

## Abstract

Theoretical and empirical research has provided mixed arguments and evidence for the effects of temporary agency work on workers' motivation and well-being. This study, based on the Self-Determination Theory, compared the motivation and well-being of workers that have had this employment status for different periods of time. We developed a study with Portuguese temporary agency workers (N= 3300) and three groups with a temporary agency contract were compared: (1) up to 6 months, (2) between 7 and 12 months and (3) between 13 and 24 months. Covariance analyses adjusted for background variables and job insecurity perception showed that maintaining this temporary arrangement for a longer time period had detrimental effects on more autonomous and volunteer motivation (i.e. lower intrinsic, integrated and identified), workplace well-being (i.e. lower engagement and higher burnout), and well-being outside work (i.e. lower satisfaction with life and lower health perception). Theoretical and practical implications have been discussed.

## Introduction

The implementation of a flexible production system is a crucial strategy for companies that produce in response to immediate client demands, reducing the administrative complexity of management and maintaining innovation (Gallagher & Sverke, 2005). This operational flexibility may be acquired with an adjustment of the workforce dimension in response to production needs (Cagliano, Caniato, Longoni, & Spina, 2014), which involves new labor contracts, namely contingent work. In contrast to the traditional format of employment (i.e. full-time occupation, with indefinite duration, held on the premises and under the contractor's control, and hiring of a permanent nature), contingent work is defined as a dependent and short time

work experience (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, OECD, 2002). Included in this contingent category are temporary agency workers (TAW) who are part of a specific a triangular employment relationship that includes the worker, the agency – the contracting company – and the client – the company where the worker develops his/her daily professional activity (Kalleberg, 2000).

According Lapalme, Simard, and Tremblay (2011) temporary agency work has been the fastest growing form of “non-standard” employment in recent years. In fact, in 2013, 40.2 million people around the world gained access to the labor market through temporary agency work, which means an increase of around 9.6% from 2012. In Portugal, 80,000 people work daily as TAW and the number of TAW doubled between 1996 and 2012 – from .6 to 1.7% – and presently is equal to the average penetration rate globally registered in Europe of 1.7% (CIETT, 2015).

Previous studies have been shown that there are different reasons to explain why people opt and maintain a temporary employment (De Jong, De Cuyper, De Witte, Silla & Benhard- Oettel, 2009; Tan & Tan, 2002), which have consequences on workers (De Cuyper & De Witte, 2008; De Jong & Shalk, 2010; Sobral, Chambel & Castanheira, 2016). Particularly more volunteer motives, namely intrinsic –he/she likes –, integrated – better fits their personal needs and commitments –, and identified - is an opportunity to gain a better job in future, namely a permanent contract - have a positive relationship with workers’ well-being (Lopes & Chambel, 2014). However, little is know about the consequences of maintain the temporary agency work for TAW’ motivations and well-being. Moreover, the Euro economic crisis that have implied high levels of unemployment and the suspended recruitment activities in different countries (e.g. Portugal, Spain, Italy, Greece) have consequences in the time that TAW could obtain a direct or permanent contract and prolonged this

employment arrangement more time.

It is the aim of the present study to investigate Portuguese TAW motives and well-being to advance an understanding of the effects of this contract. More specifically, we have developed an analysis of TAW with different tenure. We have compared the levels of motivations, workplace well-being (i.e. burnout and engagement) and general well-being (i.e. satisfaction with life and health perceptions) within three groups: those who had been TAW for at least 6 months; those who had been TAW between 7 and 12 months; those who had been TAW between 13 and 24 months.

### **Temporary Agency Workers' motivation and tenure**

The study of human motivation is fundamental for the comprehension of personality and human action. Motivation implies intention, will to act, to be persistent and to accomplish goals (Mitchell, 1982). One specific topic of interest in the study of TAW is connected to workers' motivations regarding their employment situation. The reasons TAW choose this status has frequently been portrayed as a dichotomy of voluntary versus involuntary (e.g. Bernasek & Kinnear 1999; Connelly & Gallagher 2004; Ellingson, Gruys, & Sackett, 1998). According to Ellingson et al. (1998), voluntary TAW tend to underline reasons such as flexibility, freedom and diversity offered by the temporary employment, while involuntary TAW choose these temporary work arrangements because they feel "forced" to, since they do not have a choice to get what they want, a permanent job. This classification is limited and other researchers have provided a wide range of motives for being a temporary worker: to conciliate family and personal responsibilities with work (Bendapudi, Mangum, Tansky, & Fisher, 2003; DiNatale, 2001), to have a higher or extra income (Bernasek

