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Work Context Support and Portuguese Soldiers' Well-Being: The Mediating Role of Autonomous Motivation

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Using self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2008) as the theoretical framework, we tested a model for this study that considers soldiers' perceptions of organizational support and leader–member exchange (LMX), work motivation, and well-being at work. The hypothesized model was tested using a representative sample of 1,045 Portuguese soldiers. Results revealed that autonomous work motivation was significantly related to both contextual factors (organizational support and LMX). In addition, autonomous work motivation was positively related to work engagement and negatively related to burnout, and controlled motivation showed the opposite pattern. More interesting, the results showed that autonomous work motivation as a mechanism that helped to explain the relationship between both contextual factors and workplace well-being. The present results underscore the importance of understanding the mechanisms through which higher work engagement and lower burnout take place, eventually leading to appropriate interventions.

Keywords: self-determination theory, well-being at work, perceived organizational support, LMX

Motivation is a construct that has been broadly studied and valued in the field of psychology, mainly due to its consequences: Motivation leads individuals to action, while also providing direction and intention (Ryan & Deci, 2000). According to the self-determination theory (SDT), when individuals get involved in a task or action, they may have many different reasons for doing so, and these reasons have an impact on the quality of their behavior and well-being (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

In the specific case of militaries, Gorman and Thomas (1991) identified three groups with different reasons for joining the army: finances, self-development opportunities, patriotism, or self-improvement. These reasons are compatible with the SDT assumption that holds that motivation varies on a continuum of more extrinsic and controlled motivations to motivations that are increasingly intrinsic and autonomous, or self-determined (Ryan & Deci, 2000). So according to SDT, we have (a) intrinsic motivation, which means doing something for its own sake, and reflects the individual's disposition to be challenged, explore, and develop social or cognitive competencies, and (b) extrinsic motivation, which is experienced in situations in which the individual acts more in accordance with external regulation than in accordance with an intrinsic interest (Deci & Ryan, 2008). Thus, militaries made up of individuals who choose to join the army out of a sense of patriotism or self-development oppor-

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tunities reveal an intrinsic, more autonomous motivation, because this decision reflects an inherent satisfaction that does not depend on external contingencies; those who choose money have a more controlled motivation, given that they opt for a job in the army to obtain a desired consequence (e.g., tangible rewards).

In Portugal, we may also consider the different reasons behind young people entering and continuing to work in the army as soldiers. Joining the army is a voluntary decision, thus, we may expect an autonomous motivation to be present in this option. On the other hand, soldiers receive recruitment training that promotes the development of different technical and behavioral skills and competencies. Furthermore, in their army jobs they have the opportunity not only to use these skills but also to continuously develop them. Thus, we may also expect self-development opportunities to be another reason for opting to work in the army. Finally, with the increase in unemployment over recent years, particularly in young males with lower levels of schooling (Fabricio, Koene, & Sobral, 2015), we may also expect more controlled motivation, with a view to avoiding unemployment and ensuring a salary to be an important reason for deciding to work in the army.

Recent research in the work domain has looked at the relations among contextual factors, motivation, and outcomes (Dysvik & Ku-

vaas, 2014; Gillet, Gagné, Sauvagère, & Fouquereau, 2013). However, to our knowledge, there are no studies in a military context that have included context determinants and consequences of the various types of motivation. Accordingly, the goal of the present research was to test a model that incorporates soldiers' perceptions of organizational support and of an exchange relationship with their supervisors, work motivations, burnout, and work engagement (see Figure 1). Such a model would provide a blueprint of steps to be taken to facilitate soldiers' well-being at work. The aim of the present research pertains to the role that organizational support and the supervisor exchange relationship play in soldiers' motivation and well-being at work.

Work-Context Support as a Determinant of Soldiers' Motivation

Two determinants of work motivation were examined. The first, perceived organizational support, is more distal, stemming from one's general relationship with one's employer, in this case, the army. Perceived organizational support is the degree to which employees believe that their organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986). The study of perceived organizational support has

