

PSYCHOSOCIAL FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE VOLUNTEER WORK: A PILOT STUDY

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This study is the first step in a project of research into how to adapt to a Spanish sample a model analysing variables that predict duration of service of AIDS volunteers (Omoto and Snyder, 1995). In this first study, the inventory of motivational factors generated by the American researchers is adapted and its reliability tested. The questionnaires to be used later, in the second stage of the research, were piloted on 34 volunteers. These questionnaires measure the five constructs of Omoto and Snyder's model (Helping Personality, Motivation, Social Support, Satisfaction, Integration in the Organisation). Results demonstrate the high internal consistency of the Motivation Questionnaire and its subscales. This will allow its use in the next stage of the research. Integration in the Organisation and Satisfaction variables are highly correlated with volunteers' Expectations of Continuing in the organisation. This expectation is taken as a predictive indicator of subject's duration of service.

Este estudio piloto forma parte de una investigación que pretende adaptar a una muestra española un modelo que analiza las variables que predicen La permanencia de los Voluntarios en una organización que trabaja con seropositivos (Omoto y Snyder, 1995). El objetivo principal del estudio es adaptar y fiabilizar el Cuestionario de Motivaciones elaborado por los investigadores americanos: y pilotar otros cuestionarios, que serán utilizados en investigaciones posteriores, con una muestra de 34 voluntarios. Los cuestionarios miden los cinco constructos del Modelo de Omoto y Snyder: Disposición de Ayuda, Motivaciones, Apoyo Social, Satisfacción e Integración en la Organización. Los resultados muestran, por una parte, la alta fiabilidad (0.9) del Cuestionario de Motivaciones y de sus subescalas, lo que permite su aplicación en las siguientes fases de la investigación y por otra, las elevadas correlaciones de las variables Integración en la Organización y Satisfacción con la Expectativa de seguir la actividad voluntaria, tomada como predictora de permanencia.

INTRODUCTION

Altruistic behaviours have been the object of abundant theoretical and empirical social science research for some thirty years (Chacón, 1985, Piliavin and Charng, 1990).

In this field there are two tendencies that have captured the majority of research attention. The first of these is represented by unexpected situations in which help is offered to strangers, reflecting the altruistic motivation of the person who offers it, or at least a certain humanitarian concern, since no previous relationship –nor, presumably, any subsequent one– exists to justify such behaviour. This type of help is called «spontaneous», and is usually of short duration. The second tendency is

represented by continuous and prolonged situations of helping, which have to be planned, and which involve people that are known to one another. For this reason, some authors refer to it as «obligatory» (Omoto and Snyder, 1995).

However, a third form of help exists: volunteer work, much less studied, but of great social relevance, and which could be described as a prolonged and planned helping situation among strangers. The need for research in this area is all the more pressing in view of the growing number of volunteers in recent years, a growth reflected in Spain by the Volunteer Work Law (*Ley sobre el Voluntariado*) of 1996.

Recently, Omoto and Snyder (1993, 1995) have opened up a line of research with the intention of clarifying the psychosocial factors that affect volunteers, such as what motivates them to become involved in situations of helping strangers, which often imply great personal cost over an indefinite period. These authors propose a model for predicting the *Permanence* of volunteers in a support

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organisation for seropositive people, the majority of whose members are homosexuals (Omoto and Snyder, 1995). To this end they used the variables *Helping Personality*, *Motivation*, *Social Support*, *Personal Satisfaction* and *Integration in the Organisation* as predictors of Duration of voluntary service. By means of a structural equations analysis, these authors reached the following conclusions: high *Motivation* (c) (especially in internal values) and low *Social Support* (d) have direct influence on the permanence or duration of service of volunteers. However, *Helping Personality* (a) and *Integration in the Organisation* (i) only influence *Permanence* through their relationship with *Satisfaction* with the volunteer work (e) (see Figure 1).

