



Toward a Refined Insight Into the Importance of Volunteers' Motivations for Need-Based Experiences, Job Satisfaction, Work Effort, and Turnover Intentions in Nonprofit Sports Clubs: A Person-Centered Approach

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Abstract Extensive variable-centered research guided by Self-Determination Theory (SDT) has provided insights into volunteers' motivations in nonprofit and voluntary sports clubs. However, volunteers may have multiple reasons for engaging in volunteer work. By adopting a person-centered approach, the present study aimed to identify volunteers' motivational profiles in sports clubs based on combinations of different motivational regulations as distinguished within SDT. Six profiles were retained, which differed in terms of volunteers' need-based experiences, job satisfaction, work effort, and turnover intentions. Specifically, the findings pointed out the crucial role of relatively high levels of autonomous motivation for volunteers' need satisfaction, job satisfaction, and work effort while relatively high levels of controlled motivation and amotivation were associated with need frustration and turnover intentions. Practical suggestions on how leaders can optimize their organization's motivational environment are provided. This study urges researchers to develop motivational profiles in other nonprofit contexts.

Keywords Job satisfaction · Motivational profiles · Self-Determination Theory · Sports clubs · Turnover intentions · Work effort

Introduction

Volunteers are valuable in many nonprofit organizations including large, professional nonprofit organizations (Bidee et al., 2013), and smaller, all-volunteer nonprofit organizations such as sports clubs (De Clerck et al., 2020). In this study, we focus on nonprofit and voluntary sports clubs that rely heavily on volunteers for the provision of their services (Breuer et al., 2017), yet are confronted with the challenge to attract and retain volunteers in their organization. Therefore, this study tries to gain a better and thorough understanding of why volunteers give their time for the benefit of sports clubs without receiving any tangible benefits. If the motivations to volunteer can be identified, the leaders can use this knowledge to develop effective strategies for fostering these types of motivation (Omoto & Snyder, 2002).

For this purpose, this study relies on a person-centered approach. An important strength of this approach is that it recognizes that volunteers may have multiple motivations to engage in volunteer work, identifying motivational profiles based on a shared pattern of motivations (Howard et al., 2016). To examine the different types of motivations volunteers can combine, this study adopts Self-Determination Theory (SDT; Deci & Ryan, 2000), an influential meta-theory of motivation and personality. Before discussing SDT's motivational profiles in sports clubs, we first try to better understand volunteering in sports clubs and the central role of motivation, hereby relying on the Volunteer Process Model.

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Volunteering in Sports Clubs: The Volunteer Process Model

The Volunteer Process Model (VPM; Omoto & Snyder, 2002) distinguishes three sequential stages of volunteerism (Omoto & Snyder, 2002). The first stage involves antecedents of volunteering, which provide information about the factors that lead people to become a volunteer. This stage of the model places special emphasis on the individual motivations to volunteer and basic psychological needs. The second stage concerns volunteer experiences that may promote or deter continuing involvement. It includes job satisfaction, defined as a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job experiences. The third stage refers to the consequences of volunteering. A key consequence is the length of service as a volunteer. Also work effort, which refers to the energy that people exert in a certain task (Bidee et al., 2013), is considered to be an important consequence as most voluntary organizations wish to optimize the effort volunteers donate to the organization. Importantly, according to the VPM, motivation is a crucial antecedent of volunteering (stage 1), relating to the other two stages of the model (Omoto & Snyder, 2002). Therefore, we focus on the central role of motivation in the next section.

The Central Role of Motivation in Sports Clubs

The Quality of Motivation: A Self-Determination Approach

The motives that drive and direct people to volunteer have received considerable attention in the field of psychology (Omoto & Snyder, 2002). According to the functional approach, volunteers often engage in volunteering for different reasons, in pursuit of different ends, and to serve different psychological functions, which include expressing important values like humanitarianism, learning more about the world, and exercising skills that are often unused (Clary & Snyder, 1999; Omoto & Snyder, 2002).

Drawing from a similar notion that volunteers may be driven by different types of motivation, Self-Determination Theory (SDT; Deci & Ryan, 2000) provides a comprehensive insight into qualitatively different types of motivation which vary in the degree to which they are volitional or self-determined. The continuum of the quality of motivation types ranges from intrinsic motivation (the most self-determined form of motivation) over extrinsic motivation to amotivation (absence of self-determination). When *intrinsically motivated*, volunteers are spontaneously interested in an activity and experience the activity as enjoyable in itself. An extrinsic, yet still self-determined form of motivation is *identified regulation*, which means that volunteers recognize the importance of their volunteer

work and its congruence with their personal goals (Bidee et al., 2013; Deci & Ryan, 2000). Intrinsic motivation and identified regulation are considered autonomous forms of motivation as the reasons for putting effort into an activity are self-determined or volitional.

Moving along the continuum of extrinsic motivation, the next form, *introjected regulation*, refers to a regulation that has been taken in by the volunteer but has not been accepted as his or her own (Deci et al., 2017). This kind of behavior is performed to avoid guilt or anxiety, or simply to prove something. The most extrinsic form of motivation is *external regulation*, which implies that volunteers act with the intention of satisfying an external demand, receiving a reward, or avoiding a punishment. Because in the case of introjected and external regulation, one experiences pressure to engage in the activity, either coming from oneself (i.e., introjected) or others (i.e., external), both types of motivation are considered controlled forms of motivation.

Amotivation is equated with an absence of self-determination. When amotivated, volunteers either do not act at all or act without intent, they just go through the motions (Deci et al., 2017).

