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Governing Employee Energy for Sustainable Engagement and Organizational Performance

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Abstract

Organizations commonly assess employee engagement through periodic motivation-oriented scores, yet such measures reveal little about how work systems create demands, enable recovery, distribute decision authority, or convert employee effort into sustainable performance. This Original Governance Framework Article develops a proposed Employee Energy-Governance Framework for analyzing those organizational conditions without treating engagement as an individual obligation or a universally beneficial state. The conceptual approach integrates scholarship on job demands and resources, proactive vitality management, work intensification, recovery, sleep, meaningful work, and organizational responsibility. Employee energy is proposed as a fluctuating capacity and readiness to invest cognitive, physical, and emotional effort. Demand generation describes how workload, pace, coordination, availability expectations, and monitoring create effort requirements. Recovery capacity denotes the opportunity, legitimacy, and capability to restore functioning across and within work periods. Sustainable motivation is defined as recurring willingness to engage that does not depend on compelled overinvestment or unrecovered effort. The framework proposes that organizations govern employee energy through demand authorization, resource access, recovery protection, and consequential voice. These functions are connected to conditional engagement and performance pathways rather than guaranteed outcomes. The article clarifies construct boundaries, identifies rival explanations, and establishes decision principles for evaluation. Its contribution is a non-empirical governance architecture that relocates responsibility from score maximization toward the design and oversight of work conditions. The framework remains conceptually provisional and requires construct validation, multilevel longitudinal research, credible field tests, and cumulative evidence capable of refinement or rejection.

Keywords: Employee engagement beyond motivation scores, Demand generation and energy depletion, Recovery capacity and sustainable motivation, Employee energy-governance framework, Implications for engagement research, Governing

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Introduction

Employee engagement is often presented as a desirable state that organizations should increase, but a score-centered approach can obscure the systems that make energetic investment possible, costly, or unsustainable. Job demands-resources theory distinguishes a health-impairment process, through which demanding work consumes effort, from a motivational process, through which resources support goal attainment, development, and engagement [1]. This distinction makes engagement more than a motivational indicator. It places engagement within an organizational arrangement that generates demands, allocates resources, and shapes whether sustained effort can be recovered. Governing employee energy therefore concerns the legitimacy, timing, ownership, and adjustment of effort requirements, not merely employees' reported enthusiasm.

A governance perspective also treats engagement as relational. Employees interpret organizational practices through their enacted experience of care, support, fairness, and reciprocity; engagement can consequently be understood as a response to how the employment relationship is organized rather than as a private disposition that workers must supply [2]. Formal policy and enacted practice may diverge: an organization may endorse well-being while managers reward constant availability, or may advertise autonomy while withholding authority, staffing, or time. The relevant unit of analysis therefore cannot be assumed. Individual perceptions matter, but they do not by themselves establish team norms, organizational capability, or performance effects.

Measurement remains necessary, but a concise engagement score has a bounded purpose. The UWES-3 offers evidence that vigor, dedication, and absorption can be assessed economically across national contexts [3]. Such validation does not establish that a score diagnoses demand creation, recovery access, voice effectiveness, or governance quality. Nor does a high score identify why effort is being invested. Engagement measures may capture a meaningful state while leaving its organizational antecedents, temporal stability, and consequences unresolved. Treating the measure as a comprehensive management signal risks converting an employee-reported experience into an unsupported proxy for organizational health.

Visible effort also has competing interpretations. Workaholism involves compulsive overinvestment and may produce long hours, persistence, and apparent intensity while impairing detachment and well-being [4]. Engagement and workaholism should therefore not be collapsed into a common category of "energy." Likewise, evidence linking engagement with performance and lower absenteeism is primarily associational and heterogeneous; it does not show that maximizing engagement scores necessarily improves organizational performance [5]. This article accordingly develops an original, non-empirical governance framework. It proposes that sustainable engagement depends on how organizations authorize demands, provide resources, protect recovery, enable consequential voice, and review the use of indicators. The framework is conceptually plausible but not validated, universally applicable, or implementation-ready.

