

The Flow Experience

Degree in Business Administration



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Executive summary

Every time surveys are used in order to investigate what people value the most in their lives, happiness appears in the first position, coming even before their health, money, sex or properties.

Scientific investigations assert that genetic predisposition, life circumstances, and all the different activities which take place throughout this life period participate when building a person's happiness. Because of this, many confirm that happiness is something that each individual constructs. (Salanova & Shaufeli, 2009)

Factors affecting a person's happiness were dealt with great interest scarcely two decades ago, hence, pathological psychology and anomaly studies are much more abundant since WWII (Salanova, MArtínez, Cifre & Wilmar, 2005).

Therefore, positive psychology studies are fewer in number because of their latest dedication. Optimism, creativity, responsibility, welfare, satisfaction, etc. are getting great influence and repercussions in some other fields as education (Carli, Delle Fave, Messimini & Carli, 1988; Clarke & Haworth 1994; Moneta & Csikszentmihalyi, 1996), informatics (Chen, Wigand, & Nilan, 1999; Trevino & Webster, 1992; Webster, Treviño, & Ryan, 1993), family interaction (Rathunde, 1988), spare time (Csikszentmihalyi and LeFevre, 1989; Graef, Csikszentmihalyi, and McManama Gianinno, 1983; Mannell, Zuzanek, & Larson, 1988), occupational therapy (Emerson, 1998; Jacobs, 1994), and competitive and recreational sports (Catley & Duda, 1997; Jackson, 1992; Jackson & Roberts, 1992; Kowal & Fortier, 1999; Stein, Kimiecik, Daniels, & Jackson, 1995). Nevertheless, the field of work has not received so much attention.

A company's Human Resources Department not only takes responsibility for bureaucratic formalities and their administrative procedures. It is also responsible of knowing the employees' concerns in all the workstations. What could be better for our organization than knowing our worker's satisfaction and welfare?

From all the aforementioned factors which affect the happiness variable, throughout this work we will theoretically and empirically investigate a positive psychology factor not much recent than welfare and job satisfaction studies.

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The optimal experience also called flow, in the workplace will be our main topic here. Study thoroughly the positive aspects of psychology, Human Resources Department's responsibility inside the company, is the starting point from where we will try to inquire into those mainly positive aspects in the flow experience.

We will carry out an investigation which will be quantitative as well as qualitative, to honour the beginning of this field in the positive psychology area, since its beginnings started from qualitative techniques for its investigation.

We will discover whether workers are aware of the flow concept and whether they have ever been participants of it, either in an implicit or explicit manner. And whether there are factors with more intensity and duration which lead to experience the aforementioned sensation.

These will be some of our specific targets, nevertheless, the question which we will try to solve will be: does flow favours people's happiness in the labour field?

Satisfaction, comfort and happiness in the labour context

Comfort, happiness, and satisfaction concepts construct three essential components in the line of success among organizations.

Authors as Mumford (1976), Holland (1985), & Michalos (1986) defined the concept of labour satisfaction as “the adjustment level an individual experiences among his necessities, experiences and outputs his job offers”; whereas Hoppock (1935) had already arrived to the idea of labour satisfaction considering it as “a combination of environmental, psychological and physiological circumstances which make the individual feel satisfied with his work.”

Based on the empirical studies, the analysis of the causes that cause the labour satisfaction or dissatisfaction has been, for nearly 20 year, an area of social interest primarily for the investigators.

The first empirical studies about the relation among the labour satisfaction and the productivity had their origins in 1950s and 1960s, nevertheless the results lacked consistent relation. During the 1990s some relevant data among the variables started to be obtained.

The first theories about the relation amongst satisfaction and efficiency get captured in the statement which claims that a happy worker is a productive worker (Atalaya Pisco, M.C., 1999) and therefore a loyal employee to the company. Nevertheless, researchers as Rahman and Zanzi (1995) discovered that labour satisfaction is not influenced by the same variables in all industries. Because of that, we will focus this research into the employees' welfare in jobs related to the tourism and hotel sector.

The economic model of the companies and organizations worldwide not only focuses on obtaining sales through all the possible methods and scenarios (in which the employees' welfare is not taken into account, only the person's efficiency or output is considered but not the external elements, which condition the achieved number of sales, the rigid and hierarchical organizations that hinder the empathy with workers, et.). Human capital has become one of the most important factors a company can possess. It is, therefore, the reason why the biggest companies worldwide and with the

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best Human Resources policies manage to stand out. According *Grate Place to Work* this applies to Google, Microsoft, Marriot (hotel/resort), Accor, Coca-Cola, eBay, etc. Their constant support and care towards their employees make their competitiveness the biggest barrier a company can create.

Workers' satisfaction, welfare in the company, and happiness are the factors that allow a company to excellently operate. The basis in a company is its workers, and their importance is such that sales do not just depend on a good image. Employees' internal coordination and efficiency become main characteristics for the good functioning among companies. Human Resources Department is the one dealing with all these factors. (Salanova, 2009)

This is the reason why, in order to obtain enhanced productivity from a worker, it is practically necessary for the worker to be satisfied with the job, to feel self-realised, to be able to professionally and personally grow: this person needs further training, supporting and promoting feeling from the company as well as from the organization, among many other things.

Welfare is another concept closely linked to the study of the happiness field. Over the past decades, a balance among worker's personal and labour life has been encouraged, and so, the most recent practices programs for Human Resources departments have tended to achieve greater employee efficiency thanks to their labour welfare. (Wanner, Ladouceur, Auclair, & Vitaro, 2006)

Firstly, welfare was conceived as an alternative for improving a worker's mental and moral terms. Nevertheless, this situation changed when this field's projects were oriented towards the modification and improvement of the employees' labour conditions on the whole.

This concept started to be treated from a scientific perspective until the Psychology field started to develop as a science, and thus, constituting nowadays a relevant area of study for this field and social sciences in general.

Labour welfare covers the satisfaction of an organization's needs as well as the individuals' in the working context. This generally aims organizations in going in depth into new internal challenges because of their activities' performance in

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the enterprise itself, and into external challenges due to macro-environment changes: cultural and political. (Camacho, Arias, Castiblanco & Riveros, 2011)

Individually, this concept refers to the way in which each worker measures and satisfies his basic needs, taking into account the objective conditions determining them: common objectives between the company and its employees, etc.

Labour welfare as a concept and fact gets linked to a positive approach due to the fact that this idea emerges from the worker's optimal satisfaction degree and the personal enjoyment in the labour sphere.

According to Casales (2003) in the welfare definition four theoretical perspectives are followed", but for this research we will focus on the last two:

a) The "biological" approach studies and analyses the relation among people and the physical spaces which surround them (Américo, 1995). Environmental characteristics, its implication in their lifestyles and the value scale which determine it are treated. (Américo; Aragonés & Corraliza, 1994).

b) The economic approach of welfare focuses on the income levels, social expense and investment of the individuals, group or community. Finance and resource management of a society that relates to the social welfare degree of a society.

c) The sociological approach refers to the set of objective and observable conditions which form a community. The implementation degree of services and performances from a community, the influence of demographic variables, place of residence or habitat, together with some others as leisure, family or work, closely correlate to general people's welfare (Campbell, 1981; Rice, 1982 & Michalos, 1985).

d) Psychosocial approach considers the interaction of one's perception in which the individual is immersed. "The construction of resources facing difficulties and conflicts in quotidian life will be taking into account in psychosocial welfare. This concept, relatively young and multidimensional, is accepted as conciliatory of some others as happiness and frequency of the affective states (Álvaro & Páez, 1996). It is operationally defined the association of positive and negative

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emotions related to feelings of confidence towards the world that surrounds them, the conflict management capacity (MartínezTaboada, 1995; Igartua et al., 1994), and the participation in occupational and labour activities (Echebarría y Páez, 1989)”.

Part of the sociological approach and the whole psychosocial approach are merely this research’s fields of study which we will be able to relate to the concept of flow.

1. Introduction to the concept of flow

After analysing the concepts of happiness, welfare and people's satisfaction in their workplace, we will focus this research on a more specific concept which, as the previous ones, recently has become a recognizable element and has been taken into account in several daily life aspects: the flow.

1.1. What is flow?

This concept emerged from Mihály Csíkszentmihályi, director in Quality of Life Research Center in Claremont Graduate University, California, and former professor and dean of the Psychology department in the University of Chicago (Csíkszentmihályi, 1975, p.4). His work there deals with the investigation of the basis and application of positive thinking aspects such as optimism, creativity, intrinsic motivation and responsibility. His theories have revolutionised Psychology field to an extent that some world leaders have adopted them. Some of his books, as, for instance, *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*, have become great bestsellers and influential manuals in new positive thinking Psychology schools (Punset, 2008).

In 1975, this expert studied those sensations felt and experienced by people who had oriented their work based on their leisure life; that is: dancers, athletes, artists, etc., people who equally enjoyed their working hours and their leisure time. The main concept which needed to be investigated there was the reason why these people decided to get repeatedly involved in activities which lacked external rewards (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975).

The flow term was defined by its creator in 1975 as follows: "holistic sensation that people feel when they act with total involvement in activity" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975, p. 9). In 1990 he added that the optimal experience is like "a state in which the person feels completely immersed in an activity for one's own pleasure and enjoyment, while on its development time flies and actions, thoughts and movements occur one after the other with no pause" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, p.99). Moreover, in 1996, he additionally wrote that the "extremely enjoyed optimal experience in which total concentration and enjoyment with great interest for the activity is experienced".

On their behalf, Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyi (2002) stated that this being a phenomenon coming from intrinsic and autotelic motivation, a more than satisfying

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sensation is obtained, on the fringes of final result or any intrinsic reward. Meaning this, it is on the way to the goal when the enjoyment occurs, not just in the moment in which the target itself is achieved.

There exist two different conceptualisations when talking about the flow concept. The aforementioned one, based on Csikszentmihalyi's idea (1988), which, together with Jackson and Eklud's support (2002), defended the notion that the optimal experience gets identified and measured in nine different dimensions: balance-skill challenge, consciousness-action fusion, lack of self-awareness, complete concentration, sense of control, time distortion, target clearness, feedback, and autotelic experience.

On the other hand, Bakker (2005) declares that flow at work is composed of three different dimensions: absorption, enjoyment, and intrinsic motivation.

- Absorption (full concentration on the activity which is being performed)
- Enjoyment
- Intrinsic motivation (Bakker, 2003, 2005)

When an individual practices a leisure activity one has great affection for, it is probably because this person had experienced flow with its execution. This experience takes place during an activity's development, not in the moment of achievement of a target, and thus, the enjoyment feeling encompasses the dimensions of the authors previously discussed.

The individual experiences such absorption that the concentration dedicated to the task's performance is highly elevated. Irrelevant thoughts, worries or even embarrassment have no place in this moment, this person has just one target and anything which has no connexion with the activity which is being developed has the minimum value.

Enjoyment is the key element when talking about the absorption of the consciousness in this person. Control and mastery over what is happening in this individual's range of vision and mind may not be entirely possible without the fun and enjoyment this activity represents for the person. Pressure conditions, as stress or anxiety, or even opposite circumstances, like tedium, are not present in this moment. The subject is able to stay

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concentrated long enough for time to vanish as whether it was just minutes. Hence, this factor's importance.

Thence, intrinsic motivation is another relevant factor which allows this person to continue with his target and especially to maintain control over it without any distraction. The desire to move forward, to do it right, to enjoy, to lose all sense of time, etc., allow the individual to find himself in a state of harmony and delight which favors the development of intrinsic motivation.