The Quality of Motivation and Its Relation with Crucial Volunteer Outcomes

A basic assumption of SDT is the belief that the quality of motivation (i.e., autonomous, controlled motivation, amotivation), together with the quantity of motivation, can differ among volunteers. SDT further suggests that these qualitative different types of motivation are at least as important for crucial outcomes as the quantity of motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2000). That is, when volunteers are driven by autonomous motivation, they are expected to show optimal outcomes (Deci et al., 2017). Also volunteers experiencing pressure (i.e., controlled motivation) to engage in volunteer work may invest a great amount of time and energy into their work. Yet, based on theory it is expected that these pressured motives may eventually trigger maladaptive outcomes that may lead to volunteers leaving the organization. In contrast, people showing amotivation to volunteer do not find valuable reasons for engaging in their volunteer work, which may lead to the worst pattern of outcomes.

Several studies have provided empirical evidence for SDT's theoretical views, hereby focusing on how these forms of motivation relate to important (final) outcomes including experiences that may promote or deter continuing involvement such as job satisfaction (stage 2 of the VPM), and consequences such as work effort and intentions to stay with or leave the organization (stage 3 of the VPM). In the sports context, the study of Wu et al. (2016)

connected autonomous motivation to intentions to stay volunteer, hereby suggesting that autonomously motivated volunteers (who enjoy and value their volunteer work without feelings of pressure or amotivation) showed more intention to remain volunteer. Amotivation, on the other hand, was connected to intentions to leave the organization, indicating that amotivated volunteers (who do not enjoy or value their volunteer work or conduct their volunteer work under pressure) showed more future intentions to abandon the organization (De Clerck et al., 2019). The findings in other nonprofit and voluntary organizations showed that autonomous motivation related to job satisfaction (Oostlander et al., 2014). They also indicated that volunteers that were solely driven by controlled (i.e., pressured) motivations to engage in volunteer work did not necessarily show less work effort (Bidee et al., 2013), yet often showed intentions to quit the volunteer work (Nencini et al., 2016).

The Basic Psychological Needs and the Quality of Motivation

SDT further theorizes that the basic psychological human needs (i.e., the need for autonomy, competence, and relatedness) are distinctive experiences influencing the quality of motivation (Deci et al., 2017). Specifically, SDT indicates that autonomous motivation is affected by the satisfaction of the basic psychological human needs, while controlled motivation and amotivation are affected by the frustration of the basic psychological human needs. Need satisfaction involves experiences of a sense of autonomy (i.e., the feeling of being the origins of his/her own behavior), competence (i.e., the feeling of being effective and having adequate ability), and relatedness (i.e., the feeling of being socially interconnected with valued others), which primarily lead to volunteers' autonomous motivation (and thus positive outcomes). In contrast, need frustration involves feelings of pressure (autonomy frustration), failure and inadequacy (competence frustration), and rejection and disrespect (relatedness frustration), which primarily lead to volunteers' controlled motivation and amotivation (and thus less optimal and even negative volunteer outcomes).

SDT research in the sports context found, in line with the theory, that need satisfaction related to autonomous motivation, while need frustration connected to controlled motivation and amotivation (De Clerck et al., 2019).

What Can a Person-Centered Perspective Add to the Variable-Centered Perspective: Empirical Evidence from the Volunteering (Sport) Context

The aforementioned SDT studies pointing to the central role of motivation in the nonprofit (sports) context adopted a variable-centered approach, assuming homogeneity in the population. In contrast, the person-centered approach considers the possibility that the population might include multiple subpopulations (i.e., profiles) characterized by different sets of parameters (Howard et al., 2016). Several studies in the volunteering (sport) context have used this approach to identify volunteer profiles, including basic psychological needs profiles (Li et al., 2021) and time perspective-based profiles (Kee et al., 2018). The findings of the former SDT study pointed to a high need satisfaction/low need frustration profile, low need satisfaction/high need frustration profile, and average need satisfaction and frustration profile. Li et al. (2021) further indicated that the high need satisfaction/low need frustration profile showed higher continuance intentions, and a lower level of emotional exhaustion than the other two profiles (although no differences between these three profiles in terms of intrinsic motivation were found). Likewise, the study of Kee et al. (2018) revealed that the most adaptive profile in their study, that is the balanced time perspective profile (which is characterized by people having lower past negative and present fatalism, strong past positive, and moderate present hedonistic and future time perspectives) showed higher levels of self-determined motives to volunteer, as well as the highest life satisfaction.

Developing Motivational Profiles: Evidence from the Work Context

In order to gain a refined insight into the central role of motivation to volunteer in sports clubs, it is also potentially interesting to divide volunteers into motivational profiles based on combinations of motivation as distinguished within SDT. Subsequently, one can explore differences between these motivational profiles in terms of need-based experiences and outcomes including job satisfaction, work effort, and turnover intentions.

Despite its potential benefits, SDT-based person-centered research on motivations to engage in volunteer work in nonprofit and voluntary (sport) organizations has received little attention. However, empirical evidence for the relevance of investigating work motivations from a person-oriented perspective can be found in research conducted in professional organizations, focusing on employees' motivations (e.g., Van den Broeck et al., 2013; Howard et al., 2016), managers' motivations (e.g., Graves et al., 2015), and (physical education) teachers'