& Kinnear, 1999; DiNatale, 2001; Kunda, Barley, & Evans, 2002), as a stepping stone (De Jong, et al., 2009; Morris & Vekker, 2001), self-improvement (Kunda et al. 2002; Tan & Tan, 2002), personal preference (Tan & Tan 2002), more flexibility in scheduling work (Cohany, 1998; Morris & Vekker, 2001), lack of permanent work opportunities (Morris & Vekker, 2001), to conciliate formal training and school (Bernasek & Kinnear 1999) and the fact that temporary work is the only job that they can find (DiNatale, 2001).

Despite the usefulness of these studies, there is still a lack of a solid theory regarding these TAW motives (De Cuyper & De Witte, 2008). Studies by De Jong and colleagues (2009) and De Cuyper and De Witte (2008) represent an initial effort in this direction, since they consider three temporary worker motivations based on the Self Determination Theory (SDT).

According to the SDT, motivation is the result of a complex interplay between individuals' autonomy and its internal and external regulation. Hence, human motivations can take multiple forms, each characterized by a different response to conflict - auto-motivation/ individual motivation/ external regulation (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Intrinsic motivation is voluntarily constructed by individuals, reflecting their disposition to be challenged, to explore and to develop social or cognitive competences, and may be considered the essence of human happiness and vitality towards life; extrinsic motivation is experienced in situations where the individual acts more in accordance with the external regulation than in accordance with an intrinsic interest in a particular activity or situation (Gagné & Deci, 2005; Ryan & Deci, 2000). SDT includes four types of motivation that are extrinsically motivated and vary in terms of degree and in which regulation may be more or less internalized or may be more autonomous versus controlled (Deci & Ryan 2000). When the

motivation of TAW is externally regulated, they work because that job is viewed either as a form of “survival” or as a means to earn an income. While in external regulation behavior control arises from contingent consequences that are administered by others, in introjected regulation the contingent consequences are administered by the individuals to themselves. When TAW regulation is introjected, these individuals work because they feel that to be employed is central to life and they believe that one must overcome the difficulties and be active in the labor market. Alongside these two types of extrinsic motivation, there is a more autonomous type: regulation through identification. It reflects a conscious valuing of a behavioral goal or regulation, in such a fashion that the action is accepted or owned as being personally important (Ryan & Deci 2000). When TAW motivation is regulated through identification, they recognize the value of that job for their personal objectives, since they see it as a means to develop skills that will be helpful for them or as a means to gain permanent employment (i.e., stepping stone motive). Finally, closer to the extreme of intrinsic motivation is integrated regulation, the fullest, most complete form of internalization of extrinsic motivation. It involves not only identification with the importance of behaviors but also the integration of such identification with other aspects of the self, bringing them into harmony or coherence with other aspects of personal values and identity (Deci & Ryan 2000). When TAW regulation is integrated, they accept this employment arrangement because it is actually the type of employment that better fits their personal needs and commitments (e.g. school, family), and this type of work better provides the flexibility they need, as well as the freedom to balance it with other personal goals.

Studies on Portuguese work values (Chambel, 2013; Duque, 2013) showed that employees have high expectations in terms of job security, and prefer high-job

stability. As a temporary agency contract goes against these principles of security and continuity of the employment relationship, the option for this employment modality may be expected to be dominated by more extrinsic motives (i.e. introjected and external). However, TAW are also likely to have autonomous motives since they consider temporary agency work as a means to more easily achieve a permanent job - the stepping stone motive, that corresponds to identified motivation – or as a temporary situation that accommodates their specific needs (e.g. studies or family) – which corresponds to integrated motivation or as the employment they prefer and they voluntarily choose - which corresponds to intrinsic motivation (Lopes & Chambel, 2014).