On their behalf, most of the experts assert that the flow state has its origin daily in practically all individuals. At some point in their lives, everybody gets to experience a continuous sense of enjoyment, some idea and target management, as well as the control of the event without losing concentration and the desire to continue doing the same activity for hours.

Just for the mere fact of experiencing such harmony where the thought is strictly realist, generally positive or with no evident problematic, the individual ceases to be aware of the passing time and it is then when the feeling of enjoy appears. This intrinsic enjoyment will reinforce this person's self-security and the pleasant satisfaction feeling will be so obvious at the same time that the executed effort (not perceived by the subject), the persistence of experiencing this flow sensation again will stay in this person's mind and consciousness, along with the desire of reviving this experience in the future (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988; Jackson y Eklund, 2002).

1.1.1. Precedents

Previous to the flow feeling, it is necessary that a series of precedents take place. Motivation is one of the factors which determine a suitable development of the individual's flow.

According to Escartí and Cervello (1994) flow basis emerges from motivation. Defined as the set of personal and social factors that favor the beginning of a behavior, the persistence or the intention to withdraw it. Moreover, it is also a state or internal process which activates, directs and maintains behavior towards a target (Cashmore, 2002).

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It is not necessary to insist much more in the fact that motivation is a psychological variable, “an dispositional factor” (Dosil & Caracuel, 2003) that differs from person to person and, depending on certain biological, social or environmental factors, may increase or decrease within the same individual.

From all the reasons leading a person to get involved in an activity, various influential elements of motivation play a significant role: intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, and the amotivation. The authors Frederick and Ryan (1995) defend the idea that these three variables, dependent of motivation, allow to understand the psychological processes that have influence in every behavior development.

Vallerland (1997) proposed the “Hierarchical Model of Intrinsic Motivation and Extrinsic Motivation” as a tool to organise and understand those basic mechanisms that regulate motivation in the field of sports. Nevertheless, this theory agrees with the previous and necessary precedents for achieving the flow state.

As we know, extrinsic motivation is the one that depends on a person’s external agent or an alien factor and trough which interest by external rewards is awakened.

Nevertheless, when the motivation is intrinsic, the activity is performed under a state of mind which becomes indifferent to the reward even if a large energy investment or effort is given (Smith, 2005).

The objective itself is the fulfilment of the task even under a competence and self-development feeling. The activity gets motivated by the pleasure and enjoyment.

Three types of intrinsic motivation are known: intrinsic motivation towards the pleasure for learning, intrinsic motivation towards the execution for self-improvement, and intrinsic motivation towards the stimulation of one’s senses, this last one directly connected with the flow according to the experts Deci and Ryan (1985).

From a phenomenological point of view, intrinsic motivation leads the individual to the experimentation of relaxation, relief, and concentration in the task which is being performed, whereas extrinsic motivation leads to the necessity of social endorsement and general tension. On its behalf, extrinsic motivation is determined by those external factors that influence the quest to improve those abilities and challenges to achieve, to

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experience pleasant emotions and affective rewards (Camacho, Arias, Castiblanco, & Riveros 2011, p.50-52).

The last factor affecting motivation is the amotivation or the lack of purpose, hence, the relative absence of motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985). In this case, the feelings experienced by the subject are not positive. Incompetence and the scant capacity of control are factors which contribute to the disappearance of the individual's motivation.

This variable can be classified in four different types:

- *Beliefs of lack of ability or skill*: at this point the perception of competence and ability to perform an activity or task directly influences intrinsic motivation.
- *Insecurity*: the individual thinks he is not able to achieve his objectives or proposed results.
- *Ability and effort beliefs*: the subject's abilities will cause the need to perform a great effort from the rest of the team in order to achieve the final goal.
- *Impotence beliefs*: overrating of the task which is being performed (Pelletier at al., 1998).

Once defined those elements forming the variable of motivation, we will define the control locus as the steering axis of the behaviours that an individual performs and which determinately influences flow's theory as a relevant factor in positive psychology.

Control locus is defined as the guide of an individual towards the performance of an activity considering whether its execution gets directly connected with himself (internal control or intrinsic motivation), with some other unconnected variables (external control or extrinsic motivation), or with "a-motivation" by lack of intention. Control locus is, in general, stable over time and is considered a personality trait (Paulhus & Christie, 1981).

On the other hand, Kowall and Fortier (1999) mentioned the so-called intrinsic or extrinsic motivation get direct and proportionally related to the flow state; on the contrary, amotivation has no direct influence on this state. High orientation to the task

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really generates flow experiences, whereas orientation towards ego or extrinsic motivation makes difficult this state achievement.

Thus, it is possible to say that the individual's control locus will be determined by his control and efficiency during a specific activity development. According to Bandura (1997), being the behaviour conceivable to the individual, it will be developed by internal control locus; whilst those behaviours determined by the means, its rewards, and its valuation will be determined by external control locus.

Based on Bandura's contribution, authors as Chen, Wigand and Nila (1999) defend the idea that optimal experience is characterised by three main dimensions or states which lead the flow process to its achievement.

These dimensions are the initial and the ones which give guidance to finally experience this flow state:

- Goal and challenge perception
- Perception of the abilities adjusted for the action
- Immediate feedback

Optimal experience is a simultaneous equilibrium among challenges and abilities which provide the individual high quality experience (Moneta & Csikszentmihalyi, 1996). When an individual establishes his targets, some personal abilities that the individual may (or may not) have are necessary.

The use of skills implies equivalence between a job's challenge and the capacity for accomplishing this challenge, and thus, an additional characteristic from the job which may contribute to satisfaction and motivation has been suggested (Gavin & Axlerod, 1977; O'Brien & Dowling, 1980; O'Brien, 1983).

O'Brien (1983) discovered that the use of skill represented a significant portion of the variance in job satisfaction beyond those characteristics named by Hackman and Oldham (1976).

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Flow theory by Csikszentmihalyi equally asserts that an individual's satisfaction and motivation depend on his awareness among his ability and inherent task challenge (Csikszentmihalyi, 1.975, 1.990; Csikszentmihalyi & Rathunde, 1993).

On one's behalf, whether an individual possesses more abilities than its target requires, a boredom feeling will emerge. In case the same individual establishes a very ambitious target, it is more than likely that he feels anxiety because he is not able to cover so much work or sacrifice. Nevertheless, when a subject experiences the flow sensation is due to the fact that his skills maintain balance with the objects, and thus, he is able to perceive personal growth.

According to Camacho et al. (2011, p.50-52), in order to experience flow it is also necessary to obtain positive feedback which allows to generate competence and self-confident perceptions, which increase self-determination and intrinsic motivation levels, as well as owning goals directed to the process from realistic objectives with progressive nature where individuals are allowed to participate in those same objective's determination. All this generates a perception of autonomy without leaving behind the socialisation.

For the moment, it is possible to get the picture of the factors every dimension contains and we will go in depth when, turning forwards, flow dimensions get developed.

Several authors as Escarty and Cervello (1994), Jackson and Csikszentmihalyi (1999), Deepack (2004), Torres, Izquierdo and Godoy (2012) agree that most of the results obtained in flow experience investigations have been approached from sports environment. According to Lefevre (1988), remains as an emerging area with limited research.

It is evident that optimal experience as Csikszentmihalyi et al. refer to (1984, 1992, 1993, 1996, 1998, 2014), has great repercussion in individuals when there is high achievement motivation (Eisenberger, Jones, Stinglhamber, Shanock, & Randall, 2005). Going in depth into the work field, according to Hackman and Oldham (1980), the characteristics a model work should have are: autonomy, feedback, variety of abilities, identity with the task which is going to be developed, and task significance, all this contributing to a working motivational scale according to Demerouti (2006), what influences on the working flow experience.

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Thus, it is possible to affirm that flow has been incorporated in several investigation areas as: spare time, teaching, or work, even though its limited research becomes less extended in the academic and working field.

1.1.2. Variable dimensions

The author who announced the term flow developed several researches with professionals from all fields (doctors, artists, poets, climbers, athletes, dancers, etc.) who allowed him to concrete even more this concept from 1975 on.

“Without the enjoyment of life can be supported, and may even be pleasant. But it may be just as well or poorly, and will depend on the fate and cooperation of the external environment” (Csikszentmihalyi, 2014). This sentence, from one of his books, makes possible the comparison of the happy life based on basic life pleasures which always satisfy us: eating, drinking, having sex, etc. In short, satiating basic needs which are generally fulfilled in everyday life, being this type of happiness that resembles the one proposed by Aristotle, the hedonistic happiness. Nevertheless, there are much more components than external factors, fate and short-term necessities for achieving a happier life.

Challenges, defiance's, curiosity, self-motivation, etc., are factors which make their influence over a more pleasant and long-lasting happiness feeling which is not experienced not only when the target is achieved, but during the process itself.

Optimal experience as it is called by Mihali Csikszentmihalyi, is one of the variables we may consider fetching long-term happiness, the hedonistic happiness. Based on the enjoyment during the process and the achievement of targets, and not only on the achievement itself or the consequences of the action or activity developed.

According to his investigation results, Csikszentmihalyi (1993, 1996, 2014) paid attention to the description provided by the subject of his sample when the activities they were developing were fine: swimmers traversing long distances, teachers who obtained feedback during their lessons, chess players during a tournament, climbers scaling a hard side on a rock, a dancer in the middle of the audition... All different professions, social classes, genres, age, culture, etc., were not relevant values for the final result of the investigation about this happiness psychology due to the fact that all

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individuals described the enjoyment feeling in the same manner. However, the actions that had led all of them towards this enjoyment feeling were completely different.

The expert in this psychology field asserted that enjoyment phenomenology is formed by various important components, which I have grouped in eight dimensions.

1. Clear targets and goals
2. Concentration: combining action and conscience on the current task
3. Equilibrium over abilities and challenges
4. Feedback
5. Potential control
6. Self-conscience loss
7. Time distortion
8. Value of the experience itself
9. Autotelic experience

Now, let me develop these eight components

1. Clear targets and goals

The reason that justifies the so-complete involvement in a flow experience is that, normally, goals are clear (Csikszentmihalyi, 2014).

According to Csikszentmihalyi and Csikszentmihalyi (1998), it is complicated to focus in an activity without knowing what it needs to be done or any feedback. A game with no rules, without assessment, would be impossible to develop.

When a subject concentrates and focuses all attention over a clear target is due to the fact that he has clear goals that want to satisfy no matter what. This personal challenge will become the individual's motivation and the action developed by this subject will be the key factor when developing the flow state.

As Jackson and Csikszentmihalyi (1999) assert, establishing the right goal helps in order to maintain appropriate motivational levels.

2. Concentration: combining action and conscience on the current task

In the course of daily life, conscience and actions appear separately most of the times. When we enter in the flow state, concentration focuses towards a concrete activity and both get unified in order to develop a concrete activity (Abdón, R. 2014).

When all the activities pertinent to a concrete person are needed for facing the challenges of a goal, this person's attention is completely absorbed by the activity (Csikszentmihalyi, 2014). Consciousness is not able to process other information not related to this activity. All the attention is concentrated on the stimuli this activity generates.

As a result, according to M. Csikszentmihalyi, it occurs that one of the most relevant aspects (...) of the optimal experience: people are so involved in the task they are performing that the activity becomes something spontaneous, almost automatic. Therefore, they are no longer aware of themselves.