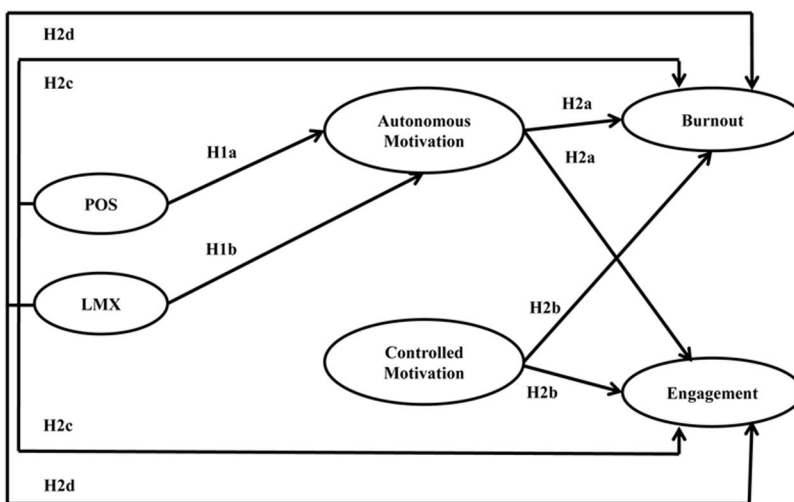


Figure 1. Research model. Only the hypothesized relationships that were tested are represented in the diagram by an arrow.

received considerable attention in the literature (for a review, see Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002) and some studies (e.g., Gagné et al., 2010; Gillet et al., 2013) have analyzed perceived organizational support in the prediction of workers' autonomous motivation according to SDT. The perception of organizational support helps to fulfill the three basic psychological needs of individuals, namely relatedness, autonomy, and competency (Fernet, Austin, Trépanier, & Dussault, 2013; Gillet, Fouquereau, Forest, Brunault, & Colombat, 2012; Van den Broeck, Vansteenkiste, De Witte, Soenens, & Lens, 2010). The need for relatedness refers to the degree to which individuals feel connected and accepted by others (Baumeister & Leary, 1995) and is the most obviously related to perceptions of organizational support (Gillet et al., 2012). This is due to the fact that whenever employees have this perception, they regard themselves as being valuable and consider their employers to be committed to the relationship with them. The need for autonomy reflects the need of individuals to have a sense of volition (i.e., a sense of free will, wanting and desiring to perform a particular action or activity), as well as a sense of feeling responsible for their own behavior (de Charms, 1968), and organizational support should satisfy this need by increasing feelings of internal control. The need for competence reflects individuals' needs to act efficaciously to achieve objectives (White, 1959). Employees' needs are satisfied when they are encouraged to seek skill-related challenges (Dysvik & Kuvaas, 2014), and when organizational support is perceived by employees, they may also consider the work context to display these characteristics.

Having one's needs met may, in turn, also enhance one's obligation to reciprocate the provided organizational support (Baran, Shanock, & Miller, 2012). Social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) has served as a fundamental framework for exploring the employee–organization relationship, namely, whenever workers receive benefits and inducements from organizations, contributing to their perception of organizational support, they are expected to reciprocate them (Gouldner, 1960). Therefore, it is possible to expect the satisfaction of workers' psychological needs—by the provided organizational support—to lead to a sense of obligation toward reciprocating such treatment. In turn, it is pos-

sible to expect the perception of organizational support to contribute to explaining favorable responses on the part of the workers, namely, having an impact on workers' motivations that are conceptualized as leading the individuals to action in a guided and intentional manner, which may be manifested in workers' outcomes (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Previous studies have provided support to the assumption that the perception of organizational support is significantly related to autonomous motivation (Gagné et al., 2010; Gillet et al., 2013), thus, our first hypothesis was established.

Hypothesis 1a: Perceived organizational support will be positively related to soldiers' autonomous work motivation.

The second source of support, a more proximal one, is the perceived leader–member exchange (LMX; Dienesch & Liden, 1986), considering that leaders develop different types of exchange relationships with their followers and that the quality of these relationships affects important leader and member outcomes (Gerstner & Day, 1997; Liden, Sparrowe, & Wayne, 1997; Sparrowe & Liden, 1997). Although the analyzed supervisor support refers to autonomy support within SDT (e.g., Black & Deci, 2000; Gillet et al., 2012; Muraven, Gagné, & Rosman, 2008), in military contexts, autonomy support may take different contours. Indeed, in schools with students, and in companies with workers, supervisor support fosters autonomy when it provides a meaningful rationale for doing the tasks, emphasizes choice rather than control, and acknowledges employees' feelings and perspective (Deci, Connell, & Ryan, 1989; Hardré & Reeve, 2009). However, in a military context, followers (in this case, soldiers) are expected to comply with rules and adhere to standardized procedures, and the supervisor–employee relationship is based on submission to the hierarchy. In these situations, soldiers' autonomy may be enhanced by an understanding of what underlies the rules and procedures. In companies and schools, it may be desirable to have employees questioning procedures, innovating, and building new solutions. However, in the army, soldiers have to follow their commands. Even so, there is still room for an increased sense of autonomy. In the military context, sol-