Moreover, workers' motivations should have variability within individuals over time, because motivations are a process and they may be changed or relatively maintained over time depending on an infinite number of factors, such as personal characteristics and social-contextual variables (Diefendorff & Chandler, 2011). A plausible assumption is that motives to temporary employment are conditional upon the length of time spent in temporary employment: considered *a route to permanent employment* may be limited when temporary employment is short-term but may decrease among those who feel trapped in long-term temporary employment (Mauno, De Cuyper, Kinnunen, Ruokolainen, Rantanen & Mäkikangas, 2015). In fact, the identified motives (i.e. the stepping stone believe that a temporary contract will facilitate obtaining permanent employment) should decrease with tenure because if they remain in a temporary agency contract their expectations and desires have not been fulfilled. On the other hand, temporary agency workers, when compared with permanent, have been considered more peripheral with less attractive job content, lower job security (Aronsson, Gustafsson, & Dallner, 2002; Hudson, 2007), lower

wages, limited opportunities for advancement (Amuedo-Dorantes, 2000) and lower opportunity of training (Forrier & Sels, 2003; Virtanen, Kivimäki, Virtanen, Elovainio & Vahtera, 2003). Thus, more tenure on temporary agency work corresponds to prolonged exposure to poor working conditions that may associate with unfavorable outcomes (De Cuyper, Notelaers, & De Witte, 2009). Particularly, the intrinsic or more volunteer motives (i.e. integrated) could be lower when TAW have more tenure because may lead the workers to develop feelings of injustice and inequality.

This leads to the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: TAW that remain for longer in this employment situation have lower intrinsic, integrated and identified motives than TAW that have less time in this employment arrangement.

### **Temporary Agency Workers' well-being and tenure**

In the case of the TAW who remain in this employment situation, they may experience a decrease in well-being over time. According to the self-determination theory, higher levels of motivation yield more optimal outcomes if the motivation is more volunteer and autonomous (i.e. intrinsic, integrated and identified) while inversely, there are more undesirable results if the motivation is controlled (for a review see Deci & Ryan, 2000; 2008). In fact, more autonomous and volunteer motivation can flourish only when the three basic psychological needs – autonomy, competence and relatedness – have been satisfied. The satisfaction of these basic needs is positive associated with different indicators of well-being and the unsatisfaction of these needs is negative associated with these indicators (Fernet & Austin, 2014). In line with this assumption the Job Demand-Control Support Model

(JD-CS, Karasek & Theorell, 1990) considered that control (i.e. autonomy for choosing and deciding and possibility for applying one's skills) and social support (possibility of relatedness, i.e. feeling connected, listened to and helped) are central work characteristics to enable employees to adapt to job demands and obtain workplace well-being. Furthermore the Job Demand-Resources Model (JD-R, Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2001; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004) consider that psychological needs satisfaction is the mechanism that explain the relationship between job resources and workplace well-being. Several theoretical and empirical studies suggest and support positive relationships between more autonomous motivation and positive indicators of well-being (Chambel et al., 2015a; Gagné & Deci, 2005; Haivas, Hofmans, & Pepermans, 2013; Stone, Deci, & Ryan, 2009; Trépanier, Fernet, & Austin, 2012), and a negative relationship between autonomous motivation and a negative indicator of well-being at work (Chambel et al., 2015a; Fernet, Austin, & Vallerand, 2012; Fernet, Trépanier, Austin, Gagné, & Forest, 2015; Gagné et al., 2014; Parker, Jimmieson, & Amiot, 2010). Furthermore, 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 (Chambel et al., 2015a; Fernet et al., 2012; Fernet, et al., 2015; Gagné & Deci, 2005).

As far as TAW are concerned, the study by Lopes & Chambel (2014) also showed that more involuntary motivation forms (e.g. external motivation) are related to lower levels of well-being at work, contrasting with more voluntary forms of motivation that lead to more positive results in workers' well-being. Thus, if remaining in this employment situation is expected to have a detrimental effect on TAW motives (i.e. less autonomous), it may also be expected to have a detrimental effect on TAW well-being.



Furthermore, as previously mentioned, TAW also have identified motives to opt and maintain this employment arrangement because they believe that a temporary contract will facilitate obtaining permanent employment (Lopes & Chambel, 2014). With this stepping stone motive they tend to show high workplace well-being (Chambel, Castanheira & Sobral, 2014) or low strain (Chambel, Sobral, Espada & Curral, 2015), regardless of their job conditions. By doing so, temporary agency workers seem to be balancing future benefits from the client company with their inducements while concurrently maximizing the fulfillment of future benefits from this organization, namely the offer of direct employment, which is what they desire (Chambel & Castanheira, 2007; Coyle-Shapiro & Kessler, 2002). However, when they remain in a temporary agency contract, their investments – high workplace well-being – have no return. According to the norm of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960), they expect a return on these investments and when this does not occur they reduce their own investments to restore the balance. Thus, maintaining temporary agency employment may be a disadvantage for workers who perceive not getting what they desire, which, in turn, may lead them to develop feelings of frustration, and consequently, poor well-being. In the same vein as we presented previously, TAW have poor job conditions that represent higher job demands (i.e. job insecurity) and lower job resources (i.e. lower wages, lower opportunity of promotion and training access) that can lead to lower workplace well-being, particularly when this unfavorable situation maintain over time (Demerouti, et al. 2001)

