design, although these designs would come with challenges of their own. Longitudinal study designs are complicated by the reluctance survey participants repeatedly expressed when having to provide the information required to uniquely track their employing organizations to analyze longitudinal data. Experimental study designs face the challenge of capturing employee engagement in a controlled environment, especially given that Shuck, Osam, et al. (2017) conceptualization encompasses an affective dimension that only develops over time.

In summary, a single-source study based on self-reported data is surely not methodologically optimal, but was, at the same time, a necessary step in order to achieve our goal of examining the research phenomenon in question. As we are aware of the consequences that arise from these methodological limitations, we have been very careful throughout this study to point out the *association* between the assessed constructs rather than implying causation (Stone-Romero & Rosopa, 2008). We believe that demonstrating association itself is insightful, given the historical avoidance of

organizational level phenomena in empirical research on employee engagement we have described, and the thus-far largely unaddressed calls to consider the influence of the wider societal context on the attitudes and well-being of individuals.

Another limitation concerns the conducting of two research projects using the same sample: a validation of the German-language employee engagement scale and the testing of the hypotheses. Supplementary research is needed to verify the findings with separate samples. Additional restrictions arise from the chosen questionnaires. Despite the careful and systematic translation of the questionnaire, the chosen phrasing of item 8 ("I care about the future of my company") works only partially in German. The translation of the verb "care" allows for two different interpretations in German, wherein the alternative interpretation is more comparable with the verb "worry". The resulting methodological artifacts are reflected in the data (factor loading of the item < 0.3). We developed an alternative formulation that needs to be tested in future research (see Fig. 2). Furthermore, since the confirmatory factor analysis did not reveal the model with three first-order factors and one second-order factor to have superior fit compared to the model without a second-order factor, a re-examination of the factor structure of the employee engagement scale is needed. Besides, we assessed life satisfaction and intention to quit using single-item measures. Previous research confirms that these measures are valid and strongly associated with multifaceted scales (Cheung & Lucas, 2014; Wanous & Hudy, 2001). Nonetheless, it should be considered that life satisfaction is a multidimensional construct; alternative scales for life satisfaction (Diener et al., 1985) and intention to quit (Cammann et al., 2002) may be even better suited.

Furthermore, we argued based on social identity theory that employee engagement at the job level is especially relevant for jobs with high task significance or a direct impact on beneficiaries, while engagement at the organizational level plays a bigger role when the social impact of their work is less tangible. Further research comparing professions at different organizations will be required to substantiate these propositions about the roles of job-level and organizational-level engagement.

Lastly, it was our objective to investigate whether employee engagement results in positive internal and external consequences. However, due to a large number of model variables, we have included only one external consequence in the present study, i.e., life satisfaction. Future studies may examine additional external consequences such as global well-being, work-life balance, physical and mental health, or even include corporate financial performance directly. Thereby, scholars can contribute to the progressive interweaving of the public value and employee engagement literature to further a more comprehensive understanding of

Appendix

Table 6 A1

Intention to quit (Baillod, 1992)

1. How often do you think about leaving your job?

Job Satisfaction (Cammann et al., 2002)

1. In general, I don't like my job. (R)
2. In general, I like working here
3. All in all, I am satisfied with my job

Affective Commitment (Felfe et al., 2014)

1. I would be happy to spend rest of my career with this organization
2. I do not feel emotionally attached to this organization. (R)
3. I am proud to belong to this organization
4. I feel a strong sense of belongingness to my organization
5. I identify with the values that are promoted by the organization

Public Value (Meynhardt & Jasinenko, 2020)

1. The organization I work for behaves decently
2. The organization I work for contributes to the cohesion in Switzerland
3. The organization I work for performs well in its core business
4. The organization I work for contributes to the quality of life in Switzerland

Life Satisfaction (e.g., Cheung & Lucas, 2014; Schwarz and Strack 1988)

1. Overall, how satisfied are you with your life?

Cognitive Work Appraisal (Shuck, Adelson, et al., 2017; Shuck, Osam, et al., 2017)

1. The work I do on this job is important
2. I feel safe at work
3. The work I do is meaningful to me
4. I have the resources I need to complete my work
5. I feel a sense of responsibility to complete my work
6. I feel supported by my supervisor
7. The work I do makes a contribution to the organization I work for
8. I enjoy doing my work
9. I have the time I need to do my job well
10. I feel supported by my coworkers
11. My work has just the right amount of challenge

Organization Engagement (Saks, 2006)

1. Being a member of this organization is very captivating
2. One of the most exciting things for me is getting involved with things happening in this organization
3. I am really not into the 'goings-on' in this organization. (R)
4. It feels exciting to be a member of this organization
5. Being a member of this organization make me come 'alive'
6. I am very involved in this organization

The scales used a six-point Likert scale reaching from 1 = "I do not agree" to 6 = "I completely agree" or 1 = "never" to 6 = "very often" and a five-point Likert scale reaching from 1 = "I do not agree" to 5 = "I completely agree"

phenomena in both fields. By doing so, they can provide guidance for practitioners in charge of making informed decisions on how their organization balances or integrates profit and social contribution.

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Data Availability The datasets generated during and/or analysed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

Declarations

Ethical Approval All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee and also with ESOMAR code of conduct (https://www.esomar.org/uploads/public/knowledge-and-standards/codes-and-guidelines/ICCESOMAR_Code_English_.pdf). Our research is not a medical study conducted with the participation of patients; therefore, the 1964 Helsinki declaration and its later amendments are not applicable here.

Informed Consent This was a fully anonymous online study and the participants were informed about it and agreed to participate by clicking on the link in the invitation e-mail. We did not collect any other forms of informed consent.

Conflict of Interest On behalf of all authors, the corresponding author states that there is no further conflict of interest.

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