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SUMMARY

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Work is a central part of life for many people with intellectual disabilities. For many of them this takes place in sheltered employment settings (e.g. day centers, vocational rehabilitation centers, or sheltered workshops), although over the past years there has been an increasing emphasis on offering integrated employment opportunities to people with intellectual disabilities. Given the significance of work in the lives of people with intellectual disabilities, it is important to pay attention to their job satisfaction. Job satisfaction is an indicator of work-related well-being, and associated with indicators of both individual and organizational functioning. In mainstream industrial and organizational psychology an extensive amount of research has been devoted to the antecedents of job satisfaction. It is, however, not evident that these findings are applicable to the employment situation of people with intellectual disabilities. Knowledge of the factors associated with job satisfaction of people with intellectual disabilities is however important and may benefit the provision of adequate support and the selection or design of suitable workplaces. Therefore, research is needed that explicitly incorporates the specific characteristics and work situation of people with intellectual disabilities and their own perspectives on job satisfaction. This thesis contributes to this.

The overall aim of this thesis, described in **Chapter 1**, is to reach a comprehensive understanding of the factors that are associated with the job satisfaction of people with intellectual disabilities. This thesis focuses on people with intellectual disabilities that have significant limitations in the work domain, and are in need of ongoing supports. This includes people with moderate intellectual disabilities (IQ: 35-50), mild intellectual disabilities (IQ: 50-70), and borderline intellectual functioning (IQ: 70-85) who rely on support provided by an organization for people with intellectual disabilities. Participants in this study have all been declared unfit for gainful employment according to Dutch legislation, and receive government benefits for their income. Their (unpaid) work takes place in either an integrated setting or a sheltered setting (i.e. day centre).

Chapter 2 of this thesis starts with an exploration of the literature regarding existing research on job satisfaction of people with intellectual disabilities in integrated and sheltered employment settings, and its associated factors. The thirteen studies that were found and examined, provided preliminary evidence for associations between employee characteristics and job satisfaction, between characteristics of the employment setting and job satisfaction, and between the extent to which the work environment meets the vocational and social needs of employees with intellectual disabilities and their job satisfaction. The number of studies on each of these aspects was however small, results were fragmented and largely on singular associations. It was concluded that knowledge of the important factors related to job satisfaction of people with intellectual disabilities is limited and incomplete. The review

suggested that, to gain a better, more comprehensive understanding of job satisfaction of people with intellectual disabilities, it is necessary to understand how various types of variables (e.g. situational and personal characteristics) interact and what may be the nature of the relations among them.

In line with these findings, the empirical studies described in Chapters 3, 4, 5, and 6 of this thesis are based on a research model that incorporates personal and situational characteristics, and the interaction between them. It is based on two different theoretical perspectives that are both relevant in order to enhance our understanding of the factors associated with job satisfaction of people with intellectual disabilities, and that are also complementary to each other. Both theoretical perspectives can take account of the specific characteristics, views and experiences of people with intellectual disabilities.

The first theoretical perspective (Chapters 3, 4 and 5) focuses on the association between job characteristics (categorized as job demands and job resources) and job satisfaction, using the job demands-resources model (JD-R; Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2001) as a theoretical framework. Within the JD-R model, the choice of specific job demands and job resources to be included in a study is dependent upon the study context (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). To ensure that the job characteristics that are included in this study reflect what is relevant to the job satisfaction of people with intellectual disabilities, **Chapter 3** explored what people with intellectual disabilities themselves considered relevant to their job satisfaction. Photovoice was used as a method of a qualitative approach with nine persons with moderate or mild intellectual disabilities. All participants worked in an integrated as well as a sheltered employment setting. Various types of work were conducted, including shop assistance, cleaning, animal care, and gardening. Participants took pictures at their workplaces of aspects related to their job satisfaction. Each participant was subsequently interviewed about his/her photographs. Interview transcripts were content analysed to distinguish themes. Nine themes relating to their job satisfaction were found: the nature of the work itself, working conditions, experienced job demands, social relations at work, received support, perceived autonomy, opportunities for using competencies, opportunities for growth and development and meaningfulness.