In this study, we consider well-being at work and general well-being. According to Schaufeli and Bakker (2004), workplace well-being should be assessed through work engagement and burnout. Both are independent, moderately and negatively connected psychological states, as work engagement is a positive

dimension of well-being, whereas burnout is a negative dimension. Work engagement may be viewed as a cognitive and affective positive mindset related to work that includes vigor, dedication and absorption (Schaufeli, Salanova, González-Romá, & Bakker, 2002). Vigor is translated in high levels of energy and mental resistance as well as in the desire and ability to invest effort in work. Dedication is a feeling of relevance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride and challenge geared towards work.

Absorption is similar to a state of persistent flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990), where the person is totally concentrated, loses the notion of time and continues to be involved in the job (Rothmann, 2008). Burnout, a negative indicator of well-being at work, can be defined as a psychological negative state of exhaustion and cynicism. Exhaustion refers to feelings of being overextended and depleted of one's emotional and physical resources. Cynicism, representing the interpersonal context dimension of burnout, refers to a negative, callous, or excessively detached response to various aspects of the job (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001).

On the other hand, work is an essential dimension of individuals' lives, and it is known that a perceived threat to employment can have consequences for workers' general well-being and their mental health (Virtanen, Janlert & Hammarstrom, 2010; Virtanen, Kivimäki, Joensuu, Virtanen, Elovainio & Vahtera, 2005). As suggested by Ryan and Deci (2001), well-being is a complex construct related to optimal experience and functioning. Moreover, they affirm that opportunities for positive affect and life satisfaction can be detracted by functional limitations that may be caused by illness. Other authors have also found empirical results that support the association between health status and well-being (Ryff & Singer 2000). Based on this assumption, we decided to measure general well-being through satisfaction with life and health perception.

This leads to the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2: TAW who remain for longer in this employment situation have lower workplace well-being (i.e. lower engagement and higher burnout) and lower general well-being (i.e. lower satisfaction with life and lower health perception) than TAW who have less time in this employment situation.

## **Method**

### ***Sample and Procedure***

The sample comprises TAW (N=3300) from seven temporary employment agencies operating in Portugal. The data was collected online with the use of a commercial survey service – survey monkey. An e-mail containing the link to the survey was disclosed by the agencies to all their workers. Within this e-mail, the future participant of the study could find a message from the research team where all the procedures were explained and the confidentiality and anonymity of the answers were assured. Moreover, it was underlined that the companies would just have access to a final report and not to the data itself, the data was exclusively for academic use and research. The lead researcher's email address was included in the cover letter in addition to a website address where respondents could find more information about the research project, including the involved academic organizations, its goals, outcomes, partners and other researchers included in the process. There was no incentive (cash or otherwise) for participating in this project.

The data collection took place at three distinct moments: May 2012, May 2013, and May 2014. At all three collection points, the seven agencies invited all their workers to participate in this survey via email. The participants' rate varied between 42% and 58% in each company, throughout the collection points. We obtain 3758

valid answers but we selected TAW that beginning their employment with the actual agency and obtain 3300 (87.81%). The three sub-samples with different tenure in temporary agency work contain workers from several sectors with different duties and backgrounds, however, they all work at client companies where the decision to employ TAW was based on the need to adapt to current market needs. This decision enabled the organizations to adjust to fluctuations in client requests or services rendered.

Regarding the demographic characteristics, in all the sub-samples women comprised around 50% of the sample, the average age was around 30 years, the majority work in full-time (77.3%), did not have another job (90.9%) nor was student (85.2%). For more demographic information see Table I.

Insert Table I

### ***Measures***

*TAW motivations.* The motivation of TAW was assessed with an adaptation of the Motivation at Work Scale (MAWS; Gagné et al., 2010) developed by Lopes and Chambel (2014). The set of motivations examined in this study range from most to least autonomous and include (1) intrinsic (four items - e.g. “Because I choose to be temporary”,  $\alpha = .87$ ), (2) integrated motivation (four items - e.g., “*Because it is the job that best suits my needs (example: studies, family)*”,  $\alpha = .82$ ), (3) identified motivation (four items - e.g., “*Because it increases my probabilities of getting a better job in the future*”,  $\alpha = .82$ ), (4) introjected motivation (four items - e.g., “*Because I cannot fail to have a job*”,  $\alpha = .76$ ) and (5) external motivation (four items - e.g., “*Because I need to have a salary to live*”,  $\alpha = .70$ ). The respondents answered the items on a 7-point scale that ranged from 1 (*does not correspond at all*) to 7 (*corresponds very strongly*).