The Department of Social Psychology of the Psychology Faculty at Complutense University of Madrid has begun a research project to see whether the model proposed by Omoto and Snyder (1995) is applicable, in the first place, to a sample of Spanish volunteers working with seropositive people, and secondly, to other types of volunteer work.

As a first step in the replication of Omoto and Snyder's model, a pilot study was carried out in order to check the reliability of the instruments and adapt them, especially the questionnaire on the specific motivational factors of volunteers working with seropositive people. The five

specific motivations assessed in the questionnaire are: *Values*, *Knowledge*, *Personal Development*, *Self-Esteem Enhancement* and *Community Concern*. The study consisted of two phases, a first, in which a battery of questionnaires is applied, and a follow-up phase six months later. This article deals with the results of the first part.

METHODOLOGY

Objectives of the research

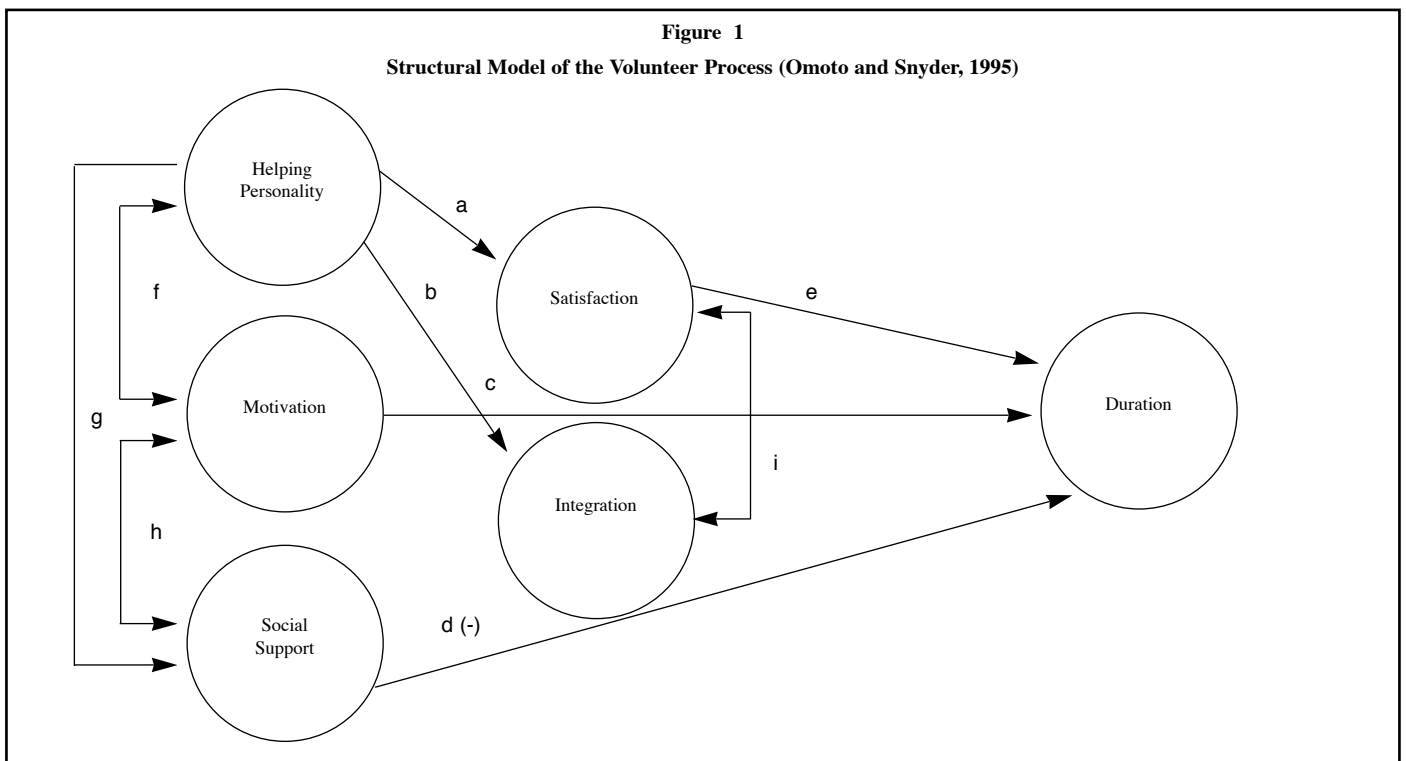
- To carry out a descriptive study that allows us to compare the sample of volunteers used by Omoto and Snyder with a sample from a Spanish organisation that fulfils the same functions.
- To adapt Omoto and Snyder's Motivation questionnaire for use with a Spanish population and check its reliability.
- To carry out a correlational study that permits us to extract hypotheses on possible alternative models to that of Omoto and Snyder.