Subsequently, based on the results of Chapter 2 and 3, in **Chapter 4** three job demands (psychological demands, physical demands, emotional demands), and five job resources (decision authority, opportunities for skill utilization, meaningfulness, social support from co-workers, social support from mentor) were studied in relation to job satisfaction. Personality traits (neuroticism, extraversion, conscientiousness) were added to the research model, to explore potential mediating and moderating pathways between personality traits, job characteristics and job satisfaction.

Data for this study, as well as the studies described in Chapters 5 and 6, were gathered in a quantitative study among 117 persons with intellectual disabilities. Participants were diagnosed with a moderate or mild intellectual disability, or borderline intellectual functioning, and were recruited from a Dutch care organization. Their work (e.g. manufacturing, gardening, shop assistance, animal care, cleaning) took place in either a sheltered employment setting (daycentre) or an integrated employment setting. To obtain an understanding of the work experiences of people with intellectual disabilities and their job satisfaction, they were interviewed themselves. Structured questionnaires, based on well-established instruments, were used for this, and visual aids were developed to increase comprehension. The interviews allowed for probing and explaining, in a prescribed manner, set out in a protocol. Interviews took place at the workplace or home of the participant, and were conducted by interviewers who were selected and trained for this research. Data on personality was obtained from support staff by means of a structured questionnaire. In this study, as well as the study described in Chapter 5, gender, age, level of intellectual disability, and the distinction between integrated and sheltered employment were added as control variables. Data on these variables were obtained from client records. It was found that age was significantly and positively associated with job satisfaction, whereas gender, level of intellectual disability and the distinction between integrated and sheltered employment were not associated with job satisfaction. Age was therefore controlled for in the analyses.

Results of the study described in Chapter 4 indicated that job resources were significantly and positively associated with job satisfaction, whereas job demands were negatively, yet not significantly, associated with job satisfaction. No direct associations were found between personality traits and job satisfaction of people with intellectual disabilities; we did however find that conscientiousness moderated the relationship between job demands and job satisfaction. For people with intellectual disabilities who had a tendency to act dutifully, and aim for achievement (i.e. high conscientiousness) enhanced job demands were associated with reduced job satisfaction, which was not the case for people with intellectual disabilities who have low levels of conscientiousness.

The second perspective (Chapters 5 and 6) is based on self-determination theory (SDT; Deci & Ryan, 2000), and focuses on the fulfilment of the basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence and relatedness (i.e. essential nutrients for optimal functioning, and underlying motivational processes), and the quality of people's motivation (i.e. autonomous and controlled motivation) in relation to job satisfaction. In **Chapter 5** the basic psychological needs for autonomy, relatedness, and competence, as defined within SDT, were introduced. This Chapter studied the associations between job characteristics, basic psychological needs, and job satisfaction. Combining the JD-R model and SDT, it was investigated whether basic psychological needs could explain the relationship between job characteristics (i.e.

job resources and job demands) and job satisfaction. This was investigated in the same sample of 117 participants. Our study was the first to show that fulfilment of the basic psychological needs for autonomy, relatedness and competence were positively associated with job satisfaction of people with intellectual disabilities. Furthermore, it was found that job resources were positively associated with fulfilment of basic psychological needs and job satisfaction. Job demands were negatively associated with basic psychological needs, yet were not significantly associated with job satisfaction. Analyses indicated that fulfilment of the needs for autonomy, relatedness and competence partially mediated the relationship between job resources and job satisfaction. These findings suggest that the provision of a resourceful work environment may positively affect job satisfaction of people with intellectual disabilities, and this may partially be explained by the finding that a positive, resourceful work environment might establish the conditions that are necessary for people with intellectual disabilities to grow. A demanding work environment may not directly affect job satisfaction, yet it requires energy, and deters the fulfilment of a person's needs, which might in turn negatively affect their job satisfaction.