The concentration level which is being experienced completely involves the individual's actions and abilities, maximum attention is being paid.

Csikszentmihalyi (2014) affirms that this state requires a vigorous physical effort or a really well-trained mind, but, while its duration the individual's consciousness works smoothly and an action continuously follows the next one. Hence, an standpoint where all the attention is focused on the activity which is being performed is produced. In that moment, consciousness retains just the most relevant information. Daily worries remain temporally on hold and just the ones related to the activity are taken into account. However, on the contrary, any distraction will provoke the disappearance of the necessary concentration in order to experience flow.

From all the testimonies the expert included in his book called *Flow*, the one which attracts our attention comes from a mountain climber: "when you are doing it [climbing] you are not aware of any other problematic situations in your life. It is a world in itself, with its own meaning. It is concentration (...) a situation (...) incredibly real, and you have the control. It becomes a world by itself".

3. Equilibrium over abilities and challenges

According to Csikszentmihalyi (1975, 1990, 2014), very activity contains several amount of opportunities for actions, or challenges, which need the possession of various appropriate abilities.

A simple manner to find challenges would be training in a competitive situation. This is the case of a stockbroker. Competition is a quick tool for the development of complexity according to Edmund Burke. It makes the nerves grow strong and improves abilities.

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Competition is only pleasant when becomes a means for perfecting our own abilities. Nevertheless, challenges are not restricted to (...) competitive or physical activities. They are necessary in order to offer ourselves some enjoyment even in those situations in which it is not expected.

Those activities which frequently cause enjoyment have been designed with the intention (...) of enriching our lives with nice experiences. It would be a mistake to assume that only leisure (...) can offer optimal experiences (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

In a healthy culture, productive work and those necessary daily routines may also cause satisfaction (Csikszentmihalyi, 2014).

In the flow, individuals perceive self-abilities as being perfectly adjusted to challenges (Abdón, 2014).

According to Csikszentmihalyi, flow experiences are developed in those activities containing medium-high challenge levels (...) and thus, the flow state will initiate or intensify depending on the individual's abilities.

Flow is a psychological state in which a person feels cognitively motivated, happy, and efficient. Whether the challenges and abilities are perceived as low-levelled, this person may feel apathy and the general quality of the experience will be poor. But, if the challenges are viewed as higher than abilities, this person will feel anxiety. Optimal experience represents a simultaneous equilibrium of challenges and abilities which provide the individual a high quality experience (Moneta & Csikszentmihalyi, 1996).

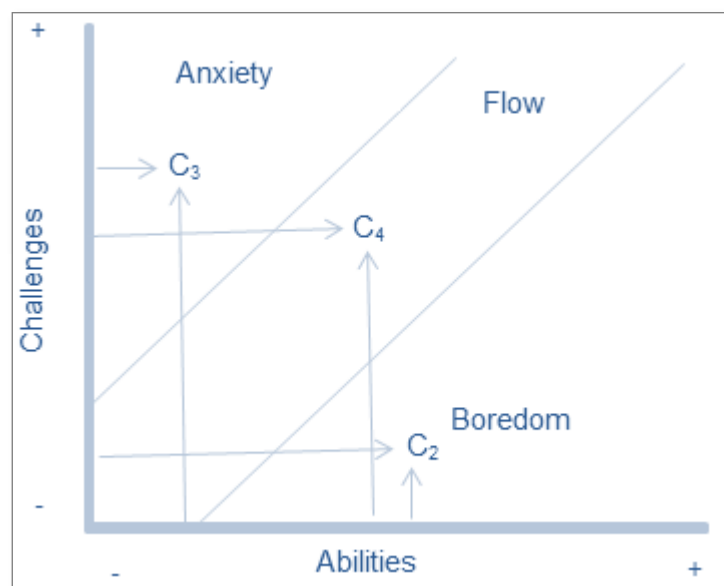


Table 1: Flow canal when challenges and abilities appear in equilibrium

When a person experiences equilibrium and perceives a feeling of high experience, according to (1984), is when this person achieves personal growth.

Bearing in mind the previous table, we will continue with the explanation of a specific worker's case:

Let's imagine this table represents a specific activity as, for instance, a business administrator job. The two main dimensions of the experience are, theoretically, challenge and abilities, which are represented over the axis of our diagram. Letter C represents Charlotte, a young woman who is learning to cope with new workplace tasks.

When C1 starts working, she barely has ability and her only challenge is verify client and supplier's data are correct. It is not a difficult task, but maybe Charlotte is satisfied because she is starting in her work setting and the task's difficulty is adequate to her rudimentary abilities.

However, she cannot stay at this point much time. After a couple of weeks, if she continues developing rudimentary activities, she will gain experience and thus, her abilities will increase, so she will enter a boredom state (C2) due to the fact that her abilities are higher than the functions she is developing.

Another case would be that another person developing the same tasks stands out among the new employees. This will lead Charlotte to a restlessness state which will make her more competent in less time, and thus, pressure in order to improve and be more competent will lead her to an anxiety state (C3).

Boredom experiences and anxiety rest away from positive experiences, so Charlotte will look for a motivating situation in order to feel again a moment of control, target focus, and complete efficiency as she was feeling during the flow state while performing working tasks. Therefore, as soon as she achieves those abilities the activity she is performing requires, she will come back to the flow state (C4).

4. Feedback

Equally as the reason which justifies a complete involvement in a flow experience is that, usually, targets are clear, as we have aforementioned on the first section, feedback becomes something immediate (Csikszentmihalyi, 2014).

Feedback may be peasant as long as it is directly related to the goal in which a person focuses attention on. This fourth dimension gets directly directed to the other dimensions: (...) thus, if a person has a clear picture of his goals, it is probable he develops the activity in the correct way in order to achieve his targets (Torres, Izquierdo & Godoy, 2012).

Focusing on targets causes immediate feedback when an individual develops those adequate actions which are needed. Therefore, like all previous dimensions, focusing on goals and immediate feedback also contribute to develop the individual's intrinsic motivation.

5. Potential control

During the flow experience equilibrium over abilities and challenges is produced, and this leads to the experience of a potential control feeling where there is no place for failure. If the challenge balances with the individual's abilities, there is a pleasure and enjoyment feeling of a total control over the activity which is being performed.

Keller and Blomann (2008), experts in the topic we are dealing with, perceive the feeling of potential control as a crucial element in the experience.

During flow, failure fear, or fear for the future possible consequences or for possible accidents do not exist. The subject feels he has absolute control over the situation and this occurs when there is balance among self-abilities and task challenges.

Every person who was part of the sample in Csikszentmihalyi's investigation (2014): artists, creatives, teachers, climbers, musicians, etc. All of them asserted they felt high confidence and their control feeling significantly increased.

Nevertheless, if the challenge is too much complex, potential control will disappear and hence the subject will experience a frustration sensation, as it has been explained in the first dimension.

6. Self-consciousness loss

As it has been commented previously, in the course of everyday life, consciousness and actions appear separated most of the times.

When we enter in a flow state, concentration is focused on a determined action. Action and consciousness get unified in order to perform a determined activity (Abdón, 2014).

Action melts with consciousness with an objective in mind, what helps balance personal abilities during the activity's performance.

In other words, body and mind work together as one. Mind will be where all attention focuses and there will not be interruption until this person stops experiencing the flow feeling.

7. Time distortion

According to M. Csíkszentmihályi (2014), one of the most frequent descriptions on the optimal experience expresses how time seems to be static, not passing as usually. When someone experiences the flow sensation, he is so immerse into the activity which is being developed that time vanishes, and this state is commonly identifiable among people when hours seem minutes.

It is said that the sense of time bears little resemblance to the real and measured time.

As the expert appropriately asserts, it is not clear if flow is just an epiphenomenon –and additional product from the intense concentration which requires the activity which is being performed- of it helps to the positive quality of the experience.

Losing the notion of the time is not one of the main elements of enjoyment, (...) but it is added to the euphoria we feel (...) in a complete involvement state.

8. Value of the experience itself

The activity which causes flow provides value to a subject during the development of the activity process. The final achievement is not the result of experiencing flow, but the activity becomes comforting and gratifying in the moment of its development (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2002).

9. Autotelic experience

A key element in the optimal experience is the fact that it has a purpose itself. Even if any activity is started, the activity itself may become something intrinsically gratifying.

M. Csikszentmihalyi (2014) defines this sensation as autotelic experience. This word comes from the Greek roots “auto” meaning “itself” and “telos”, which means “purpose”. It refers to an activity which is contained in itself, which is not developed in order to obtain future benefit, but performing this activity becomes the reward itself. For instance, our author affirms in his book *Flow* that playing in the stock market in order to earn money is not an autotelic experience, but it is playing in order to test one’s ability to predict future market trends.

When an experience is autotelic, the person focuses all attention into the activity itself, and when this is not the case, the attention is focused on the consequences.

The key factor for achieving gratification in a flow experience is enjoying it while the activity’s development, what leads to the experience of what it has been mentioned before (control, management, focus on the ideas, feedback, time distortion, increase of the abilities, etc.).

1.1.3. Consequences

Optimal experience has, therefore, a number of consequences that contribute to the happiness of a subject.

Main consequences of flow are enjoyment and pleasant absorption.

Deepak (2004, p.10) cites some other authors as Csikszentmihalyi, Rathunde, and Whalen (1993) who affirm that flow theory is one of the most thoroughly quoted explanations for pleasant absorption in leisure and sport activities, and has been related with various relevant results in workplace such as the increase of interest in the task, positive mood (Eisenberger, Jones, Stinglhamber, Shanock, & Randall, 2005), the role and capacity role (Demerouti, 2006), organizational spontaneity measured by positive mood (Eisenberger et al., 2005), and physical and psychological welfare (Steele, 2006). A lot of studies have found positive relationships in the performance of work tasks with beneficial outcomes such as job satisfaction, good health and redimientos (Eisenberger et al., 2005, cita a Campion & McClelland, 1991; Fried &

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Ferris, 1987; Gerhart, 1987; Loher, Noe, Moeller, & Fitzgerald, 1985; Schaubroeck, Jones, & Xie, 2001; Tiegs, Tetrick, & Fried, 1992).

During these last decades, organizational field researchers were more and more interested in the influence of positive moods over companies' employees. According to authors like Eisenberger, Armeli, Rexwinkel, Lynch, & Rhoades (2001), & Gorge and Brief (1992), positive mood has been associated to the increase of the capacity of roles in employees. Gorge and Brief assert that the capacity of adopting various roles among workers in the same company encourages cooperativeness and help among itself, favouring teamwork.

Voluntary organizational behaviours which expect to help the organization are called, according to George and Brief (1992), organizational spontaneity. Employees in a company improve their own knowledge as well as their abilities, contributing with constructive suggestions which help the organization in conflict resolution among all the working team.

Moreover, increasing also positive mood promotes positive thinking, which positively reinforces the idea that claims that employees might make contributions to the company with creative suggestions according to Eisenberg et al. (2001).

Hence, all positive results encompass the topic we are studying, are a testing pattern which could propel numerous practices in Human Resources in order to obtain better output from employees; not only in a matter of monetary benefits for the company, but also in personal welfare and benefit for the worker, increasing thus his satisfaction, workplace comfortability/welfare and, mostly, his own happiness.

1.2. Flow vs. Engagement

Flow variable occasionally tends to be related to the concept engagement up to an extent that several people who know these concepts, knowing them without having studied them, think that they are similar concepts or that they refer practically to the same phenomenon.

