

WORK MOTIVATION AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING OF VOLUNTEERS AND NON-VOLUNTEERS

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to describe similarities and differences in the motivational profile and psychological well-being between two groups of 94 paid employees each, one of them are volunteering fire fighters, the others are non-volunteers. The scales of Motivation at Work (Gagné, et al., 2010, 2012) and Psychological Well-being (Ryff, 1989) were used. Results have shown that the non-volunteers scored significantly higher for external behavioral regulation/motivation and introjected motivation. Identified and intrinsic motivation was significantly higher in the group of volunteers. If behavior regulators are categorized in autonomous and controlled motivation, it is clear that in both groups autonomous work motivation is significantly higher than controlled motivation. As expected, based on Self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000), volunteers had a significantly higher score for autonomous motivation and a significantly lower score for controlled motivation. Although well-being correlated positively with autonomous motivation, no significant mean differences were found between the two groups.

Key words: Psychological Well-being, Motivation, Volunteering

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RESUMEN

La presente investigación tiene el propósito de explorar y describir si existen semejanzas o diferencias entre los perfiles motivacionales y las dimensiones de bienestar psicológico en trabajadores remunerados y trabajadores que se dedican a una actividad de voluntariado, adicional a su labor remunerada. Para ello, se aplicó la escala de Motivación en el Trabajo (Gagné, 2010) y la escala de Bienestar Psicológico (Ryff, 1989) en una muestra de 188 participantes (94 bomberos voluntarios y 94 remunerados). Los hallazgos indican que los trabajadores remunerados presentaron mayores niveles de motivación extrínseca e introyectada. La motivación identificada e intrínseca fue significativamente más alta en los bomberos voluntarios. Cuando los reguladores comportamentales se categorizan como motivación autónoma y controlada, se observa claramente que la motivación autónoma es más alta en ambos grupos. Como se esperaba, de acuerdo con la teoría de la autodeterminación (Deci y Ryan, 2000), los voluntarios tuvieron un puntaje significativamente mayor en la motivación autónoma y significativamente menor en la motivación controlada. Aunque el bienestar correlaciono de forma positiva con la motivación autónoma, no se encontró diferencias entre los dos grupos en relación al bienestar psicológico.

Palabras clave: Motivación Intrínseca, Motivación Autónoma, Bienestar Psicológico

Introduction

Motivation is a key concept to understand the reason why human behavior appears, persists, disappears or varies among people. In this study we look for motivational differences between a group of employees who are also volunteering fire fighters and a group of employees who are not volunteering. Hypotheses and measures are based on the Self Determination Theory (SDT; Deci & Ryan, 2000, Herrera & Matos, 2009), as theoretical framework. This theory replaced the original distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation by a more valid difference between autonomous and controlled motivation; and argues that autonomous motivation, as a higher quality of motivation, positively predicts personal growth and well-being. Research has empirically proved the validity of this theory in fields like education, sports, organizational settings, health behavior, among others. In terms of SDT, people have multiple motivational profiles and these profiles are positively or negatively related to adaptive and maladaptive outcomes such as well-being, ill-being, positive and negative affect, personal growth and depressive feelings (Baumeister & Leary, 1995 in Parfyonova, 2009; Deci & Ryan, 1985; Herrera & Matos, 2009; Van den Broeck, De Witte, Neyrinck, Lens & Vansteenkiste, 2009). In order to understand this relation in a Peruvian context, two samples of volunteering and non-volunteering employees were compared.

Self Determination Theory, Motivation and Well-being

According to SDT, people are agents of their lives and, consequently, happiness and well-being are actively built by personal decisions. Thus, people establish goals and select specific paths to accomplish them, acting on their environment and transforming it. In this context, SDT proposes that humans need to satisfy three innate basic psychological needs that are vital to our functioning and promote well-being, these are autonomy (volitional functioning and freedom to choose activities and make decisions), competence (efficacy to accomplish tasks or activities) and relatedness (which includes mutual respect, caring and trust) (Gagné & Deci, 2005, Pintrich & Schunk, 2006). The satisfaction of these needs has positive outcomes (for example, well-being), and their frustration leads to maladaptive outcomes (for example, ill-being).

