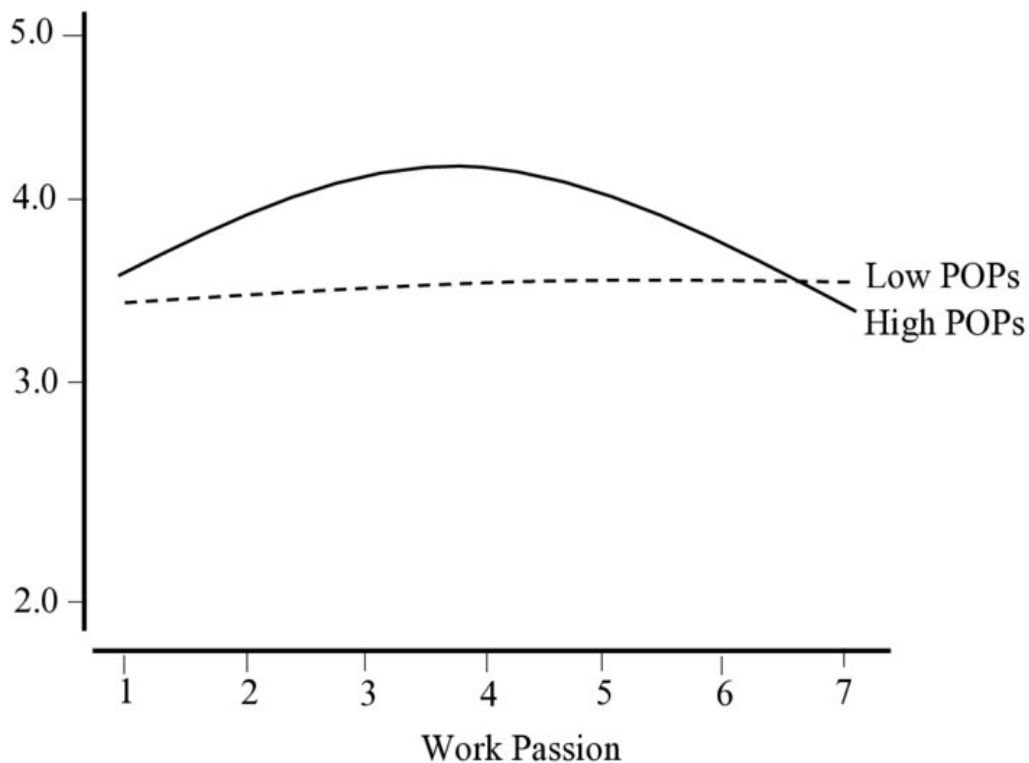


Researcher: Passion can fuel success or leave workers' tanks empty

February 21 2023, by Mark Blackwell Thomas



Interactive Effects of Work Passion and Perceptions of Organizational Politics (POPs) on Organizational Citizenship Behaviors. Credit: *Career Development International* (2022). DOI: 10.1108/CDI-05-2022-0132

The fires of passion can propel employees toward success but can also cause them to flame out, a study by a Florida State University researcher

has found.

Wayne Hochwarter, the Melvin T. Stith Sr. Professor in Business Administration at FSU's College of Business, said passion is a definite plus in [employees](#), but it doesn't guarantee results.

"We all know people who are gung-ho but who don't have a plan or a defined mission and go forward anyway," Hochwarter said. "Passion has to be tempered, moderated and managed as a resource to make its maximum positive impact."

That moderating force is called ego [resilience](#), and in a new study published in *Career Development International*, Hochwarter and his team found it's crucial to making passion a positive.

Ego resilience includes healthy self-regulation, the ability to make a conscious decision to recalibrate, to hear feedback from people you trust and to evaluate one's mental and [physical health](#) and adjust accordingly or seek help to do so.

"In the workplace, ego resilience can mean things like pausing, reflecting on where you're at for a minute and seeing if you can get someone else on board," Hochwarter said. "It's the ability to realize that it's not always OK to keep going forward, especially if you're going in the wrong direction."

The study showed that high-passion employees with elevated levels of ego resilience reported positive attitude, behavioral and well-being outcomes. Those outcomes were absent in employees reporting low levels of ego resilience.

As an example, passionate workers reported lower stress and exhaustion, plus higher job satisfaction when able to tap into ego-resilience

attributes. Conversely, passion and an absence of such resources led to more anxiety, feeling worn out, and fewer positive feelings toward work.

"Those who are passionate but couldn't take a step back and realize they need to slow down, pause, evaluate and determine a course of action, it leads to detrimental effects," Hochwarter said. "Among the big consequences is you can lose those social supports that lead to desired outcomes. No one wants to work with someone who is going a million miles an hour but going nowhere."

To avert these consequences, the study recommends human resource departments provide employee training programs to cope with stress and work–life balance and train leaders to better recognize signs of low resilience in employees.

Hochwarter noted that high passion can spur someone to pursue a line of work but can also fuel burnout, a dynamic to which he attributed "a big part" of the shortage of nurses in America.

"People go into nursing because they want to help people get better—it has passion embedded in it," he said. "Passion is not a bad thing. It's an important resource and we can't squander it by not using it well," he said.

Hochwarter said other critical occupations, including teachers and first responders, are also experiencing burnout associated with poorly calibrated and supported levels of job [passion](#).

More information: Wayne Hochwarter et al, Losing the benefits of work passion? The implications of low ego-resilience for passionate workers, *Career Development International* (2022). [DOI: 10.1108/CDI-05-2022-0132](https://doi.org/10.1108/CDI-05-2022-0132)

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