diers feel more autonomous and motivated to perform their roles when they understand what is expected of their actions, when they have the required resources, and have someone (e.g., a leader) they can rely on. Hence, we consider that the LMX (Dienesch & Liden, 1986) plays an important role in explaining soldiers' motivations. Military leaders can increase soldiers' autonomous motivation not only by considering their problems and needs, but also by giving legitimacy and credibility to the commands that soldiers are expected to abide. In higher quality LMX relationships, leaders provide their subordinates with helpful resources for their work (Liden et al., 1997) such as material and non-material goods, namely high levels of trust, interaction, support, and formal and informal rewards (Liden & Graen, 1980). Thus, in keeping with organizational support, more proximal supervisor support acts as an efficient way of promoting workers' motivation (Lagace, Castleberry, & Ridnour, 1993). Furthermore, drawing from social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), LMX theory also suggests a perceived obligation on the part of subordinates to reciprocate this high-quality relationship (Blau, 1964; Gouldner, 1960). Thus, to reciprocate high-level LMX relationships, subordinates are likely to choose an autonomous motivation that leads to positive employees' responses to maintain a balanced or equitable social exchange (Wayne, Shore, Bommer, & Tetrick, 2002). Hence, the following hypothesis was established.

Hypothesis 1b: The LMX will be positively related to soldiers' autonomous work motivation.

Soldier Motivation and Well-Being at Work

According to Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) workplace well-being should be assessed through burnout and work engagement. Both are independent, moderately and negatively connected states, as burnout is a negative dimension of well-being, whereas work engagement is positive. In spite of its initial inclusion as a dimension of burnout, professional efficacy has more recently been considered a relatively independent dimension (Lee & Ashforth, 1996), but one that is developed in a parallel way (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001). Thus, it is currently believed that exhaustion and cynicism

should be considered the core dimensions of burnout (Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2001). Exhaustion refers to a feeling of having drained one's resources and involves an affective response and a negative psychological state caused by the perception of high arousal or overload. Cynicism is a dysfunctional way of coping with the loss of energetic resources by developing a disinvestment in the job (Maslach, 1993). On the other hand, work engagement may be viewed as a motivational construct characterized by a positive feeling in relation to work (Britt, 1999), which includes vigor, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzalez-Romá, & Bakker, 2002). Vigor is translated into high levels of energy and mental resistance and also the desire and ability to invest effort in work. Dedication is a feeling of relevance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, and challenge geared toward work. Absorption is similar to a state of persistent flow, such that the person is totally focused, loses the notion of time, and remains involved in the job. Following this framework, we conceptualized psychological well-being as being characterized by the presence of work engagement and the absence of burnout.

According to SDT, higher levels of motivation yield more optimal outcomes if the motivation is autonomous, whereas inversely, there are more undesirable results if the motivation is controlled (for a review see Deci & Ryan, 2000, 2008). As far as well-being at work is concerned, some theoretical and empirical studies have suggested and supported positive relationships between autonomous motivation and positive indicators of well-being (e.g., Gagné & Deci, 2005), namely work engagement (Stone, Deci, & Ryan, 2009), and a negative relationship between autonomous motivation and a negative indicator of well-being at work, namely emotional exhaustion (Gagné et al., 2015) and burnout (Fernet, Guay, & Senécal, 2004). In addition, controlled motivation is negatively related to positive indicators of well-being at work and shows a positive relationship with negative indicators of well-being at work (Gagné & Deci, 2005).

As such, Hypothesis 2 was established and divided into four parts.

Hypothesis 2: Motivations for becoming a soldier are related to well-being at work.

Hypothesis 2a: Autonomous work motivation will be negatively related to soldiers' burnout and positively related to their work engagement.

Hypothesis 2b: Controlled work motivation will be positively related to soldiers' burnout and negatively related to their work engagement.