However, the environment also generates conditions that affect our motivation and behavior (Reeve, 2001, Pintrich & Schunk, 2006). One's environment (for example, parents, teachers, peers, so on) can support but also thwart need satisfaction. Need satisfaction enhances the quality of one's motivation by inducing autonomous motivation and need frustration lowers the quality of motivation by creating controlled motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2002; Lens & Vansteenkiste, 2006). Behavior is controlled motivated when it is regulated by external factors (that is, rewards, punishments, imposed rules, deadlines) or characterized by introjected regulation, which means

that individuals partially understand the value of an activity but they don't assume it as personal, they act for example to avoid feelings of guilt or shame (Parfyonova, 2009).

On the other hand, behavior is autonomously motivated when it is intrinsically motivated (which is the most autonomous type of motivation) or regulated by identified or integrated underlying reasons. Identified regulation refers to activities done because they are important for a person but are not always pleasant tasks; the second one (integrated) is presented when people behave in some way because their acts are congruent with the true values and needs they have. Intrinsic motivation occurs when a person is moved by the interest of the task and is not necessary then to have external rewards (Deci, Ryan, Gagné, Leone, Usunov & Kornazheva, 2001; Pintrich & Schunk, 2006).

Self-determination theory and work motivation

People often depend on their jobs to organize their way of living in terms of time, resources and interpersonal relationships. In many jobs, employees must keep a minimum standard of effectiveness, and have to follow established agendas and rules to receive a salary; or to avoid being fired. Such work situations promote an external regulation (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Sánchez, Leo, Sánchez, Gómez & García, 2011) and consequently have an impact on the level of perceived well-being (Deci & Ryan, 2000). However, it is evident that employers and employees can be both intrinsically (autonomously) and extrinsically (controlled) motivated. Some jobs are only intrinsically motivated and an example of this is the altruistic labor of many volunteers. These people regularly spend their time and talent helping others without expecting any kind of compensation in return (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Thoits & Hewitt, 2001); they are volunteers by their own interest and intrinsically enjoy the activities they do.

According to the SDT framework, it is clear that volunteerism allows the satisfaction of the three basic psychological needs (Boezeman & Ellemers, 2009; Grant, 2008). Some studies, nevertheless, point out that volunteers can also be extrinsically motivated, which means that not all types of pro-social or helping behavior are purely altruistic (Grant, 2008). But if such volunteering is regulated by identified or integrated reasons, it is still autonomously motivated.

As was mentioned previously, the context also has an impact on motivation. If an employee works in a context where controlled motivation is prioritized, he will tend to act with lower interest; and the rules will be perceived as imposed, working only for external reasons or awards. On the other hand, if autonomous motivation is promoted, employees will work for growing; they will enjoy what they are doing, are they will be more creative and passionate in relation to their jobs (Ryan, 2009; Ryan, Deci, Grolnick & LaGuardia, 2006; Stone, Deci & Ryan, 2009).

Well-being

As we have mentioned before, motivation has a direct impact on well-being as a component of life quality and mental health (García & Hombrados, 2002).

Traditionally well-being has been conceptualized as the absence of illness and concepts like hope, happiness, optimism and their benefits on people were not included (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). But within positive psychology all these concepts are analyzed and related with life satisfaction (Cuadra & Florenzano, 2003). Two perspectives appear to understand the meaning of well-being: *hedonistic* and *eudaemonic well-being*.

From an hedonistic perspective, subjective well-being represents a cognitive and emotional appraisal about people's own life, and is associated with happiness, pleasure and life satisfaction (Diener, Oishi & Lucas, 2011). There are two key aspects to remark under this condition; in the first place, subjective well-being involves a balance between positive and negative emotions, in other words, to be in a stable mood; and in the second place, subjective well-being implies a global judgment about personal life (Vásquez, Hervás, Rahona & Gómez, 2009; Villar, Triadó, Resanó & Osuna, 2003). On the other hand, from an *eudaemonic* perspective, also known as psychological well-being, the experience of well-being is considered as a process that leads people to achieve specific values which allow individuals to grow, develop their potentials; achieve self-realization and stay concentrated on actions that take away negative affects or outcomes (Vásquez et al., 2009; Villar et al, 2003). Thus, psychological well-being represents a personal condition in which deep values orient individuals to be authentic, and engaged with actions considered important for them (Waterman, 1993; Vásquez et al., 2009).

Ryff (1995) proposed a multidimensional model with six areas to measure psychological well-being. These are *self-acceptance*, which implies feeling good about our self and being conscious of our limitations, *positive relation with others*, that represents the capability to love someone and to have warm, satisfying and trusting relations with others; *autonomy* which includes aspects such as freedom and self-determination; *environmental mastery* that is the ability to adapt the environment in a way consistent with one's personal needs and values; *purpose in life*, which basically refers to find a meaning for life; and finally, *personal growth* that represents the intention to develop our own potential in a continuous and dynamic learning effort (Ryff, 1995; Ryff & Keyes, 1995; Vásquez et al., 2009; Grajales, 2011).

