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POSITIVE INTERVENTION DESIGN FOR THE PROMOTION OF WELL-BEING IN AGILE TEAMS, BASED ON CHARACTER STRENGTHS

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Abstract

This research proposes an intervention model to promote well-being among members of teams operating within agile frameworks; this proposal is grounded in Positive Psychology and Peterson and Seligman's 24 Character Strengths model. The research seeks to promote the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) numbers 03 (Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages) and 08 (Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all). The study arises from the need to improve the quality of life of individuals operating in business agility environments, aiming for well-being to be scalable across the entire organizational structure. Methodologically, it is defined as a feasible project with an exploratory scope and a documentary design. The proposal consists of an original intervention model made up of six (06) integrated sessions, conducted in one of the most common agile rituals used by these teams, known as the "Retrospective". The design ranges from strengths assessment to the alignment of tasks and roles, promoting psychological safety and engagement. It is concluded that the integration between positive psychology and business agility generates benefits for

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both the individual and the organization, with this document serving as a basis for continuing similar research and complementing these results.

Keywords: Business agility, Positive psychology, Character strengths, Organizational well-being, Agile teams.

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1. Introduction

Positive Psychology—or the "science of well-being"—proposes the model of the 24 character strengths developed by Peterson and Seligman. These strengths are positive and universally valued traits that are grouped into six core virtues: Wisdom, Courage, Humanity, Justice, Temperance, and Transcendence. Within Peterson and Seligman's PERMA model (Positive Emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Achievement), strengths act as a cross-cutting axis that enhances positive emotions, engagement, healthy relationships, a sense of purpose, and achievement. In the workplace, leveraging these strengths transforms work from a mere contractual obligation into a space for human flourishing, where passion and perseverance (Grit) enable individuals to tackle the challenges of rapid delivery cycles (sprints: a work frequency characteristic of the agile framework) in a healthier way, fostering well-being and personal growth. In summary, it can be said that Positive Psychology promotes mental health through prevention, psychological well-being, positive emotions, and leveraging the 24 character strengths in the pursuit of well-being across the various contexts in which we operate.

For its part, the Enterprise Agility model is a culture or shift in the business management model that proposes 4 values and 12 principles, with "frequent delivery of value to the customer" as its central focus. This way of thinking has its origins in a gathering of creators, enthusiasts, and competitors from the world of software development who, in 2001, in Utah, USA (Beedle et al., 2001), decided to come to an agreement and sign a manifesto calling for responsible conduct within their sphere of influence (the world of software development), and they also decided to share their agreements with the world; the manifesto is available on the website: www.manifiestoagil.com. The authors propose not only creating value but also establishing an ethical foundation for the creation of applications, social networks, and developments across all areas of the web, including artificial intelligence. What is interesting is that this has not been limited to the technological sphere; this work culture has proven so productive and efficient that industries in other sectors are adopting it and have successfully embedded it in their organizational DNA, for example, banks such as BBVA and the Santander Group in Spain, the Falabella Group (a retail chain in Chile), and the retail giant Walmart in the United States, among other companies.

According to an article published and written by contributors at McKinsey & Company (one of the world's leading consulting and research firms), a study was conducted in 2021 with 1,000 U.S. workers to explore their individual purposes and what they expect from work

and life; this study found that the COVID-19 pandemic served as a catalyst that prompted people to reflect on their purpose as individuals and seek a more meaningful connection with the organizations where they undoubtedly spend a significant portion of their lives. The article concludes that this paradigm shift and change in mindset are here to stay, and if organizational leaders are not prepared to understand it, they will simply watch as employees leave for other companies that are willing to listen to each worker's sense of purpose and help them achieve it. So what's the good news? That the benefits of supporting employees in fulfilling their individual purpose are significant and extend not only to employee well-being but also to an excellent work environment and, consequently, to strong financial performance for companies." (Dhingra et al., 2021). In today's corporate environment, Positive Psychology has established itself as an essential discipline for enhancing individuals' optimal functioning, focusing on the study of well-being and character strengths, while Business Agility presents itself as an alternative to bureaucracy and lengthy processes that only lead to burnout and frustration.

According to the 2024 report from the Business Agility Institute, organizations that adopt the business agility model tend to develop capabilities in four key domains: **engaged culture, customer-centric outcomes, operational flexibility, and frequent value delivery.** In this context, psychological safety—understood as the climate of trust that allows team members to admit mistakes and experiment without fear of reprisal—is established as a fundamental aspect of the culture in organizations that implement it. However, the report shows that the operational implementation of the agility model in sectors such as finance or consumer goods does not, on its own, guarantee emotional stability for team members, which often leads to significant challenges such as burnout and frustration among talent.

