

Basic Psychological Needs at Work of Mental Health Professionals in Albania

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Abstract

Research has supported the important role of meeting the needs of autonomy, competence and relatedness within the workplace, in order to enhance wellbeing, including lowered stress, burnout, and anxiety and enhanced workplace engagement. The subjects of this study are mental health workers in Albania. This article reviews the meaning of quality of work life and analyses constructs of basic psychological needs at work based on Deci & Ryan model. The constructs of basic psychological needs at work discussed are, the need for autonomy, the need for competence and the need for relatedness.. This is mainly a quantitative study, with some elements of qualitative methods. Specifically, are used the scale measuring satisfaction with basic psychological needs at work (adapted from the model of Deci & Ryan), interviews and observations. At the conclusion of the study came out that overall mental health workers are satisfied with their basic psychological needs at work. Basic psychological need at work is positively related to all its constructs.

Keywords: *basic psychological need; autonomy, competence, relatedness, mental health worker;*

1. Introduction

Human needs are diverse. They may be physiological, psychological and social. Needs are very different, depending on individual and social-economic development of society. Individuals in different environments have different needs. A part of these needs appear in the work environment.

By definition, a "need" indicates some deficient state within and individual. Psychologists have proposed the humans have psychological needs that serve to drive much of human behavior (Jex, 2002, p. 211). Self Determination Theory (SDT) is a positive psychological motivation theory based on the premise that people actively seek opportunities to satisfy their basic psychological needs for competence, relatedness and autonomy (Greguras & Diefendorff, 2009). According Deci and Ryan (1985), people are always trying to overcome challenges to meet their needs for competence and self-determination. What everyone agrees is that first there must be a lack of something that is necessary for the welfare or for the operation and optimal growth. This serves as an inspiration or impetus to do something towards achieving a favorite state, where the need no longer exists or is completely filled. (Deci, & Ryan, 1985).

In this study are analyzed basic psychological needs at work of mental health workers located in four regions of the country, Tirana, Elbasan, Vlora and Shkodra. Services are provided by psychiatric hospitals, protected homes and community mental health centers. The study aims to assess satisfaction of basic psychological needs at work of Albanian mental health workers taking into consideration all its dimensions. Therefore, it aims to identify weaknesses and strengths of employees' life, and to provide specific recommendations to improve the situation.

Research has supported the important role of meeting the needs of autonomy, competence and relatedness within the workplace, in order to enhance wellbeing, including lowered stress, burnout, anxiety and enhanced workplace engagement (Van den Broeck et.al., 2008).

2. Literature review

2.1 Theories of needs

Need-based theories explain work motivation in terms of the extent to which employees satisfy important needs in the work place ((Jex, 2002, p. 211). People differ in their individual needs, perceptions and aspirations. Such differences are reflected in their behaviors at work. Some are good performers while others are not. Some are cooperative while others are not. The manager must know and understand the needs and interests of his subordinates. To motivate them to reach peak performance is to satisfy first their needs and interests. A high salary is not only the motivating factor. There are

higher needs which people want to satisfy, like recognition, belongingness, and honor. Employees who are satisfied are happy. This makes them efficient (Fajardo, 1997, p. 177). Each of us as a human being has needs and personal goals. We recognize some of our needs and take care of them objectively, while we respond to other needs subconsciously and spontaneously. A human need is a personal, unfilled vacancy that determines and organizes mental processes and physical behavior so that fulfillment can occur. Each of us possesses many needs, and those needs differ from person to person. The needs we have individually are quite varied, as are the way our needs are triggered. The type of needs an employee has will in many ways shape the individual's behavior. The degree of individual initiative, the level of willingness to take risks, and the desire to climb the organizational ladder are specific results of the type and strength of unfilled needs (Harris & Hartman, 2002, p. 200-201). Need is a state in a person's life that triggers action and activates behavior. Some theories arrange needs in hierarchical levels, with each level activating a different behavior aimed at satisfying that need. Some arrange them on a continuum, indicating that they could influence a person's behavior (Singh, 2010, p. 143). All need theories share fundamental focus: a deficit created by an unsatisfied need, and motivated behavior being aimed at restoration of balance or satisfaction. Yet, there are differences among the major need theories. Some of major theories of motivation based on needs are them given by Abraham Maslow (1954), Herzberg (1967), Adlerfer (1969), and McClelland (1961). The theories of Herzberg and Alderfer are more or less modifications of Maslow's work (Parikh & Gupta, 2010, p. 141-142).