Procedure

Adaptation of the questionnaires and access to the sample

Our first step was to contact FASE* (Anti-Aids Foundation of Spain), an organisation that offers similar services to that from which the volunteers in Omoto and

Figure 1
Structural Model of the Volunteer Process (Omoto and Snyder, 1995)



Snyder's study came, such as telephone information, hospital and home support, and awareness-raising activities.

Secondly, we carried out six orientational interviews with volunteers from FASE. The main objective of this first, qualitative approach was to check whether the five motivational factors found by Omoto and Snyder were present in the Spanish sample, and if, in addition to them, there were other, different ones, since these authors pointed out that motivation may vary from one sample to another. After the analysis of the interviews, we confirmed the presence of the five motivational factors: *Values, Knowledge, Personal Development, Self-Esteem Enhancement and Community Concern*, though this last factor was less clearly found than the others, due to the differences between the two organisations.

The American organisation, in contrast to the Spanish one, has a membership that is 59% homosexual. This may be explained in two ways: first, in the USA the highest-risk behaviour is sexual contact, while in Spain it is drug use; second, American homosexual organisations have a more important role in the fight against AIDS than Spanish ones. The high percentage of homosexuals in the US organisation has obliged us to introduce some modifications in our adaptation of the questionnaire, such as translating in a more general way the subscale *Community Concern*, as in the original questionnaire «community» referred specifically to the gay community; our questionnaire refers to seropositive people.

We also removed the items referring to the political ideology and political activity of the volunteers, considering that the questions did not appropriately reveal political attitudes, and in any case were not especially significant in Omoto and Snyder's results.

To assess *Helping Personality* we considered it appropriate to substitute the Nurture Scale from the Personality Research Form (Jackson, 1974), used in the original research, by the Self-report altruism scale (Rushton, 1981), as it assesses in a more direct way the disposition to perform altruistic acts. Moreover, this self-report scale is also validated in a Spanish sample (Chacón, 1985).

Finally, we included some questions related to the particular organisation to whose members we applied the questionnaire, such as time served in the organisation, type of work carried out and participation as a volunteer in any other organisation.

* We are grateful to FASE for their cooperation in this study.

The questionnaire was applied after numerous contacts with the organisation, in which various important aspects of it were agreed upon and a detailed work plan drawn up. This included a first phase in which the volunteers were informed, during one of their routine meetings, about the research project and their cooperation requested, both for completing the questionnaire on the appointed day (first phase of the pilot study), and for answering questions by telephone six months later, if they were still with the volunteer organisation (second phase of the study).

We then proceeded to apply the questionnaire to part of the sample in another of their meetings, while the remainder filled it out over the next few days, leaving their completed forms in a post-box which we had left in the organisation's headquarters. The questionnaire was applied to a total of 34 subjects.

Questionnaires were anonymous, and the researchers guaranteed that their work was totally independent of the volunteer organisation, to which only the final global results would be made available.