The 2024 report referenced in the previous paragraph highlights the notably low scores in the organizational culture domain; companies in the retail and financial sectors receive very low ratings in this area. In the case of the retail sector, which has implemented business agility, its ability to integrate psychological safety shows a significant decline compared to other sectors (22% below the global average), while the ability to treat others as we would like to be treated is the greatest challenge for the financial services sector (21% below the global average). Among other factors, given the current economic uncertainty, this may reflect a level of unease regarding the psychological and workforce capital of organizations that are in the process of adopting an agile culture. (Business Agility Institute, 2024).

This valuable information may be telling us that the promise of business agility, based solely on its fundamentals, does not provide the psychological stability expected by employees working in these environments—especially in companies outside the software development sector—thus reinforcing the need to combine business agility with holistic well-being, which implies a balanced relationship between organizational and individual goals.

Business agility and positive psychology are presented as simple and appealing approaches to apply in the organizational world, but is it really that easy to implement? Are the people who make up the teams willing to accept and internalize this shift in mindset? To achieve this, support is needed through a change management model that includes certain key aspects—ranging from the commitment of the organization's leaders to guidance from psychologists or coaches who can provide tools to promote communication, change management, and emotional regulation—as well as the implementation of intervention models grounded in positive psychology.

As this research unfolds, the world—and Venezuela in particular—continues to experience a period of great uncertainty and widespread unrest, during which fostering positive emotions would be of great help. However, there are few examples of companies in the country that genuinely prioritize employee well-being through a systematic effort to cultivate positive emotions and focus on people's emotional well-being. Generally, organizations offer some programs and carry out activities primarily to meet legal obligations and comply with parafiscal requirements; for example, in Venezuela, there is the Organic Law on Prevention, Working Conditions, and the Work Environment (LOPCYMAT) and the National Institute for Worker Training and Recreation (INCRET), which, through the Ministry of Popular Power for the Social Process of Work (MPPPST), require organizations to present a program that includes training and recreational hours for workers at all levels. But beyond this, a significant number of organizations are reluctant to set aside time for conversation, recreation, creativity, and the connection between individuals' personal purpose and the organization's purpose.

In today's dynamic corporate environment, Positive Organizational Psychology (POP), driven by the research of Marisa Salanova and Susana Llorens (Jaume I University, Spain), has established itself as a fundamental discipline for enhancing the optimal functioning of organizations and their employees. Its primary focus lies in strengthening character traits and cultivating people's holistic well-being as the cornerstone of organizational success. At the same time, the Business Agility model has emerged as a strategic alternative to bureaucratic rigidity and lengthy project cycles, which often lead to burnout, frustration, and financial losses. This research stems from the need to promote well-being specifically within the context of agile teams, where ensuring psychological safety and human engagement is a fundamental challenge for achieving true organizational sustainability. Since both constructs aim to improve quality of life and optimize corporate results, the study highlighted the relevance of a joint analysis that could demonstrate their compatibility. To this end, a convergence matrix (developed in-house) was created, which presents, within a single analytical framework, the points of convergence between the foundations of Peterson and Seligman's 24 character strengths and the principles of Business Agility. This analytical exercise revealed sufficient common ground to affirm that the integration of both models fosters human flourishing and strengthens teams' ability to tackle challenges in today's corporate environment.

Convergence Between Agile Principles and Character Strengths

Principles and Foundations of Business Agility	Character Strengths	Convergence (How They Connect)
Psychological Safety Simplicity	Courage Loving and Allowing Oneself to Be Loved Gratitude Hope	Courage allows us to acknowledge and accept mistakes without fear and with respect, while gratitude and hope create the safe environment needed to simplify processes with openness. Loving and allowing oneself to be loved can foster respect and closeness among team members.
Motivated employees Face-to-face communication Cross-departmental collaboration	Kindness Sense of humor Enthusiasm Humility Social Intelligence Self-control	Enthusiasm and kindness break down barriers between silos; social intelligence ensures that face-to-face communication is honest and constructive. A good sense of humor fosters lightheartedness and humility in communication.
Self-Organizing Teams Embrace change Commitment to excellence and good design	Teamwork Equity Leadership Honesty	Shared leadership empowers the team to make timely decisions; fairness and honesty ensure that all members take on challenges according to their abilities, leading to satisfaction for everyone.
Frequent Value Delivery	Perseverance Curiosity Originality	Perseverance keeps the momentum going in the face of technical obstacles, while each member's curiosity and originality drive constant innovation to deliver real and timely value.
Promoting sustained development	Love of knowledge Critical thinking Appreciation for beauty and excellence	A love of learning and an appreciation for excellence connect people to incremental development, while critical thinking enables the evaluation of various factors related to relationships and achievement.