Employee energy as an organizational resource

Employee energy is proposed here as a fluctuating capacity and readiness to invest cognitive, physical, and emotional effort in work. It is not a literal stock, stable trait, engagement score, or direct measure of performance. The proposed definition separates the state of available capacity from proactive vitality management, which concerns deliberate employee behaviors intended to mobilize or conserve physical and mental energy. Research defines and validates proactive vitality management as an intentional work behavior and associates it with engagement and creativity under conditional motivational orientations [6, 7]. These findings support the relevance of employee action, but they do not justify transferring responsibility for excessive demands or inadequate recovery to individuals.

Calling energy an organizational resource does not mean that the organization owns employees' bodies, attention, or emotions. It means that organizational performance depends partly on human capacities that are shaped by work design, scheduling, coordination, leadership, social relations, and nonwork spillover. Governance is therefore required because the organization can create the conditions that consume or replenish capacity while employees retain agency over whether and how effort is invested. At the individual level, energy may vary within a day. At team or organizational levels, only appropriately aggregated and independently supported patterns can justify inference about shared conditions.

Motivation is adjacent to, but distinct from, employee energy. Self-determination theory differentiates autonomous motivation from controlled motivation and links need support to higher-quality functioning [8]. An employee may be autonomously motivated yet lack sufficient energy after prolonged demands, disrupted sleep, or emotional strain. Conversely, a person may display high activation while acting under control, fear, or compulsion. Sustainable engagement therefore requires attention to both motivation quality and energetic capacity. The framework does not presume that either construct mechanically produces the other.

Employee energy is also dynamic and task-dependent. Evidence connecting proactive vitality management and mindfulness with a creative state of mind suggests that employees can influence temporary cognitive and energetic conditions, but effects remain contingent on task, context, and strategy fit [9]. Alternative explanations include baseline affect, health, personality, occupational selection, and access to supportive resources. The proposed resource framing is thus bounded: it organizes questions about capacity, opportunity, and responsibility, but it does not establish a universal energy measure, a causal organizational asset, or a legitimate basis for ranking employees.

Demand generation and energy depletion

Demand generation refers to the organizational processes through which effort requirements are created, intensified, scheduled, communicated, monitored, and extended. Demands can arise from workload, time pressure, emotional regulation, cognitive complexity, coordination burdens, staffing decisions, interruptions, or expectations of availability. Depletion denotes a possible reduction in immediately available self-regulatory or energetic capacity. It is not assumed to follow every demand. Job demands-resources theory extended through self-regulation suggests that high demands can initiate loss cycles

in which strain weakens employees' capacity to use resources and increases self-undermining behavior [10]. The mechanism is plausible, but neither deterministic nor solely attributable to the employee.

Temporal evidence further cautions against treating all demands alike. Longitudinal synthesis is consistent with job resources predicting later engagement, whereas relationships between demands and engagement vary by demand type, lag, occupation, and measurement design [11]. Some demanding tasks may be appraised as challenging when accompanied by control, competence, meaning, and adequate recovery. The same demand may become depleting when imposed without authority, staffing, predictability, or adjustment. Governance must therefore examine how a demand is generated and supported, not merely whether employees report being busy.

Work intensification makes this distinction organizationally concrete. Increased pace, volume, simultaneity, and pressure to work more efficiently are predominantly associated with adverse employee outcomes, although definitions and designs remain heterogeneous [12]. Intensification can reduce slack, compress learning, and displace micro-recovery within the workday. Yet no universal threshold can be inferred, and occupation, age, control, contractual insecurity, and resource access may alter consequences. The framework therefore treats intensification as a governable pattern requiring ownership and review, not as proof of inevitable depletion.

Technology-mediated coordination can extend demand beyond formal working time. Longitudinal evidence is consistent with ICT workload impairing psychological detachment through extended availability and workplace telepressure [13]. The relevant mechanism is enacted expectation rather than technology alone. Messaging systems may enable flexibility, but the same capability can create response pressure, fragmented attention, and ambiguous stopping rules. Formal permission to disconnect is insufficient when managerial behavior, workload, or customer norms penalize delay. Demand governance must consequently distinguish technological capability from legitimate authority and assess who can create, escalate, defer, or withdraw a demand.

Table 1 organizes the evidence, constructs, relationships, uncertainties, and boundary conditions required for definitions, constructs, and conceptual boundaries for governing employee energy for sustainable engagement and organizational performance.