Previous research has shown that perceived organizational support (Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011; Gagné & Deci, 2005; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002) and a high-quality relationship between the supervisor and employees (Sparr & Sonnentag, 2008; van Dierendonck, Haynes, Borrill, & Stride, 2004) predict employee well-being. Based on the relevance of job characteristics to explain workplace well-being, theoretical models emphasize the value of social support in coping with stress and promoting well-being. In line with the assumption of the job control support model (JD-CS, Karasek & Theorell, 1990), social support—from both supervisor and peers—should be a significant factor for workers' adaptation to job demands and, consequently relates positively to well-being at work and negatively to strain. Further, the job demand-resource model (JD-R, Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004) specifically assumes that the satisfaction of basic needs is the mechanism that explains the relationship between job resources and well-being at work, namely engagement. In support of this assumption, Van den Broeck et al. (2010) verified that the satisfaction of basic needs was a partial mediator between job resources—i.e., control, decision latitude, and social support—and vigor. On the other hand, these authors also showed that the satisfaction of these needs mediated the relationship between job resources and exhaustion. As for perceived organizational support, Gillet et al. (2012) showed that needing satisfaction was a partial mediator between context support, job satisfaction, and self-realization, and was a full mediator when it came to happiness. With regard to the supervisor–employee exchange relationship, Lagace et al. (1993) found that employees with higher quality LMX relationships were more motivated and experienced less role-related stress. Thus, we may consider that a context with support, both from the organization and from the supervisor, responding to

workers' needs, not only relates positively to autonomous motivation, but also relates positively to the positive indicator of well-being at work—engagement—and negatively to the negative indicator of well-being at work—burnout (Gillet et al., 2012).

More interesting is the notion that autonomous motivation is a mechanism that helps to explain the relationship between context support and soldiers' well-being. As argued before, the perception of organizational support and a high-quality relationship between the supervisor and the employee is vital for soldiers' autonomous motivation. Moreover, autonomous motivation contributes to soldiers' well-being. In fact, Britt (1999) studied soldiers and found that they were most likely to be engaged in their jobs when their job guidelines were clear (i.e., when job characteristics were promoted by an army context with heavy support and a high-level LMX relationship) and when they felt personal control over their job performance (i.e., an autonomous motivation). Going a step further, we considered that, perceived organizational support and the LMX should be related to soldiers' well-being via autonomous motivation. Therefore, we hypothesized that perceived organizational support and the LMX would have both direct and indirect (via autonomous work motivation) effects on soldiers' well-being.

Hypothesis 2c: Autonomous work motivation will partially mediate the effects of perceived organizational support on burnout and work engagement.

Hypothesis 2d: Autonomous work motivation will partially mediate the effects of the LMX on burnout and work engagement.

Method

Sample and Procedure

A sample of 1,045 soldiers from the Portuguese army participated in this study. This sample was taken from a universe of 9,743 soldiers, which is representative of a 95% confidence interval. Age and gender of population and sample were very similar (cf. Table 1). Soldiers in Portugal join the army voluntarily and enter into a 1-year contract that can be renewed for a maximum of six years. Most of our sample was

Table 1
Demographic Characteristics

| Soldiers | Sample (<i>N</i> = 1,045) | Population ^a (<i>N</i> = 9,743) |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|--|
| Gender (% male) | 91.50% | 89.31% |
| Age (mean) | 23.66 (<i>SD</i> = 3.99) | 23.77 (<i>SD</i> = 3.89) |
| Marital status (% single) | 88.50% | — |
| Education | | — |
| 9th Grade | 30.90% | |
| 12th Grade | 66.90% | |
| Mean tenure | 3.74 (<i>SD</i> = 2.70) | — |
| Displaced from home (% yes) | 71.20% | — |

^a Data for the population was extracted from the Portuguese Army 2014 management report.

composed of men (91.5%), between 19 and 56 years of age ($M = 23.66$, $SD = 3.99$), with secondary school education—Year 12 (66.9%)—or basic school education—Year 9 (30.9%). The average tenure was around 4 years ($M = 3.74$; $SD = 2.70$), with the minimum of 3 months to 6 years of tenure. More demographic information on the sample is presented in Table 1.

Questionnaires were distributed and collected by psychologists from the army in several barracks in different regions of Portugal. In each barrack, participants received a questionnaire package, a cover letter explaining the study, and a consent form, stressing the fact that their participation was confidential and voluntary. They completed the questionnaires and returned them directly to the psychologist.

Measures

Perceived organizational support. Perceived organizational support was measured with a translated eight-item version of the Perceived Organizational Support Scale developed by Eisenberger et al. (1986), which has been used in previous Portuguese studies (Chambel & Sobral, 2011; Giunchi, Chambel, & Ghislieri, 2015). An item example is “Help is available from the army when I have a problem” and “The army really cares about my well-being” and respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed with the eight statements on a seven-point scale from 1 (*totally disagree*) to 7 (*totally agree*). Cronbach’s α in this study was .81.

