

CAN WE BE PASSIONATE ABOUT OUR WORK? A REVIEW ON PASSION AT WORK

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Es posible distinguir entre dos tipos de pasión: la pasión armoniosa y la obsesiva, así el modelo teórico denominado *Dualistic Model of Passion* (DMP) (Vallerand et al., 2003) afirma que las actividades puedes ser internalizadas en la propia identidad a través de dos procesos que se corresponden con estos dos tipos de pasión. El presente trabajo pretende revisar los estudios empíricos que abordan el constructo de pasión en el trabajo. Para ello, se ha realizado una búsqueda bibliográfica en la base de datos PsycINFO. El periodo de búsqueda se centra en los cinco últimos años y se han seleccionado aquellos artículos con diseño empírico y cuantitativo. Se han obtenido un total de 90 registros donde se estudia la pasión en el ámbito laboral. Se observa que la pasión ha sido estudiada como un recurso personal, con respuestas asociadas a la satisfacción, bienestar y desempeño.

Palabras clave: Pasión, Satisfacción, Bienestar, Desempeño.

Two types of passion can be distinguished: harmonious passion and obsessive passion. The dualistic model of passion (DMP) (Vallerand et al. 2003) posits that activities can be internalized in one's identity by two different processes, each of them leading to the two aforementioned types of passion. The aims of the paper are to review the empirical studies related to the construct passion at work. We review some empirical evidence from the PsycINFO database. The search focuses on the last five years and we have selected articles with empirical and quantitative designs. We obtained a total of 90 records in which passion in the workplace is studied. The results show that passion has been studied as a personal resource, and is related to satisfaction, well-being and performance.

Key words: Passion, Satisfaction, Well-being, Performance.

The study of passion can be situated within the body of research aimed at analysing all of the behaviours that relate to the positive aspects of people, as will be shown in this work. The study of this subject emerged with force in the field of positive psychology, led by Canadian professor Robert Vallerand, president of the (IPAA) the International Positive Psychology Association, appointed in 2013.

Following Vallerand's proposal, passion is defined as a strong inclination towards an activity that appeals to people and is considered important in their life, and on which time and energy is spent. There have been numerous studies on passion in the professional context (Bernabé, Lisbona, Palací, & Martín-Aragón, 2014; Serrano Fernández, 2014) and it is this context on which we will focus. The study of passion has spread to many different areas however, ranging from online shopping (Wang & Yang, 2008) to dancing (Chamarro, Martos, Parrado & Oberst, 2011).

We can answer the question of how a particular activity can become a passion, based on Self-Determination Theory by Deci and Ryan (1991). We can affirm that people have a natural

tendency to internalize some activities within themselves. Depending on the importance and value of these activities they eventually come to occupy a central part of the person's identity. Thus, if an activity is highly valued and has become a central aspect of one's identity, it becomes an activity that defines the person and the activity becomes a passion.

It is possible to distinguish various types of passion. Vallerand and his team (Verner-Filion, Lafreniere & Vallerand, 2012) propose a model to explain passion which distinguishes between two types of passion: the obsessive and the harmonious. While harmonious passion refers to an autonomous internalization that allows the person to choose to undertake an activity they like, and despite being very important for the self, the presence of this activity is not overwhelming and leaves the person room for other life interests. The people feel obliged to perform the activity, but at the same time, they feel independent and they choose to do so freely. In contrast, obsessive passion frustrates this positive adaptation and generates not only negative affect, but also a rigid persistence without flexibility.