Table 1. Definitions, constructs, and conceptual boundaries for Governing Employee Energy for Sustainable Engagement and Organizational Performance.

Construct or component	Definition	Problem addressed	Distinction from adjacent concepts	Proposed role	Uncertainty	Boundary statement
Work engagement	Vigor, dedication, absorption	Score-centered interpretation	State, not governance quality	Conditional manifestation	Temporal and source bias	Does not prove performance
Employee energy	Fluctuating capacity or readiness for effort	Hidden capacity constraints	Not engagement, trait, or output	**Proposed central state**	Measure not validated	Not an owned asset
Autonomous motivation	Self-endorsed willingness	Motivation-quality differences	Willingness, not available capacity	Supporting condition	Context and selection	May coexist with fatigue
Demand generation	Creation and extension of effort requirements	Unowned workload and intensity	Process, not employee weakness	**Proposed governance object**	Demand heterogeneity	No universal threshold
Depletion	Possible short-term capacity reduction	Cumulative effort costs	Process, not diagnosis	**Proposed risk pathway**	Mechanism unevenly tested	Not inevitable
Digital availability	ICT-enabled reach and response expectation	Boundary erosion	Capability, not authority	Governed demand channel	Role and preference variation	Not all ICT use depletes
Recovery	Restoration after effort	Continued activation	Episode or process, not policy	Evidence-supported pathway	Bidirectional influences	No universal dose
Recovery capacity	Opportunity, legitimacy, and capability to restore	Recovery rhetoric without access	Governance condition, not behavior alone	**Proposed protective function**	Construct unvalidated	Requires empirical testing

Note: Bold "Proposed" entries are original synthesis. Evidence citations support bounded definitions or relationships, not a validated governance model.

Recovery capacity and sustainable motivation

Recovery from work concerns processes through which psychophysiological systems move toward pre-stressor functioning. The literature identifies detachment, relaxation, control, mastery, sleep, and breaks as relevant, while emphasizing that recovery depends on timing, context, and continuing demands. This article proposes recovery capacity as the opportunity, legitimacy, and capability to restore functioning within and between work periods. Recovery experiences and sleep are systematically related to employee well-being and work functioning, although the evidence includes heterogeneous and often correlational designs [14-16]. Recovery capacity extends this evidence by asking whether work systems make recovery possible, socially acceptable, and practically usable.

Opportunity concerns time, workload, staffing, and stopping points. Legitimacy concerns whether employees can disengage without reputational or career penalties. Capability concerns access to workable boundaries, schedule control, safe breaks, and personal or social conditions that permit restoration. These dimensions operate across levels. An employee may possess recovery skills but lack workload relief; a team may endorse boundaries while customer systems continue to generate overnight demand; an organization may publish a right-to-disconnect policy while local managers reward immediate response. Formal permission must therefore be separated from enacted recovery conditions.

Sustainable motivation is proposed as recurring willingness to invest effort without dependence on compelled overinvestment or chronically unrecovered work. Evidence concerning calling illustrates why this distinction matters: meaningful work can be associated with longer hours, reduced detachment, poorer sleep quality, and lower next-morning vigor [17]. The finding does not imply that calling or meaningful work is harmful. It demonstrates that strong motivation can coexist with recovery costs when boundaries, hours, or expectations are poorly governed. Motivation intensity is therefore not evidence of sustainability.

Alternative explanations remain important. Sleep and recovery may be shaped by health, caring responsibilities, shift schedules, financial insecurity, personality, and nonwork events. Employees also differ in boundary preferences and recovery strategies. The framework does not prescribe a uniform recovery practice or threshold. It proposes instead that organizations examine whether demand decisions preserve credible recovery opportunities and whether employees can raise concerns that lead to adjustment. Recovery capacity is thus a provisional governance construct linking work design with sustainable motivation; its measurement, multilevel structure, and causal relevance require empirical testing.

Proposed employee energy-governance framework

The proposed Employee Energy-Governance Framework begins from a conditional rather than harmonious view of employment systems. Human resource practices may support both employee well-being and performance, but the literature also permits conflicting-outcomes configurations in which performance demands are achieved through intensified or unevenly distributed costs [18]. Governance is therefore defined here as the allocation of decision rights, responsibilities, review processes, and corrective authority concerning how employee effort is requested and sustained. It does not mean controlling an employee's internal state. The framework instead asks who authorizes demands, who provides resources, who protects recovery, and who must respond when energetic conditions become unsustainable.