The discussion about this confusion led me into a brief review of both concepts:

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Engagement with labour context emerges from a research about burnout, antonym and theoretical opposite of engagement, which explains the feeling of a person who becomes mentally, physically and emotionally tired produced by chronic involvement in working in harder emotional situations, like some tasks when they are working. (Pines & Aronson, 1988)

Authors like Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzalez-Rokmá and Bakker (2002) contended that engagement is something like a positive psychological state related to work which is characterised by vigour, dedication, and absorption. Engagement is an indicator of intrinsic motivation of job; more than a specific and temporal state, it refers to a cognitive-affective state more persistent by the time one is not exclusively focused on a specific object or behaviour. Absorption dimension is the one closer to flow. Nevertheless, flow refers to a temporal and punctual experience, a peak experience, but not a psychological state persistent in time, as in the case of engagement.

On their behalf, basic engagement dimensions are based to a great extent on and towards dedication. On the other hand, cynicism and exhaustion are direct opposites from burnout dimensions.

According to the previously quoted experts, the engaged employees present a continuous energy and affective bond towards their labour occupation. Thus, they feel capable of facing those demands that day-to-day arise in their job.

In the workplace, engagement has been defined with small differences from flow state, identifying it as a state relatively more balanced and lasting. For Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzalez-Roma and Baker (2002), it is formed by three processes:

- *Vigour*: refers to high energy and mental activation levels in work, will and predisposition to invest efforts and perseverance, even over difficulties.
- *Dedication*: associated with the enthusiasm, being proud and inspired at work. It is characterised by a relevance and challenge feeling.
- *Absorption*: characterised by a concentration state in which there is a feeling of time quickly passing and with difficulties for separating from job.

According to these authors, people experiencing engagement display energy, are efficiently bound to their working activities and feel completely able to answer to their

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job requirements with absolute efficacy. They face their work day full of energy and are ready to apply their knowledge and develop their abilities. In their workplace they get thoroughly engaged with their tasks getting completely involved in their daily chore. They enjoy their task execution and experience pleasant self-fulfilment emotions. This positive experience is directly related to satisfaction and contributes to welfare state.

It has been empirically proved that the engagement status modulates the direct effects of resources over the performance, welfare, and life quality in general (Salanova & Schaufeli, 2004) as whether it was a positive state which makes possible and facilitates the use of resources at the same time.

From the organizational perspective, engagement positively relates to the performance and organizational agreement and negatively to the absenteeism, rotation and tendency to abandon (Roy, 2013).

Regarding to the flow case, this factor is defined as an exceptional experience which occurs during the working process, characterised by an absorption state, labour enjoyment and intrinsic motivation for work (Bekker, 2005). Following the research about flow which has been developed in this paper, we know beforehand that the experience emerges when the individual's demands and his abilities are balanced.

An intrinsic motivated worker feels the necessity of developing a specific task in his workplace when his goal is experiencing a satisfaction coming from self-fulfilment, personal knowledge, control of the situation, objective achieving, etc.

The most obvious difference between both terms is temporality. Flow state emerges intermittently; even though M. Csikszentmihalyi (1975, 1990, 2003, 2014) at some point of his publications stands for the idea that it might be constant in time; whereas job compromise is tied to the feeling of belonging to a company, is connected to the employee's satisfaction but there is no need for him to experience flow in all its dimensions.

1.3. Flow at work

There are huge number of actions where a person can experience the flow state. Leisure activities as listening to music, practising any sport, dancing, going out with

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friends or participating in an interesting conversation are the most common factors where this experience is present. Nevertheless, there is another field where in several, and less others, occasions the flow sensation is experienced: the working area.

People spend one third of their lives at work (...) and precisely because of that it is important for our labour experience to be as pleasant as possible (McEntee, 2014).

Numerous famous and well-known organisations, for the last scarcely two decades have started to value the importance of internal working capital, not meaning this the monetary amount they have, nor the material goods or any other physical and precious resource but some other extremely valued capital: their employees' knowledge and the curiously perfect performance in their respective working activities.

Nowadays, this finding presents such magnitude and importance that as McEntee (2014) correctly asserts (...) high importance is given to the employees' welfare as well as to the achievement to good results in the company.

Both factors represent a positive interrelation due to the fact that "los efectos de factores psicosociales positivos tendrán consecuencias positivas para la organización" (McEntee, 2014).

In this field healthy organisations stand out. That is, those organisations which invest their collaboration, systematic and intentional efforts in maximize their employees' welfare and productivity towards the creation of well-designed and significant workplaces, with social supporting environments, and also balanced and accessible opportunities for the development of the workers' career and balanced working-private life (Wilson, DeJoy, Vandenberg, Richardson & McGrath, 2004).

According to Salanova (2009), a healthy organisation develops healthy practices for structuring and managing working processes which will influence the development of healthy employees and healthy results interacting these three elements and mutually influencing in each other.

When these positions and actions improve and produce healthy workers, the company gets characterised by self-efficacy, optimism, resistance or resilience, problem overcoming, and engagement (McEntee, 2014).

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It is important to bear in mind these organisations because in a more direct manner they obtain greater engagement from their workers, and this not only refers to the labour concept, which is mainly excellent, but also influence the suitable aspects from everyone in order to obtain the best of them in their respective workplaces, when they are developing their labour tasks.

This is the moment when flow emerges and influences and, thus, flow easily appears among those employees from healthy organisations since involvement for the worker's welfare, comfort and satisfaction when developing their tasks is as relevant as the achievement of results or goals for the organisation.

It is convenient to bear in mind the importance of this type of organisations because every day more organisations join this welfare promotion among their employees in their corresponding positions. Nevertheless, throughout this research healthy organisation characteristics and functions will no longer be analysed.

According to the Neuroscience professor in Stanford University: "Monday" is almost a terrible word for many people because it means going back to work (Csikszentmihalyi, 2014).

He was the one revealing the paradox that affirms that work is more propitious than leisure in order to achieve what he calls the flow state, something which might be interpreted as happiness. The key is that, for most of the people, leisure represents downtime whereas working is the moment for managing clear goals, receiving feedback (Punset, 2008); experiencing at the same time an enjoyment feeling thanks to the self-fulfilment and full control over the task which is being performed.

As our flow expert well-affirms, there are lots of different jobs with different difficulty degrees. Because of this, sometimes the individual may feel bored or gets aligned with it. Whereas some consider job as a load, in most cases it represents a really positive factor in people's lives.

For most people, their working hours represent aspects distinguished from leisure time. Gratifying experiences and sensations, but different from one another.

Scientifically, Mihaly C. demonstrated in a research carried out in different countries that it is during weekends when individuals are usually less happy. Making allusion to

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the previously commented paradox, at work people usually has clearly defined goals which they can handle: one of the factors producing flow is knowing something specific needs to be done; and, furthermore, feedback is also achieved, this means the individual is able to know how he is doing through the clients' opinion, s superior or friends' comment.

A very important part of the flow is that the abilities or the skills are balances with the challenge which needs to be done, circumstances which generally appear at work.

This is the reason why, in several occasions, work is conceived as a disproportionately gratifying leisure activity, even more than those other activities which may be performed during free time at home. Therefore, there is lots of people who do not know what to do exactly with their leisure time: they do not know what is better, they do not receive any feedback, they feel their abilities are not optimized... this feeling does not cause them enjoyment, but boredom or frustration.

Many people consider flow is only acquired through leisure time and relaxed experiences, with no obligations or responsibilities: art, music or sports. Nevertheless, flow state is not always experienced through these experiences.

Moreover, experiencing flow at leisure time is not enough. The important matter according to Csikszentmihalyi is experiencing at work, in friendship, family, etc., because this is how one's life on the whole will be in flow state, instead of being divided in work and free time (Punset, 2008).

Returning to the flow experience at work, it is possible to think that several occupations as doctors, architects, cooks, journalists, researchers, etc., offer more opportunities for self-fulfilment. In these jobs, it is more much possible for the individual to focus attention on the task's development and not only on the final result, providing more frequency for intrinsic gratifying situations to occur, when this is not the case for other (...) routine and less creative jobs. However, paying attention to Csikszentmihalyi's proposal, any occupation offers possibilities for experiencing flow (Salanova, Martínez, Cifre & Wilmar, 2005).

The recent discipline of positive psychology is leading towards conclusions (...) as people have different strong points -24 according to Peterson and Seligman- and when

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they use them (...) they are not only more efficient but also they live within a more positive mood.

As it has been explained before, this occurs not only to distinguished professionals or other fortunate people. Workers in a factory, service sectors, people who apparently might have not many reasons for enjoying their jobs, are very often as powerful on what they do for the living as a poet or a doctor could be.

Some of the testimonies the author notes in one of his posts:

- A 62-year-old woman taking care of the cows and the vegetable garden in the Alps “I still take care of the cows and the vegetable patch”
- A person who feels special satisfactions when looking for the plants he owns “I feel specialist satisfaction when looking after my plants: I like to see them grow day by day. It is very beautiful”
- 50 years-old farmer who preferred to to come back to his country, leaving behind other works in France, because of his passion for animals “For me, working means take care of the fields and animals. Specially of the animals... I had some other jobs in France, but I preferred to come back. I like to be close to the. I feel much satisfaction.”

People with no more happiness than the one based on living for working in what they love. This is the justification that shows flow is not something out of this world, but something doable performing those activities one enjoys most, losing the notion of time.

Tertiary sector is the impartial public in our study. People who spend most of their working time dealing directly with clients, always with a smile and properly behaving. In the service sector, tourism concretely requires special interpersonal abilities workers from other sectors may not be aware of.

According to Deepack (2004) the flow variable as well as the engagement one haven been catalogued as relevant for jobs which require continuous interrelations.

During these last years, a series of researchers identified these two concepts with working aspects: higher commitment with the organization and the job (Schaufeli &

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Bakker, 2004), stress reduction (Salanova, Bakker & Llorens, 2006; Britt, Castro & Adler, 2005), and increased personal performance (Harter, Schmidt & Hayes, 2002).

Research work.

2. Main goals

According to Csikszentmihalyi's hypothesis: "You can experience flow in routine activities, leisure and work with the same intensity".

Taking into account the previous hypothesis, the general goal of this study will be discover whether it is really possible to experience flow with the same intensity at the areas: work, leisure, and daily life according to travel agencies located in Barcelona.

In the empirical part of the study we expect to discover:

1. Have they ever experienced flow? Were they aware of it?
2. Is flow experienced with the same intensity and frequency in routine activities, leisure and work?
3. In which area does the sample experiences more flow?
4. According to WOLF scale, Is any of the studied variables more positive than the others for the sample?
5. Is absorption factor relevant for flow?
6. To know the sample's opinion on satisfaction at work.
7. Is happiness at work an important variable for the optimal experience?

3. Literature review. Other experts' measurement processes

Various are the tools used for measuring the flow variable. Mesurado (2009) defends the idea in which the *Experience Sampling Method (ESM)* was one of the pioneer and most used resources in the flow variable measurement.

Flow concept was born in qualitative interviews where people's experiences in those activities in which they were completely involved was investigated (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975).

Generally, flow is measured using a variety of quantitative methods as well as qualitative methods.