Description of the measures

The questionnaires assessed, in the first place, some basic sociodemographic data, such as age, sex, educational level, work situation, etc., and secondly, the constructs used by Omoto and Snyder to predict duration of service, namely, *Helping Personality, Motivation, Social Support, Satisfaction and Integration in the Organisation*.

Helping Personality was assessed by means of Berkowitz and Lutterman's Social Responsibility Questionnaire (1968) comprising eight items on a scale of 1 to 7 (1 Totally Disagree, 7 Totally Agree), another of Empathy, comprising twenty items with a similar scale, and the above-mentioned Self-report altruism scale (Rushton, 1981), with twenty items on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 Never, 5 Very Often).

Motivation was assessed by means of the Motivation questionnaire (Omoto and Snyder, 1995), with twenty-five items on a scale of 1 to 7 (1 No importance, 7 High importance).

To measure structural *Social Support* we included an item that asked how many close friends the subject had, and another that inquired as to how much these friends, as well as family, colleagues and partner, knew about their doing voluntary work. Functional *Social Support* was assessed through an item asking about the emotio-

nal and psychological support received from the different people in the subject's social network (family, friends, colleagues, partner), and another which measured, on a 1-7 scale, the general support received from people important to the subject.

Satisfaction with the volunteer work was measured using nine items which, on a scale of 1 to 7, assessed the experience of being a volunteer in terms of various dimensions: satisfactory, rewarding, exciting, interesting, disappointing, fun, challenging, important and boring. A further item was included which referred to the general satisfaction experienced, and another about the subject's expectations of continuing with the voluntary work, also on a scale of 1 to 7.

Integration in the Organisation was assessed by means of six items, which referred to: the number of meetings he/she had attended in the previous three months; the degree of importance attributed to these meetings by the volunteer, on a scale of 1 to 7; the number of friends made in the organisation; the level of agreement with the philosophy, objectives and aims of the organisation; the subject's interest in recruiting new members for the organisation; and the volunteer's disposition to participate in other activities.

DATA ANALYSIS

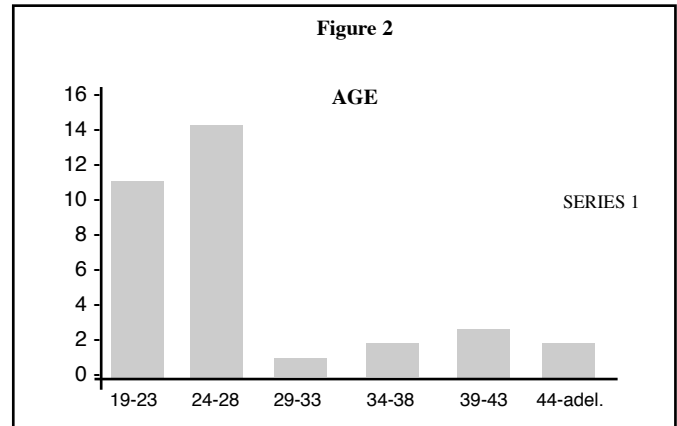
The data obtained after the application of the set of questionnaires was subjected to the following statistical analyses:

- Descriptive analyses of the central tendency and of variability for the sociodemographic study of the sample and its comparison with that of Omoto and Snyder (1995).
- Analysis of the reliability of the Motivation questionnaire, using as a measure of internal consistency Cronbach's α coefficient.
- Analysis of the correlations between the most relevant variables (*Motivation, Helping Personality, Social Support, Satisfaction and Integration*) and *Expectations of Continuing in the Organisation*, taken as a predictor of *Permanence*.