motivations (e.g., Van den Berghe et al., 2014). All of these studies indicated that the person-centered perspective can provide valuable information regarding people's motivations from a SDT perspective. Specifically, this approach can be used to identify different quantitative and qualitative profiles, each with a unique pattern of scores on autonomous and controlled motivation, and amotivation (e.g., Howard et al., 2016). Consistent with SDT, most research conducted in the professional context (e.g., Van den Broeck et al., 2013; Van den Berghe et al., 2014) revealed a profile characterized by relatively high levels of both autonomous and controlled motivation, and relatively low levels of amotivation (i.e., a high quantity motivation profile), and a profile with opposite values (i.e., a low quantity motivation profile). Furthermore, most results of these studies also pointed to a profile characterized by relatively high levels of autonomous motivation yet relatively low levels of controlled motivation and amotivation (i.e., a good quality motivation profile) and a profile with opposite values (i.e., a poor quality motivation profile). Because volunteering differs significantly from professional work in that volunteers receive little or no monetary compensation for the delivered work, it is interesting to examine whether similar motivational profiles will occur in the volunteering context. Given the fact that volunteers spend unpaid time working for an organization, we expected that the largest group of volunteers would combine relatively high levels of autonomous motivation with relatively low levels of controlled motivation and amotivation (i.e., a good quality motivation profile), with only a small number of volunteers showing an opposing motivational profile (i.e., a poor quality motivation profile). Furthermore, we also hypothesized to identify a high quantity and a low quantity motivation profile which we expected to be in between the good quality motivation and poor quality motivation profiles (i.e., hypotheses 1).

Apart from providing insight into motivational profiles, the person-centered approach can also shed light on SDT's view that especially the quality of motivation matters for people's functioning in the organization, hereby stipulating that more motivation is not necessarily better if it is less self-determined (Deci & Ryan, 2000). The results of previous studies in the professional context revealed, mostly in line with SDT, that profiles characterized by relatively high levels of autonomous motivation (i.e., the good quality motivation and high quantity motivation profiles) showed the most adaptive pattern of need-based experiences and outcomes including autonomy satisfaction (Van Den Berghe et al., 2014), job satisfaction (Van den Broeck et al., 2013; Graves et al., 2015), work engagement (Van den Broeck et al., 2013), and job performance (Howard et al., 2016). In contrast, profiles with workers experiencing relatively high levels of poor quality motivation (i.e.,

controlled motivation and amotivation) showed maladaptive feelings including burnout (Howard et al., 2016). Based on these results, together with the previous findings of variable-centered research in the volunteering (sports) context (e.g., Nencini et al., 2016; Wu et al., 2016), we expected that the good quality motivation and high quantity motivation profiles in our study would display the highest levels of need satisfaction, job satisfaction and work effort (when compared to profiles with relatively lower levels of autonomous motivation; i.e., hypothesis 2). The poor quality motivation profile, on the other hand, was expected to display the highest levels of need frustration and turnover intentions (when compared to profiles with relatively lower levels of controlled motivation and amotivation; i.e., hypothesis 3).

Several person-centered studies in the for-profit context also focused specifically on the relevance of controlled motivation for worker outcomes, indicating, in line with SDT, that the presence of relatively high levels of controlled motivation elicited elevated maladaptive feelings such as emotional exhaustion (Van den Broeck et al., 2013; Van Den Berghe et al., 2014), and burnout symptoms (Van den Broeck et al., 2013), although several other studies also found no associations (e.g., Howard et al., 2016). In this study, we follow SDT's theoretical postulations, expecting that profiles with relatively high levels of controlled motivation (e.g., the high quantity motivation profile) in our study would show higher levels of need frustration and turnover intentions when compared to similar profiles with relatively lower levels of controlled motivation (e.g., the good quality motivation profile; i.e., hypothesis 4).

Method

Participants and Procedure

The introduction clearly showed that person-centered research can provide a fine-grained insight into the motivations to volunteer in sports clubs. Therefore, the present study tested the hypotheses in Flemish sports clubs (Belgium). In total, 336.000 volunteers are active in Flemish sports clubs, thus representing the highest number of volunteers (27.6% of volunteers) when compared to other voluntary sectors (Thibaut & Scheerder, 2018).

In order to collect data for our research, a call to participate was included in a monthly newsletter of the Flemish Sports Federation (VSF), the umbrella federation of all Flemish sports federations. Forty sports clubs responded to this call. Our sample included small clubs with less than 100 members (5%), middle-sized clubs with between 100 and 250 members (40%), and large clubs with more than 250 members (55%), providing various sports

disciplines such as football, tennis, volleyball, and gymnastics. Most of these sports clubs were located in urbanized areas in Flanders (> 20,000 inhabitants). The participating sports clubs were asked to send a personalized link to the corresponding online questionnaire in an invitation e-mail to volunteer coaches and volunteers within their sports club. Volunteer coaches are responsible for developing the training programs and coaching athletes during competitions. Volunteers are involved in the organization of the sports club competitions, tournaments, and other events. Typical tasks include helping in the cafeteria or checking the admission ticket of supporters. In total, 170 volunteer coaches and 185 volunteers filled out the questionnaires (355 in total).

Measures

All measures consisted of standardized scales with alterations mentioned below. The scales included the stem “In my sports club ...” (unless indicated otherwise), followed by items of the respective scale that the respondents had to rate from 1 (*does not describe me at all*) to 7 (*does describe me extremely well*).

Volunteers' Quality of Motivation

Autonomous and controlled motivation to volunteer were measured with an adapted version of the Academic Self-Regulation Scale (Ryan & Connell, 1989). Like previous researchers (e.g., Vansteenkiste et al., 2009), composite scores for autonomous and controlled motivation were created by averaging the subscales of intrinsic motivation and identified regulation, and introjected and external regulation, respectively. In this scale, the stem “I am a volunteer because ...” was used, followed by 8 items relating to autonomous motivation (e.g., “it is personally important to me”), and 8 items referring to controlled motivation (e.g., “I would feel guilty if I wouldn't do so”). The reliability of the scale, as measured by Cronbach's alpha (α), was excellent for the autonomous motivation ($\alpha = 0.83$) and good for the controlled motivation scale ($\alpha = 0.74$).

