

ENGAGEMENT AND FLOW IN THE JOB SATISFACTION OF VOLUNTEERS AT A NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATION (NGO) IN PERU

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Abstract. The objective was to analyze how engagement and the state of flow influence the job satisfaction of volunteers. The design was non-experimental, cross-sectional, and the sample consisted of 1023 volunteers, selected through non-probabilistic convenience sampling. Validated questionnaires were used: a) the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (Schaufeli et al., 2003); b) the Flow Experience Scale (Bakker, 2008); and c) the Job Satisfaction Scale SL-20/23 (Meliá & Peiró, 1998). Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. Exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses were conducted. Data were collected and processed using SPSS, AMOS, and SEM. Both flow (0.703) and engagement (0.557) have a significant influence on the job satisfaction of volunteers, with both factors being relevant for improving job satisfaction. The state of flow is a stronger predictor than engagement. It is concluded that there is a significant and positive influence of engagement and flow on the job satisfaction of volunteers. The study of these topics confirms the importance of fostering engagement and flow among volunteers to enhance their job satisfaction.

Keywords: engagement, state of flow, job satisfaction, volunteering, non-governmental organizations.

JEL Classification: M12, L31, D23, I31.

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1. Introduction

NGOs rely on the work of volunteers to fulfill their mission and achieve their goals (United Nations Volunteers, 2021; Plataforma del Voluntariado de España, 2023). Volunteer groups dedicate their time, effort, and skills without expecting financial compensation in return (López-Cordero & Herrera-Torres, 2019); they are simply motivated by the desire to benefit others (Miller, 2022), whether in administrative, educational, or healthcare settings. Their work is altruistic and highlights an intrinsic drive to contribute to community improvement (Dal Corso et al., 2019), aligning with the theory of prosocial motivation (Kronfle, 2022).

NGOs rely on the work of volunteers to fulfill their mission and achieve their goals, as highlighted in reports by the United Nations Volunteers (2021) and the Plataforma del Voluntariado de España (2023). Volunteer groups dedicate their time, effort, and skills without expecting financial compensation in return (López-Cordero & Herrera-Torres,

2019); they are simply motivated by the desire to benefit others (Miller, 2022), whether in administrative, educational, or healthcare settings. Their work is altruistic and highlights an intrinsic drive to contribute to community improvement, as demonstrated in empirical studies (Dal Corso et al., 2019), aligning with the theoretical framework of prosocial motivation (Kronfle, 2022).

Volunteers do not expect tangible benefits; actually, they work based on intangibility and recognition from others to enhance their levels of personal satisfaction, participation, commitment, and motivation (Moura-Díez et al., 2016), as well as their sense of belonging, personal fulfillment, purpose, and connection with the community (Valenzuela-Reyes, 2022). This aligns with their emotional well-being and self-esteem, as well as with Social Exchange Theory.

The identity of the volunteer role motivates continued participation (Callero, 1994; González, 2024) and influences public experiences, reflecting the individual's intent and group awareness. Volunteers value motivating factors such as

recognition and responsibility, which are essential elements for maintaining high levels of engagement (Herzberg, 1966; Karaferis et al., 2022; Bakker et al., 2023; Bakker & Demerouti, 2013; Mauno et al., 2007). Therefore, it is crucial for NGOs to support this group of individuals, whose intrinsic and pro-social motivation fosters attachment to their activities and enhances their personal development (Klos & Lemos, 2019).

The motivation to exert effort in life stems from experiencing and enjoying activities, which is essential for personal development (Moneta & Csikszentmihalyi, 1996). These motivational states lead to commitments aligned with social change. Due to the tasks performed and roles assumed, volunteers often face high levels of stress and burnout. In different cases, a lack of recognition reduces motivation and commitment, affecting work quality (Corbin et al., 2016). In this regard, 65% of volunteers report dissatisfaction, which lowers the quality of service provided; 48% experience excessive workloads, and 52% face irregular schedules and unclear responsibilities. These factors generate frustration and demotivation, which, combined with insufficient communication processes, result in 57% of volunteers feeling ineffective and unappreciated, leading to feelings of alienation and lack of motivation (CEPAL, 2023; Plataforma del Voluntariado de España, 2023).