LMX. The LMX was measured using a translated seven-item scale developed by Scandura and Graen (1984) that was also used

in a previous Portuguese study (Carvalho & Chambel, 2014). An example of a sample item is “My supervisor understands my problems and needs” and “My supervisor recognizes my potential.” Items were scored on a 7-point rating scale from 1 (*totally disagree*) to 7 (*totally agree*). Cronbach’s α in this study was .92.

Work motivation. Work motivation was assessed with a Portuguese adapted version of the Motivation at Work Scale (MAWS; Gagné et al., 2010). The questionnaire was translated into Portuguese according to the guidelines of Brislin (1980). This scale includes 12 items reflecting four types of motivation identified by Deci and Ryan (1985). Ranging from most to least autonomous, these constructs are Intrinsic Motivation (e.g., “Because I enjoy being in the military very much.”), Identified Regulation (e.g., “Because being in the military fulfills my career plans.”), Introjected Regulation (e.g., “Because working in the army is my life and I don’t want to fail.”), and External Regulation (e.g., “I do this job in the army for the paycheck.”). Participants were asked to consider all statements and indicate to what degree they corresponded to one of the reasons for why they were doing their job in the army on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*does not correspond at all*) to 7 (*corresponds very strongly*). Reliability of the MAWS was demonstrated by confirmatory factor analyses with language invariance tests, and evidence for its validity is good (Gagné et al., 2010). In line with Gillet et al. (2013), the different types of motivation were combined into Autonomous (Intrinsic Motivation and Identified Regulation) and Controlled (Introjected Regulation and Ex-

ternal Regulation) Motivation scores. The factorial structure of the MAWS was evaluated using an exploratory factor analysis. Two factors were extracted, explaining 61% of the variance and factor loadings of the matrix structure ranged from .50 to .78, corresponding to autonomous motivation and controlled motivation. The factors were well-defined with a cross-loading. Indeed, an External Regulation item ("Because this job in the army affords me a certain standard of living.") loaded .50 on the Autonomous Motivation factor and .54 on the Controlled Motivation factor. Thus, this item was erased. In this study, Cronbach's α of Autonomous Motivation was .86 and of Controlled Motivation .85.

Burnout. Burnout was assessed using a Portuguese translation of the Maslach Burnout Inventory (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996), which was also used in a previous study with militaries (Chambel & Oliveira-Cruz, 2010). The two core dimensions were selected: Emotional Exhaustion (five items, e.g., "I feel used up at the end of a work day") and Cynicism (five items, e.g., "I doubt the significance of my work"). The respondents answered the items on a 7-point scale that ranged from 1 (*never*) to 7 (*every day*). Higher scores indicated high burnout levels. The internal consistency reliability coefficient among participants in the present sample was $\alpha = .85$ for Exhaustion and $\alpha = .74$ for Cynicism.

Work engagement. Work engagement was measured by a short Portuguese version of the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (Schaufeli et al., 2002), which was used in a previous military study (e.g., Chambel & Oliveira-Cruz, 2010). The Vigor, Dedication, and Absorption dimensions were each measured by three items (item examples include "At my work I feel bursting with energy," "I find the work that I do full of meaning and purpose," and "I am immersed in my work"). All items were rated on a 7-point Likert scale, identical to burnout. In this study, the exploratory factor analysis showed a one-factor solution that explained 58.33% of the variance. All items had factor loadings between .47 and .88 and good reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = .91$). The one-dimensional Work Engagement concept was also used in previous studies (e.g., Halbesleben & Wheeler, 2008; Sonnentag, Dormann, & Demerouti, 2010).

Results

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Because this study used self-reported measures, the recommendation of Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, and Podsakoff (2003) was taken into account to test the error of common method variance and, a confirmatory factor analysis of our theoretical model was also performed. To confirm dimensionality, a one-factor model was examined for comparison purposes.

The models were compared based on χ^2 difference tests and other fit indices, including the standardized root-mean-square residual (SRMR), the Bentler comparative fit index (CFI), the Tucker-Lewis index (TLI), and the root mean-square-error of approximation (RMSEA). Levels of .90 or higher for CFI and TLI and levels of .06 or lower for RMSEA combined with levels of .08 or lower for SRMR, indicated that the models fit the data reasonably well (Arbuckle, 2003).

The model with six latent factors (i.e., Perceived Organizational Support, LMX, Autonomous Motivation, Controlled Motivation, Burnout, and Work Engagement) corresponding to our theoretical model showed an acceptable fit, $\chi^2(797) = 2605.21$, $p < .01$, SRMR = .05, CFI = .93, TLI = .92, RMSEA = .05. In comparison with an alternative tested model, an unacceptable fit of the one-factor model was verified, in which all items loaded on a single latent variable, $\chi^2(814) = 12,652.00$, $p < .01$, SRMR = .12, CFI = .51, TLI = .49, RMSEA = .12. Furthermore, the difference between our theoretical model and the one-factor model was significant, $\Delta\chi^2(17) = 10,046.79$, $p < .01$, and confirmed that the theoretical model represented the best fit.