Amotivation was assessed relying on the Academic Motivation Scale (AMS, Vallerand et al., 1992). The question “Why are you volunteer” was followed by 4 items of the AMS scale ($\alpha = .82$). The items were slightly reworded to better reflect the context of a volunteering sports club. To illustrate, the word “school” was replaced by “the sports club” in the item “Honestly, I don't know; I really feel that I am wasting my time in school.”

Volunteers' Need Satisfaction and Need Frustration

Volunteers' need satisfaction and frustration were measured with the Dutch language version of the validated Basic Psychological Need Satisfaction Need Frustration Scale (BPNSNF, Chen et al., 2015), which has been intensively used in previous studies (e.g., De Clerck et al., 2019). This scale consisted of 12 items tapping into need satisfaction and 12 items into need frustration. Examples of need satisfaction items were “I feel a sense of choice and freedom in the things I undertake” (autonomy satisfaction—4 items), “I feel I can successfully complete difficult tasks” (competence satisfaction—4 items), and “I feel that the people I care about also care about me” (relatedness satisfaction—4 items). Examples of need frustration items were “I feel forced to do many things I wouldn't choose to do” (autonomy frustration—4 items), “I have serious doubts about whether I can do things well” (competence frustration—4 items), and “I feel that people who are important to me are cold and distant towards me” (relatedness frustration—4 items). The reliability of both the need satisfaction ($\alpha = 0.89$) and the need frustration scale ($\alpha = 0.88$) was excellent.

Volunteers' Work Effort

Volunteers' work effort was measured using the Dutch-language Work Effort Scale developed by De Cooman et al. (2009). A sample item was, “I do my best to do what is expected of me”. This scale showed an excellent reliability ($\alpha = 0.88$).

Volunteers' Job Satisfaction

Volunteers' job satisfaction was assessed with a Dutch version of the Life Satisfaction Scale of Diener et al. (1985) developed by Arrindell et al. (1991). This general life satisfaction scale was used since most job satisfaction scales (e.g., Job Satisfaction Survey (Spector, 1997)) included items (e.g., benefits and promotion) that were not relevant for the volunteering context. The original scale of Arrindell et al. (1991) consisted of 5 items that were slightly reformulated for this study. For instance, the items “I am satisfied with my life” and “The conditions of my life are excellent” were altered into “I am satisfied with my role as a volunteer” and “The conditions in which I can do my volunteer work are excellent”. The reliability of the scale was good ($\alpha = 0.77$).

Volunteers' Turnover Intentions

Volunteers' turnover intentions were measured with a scale used for research in for-profit organizations (Wayne et al.,

1997). The original scale (which was translated in Dutch using the “Back-translation” technique) consisted of four negatively worded items (e.g., “I am seriously thinking about quitting my job”) and one (reverse-scored) positively worded item (i.e., “I think I will be working at the organization five years from now on”). For his study, the word “job” in the original items was replaced by “volunteer work”. This scale showed a reasonable reliability ($\alpha = 0.69$).

Analyses

Firstly, descriptive statistics and Pearson’s correlations were calculated. Next, person-centered analyses (i.e., cluster analyses) were conducted to examine whether subgroups could be defined based on volunteers’ levels of autonomous and controlled motivation, and amotivation. First, the scores of the three types of motivation were standardized. Next, univariate outliers (i.e., values of more than three SD above or below the mean), and multivariate outliers (as identified using the Mahalanobis distance measure) were removed since they can substantially perturb cluster solutions (Garson, 2014). Subsequently, a two-step procedure (Gore, 2000) was applied in SPSS 25.0 to conduct the cluster analyses. First, a hierarchical cluster analysis was carried out using Ward’s hierarchical clustering method (Everitt et al., 2001). Based on previous research, three-, four-, five- and six- cluster solutions were considered (e.g., Howard et al., 2016). Only cluster solutions which explained at least 50% of the variance in autonomous and controlled motivation, and amotivation were retained for the following step (Milligan & Cooper, 1985). In the second step, an iterative, non-hierarchical k-means clustering procedure was conducted using the extracted initial cluster centers (based on Ward’s hierarchical method) as non-random starting points (Asendorpf et al., 2001). To examine the stability of the remaining cluster solutions, a double-split cross-validation procedure was implemented by randomly splitting the total sample into halves and applying the two-step procedure (Ward and k-means) in each subsample (Breckenridge, 2000). Next, the participants in each half of the sample were assigned to new clusters based on their Euclidean distances to the cluster centers of the other half of the sample. These new clusters were then compared for agreement with the original clusters by means of Cohen’s kappa (K). The two resulting kappas were averaged, and an average Cohen’s kappa of at least 0.60 (good agreement) was considered acceptable (Asendorpf et al., 2001).

Next, a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) with post hoc tests using the Bonferroni method was used to explore differences in the quality of motivation between the retained clusters, as well as differences between the

retained clusters in terms of need-based experiences and outcomes. Effect sizes (Partial η^2) above 0.01 were considered small, above 0.06 moderate, and above 0.14 large (Cohen, 1988). The possibility of including sociodemographic variables (i.e., gender, age, number of years volunteer, and type of volunteer, which refers to a coach or a volunteer responsible for the daily operations) as covariates in the MANOVA including need-based experiences and outcomes was explored using the Chi-square test and multinomial regression.

Results

Descriptive statistics for volunteers’ responses to the study variables and Pearson’s correlations are reported in Table 1.