*Workplace well-being.* We measured TAW well-being at work with the assessment of engagement and burnout. Work engagement which included the dimension of vigor (three items – e.g., “*When I wake up in the morning, I feel good about going to work*”,  $\alpha = .90$ ), dedication (three items – e.g., “*My work inspires me*”,  $\alpha = .90$ ) and absorption (three items – e.g., “*I am immersed in my work*”,  $\alpha = .76$ ), were measured by the participants’ responses to items scored on a seven-point Likert scale (1 = *never* to 7 = *every day*). The set of nine items was constructed by Schaufeli, Bakker and Salanova (2006) and had already been used in Portugal (e.g. Lopes & Chambel, 2014; Moura, Orgambídez-Ramos, & Gonçalves, 2014). Higher values indicate that workers have higher levels of work engagement.

Burnout was assessed using a Portuguese translation of the Maslach Burnout Inventory (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996) that had also been used in previous studies with Portuguese samples (e.g. Castanheira & Chambel, 2010; Chambel et al., 2015). According to González-Romá, Schaufeli, Bakker, and Lloret (2006) the two core dimensions of burnout were selected: Emotional Exhaustion (five items - e.g., “*I feel used up at the end of a work day*”,  $\alpha = .91$ ) and Cynicism (five items - e.g., “*I doubt the significance of my work*”,  $\alpha = .83$ ). 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.

*General well-being.* We measured TAW general well-being with the assessment of satisfaction with life and health perceptions. Satisfaction with life was measured by the participants’ responses to five items (e.g., “*If I could live my life again I would hardly change anything at all*”;  $\alpha = .89$ ) scored on a seven-point Likert scale (1 = *totally disagree* to 7 = *totally agree*). The set of five items was constructed by Diener,

Emmons, Larsen, and Griffin (1985), and had already been used in Portugal (e.g. Carvalho & Chambel, 2014; Chambel & Farina, 2015).

Health perceptions were measured by the participants' responses to four items (e.g., "*I am as healthy as others*";  $\alpha = .90$ ) scored on a five-point Likert scale (1 = *definitely false* to 5 = *definitely true*). The set of four items was constructed by Ware, Davies-Avery and Donald (1978), and had already been used in Portugal (e.g. Carvalho & Chambel, 2014; Chambel & Farina, 2015). Higher values in both dimensions of general well-being indicate that workers have a favorable evaluation of these variables.

*Control variables.* We controlled for gender (0 = Men; 1 = Women), age (in years) and educational level (1 = 9<sup>th</sup> Grade, 2 = 12<sup>th</sup> Grade, 3 = university frequency, 4 = graduation, 5 = master level or superior) because these variables can influence motives for taking up temporary employment (De Jong & Schalk, 2010; Tan & Tan, 2002). We also controlled job insecurity perception because this variable relates with TAW well-being (Virtanen, Janlert, & Hammarstrom, 2011; Virtanen, Kivimäki, Joensuu, Virtanen, Elovainio & Vahtera, 2005). Job insecurity was measured using 4 items (De Witte, 2000), scored in a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (entirely disagree) to 5 (entirely agree). The  $\alpha$  coefficient for this scale was .89. We also control the sector (0 = manufacture, construction and transport; 1 = commerce, financial, telecommunication and hospitality) and the experience in different clients (0 = work in different clients; 1 = work in one client) because we considered that these variables could relate with TAW motivations or well-being.

### ***Statistical Analyses Design***

We conducted a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), with the use of the AMOS 22.0 program, to examine our measurement model (with twelve latent

variables, i.e.: intrinsic motivation, integrated motivation, identified motivation, introjected motivation, external motivation, vigor, dedication, absorption, exhaustion, cynicism, satisfaction with life, and health perceptions) and compare it with another alternative model (i.e., one latent factor model – where all items of the studied variables loaded on a single latent variable), in order to assess whether common method variance constitutes a problem (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). The models were compared based on Chi square difference tests and on other fit indices: the Standardized Root Mean Square (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).