According to López (2006), Csikszentmihalyi and Larson were the founders of the Experience Sampling Method (ESM). Their main goal was accurate describing the quality of experience from individuals in ordinary situations. For this, both researchers provided the individuals of their investigation (teachers, dancers, artists, creatives, musicians, chess players, climbers, sailors, etc.) a reminder system as an electronic beeper as well as a record sheet. Thus, receivers used a radio broadcaster and when it sounded they needed to fill in the record sheet according to the feelings and the experience they perceived in that moment.

According to Csikszentmihalyi and Csikszentmihalyi (1998) each questionnaire was formed by open items and numerical scales which indicated feeling intensities of those individuals.

This measurement method is one of the most popular, nevertheless, as Deepack (2004) asserts, it presents an inconvenient while its use: this tool interrupts the ptimal flow experience of the subject due to the disappearance of control, feedback, objective focus... the flow state, to focus one's attention in filling the researcher's questionnaire.

As Deepack (2004) states, another method for measuring flow is the Flow State Scale (FSS) by Jackson and Marsh (1996). This scale is based in the Csikszentmihalyi's 9 dimensions approach (1988). The analysed questionnaire for this method is formed by 36 elements with 4 items for each one of the flow dimensions. According to the experts

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Jackson and Eklund (2002), this scale shows high reliability and inner consistency, due to the fact that the subject explains the experience he remembers from an activity, answers are restricted and fit the Likert scale, determined by 0 score for completely disagree, and from 5 to 100 as total agreement.

According to López (2006) another measure method is the *Dispositional Flow Scale (DFS)*, based on the FSS scale previously explained. This scale is outlined by the same standards as the previous one, nevertheless, there exists a fundamental unevenness which makes the different, the writing period which is contemplated.

The DFS refers to the happiness in which subjects experiment flow, thus, is based on present facts. On its behalf, the FSS is focused on a concrete situation which has just happened, so refers to past facts.

The scale which takes into account the present facts consists of 36 items, in Likert scale, where 1 means “never” and 5, “always”. It formed by 9 factors, which refer to those dimensions forming Csikszentmihalyi’s flow. This inventory show alpha values of .91 for the dispositional flow value, which is formed by its nine possible dimensions (.59 for balance among ability and challenge, .70 for the combination/union of action and thought, .70 for goal clarity, .72 for clear feedback, .70 for concentration on the task which is being performed, .75 for control feeling, .58 restraint or self-consciousness loss, .68 for time perception transformation, and .66 for autotelic experience) (Moreno, Cervello & González, 2006, quoted in Camacho et al., 2011).

As Jackson, Eklund and Martin assert (2008), previous scales present three different presentation models:

- *Long*: 36 questions where Csikszentmihalyi’s nine flow dimensions are evaluated. When it is necessary to obtain exhaustive results from a research, this is the most useful scale due to the fact that flow dimensions are very detailed, even though much time is necessary.
- *Shorten*: a proper scale when sample or time limitations occur during the research.
- *Main scale*: it completes the two previous scales. According to Camacho et al. (2011) “the objective of this scale is to take advantage of the flow phenomenology compatible with the original conceptualizations of subjective

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experience that supports the optimum flow (...) and focuses on the optimal experience from the perspective of the performer. (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975)

According to Fagerlind, Gustavsson, Johansson and Ekberg (2013), flow experience has received growing research attention (Seligman y Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) and provides a positive complement in the traditional focus of health psychology in an organisation (Schafeli, 2004). There is a main scale focused on the relation among work and optimal experience: the WOrk reLated Flow scale, by Bakker (2005).

According to Demerouti, Bakker, Sonnentag, and Fullagar (2012), flow experience connected to work may increase vigour and decrease exhaustion during the working hours as well as outside the workplace. A positive experience related to the labour performance (Bakker 2008; Demerouti 2006; Engeser y Rheinberg, 2008) where optimal experience is contextualised with absorption, enjoyment and intrinsic motivation at work dimensions (Bakker, 2005). Moreover, Demerouti (2006) considers it presents relevant positive consequences for any organisation.

The WOLF scale presents 13 items and indicates whether individuals have experienced flow in their workplace during the two previous weeks in terms of enjoyment, absorption, and intrinsic motivation (Bekker, 2005). The original scale responses move from never-always values in a seven-point-scale, but it became a five-point-scale: 1 never and 5 always.

4. Research technique to be applied

Flow concept was born in qualitative interviews. Mr. Csikszentmihalyi (1975) initiated his researches using this method in order to certainly know the experience of activities where people got completely involved.

Most of the found researches (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988; Deepak, 2004; Salanova, Martínez, Cifre, & Wilmar, 2005; Fagerlind, Gustavsson, Johansson & Ekberg, 2013) focus their concept flow measurement, and some other similar concepts, on qualitative interviews which require quite a numerous sample as well as time for the research to be outstanding and interesting at the same time. Nevertheless, there are some limitations due to the fact that questions are focused on a specific target and its answering may lead to inner debate to the person who is being investigated in case of question misunderstanding. Thus, it is difficult to perceive the individual's non-verbal communication.

It is interesting to carry out a qualitative research because it allow us to establish direct interaction among interviewer and interviewees. Furthermore, the information this sample is going to provide will be more detailed and probably more specific than a questionnaire, so, it will be possible to have flexibility when examining small details and aspects: gestures, tone of voice, facial expressions, pauses, etc.

The discussion group will allow us to generate general information over a specific area, and this can be oriented towards the recreation of daily life situations in order to know and go in depth into the perspective groups of professionals have on aspects as: flow, engagement, motivation, happiness at work, goal focus, etc.

It is suggested the formation of a discussion group over a group interview because a specific speech is needed, a speech from an international and social situation where not only individual opinions are found, but also a group agreement is reached, when possible.

We will also put into practice the fact that participants suggest ideas in order to achieve highest welfare and satisfaction during working hours. This will help us to mainly identify unsatisfied necessities related to the job they develop as well as improving patterns which may contribute to the increase of happiness at work.

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We will also use an associative projective technique, concretely through a free association word” game. Another technique which serves to investigate through the professionals’ subconscious.

Apart from the qualitative investigation, we will do a small quantitative research to focus the importance the subjects may give to happiness, motivation, enjoyment, etc. at work. Thoroughly influent variables in the flow state.

Thus, we will use the WOLF scale, mainly based on elements of intrinsic motivation, enjoyment at work and absorption. Nevertheless, some other relevant concepts have been added to the investigation, as, for instance, happiness itself measured through Pemberton’s happiness index¹. Finally, this index has been chosen because it was the first index created in Spain and with strong and reliable repercussions in the field of happiness, at the same level as some other well-known measuring indexes of happiness as *Social Progress Index* by Michael Porter or the *Happy Planet Index* by *New Economics Foundations* (Barnés, 2013)

According to Barnés (2013), the Pemberton index is a project by Gonzalo Hervás, Psychology professor at the Universidad Complutense, and has been validated by three different scientific committees from different journals until its publication in *Health and Quality of Life Outcomes*. It has also been presented in congresses as the *European Conference of Positive Psychology* (Copenhagen, 2010) or the *Primer Congreso de Psicología Positiva* in Madrid, 2012.

Furthermore, in order to orient our subjects’ answers, some suitable issues related to people’s happiness at work have been captured.

¹ Annex 2, table 8

5. Sampling procedure

5.1 Sample and methodology

The set out objectives lead to the usage of two types of investigation techniques. On the one hand, it is created a discussion group which will provide answers to qualitative objectives and, on the other hand, a survey which will answer to quantitative objectives. For the first one two discussion groups have been developed during 90 minutes each. The first group is formed by 7 individuals and the second one by 5, all of them professional workers from the tourism area, more specifically, travel agencies located in Barcelona.

On its behalf, a quantitative research is developed towards a survey, generally WOLF, formed by 13 questions, plus some other questions from the Pemberton index and happiness at work. These questions will allow us to compile primary information.

The survey used can be found in annex 1, whereas the techniques used can be found in annex 2.

5.1.2 Discussion outline

The outline which has been followed during the sessions is:

1. *Introduction*

In order to put our participants in context, some open questions which they will quickly relate to daily life are asked. In this point, our main goal is for them to participate answering easy questions with automatic answers, without the necessity of thinking in order to answer

- Happiness situations
- Welfare and satisfaction experiences
- Frequency of these sensation experiences

2. *Warming up*

Continuing with the introductory phase, the moderator leaves aside the speech turn. After 15 minutes, participants will feel more uninhibited, leaving room for the wanted debate. This debate will last approximately 20 or 30 minutes.

- Welfare and satisfaction experiences at work
- Causes of these experiences

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- Differences among happiness at work and social or routine life.

3. *Development of the group*

In this phase, we start working with the specific objectives of the investigation.

- Causes and consequences of the 9 dimensions of flow experience of Csikszentmihalyi (1975).
- Discussion on motivation and happiness at work.

4. *Group relaunching*

From the discussion group, the moderator will comment on the most relevant aspects which had emerged during the meeting, looking for a general consensus.

5. *Final closure*

The meeting will be concluded thanking the participants for their interest and attendance.

In annex X, the questions executed during the discussion outline are shown.

5.1.2. Questionnaire

The questionnaire used can be found in annex 1.

5.1.3 Technical datasheet

The table 1 (annex 2) collects data related to the quantitative research carried out:

Table 1. Technical datasheet

| | |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Universe | Workers of the touristic sector in Barcelona, specialised in travel agencies |
| Collecting data method | Qualitative method: discussion outline Quantitative method: personal structured survey |
| Field of study | Local: Barcelona |
| Size of the sample | 12 valid questionnaires |
| Sampling procedure | Convenience |

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Questionnaires

Structures questionnaires with restricted questions of Likert scale (WOLF method)

Fieldwork

October – December 2015

5.1.4. Measurement scales

In the literature revising period there exist a series of scales which will allow us to know the more relevant factors when experiencing flow (see table 2). Some of these are: absorption, enjoyment at work, intrinsic motivation, happiness and happiness at work.

Table 2: Measure scales used

| Concept | Scale | Code | Ítem | Source |
|-----------------------|-----------|------|---|---------------|
| Absorption | Likert, 5 | ABS | 1. When I am working, I think about nothing else 2. I get carried away by my work 3. When I am working, I forget everything else around me 4. I am totally immersed in my work | Bakker (2008) |
| Work Enjoyment | Likert, 5 | ENJ | 5. My work gives me a good feeling 6. I do my work with a lot of enjoyment 7. I feel happy during my work 8. I feel cheerful when I am working | Bakker (2008) |
| Intrinsic Work | Likert, 5 | INT | 9. I would still do this work, | Bakker |

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| | | | | |
|--------------------------|------------------|------------|--|---------------------------------|
| <p>Motivation</p> | | | <p>even if I received less pay</p> <p>10. I find that I also want to work in my free time</p> <p>11. I work because I enjoy it</p> <p>12. When I am working on something, I am doing it for myself</p> <p>13. I get my motivation from the work itself, and not from the reward for it</p> | <p>(2008)</p> |
| <p>Happiness</p> | <p>Likert, 5</p> | <p>PHI</p> | <p>14. I am very satisfied with my life</p> <p>15. I have the energy to fulfill my daily tasks well</p> <p>16. I think my life is valuable and useful</p> <p>17. I am satisfied with my personality</p> <p>18. My life is full of lessons and challenges that make me grow</p> <p>19. I feel very attached to the people around me</p> <p>20. I am able to solve most of the problems in my day to day</p> <p>21. I think that the important</p> | <p>Pemberton (Barnés, 2013)</p> |

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| | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------|--|-----|
| | | | <p>thing I can be myself</p> <p>22. I enjoy every day of many small things</p> <p>23. In my day I have many times where I feel bad</p> <p>24. I think we live in a society that allows me to develop fully</p> | |
| Happiness at work | Only answer or Likert, 6 | HAPPW | <p>25. Have you ever been happy in your work?</p> <p>26. Are you happy in your current job?</p> <p>27. Is it important to be happy at work?</p> <p>28. Do I need to be happy at work to experiment flow?</p> | Own |

It is necessary to add the explanation that some demographic nature questions have been asked in order to describe and to know the analysed sample.