Prior to conducting the cluster analyses, ten univariate outliers and ten multivariate outliers had to be removed from the initial sample of 355 participants, resulting in a final sample of 335 participants. This final sample included 161 volunteer coaches (68% men; Mage = 36.24 years; $SD = 14.47$) and 174 volunteers (50% men; Mage = 44.98 years; $SD = 11.26$). These volunteer coaches and volunteers were on average (respectively) 8.73 years ($SD = 9.48$) and 7.09 years ($SD = 7.12$) active in the sports club.

Next, in order to identify the clusters, hierarchical and non-hierarchical clustering procedures were conducted. After inspection of the explained variance and stability of the cluster solutions, only the six-cluster solution was retained for further analyses. That is, the three- and four-cluster solutions explained too little variance in the motivational dimensions (< 50%). Also the five-cluster solution was not chosen because it showed a low stability, providing an average kappa value of 0.20. The retained six-cluster solution explained respectively 73%, 61%, and 53% of the variance in autonomous motivation, controlled motivation, and amotivation. It provided an average kappa value of 0.61, indicating good stability.

The graphical results for the six-cluster solution based on Z-scores (Y-axis) with regard to autonomous motivation, controlled motivation, and amotivation are presented in Fig. 1.

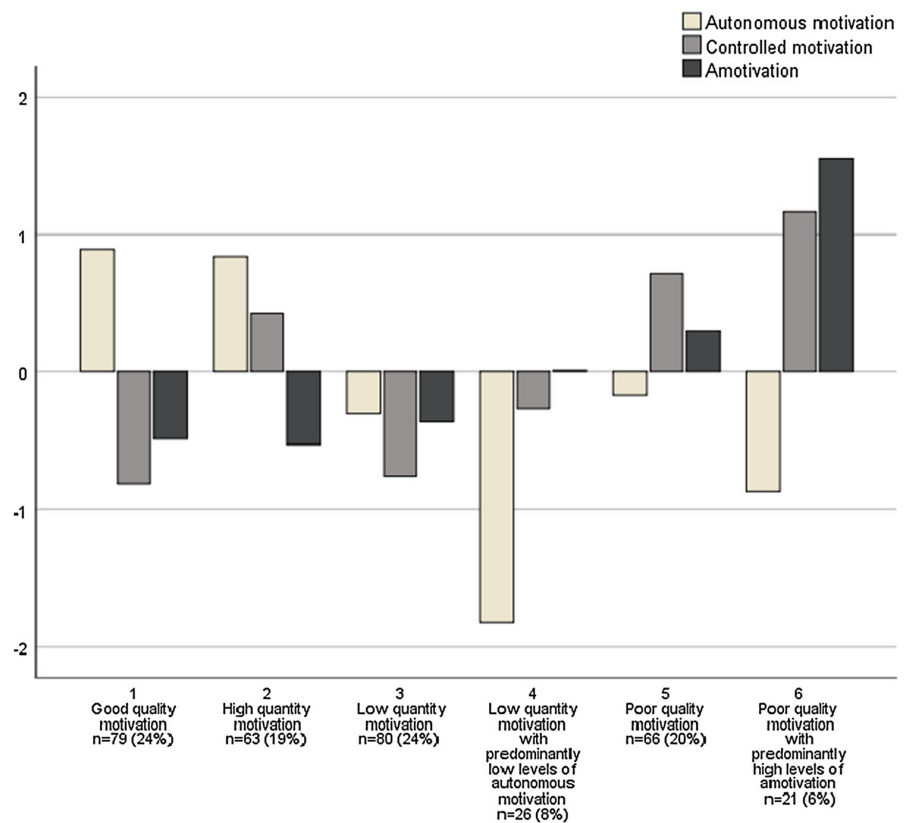
Based on their relative, standardized scores, the following labels were given to the clusters: a good quality (profile 1), a high quantity (profile 2), two low quantity (profile 3–4), and two poor quality (profile 5–6) motivation profiles. The good quality motivation profile (profile 1; $n = 79$, 24%) displayed relatively high levels of autonomous motivation and low levels of controlled motivation and amotivation. The high quantity motivation profile (profile 2; $n = 63$, 19%) displayed relatively high levels of autonomous and controlled motivation, and low levels of

Table 1 Means, standard deviations, and Pearson's correlations among the study variables ($n = 355$)

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Autonomous motivation	5.51	1.00								
2. Controlled motivation	2.12	0.88	-.14**							
3. Amotivation	1.47	0.81	-.36**	.55**						
4. Need satisfaction	5.39	0.86	.45**	-.14*	-.31**					
5. Need frustration	2.13	0.89	-.22**	.44**	.55**	-.49**				
6. Job satisfaction	4.86	1.06	.45**	-.05	-.22**	.62**	-.32**			
7. Work effort	5.86	0.74	.54**	-.20**	-.37**	.49**	-.32**	.44**		
8. Turnover intentions	1.87	0.90	-.29**	.36**	.55**	-.39**	.51**	-.38**	-.34**	

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Fig. 1 Six-cluster solution based on standardized scores for volunteers' quality of motivation



amotivation. The first low quantity motivation profile (profile 3; $n = 80$, 24%) showed relatively low levels of autonomous and controlled motivation, and amotivation. The second low quantity motivation profile (profile 4; $n = 26$, 8%) displayed very low levels of autonomous motivation, low levels of controlled motivation, and moderate values of amotivation. To contrast profile 3 with profile 4, the latter was labeled as a low quantity motivation profile with predominantly low levels of autonomous

motivation. The first poor quality motivation profile (profile 5, $n = 66$, 20%) showed relatively low values of autonomous motivation, and relatively high levels of (especially) controlled motivation, and (to a lesser extent) amotivation. The other poor quality motivation profile (profile 6, $n = 21$, 6%), displayed relatively low levels of autonomous motivation, high levels of controlled motivation, and predominantly high levels of amotivation. To contrast profile 5 with profile 6, the latter was labeled as a