Descriptive Analysis

The means, standard deviations and correlation matrix are presented in Table 2. Looking at the mean rates of the perceived organizational support and LMX ($M = 3.32$, $SD = 1.15$; $M = 5.01$, $SD = 1.33$, respectively, considering a 7-point Likert scale), it was observed that soldiers had a neutral perception in terms of organizational support. However, in relation to the supervisor exchange relationship they had a

Table 2
Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlation Matrix

| Variable | Mean | SD | <i>r</i> Sample | | | | | | | | |
|-------------------------------|-------|------|-----------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--|
| | | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | |
| 1. Age | 23.66 | 3.99 | | | | | | | | | |
| 2. Tenure | 3.74 | 2.70 | .51** | | | | | | | | |
| 3. POS | 3.32 | 1.15 | -.00 | -.00 | | | | | | | |
| 4. LMX | 5.01 | 1.33 | .04 | .06* | .38** | | | | | | |
| 5. Autonomous work motivation | 4.61 | 1.03 | .02 | .03 | .41** | .34** | | | | | |
| 6. Controlled work motivation | 4.50 | 1.37 | -.07* | -.08** | .07* | .00 | .18** | | | | |
| 7. Emotional exhaustion | 4.06 | 1.36 | -.04 | -.06 | -.20** | -.25** | -.21** | .21** | | | |
| 8. Cynicism | 3.81 | 1.29 | -.04 | -.05 | -.25** | -.32** | -.26** | .15** | .53** | | |
| 9. Engagement | 4.35 | 1.22 | .06 | .08** | .35** | .35** | .51** | -.09** | -.41** | -.48** | |

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

positive perception. Considering both types of motivation, the soldier was found to attribute, on average, a similar score regarding Autonomous Motivation for being in the army ($M = 4.61$, $SD = 1.03$) and Controlled Motivation ($M = 4.50$, $SD = 1.37$). The mean values obtained for Exhaustion and Cynicism ($M = 4.06$, $SD = 1.36$; $M = 3.81$, $SD = 1.29$, respectively, considering a 7-point Likert scale) and for Work Engagement ($M = 4.35$, $SD = 1.22$) suggested that soldiers presented relatively high levels of Burnout and low levels of Work Engagement.

Analyzing the correlations among the studied variables (see Table 2), we found that perceived organizational support and LMX related positively to Autonomous Motivation; the latter related significantly and negatively to Burnout and positively to Work Engagement. We also found a significant positive relationship between Controlled Motivation and Burnout and a significant negative relationship between Controlled Motivation and Work Engagement.

Structural Equation Models

Testing mediation analysis through structural equation models (SEM) has some similarities to the approach adopted by Baron and Kenny (1986) and also provides several advantages (James, Mulaik, & Brett, 2006). As a confirmatory approach, SEM simultaneously tests the relationships among an initial variable, a mediator, and an outcome variable. In addition, SEM analyses derive from nested model comparisons, allowing us to hone in on the specific parameters of interest and to contrast a given pattern of effects against viable alternatives.

To test the mediation relationship, two sets of SEMs were computed. First, a mediation model including full mediation of the relationship between the two context characteristics—perceived organizational support and the LMX—and the two dimensions of work well-being—Burnout and Engagement—by Work Motivation, Autonomous and Controlled, $\chi^2(802) = 2691.25$, $p < .01$, SRMR = .06, CFI = .92, TLI = .92, RMSEA = .05 were analyzed, which showed an acceptable fit. Then, in addition to the relationships established in the above mediation model, a partial mediation model was elaborated, which corresponded to our theoretical model and included direct relationships between the two context characteristics and the two dimensions of work well-being. This partial mediation model showed an acceptable fit, $\chi^2(798) = 2608.77$, $p < .01$, SRMR = .05, CFI = .93, TLI = .92, RMSEA = .05, significantly better than the full mediation model $\Delta\chi^2(4) = 82.48$, $p < .01$.