Four proposed functions organize the framework. Demand authorization requires identifiable ownership of workload, timing, priority, and escalation. Resource access concerns information, staffing, competence support, autonomy, and coordination needed to meet legitimate demands. Recovery protection concerns stopping rules, temporal boundaries, workload adjustment, and the legitimacy of disengagement. Consequential voice requires safe reporting, credible response, appeal, and authority to revise work. Digital technologies affect these functions through their effects on autonomy, skill use, feedback, interdependence, and other work-design characteristics, rather than through capability alone [19]. Algorithmic direction, evaluation, and discipline can also redistribute control and create contested forms of visibility [20]. The framework consequently separates technological capacity from legitimate organizational authority.

Voice completes the governance loop only when employee input can influence demand, resource, or recovery decisions. Research on voice and silence shows that expression depends on perceived safety and efficacy and that speaking opportunities do not guarantee response [21]. A survey box, reporting channel, or consultation meeting is therefore not treated as consequential voice by default. The proposed framework requires traceable consideration, protection from retaliation, and an adjustment or reasoned-decision pathway. These rules are original synthesis and remain empirically unvalidated.

Accountability has prospective and retrospective dimensions. Prospectively, decision-makers should identify foreseeable capacity and recovery consequences before imposing major workload, schedule, or monitoring changes. Retrospectively, they should review whether demands were supported, whether concerns produced action, and whether performance gains coincided with displaced harm. Because well-being and performance can align or conflict, accountability cannot be satisfied by reporting a favorable outcome in only one domain [18]. Likewise, recording that employees were invited to speak does not establish influence; review must examine what response followed, who held amendment authority, and whether silence reflected safety or futility [21]. These requirements are proposed decision principles rather than established best practices.

Figure 1 presents the original conceptual synthesis for employee energy-governance framework, showing how the article's principal constructs, mechanisms, uncertainties, and decision boundaries are connected.