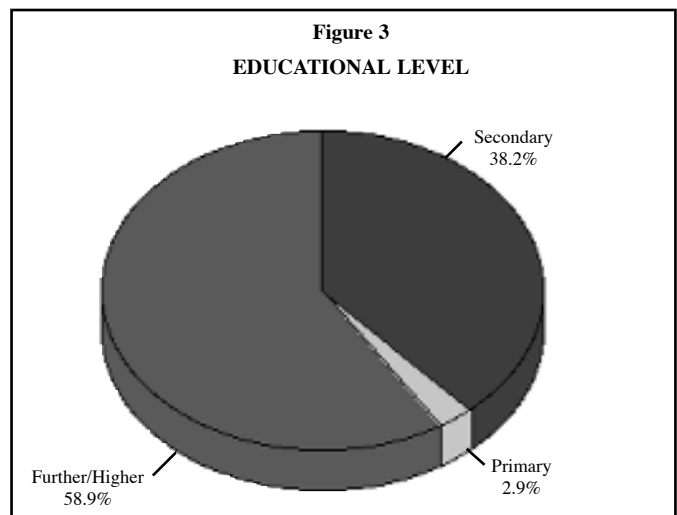
Descriptive analysis

Sociodemographic variables: description of the sample

The age range of the 34 volunteers in the sample was 19 to 50 years, with a mean of 27.3 and a standard deviation of 8. The graph (Figure 2) shows distribution by age, grouped in 6-year blocks.



76.5% of the sample (26) were women and 23.5% (8) men. The majority of those interviewed (17) described themselves as agnostics or atheists (53.1%), and 46.9% (15) as Catholics, of which only 46.7% (7) were practising Catholics. We should point out that two subjects failed to answer this question.



93.9% (31) described themselves as heterosexual, 3% (1) as bisexual and 3% (1) as homosexual.

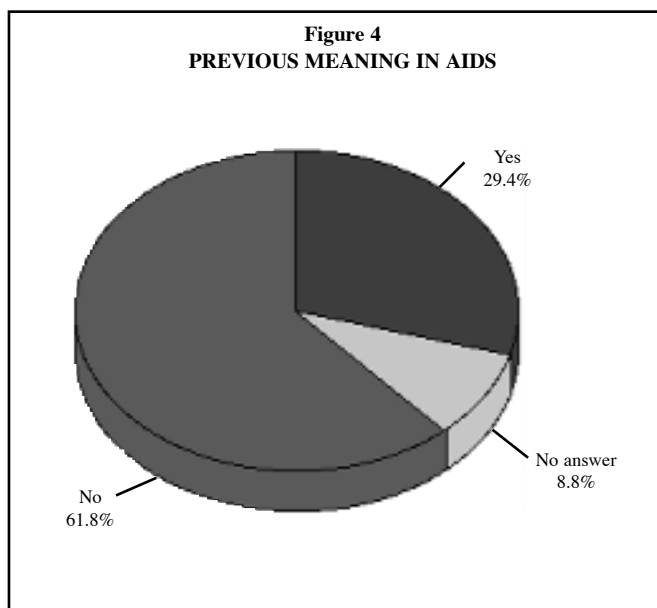
The educational level of the volunteers was high, with 58.8% (20) of them having completed further or higher education; only 1 subject had progressed no further than primary education (figure 3).

61.8% (figure 4) of the volunteers studied did not know any seropositive person before beginning their voluntary work.

With respect to work situation, 14 (41.2%) of the 34 volunteers were unemployed, 10 (24.4%) were students and only 10 were working, 7 full-time and 3 part-time.

The volunteers of the sample had been working with FASE for an average of 11 months, though the variability is very high (S.D. = 7.0).

Figure 4
PREVIOUS MEANING IN AIDS



With respect to the type of activity in which subjects were involved, 16 volunteers (47.1%) worked in the Support Group, 10 (29.4%) in Telephone Services and 1 in Training. It should be pointed out that, at the time of the study, 6 volunteers (17.6%) were receiving training, and therefore not actually doing any particular job.