Some of the dimensions mentioned by Ryff are also described by SDT's three basic needs. Psychological well-being or experiencing eudaemonia is characterized by self-regulation, independence, environmental mastery and positive relationships, choosing activities one really wants to do. (Pardo, 2010; Ryan, Huta & Deci, 2008).

However, due to the fact that there are individual differences between human beings, in many occasions people pursue extrinsic goals and values that keep them away from the experience of eudemonia. This is the case for the search of wealth, fame or power. In those situations humans may feel a transitory happiness, but in the long term, well-being is negatively affected due to the lack of satisfaction of the basic needs or some of the dimensions of psychological well-being (Ryan, Deci, Grolnick & LaGuardia, 2006; Herrera & Matos, 2009). Psychological well-being does not only mean to feel good; it goes farther and it orients individuals to pursue intrinsic goals, leading to life satisfaction (Ryan et al., 2008; Valenzuela, 2005). Under this theoretical framework, pro-social behavior not only brings benefits to people who receive the help; it is also favorable for the volunteers who promote this type of acts and it is clearly associated with high scores for psychological well-being (Ryan et al., 2008).

Researches in this field have reported that people who participate in social programs are more confident, tend to manage their own life, and have higher self-esteem and good health (physical and mental). As a consequence, these people have lower psychological stress and less mortality (Thoits & Hewitt, 2001). All this suggests a positive relation between volunteering and psychological well-being.

This relation has indeed been corroborated in multiple studies in different nations. For example, Cheung and Kwan (2006) demonstrated that volunteerism impacts positively on well-being in senior adults from Hong Kong; it increases their self-esteem, satisfaction with life and health self-evaluation. Also, it has been found that, in United States, volunteering is a socially valued free time activity that reduces negative feelings. (Mojza, Sonnentag & Bornemann, 2011).

In contemporary societies, there is no doubt that work allows an economical income that is necessary for a decent living. But, as it was mentioned before, in some organizational contexts, the stressful environments can negatively affect the performance and work satisfaction of employees and damage their well-being (Liao-Troth, 2001; Waddell & Burton, 2006).

Given that well-being is an outcome variable of high relevance, in this paper the comparison between the motivational profiles and well-being of paid workers and volunteers will be analyzed. We expect that, compared to paid workers, volunteers (who are paid workers at the same time) will score higher for autonomous motivation and for psychological well-being. We also expect that psychological well-being correlates positively with autonomous motivation and negatively with controlled motivation.

Methodology

Participants

For this study, we decided to work with Peruvian fire fighters because on a worldwide level, they are one of the most admired and respected groups. In Peru, all fire fighters work only on a voluntary basis, and do not receive any kind of reward or compensation. In 2009, the number of fire fighters reached 9316 and it is continuing to grow.

For this reason, our sample was constituted of 94 volunteering fire fighters and 94 non volunteering paid workers, who were matched in age, gender, and profession with the fire fighters. In total, we have 188 participants (147 males and 41 females), between 20 to 35 years old (mean age = 26.47; SD = 5.25).

Intentional and Snowball sampling were used for this study, and much care was given to make the groups as much similar as possible (Kerlinger y Lee, 2002).

Measurement and Procedure

Participants were invited to answer three questionnaires: the self-report biographic questionnaire, the scale of motivation at work and the psychological well-being scale. The first one was a general data sheet where we collected some socio-demographic characteristics such as education, profession, age, gender and time as a volunteer in the case of firefighters.; The *Motivation at work* scale is composed of 19 items that are grouped in 5 subscales: *A-motivation* (3 items; for example, «*I do little because I don't think this work is worth putting efforts into*»; Cronbach $\alpha = .619$); *External regulation* (6 items; for example, «*To get others' approval (for example, supervisor, colleagues, family, clients ...)*»; $\alpha = .781$); *Introjected regulation* (4 items; for example, «*Because I have to prove to myself that I can*» $\alpha = .561$); *Identified regulation* (3 items; for example, «*Because putting effort in this job has personal significance to me*»; $\alpha = .609$) and *Intrinsic motivation* (3 items, for example, «*Because I have fun doing my job*»; $\alpha = .759$). This scale has been validated in ten languages and for this study we have used the Spanish adaptation (Gagné, Forest, Vansteenkiste, Crevier-Braud, Van den Broeck, Martin-Albo, & Nunez, under revision) of the Revised Motivation at Work Scale (R-MAWS; Gagné, Forest, Gilbert, Aubé, Morin, & Malorni, 2010). All items were rated on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (totally disagree) to 7 (totally agree). The internal consistency of the scale for introjected regulation is too low and it is rather low also for a-motivation and identified regulation. However, when the items for external and introjected regulation are combined in a score for *controlled motivation* (see Introduction) the Cronbach alpha equals .76. Combining identified regulation and intrinsic motivation gives a score for *autonomous motivation* and the Cronbach alpha for this scale is .77. We will not use RAI-scores (resultant autonomous