2.2 Theory of basic needs

The concept of basic psychological needs has played an important, though often implicit, role in Self-Determination Theory and each of its mini-theories from the time the work began. To qualify as a need, a motivating force must have a direct relation to well-beings. Needs, when satisfied, promote well-being, but when thwarted, lead to negative consequences. Further, because needs are hypothesized to be universal, this relation between satisfaction and well-being must apply across ages, genders, and cultures. Of course, the means through which needs are satisfied (versus thwarted) vary as a function of age, gender, and culture. Thus, in an extreme case, it is possible for the same behavior to be need satisfying for one group and need thwarting for another (Deci & Ryan, 2004, p. 22). In SDT, needs specify innate psychological nutrients that are essential for ongoing psychological growth, integrity, and well-being. We identified three, the needs for competence, relatedness, and autonomy." (Deci & Ryan, 2000, p. 229). Everyone is assumed to have these innate needs (regardless of the strength of their reported desires for those outcomes), so the degree of a person's need satisfaction is hypothesized to predict positive work-related outcome. When need satisfaction is assessed, determining which aspects of the work context allow need satisfaction becomes a matter for empirical exploration, rather than for assumption (Baard, Deci, & Ryan, 2004, p. 2047). Self determination theory argues that there are three universal and evolved human needs, which when satisfied, lead a person to thrive in the same way that a plant thrives when it is given sun, soil, and water. The needs are: autonomy (to be self-regulation, to be the maker or at least the owner of one's choice); competence (to be effective in what one does mastering new skills in the process); and relatedness (to feel connected and in sympathy with at least some others) (Martocchio, & Ferris, 2003, p. 366). According to Deci and Ryan (1991), needs are defined as nutrients essential to a living entity's growth, integrity, and health. They derive this definition of needs from biological and evolutionary approaches that determine organismic needs using functional criteria. For instance, a plant can be said to need water, sunlight, and specific minerals based on the observation that growth, health, and integrity are compromised when any one of these nutrients is withheld or is unavailable. Extending this reasoning to psychological systems, Deci and Ryan have argued that in humans, at least three types of nutrients are functionally essential to ongoing personal growth, integrity, and well-being. These are the needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Factors in the person or situation that facilitate autonomy, competence, and relatedness are thus expected to enhance well-being, whereas factors that detract from fulfillment of these needs should undermine well-being (Reis, Sheldon, Gable, Roscoe, & Ryan, 2000, p. 420). Whether or not one is aware of "needing" autonomy, competence or relatedness, one's access to them will impact upon one's tendencies toward growth and integration, and thus the experience of wellbeing and health. Not only are one's conscious desires not definitional of needs; conscious wants and desires may often run counter to basic needs. For example, because of various dynamic and cultural influences, an individual may come to consciously value "independence" and be strongly oriented to avoid relying on others. Such a value may conflict with relatedness needs and thus have deleterious consequences for integration and well-being. Similarly, one may place a high value on material success and thus enslave oneself to attain it, thereby losing one's autonomy in the process. These examples show one advantage of defining psychological needs independently of acquired desires and values (Ryan, 1995, p. 413-414). Need for competence: The need for competence refers to the needs to experience ourselves as capable and competent in controlling the environment and being able to reliably predict outcomes. Need for autonomy: The need for autonomy refers to our need to actively participate in determining our own

behavior. It includes the need to experience our actions as result of autonomous choice without external interference. Need for relatedness: The need for relatedness refers to our need to care for and be related to others, it includes the need to experience authentic relatedness from others and to experience satisfaction in participation and involvement with the social world (Contento, 2011, p. 83).

3. Research Methodology

3.1 The questions and hypotheses of the study

- Q 1: What is the level of satisfaction with basic psychological needs at work among mental health staffs?
 Q 2: What is the level of satisfaction with each of constructs of basic psychological needs at work among mental health staffs?
 H 1: There is a significant relationship between personal factors (age, status, education level, work position, work experience) and overall satisfaction of basic psychological needs at work.
 H 2. Satisfaction of competence needs is positively related to overall satisfaction of basic psychological needs at work
 H 3. Satisfaction of autonomy needs is positively related to overall satisfaction of basic psychological needs at work.
 H 4. Satisfaction of relatedness needs is positively related to overall satisfaction of basic psychological needs at work.

3.2 Participants

The subjects of this study are mental health professionals employed in psychiatric hospitals psychiatric hospitals, protected homes and community mental health centers in Albania located in four regions of the country, Tirana, Elbasan, Vloara and Shkodra. Despite the study aimed to include all employees, at the end 231 employees participated in study.