Table 2 Motivational cluster mean scores, *F*-values, and effect sizes (partial η^2) for volunteers' quality of motivation

	1	2	3	4	5	6	<i>F</i> (5,329)	Partial η^2
	Good quality motivation <i>n</i> = 79 (24%)	High quantity motivation <i>n</i> = 63 (19%)	Low quantity motivation <i>n</i> = 80 (24%)	Low quantity motivation with predominantly low levels of autonomous motivation <i>n</i> = 26 (8%)	Poor quality motivation <i>n</i> = 66 (20%)	Poor quality motivation with predominantly high levels of amotivation <i>n</i> = 21 (6%)		
<i>Autonomous motivation</i>								
Z-score	0.89 (0.41) ^{3,4,5,6}	0.84 (0.45) ^{3,4,5,6}	- 0.30 (0.40) ^{1,2,4,6}	- 1.82 (0.56) ^{1,2,3,5,6}	- 0.16 (0.48) ^{1,2,4,6}	- 0.87 (0.93) ^{1,2,3,4,5}	201.25***	0.75
Absolute score	6.41 (0.41) ^{3,4,5,6}	6.36 (0.46) ^{3,4,5,6}	5.21 (0.40) ^{1,2,4,6}	3.68 (0.56) ^{1,2,3,5,6}	5.35 (0.48) ^{1,2,4,6}	4.64 (0.70) ^{1,2,3,4,5}		
<i>Controlled motivation</i>								
Z-score	- 0.81 (0.35) ^{2,4,5,6}	0.43 (0.45) ^{1,3,4,5,6}	- 0.76 (0.39) ^{2,4,5,6}	- 0.27 (0.69) ^{1,2,3,5,6}	0.71 (0.70) ^{1,2,3,4,6}	1.16 (0.53) ^{1,2,3,4,5}	134.90***	0.67
Absolute score	1.41 (0.31) ^{2,4,5,6}	2.50 (0.39) ^{1,3,4,5,6}	1.46 (0.34) ^{2,4,5,6}	1.89 (0.60) ^{1,2,3,5,6}	2.75 (0.62) ^{1,2,3,4,6}	3.15 (0.47) ^{1,2,3,4,5}		
<i>Amotivation</i>								
Z-score	- 0.49 (0.34) ^{4,5,6}	- 0.53 (0.17) ^{4,5,6}	- 0.36 (0.42) ^{4,5,6}	0.01 (0.62) ^{1,2,3,5,6}	0.30 (0.52) ^{1,2,3,4,6}	1.55 (0.60) ^{1,2,3,4,5}	107.07***	0.62
Absolute score	1.08 (0.28) ^{4,5,6}	11.05 (0.13) ^{4,5,6}	1.18 (0.34) ^{4,5,6}	1.48 (0.50) ^{1,2,3,5,6}	1.72 (0.42) ^{1,2,3,4,6}	2.73 (0.49) ^{1,2,3,4,5}		

Standard errors are reported in parentheses. Numbers in superscript (1 to 6) refer to significantly different profiles, **p* < .05; ***p* < .01; ****p* < .001

poor quality motivation profile with predominantly high levels of amotivation.

The standardized and absolute scores, and Bonferroni pairwise comparisons (including Partial η^2 and F -values) of the six clusters, in terms of autonomous motivation, controlled motivation, and amotivation, are presented in Table 2.

Next, prior to conducting a MANOVA including the need-based experiences and outcomes, we examined the cluster assignment by sociodemographic variables. Chi-square testing pointed to a significant cluster assignment by the type of volunteer (i.e., coach or volunteer; χ^2 [5, $n = 335$] = 38.30, $p < .001$), while the cluster assignment by gender was insignificant (χ^2 [5, $n = 335$] = 5.37, $p = .37$). In addition, multinomial regression analysis revealed an insignificant association between age (Pseudo-R2 Nagelkerke = 0.00) and the number of years volunteer (Pseudo-R2 Nagelkerke = 0.41, $p = .70$) with the six-cluster solution. Based on these results, only the type of volunteer was considered as a covariate in the analysis of differences between the clusters in terms of need-based experiences (i.e., need satisfaction and need frustration) and outcomes (i.e., job satisfaction, work effort, turnover intentions). Using the six clusters as the independent variables, a MANCOVA pointed to significant differences between these clusters in terms of need-based experiences and outcomes, Wilks' Lambda = 0.63, $F(25, 1205) = 6.24$, $p < .001$. Bonferroni pairwise comparisons between clusters were performed. F -values and univariate effect sizes (Partial η^2) are reported in Table 3.

The results indicated that the profiles with relatively high levels of autonomous motivation, i.e., the good quality motivation profile (profile 1) and high quantity motivation profile (profile 2), displayed relatively higher levels of need satisfaction and job satisfaction when compared to the profiles with relatively lower levels of autonomous motivation, i.e., the two low quantity motivation profiles (profiles 3–4) and the two poor quality motivation profiles (profiles 5–6). Furthermore, the good quality motivation profile (profile 1) also showed more work effort when compared to the latter, less autonomously motivated profiles, as well as less turnover intentions. Also the high quality motivation profile (profile 2) showed more work effort when compared to the less autonomously motivated profiles, except with the poor quality motivation profile (profile 5).

The findings further revealed that the profiles with relatively high levels of controlled motivation and amotivation, i.e., the poor quality motivation profiles (profiles 5–6), displayed relatively higher levels of need frustration when compared to the profiles with lower levels of controlled motivation and amotivation, i.e., the good quality motivation (profile 1) and low quantity motivation profile (profile

3). In addition, the poor quality motivation profile with predominantly high levels of amotivation (profile 6) also showed higher turnover intentions when compared to all other profiles.