When individual initiatives come together in service to society, volunteers shape prosocial support, which materializes through their participation in social programs where they engage in meaningful tasks that provide them with satisfaction, enrich their daily lives, and foster personal growth. By dedicating their skills, time, energy, and effort to supporting vulnerable groups, volunteers contribute to enhancing the well-being of others. Through their empathy, their actions positively impact human lives, demonstrating that with responsibility and commitment, significant social transformations can be achieved – not only in societal structures but also in individual behaviors and realities, which are increasingly challenged by human-driven constraints that hinder personal development. Given their vital role in society, it is essential to ensure that volunteers remain motivated and derive fulfillment from their contributions.

An unsatisfied volunteer is less likely to commit to long-term engagement, leading to high turnover, role abandonment, disidentification with the organization, and eventual departure. In this regard, Córdova et al. (2025) emphasize the importance of creating an attractive work environment for collaborators to reduce turnover.

Furthermore, declining morale and enthusiasm among volunteers negatively affect public perception and the reputation of NGOs, making it more challenging to attract and retain new volunteers (Arias et al., 2015; Cordobés et al., 2018; International Labour Organization, 2023). These conditions decrease engagement and the state of flow in 63% of volunteers (CEPAL, 2023; Plataforma del Voluntariado de España, 2023; United Nations Volunteers, 2021; World Bank, 2023).

These aspects guide the study of engagement and flow in the job satisfaction of NGO volunteers, with the purpose of closing gaps related to the exclusion of vulnerable groups and provide quality and timely care to meet their immediate

needs, whether physiological or related to other social dimensions. Understanding people is essential for efficient and high-quality management, as well as for improving internal practices with a constant focus on enhancing the quality of life of both volunteers and stakeholders (Carrillo & Escudero, 2025).

The aim is to generate citizen and social well-being through volunteer work. In this sense, the objective is to determine reciprocal relationships and influences between the variables and to develop strategies that enhance both the efficiency of volunteers' roles and the receptiveness of organizations toward these individuals, who engage in altruistic work for social and community well-being rather than personal gain. Aligned with the research objective, the central research question is posed: How are engagement and flow related to the job satisfaction of NGO volunteers in Peru? This is followed by specific questions: 1) How do engagement and flow influence the job satisfaction of NGO volunteers in Peru?, 2) How is the relationship between engagement and flow?, 3) Does engagement influence the work satisfaction in a group of NGO volunteers? 4) Does state of flow influence in job satisfaction?, Answering these questions will provide clear contributions to the study of these topics.

The study is structured into four key sections. The theoretical section, supported by seminal authors in the research field, establishes the research variables and the relationships between them. The materials and methods section outlines the methodological decisions made, detailing the instruments and tools used in the study. The results section presents the most relevant findings, supported by statistical data that are interpreted, analyzed, and discussed. Finally, these findings serve as the foundation for the conclusions, which provide a logical synthesis of the conducted analysis.

2. Literature review and justification of the research hypotheses

Engagement is associated with the concepts of "psychological attachment" (Salanova et al., 2006) and "involvement" (Gil- Monte, 2007). It is a multidimensional phenomenon that includes emotional, behavioral, and cognitive dimensions (Lavrijsen et al., 2025) and is defined as a state of emotional and cognitive connection (Kahn, 1990), which is both positive and persistent in relation to the job position (Salanova et al., 2000; Mérida-López & Extremera, 2022).

It allows individuals to experience a greater sense of purpose and belonging while reinforcing the perception that their work is valuable and meaningful (Mazzetti et al., 2023; Schaufeli et al., 2006; Cueto et al., 2024). According to the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model, engagement arises from a balance between job demands and available resources, such as support and autonomy (Bakker et al., 2023; Bakker & Demerouti, 2013; Mauno et al., 2007), which serve as the foundation for active participation in the work environment.

The state of flow is defined as an optimal experience that requires deep concentration and enjoyment in performing an activity. It happens when a person's abilities are perfectly

aligned with the challenges presented by the task (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). It is also considered a condition of physical, mental, and social well-being (World Health Organization, 2001). From a psychological perspective, flow is understood as an exceptional mental state, characterized by deeply gratifying and unique experiences, such as those felt by artists while creating a masterpiece or by individuals fully immersed in their daily tasks (Salanova et al., 2005).

According to the Optimal Experience Model, the state of flow occurs in activities with clear objectives, immediate feedback, and a balance between challenge and skill (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2014). It manifests in individuals who are well-prepared and act as catalysts of motivation for task execution. This state culminates in maximum effort, where the perception of time diminishes, and satisfaction derived from performing activities efficiently (Chen et al., 2000; Gkliati & Saiti, 2022).

Engagement and flow are interdependent, and this synergy enhances motivation and commitment, ensuring a highly satisfying work experience and facilitating the continuous and effective contribution of volunteers (Farina et al., 2018, 2020; Tandler et al., 2020).