The final study, described in **Chapter 6**, takes a first step in a further extension of the research model. This study addressed another facet of SDT, namely the reasons behind people's behaviour, referred to as quality of motivation. Having a high quality of motivation (i.e. autonomous motivation) instead of a low quality of motivation (i.e. controlled motivation) has been associated with positive work-related outcomes for employees without disabilities, including job satisfaction. Previous studies introduced autonomous motivation as another mediating variable in the relationship between job characteristics and job outcomes. The explorative, qualitative study, described in this chapter, examined the motivation of people with intellectual disabilities to work, exploring the quality of their work motivation, and the associations between the quality of work motivation and job satisfaction. From the 117 persons that were interviewed, using open-ended questions on motivation and a job satisfaction questionnaire, a matched sample of 25 participants in integrated employment and 25 in sheltered employment was selected for this study. Qualitative analysis, using open and axial coding, was conducted to discern motivational quality. Three groups were discerned: participants displaying (1) autonomous, (2) controlled, or (3) both autonomous and controlled motivation, which were examined in relation to job satisfaction. Reasons displaying low quality motivation (i.e. controlled motivation), such as financial reasons, feeling urged by someone else, avoiding the negative consequences of staying at home, were expressed more frequently than reasons displaying high quality motivation (i.e. autonomous motivation), such as working for the enjoyment of working, or because they identified with the value of the job (e.g. helping or meeting others). People with intellectual disabilities in sheltered and integrated employment settings brought forward the same reasons for working and

did not display differences in quality of motivation. Results indicated that job satisfaction was higher for participants with autonomous motivation compared to controlled motivation. These findings provide an initial indication of the relevance of the quality of motivation for job satisfaction of people with intellectual disabilities.

In the General Discussion (**Chapter 7**) findings of all studies are summarized and strengths and limitations of the study are discussed. The mixed method methodology of this research, including literature research, qualitative and quantitative methods, allowed for in-depth understanding of the factors associated with job satisfaction of persons with intellectual disabilities. In addition, a large amount of information was obtained on their experiences and job satisfaction from their own perspective. Because participants in this research were people with intellectual disabilities with significant limitation within the domain of work, results cannot automatically be generalized to people with other skills or limitations. Several recommendations are made for future research, such as the inclusion of other measures of job characteristics, fulfilment of needs and job satisfaction (e.g. objective or proxy) to strengthen the findings, the use of longitudinal designs or controlled trials to increase insight in the causality of the associations, to investigate associations at the level of individual job characteristics and needs, and to examine the effect of support style on need fulfilment at work and job satisfaction.

Finally, recommendations for practice are made. The results of this study suggest that for jobs to be satisfying to people with intellectual disabilities it would seem useful that they allow people to fulfil their basic psychological needs for autonomy, relatedness and competence. The results point to the potential role of job design in job satisfaction of people with intellectual disabilities, particularly providing positive, resourceful job characteristics may be useful. People with intellectual disabilities who experience more job resources tend to feel more satisfied with their jobs, which might partly be explained by the fact that they may be more likely to feel that their needs are fulfilled. People with intellectual disabilities who experience their work environment as demanding may on the other hand be more likely to feel that their needs are thwarted. As job design might play an important role with respect to need fulfilment and job satisfaction, employers and employment workers can actively work on developing or adapting jobs in such a way that they contribute to job satisfaction. For adequately matching a person with a job, taking account of personal characteristics (i.e. personality traits, age) may be advised as these might affect how a person actually perceives job characteristics or how they are associated with job satisfaction. In addition, findings suggest that paying attention to quality of work motivation of people with intellectual disabilities may be important in relation to their job satisfaction.

To fully understand how a person experiences his work and how he expresses his autonomy, relatedness and competence in his work, it is essential to incorporate his own

perspective. Interviews are a useful means for this, particularly when combined with visual aids. In addition, a method like photovoice provides a powerful tool to improve understanding of the work experiences of people with intellectual disabilities, particularly those with more severe disabilities.

Though in Article 27 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities the term 'job satisfaction' is not explicitly used, it may be clear that in attempts to realize the entitlement to work paying attention to job satisfaction is important. Increased awareness of the job satisfaction of people with intellectual disabilities, and the factors that are related to it, is greatly encouraged.

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