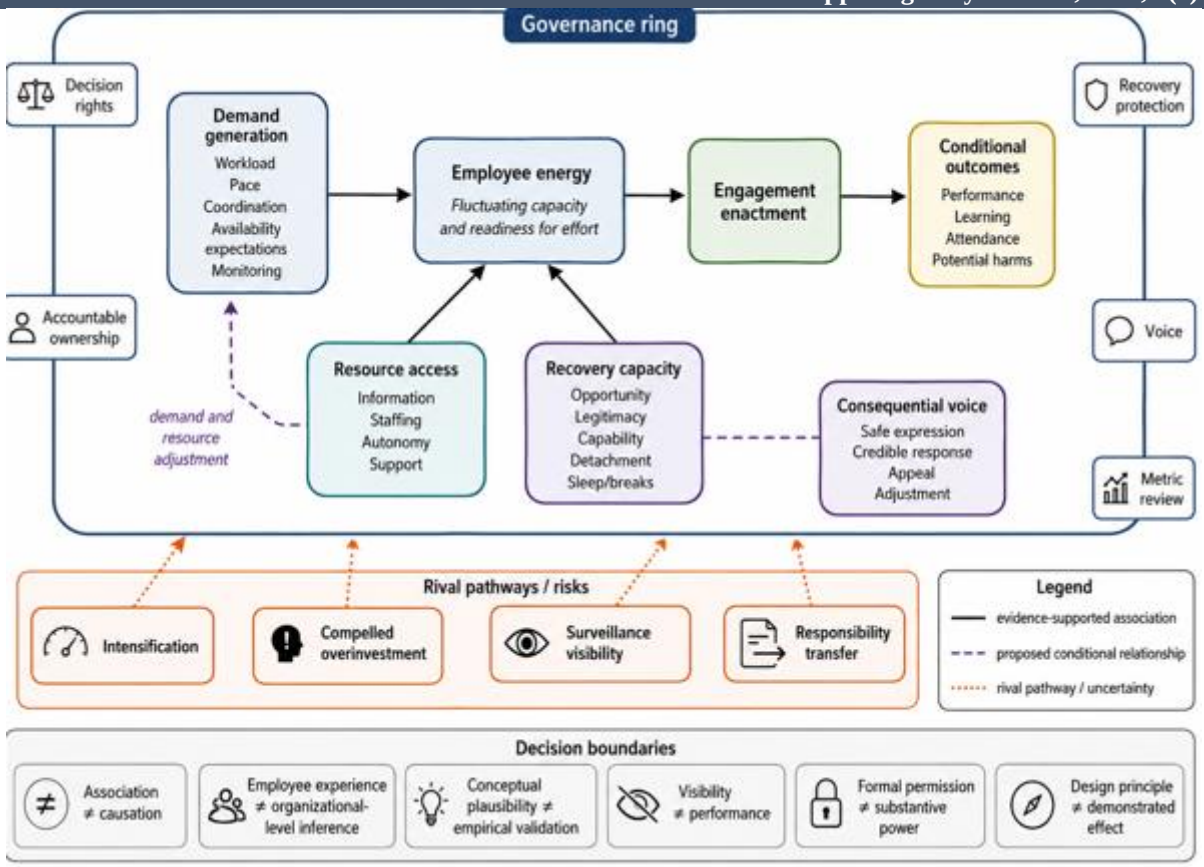

Figure 1. Employee Energy-Governance Framework

Table 2 organizes the evidence, constructs, relationships, uncertainties, and boundary conditions required for proposed mechanisms, relationships, and organizational consequences in governing employee energy for sustainable engagement and organizational performance.

Table 2. Proposed mechanisms, relationships, and organizational consequences in Governing Employee Energy for Sustainable Engagement and Organizational Performance.

Mechanism or relationship	Antecedent	Mediator or process	Moderator	Expected consequence	Rival explanation	Validation requirement
Demand authorization	Work priorities	Effort allocation	Authority and staffing	Clearer load ownership	Bureaucratic delay	Comparative governance test
Intensification–depletion	Pace and volume	Restricted slack	Control and occupation	Higher strain risk	Economic insecurity	Longitudinal demand measures
Digital availability–detachment	ICT workload	Telepressure	Boundary preference	Reduced recovery opportunity	Role selection	Intervention or natural experiment
Resource access–engagement	Job resources	Motivation and capability	Resource fit	Conditional engagement	Positive affect	Multisource temporal model
Recovery protection–renewal	Stopping rules	Detachment and sleep	Nonwork conditions	Restored capacity	Baseline health	Multilevel repeated measures
Voice–adjustment	Safe expression	Consequential response	Power and climate	Demand revision	Supportive leadership	Traceable response study
Monitoring–control	Performance surveillance	Visibility and discipline	Purpose and transparency	Mixed strain or coordination	Task measurability	Participatory field comparison
Autonomy without authority	Delegated responsibility	Self-redesign pressure	Capacity and resources	Responsibility transfer	Employee proactivity	Authority–resource manipulation

Note: Expected consequences are hypotheses. Proposed rows and governance interpretations require empirical validation.

Organizational levers and failure modes

The framework distinguishes a lever from a benefit. A lever is an organizational condition that may alter demand, resources, recovery, voice, or accountability; its effect depends on enactment and context. Recovery-supportive leadership is one such lever. Multilevel evidence indicates that leader support for recovery may enable psychological detachment at both individual and shared levels [22]. Yet supportive language cannot compensate automatically for understaffing, incompatible deadlines,

or persistent after-hours escalation. Enacted support must include workload decisions, protected boundaries, and authority to defer or redistribute work.

Monitoring is another conditional lever. Electronic performance monitoring varies in purpose, transparency, invasiveness, timing, and employee participation, and these design properties shape how monitoring is interpreted [23]. Activity traces may assist coordination or safety, but visibility is not equivalent to performance, and neither is a valid measure of employee energy. The proposed framework therefore rejects the use of responsiveness, keystrokes, online presence, or biometric proxies as stand-alone evidence for appraisal, discipline, or energetic capacity. Technological capability does not establish necessity, proportionality, validity, or legitimate authority.

Autonomy can also become a failure mode when responsibility is transferred without decision power or resources. Existing work design affects employees' capacity and willingness to redesign their own jobs [24]. Asking depleted employees to craft around structural overload can reproduce poor design while making failure appear individual. Legitimate autonomy therefore requires scope, information, competence, time, and escalation rights. Employee initiative complements but does not replace organizational responsibility.