Reflection on continuous improvement	Forgiveness Purpose	Forgiveness is vital in retrospectives to view mistakes as a source of learning; purpose connects to continuous improvement and the real impact of processes on people.
Progress Reporting Customer Satisfaction	Perspective Prudence Humility	In this case, humility allows us to accept feedback, while perspective and prudence help us gauge what truly matters for long-term success.

Convergence between agile principles and character strengths. Author's own work

2. Method

This research falls within the framework of what is defined as a feasible project; therefore, it is designed as a documentary study and will cover only up to the intervention design phase, in accordance with the Thesis Manual of the Libertador Experimental Pedagogical University (2011).

The design is based on the character strengths interventions (CSI) proposed by Dr. Ryan Niemiec (2019), adapting them to the reality of agile frameworks. To ensure its sustainability, the proposal is integrated into the retrospective or sprint wrap-up meeting, taking advantage of the fact that this is an established space for reflection and continuous improvement among agile teams.

- Objective: To design a positive intervention to promote well-being in teams working in business agility environments, based on positive psychology as a cross-cutting theme and on the 24 Character Strengths.

3. Results

The proposed intervention model consists of a viable operational model designed to integrate organically into the dynamics of business agility, specifically within high-performance teams. This intervention is conceived as a planned, measurable, and intentional activity that seeks to raise employees' levels of well-being through the understanding and implementation of the 24 Character Strengths by members of agile teams.

- Frequency: Six sessions lasting between 20 and 35 minutes, held during sprint retrospectives.
- Responsible Party: This role refers to the person who will ensure that the activities are carried out in collaboration with a specialist in positive psychology who will guide the process. To this end, the Scrum Master or Agile Coach has been designated as the facilitator (given their profiles focused on service, learning, and removing obstacles within the team).

Structure of the sessions

The intervention unfolds in six key stages, at each sprint retrospective and according to the frequency the teams establish for this ritual—which usually takes place every two weeks—and is designed to progress from self-knowledge and awareness to the practical application of strengths in one's professional role:

- Setting the Context: An introduction to the fundamentals of Positive Psychology and the VIA Character Strengths Questionnaire, including a presentation of key concepts and how to administer the questionnaire.

- Strengths Assessment: An exploratory session where each team member shares their top five strengths and their emotional connection to the results.

- Strengths Alignment (Part I): Implementation of the IFC20 proposed by Niemiec (2019), "Meaning and Engagement." In this activity, the central focus is on each individual's purpose and the processes involved in building bonds and connections among team members. It is based on individual reflection on how to apply personal strengths to the five most common daily tasks.

- Strengths Alignment (Part II): This session proposes the creation of a team matrix to visualize similarities and differences and, if necessary, redistribute tasks to align with each team member's enjoyment and effective use of their strengths, thereby maximizing the benefits for the group as a whole.

- Positive Roles: This session proposes an adaptation of the IFC36 intervention, described by Niemiec (2019), in which the author seeks to improve teamwork through role pairing. The seven strength-based roles (Creator, Gatherer, Implementer, Energizer, Decider, Relater, and Influencer) are presented so that members can choose two that resonate with them and bring them the greatest satisfaction.

- Closing and Review of Results: Sharing experiences regarding the implementation of the new roles and team reflection on the experience and how to sustain it over time for the well-being of team members.

This intervention model is designed to be carried out over an estimated period of 3 to 5 months, considering that *sprint* periods may vary between 2 and 3 weeks and, as previously mentioned, are to be conducted during the retrospective or wrap-up meeting of each *sprint.*

Resources and facilitation methodology

To optimize participation, we suggest using "liberating structures"—practical methods that increase interactivity and innovation in groups of any size. The necessary resources are minimal: access to the VIA Institute platform, notebooks, whiteboards, and basic office supplies (sticky notes, markers).

Monitoring system and indicators

The effectiveness of the proposal is measured using two main tools:

- Participation Matrix: Record of attendance and fulfillment of prior and in-person commitments by each member.