Hypotheses were tested using ANCOVA and compared the tenure-groups (i.e. the independent variable) in the motivation and well-being (i.e. the dependent variables), taking into account the variability of other variables' covariances. Before performing these analyses we confirmed in all groups that there were no significant outliers that the distribution of the dependent variable was approximately normally distributed, and the variances of the differences between groups were equal. To assess differences between-groups, we inspected pairwise comparisons with Bonferroni correction.

## **Results**

### ***Measurement model***

The model with twelve latent factors (i.e., intrinsic motivation, integrated motivation, identified motivation, introjected motivation, external motivation, vigor, dedication, absorption, exhaustion, cynicism, satisfaction with life, and health

perceptions), corresponding to our theoretical model, showed a good fit [ $\chi^2$  (1011) = 8548.71,  $p < .01$ , SRMR = .06, CFI = .93, TLI = .93, RMSEA = .05].

Compared with the single factor model tested, we verified a significantly lower fit to the data [ $\chi^2$  (1077) = 56911.30,  $p < .01$ ; SRMR = .13, CFI = .47, TLI = .46, RMSEA = .13]. Furthermore, the difference between our theoretical model and the alternative tested model was significant [ $\Delta\chi^2$  (66) = 48362.59,  $p < .01$ ]. Thus, our theoretical model was the one that represented the best fit.

### *Analyses of covariance*

#### Insert Table II

As postulated in Hypothesis 1, the one-way ANCOVA revealed significant differences between the tenure-groups with regard to intrinsic motivation, integrated motivation and identified motivation, with the post-hoc pair wise comparisons (Table III) showing that remaining in this employment condition diminished TAW' more autonomous and volunteer motives toward the situation. However, there were no significant differences between the tenure-groups with regard to introjected motivation and extern motivations. Therefore, Hypothesis 1 was supported.

#### Insert Table III

Regarding the second hypothesis, we found significant differences between the tenure-groups with regard to vigor, dedication, absorption, exhaustion, cynicism, satisfaction with life, and health perceptions. When conducting the post-hoc pair wise comparisons, we were able to verify that the permanence of workers in this contractual condition contributed to diminishing both TAW' workplace well-being



(i.e., the time effect contributes to lower engagement and higher burnout) and their satisfaction with life and health perception. Therefore, Hypothesis 2 was supported.

### **Discussion**

Over recent decades, many workers have been employed with a temporary agency contract (CIETT, 2015). Despite the numerous studies on workers with this employment arrangement (De Cuyper et al., 2008), little is known about the effect of this status on workers' motivations and well-being over time. In order to further understand this issue, the current study focused on a sample of 3300 Portuguese TAW and examined three groups with different tenure in this employment arrangement. Previous studies have indicated that despite TAW have more extrinsic motives (i.e. to ensure an employment and a salary) they also have autonomous and volunteer motives (i.e. because is the employment arrangement that satisfy their goals and is considered a way to obtain a better job) (De Jong et al., 2009; De Jong & Shalk, 2010; Lopes & Chambel, 2014). Findings from our study are coherent with this prior research. Indeed, the present research study in accordance with the predictions of the self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000) highlights that TAW have different motives to opt and maintain this employment arrangement. Furthermore, aligned with our hypotheses, we observed that TAW who maintained this employment arrangement for longer had lower autonomous and volunteer motivation (i.e. intrinsic, integrated and introjected), than those who had been TAW for less time. These findings support the view that temporary agency work is more accepted when is short - *in fact temporary* - but is more forced and involuntary when it is longer. Therefore, with higher tenure in temporary agency work, individuals verified that this employment arrangement did not facilitate the access of a better direct or permanent contract – stepping stone motive – (Mauno et al., 2015) and live more time with poor

job conditions (De Cuyper et al., 2009), which plays a central role in their motivation, feeling low autonomous and volunteer reasons. This is particularly relevant in time of profound economic and financial crisis in Portugal where an unemployment rate remained high and always above 13.5% and where a fix and permanent contract where less probable and we can expect that maintain the temporary agency work is longer.