Regarding Figure 2, the results obtained with this final model suggest that, as expected, more perceived organizational support and more LMX meant more Autonomous Motivation ($\beta = .38$, $p < .01$ and $\beta = .19$, $p < .01$, respectively), thus supporting Hypotheses 1a and 1b. Hence, Autonomous Motivation was found to be negatively and significantly related to Burnout ($\beta = -.26$, $p < .01$) and positively and significantly related to Work Engagement ($\beta = .49$, $p < .01$), supporting Hypothesis 2a. Furthermore, Controlled Motivation was also observed to be positively and significantly related to Burnout ($\beta = .24$, $p < .01$) and nega-

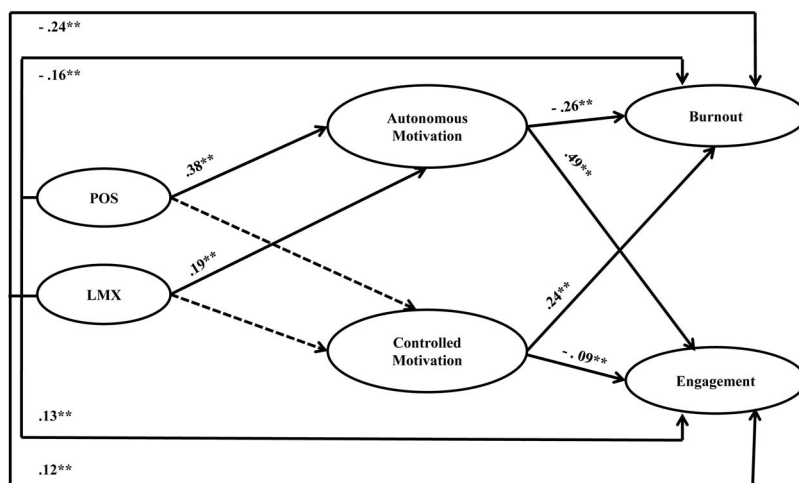


Figure 2. Partially mediated model with the significant relationships between variables represented. ** $p < .01$; nonsignificant paths are represented by --->.

tively and significantly related to Work Engagement ($\beta = -.09, p < .01$), supporting Hypothesis 2b. Regarding the role of work motivation as mediator of the relationship between context characteristics and the two dimensions of work well-being, the mediation of Autonomous Motivation helped partially explain the relationship between perceived organizational support and the two dimensions of work well-being—Burnout ($z = -8.25, p < .01$) and Work Engagement ($z = 6.43, p < .01$), supporting Hypothesis 2c; the mediation of Autonomous Motivation helped partially explain the relationship between LMX and the two dimensions of work well-being—Burnout ($z = -4.41, p < .01$) and Work Engagement ($z = 5.49, p < .01$), supporting Hypothesis 2d. Furthermore, also supporting the mediating role of Autonomous Motivation, the explained variance of burnout without this mediator was observed at 21% and with this mediator at 32%. Likewise, the variance of Work Engagement was 20% without this mediator and stood at 38% with this mediator.

Discussion

The main purpose of the present research was to test a model positing that perceived organizational support (i.e., a distal source of support) and LMX (i.e., a proximal source of support) related to soldiers' autonomous work motiva-

tion. In turn, autonomous work motivation was hypothesized to predict higher levels of well-being (less burnout and more work engagement), while controlled work motivation was likely to be negatively associated with workplace well-being. Results from structural equation modeling analyses supported the hypothesized model and revealed that all hypothesized paths were significant. These findings lead to a number of implications.

Previous studies have indicated that employees report higher levels of well-being when they perceive their organizations to be high in support (e.g., Eisenberger, Cummings, Armeli, & Lynch, 1997; Eisenberger, Armeli, Rexwinkel, Lynch, & Rhoades, 2001) and when they feel they have high-quality relationships with their supervisors (Sparr & Sonnentag, 2008; Van Dierendonck et al., 2004). Findings from our study are coherent with this prior research. Indeed, the present research study highlights that perceived organizational support and the LMX relationship positively predicts soldiers' well-being. Aligned with our hypotheses, and in accordance with the predictions of the self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000), the present results also show that autonomous motivation mediated the relationships between soldiers' perceived social context support—organizational support and LMX—and workplace well-being. These findings support the view that autonomous motivation represents

a basic mechanism contributing to the effects of social context characteristics on soldiers' well-being. Therefore, the soldier behaves with a full sense of volition and choice to work in the army, which plays a central role in his or her well-being at work, feeling low burnout and high engagement.