The proposed failure-mode taxonomy includes demand without an accountable owner, resources that exist formally but are inaccessible, recovery rhetoric without workload relief, voice without consequence, autonomy without authority, monitoring without validity, and performance targets without harm review. These categories are not prevalence estimates. They are diagnostic propositions that direct attention to mismatches between formal arrangements and enacted practice. Their usefulness is conditional on occupation, employment status, national institutions, disability, caring responsibilities, technology, and power. Governance quality must therefore be assessed as a pattern of decisions and remedies rather than inferred from policy presence.

The taxonomy also separates correctable implementation failure from a challenge to the framework itself. A recovery policy that managers ignore may indicate weak enactment, whereas an enacted policy that produces no change may contradict the proposed mechanism. Similarly, voice procedures may fail because employees distrust them, because decision-makers lack authority, or because the underlying demand cannot be altered. Evaluation should document these distinct possibilities rather than protecting the framework through post hoc explanation. A governance architecture is scientifically useful only when its components can fail visibly and its advocates specify what evidence would count against them.

Evaluation indicators

Evaluation should begin by refusing a single composite employee-energy score. Subjective reports are necessary for experiences such as vigor, fatigue, detachment, and perceived voice, but one source measured at one time can produce complex common-method bias that no single procedural or statistical correction removes [25]. A defensible design should combine employee reports with work-design information, workload and scheduling records, process data, qualitative accounts, and independently assessed outcomes where legitimate. Data minimization, informed purpose, access control, and nonretaliation are governance requirements, not secondary technical details.

A defensible evaluation should combine method-bias safeguards, tests of person-level heterogeneity, and intensive longitudinal assessment of within-person dynamics [25-27]. Person-centered analyses may test whether distinct demand–energy–recovery configurations occur, but extracted profiles can be sample-dependent and must not become labels for employment decisions. Experience sampling can capture short-term fluctuations and temporal ordering, yet prompt burden, reactivity, missingness, lag choice, and time-varying confounding remain. Temporal resolution improves inference; it does not manufacture causality.

Indicator families should therefore remain separate. Demand indicators concern volume, pace, simultaneity, interruptions, availability, and unresolved priority conflict. Energy-state indicators concern self-reported capacity and readiness, not inferred productivity. Recovery indicators concern opportunity, legitimacy, detachment, breaks, and sleep-related functioning without employer surveillance of private behavior. Voice indicators concern response time, escalation, reasoned decisions, and actual adjustment. Work-design indicators concern autonomy with authority, role clarity, staffing, and interdependence. Outcome indicators may include engagement, learning, attendance, performance, error, health, and unwanted consequences, but each requires level-appropriate interpretation.

Interpretation should be protected by explicit data boundaries. Employees must know which indicators are collected, for what purpose, who can access them, how long they are retained, and which decisions they cannot inform. Measurement quality does not resolve legitimacy: an accurate indicator may still be disproportionate, intrusive, or used outside its stated purpose. Conversely, rejecting all subjective data would erase the experiences the framework is intended to explain. The proposed evaluation architecture therefore combines epistemic adequacy with procedural safeguards and requires that organizational decision-makers—not respondents—bear responsibility for demonstrating necessity, proportionality, and appropriate use.

Table 3 organizes the evidence, constructs, relationships, uncertainties, and boundary conditions required for testable propositions, evaluation criteria, and practical responsibilities.

Table 3. Testable propositions, evaluation criteria, and practical responsibilities.