The findings of our study also provide support to the assumption that remain for longer in this employment situation have detrimental effects of TAW well-being. As expected, we observed that TAW who remain for longer in this employment arrangement have lower engagement, higher burnout, lower satisfaction with life and lower health perception than TAW who have less time in this employment situation. Also in accordance for the self-determination theory and concur with past research in the work context, which has shown that the more autonomous and volunteer the motivation, the more adaptive the outcomes (e.g., Gagné & Deci, 2005), we verified that TAW that maintain this employment arrangement longer show lower autonomous motivation and lower well-being. Furthermore, we observed that controlled motivation (i.e introjected and external) maintain identical levels in the different TAW tenure-groups, suggesting that these motives are less important to explain workers well-being. These findings are in line with the vision that considered that the motivation effects on workers' well-being depends of the conjugation of autonomous and controlled motivation: positive results occur with high autonomous motives independently of the levels of controlled motives; negative results occurs with low autonomous independently of the levels of controlled motives (Van den Broeck, Lens, De Witte, & Van Coillie, 2013). More specifically, TAW workplace well-being (e.g. vigor, dedication, absorption, exhaustion, and cynicism) or general well-being outside

work (satisfaction with life and health perceptions) are related with the typology of TAW motivation: when these workers have only extrinsic motivation they have lower well-being; when they have extrinsic motivation integrated with more autonomous and volunteer motivations – intrinsic, integrated, introjected – they show higher well-being (Sobral, Lopes, Chambel & Castanheira, 2016).

On the other hand, as previously mentioned, temporary agency work goes against the more important work values of Portuguese workers: employment security and continuity of the employment relationship. Take the assumptions made by Maslow: If fundamental work values like job security are not fulfilled, they become strengthened (Hauff & Kirchner, 2014). Thus, the maintenance of this employment arrangement is likely to have detrimental effects as it strongly violates workers' values (Hoffman & Woehr, 2006). Future research should include TAWs' work values and analyze their moderating role in the relationship between the maintenance of this employment arrangement and workers' motivations and well-being over time.

### ***Limitations and future studies***

Our research has some limitations that should be addressed. First, this study cannot be considered representative. The research focus is on Portuguese temporary agency workers, and extending our findings to countries outside Europe should be done only with considerable caution. Nevertheless, we believe that our study sheds some light on TAW' motivations and well-being with regard to their employment relationship. Second, the data collection method (i.e., online questionnaires) may have restricted the sample to younger and scholarly respondents, in a less-peripheral job position. Although there is steadily growing access to the Internet and new technologies, it is not yet transversal to all the Portuguese society. Despite these

limitations, the present study was conducted on a large sample and respondents were from several agencies, client companies, and several occupations. Future studies should approach this issue using cross-cultural and representative samples. Third, all the variables were obtained through the use of self-reported questionnaires, which may raise issues regarding the common-method bias. However, according to Spector (2006), common method variance concerns associated with self-reported data may be inflated. Furthermore, since our research was mainly focused on workers' emotional responses to the job conditions they experience (i.e., motivations, workplace well-being and satisfaction with life), the use of self-reported data seems to be the most appropriate approach. However, the use of an objective measure, capable of evaluating the respondent's health, may result in more accurate findings. Finally, our study analyzed different tenure-groups to infer what occurs with TAW motivation and well-being over time. Therefore, this type of data does not provide the possibility of resolving causality issues or development patterns (Taris, 2000). In order to examine changes at an individual level, future studies should opt for a longitudinal panel design.

### ***Conclusions and implications***

Regarding the maintenance of temporary agency arrangements, in Portugal we found a negative effect on motivations (i.e. lower intrinsic, integrated and introjected), on workplace well-being (i.e. lower engagement and higher burnout) and on general well-being (i.e. lower satisfaction with life and lower health perceptions). This generally supports our assumption that temporary agency work is more accept when is in fact temporary and correspond to a short employment experience. Thus this calls to question the adaptations made within the scope of Portuguese workers of this

contingent employment regime, during a period of financial and economic crisis that increase the probability that this employment arrangement is experiment as more long.

Moreover, the research implications of our findings also point to several management implications. Managers should try to counteract the negative effects of maintaining a temporary agency contract and act towards moderating the workers' reactions. For example, if they are unable to fulfill the desire and expectations of TAW by offering a direct contract, they should develop their employability, i.e. increase their chances of employment within or outside the current organization (Van der Heijden, Boon, Van der Klink, & Meijs, 2009). Thus, they should develop training or provide different assignments that enable temporary agency workers to acquire new knowledge and skills and, consequently, increase their chance of employment.