Participant's Name	Attendance	Fulfillment of Prior Commitments	Fulfillment In-Person Activity	Participation

Participation indicator

Developed in-house

- Context Adaptation Questionnaire: We propose implementing this in two phases: halfway through the intervention process, in session three, and at the end of the process, in session six. This is an adaptation of Lyubomirsky's survey, cited by Niemiec (2019), which aims to measure participants' level of connection and assesses five subjective dimensions as follows:

    - Natural: Do you feel that this activity comes naturally to you as you participate in it? Please mark with an X:

      YES____ NO____

- Enjoyment: Do you find this activity enjoyable and interesting, like a fun challenge? Please mark with an X:

  YES____ NO____

- Value: Do you value this activity for the value it adds to your life, rather than just seeing it as another task? Please mark with an X:

  Value___ Chore___

- Guilt: Do you engage in this activity because you enjoy it, or would you feel anxious, guilty, or ashamed if you didn't do it? Please mark with an X:

  Enjoyment____ Anxiety____ Guilt___ Shame___

- Situation: Do you engage in this activity because you feel forced to do it or because you want to please someone else? Please mark with an X:

  Enjoyment____ It's another task____ I want to please others___

Conclusions

This research is based on Peterson and Seligman's 24 Character Strengths Inventory model. The proposed intervention design is intended to ensure that well-being is not an abstract concept, but rather a practical guide to activities that positively impact the corporate environment and the psychological safety of agile teams.

During the research process, a review and analysis were conducted of various researchers, authors, and leading figures in positive psychology, such as Garassini (2012), Duewck (2017), Duckworth (2021), Seligman (2011), and Niemiec (2019), and to understand the context of business agility, particular attention was given to Sutherland and the Business Agility Institute, which has been monitoring the progress of this methodology's implementation in companies across various sectors for several years. Based on the information gathered—and drawing particularly on the research and intervention designs of Dr. Ryan Niemiec (2019)—an intervention design was proposed that is structured into six sessions and includes special adaptations to integrate the process into the activities and ceremonies already established within the agile framework, with the aim of introducing the activities as seamlessly as possible.

The proposed activities aim to promote self-awareness as well as awareness of others, with the goal of identifying commonalities in the strengths, psychological safety, and well-being of team members across different contexts—particularly in the workplace.

There is now sufficient literature supporting these interventions and their impact on individuals and organizations. Researchers such as Marisa Salanova and Susana Llorens, along

with other authors, have described what they call Positive Organizational Psychology 2.0 (POP 2.0), demonstrating an adaptation to new organizational trends and technological changes occurring worldwide, (Salanova and Llorens, 2024, 20). However, there is a need to implement these interventions more frequently within organizations and to measure their outcomes before and after implementation. It is recommended to sustain activities that promote employee well-being and to track these outcomes throughout employees' professional careers.

This research focused on consulting and analyzing relevant authors in the academic field of positive psychology, whose work seeks to support and promote organizational well-being through positive intervention models, Furthermore, to develop a well- d intervention design tailored to the target population (teams operating in agile business environments), this organizational model—including its culture, key tools, roles, and rituals—was characterized.

It can be concluded that any intervention designed from the perspective of positive psychology and applied in organizational settings will result in the holistic well-being of individuals. Furthermore, throughout the research, it was observed that the business agility model has a well-being focus, placing people (*stakeholders*) at the center and including psychological safety among its foundational principles. Both constructs—positive psychology and business agility—when applied together in organizations willing to experiment with new collaborative work models, could yield significant benefits in the medium and long term.

Recommendations

Given that this research has been established as a feasible project but its implementation has not yet been tested, it is recommended that future researchers, should they put this model into practice, ensure that participants in agile teams have full access to Peterson and Seligman's VIA Character Strengths Inventory, thereby ensuring a solid diagnostic foundation for the intervention. We urge researchers to consider the specific cultural characteristics of each organization before applying the proposed intervention model, identifying local factors that may influence the acceptance of the proposal and how character strengths influence dynamic environments. We suggest further exploration of the role of organizational leaders, encouraging future research to analyze how positive leadership support enhances employee outcomes in Venezuelan companies. We invite readers to supplement this study by using other Positive Psychology instruments, such as the PERMA Workplace Profiler or work-life balance questionnaires, to gain a broader perspective on job satisfaction. These are available on the University of Pennsylvania's website: http://www.authentichappiness.sas.upenn.edu/

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Ruth Mary Valencia, Author: (valenciaruthmary@gmail.com) Organizational and Business Consultant with more than 25 years of experience in leadership positions. Postgraduate degree in Business Marketing (UCV) and Positive Psychology (UNIMET); Master's in Business Management (UCV); Accredited Ontological Coach (COA-FICOP). Graduate of the Advanced Management Program PAG71 (IESA). Accredited Professional Mentor by the European Council for Coaching and Mentoring (EMCC); certified by ICAgile in Agility Fundamentals (ICP-BAF), Agile Coach (ICP-ACC), and Agile Enterprise (ICP-ENT); and certified as an Explorer by LCC. This research was limited to the area of Organizational Well-being and focuses on institutional change processes. It also presented a proposal that integrates character strengths with business agility to enhance the optimal functioning of work teams. This academic research is based on the creation of viable models in the form of a feasible project.

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