Finally, 15 people (44.1%) were involved in activities with some other kind of voluntary organisation, with an average of 16 months service, though, again, variability was very high (S.D. = 10.98)

Predictive variables of Omoto and Snyder's model **Helping Personality**

On a scale of 1 to 5, subjects' average score on Rushton's Self-report altruism scale is close to the mid-point of the scale (Mean = 2.89; S.D. = 0.59). Mean score on the Empathy questionnaire is 5.32 on a scale of 1 to 7, and S.D. = 0.42. On the Social Responsibility questionnaire, the mean score is 4.75 and the S.D. 0.82, again on a scale of 1 to 7.

Motivation

The total mean score of Omoto and Snyder's Motivation questionnaire is 4 (S.D. = 0.94), on a scale of 1 to 7. Thus, the most important differences between the scores are found on analysing independently the scores in the five subscales. The highest scores were obtained in the subscale of Values: (Mean = 5.52; S.D. = 2.00), in that of Community Concern: (Mean = 4.55; S.D. = 1.20), and in that of Knowledge: (Mean = 4.50; S.D. = 1.30). The lowest scores were obtained in the subscales of Personal Development (Mean = 3.2; S.D. = 1.35) and of Self-Esteem Enhancement (Mean = 2.24; S.D. = 0.94).

Social support

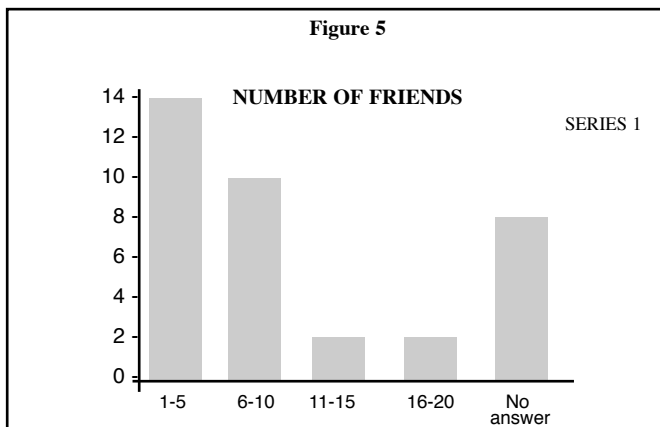
In a structural analysis of *Social Support*, the volunteers affirmed that they had a moderate to high number of friends, the mean being 6.5 and the standard deviation 4.9, with a variability range of 1 to 20. (figure 5).

Practically all of the volunteers affirmed that not only their friends, but also their family, colleagues and partner, knew of their voluntary activity. Only in one case of the 34 was the subject's family unaware that they were doing volunteer work. With respect to perceived or functional Social Support, we should stress that it is high, whether we consider mean perceived Support (5.8 on a scale of 1 to 7, with variability of 1.33) or whether we consider separately the support provided from the different people or groups (see Table 1).

Table 1
Social Support perceived by volunteers

	Mean	S.D.	N
Support from friends	5.85	1.23	34
Support from family	4.88	1.53	34
Support from colleagues	4.37	1.73	27
Support from partner	5.8	1.5	21

Figure 5



Satisfaction

The score in general *Satisfaction* with the volunteer work, on a scale of 1 to 7, is very high (Mean = 5.94) and with a remarkably low variability (S.D. = 1.20); only two subjects scored less than 5 on the scale. On asking subjects about their experience as a volunteer in the nine dimensions, ratings on a 1-7 scale are very positive (see Table 2).

As it can be seen, the volunteers working with seropositive people considered their activity as not boring, important, not disappointing and interesting; however, quite naturally, they did not consider it to be fun. The mean of average scores in the 9 dimensions was 5.63, with an S.D. of 0.64.

