

Motivation, Implication and Autonomy at Work

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Summary

From two populations of the same institution not having the same level of autonomy in their respective positions, one makes the assumption that a larger autonomy increases motivation, satisfaction and implication at work, this one referring to the intrinsic aspects of the activity rather than to extrinsic dimensions. It is also verified that the aspects relating to autonomy vary according to the type of work and reflect a specific form of relation to work. The study concerns a sample of 230 employees on which a multivariate model is tested by the means of a series of regressions and then using confirmatory techniques basing on the content analysis. The results go in the sense of the previous research and consequently confirm the formulated assumptions. The adequacy of the ideal model is confirmed by the confirmatory analysis carried out with the software SPSS.

Key Words: autonomy, working position, satisfaction, implication.

1. Introduction

The research aims at showing the relations between the level of autonomy at work, the motivation and satisfaction, and the preference given to the extrinsic or intrinsic aspects, the latter dimension expressing the implication for the work itself. Thus, the need for autonomy implies the desire to work alone, at one's own pace and without being bothered by too constraining rules. The individuals who have a strong need for autonomy would adapt badly to the particular conditions of the large traditional organization.

Autonomy can be conceived like "a room for proceeding of the individual and group with respect to the regulation and control " (Chatzis, 1999, Serupia, 2006). It is related to the idea of initiative and refers also to the choice in opposition to the constraint and the variety of work versus the repetition of mechanized tasks. Autonomy is associated with the possibility of organizing one's work like in teams, which manage their own operation (Savoie & Brunet, 2000) or in distance working where the individual must know how to organize their time and their work (Kouloumdjian, 2000). As a result, the autonomy becomes a constituent factor of the appropriation of the work because they made it their own, they integrate it into their familiar universe and they have its control (Lemoine, 1994). In that case, it contributes to the realization of oneself.

The meaning most usually given to autonomy is positive. Hence, this one would be a source of satisfaction and motivation (Cooper, 1973; Ripon, 1987, Serupia, 2009). It seems to be the symbol of the break with the bureaucratic and demotivating structures of Taylorism and is associated with a job enrichment vis-a-vis a rigid system. On the other hand, a too significant autonomy in a fuzzy organization can also become a source of dissatisfaction by increasing risks, uncertainty and the individual workloads. However, compared to the repetitive and monotonous situations, more autonomy brings the possibility of organizing one's work and choosing the means of carrying it out. To this effect, it contributes to increase the motivation at work while making it more interesting and brings a source of satisfaction. The intrinsic aspects of work related

to its content are found here (Herzberg, 1966, Serupia, 2015) such as the responsibility, the consideration, and the involvement of one's competences.

These factors concern all the feeling of realization of oneself into the work (Lemoine, 2001), on the possibility of controlling the situation, and constitute the bases of the implication for work itself. They are different from an extrinsic motivation brought by external elements such as the salary or the status. They form a set of values which are attached to work, close to those proposed by Perron (1997).

Within this framework, one seeks to verify that, for the same hierarchical level, employees working in the same institution but in positions that offer more autonomy express a satisfaction level, a motivation and a preference for the intrinsic aspects of their work larger than those having less autonomy on their work. Hence, the assumption is made that a little larger autonomy increases the motivation, the satisfaction and the involvement in work.

It is not a question of showing that the job satisfaction varies according to the professional category, as it is said by Centers & Bugenthal (1966), it is rather a question of establishing a linkage between the level of autonomy and the importance attached to the various aspects of work. In addition, it sought to show that the characteristic of the idea of autonomy varies according to the occupied position.

2. Methodology

2.1. Population

The comparisons relate to a population of 230 employees of different hierarchical level resulting from the same organization. For the investigation, we limited ourselves to the civil servants of the central administration working in the technical and support departments and the directors and persons in charge of different services of the Ministry of Education.

The men/women representation was respected according to the percentage of men (59.1%) and (40.9%) women on the whole of the civil servants of the Ministry of Education. The age of the employees varies between 23 and 64 years. This variable has certainly a significant influence on the motivation of the civil servants. The analysis will also distinguish the following categories of civil servants:

- those who occupy a function of responsibility, i.e. top executives, heads of departments, services or divisions (13.5%);
- the executive technicians or subordinates (76.1%); - personnel of support (9.1%);
- 1.3% of respondents who did not mention their current function.

2.2. The questionnaire

Two complementary methods were used: a questionnaire, and talks realized on the field. The association of these methods allows a more thorough investigation. It compensates the deficiencies of very formalized research methods such as the questionnaire whose technical rigour often has as a corollary lack of sensitivity as far as the comprehension of the phenomena is concerned. It compensates also the difficulty of the interview and direct observation methods. This choice made it possible to obtain at the same time quantitative and qualitative data by means of complementary instruments making it possible to match up the information and to enrich them.