From a motivational perspective, engagement and flow are linked to employees' emotions and attitudes in goal attainment, organizational outcomes (Gkliati & Saiti, 2022), and personal productivity (Dávila Morán et al., 2022). Flow complements engagement by providing an optimal experience in task execution (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

During flow, volunteers feel completely absorbed in their work, allowing them to disconnect from external concerns and focus entirely on their activities. This immersion enhances performance and boosts emotional well-being by fostering a sense of control and competence (Abner et al., 2023; Fatoki, 2023; Su et al., 2024; Sypniewska et al., 2023). Furthermore, it promotes job satisfaction, which depends not only on intrinsic or motivational factors – such as personal relationships, job fit, and organizational climate (Pecina & Gutiérrez-Ortiz, 2023) – but also on hygienic factors (Adams, 1963; Herzberg, 1966).

Job satisfaction reflects how content and fulfilled individuals feel with their work (Kammerhoff et al., 2019). It encompasses emotional aspects related to work and the alignment between what the job promises and what it actually delivers in terms of outcomes, expectations, and benefits (Aguilar Ham et al., 2024; Mills, 1967; Locke, 1966). It reflects the pleasure one feels when fulfilling needs or achieving expectations in the workplace, serving as an indicator of the subjective well-being that workers experience in their roles (Corbin et al., 2016; Pecina & Gutiérrez-Ortiz, 2023).

The level of job satisfaction reflects a worker's feelings and emotions toward their occupation, which can impact organizational productivity, professional performance, and employees' personal lives (Mendoza-Llanos & Moyano-Díaz, 2019). This construct relates to the perceived support received from both the organization and family, the alignment between expectations and achievements, and the opportunities for promotion and advancement. Based on this foundations, the next hypotheses comes:

H1: Engagement and flow influence job satisfaction among NGO volunteers.

When individuals perceive their work as meaningful, they experience deep states of concentration and demonstrate enjoyment in their activities (Chin & Kales, 2019; Ellis et al., 2024; Gerpott et al., 2022; Lavoie & Main, 2022; Weintraub et al., 2023; Kahn, 1990; Miller, 2022; Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2014; Agmapisarn & Khetjenkarn, 2024; Baran & Sypniewska, 2020; Gürbüz et al., 2023; Hinojosa-López, 2022; Mazzetti et al., 2023; Sypniewska et al., 2023), thereby strengthening their commitment and increasing volunteers' altruistic desire for engagement. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2: Engagement is positively related to flow.

The relationship between engagement and job satisfaction has been validated by Ogbuanya and Chukwuedo (2017) and further supported by Noercahyo et al. (2021), who highlight its influence on organizational performance. Maleka et al. (2021) and Rai and Maheshwari (2020) demonstrate the correlation between job satisfaction and employee engagement, incorporating additional variables such as fair wages, workplace characteristics, and overall job satisfaction. Moreover, factors influencing job engagement and well-being must be understood in a broader context of mental health and organizational support, as emphasized in global frameworks such as the World Health Organization (2001). Employee engagement can act as a mediator between various factors, including human resource practices and union affiliation, directly impacting job satisfaction (Deci et al., 2017; Deci & Ryan, 1985; Wang et al., 2023; Arifin, 2024; Arulsenthikumar & Punitha, 2023) and, ultimately, organizational performance (Budilestari et al., 2024; Farina et al., 2020). Consequently, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3: Engagement influences job satisfaction.

During the state of flow, volunteers experience high levels of concentration and enjoyment, allowing them to disconnect from external concerns and reduce stress (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2014). Additionally, this creates an environment where collaborators feel competent and effective (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990), capable of facing and overcoming task-related challenges. They develop confidence in their abilities, which translates into a greater sense of personal value and self-efficacy (Bellini et al., 2022; Brol & Dyga, 2021; Deterding & Cutting, 2023), a sense of accomplishment, and emotional well-being. This, in turn, leads to greater opportunities for growth and job satisfaction (Berger et al., 2018; Bergström et al., 2023; Kam et al., 2020; Peixoto et al., 2024), stemming from the successful completion of tasks (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

The repeated experience of achieving goals and overcoming challenges contributes to an overall sense of personal fulfillment and job satisfaction (Habe & Tement, 2016; Locke, 1966; Lovelace et al., 2007; Sharma et al., 2020). The reduction of stress and the increase in

enjoyment during work activities generate a sense of emotional well-being that extends beyond the time dedicated to tasks, positively impacting their perception of job satisfaction (Dorta-Afonso et al., 2023; Maunz & Glaser, 2024; Sak et al., 2023). Volunteers who experience flow feel more committed to complying with regulations and the organization's mission, experiencing a greater alignment between their personal values and their work. This alignment enhances job satisfaction, as they perceive that their efforts contribute significantly to meaningful causes and reinforce their commitment (Drnovšek et al., 2024; Tandler et al., 2020). Based on these considerations, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H4: The state of flow influences job satisfaction.