DIMENSIONS	Mean	S.D.	MINIMUM
Satisfactory	5.94	0.88	4
Rewarding	5.50	1.23	3
Exciting	4.56	1.40	1
Interesting	6.32	0.91	4
Not disappointing	6.38	0.85	4
Fun	3.28	1.40	1
Challenging	5.56	1.28	2
Important	6.35	0.92	4
Not boring	6.50	0.82	4

Integration in the Organisation

The overall acceptance of the philosophy, objectives and aims of the organisation is very high, 6.4 (minimum = 4; maximum = 7). This result is in accordance with the high expectations of continuing in the organisation affirmed by the volunteers (Mean = 6.38; S.D. = 1.23), and with the importance attributed to attendance at meetings (Mean = 5.85, S.D. = 1.28). However, when subjects were asked about their disposition to carry out specific behaviours, their mean score decreased considerably (see Table 3).

BEHAVIOURS	Mean	S.D.
To recruit new members	4.76	1.41
To participate in other activities	5.70	0.98

We also calculated a global score for *Integration in the Organisation*, including all the items referring to *Integration* and finding the mean. This result is also very high: Mean = 5.95 and S.D. = 0.68.

Reliability of the Motivation questionnaire

Table 4 shows the indices of internal consistency for the five subscales of the Motivation questionnaire. Mean of the indices in the five scales is 0.80; index of internal consistency for the total scale is 0.9 (see Table 4).

SUBSCALES	α
Values	0.85
Personal Development	0.82
Knowledge	0.79
Self-Esteem Enhancement	0.78
Community Concern	0.80

Although this data demonstrates very high reliability, it should nevertheless be analysed with caution, since, given the sample size, covariances among the items are still unstable.

Correlations among the predictive variables of the model

We calculated the correlations (Pearson coefficient) among the principal variables of the model. A total of 18 variables were included in the correlation matrix:

- Altruism self-report.
- Perceived Emotional and Psychological Support.
- Social Support specific to the voluntary work.
- Age.
- Empathy.
- Agreement with objectives, aims and philosophy of the organisation.
- Integration in the Organisation.
- Motivation: Community Concern.
- Motivation: Knowledge.
- Motivation: Personal Development.
- Motivation: Self-Esteem Enhancement.
- Motivation: Values.
- Total motivation.
- Social responsibility.
- Satisfaction.
- Satisfaction in the dimensions (adjectives).
- Expectations of continuing in the organisation.
- Time served in the organisation.

The correlation matrix was analysed in order to extract tentative hypotheses for generating alternative models. With this objective we concentrated on the correlations between *Expectations of continuing in the organisation* and the rest of the variables. We preferred to use the variable *Expectations* rather than actual *Time served* in the organisation, since we were dealing with a sample of volunteers whose mean time served was 11 months, and who had been selected on this basis, which limited the correlations with the remainder of the variables.

Expectations of continuing in the organisation shows significant correlations with: (Table 5)

	R	α
Agreement with objectives, aims and philosophy of the organisation	0.71	0.000
Specific Social Support	0.70	0.000
Integration in the Organisation	0.59	0.000
Satisfaction	0.54	0.001

From this data it is clear that related to *Expectations of continuing* are the variables of the intermediate constructs *Integration in the Organisation* and *Satisfaction*, in addition to the variable *Social Support* specific to volunteer work. It is also noticeable that the relationships with *Motivation* and *Helping Personality* are weak.

CONCLUSIONS

If we compare the sample of our pilot study with Omoto and Snyder's (1995), we see that there are important differences. Thus, the Spanish sample of volunteers is considerably younger (27.3 compared to 36.4 years mean age), predominantly feminine (76.5% compared with 36%), fundamentally heterosexual (93.9%) compared with a preponderance of homosexuals in the American sample (59%). This last circumstance is related to the fact that the percentage of subjects who previously knew a seropositive person is inverted in the Spanish sample (67% previously knew no-one with AIDS) with respect to the American one.

The reliability of the adapted version of Omoto and Snyder's (1995) Motivation questionnaire is greater than that obtained for the original questionnaire (0.90 compared to 0.88). This fact, even allowing for the instability of the covariances, permits us to use the Motivation questionnaire in the second phase of the research, in which we shall replicate the model proposed by Omoto and Snyder.