In addition, nine questions including four proposals each one with demand of choosing in priority two aspects of work among the four, which limits the difficulty of answering and makes it possible to obtain a non-exclusive opinion. This method of multiple choices is also distinguished from that of critical incident. The proposals relate to dimensions corresponding to those studied in the model of Herzberg (1966), that is to say six extrinsic methods which include the schedules, the employees 'security, salaries, seniors in rank, colleagues, promotion, and six intrinsic aspects on the work itself: the responsibilities, the consideration,

the interesting activity in itself, the initiative, the realization of one's competences, the success in one's work. Each one of these 12 dimensions can thus be selected between 0 and 3 times, knowing that each group of four proposals includes two intrinsic aspects and two different extrinsic aspects in order to balance the set. Thus, this method makes it possible to sum up the extrinsic and intrinsic answers or to study the importance given to each of the 12 dimensions.

Finally, autonomy is estimated starting from eight affirmative proposals compared with answers on a scale of frequency in six points (**from never to very often**). Four aspects of autonomy are presented, at the same time in a positive and negative way according to the following schedule: variety, repetition of the activity; to take initiatives, to follow the rules; freedom to organize one's work, follow up by the superior; to make choices, to request to act vis-a-vis an incident. According to the case, the various proposals are positively or negatively counted, which gives a total ranging between +20 and -20.

2. 3. Operational assumptions

Initially to estimate the autonomy level corresponding to observable characteristics of work. Consequently, it is assumed that the assumption that the personnel of support and office agents who have a more repetitive and more constraining work estimate to have an autonomy less than the heads of services, those ones being more able to organize their work and to have some initiatives. One also expects to find a distinction between the intrinsic and extrinsic aspects by analysing the answers from all the subjects.

Apart from these preliminary findings, one seeks to show a correlation between the autonomy and the motivation and satisfaction level on the one hand (H1), and between autonomy and the intrinsic aspects of work on the other hand (H2). The executive technicians or subordinates, having less autonomy, must thus show themselves less satisfied of their work and give more extrinsic answers. Thus, we make the assumption of a linkage between the level of autonomy on work and the importance granted to different aspects of work related to the implication: the autonomy brings a restructuring of the psychological relation of the person to their work.

One also seeks to study the connections between the characteristics of the subjects (age, level of study) and their appreciation in terms of importance attached to the various aspects of work (autonomy, motivation, satisfaction and implication) (H3). In addition, one aims at showing that the various aspects of the concept of autonomy are differently perceived according to the type of work carried out (H4).

3. Results

3.1. The perception of autonomy according to the work carried out

The average of the marks out of the eight items relating to autonomy is -0.35 for the executive- technicians or subordinates and -6.22 for the directors and Heads of services. The t of Student of 3.75 (ddl = 44) gives a significant difference $p < .0003$, what makes it possible to affirm that the level of perceived autonomy is smaller among the executive's technicians or subordinates. That also corresponds to the observations of the field: it appears that the employees have a representation of their autonomy in relation to their type of effective work. It is noticed that the level of autonomy is low for all (< 0) and weaker still for support personnel.

3.2. Distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic factors

Factorial analysis carried out on the whole of the population (N = 230) revealed three principal components which explain overall 51.22% of the variance of the cloud. The first which explains the most significant share of the phenomenon (27.38% neat value = 4.93) opposes the majority of the extrinsic aspects (time, safety, superiors, colleagues) to the principal intrinsic aspects (initiative, competences, responsibilities). Let us note that the aspects salary and promotion are dissociated from the other extrinsic aspects while more referring to the axis 2 with opposition to the intrinsic variable consideration.

3.2. Correlation between motivation, satisfaction and autonomy(H1)

The variables motivation, satisfaction and autonomy are positively correlated in a significant way to 44. None of these two variables is correlated in a significant way with the other studied aspects. The ACP confirm this relationship between autonomy and satisfaction. These variables vary in the same direction and are close to each other. They participate in a significant way to the emergence of the factor 3 (correlations: + 61 and +62). Projection on plan 1-3 also states that satisfaction and autonomy are closely dependent, the formed angle is particularly weak. The assumption 1 is thus confirmed.

Correlations between the aspects of work, autonomy and satisfaction (H2):

The correlation between the autonomy and the total of the intrinsic or extrinsic aspects of work is weak (.14). The choice of the intrinsic or extrinsic aspects varies according to the subjects, but the connection between intrinsic autonomy and aspects exists only for one part of them.

Thus, H2 is not validated on the whole. However, for the subordinates, a correlation between autonomy and initiative is found (34), autonomy and responsibility (42) and a reverse correlation with dimension colleague (42). It is noted that the frequency of the choices is slightly different between assistants and the persons in charge, those ones giving a little less extrinsic answer but without reaching a sufficient threshold level of significance: the general average on the extrinsic factors is 10.00 for the executive agents and 9.26 for the heads of services and directors for a maximum of 18. It is conversely 8.00 and 8.74 for the intrinsic factors.