Proposition or criterion	Unit and context	Observable indicator	Evidence required	Falsification condition	Organizational responsibility	Misuse risk	Readiness boundary
Accountable demand ownership	Team or workflow	Named priority owner	Process and employee data	Ownership does not alter conflict	Assign and review priorities	Blaming owner	Proposed criterion
Recovery protection	Person within team	Usable stopping rules	Repeated reports and schedules	No recovery improvement	Adjust load and norms	Policing private recovery	Mechanism unvalidated
Consequential voice	Employee–manager process	Documented response or change	Voice and decision records	Voice never affects decisions	Protect, respond, appeal	Performative consultation	Proposed governance rule
Monitoring legitimacy	Monitored work	Purpose, validity, participation	Comparative implementation evidence	Harm exceeds coordination value	Limit and review monitoring	Surveillance and discipline	No energy inference
Dynamic energy pattern	Within person	Repeated capacity reports	Experience sampling [27]	Pattern fails replication	Minimize burden	Employee classification	Research use only
Heterogeneous configurations	Persons or teams	Replicable profiles	Person-centered tests [26]	Classes are unstable	Test alternatives	Stereotyping profiles	No managerial labeling
Conditional performance pathway	Multilevel	Independent outcomes	Longitudinal or experimental evidence	Energy change lacks outcome change	Preserve harm measures	Score maximization	Causality unestablished
Decision readiness	Organization	Replication and adverse-effect evidence	Credible counterfactuals	Rival model fits better	Suspend or revise use	Premature deployment	Not implementation-ready

Note: All propositions, readiness boundaries, and responsibility assignments are original and unvalidated. Indicators must not be repurposed for employee ranking or discipline.

Implications for engagement research

The framework shifts engagement research from score optimization toward the governance of work design. A century of work-design scholarship shows that task, knowledge, social, and contextual characteristics operate across individual, team, and organizational levels [28]. Employee energy should therefore be examined as a dynamic, situated condition rather than a decontextualized trait or organizational asset. Studies should distinguish within-person fluctuation from stable between-person differences and should justify any aggregation to teams or organizations. Performance measures should likewise correspond to the level and time horizon of the proposed mechanism.

Causal evaluation requires interventions that alter governable conditions rather than instructing employees only to become more resilient or energetic. Organizational field experiments can test demand authorization, recovery protection, participatory monitoring, or voice-response procedures, but randomization, contamination, ethical constraints, implementation fidelity, and spillover complicate interpretation [29]. Where experimentation is infeasible, interrupted time-series, difference-in-differences, natural experiments, and carefully matched comparisons may strengthen inference. Mechanism evidence should include whether practices were enacted, who gained authority, and whether adverse effects shifted to another group.

Research must also be capable of rejecting the framework. Cumulative organizational science depends on transparent constructs, comparable estimates, replication, accessible evidence, and synthesis across heterogeneous contexts [30]. Supportive associations alone should not count as validation. Rival models should test whether health, affect, personality, selection, economic insecurity, occupation, or leadership quality explain apparent energy-governance relationships. Preregistered multisite studies could compare countries, contracts, technologies, and occupational groups while preserving contextual interpretation.

The principal research priority is therefore staged validation. Construct studies should establish discriminant and multilevel validity. Intensive longitudinal studies should test temporal processes. Qualitative research should examine enacted authority, silence, and unintended consequences. Comparative and experimental studies should evaluate governance levers. Replications and evidence synthesis should then refine, narrow, or reject propositions. Until this sequence yields credible cumulative evidence, the framework remains a scholarly organizing device rather than a managerial deployment system.

Conclusion

This Original Governance Framework Article proposes that sustainable engagement depends not only on employee motivation but on how organizations generate demands, enable resource access, protect recovery, and respond consequentially to voice. Employee energy is conceptualized as a fluctuating capacity and readiness for cognitive, physical, and emotional effort.

Recovery capacity and sustainable motivation extend this view by distinguishing recurring, replenishable participation from visible effort sustained through compulsion, surveillance, or unrecovered work.

The principal contribution is the proposed Employee Energy-Governance Framework: a non-empirical architecture that assigns responsibility for demand authorization, resource provision, recovery protection, voice, and indicator use. It connects established but heterogeneous evidence without claiming that the integrated relationships are causal, universal, or validated. Engagement remains a meaningful employee state, but it is not a complete organizational diagnostic, a performance guarantee, or a legitimate target for maximization without regard to costs.

The framework's decision boundary is deliberate. It should guide research questions and conceptual scrutiny, not employee ranking, appraisal, discipline, or claims of implementation readiness. Its constructs, mechanisms, propositions, and responsibility rules require discriminant validation, multilevel temporal evidence, credible counterfactual tests, attention to adverse effects, and cumulative replication. Sustainable engagement becomes governable only in the limited sense that organizations can be held accountable for the conditions under which human effort is requested, supported, renewed, heard, and evaluated.

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