With regard to the correlations found, and those found to be most significant, we should point out that, if we admit that *Expectations of continuing in the organisation* is a predictor of *Permanence*, we can affirm that in our sample *Integration in the Organisation* and *Satisfaction* are more strongly related with *Duration of Service* or *Permanence* than in the original study. In addition, there is no correlational evidence to suggest that *Social Support* is negatively related to *Expectations of Continuing*.

Finally, the fact that no relationships were found between *Motivation* and *Expectations of Continuing* appears to be due to the fact that our volunteers, in contrast to those of Omoto and Snyder, had already been working for a considerable period in the organisation, on which basis they were selected, so that it is predictable that they would have high *Motivation*, as the high scores obtained in the questionnaire demonstrate.

As a continuation of the research presented here, two further studies are being carried out:

- 1) the second phase of the pilot study, which consists in questioning the 34 subjects of the Spanish sample in order to discover which are the variables that best discriminate between those that remain and those that do not after six months, and to check correlations with *actual Time Served*, and not only with *Expectations of Continuing*.
- 2) the application of the entire questionnaire to a sample of some 100 recently-recruited (less than three months) volunteers in five organisations working in AIDS-related areas, in order to check the validity of the model in a larger sample.

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APPENDIX ITEMS OF THE MOTIVATION SCALES

ORIGINAL VERSION

VALUES

Because of my humanitarian obligation to help others.
Because I enjoy helping other people.
Because I consider myself to be a loving and caring person.
Because people should do something about issues that are important to them.
Because of my personal values, convictions and beliefs.

UNDERSTANDING

To learn more about how to prevent AIDS.
To learn how to help people with AIDS.
To deal with my personal fears and anxiety about AIDS.
To learn about how people cope with AIDS.
To understand AIDS and what it does to people.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

To get to know people who are similar to myself.
To meet new people and make new friends.
To gain experience dealing with emotionally difficult topics.
To challenge myself and test my skills.
To learn about myself and my strengths and weaknesses.

ESTEEM ENHANCEMENT

To make my life more stable.
To escape other pressures and stress in my life.
To feel less lonely.
To feel needed.
To feel better about myself.

COMMUNITY CONCERN

Because of my sense of obligation to the gay community.
Because I consider myself an advocate for gay-related issues.
Because of my concern and worry about the gay community.
To get to know people in the gay community.
To help members of the gay community.

ADAPTED VERSION

VALORES

Por mi obligación humanitaria para ayudar a otros.
Porque me gusta ayudar a otros.
Porque me considero una persona preocupada por los demás.
Porque la gente debería hacer algo sobre los temas que son importantes para ellos.
Por mis valores personales, mis convicciones y mis creencias.

CONOCIMIENTO

Para aprender más sobre cómo prevenir el sida.
Para aprender cómo ayudar a personas con sida.
Para tratar con mis miedos personales y mi ansiedad hacia el sida.
Para aprender cómo las personas afrontan el sida.
Para comprender el sida y cómo éste afecta a las personas.

DESARROLLO PERSONAL

Para conocer personas similares a mí.
Para encontrar nueva gente y hacer nuevos amigos.
Para conseguir experiencia en tratar temas emocionalmente difíciles.
Para ponerme a prueba y evaluar mis habilidades.
Para aprender sobre mí, sobre mis fuerzas y debilidades.

INCREMENTO DE LA AUTOESTIMA

Para hacer mi vida más estable.
Para escapar de las preocupaciones de mi vida.
Para sentirme menos solo/a.
Para sentirme necesario/a.
Para sentirme mejor conmigo mismo/a.

INTERES POR LA COMUNIDAD

Por mi sentido de obligación hacia las personas seropositivas.
Porque me considero un defensor de los temas relacionados con los seropositivos.
Por mi interés y mi preocupación por los seropositivos.
Para conocer a personas seropositivas.
Para ayudar a personas seropositivas.