Finally, the results regarding the specific role of controlled motivation revealed that the relatively high levels of controlled motivation in the high quantity motivation profile (profile 2) did not elicit more need frustration or turnover intentions when compared to the good quality motivation profile (profile 1).

Discussion

In many nonprofit and voluntary sports clubs, recruiting and retaining volunteers is an important issue. Therefore, this study used a person-centered approach to examine the motivations to volunteer in sports clubs.

A Person-Centered Perspective on Volunteers' Motivations: Motivational Profiles

First, we investigated whether we could identify motivational profiles in sports clubs. The results revealed in line with SDT and previous person-centered research in the work context (e.g., Van den Broeck et al., 2013) that sports club volunteers were not always engaging in volunteer work because it is fun and in line with personal values (i.e., autonomous motivation), yet also experienced internal and external pressure (i.e., controlled motivation) and even amotivation to volunteer. However, although we expected that most volunteers would be primarily driven by good quality motivation (which is characterized by relatively high levels of autonomous motivation, and low levels of controlled motivation and amotivation, i.e.; hypothesis 1), this profile only represented 24% of the volunteers. Other volunteers experienced high quantity (19%) and low quantity motivation (32%), being driven by respectively high and low levels of autonomous motivation and controlled motivation. Furthermore, a considerable amount of volunteers (26%) experienced poor quality motivation, feeling pressured, and even amotivated to volunteer. Although the latter was a remarkable result, it should be noted that these profiles were based on relative values. Inspection of the absolute values indicated that volunteers experiencing poor quality motivation showed an acceptable level of autonomous motivation (on average 5.20/7), even when compared to other studies in the volunteering context (e.g., Bidee et al., 2013, score 4.95/7). Still, it was important to assess what these (unexpected) results mean for the volunteers' psychological functioning in sports clubs.

Table 3 Motivational cluster mean scores, *F*-values, and effect sizes (partial η^2) for volunteers' need satisfaction, need frustration, work effort, job satisfaction and turnover intentions

	1	2	3	4	5	6	<i>F</i> (5,329)	Partial η^2
	Good quality motivation <i>n</i> = 79 (24%)	High quantity motivation <i>n</i> = 63 (19%)	Low quantity motivation <i>n</i> = 80 (24%)	Low quantity motivation with predominantly low levels of autonomous motivation <i>n</i> = 26 (8%)	Poor quality motivation <i>n</i> = 66 (20%)	Poor quality motivation with predominantly high levels of amotivation <i>n</i> = 21 (6%)		
<i>Need-based experiences</i>								
Need satisfaction	5.84 (0.71) ^{3,4,5,6}	5.74 (0.77) ^{3,4,5,6}	5.29 (0.75) ^{1,2}	4.89 (0.90) ^{1,2}	5.24 (0.73) ^{1,2}	4.84 (0.89) ^{1,2}	11.36***	0.15
Need frustration	1.77 (0.60) ^{4,5,6}	1.88 (0.70) ^{5,6}	1.91 (0.73) ^{5,6}	2.20 (0.87) ¹	2.47 (0.99) ^{1,2,3}	2.73 (0.44) ^{1,2,3}	12.76***	0.16
<i>Outcomes of volunteers' quality of motivation</i>								
Job satisfaction	5.31 (1.08) ^{3,4,5,6}	5.34 (1.05) ^{3,4,5,6}	4.63 (0.91) ^{1,2}	4.13 (0.94) ^{1,2,3,5}	4.76 (0.90) ^{1,2,4}	4.49 (0.81) ^{1,2}	11.03***	0.14
Work effort	6.27 (0.57) ^{3,4,5,6}	6.11 (0.72) ^{3,4,6}	5.78 (0.66) ^{1,2,6}	5.45 (0.75) ^{1,2}	5.82 (0.58) ^{1,6}	5.21 (0.73) ^{1,2,3,5}	12.75***	0.16
Turnover intentions	1.45 (0.57) ^{3,4,5,6}	1.72 (0.87) ⁶	1.77 (0.69) ^{1,6}	1.89 (0.79) ^{1,6}	1.96 (0.74) ^{1,6}	2.65 (0.99) ^{1,2,3,4,5}	11.31***	0.15

Standard errors are reported in parentheses. Numbers in superscript (1 to 6) refer to significantly different profiles, **p* < .05; ***p* < .01; ****p* < .001

The Role of the Motivational Profiles for (Mal)adaptive Need-Based Experiences and Outcomes

Therefore, as a second aim, we investigated the relevance of these motivational profiles for adaptive and maladaptive need-based experiences and outcomes as outlined in the Volunteer Process Model. We hypothesized that the good quality motivation and high quantity motivation profiles, characterized by relatively high levels of autonomous motivation, would show the highest levels of need satisfaction, job satisfaction, and work effort (i.e., hypothesis 2). Results were mostly in line with our hypothesis, indicating that volunteers experiencing high levels of autonomous motivation and thus engaging in volunteering because it is fun and in line with personal values showed feelings of volition and psychological freedom (i.e., autonomy satisfaction), beliefs of effectiveness (i.e., competence satisfaction), and connectedness with valued others (i.e., relatedness satisfaction). These results confirmed the findings of variable-centered research of De Clerck et al. (2019) indicating that volunteers' basic need satisfaction and autonomous motivation were related, although no relation was found in the person-centered research of Li et al. (2021).