To answer the aforementioned question, regarding how an activity becomes a passion in academia and work, it is important to detect the psychological process that is involved, through which an interest in an activity becomes a passion. Vallerand and Houlfort (2003) identified two processes,

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included in the definition of both types of passion: the valuation of the activity and the internalization of the activity as part of one's own identity. The studies that have been conducted in this context propose the dualistic model of passion, whereby a series of affective responses are identified depending on the type of passion experienced when carrying out the activity. First, they point out the positive affective outcomes for harmonious passion and the negative ones for obsessive passion, emphasizing flow among the positive outcomes and anxiety among the negative ones. In harmonious passion the activity is freely important for the self, regardless of other contingencies, whereas in obsessive passion, the passionate activity is associated with inter- or intra-personal contingencies, such as feelings of self-worth, social acceptance or uncontrollable excitement. The person feels an inner compulsion to perform the activity even though they should not, which therefore causes conflict with other tasks or roles, the person will feel negative emotions and it will have significant personal costs due to not having attended to other tasks or roles. In addition and due to the internal pressures the person feels, they cannot stop thinking about the activity when they are performing other tasks, they cannot focus on other activities and it prevents them from enjoying the other activities (Chamarro, Martos, Parrado & Oberst, 2011).

In contrast, with harmonious passion the individuals feel control over the activity, they can choose when to do it, and they perceive little conflict between the activity they love and other activities and roles. This autonomy is vital in reducing the feeling of negative emotions. In this case the person is persistent in carrying out the activity, but there is a rational flexibility, if the person has some difficulty, or has negative results, they can reduce the activity, adjust it, etc. However, with obsessive passion, the activity has taken control of the person.

Although the concept of passion has been defined and tested empirically, we believe it is important to establish the differences with other related terms that we apply in the workplace and professional environment.

Related concepts

There are similarities and differences between passion and intrinsic motivation. Both constructs are related to an activity. However, they differ in the degree it occupies within the person's identity. People who are intrinsically motivated engage freely in an activity and derive inherent satisfaction from commitment to the activity. Passion for an activity becomes a central part of the person's identity and this is what explains the carrying out of the activity.

Turning to the definitions proposed by the authors, the definition by Vallerand and Houlfort (2003) speaks of a strong inclination towards an activity that appeals to people because it is considered important, time and energy is spent on it and, similarly, the vigour dimension of engagement, according to the definition by Schaufeli and Bakker (2003), is characterized by high levels of energy and mental resilience while working, the wish to invest effort in the work being carried out even when difficulties arise, together with the dimension of dedication

which refers to the manifestation of a sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride and challenge at work. From the definitions we can see that the scope of influence of passion occupies a central aspect in the identity of the person, whereas vigour is limited to the workplace.

According to the definition of the absorption dimension of engagement, this appears not to be so associated with passion, since according to the definition by Schaufeli and others, absorption occurs when one is fully concentrated at work, while experiencing that time 'flies', and having difficulty disconnecting from what one is doing, due to the heavy doses of enjoyment and concentration experienced. Harmonious passion, thus, seems to be an antecedent to engagement, as it facilitates emotional energy, and satisfaction at work, by allowing tasks to be done flexibly.

However obsessive passion has been related to workaholism, and as is the case with workaholism, it is characterized by an inner compulsion that prevents the individual from disconnecting from work even if they are not there (Serrano Fernández, 2014).

As for the relationship with engagement, based on the Job Demands-Resources model by Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli (2001), a strong relationship is clearly identified between the existence of resources in the individual's immediate environment and the generation of an engagement response, while in the absence of resources, the response will weaken, the work demands carrying more weight. However, passion would explain the persistence maintained in situations where a significant personal investment is required, the activity itself exercising the motivational force necessary in the absence of resources.

With respect to burnout, harmonious passion could function as a shield against exhaustion, since it is positively related to strength but negatively related to the dimensions of burnout (cynicism, emotional exhaustion and effectiveness). Given these considerations, we now review the empirical studies that address the construct of passion at work.

METHOD

The construct of passion applied to the working environment was reviewed in the PsycINFO database. The criterion for selecting the descriptors was aimed at obtaining the highest number of empirical studies evaluating passion for work. Articles were included from the period between 2010 and 2015.

The descriptors used were passion and work. They were combined with the Boolean operator AND. The inclusion criteria were that the study had to have a quantitative design, be published in a journal with peer review and cover the aspects Motivation and Passion at work. A total of 481 results were obtained, and the search was filtered according to the established criteria. There were 281 items selected from journals. Subsequently, 56 studies with a quantitative methodology were selected, and finally a total of 20 articles were obtained which studied passion at work, concentrating on aspects of motivation and passion in the work context. Articles that did not meet these criteria were eliminated.