motivation; i.e., autonomous minus controlled motivation or (2*intrinsic motivation + identified regulation) – (2*external regulation + introjected regulation)) because we are interested in the two qualitatively different types of motivation which are not significantly intercorrelated ($r = .13$). A-motivation correlates negatively ($-.333, p < .000$) with autonomous motivation and positively but not significantly ($.125, n.s.$) with controlled motivation.

Finally, psychological well-being was measured with the Ryff Scale (Ryff, 1989, 1995; Ryff & Keyes, 1995). This questionnaire has six subscales with 14 items each. All items were rated on a 6-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (totally disagree) to 6 (totally agree). The six subscales are: *Autonomy* (for example, "I have confidence in my opinions, even if they are contrary to the general consensus"; Cronbach alpha $\alpha = .721$); *Environmental mastery* (for example, I general, I feel I am in charge of the situation in which I live, $\alpha = .787$); *Personal growth* (for example, «I think it is important to have new experiences that challenge how you think about yourself and the world"; $\alpha = .784$); *Positive relations with others* (for example, « People would describe me as a giving person, willing to share my time with others"; $\alpha = .801$); *Purpose in life* (for example, " Some people wander aimlessly through life, but I am not one of them"; $\alpha = .779$); and , finally, *Self-acceptance* (for example, "I like most aspects of my personality"; $\alpha = .785$). For the total score (84 items) the Cronbach alpha was .944. For all six subscales (and for the total scale) the internal consistency (Cronbach alpha) is satisfactory. The inter correlations between the six subscales range from .464 to .754 and the correlations of the six subscales with the total score vary from .735 to .872. So we will only use the total scores.

The questionnaires above were applied at the firefighters' offices. Most of the evaluations were applied individually but in some cases it was done in small groups. In the case of the other workers, the ones who did not practice volunteering, questionnaires were individually administered. All participants were totally free to participate or not.

Results

As expected, based on the SDT, psychological well-being correlates positively with autonomous motivation ($r = .455, p < .000$) and negatively with a-motivation ($r = -.348, p < .000$). The correlation with controlled motivation is not significant ($r = .090$). Table 1 shows the mean scores for the five types of motivation.

Table 1. Motivational Means and Standard Deviation as a function of group and gender

	Volunteers						Non Volunteers					
	Male		Female		Total		Male		Female		Total	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
A-motivation	1.39	0.65	1.65	1.16	1.44	0.77	1.48	0.63	1.42	0.47	1.46	0.59
External regulation	3.29	1.31	3.66	0.97	3.35	1.26	4.20	1.26	4.10	0.93	4.17	1.18
Introjected regulation	5.11	1.24	5.59	0.53	5.19	1.16	5.77	0.88	5.49	0.94	5.70	0.90
CONTROLLED motivation	4.20	1.08	4.62	0.59	4.27	1.02	4.98	0.80	4.79	0.81	4.93	0.80
Identified regulation	6.36	0.65	6.37	0.81	6.37	0.68	6.20	0.64	5.96	0.98	6.14	0.74
Intrinsic motivation	6.26	0.85	6.29	0.96	6.27	0.86	5.94	0.91	5.74	1.15	5.89	0.97
AUTONOMOUS motivation	6.31	0.65	6.33	0.73	6.31	0.66	6.07	0.61	5.85	1.03	6.02	0.74

Volunteers and non-volunteers score significantly higher in autonomous motivation compared to controlled motivation: $t(93) = 17.68, p < .000$ for volunteers and $t(93) = 11.40, p < .000$ for non-volunteers. For the four subtypes of motivation we found this difference. In the case of a-motivation, the difference between the two groups is not significant. Table 1 shows that in all subgroups the mean score for a-motivation is low. The main effects of gender and group membership, and the interaction effect on a-motivation are not significant.

Multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) for the four types of intrinsic or extrinsic motivation or behavioral regulations shows a significant main effect of group membership ($F(4, 183) = 10.37, p < .000$). To compare the two groups for each of these four variables and for autonomous versus controlled regulation/motivation, we use 2*2 analysis of variance with the gender and group membership variables (and their interaction) as predictors.

For *controlled motivation* we found a significant effect of group membership ($F(1, 184) = 8.56, p = .004, \eta_p^2 = .044$). Non-volunteers score significantly higher than volunteers for this lower quality of motivation. The main effect of gender is not significant but the interaction between group and gender is marginally significant ($F(1, 184) = 3.53, p = .06, \eta_p^2 = .019$). Non-volunteers score significantly higher

than volunteers, but the difference is larger for men than women. When we look at the two components of controlled motivation we see that, for *external regulation*, the main effect of group membership is significant ($F(1, 184) = 9.54, p = .002, \eta_p^2 = .049$). Non-volunteers score significantly higher than volunteers. And in the case of *introjected regulation*, there are no significant main effects, but there is a significant interaction effect of gender by group membership ($F(1, 184) = 4.23, p = .041, \eta_p^2 = .022$): male non-volunteers score higher than male volunteers but for women the difference is in the opposite direction and much smaller.

For the high quality *autonomous motivation*, we find only a significant main effect of group membership ($F(1, 184) = 8.37, p = .004, \eta_p^2 = .043$): Volunteers score significantly higher than non-volunteers. This also true for the two components of autonomous motivation: volunteers score significantly higher than non-volunteers for *identified regulation* ($F(1, 184) = 5.10, p = .025, \eta_p^2 = .027$) and for *intrinsic motivation* ($F(1, 184) = 7.10, p = .008, \eta_p^2 = .037$).

We can conclude that the work motivation of male and female employees, who are also volunteering as fire-fighters, is significantly of better quality than the work motivation of a comparison group of employees who are not volunteers at all. Their motivation is significantly more autonomous and less controlled. Based on SDT we can then expect that they score also significantly higher for psychological well-being. Table 2 gives the mean scores for the six subscales and for the total well-being score.

Table 2. Psychological Well-being (Means and Standard Deviations) as a Function of Group and Gender

	Volunteers						Non Volunteers					
	Male		Female		Total		Male		Female		Total	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Autonomy	4.57	.63	4.38	.84	4.54	.67	4.42	.54	4.26	.45	4.37	.52
Positive relations with others	4.89	.55	4.84	.67	4.88	.57	4.79	.61	4.76	.62	4.78	.61
Self-acceptance	4.73	.61	4.72	.91	4.73	.67	4.68	.52	4.80	.56	4.71	.53
Environmental control	4.73	.66	4.52	.70	4.69	.67	4.74	.50	4.69	.49	4.73	.50
Life purpose	4.85	.65	4.68	.72	4.81	.66	4.85	.52	4.88	.46	4.86	.50
Personal growth	4.91	.61	4.84	.81	4.89	.65	5.00	.46	4.92	.63	4.98	.51
Well-being	4.78	.52	4.66	.72	4.76	.56	4.74	.43	4.72	.41	4.74	.42

Because of the high inter correlations between the six subscales we will only look at the total score for psychological well-being as dependent variable and gender and group as independent variables. Different from what was expected, analyses of variance show neither significant main effect of gender or group, nor a significant interaction effect of group by gender.

Conclusion

Motivation is a psychological variable that is closely related with well-being. Intrinsic and the four types of extrinsic motivation have different impacts on individuals.

As expected and according the theoretical framework of this research, when paid workers and volunteers are compared in terms of motivation the ones who are inserted in a work activity without participating in volunteering show a higher level of motivation of lower quality (external regulation). The opposite is true for volunteers, who score significantly higher for a higher quality of motivation (intrinsic and identified).

Although well-being was significantly associated with autonomous work motivation and volunteers scored significantly higher for autonomous motivation than the non-volunteers, the two groups did not differ for psychological well-being. We notice in Table 2 that both groups score rather high (4.76 and 4.74) on a 6-point scale. It means that both groups have an adequate level of well-being in their lives, especially for the dimensions of purpose of life, personal growth and positive relationships with others. Although the volunteers score significantly higher ($M = 6.31$) also the non-volunteers score high for autonomous motivation ($M = 6.02$) on a 7-point scale.

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