In the present study, we distinguished between two types of motivation (i.e., autonomous and controlled). Recent studies (Gagné et al., 2010; Gillet et al., 2013) have shown that social context support also relates positively to controlled motivation. This is somewhat surprising because the self-determination theory postulated that autonomy support should be significantly linked to autonomous motivation, but not to controlled motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Thus, further work was required to also examine the relationship between social context support and controlled motivation. Our findings, in line with those of other researchers (e.g., Chan, Hagger, & Spray, 2011; Lavergne, Sharp, Pelletier, & Holtby, 2010) have shown no significant relationships between social context characteristics and controlled motivation. However, results also revealed that controlled motivation relates to soldiers' well-being: Those who work in the army to obtain a desired consequence (e.g., salary) or to avoid a punishment (e.g., unemployment), reported higher levels of burnout and lower levels of work engagement than those with no controlled motivation. Moreover, both controlled and autonomous motivation made unique contributions to explaining soldiers' well-being. The distinction between each is, thus, useful and our results suggest that soldiers must be intrinsically motivated (and not extrinsically) to experience well-being at work. These findings provide support for the self-determination theory and concur with past research in the work context, which has shown that the more autonomous the motivation, the more adaptive the outcomes, and the more controlled the motivation, the less adaptive the outcomes (e.g., Gagné & Deci, 2005).

The present findings also have some practical implications for promoting soldiers' well-being. Our findings suggest that perceived organizational support and LMX lead to an increase in subordinates' autonomous work motivation, and thus facilitate the development of their work engagement and the reduction of their burnout. Therefore, perceived organizational

support and LMX play key roles in the promotion of soldiers' well-being. In light of these results, it appears to be important that the army implements actions to enhance organizational support and encourage supervisors to develop a balanced relationship with subordinates based on trust and support. This is particularly relevant to organizational support as our results show that the soldiers in our research study—a representative sample of Portuguese soldiers—have a low perception of this social context characteristic. On the other hand, our findings also suggest that a soldier who acts with a full sense of volition and choice (i.e., autonomously motivated) experiences more positive states than a worker who acts with a feeling of pressure that comes from forces perceived to be external to the self (i.e., controlled motivation). Thus, it appears crucial that, in the recruitment and selection process, autonomous motivation should be a criterion, and in recruitment and continued training, the army should develop actions that contribute to soldiers' option to work there on the basis of an intrinsic choice. Once again, this is also highly relevant given that the sampled soldiers in our study had a relatively low level of autonomous motivation, identical to controlled motivation.

The present study has some limitations. First, our design was correlational and cross-sectional and, therefore, causality cannot be inferred from the present results. Future research using a longitudinal design should be conducted to better understand the effects of social context support and motivation on workplace well-being. Furthermore a future longitudinal study would help clarify the possible reciprocal effect between motivation and soldiers' well-being. In line with the study of Britt, Adler, and Bartone (2001), the military's engagement during a stressful military deployment was found to contribute to the meaning that soldiers assigned to their work on the mission. Thus, future studies should analyze the hypothesis that soldiers' engagement not only increases with autonomous motivation. But also has a positive influence on this motivation. Second, our research included LMX as a source of more proximal social context support and did not include the perceived supervisor autonomy support (Gillet, Vallerand, Paty, Gobancé, & Berjot, 2010). This form of social context support is important for explaining workers' autonomous motivation (Gillet et al.,

2013), which would be worth examining in future research in the military context. Including this variable in future research on soldiers' motivation is, therefore, advisable. Third, all the outcomes assessed in the present study were assessed with self-reported measures. Such measures may be impacted by social desirability, and we thus encourage researchers to conduct additional research using an objective assessment of well-being. Fourth, the present sample only comprised soldiers from one country (Portugal). Future research is needed with soldiers from different countries where military service is also voluntary or, on the contrary, mandatory, to replicate and broaden the present results. Furthermore, future research is needed with other military ranks, namely sergeants and officers, to promote the generalization of these results. Finally, the present study only included context variables and soldiers' motivation to explain soldiers' well-being. However, Britt (2003) verified that individual identity was an important variable for explaining U.S. army rangers' well-being, namely job engagement. When environment conditions were unfavorable—i.e., when job clarity, job control, and job relevance were low—military members with high identity showed high levels of engagement, whereas those with low identity showed low engagement. Thus, future research should include individual variables, namely individual identity, to explain soldiers' well-being. One would expect individual identity to moderate the mediating role of autonomous motivations and buffer the context-support effect on this motivation and, in turn, promote the effect of this motivation on soldiers' well-being.

In sum, our study provides strong support for self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000) and its applicability in the military context. Our findings contribute to our understanding of the role of organizational support, LMX, and soldiers' motivation in the prediction of their well-being at work.

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