RESULTS

The studies consulted can be seen in Table 1. As can be observed, most of them combine a descriptive design with a confirmatory design by longitudinal study ($n = 8$). They analyse passion as a predictor variable ($n = 8$) and as a mediator variable ($n = 6$).

The study of passion has been carried out with variables related to well-being at work (i.e., burnout and engagement), satisfaction and performance (i.e., working hours and creativity) and with organizational resources in the work environment (i.e., autonomy, social support and social identity). Articles were also found related to individual well-being (i.e., life satisfaction, vitality and depression) and personal resources (i.e., strengths, psychological adjustment).

DISCUSSION

As can be seen in the articles found, passion is an issue that has sparked interest in the organizational context, whether as a variable that mediates between individual responses (Chen & Xin, 2011; Forest, Mageau, Crevier-Brand, Bergerson & Vallerand, 2012; Trepanier Ferment, Austin, Forest & Vallerand, 2013; Belanger, Pierro, Kruglanski, Vallerand, & Falco, 2015; Bernabé, Lisbona, Palací, & Martín-Aragón, 2014; Fernet, Lavigne, Vallerand, & Austin, 2014) or as an antecedent in aspects of performance and well-being (Caudroit, Boiché, Stephan, Le Scanff, & Trouillod 2011; Ho, Wong & Lee, 2011; Donahue, Forest & Vallerand, 2012; Houlfort, Philippe, Vallerand & Ménard, 2012; Lavigne, Forest, & Crevier-Braund, 2012; Thorgren & Vincent, 2013; Lavigne, Forest & Crevier-Braund, 2014; Houlfort, Fernet, Vallerand, Laframboise, Guay, & Koestner, 2015). The studies confirm the role that both kinds of passion have on the responses of well-being and performance at work. The vast majority of the studies confirm the relationships found at different times. On the one hand, it is confirmed that employees who experience harmonious passion according to the definition of Vallerand et al. (2012), tend to experience more absorption at work and engagement (Ho et al., 2011; Trepanier et al., 2013), lower levels of emotional exhaustion and burnout (Belanger et al., 2015; Donahue et al., 2012; Lavigne et al., 2012; Trepanier et al., 2013; Fernet et al., 2014) higher levels of satisfaction in different areas (Houlfort et al., 2012; Bernabé et al., 2014; Houlfort et al., 2015), as well as well-being and happiness (Forest et al., 2012; Bernabé et al., 2014). These employees show better performance, are more creative and have more control at work (Chen & Xin, 2011; Ho et al., 2011; Lavigne et al., 2014).

In view of the studies, experiencing passion in a balanced way when carrying out an activity has more beneficial results than workers with obsessive passion in the execution of work behaviour. The latter experience higher levels of emotional exhaustion and burnout, higher levels of depression and lower levels of happiness (Houlfort et al., 2012; Trepanier et al., 2014; Bernabé et al., 2014; Serrano Fernández, 2014). Also, despite spending more hours at work (Cuadroit et al., 2011) these workers have a lower performance, poorer attentional levels,

higher levels of perceived stress and greater difficulty in balancing their work and family life (Caudroit et al., 2011; Ho et al., 2011; Belanger et al., 2015). This also results in a higher intention to leave the organization (Houlfort et al., 2012). Even after the end of their working life, they say they feel less satisfied with life, due to not having all their needs covered and having a poorer psychological adjustment in retirement (Houlfort et al., 2015).