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**Table I.** Demographic characteristics of the sub-samples with different tenure in temporary agency work

		<b>Until 6 months</b>	<b>Between 6 and 12 months</b>	<b>Between 13 and 24 months</b>
Gender %				
	Woman	52.4	54.3	55.5
	Man	47.6	45.7	44.5
Age Mean (SD)		30.43 (8.02)	31 (8.09)	31.49 (7.95)
Qualifications %				
	Up to secondary	51.2	53.1	51.2
	University attendance	15.2	15	18.3
	Degree or postgraduate studies	33.6	31.9	30.5
Sector				
	Commerce, Financial, Telecommunication, and Hospitality	62.6	62.2	70.4
	Manufacture, Construction and Transport	37.4	37.6	29.6



**Table II.** Descriptive statistics and zero-order correlations for all variables (N = 3758)

Variables	Mean	SD	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.
1. Gender <sup>(a)</sup>	1.46	0.50												
2. Age	31.06	8.06	.1**											
3. Qualifications <sup>(b)</sup>	3.73	1.26	-.23**	-.15**										
4. Job Insecurity <sup>(b)</sup>	3.14	1.00	-.04*	-.02	.08**									
5. Collection year <sup>(c)</sup>	2.00	0.80	.07**	.04*	-.04**	-.02								
6. Tenure <sup>(c)</sup>	1.94	0.86	-.03	.08**	.00	-.00	-.07**							
7. Autonomous Motivation	3.12	1.32	.02	-.02	-.18**	-.37**	.02	-.12**						
8. Controlled Motivation	5.46	1.08	-.04**	.02	-.11**	.06**	-.02	.03	.16**					
9. Engagement	5.17	1.43	.01	.20**	-.21**	-.30**	.02	-.10**	.44**	.13**				
10. Exhaustion	3.41	1.68	.01	-.15**	.07**	.28**	-.02	.11**	-.28**	-.04*	-.50**			
11. Cynicism	2.58	1.48	.04*	-.11**	.08**	.29**	-.03	.05**	-.25**	-.05**	-.51**			
12. Satisfaction with life	3.69	1.50	-.05**	-.01	-.09**	-.33**	.01	-.03*	.43**	-.01	.43**	-.28**	-.24**	
13. Health perceptions	1.46	0.50	1	.01**	-.23**	-.18**	.07**	-.03	.02	-.04**	.01	.01	.04*	-.05**

<sup>(a)</sup> 0 if Female and 1 for Male; <sup>(b)</sup> Range from 1 to 5 (5 is the highest); <sup>(c)</sup> Range from 1 to 3 (3 is the highest);

\*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$

**Table III.** Motivations' means and post-hoc comparisons (N = 3300)

	N	Intrinsic Motivation		Integrated Motivation		Identified Motivation		Introjected Motivation		External Motivation	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
1. Up to 6 months	1392	1.86	0.03	2.91	0.04	3.67	0.03	5.69	0.03	5.17	0.03
2 From 7 to 12 months	804	1.79	0.04	2.82	0.05	3.47	0.04	5.70	0.04	5.23	0.04
3. From 12 to 24 months	1104	1.66	0.03	2.71	0.04	3.17	0.03	5.74	0.03	5.27	0.03
	Post-hoc <sup>(a)</sup>	1, 2>3		1>3		1>2>3		1=2=3		1=2=3	
	<i>F</i> -values <sup>(b)</sup>	10.75**		6.08**		36.27**		0.54		2.58	

<sup>(a)</sup> Bonferroni post-hoc comparisons indicate which means differ significantly at  $p < .05$ .

<sup>(b)</sup> *F*-values refer to main effects Tenure Group; *F*-values have 2 df.

\*\*  $p < .01$

**Table IV.** Well-being's means and post-hoc comparisons (N = 3300)

	N	Vigor		Dedication		Absorption		Exhaustion		Cynicism		Satisfaction with life	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
1. Up to 6 months	1392	5.43	0.04	5.25	0.04	5.32	0.04	3.20	0.04	2.51	0.04	3.76	0.04
2 From 7 to 12 months	804	5.22	0.05	5.05	0.05	5.20	0.05	3.43	0.06	2.52	0.05	3.70	0.05
3. From 12 to 24 months	1104	4.95	0.04	4.86	0.05	5.04	0.04	3.65	0.05	2.68	0.04	3.61	0.04
	Post-hoc <sup>(a)</sup>	1>2>3		1>2>3		1, 2>3		3>2>1		3>1, 2		1>3	
	F-values <sup>(b)</sup>	36.62**		19.63**		12.95**		23.88**		4.97**		3.19*	

<sup>(a)</sup> Bonferroni post-hoc comparisons indicate which means differ significantly at  $p < .05$ .

<sup>(b)</sup> F-values refer to main effects Tenure Group; F-values have 2 df.

\*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$