Table 3: Demographic measure scale

| Concept | Scale | Ítem | Reference |
|-------------|-------|--------------------------|-----------|
| Demographic | GEN | ¿Are you a woman or man? | Own |

| | | |
|-----|----------------------------------|-----|
| AGE | ¿How old are you? | Own |
| SDY | ¿What is your educational level? | Own |

5.2. Quantitative methods

After the game of words, the non-probabilistic sampling of convenience answered to the structured and physical questionnaire, distributed at the end of the discussion outline.

The document consists of 11 questions which allowed compiling primary information. The questionnaire used can be found in Annex 1.

5.2.1. Methods employed

The methods employed for the analysis were descriptive techniques because of the limited sample size. Here the details:

- *Frequencies*: univariate analysis which allows analysing in a descriptive manner nominal or direct variables by the generation of tables with their respective percentages.
- *Measurements*: univariate analysis carried out with continuous or numerical variables which allow us to obtain information from a central value. The result is a table with medium values of the variable under analysis.

6. Results

6.1. Qualitative method

6.1.1. Introductory sessions – Happiness, welfare and satisfaction situations

During the first 15 minutes participants were gotten into the context with open questions in order to relax the environment and to create a familiarity climate.

At the beginning, the session was introduced by asking questions about situations in which they feel and have felt satisfaction, welfare and happiness generally in their lives, from where the participants explained where they were, who was with them or what they were doing. These are some testimonies:

“Cuando juego con mis sobrinas, me olvido del mundo y soy un niño más, disfruto a lo grande jajaja”

“Cuando las cosas salen por si solas. Y sobre todo cuando era niño”

Most of them agree on the idea that the time when they were children was the happiest period in their lives, because of the ignorance in life and the complete enjoyment of less complex matters.

But it is true some few others advocate for the increase of happiness as they have grown together with some life aspects, they have felt self-fulfilment or they have experienced personal growth within themselves because of the achievement of their own expectations.

Most of the sample highlighted the idea that happiness is not and cannot be linear in time:

“Mi felicidad no es la misma en un concierto que cuando estoy trabajando”

“Yo soy más feliz en los momentos que estoy con mis amigos”

“A mí me encanta entrar en la cocina, ponerme a cortar ajo y tomates y olvidar todo”

Bearing in mind welfare, these professionals assert that for them this concept is:

“Sentirme bien conmigo mismo”

“Tener mis necesidades cubiertas: comer, dormir...”

“El bienestar para mi empieza desde que me despierto y me levanto por la mañana...”

And, regarding to satisfaction:

“Disfrutar de lo que la vida te ofrece”

“Que una de mis audiciones de canto salga bien y me aplaudan al final ¡es lo mejor!”

All the participants argue during the first 20 minutes, time of the introductory session, mainly making references to positive aspects related to leisure, and a participant makes a sporadic comment including work, in particular, the boss:

“Estoy satisfecho porque veo resultados y porque hacía tiempo que no daba con un equipo realmente bueno y unido, se nota”

6.1.2. Warming up

We enter now in our topic, and start connecting questions with the working area.

Most of the participants affirm welfare at work is important and they have sometimes experienced it in the past.

“Evidentemente se siente bienestar y satisfacción en el trabajo, sino no es tu trabajo”

“Me ayuda a venir más contenta al trabajo, y si encima mi trabajo sale bien y cubro las expectativas de hoy... ding! Me marcho contentísima a casa”

Most of the subjects feel happier when they perform activities related to leisure time than with working activities:

“Me encanta cuando cojo la bici, empiezo a pedalear y me pierdo por la montaña”

In base to whether welfare at work is more or less relevant than welfare at personal life:

“Son igual de importantes, pero yo siento un mayor bienestar cuando estoy en casa cocinando que trabajando por ejemplo”

“Corriendo siento un bienestar, una adrenalina y una satisfacción enormes conmigo”

6.1.3 Discussion development

At this point, groups seem more uninhibited towards the working aspects and the elements influencing flow.

In the working area, when they achieve a goal, their job satisfaction increases, and therefore, their happiness. In this, the group gets divided. Some of them consider that by the moment the target is achieved, self-satisfaction emerges and it is ten when they are happy. Some others affirm it is a global fact, the process is closely connected to the target achievement, so the satisfaction comes during the process when obstacles are overcome and the goal is fixed.

“Disfruto tanto con el camino hasta conseguir el objetivo de 1.000 viajeros confirmados que una vez conseguido sigo en mi estado de felicidad”

“Hasta que no consigo el objetivo no estoy satisfecho”

“El objetivo final es el todo, si no lo consigues no vas a quedar satisfecho con el recorrido”

Importance of establishing clear targets at work:

“Si no te planteo unos objetivos vamos desorientados, no sabemos dónde vamos...”

“Sirve para motivaros, sacar más y mejor de cada uno de vosotros”

Motivational aspect:

“Es importante pero no estoy motivado en el trabajo”

“Imprescindible para conseguir metas, no conseguiremos nada sin que os guste lo que hacéis”

Concentration at work:

“Es como el ying y el yang, hay momentos que tienes una concentración plena porque tu trabajo lo necesita, y otras veces que no es necesario”

“ Si si me sorprendo cuando miro el reloj y... uala! han pasado 3 horas”

“Yo en ocasiones quedo absorbido cuando hago mi trabajo. Dejo de oírlos, tengo un control total de lo que estoy haciendo... porque lo que estoy haciendo me los exige”

“Pero esto no dura mucho... son unas horas pero igual dos veces a la semana... y me pasa más fuera del trabajo, tomando una copa con los amigos”.

The importance of feedback:

“Si no me digo que estoy haciéndolo mal... pues no lo voy a saber si yo mismo no lo detecto”

“Muy importante, siempre debe haber un feedback constante. Pero por parte de todos, no es solo competencia del jefe”

Aforementioned concepts:

“Todos son importantes para sentirse autorrealizados ¿no? Para estar contentos con el trabajo que hacemos”

“Hay que tener como una fluidez con el trabajo, dejarte llevar”

“Siempre hay que dejarse llevar y aprender continuamente de todo”

6.1.4 Speech conclusion

We finish the discussion with a game, associating words, and a quantitative test with own questions and scale questions connected to WOLF (Annex 2)³.

6.2. Quantitative method

6.2.1 “Free association words”

With the development of this associative projective technique, the aim is to obtain the information if there is any type of relation among the workers from the same area, as the travel agencies in a specific area, as Barcelona.

Table 4: “Free association words”

| Concept | Answer |
|------------|---|
| Motivation | Achievement Energy (2) Salary (2) Happiness Positive Objectives One two, one two Pleased |

The Flow Experience

| | |
|-------------------------|--------------------|
| | Implication |
| | Target |
| | Responsability (3) |
| | Engagement |
| | Goals |
| Engagement | Fidelity (2) |
| | Dedication |
| | Absorption |
| | Continuity |
| | Reward |
| | Fluency |
| | Flow |
| | Flowerpower |
| | Float |
| Flow | Spontaneous |
| | Energy (2) |
| | Positive (2) |
| | Fade |
| | Power |
| | Happiness |
| | Innecessary |
| | Independence (2) |
| Self-sufficiency | Responsability (2) |
| | Own |
| | Manage |
| | Perform |
| | Objective |
| | Essential |
| | Necessary |
| | Sargeant |
| Control | Strict hierarchy |
| | Security |
| | Excessive |
| | Focus |
| | Old |

The Flow Experience

Supervision
Bureaucratic
Observe

Abilities

Skill
Indispensable
Progress
Tararit
Competence
Know
Knowledge
Job/work
Use
Necessary
Prosper

Job/work

Comradeship
Stability
Development
I like
Far away
Salary
Learn
Self-fulfillment
Welfare
Equilibrium
Money
Engagement

Empathy

Comradeship
Team (2)
Empathize
Feel
Help
Understand
Comprehend
Reflection

To the concept of motivation, at least half of the sample shows receptive, taking note of positive aspects as happiness, positive... the rest of the sample considers this concept is connected to goals or targets and thus, the motivation is achieved by attainment of those. Some of them connect it also to more ordinary concepts, as salary or progress with an activity.

The second concept, engagement, is considered by researchers as a concept of continuity and dedication towards the organization. This leads some of them to think in absorption at work or award for their dedication.

Flow is a term considered as a spontaneous and positive energy, as let yourself go. Even though there have been various individuals who were not able to note anything this word suggested them. This makes me think that maybe people with limited knowledge or studies level is not aware of the existence of this factor.

Interviewees with high responsibility, supervisors, and bosses... define self-sufficiency as something unnecessary. Nevertheless, the rest of the workers consider it as something necessary in order to do well at work. Achieving their targets by knowledge and own merits, managing and doing well by oneself is considered a gratifying experience.

Control presents a negative influence over the concept itself. Most of the workers affirm it is old-fashioned, excessive or bureaucratic, or even there are some who literary thing in the sergeant figure. Nevertheless, it seems higher levels consider it indispensable and necessary.

Abilities are a real unfocused concept in several opinions. Some think it means progressing, knowing, prospering... focusing knowledge and skills in every field. "Work or competence" are two valuations we may consider as negatives due to the fact that we could consider a perception of load and bore.

"Work" apart from being connected to economic matters, some consider it as a source of welfare, learning, engagement, balance, fulfillment, stability, etc. Valuations which are mainly positive.

Lastly, empathy concept shows valuations of comradeship, sharing, help, understanding, or patience. Concepts with acceptable to positive consideration, although a part of the sample did not know how to define it.

6.3 Quantitative results.

6.3.1 Absorption

Table 5 measures absorption, where it is possible to find similar opinions. Even though the most valued answer is “I get carried away by my work” (3.42 over 5), we can affirm that the interviewees do not feel completely absorbed in their jobs (2.58).

Table 5: Absorption measurement

| | N | Average | Standard deviation |
|---|----------|----------------|---------------------------|
| 1. When I am working, I think about nothing else | 12 | 3,17 | 1,267 |
| 2. I get carried away by my work | 12 | 3,42 | ,996 |
| 3. When I am working, I forget everything else around me | 12 | 2,67 | 1,435 |
| 4. I am totally immersed in my work | 12 | 2,58 | 1,443 |

6.3.2 Work Enjoyment

Employees feel comfortable in their workplaces since they develop their work tasks quite mused (4.00), moreover, they feel fortunate at work (3.92) and they feel happier there (3.83), see table.

Table 6: Work enjoyment measurement

| | N | Average | Standard deviation |
|--|----------|----------------|---------------------------|
|--|----------|----------------|---------------------------|

The Flow Experience

| | | | |
|--|----|------|-------|
| 5. My work gives me a good feeling | 12 | 3,58 | ,793 |
| 6. I do my work with a lot of enjoyment | 12 | 4,00 | 1,044 |
| 7. I feel happy during my work | 12 | 3,83 | 1,193 |
| 8. I feel cheerful when I am working | 12 | 3,92 | 1,165 |

6.3.3 Intrinsic work motivation

In general, the sample confirms that when they develop a task at work, they do it by themselves (4.17), this statement is based on the refusal which implies they would not continue in their current job for a fewer salary (3.25), and they would not work during their leisure time (2.50).