Regarding the execution of tasks, the studies consulted indicate that employees who show harmonious passion in carrying out an activity, experience less overload and role conflict (Thorgren & Vincent, 2013; Lavigne et al., 2014), experiencing flow in the relationship demands and personal resources in performing the activity. The opposite is observed in workers with a more obsessive profile in carrying out their

TABLE 1
DATA ITEMS REVIEWED. PSYCINFO 2010-2015

Authors	T ₁	T ₂	N	Population	A	M	Variables	α	Results
Belanger et al. (2014)	✓	✓	119/92	Technicians	✓		Stress [ST] Organizational action [OA] Organizational rule [OR]	.88 .82 .70	OA→PA: + ON→PO: + PA/PO→EP
Bernabé et al. (2014)	✓		266	Students	✓		I. Organization [IO] I. Studies [IS] Happiness [HA] Satisfaction [SA]	.82 .75 .89 .73	IS-PA/PO: PA-FE/SA: + PO-FE/SA: ns
Caudroit et al. (2011)	✓		160	Teachers	✓		Physical A. [PA] Family C. [FC] Work H. [WH]	- .82 -.82	PA-AF: + PO-HT: + PA/PO - CC
Donahue et al. (2012)	✓	✓	117/118	Nurses	✓		Emotional A. [EA] Recuperation [RE] Rumination [RU]	.86 .89 .94	PA/PO→RE/RU RE→AE: - RU→AE: +
Fernet et al. (2014)	✓	✓	246/689	Teachers	✓		Emotional A. [EA] Cynicism [CY] Professional E. [PE] Autonomy [AU]	.95 .86 .81 .84	AU-PA: + AU-PO: - PA/PO→BO
Forest et al. (2012)	✓		186	Students	✓		Personal F. [PF] Vitality [VT] Vital S. [VS] Well-being [WB]	.92 .90 .87 .83	FP→PA: + PA→BS: + AB/AT → RT
Ho et al. (2011)	✓		557	Technicians	✓		Absorption [AB] Attention [AT] Performance [PF]	.84 .86 -.86	PA-AB: + PO-AT: - AB/AT → RT
Houlfort et al. (2012)	✓	✓	2393/335	Teachers	✓		Work S. [WS] Depression [DP] Abandonment I. [AI]	.86 .84 -.84	PO→DP: + PA→SL: + DP/SL→IA
Houlfort et al. (2015)	✓	✓	103/73	Teachers	✓		Needs S. [NS] Psychological A. [PA] Vital S. [VS]	.90 .94 .89	PA→SN: + PA→SN: - SN→SV
Lavigne et al. (2012)	✓	✓	113/325	Technicians	✓		Burnout [BU] Flow [FL]	.97 .92	PA→FO PO→BU FO→BU: -
Lavigne et al. (2014)	✓		485	Teachers	✓		Overload [OL] Control [CO] Social A. [SA]	.88 .90 .72	PA→SC: - PO→SC: + SC→CO
Liu et al. (2010)	✓	✓	856/525	Technicians	✓		Autonomy [AU] Team A. [TA] Autonomy A. [AA] Creativity [CR]	.77 .86 .78 .90	OA→PA: + AE→PA: + AA→PA: + PA→CC
Thorgren et al. (2013)	✓		704	Self-employed	✓		Role C. [RC] Overload [OL] Opportunities B. [OB]	.71 .73 -.73	PA-CR/SC: - PO-CR/SC: + CR/SC-BO
Trepanier et al. (2014)	✓	✓	1179/745	Nurses	✓		Emotional A. [EA] Vigour [VI] Work D. [WD] Work R. [WR]	.93 .87 .93 .92	DL→PA/PO RL→PO: - PA→EN/AE PO→AE

Legend. T₁/T₂: Moments of measurement; A: Passion as an antecedent variable, M: Passion as a mediator variable. **Results:** → regression. -: Correlation; +: Direct relationship; -: Inverse relationship; ns: not significant



activities, where rumination produces the burden is higher and they experience less control at work (Thorgren & Vincent, 2013; Lavigne et al., 2012). Thus, both types of passion differ in the explanatory variable of the responses of emotional exhaustion experienced. As noted above, employees who carry out their professional activity with harmonious passion implement more effective recovery strategies that prevent most emotional exhaustion. This is not the case for employees with obsessive passion for their activity, for whom rumination exposes them to greater emotional exhaustion (Donahue et al., 2012). In the same vein, workers that are passionate about their work in a balanced way are aware of fatigue and can take breaks from their work without feeling guilty or anxious (Trepanier et al., 2014).