3.3 Instrument

The study used quantitative research methods as well as qualitative ones. The necessary information is collected through measurement scale, natural observation and interviews. The methodology developed in this work was initially based on bibliographical review of research of the main factors and criteria in quality of work life considerate in literature. satisfaction of basic psychological needs at work was assessed by using the scale of Deci & Ryan, a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from "Totally disagree" (value of 1) to "Totally agree" (value of 5). The entire scale involves 21 polar affirmations regarding Basic Need Satisfaction at Work and is reliable enough (Cronbach's Alpha $\alpha=0.914$). Also the 3 subscales are reliable enough

Subscales	Cronbach's Alpha α
1. Autonomy	0.774
2. Relatedness	0.846
3. Competence	0.810
Entire Scale	0.914

4. Findings and discussion

4.1 Demographic variables

The collected data were analyzed using the SPSS 16 package. The analysis reveals that the respondents were aged 21-30 years (23%), 31-40 years (21%), 41-50 years (33%) and over 51 years (23%). Marital status was singles (19%), married (73.3%), divorced/separated (5.3%) and widow (2.2%). Their education was secondary education (41%) bachelor degree (18%), 4 years higher education (19%), and master's degree (17%), PhD (4%). Their positions were physicians (7%), psychologists (7%), social workers (8%), staff nurses (50%), and custodians (14%), sanitary (13%). In this study majority (74%) of respondents are female and remaining (26%) are male.

4.2 Level of satisfaction with basic psychological needs at work

The research question is: "What is the level of satisfaction with basic psychological needs at work among mental health staffs?" Based on the five-point scale used, the minimum quality of work life rating was 2 and a maximum of 4.86. The mean quality of work life rating was 3.77, with a standard deviation of $SD=0.48$ implying that employees in general are satisfied with their quality of work life

4.3 Level of satisfaction with conceptual categories of basic psychological needs at work

The research question: "What is the level of satisfaction with each of constructs of basic psychological needs at work among mental health staffs?" For initial analysis of the 21 questions considered in this study had been grouped in 3 criteria idealized by Deci & Ryan. For each criterion the average of the questions of the research referring to the criterion had been calculated and is presented in Table 1. This table indicates the mean ratings for the conceptual categories of basic psychological needs at work.

Conceptual categories of basic psychological needs at work among mental health staffs?	Mean	SD	Level of satisfaction
1. Autonomy	3.72	0.53	Moderate
2. Relatedness	3.67	0.55	Moderate
3. Competence	3.95	0.55	Moderate

In general employees are satisfied at a moderate level with their needs for autonomy, relatedness, and competence.

4.4 Correlation of basic psychological needs at work

Based on the conceptual framework of the present study, the quality of work life was independent variables of some dependent variables some called conceptual categories and other demographic variables. The findings reversed that the personal factors: age, status, education level, work position, work experience were not relate to the basic psychological needs at work at 0.01 level. Thus, the research hypothesis "There is a significant relationship between personal factors (age, status, education level, work position, work experience) and overall satisfaction with basic psychological needs at work was rejected.

The descriptive statistics, correlations of basic psychological needs at work and other predictor variables are shown in Table 2. The findings indicate that the basic psychological need at work is positively related to all conceptual categories of basic psychological needs at work.

Correlation between basic psychological needs at work and its dimensions	Pearson Correlation (r)	Sig (2-tailed) (p)	Level of relation
1. Autonomy	0.911	0.00	Strong positive
2. Relatedness	0.878	0.00	Strong positive
3. Competence	0.870	0.00	Strong positive

Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level and the results of Table 2 show that all correlations are significant ($r < 0.01$). The findings indicate that the basic psychological needs at work is positively related to all conceptual categories of basic psychological needs at work.

5. Conclusion

It can be said that mental health workers in Albania in general meet their basic psychological needs at work. There is no evident problematic area for meeting these needs. All the 3 conceptual categories of basic psychological needs at work determine the satisfaction with basic psychological needs at work. They are strongly and positively correlated with basic psychological needs at work. The three needs do not explain everything, and we often have considered the influence of

other factors such as genetics and neurobiological processes in shaping people's behavioral vulnerabilities and resources. Nonetheless, we think that most significant events in social life relate to basic psychological needs and that need dynamics explain sequel to the events. (Ryan, & Deci, 2003, p. 328).

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