Table 7: Intrinsic work motivation measurement

| | N | Average | Standard deviation |
|---|----------|----------------|---------------------------|
| 9. I would still do this work, even if I received less pay | 12 | 3,25 | 1,357 |
| 10. I find that I also want to work in my free time | 12 | 2,50 | 1,243 |
| 11. I work because | 12 | 3,42 | 1,165 |

I enjoy it

| | | | |
|--|----|------|------|
| 12. When I am working on something, I am doing it for myself | 12 | 4,17 | ,577 |
|--|----|------|------|

| | | | |
|--|----|------|------|
| 13. I get my motivation from the work itself, and not from the reward for it | 12 | 3,42 | ,793 |
|--|----|------|------|

6.3.4 Happiness

Practically all the sample feels satisfied with their lives in general (4.25), they feel their lives are full of challenges, lessons, and changes which help them grow, as they consider (4.65), thus they find themselves energetic enough to face those challenges their jobs offer them (4.5). Nevertheless, they consider contemporary society makes difficult full development in a job (3.00).

Table 8: Happiness measurement

| | N | Average | Standard deviation |
|---|----|---------|--------------------|
| 14. I am very satisfied with my life | 12 | 4,25 | ,622 |
| 15. I have the energy to fulfill my daily tasks | 12 | 4,50 | ,905 |

well

| | | | |
|---|----|------|------|
| 16. I think my life is valuable and useful | 12 | 4,33 | ,778 |
|---|----|------|------|

| | | | |
|---|----|------|------|
| 17. I am satisfied with my personality | 12 | 4,00 | ,953 |
|---|----|------|------|

| | | | |
|--|----|------|------|
| 18. My life is full of lessons and challenges that make me grow | 12 | 4,67 | ,651 |
|--|----|------|------|

| | | | |
|---|----|------|------|
| 19. I feel very attached to the people around me | 12 | 4,42 | ,669 |
|---|----|------|------|

| | | | |
|---|----|------|------|
| 20. I am able to solve most of the problems in my day to day | 12 | 4,08 | ,669 |
|---|----|------|------|

| | | | |
|---|----|------|------|
| 21. I think that the important thing I can be myself | 12 | 4,08 | ,900 |
|---|----|------|------|

| | | | |
|---|----|------|------|
| 22. I enjoy every day of many small things | 12 | 4,33 | ,985 |
|---|----|------|------|

The Flow Experience

| | | | |
|--|----|------|------|
| 23. In my day I have many times where I feel bad | 12 | 1,92 | ,669 |
|--|----|------|------|

| | | | |
|--|----|------|------|
| 24. I think we live in a society that allows me to develop fully | 12 | 3,00 | ,853 |
|--|----|------|------|

6.3.5 Happiness at work

In order to measure happiness at work a frequency descriptive technique has been used, which allows the aggrupation by tables and percentages of the sample and their answer degree. 91.7% of the sample claims to have ever felt happy at work.

Table 9.1: Have you ever been happy in your work?

| | | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------------|-------|-----------|------------|
| Valid | Yes | 11 | 91,7 |
| | No | 1 | 8,3 |
| | Total | 12 | 100,0 |

Taking into account the chosen sample, more than a half affirms to have felt happy in their current job (58.3%), followed by a 25% which represent those professionals who claim they feel that happiness sometimes but not some others.

Table 9.2: Are you happy in your current job?

26. Are you happy in your current job?

| | | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------------|-------------|-----------|------------|
| Valid | Not usually | 1 | 8,3 |
| | Yes and no | 3 | 25,0 |
| | Usually yes | 1 | 8,3 |
| | Often | 7 | 58,3 |
| | Total | 12 | 100,0 |

A large part of the sample considers that it is important to be happy at work (91.7%).

Table 9.3: Is it important to be happy at work?

27. Is it important to be happy at work?

| | | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------------|-------|-----------|------------|
| Valid | Yes | 11 | 91,7 |
| | Often | 1 | 8,3 |
| | Total | 12 | 100,0 |

As in the previous question, 91.7% of the sample considers necessary to be happy at work in order to experience flow.

Table 9.4: Do I need to be happy at work to experiment flow?

| 28. Do I need to be happy at work to experiment flow? | | | |
|---|-------|-----------|------------|
| | | Frequency | Percentage |
| Valid | Yes | 11 | 91,7 |
| | No | 1 | 8,3 |
| | Total | 12 | 100,0 |

6.3.6 Social-demographic characteristics

When talking about socio-demographical characteristics of the group², the following data has been obtained:

From all the interviewees, degrees and bachelors are predominant with a 75%, whereas 25% have postgraduate studies.

Table 10: Studies

| Studies | | |
|---------|-----------|------------|
| | Frequency | Percentage |

² Annex 2, table 10 and 11

The Flow Experience

| | | | |
|--------------|--------------------------|----|-------|
| | Graduate | 9 | 75,0 |
| Valid | Postgraduate (master) | 3 | 25,0 |
| | Total | 12 | 100,0 |

In our case, 58.3% of the interviewees are men, predominating over women, who are part of this group of tourism professionals and travel agencies with a 41.7%.

Table 11: Gender

| Gender | | | |
|---------------|-------|-----------|------------|
| | | Frequency | Percentage |
| Valid | Man | 7 | 58,3 |
| | Woman | 5 | 41,7 |
| | Total | 12 | 100,0 |

7. Conclusions

The results obtained about the main topic, the flow experience, lead us to conclude that it is in the leisure are where the optimal experience is more strongly present when feeling the optimal experience. Even though a small part of the sample also make reference to work as an important element where the optimal experience has strong appearance.

In the work field, the survey respondent affirmed that being good at work (comfortable, happy, etc.) is as important as feeling it in their daily lives, taking into account its routine and leisure activities.

Taking into account the nine flow dimensions Csikszentmihalyi distinguishes, determining a goal or various targets is important in the field of work. It is useful for knowing how to orient different work tasks and moreover it helps to increase the individual's motivation.

Focusing on work it important, some even commented on the temporal distortion they suffer when they are so immerse at work that hours become minutes; some of the reasons of optimal experience which leads workers towards the flow state.

Some of the interviewees felt this distortion during leisure activities and some others affirmed they had felt it during their working hours. Nevertheless, all of them agreed this only happens during a specific period, it is not a constant sensation over time as Csikszentmihalyi defended. This idea is not completely rejected because probably there will be people experiencing tremendously pleasant in their everyday lives, leisure and work.

From all the books, articles, researches, works, etc. consulted, none of them affirmed to have found this type of person. But this is not enough in order to dismiss it since there are not researches which had deepened so much in this issue. Even though the concept of flow is relatively recent due to the fact that its study did not started until the early 90s.

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On its behalf, feedback was considered a relevant aspect among employees for correctly focusing their efforts. Thus, it is necessary having this feedback from a superior or a workmate in order to focus the efforts towards the proposed goals.

Fun at work, on its behalf, was considered very important. People who enjoy at their workplaces feel fortunate for developing tasks they like, which leads to enjoyment, concentration and motivation for continuing repeating those activities which cause this sensation.

On its behalf, intrinsic motivation is fundamental for experiencing flow. Enjoyment and work absorption unleash personal growth and self-fulfilment which lead to the willing of the development the same activities from work on leisure time, just for the fact of experiencing that flow which makes the world disappear and creates temporal distortion where enjoyment and absorption is guaranteed.

Happiness is an essential element in people's lives, according to the interviewed professionals, their lives are generally pleasant. Continue challenges and changes are lessons helping self-fulfilment and thus, influencing in the increase of self-abilities.

Most of our professionals consider they have been happy sometimes in some of the jobs they have had, their present job or some other in their past. Occasionally they are satisfied and happy at work.

Happiness at work is important for an individual to feel self-fulfillment, the flow experience is not commonly known among the interviewed professionals, although experienced. Which makes me think in the rest of the population, with minor degree of professionalism or interest in psychology, who will continue being ignorant in this large field of study in the research

Temporal distortion, the control over activity which is developed in its moment and enjoyment are the most mentioned elements when entering in the flow state.

Its intensity and durability on time are not directly influenced by age, professional rank, or genre. It would be a coincidence to associate these aspects to a higher flow at work.

The Flow Experience

If strength and durability over time are not dependent variables of: age, profession or gender range. It would be able to associate these aspects overlap to a greater flow at work.

Mainly, people with more flow experience are the ones in love with their job, those who will continue working all day long no matter the time, always enjoying the tasks developed, no matter how routine they are, having total control over the activity with no other daily life or personal distresses which may come in those moments to their minds. Enjoyment sensations is so intense that even leads to the enjoy self-motivation, which causes the flow experience at work.

Finally we can say that the flow has influence and is relevant to the happiness of people, although many people are unaware of its existence.

7.1 Research limitations

Based on the results obtained from our research, it is convenient to bear in mind that the size of the sample is not relevant. Nevertheless, the fact of these results having no significance for granting validity together with some other studies does not mean it has no value for the interviewees.

Flow, even though its study started in 1975 with Csikszentmihalyi, is a concept which continues being relatively new. Precisely, most of the researches in this area have focused on leisure activities more than in work.

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9. Annex

Annex 1: Questionnaire

CUESTIONARIO

1. A continuación se le proponen una serie de afirmaciones relacionadas con su grado de **absorción en el trabajo** que desempeña. Indique su grado de acuerdo o desacuerdo con ellas, en una escala del 1 al 5, 5 totalmente de acuerdo y 1 totalmente en desacuerdo.

| | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| Cuando estoy trabajando, no pienso en nada | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Me dejo llevar por mi trabajo | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Cuando estoy trabajando, olvido todo lo que me rodea | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Estoy totalmente inmerso en mi trabajo | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

2. Las siguientes preguntas son en relación a la experiencia del **disfrute en su trabajo**. Indique su grado de acuerdo o desacuerdo, siendo 5 muy de acuerdo y 1 muy en desacuerdo.

| | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| Mi trabajo me da una buena sensación | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Disfruto mucho realizando mi trabajo | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Durante mi trabajo me siento feliz | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Me siento afortunado cuando estoy trabajando | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

3. Las preguntas que se presentan a continuación están relacionadas con la **motivación** propia en el desempeño del trabajo. Señale su grado de acuerdo o desacuerdo, siendo 5 totalmente de acuerdo y 1 totalmente en desacuerdo.

| | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| Seguiría realizando este trabajo aunque mi salario fuera menor | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| A menudo quiero trabajar en mis horas libres | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Trabajo porque me divierto | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Cuando estoy trabajando en algo, lo hago por mí mismo | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Tengo mi motivación por el trabajo en sí, y no de la recompensa por ello | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

4. Las siguientes preguntas están enfocada al concepto de **felicidad**. Establezca del 1 al 5 su grado de implicación con las siguientes cuestiones, siendo 5 implicación máxima y 1 nada de implicación.

| | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| Me siento muy satisfecho con mi vida | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Tengo la energía necesaria para cumplir bien mis tareas cotidianas | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Creo que mi vida es útil y valiosa | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Me siento satisfecho con mi forma de ser | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Mi vida está llena de aprendizajes | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

| y desafíos que me hacen crecer | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Me siento muy unido a las personas que me rodean | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Me siento capaz de resolver la mayoría de los problemas de mi día a día | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Creo que en lo importante puedo ser yo mismo | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Disfruto cada día de muchas pequeñas cosas | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| En mi día a día tengo muchos ratos en los que me siento mal | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Creo que vivo en una sociedad que me permite desarrollarme plenamente | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Marque en la casilla que le corresponda la respuesta a las siguientes preguntas relacionadas con la **felicidad en el trabajo**

5. ¿Alguna vez has sido feliz en tu trabajo?

| | |
|----|---|
| Si | 1 |
| No | 2 |

6. ¿Eres feliz en tu trabajo actual? Respuesta única.

| | |
|--------------|---|
| No | 1 |
| Rara vez | 2 |
| Si y no | 3 |
| A menudo | 4 |
| Casi siempre | 5 |
| Siempre | 6 |

7. ¿Es importante ser feliz en el trabajo?

| | |
|---------|---|
| Si | 1 |
| No | 2 |
| A veces | 3 |

8. Es necesario ser feliz en el trabajo para experimentar flow?

| | |
|----|---|
| Si | 1 |
| No | 2 |

9. Genero

| | |
|--------|---|
| Hombre | 1 |
| Mujer | 2 |

10. ¿Serías tan amable de indicar tu edad? _____

11. Nivel de estudios superado:

| Sin estudios | Primarios (Hasta los 10 años) | Primario (EGB, secundaria, FP1) | Bachiller o FP2 | Universitarios | Postgrado (Máster) |
|--------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------|----------------|--------------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |

Annex 2: Tables and graphs

Graph 1: Flow canal when challenges and abilities appear in equilibrium

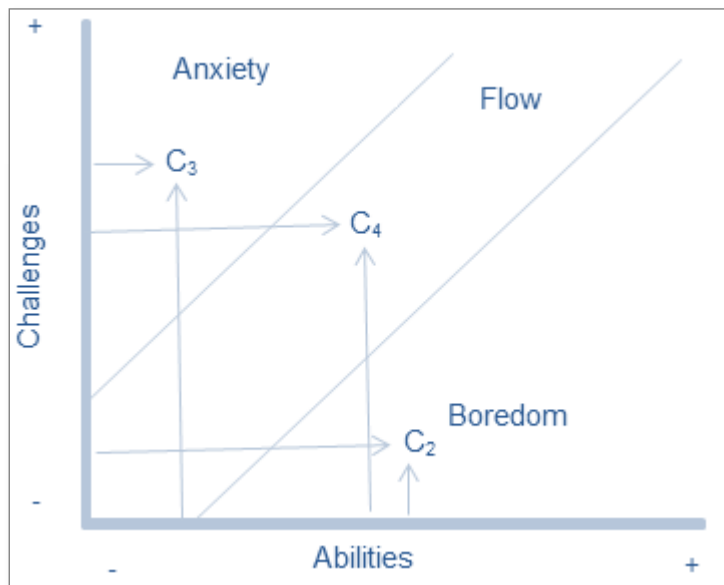


Table 1: Technical datasheet

| | |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Universe | Workers of the touristic sector in Barcelona, specialised in travel agencies |
| Collecting data method | Qualitative method: discussion outline Quantitative method: personal structured survey |
| Field of study | Local: Barcelona |
| Size of the sample | 12 valid questionnaires |
| Sampling procedure | Convenience |
| Questionnaires | Structures questionnaires with restricted questions of Likert scale (WOLF method) |
| Fieldwork | October – December 2015 |

Table 2: Measure scales used

| Concept | Scale | Code | Item | Source |
|----------------------------------|-----------|------|---|--------------------|
| Absorption | Likert, 5 | ABS | 14. When I am working, I think about nothing else 15. I get carried away by my work 16. When I am working, I forget everything else around me 17. I am totally immersed in my work | Bakker (2008) |
| Work Enjoyment | Likert, 5 | ENJ | 18. My work gives me a good feeling 19. I do my work with a lot of enjoyment 20. I feel happy during my work 21. I feel cheerful when I am working | Bakker (2008) |
| Intrinsic Work Motivation | Likert, 5 | INT | 22. I would still do this work, even if I received less pay 23. I find that I also want to work in my free time 24. I work because I enjoy it 25. When I am working on something, I am doing it for myself 26. I get my motivation from the work itself, and not from the reward for it | Bakker (2008) |
| Happiness | Likert, 5 | PHI | 14. I am very satisfied with | Pemberton (Barnés, |

The Flow Experience

| | | | | |
|---------------------|----------------|-------|--|-----|
| | | | <p>my life</p> <p>2013)</p> <p>15. I have the energy to fulfill my daily tasks well</p> <p>16. I think my life is valuable and useful</p> <p>17. I am satisfied with my personality</p> <p>18. My life is full of lessons and challenges that make me grow</p> <p>19. I feel very attached to the people around me</p> <p>20. I am able to solve most of the problems in my day to day</p> <p>21. I think that the important thing I can be myself</p> <p>22. I enjoy every day of many small things</p> <p>23. In my day I have many times where I feel bad</p> <p>24. I think we live in a society that allows me to develop fully</p> | |
| Happiness at | Only answer or | HAPPW | 25. Have you ever been | Own |

The Flow Experience

| | | | | |
|------|-----------|--|---|--|
| work | Likert, 6 | | <p>happy in your work?</p> <p>26. Are you happy in your current job?</p> <p>27. Is it important to be happy at work?</p> <p>28. Do I need to be happy at work to experiment flow?</p> | |
|------|-----------|--|---|--|

Table 3: Demographic measure scale

| Concept | Scale | Ítem | Reference |
|-------------|-------|----------------------------------|-----------|
| Demographic | GEN | ¿Are you a woman or man? | Own |
| | AGE | ¿How old are you? | Own |
| | SDY | ¿What is your educational level? | Own |

Table 4: "Free association words"

| Concept | Answer |
|-------------|------------------|
| Motivation | Achievement |
| | Energy (2) |
| | Salary (2) |
| | Happiness |
| | Positive |
| | Objectives |
| | One two, one two |
| | Pleased |
| Implication | |

The Flow Experience

Engagement

Target
Responsability (3)
Engagement
Goals
Fidelity (2)
Dedication
Absorption
Continuity
Reward

Flow

Fluency
Flow
Flowerpower
Float
Spontaneous
Energy (2)
Positive (2)
Fade

Self-sufficiency

Power
Happiness
Innecessary
Independence (2)
Responsability (2)
Own
Manage
Perform

Control

Objective
Essential
Necessary
Sargeant
Strict hierarchy
Security
Excessive
Focus
Old
Supervision

The Flow Experience

| | |
|------------------|-----------------|
| | Bureaucratic |
| | Observe |
| | Skill |
| | Indispensable |
| | Progress |
| | Tararit |
| | Competence |
| Abilities | Know |
| | Knowledge |
| | Job/work |
| | Use |
| | Necessary |
| | Prosper |
| | Comradership |
| | Stability |
| | Development |
| | I like |
| | Far away |
| | Salary |
| Job/work | Learn |
| | Self-fulfilment |
| | Welfare |
| | Equilibrium |
| | Money |
| | Engagement |
| | Comradeship |
| | Team (2) |
| | Empathise |
| Empathy | Feel |
| | Help |
| | Understand |
| | Comprehend |
| | Reflection |

Table 5: Absorption measurement

| | N | Average | Standard deviation |
|---|----------|----------------|---------------------------|
| 1. When I am working, I think about nothing else | 12 | 3,17 | 1,267 |
| 2. I get carried away by my work | 12 | 3,42 | ,996 |
| 3. When I am working, I forget everything else around me | 12 | 2,67 | 1,435 |
| 4. I am totally immersed in my work | 12 | 2,58 | 1,443 |

Table 6: Work enjoyment measurement

| | N | Average | Standard deviation |
|--|----------|----------------|---------------------------|
| 5. My work gives me a good feeling | 12 | 3,58 | ,793 |
| 6. I do my work with a lot of enjoyment | 12 | 4,00 | 1,044 |
| 7. I feel happy during my work | 12 | 3,83 | 1,193 |
| 8. I feel cheerful when I am working | 12 | 3,92 | 1,165 |

Table 7: Intrinsic work motivation measurement

| | N | Average | Standard deviation |
|--|----------|----------------|---------------------------|
|--|----------|----------------|---------------------------|

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| | | | |
|--|----|------|-------|
| 9. I would still do this work, even if I received less pay | 12 | 3,25 | 1,357 |
| 10. I find that I also want to work in my free time | 12 | 2,50 | 1,243 |
| 11. I work because I enjoy it | 12 | 3,42 | 1,165 |
| 12. When I am working on something, I am doing it for myself | 12 | 4,17 | ,577 |
| 13. I get my motivation from the work itself, and not from the reward for it | 12 | 3,42 | ,793 |

Table 8: Happiness measurement

| | N | Average | Standard deviation |
|--|----|---------|--------------------|
| 14. I am very satisfied with my life | 12 | 4,25 | ,622 |
| 15. I have the energy to fulfill my daily tasks well | 12 | 4,50 | ,905 |
| 16. I think my life is valuable and useful | 12 | 4,33 | ,778 |
| 17. I am satisfied with | 12 | 4,00 | ,953 |

my personality

18. My life is full of lessons and challenges that make me grow

12 4,67 ,651

19. I feel very attached to the people around me

12 4,42 ,669

20. I am able to solve most of the problems in my day to day

12 4,08 ,669

21. I think that the important thing I can be myself

12 4,08 ,900

22. I enjoy every day of many small things

12 4,33 ,985

23. In my day I have many times where I feel bad

12 1,92 ,669

24. I think we live in a society that allows me to develop fully

12 3,00 ,853

Table 9.1: Have you ever been happy in your work?

25. Have you ever been happy in your work?

| | | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------------|-------|-----------|------------|
| Valid | Yes | 11 | 91,7 |
| | No | 1 | 8,3 |
| | Total | 12 | 100,0 |

Table 9.2: Are you happy in your current job?

26. Are you happy in your current job?

| | | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------------|-------------|-----------|------------|
| Valid | Not usually | 1 | 8,3 |
| | Yes and no | 3 | 25,0 |
| | Usually yes | 1 | 8,3 |
| | Often | 7 | 58,3 |
| | Total | 12 | 100,0 |

Table 9.3: Is it important to be happy at work?

27. Is it important to be happy at work?

| | | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------------|-------|-----------|------------|
| Valid | Yes | 11 | 91,7 |
| | Often | 1 | 8,3 |
| | Total | 12 | 100,0 |

Table 9.4: Do I need to be happy at work to experiment flow?

28. Do I need to be happy at work to experiment flow?

| | | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------------|-------|-----------|------------|
| Valid | Yes | 11 | 91,7 |
| | No | 1 | 8,3 |
| | Total | 12 | 100,0 |

Social-demographic Characteristics

Table 10: Studies

| Studies | | |
|----------------|-----------|------------|
| | Frequency | Percentage |

The Flow Experience

| | | | |
|--------------|--------------------------|----|-------|
| | Graduate | 9 | 75,0 |
| Valid | Postgraduate (master) | 3 | 25,0 |
| | Total | 12 | 100,0 |

Table 11: Gender

| Gender | | | |
|---------------|-------|-----------|------------|
| | | Frequency | Percentage |
| Valid | Man | 7 | 58,3 |
| | Woman | 5 | 41,7 |
| | Total | 12 | 100,0 |