Among the intrinsic aspects selected, one finds the possibility of taking initiatives and to have an interesting activity for the extrinsic aspects in the first place, the job security and the salary are involved. It appears that the way of obtaining the answers supports the non-exclusiveness in various dimensions suggested, which justifies the fact of having avoided the exclusive choices forced between them.

On the other hand, the correlation between the intrinsic aspects and satisfaction is larger (34). It is found between initiatives, motivation, and satisfaction (32) and between satisfaction and interesting activity in oneself (26). It is also found that the heads of service and directors declare themselves to be more satisfied on their work than the subordinates: The X^2 for the two groups on the opposition between the weak marks (1 to 5) and strong (6 to 10) is equal to 7.09 (ddl = 1), $p < .01$.

3.4. Effects of the age and the level of study (H3)

The correlations between the age and autonomy (25) and between the age and the intrinsic aspects (29) are rather weak. However, for the assistants, the correlations are more consequent: the age is correlated with the whole of the intrinsic aspects (61) and in particular the initiative (57) and negatively with the extrinsic aspects. But these relations are not found for the subordinates. In addition, the level of study is correlated to a significant level only with the unit of the extrinsic aspects (42), and conversely with the intrinsic aspects. That can mean that the working positions present little interest for people having a higher level of study. It is necessary to mention the strong and negative correlation between the age and the level of study (- .62), which indicates that the older personnel have less of diplomas.

3.5. Variations on the concept of autonomy (H4)

All in all (for $N = 230$, on a theoretical average with 3.5), the items to request to act, to follow the rules and to repeat the same activity dominate ($M = 4.02$; 4.00 and 3.80). One obtains consecutively to take initiatives, to have one's work verified, ($M = 3.48$ and 3.43); then to make choices, to have a varied activity and to be able to organize one's work ($M = 2.91$; 2.91 and 2.83). Thus, it arises three groups of proposals which are distinguished clearly with a general deficit for the positive aspects.

In addition, the two populations are also different in a significant way. The executive- technicians follow more the rules and have an activity more repetitive than the heads of services and directors: 4.43 against 3.56 for the rules; 4.09 against 3.52 for the repetition. Conversely, they have less variety and initiative in their work: 2.43 against 3.39 for the variety; 2.87 against 4.09 for the initiative. They make also less choice: 2.17 against 3.65 and organize less their work: 2.52 against 3.13. Only the fact of being checked in their work (3.35 against 3.52) and to have to ask to act in the event of incident (4.04 against 4.00) bring closer the subordinates and the persons in charge.

It is noted that the most significant differences between the two trades are on the impossibility of making choices (1.48) and to take initiatives (1.22).

One can also keep the ordinal level of measurement and treat the data starting from the number of extreme answers (5+6) decreased of the opposite answers (1+2) on the total number of answers, which gives an index of central answer $A/N = Nb(5+6) - Nb(1+2) / N \times 100$ (Lemoine, 1998). This formula that draws aside the intermediate answers gives more marked results if one finds the general tendencies obtained by the averages, one also reveals more clearly two results for the assistants: weak variety in the activity (-47.8) and the fact of being able to organize one's work (-43.5).

In the two methods of measurement, assumption 5 of difference in the aspects of autonomy between heads of services and subordinates is verified, the Assistants have less autonomy and do not privilege the same dimensions.

4. Conclusions and discussions

In this research, it appears initially that the perception of autonomy corresponds with the characteristics observed at work but also different characteristics from autonomy varies according to the type of position: the technical departments, the support units, the directors and Heads of different services are different on the autonomy level as well as on its components.

One finds the distinction between extrinsic factors (employment, salary) and the intrinsic factors of work (interest for the activity, initiative) corresponding with an implication in one's work. One obtains also a correlation between autonomy and motivation and satisfaction, as well as the intrinsic aspects, initiatives and interesting activity. But one does not find a simple relation between autonomy and intrinsic aspects, except the relationships with the initiative and the responsibilities of directors. It is possible that it comes from the formulated questions about the choice of the aspects of work in terms of wishes while those on autonomy refer to the effective activity.

The individual characteristics (age, level of study) have a weak role in general, but there is a correlation between the age and aspects intrinsic for the subordinates. One can suppose that they attach more importance as time goes by to the inherent aspects on work like the realization of their competences and that they are more involved at this level.

One can conclude on the importance of taking into account the form of activity and in particular the level of autonomy when one is interested in the motivation, satisfaction and the implication at work. It arises that, in these positions, the individuals who are more autonomous in their job, are satisfied and motivated, which supposes that the autonomy causes satisfaction here. This last component is also related to the intrinsic factors such as the fact of taking initiatives, to have responsibilities or to carry out one's competences, source of implication, while extrinsic aspects and dissatisfaction go together. It however remains to specify the direction of the correlations in a model where each variable is likely to exploit partially the others even if it is known that the level of motivation and satisfaction is rather the effect of many factors than their cause.

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