Furthermore, volunteers perceiving their voluntary activities as relatively enjoyable and personally valuable showed in general more job satisfaction and work effort, which are crucially important outcomes for an optimal volunteer management (Omoto & Snyder, 2002). Especially job satisfaction was consistently higher in the profiles with relatively higher levels of autonomous motivation, suggesting that if volunteers enjoy and value their volunteer work, they were more satisfied with their work, and this was independent of whether they also feel externally or internally pressured to engage in volunteering. These findings were consistent with person-centered research in the work context (e.g., Van den Broeck et al., 2013) pointing to the importance of (high levels of) autonomous motivation for job satisfaction. As for work effort, results were a little less consistent, which may be due to the fact volunteers in each profile already experienced relatively high levels of work effort. This seems to underscore SDT's postulations that even controlled motivated volunteers can invest a reasonable amount of effort into their volunteer work, yet perhaps for the wrong reasons. Importantly, the results also pointed to the good quality motivation profile as the most adaptive profile, revealing that when volunteers combine relatively high experiences of pleasure, satisfaction, and personal importance with relatively low levels of pressured (i.e., controlled) motivation and amotivation, they will show less intentions to leave the organization.

In contrast, we expected that the poor quality motivation profile, consisting of relatively high levels of controlled motivation and amotivation, would show the highest levels of need frustration and turnover intentions (i.e., hypothesis 3). The findings were mostly in line with this hypothesis, pointing primarily to the maladaptive role of poor quality motivation for need frustration. This means that volunteers experiencing relatively high levels of internal and external pressure (i.e., are controlled motivated) and a lack of motivation (i.e., are amotivated) to engage in volunteer work, experienced distinctive feelings of control and pressure (autonomy frustration), failure and inadequacy (competence frustration), and rejection and disrespect (relatedness frustration). Furthermore, when relatively high levels of amotivation got the upper hand (which is the case in the poor motivation profile with predominantly high levels of amotivation), volunteers even considered leaving the organization, which is consistent with variable-centered research (De Clerck et al., 2019) in the volunteering context, and person-centered research (e.g., Howard et al., 2016) in the work context revealing the connection between (high levels of) amotivation and maladaptive outcomes including intentions to leave.

Finally, we also focused on the role of relatively high levels of controlled motivation. The results did not support hypothesis 4, indicating that the relatively high levels of controlled motivation in the high quantity motivation profile did not lead to more need frustration and turnover intentions when compared to a similar profile with relatively low levels of controlled motivation (i.e., the good quality motivation profile). This finding seemed to suggest that the possible detrimental effects of external and internal pressure to engage in volunteer work as suggested by SDT may be less prominent when combined with autonomous motivation (see also the study of Howard et al., 2016), once again pointing to the importance of people enjoying and valuing their volunteer work.

To summarize, our results highlighted the adaptive role of good quality motivation, while pointing to the maladaptive role of poor quality motivation. As noted before, this good quality motivation profile only represented one out of four volunteers, while the poor quality motivation profiles represented a similar proportion of volunteers. Therefore, there is still room for the leaders of sports clubs to enhance good quality motivation and decrease poor quality motivation in their organization.

Practical Implications

The question arises then as to how the leaders in sports clubs can create a club environment in which good quality motivation prevails. According to SDT, leaders can do so by supporting the volunteers' basic psychological needs of

autonomy, relatedness, competence. To support the volunteers' needs for autonomy, they can provide a choice on how volunteer work can be organized, consider the volunteers' personal preferences, interests and wishes, and create opportunities to take initiatives (Deci & Ryan, 2000). To support the volunteers' need for competence they can communicate clear expectations and guidelines, provide step-by-step directions, offer challenging tasks, and provide positive and constructive feedback. To support the volunteers' need for relatedness they can spend a considerable amount of time, energy, and resources in volunteers and interact with them in a warm and friendly fashion. Leaders can use these suggestions to optimize their sports club's motivational environment.

On the other hand, leaders need to realize that poor quality motivation will prevail in an environment in which the volunteers' needs for autonomy, competence, relatedness are thwarted (Deci & Ryan, 2000). This means that leaders have to avoid using strong language or guilt-inducing strategies to persuade people to volunteer, formulating instructions that are not adjusted to volunteers' skills, and interacting with volunteers in an unfriendly and cold way.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

The first limitation of the present study was the cross-sectional study design, making it impossible to draw conclusions regarding the inference of causal associations. Future longitudinal or intervention studies are needed to exclude the possibility of reciprocal associations. Second, generalizability may be limited as the sample consisted of Flemish volunteers in nonprofit sports clubs only. More studies are needed to confirm the present findings on the motivational profiles of volunteers in other nonprofit and voluntary organizations and/or regions of the world. Third, this research used self-report data of volunteers. Although respondents were assured that the survey was anonymous, and the data were treated confidentially, this may have resulted in social desirability bias and recall bias.

Conclusion

Based on a person-centered approach, we identified different qualitative and quantitative motivational profiles to volunteer within nonprofit and voluntary sport organizations. The results indicated that high levels of autonomous motivation in the motivational profiles served as a crucial mechanism to foster volunteers' need satisfaction, job satisfaction, and work effort and prevent turnover intentions. Furthermore, the presence of high levels of

controlled motivation in a profile appears unimportant when combined with autonomous motivation. Based on our findings, we suggested SDT-based strategies that leaders can rely on to enhance good quality motivation in their organization.

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Declarations

Conflict of interest The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

Ethical Standard The research involved human participants. The following informed consent was included in our research: "You are voluntary involved in our study and you can stop your involvement at any moment for any reason. All answers to the questions will be treated confidentially and will only be used for scientific purposes. This means that only researchers have access to your answers and that this information will be not be passed on to other members of the organization, nor to third parties. Please indicate whether or not you agree to these conditions and whether or not you wish to participate in the survey." Possible answers: yes or no. This informed consent was approved by the ethical committee of the faculty of the university.

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