The relationships proposed in the hypotheses highlight the importance of engagement, the state of flow, and job satisfaction in volunteer work – are interconnected variables that foster emotional, cognitive, and positive connections. These dynamics, considered new from a human perspective due to the altruistic nature of volunteerism, are essential for volunteers to find purpose and enjoyment in their activities. Engagement, as an emotional and cognitive bond, strengthens commitment; the state of flow, as an optimal experience of concentration and enjoyment, enhances performance; and job satisfaction, as an indicator of well-being, reinforces the sense of belonging. Together, these interactions not only transform volunteer tasks into pleasant and meaningful experiences but also promote well-being and strengthen the perception of contributing to a valuable cause.

Based on the above, the theoretical model is structured as follows (Figure 1):

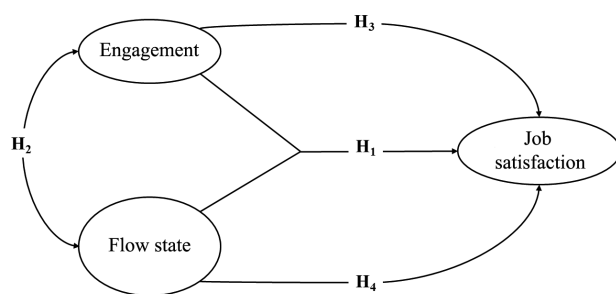


Figure 1. Theoretical model proposed for the study

The elements contained in the model require organizational support, especially in the case of NGOs, which rely on a volunteer group to plan and execute tasks in alignment with the organization's altruistic mission. The work of these volunteers should be compensated with intangible rewards, fostering a cooperative social effort for the benefit of those in need. From both perspectives – the volunteers and the NGO – there is a commitment to complying with regulations and creating a harmonious work environment where efforts and achievements are recognized. This, in turn, facilitates opportunities for growth that benefit both the community and the management.

3. Materials and methods

A quantitative methodology was used to analyze how engagement and flow state influence volunteers' job satisfaction. The study employed a non-experimental, cross-sectional design, allowing data collection and analysis at a single point in time to identify relationships between the variables of interest. The sample consisted of 1,023 volunteers, selected through non-probabilistic convenience sampling. It was a heterogeneous sample relative to the population size and met the criterion for a representative sample to conduct multivariable analysis. Additionally, it allowed for a factorial analysis as evidence of construct validity for one of the research variables, requiring samples larger than 200 observations (Comrey, 1985; Tabachnick & Fidell, 1989). To measure engagement, flow state, and job satisfaction, validated questionnaires were used: a) The Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) (Schaufeli et al., 2003), which assesses aspects such as energy and resilience at work (vigor), enthusiasm and sense of purpose in work tasks (dedication), and full concentration during work activities (absorption). b) The Work-Related Flow Inventory (WOLF) (Bakker, 2008), which evaluates whether participants clearly understand their work goals, perceive that job demands match their abilities, and experience full attention during their work activities. c) The Job Satisfaction Scale SL-20/23 (Meliá & Peiró, 1998), which measures satisfaction with job content and activities (intrinsic satisfaction), external conditions such as salary and work environment (extrinsic satisfaction), and overall job satisfaction (general satisfaction).

The reliability of the instruments was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, ensuring adequate internal consistency. Table 1 presents high Cronbach's alpha values for the variables "Engagement" (0.945) and "Flow State" (0.948), indicating excellent internal consistency. In both cases, the values exceed the established threshold of 0.70 (Hernández & Mendoza, 2018). This suggests that the items within the scales used to measure these constructs are highly correlated internally and demonstrate strong reliability.