Regarding the antecedents of passion analysed, the studies show autonomy, self-regulation, personal strengths and social identity (Chen & Xin, 2011; Forest et al., 2012; Belanger et al., 2015; Bernabé et al., 2014; Fernet et al., 2014). Autonomy, understood as the degree to which the activity provides opportunities to make decisions and exercise control over the tasks to be performed (Karasek, 1985), seems to contribute to the experience of passion in one way or another (Fernet et al., 2014). Thus, the support systems of autonomy promote the internalization of the activity (i.e., the acquisition of values and goals), as opposed to the absence of autonomy in the workplace which encourages a directed internalization because somehow it forces people to comply with and address external contingencies that are not necessarily consistent with the objectives or values of the employee (Ferent et al., 2014). So passion is harmonious when the activity is under the individual's control, whereas it becomes obsessive when it is the activity that controls the individual.

As for self-regulation as an antecedent variable to passion, according to the model of self-regulation by Kruglanski et al. (2000), Belanger et al. (2015) identify two orientations of self-regulation: action orientation and rule orientation for achieving goals. The first one, understood as "committing the psychological resources that will initiate and maintain the progress aimed at an objective without distraction" (Kruglanski et al., 2000, p.794), is related to harmonious passion. In comparison, rule orientation, understood as evaluating the different alternatives for "doing the right thing" (Belanger et al., 2015, p. 320), relates to obsessive passion. Thus, the authors note that action orientation mobilizes intrinsic motivation as opposed to rule orientation, which is related to extrinsic motivation, aimed at achieving a specific end state with participation in an activity (Deci & Ryan, 1991; Belanger et al., 2015). Regarding personal strengths, based on the definition made by the authors (see Linley, 2008), these are related to harmonious passion (Forest et al., 2012). In other words, it seems that being aware of and using one's strengths is associated with perceiving that you are using your full potential at work. This way you are more likely to freely internalize the values and objectives of the work, according to Forest et al. (2012). Although it is worth noting that the relationship with

obsessive passion was not addressed in the cited study, and it is not known whether strengths may have a preventive effect on it.

There are different practical implications of the findings of the studies consulted in this review that we can classify according to the taxonomy proposed by Salanova et al. (2013). At the level of healthy practices, there is broad consensus among the studies in indicating that promoting autonomy at work, offering the opportunity to make decisions and to have control over tasks will favour the development of harmonious passion, reducing distress. Strategies at this level may include team-based interventions such as establishing rules in work teams to support the autonomy of the members. It seems that creating these environments that support autonomy can facilitate harmonious internalization in comparison with environments with rewards and timescales that promote obsessive passion (Belanger et al., 2015). Thus, in environments with high demand (i.e., short timescales and remuneration system), a strategy that can be developed is to facilitate the integration of motivation with tasks (Trepanier et al., 2013). To this end, labour resources can play an important role in encouraging motivation (Bakker & Demerouti, 2006). Among the strategies available at the individual level, employees can be encouraged to identify their own strengths and implement them in order to experience harmonious passion (Forest et al., 2012). This leads to the pursuit of a professional life with meaning and the development of strengths, talents, etc. (Ryan & Deci, 2001). At the organizational level, authentic leadership can be developed, which facilitates this self-knowledge, because as we have seen, this kind of leadership promotes the psychological capital of the organization (see Rego, Fousa, Marques, & Pina, 2012).

Other strategies for interventions are those that promote employee development activities or strategies at the cognitive and volitional level (Salanova et al., 2013). An example could be the actions that lead to reflection on the intrinsic values of work and how they link to the strengths, through programs of Emotional Intelligence that encourage this (Houffort et al., 2015). Furthermore individual cognitive level actions to reduce rumination and understand the values and objectives linked to the activity may be a useful strategy in preventing emotional exhaustion (Lavigne et al., 2014). Finally, and not less important, another strategy at the organizational level is to include measures of health promotion. One of these is to promote recovery outside of work (Donahue et al., 2012), based on health promotion at work, encouraging an active and satisfying life, both within the work environments and outside work, which contributes to recovery.

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