Table 1. Cronbach's Alpha

| Latent Variables | Cronbach's alpha | Elements |
|------------------|------------------|----------|
| Engagement | .945 | 17 |
| Flow statement | .948 | 13 |

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) were conducted to confirm the validity of the measured constructs. In the descriptive analysis, the unit of analysis was characterized by describing volunteer attributes such as age, educational level, experience, and the types of tasks performed within the NGO, providing a general overview of the volunteers' profiles and their work context. For the inferential analysis, Pearson's correlation test was used to explore the bivariate relationships between engagement and flow. Additionally, linear regression analyses were conducted to examine the influence of independent variables on job satisfaction. Finally, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was employed to assess the complex and simultaneous relationships

among engagement, flow, and job satisfaction, offering insight into the underlying mechanisms.

Data were collected through questionnaires distributed to volunteers, ensuring participant confidentiality and anonymity. The data were analyzed using SPSS for preliminary analyses and AMOS for confirmatory analyses and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). The results were interpreted within the framework of the theoretical model, identifying significant relationships and their impact on job satisfaction.

4. Results

The descriptive results indicate that volunteers exhibit diversity, with the majority falling within the 30 to 35 age range and a high proportion holding a bachelor's degree (557) or associate studies (318). This diversity facilitates the implementation of NGO programs, although it may lead to inconsistencies in work quality (Arias et al., 2015; Cordobés et al., 2018). Engagement levels show that 40% of volunteers report high engagement, demonstrating a strong emotional and cognitive connection to their work, while 25% exhibit low engagement due to a lack of recognition and work overload (Herzberg, 1966; Bakker & Demerouti, 2013). Only 30% experience high levels of flow, indicating that many do not perceive their tasks as aligned with their skills, a crucial factor in achieving flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Job satisfaction is reported as high by 35% of volunteers, moderate by 45%, and low by 20%, influenced by engagement and flow, supporting the interdependence of these constructs (Schaufeli et al., 2006; Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

The high level of education among volunteers facilitates program implementation and allows NGOs to adapt to diverse community needs. Furthermore, high and moderate engagement levels suggest that volunteers are emotionally invested in their work, positively impacting performance and job satisfaction.

However, variability in experience and training leads to inconsistencies in work quality. Additionally, low job satisfaction levels contribute to demotivation, high turnover, and reduced commitment. The variability in flow levels suggests that not all volunteers are fully immersed in or enjoying their tasks, which negatively affects performance.

The results in Table 2 confirm the adequacy of the data for factor analysis. The KMO value of 0.811 indicates good sampling adequacy, while Bartlett's sphericity test ($p < 0.000$) confirms that the variable correlations are sufficiently strong to justify factor analysis.

Table 2. KMO and Bartlett's test for job satisfaction

| | | |
|---|-----------|-----------|
| Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy | | .811 |
| Bartlett's test of sphericity | Aprox. X2 | 39974.059 |
| | gl | 15617 |
| | Sig. | .000 |

Table 3 identifies five key factors contributing to volunteers' job satisfaction. The most significant factor is work environment and support, which accounts for the greatest variability in job satisfaction. This is followed by compensation and recognition, emphasizing the importance of these elements in maintaining satisfaction. Autonomy and volunteer participation also play a crucial role, indicating that decision-making capacity and group involvement enhance job satisfaction. Additionally, regulatory compliance and perceived fairness are significant, suggesting that a just and well-regulated environment improves overall satisfaction. Finally, although with lesser impact, opportunities for growth and professional development remain relevant, highlighting their importance in sustaining volunteer engagement and motivation.

Table 3. Variance and matrix of extracted factor

| Factor | Significance | % de variance | % acumulated | Points |
|--------|-----------------------------------|---------------|--------------|--------|
| 1 | Work environment and support | 46.762% | 46.762% | 10.755 |
| 2 | Compensation and recognition | 23.711% | 70.473% | 5.454 |
| 3 | Autonomy and participation | 8.000% | 78.473% | 1.840 |
| 4 | Regulatory compliance and justice | 4.356% | 82.829% | 1.002 |
| 5 | Growth opportunities | 3.299% | 86.128% | 0.759 |

Results of Table 4 and Figure 2 indicate that the model fits the data well. The chi-square value is 39,979.72, which is reasonable given the model size. The RMSEA of 0.049 suggests a good fit, as it is less than or equal to 0.05 (Kline, 2023). The fit indices CFI (0.953), TLI (0.947), and NFI (0.912) are all above 0.90. The parsimony indices PCFI (0.838) and PNFI (0.752) are acceptable. The AIC is 41,254.36, indicating model efficiency. The normed chi-square value of 2.56 falls within the acceptable range, as the ratio of chi-square to degrees of freedom is below 3, supporting the model's adequacy (Bollen & Long, 1993; Hair et al., 1999).

Table 4. Confirmatory factor analysis

| Index | Value |
|--------------|----------|
| X2 | 39979.72 |
| RMSA | 0.049 |
| CFI | 0.953 |
| TLI | 0.947 |
| NFI | 0.912 |
| PCFI | 0.838 |
| PNFI | 0.752 |
| AIC | 41254.36 |
| X2 normative | 2.56 |

Table 5 shows a correlation of 0.908, indicating a very strong positive relationship between engagement and the state of flow, with a significance level of $p < 0.001$.

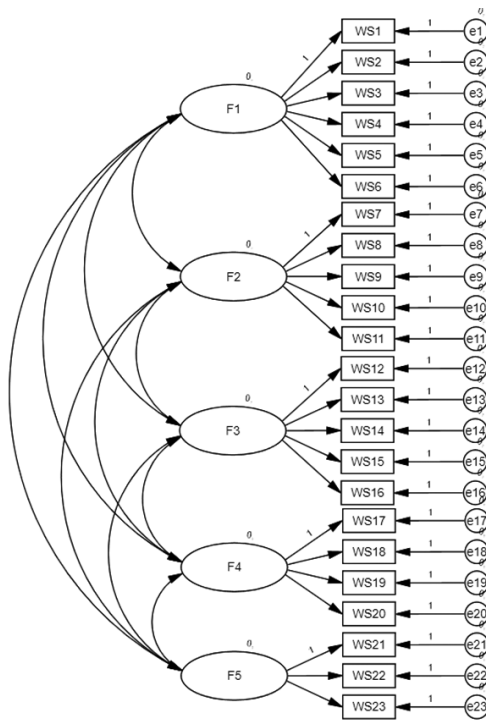


Figure 2. Confirmatory analysis

Table 5. Level of relationship between independent variables

| | | Engagement | Flow |
|------------|---------------------|------------|------|
| Engagement | Pearson correlation | 1 | .908 |
| | Sig. (bilateral) | | .000 |
| | N | 1203 | 1203 |
| Flow | Pearson correlation | .908** | 1 |
| | Sig. (bilateral) | .000 | |
| | N | 1203 | 1203 |

Table 6 shows that both flow (coefficient 0.703) and engagement (coefficient 0.557) have a significant and positive influence on volunteers' job satisfaction. This indicates that both factors are relevant for improving job satisfaction, with the state of flow being a stronger predictor than engagement.

Table 6. SEM model relationship

| Relationship | Coefficient | Significance |
|-------------------------------|-------------|--------------|
| Flow → Job Satisfaction | 0.703 | $p < 0.001$ |
| Engagement → Job Satisfaction | 0.557 | $p < 0.001$ |

Table 7. Linear regression

| Model summary ^b | | | | | | | | | |
|----------------------------|-------------------|----------------|-------------------------|----------------|-----------------------|----------|-----|------|-------------|
| Model | R | R ² | Adjusted R ² | Standard error | Change statistics. | | | | |
| | | | | | Change R ² | Change F | gl1 | gl2 | Change in F |
| 1 | .865 ^a | .749 | .748 | 6,033 | .749 | 1787,069 | 2 | 1200 | .000 |

Notes: a. Predictors: (Constant), FLOW, Engagement; b. Dependent variable: Job_satisfaction.

Table 7 presents the results of the linear regression, indicating that 74.9% of the variability in job satisfaction can be explained by engagement and the state of flow. The R value (0.865) demonstrates a strong relationship between the independent variables and job satisfaction.

Figure 3 represents the relationship between the model-adjusted predicted values and the observed job satisfaction. A straight fit line indicates that the model accurately predicts job satisfaction based on the independent variables.

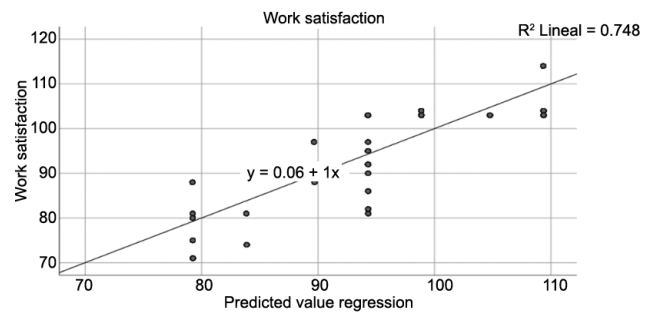


Figure 3. Relationship between the adjusted predicted value and job satisfaction

Figure 4 shows that engagement is positively related to flow (0.908, $p < 0.001$), indicating that as volunteer engagement increases, their state of flow also increases (H1). Additionally, engagement significantly influences job satisfaction (0.557, $p < 0.001$), meaning higher levels of engagement are associated with greater job satisfaction (H2).

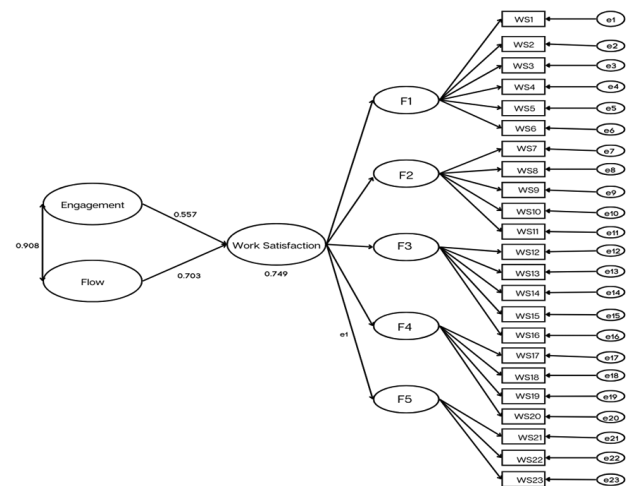


Figure 4. SEM design

Likewise, the state of flow has a strong positive influence on job satisfaction (0.703, $p < 0.001$), suggesting that as volunteers experience more flow, their job satisfaction increases (H3). Furthermore, both engagement and flow together explain 74.9% of job satisfaction (H4), thus validating all research hypotheses.

Hypothesis 1 states that engagement is positively related to flow. The correlation analysis results confirm a very strong relationship between these constructs, with a coefficient of 0.908 and a significance level of $p < 0.001$. According to Kahn (1990), engagement facilitates immersion in tasks and, therefore, the experience of flow. Miller (2022) and Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyi (2014) confirmed that higher engagement facilitates the flow experience. Miller's (2022) Prosocial Motivation Theory and Callero's (1994) Role Identity Model support the idea that engagement, driven by the desire to benefit others and role identity, creates an environment conducive to flow.

Hypothesis 2 posits that engagement positively influences job satisfaction, which is confirmed by the analysis results with a coefficient of 0.557 and significance at $p < 0.001$. Kahn (1990) and Deci and Ryan (1985) confirmed how engagement, as a state of emotional and cognitive connection to work, enhances the perception of value and meaning, thus increasing job satisfaction. Several studies support this relationship (Agmapisarn & Khetjenkarn, 2024; Mazzetti et al., 2023). Additionally, Urteaga's (2013) Social Capital Theory and Herzberg's (1966) Two-Factor and Social Exchange Theories remember the importance of support and recognition in engagement and job satisfaction.

Hypothesis 3 states that the state of flow positively influences job satisfaction, with a coefficient of 0.703 and a significance level of $p < 0.001$. Csikszentmihalyi (1990), Berger et al. (2018), and Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyi (2014) show that flow provides emotional and psychological benefits, increasing job satisfaction. Deci and Ryan's (1985) Intrinsic Motivation Theory also supports these findings. Deterding and Cutting (2023) and Lovelace et al. (2007) highlight that the organizational context and task characteristics may moderate this relationship, aspects not specifically addressed in our study.

Hypothesis 4 posits that both engagement and the state of flow significantly impact job satisfaction. The results confirm this relationship, with coefficients of 0.703 for flow and 0.557 for engagement, explaining 74.9% of the variability in job satisfaction. Kahn's (1990) theory and the Job Demands-Resources Model (Bakker et al., 2023; Bakker & Demerouti, 2013) confirm that engagement provides a sense of purpose and belonging, increasing job satisfaction. Likewise, Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) theory describes flow as an optimal experience of concentration and enjoyment, significantly contributing to job satisfaction. Schaufeli et al. (2006) and Mazzetti et al. (2023) corroborate that engagement and flow are interdependent and jointly enhance volunteer motivation and emotional well-being.

By statistically validating and confirming the proposed relationships between the variables, it becomes evident how the research aligns with the arguments of seminal authors in the studied field. The findings confirmed that, in volunteer work, motivation is essential for carrying out tasks harmoniously, responding optimally and efficiently to the needs of vulnerable groups. Therefore, volunteer activities should be spontaneous while also being performed with the right attitude and commitment. Both engagement and the state of flow require psychosocial connections to support the altruistic practice being developed.

5. Conclusions

NGOs are organizations that carry out collective actions for social benefit. They rely on a group of individuals who develop the role of volunteers, supporting management without expecting anything in return other than recognition for their work and a sense of usefulness to society. Through philanthropic and altruistic efforts, volunteers seek to identify with the activities they perform; these should be carried out in a harmonious and positive environment that fosters the desire to continue helping those in need.

This study examined engagement and the state of flow to determine their influence on the job satisfaction of a group of volunteers collaborating with an NGO. Engagement represents a state of emotional and cognitive connection that is positive and persistent, allowing individuals to experience a greater sense of belonging to their work and the organization. Interdependently and synergistically with engagement, flow was studied as a state that fosters optimal experiences and enjoyment. Both states enhance the motivation and commitment of volunteers in the workplace.

High levels of engagement are present in less than half of the volunteers studied (40%), indicating that this group has a strong emotional and cognitive connection with their work, while the remaining volunteers report a lack of recognition and work overload. Regarding the state of flow, only a small group (30%) of volunteers experiences high levels of flow, while the rest claim that their tasks are not aligned with their skills. These realities affect job satisfaction in the volunteer roles within the studied NGO. Furthermore, satisfaction levels were recorded at only 35% of the total volunteers, a result influenced by engagement and flow. In other words, there is a general lack of satisfaction, which is attributed to the absence of fulfillment states associated with engagement and the state of flow.

A significant influence of engagement and flow on volunteers' job satisfaction is confirmed, with flow being a stronger predictor than engagement. Regarding the research hypotheses, all proposed hypotheses were validated, demonstrating strong relationships between these constructs. The study reinforces the importance of fostering engagement and flow among volunteers to enhance their job satisfaction. The strong correlation between

engagement and flow highlights the necessity of promoting engagement to improve the flow experience among volunteers. Implementing strategies that create a work environment conducive to both engagement and Flow – such as adequate recognition, the assignment of challenging yet manageable tasks, and continuous feedback – can significantly enhance job satisfaction.

To advance the research, the obtained results were analyzed, and future projections were outlined. Core elements related to the central variables were reorganized, and key factors contributing to volunteer job satisfaction were identified. These include the work environment and support, compensation and recognition, autonomy and participation, compliance and justice, and opportunities for growth. Given the diversity among volunteers, NGOs should implement tailored programs to optimize support and collaboration.

NGOs should establish policies, programs, and practices that recognize and value volunteers' contributions, provide appropriate challenges with immediate feedback, and ensure a balanced workload with sufficient resources. Continuous training should be provided to develop specific skills and competencies, thereby increasing volunteers' efficiency, confidence, and engagement. Moreover, regular recognition mechanisms like awards, certificates, and acknowledgments in newsletters can further enhance volunteer motivation and job satisfaction.

Fostering a collaborative and supportive work environment, characterized by constructive feedback and open, effective communication, can improve mutual understanding among volunteers, ultimately enhancing job satisfaction.

Finally, offering flexibility in schedules and responsibilities, along with clearly defining tasks and expectations, can help volunteers balance their personal and professional commitments more effectively, thereby maintaining motivation and job satisfaction.

Limitations

First, the sample consists exclusively of volunteers from an NGO in Peru, which limits the generalizability of the findings to other organizations and cultural contexts. Second, the use of self-reported questionnaires may introduce response biases, such as social desirability, potentially affecting the accuracy of the collected data. Third, although validated instruments were used, the measurement of engagement, flow state, and job satisfaction may not fully capture the complexity of these constructs. Finally, the scarcity of prior research in the NGO context limits the comparison of results with similar studies, highlighting the need for further research in this area to strengthen the understanding of these phenomena. These limitations are acknowledged and indicate the possibility of continued research to expand the study to other contexts and incorporate volunteers' perspectives, allowing for a broader generalization of results. This, in

turn, leads to the proposal of new lines of research aimed at overcoming biases or gaps. Among these, qualitative studies could be developed to enrich the studied topics, offering insights from an interpretative and narrative perspective on volunteer work, their emotions, feelings, expectations, and experiences.

Ethical considerations of research

The presented work was submitted for review by the Ethics Committee of César Vallejo University, obtaining a favorable opinion and approval for the development of the research.

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Informed consent statement

Informed consent was obtained from all subjects who participated in the study.

Data availability statement

The research processes data collected from the reality of non-governmental organizations; however, due to ethical and privacy restrictions, these data are not published. If specific data are required, please contact the authors of the article.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that they have no competing financial interests or known personal relationships that could have influenced the work presented in this article.

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