Article

Work Adjustment in an Employment Program for Colombian People Involved in Armed Conflict: A Multilevel Mixed-Methods Case Study

Concha Antón Rubio [1,]*, Merlin Patricia Grueso Hinestroza [2] and Mónica López-Santamaría [2]

1   Department of Social Psychology and Anthropology, University of Salamanca, 37005 Salamanca, Spain
2   School of Management and Business, Universidad del Rosario, Bogotá 111711, Colombia
*   Correspondence: canton@usal.es

Abstract: Work plays a significant role in societies; however, currently, work is a particularly difficult area for those in the most vulnerable social categories who have been heavily affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Because there is scarce research on labor integration of people affected by armed conflicts from work adjustment (WA) perspectives, we have developed research to understand the relationship between people and their work setting in an employment program inspired in supported employment models (SEMs). To achieve this, a nonexperimental mixed-methods research design with a convergent parallel approach and multilevel design was developed. The results show that the work-adjustment approach is a useful framework with which to understand the relationship between the work setting and individuals. The conclusions of the research are as follows: (1) people who have been involved in armed conflicts can develop attitudes and abilities to properly develop their work; (2) the configuration of a labor-inclusion model is related to the results in the medium and long term, both in the program itself and in its participants and society; (3) the SEMs contribute to the effective inclusion of people affected by armed conflicts, which have low skills, scarce social contacts, and low educational levels.

Keywords: work adjustment; work personality; supported employment; marginalized population

1. Introduction

Work plays a significant role in contemporary societies (Bezyak et al. 2018). However, currently, work is a particularly difficult area for those in the most vulnerable social categories, such as young people (Crespo-Andrade et al. 2022), minorities (Hussein 2022), migrants (Agudelo-Suárez et al. 2022), older workers (Peng 2022), and people with disabilities (Jacob et al. 2023; Martinelli et al. 2022), who dream of achieving dignity and social liberation (Bendassolli and Tateo 2018). People affected by armed conflicts also face marginalization and social disadvantages (Grueso Hinestroza et al. 2022). Recent research has proven that people who have been victims of internal displacement are more likely to be long-term unemployed (Aysa-Lastra 2011; Carrillo 2009; Cotroneo 2017; Ivlevs and Veliziotis 2018), as are demobilized fighters who have left GAOML (Spanish acronym for "organized armed groups outside the law") that are currently reintegrating into civilian life (Guerrero 2017). In addition to the high unemployment rates, people who have been involved in armed conflict have few skills and social contacts and low educational levels (Aysa-Lastra 2011; Kaplan and Nussio 2018); however, little has been studied about the work experiences in this type of population.

To improve the employment rates of people who are part of the most vulnerable social categories, special employment programs such as supported employment models (SEMs) have been created (Strauser and Keim 2002). There is empirical evidence about SEMs with populations such as workers with mental disorders (Ow et al. 2022; Probyn et al. 2021; Sundermann et al. 2022; Zürcher et al. 2023), workers who have some type of mental

disorder and who do not have a permanent work contract (Lammerts et al. 2017), young people (Ow et al. 2022) and young adults with mild intellectual disabilities (Soenen et al. 2016); however, there is no evidence on using SEMs as tools for labor integration for people affected by armed conflicts.

In supported employment contexts, the work-adjustment approach may be useful to guide the vocational evaluation (Strauser et al. 2020). In that approach, there is a focus on the relationship between the work setting and the individual (Bayl-Smith and Griffin 2018). For instance, the literature review shows studies about work adjustment in: cancer survivors (Clur et al. 2017), middle-aged Korean women (Lee et al. 2017), co-workers of people with mental disorders (Muschalla et al. 2016), primary and secondary teachers who work in Iran (Mirsafian 2016), expatriates (Zhu et al. 2016), adults of retirement age (Foley and Lytle 2015), and parents who return to work after the birth of a child (Kaufman and Bernhardt 2015); however, none of these studies address work adjustment in people affected by armed conflicts.

Studying the work experiences with people in a disadvantaged condition is highly relevant. First, the International Labour Organization (2017) points out that the number of workers in vulnerable jobs shows a growing trend. The number of people trying to escape from wars or persecution is dramatically increasing as well (Knappert et al. 2018). According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), at the end of 2017, there were 71.44 million people in the world who were refugees, returnees, stateless, internally displaced by violence, or seeking asylum because of violence (UNHCR 2017). More recently, the conflict between Russia and Ukraine in 2022 has created a large-scale humanitarian crisis (Ben-Ezra et al. 2023).

Considering people affected by armed conflicts are more likely to be long-term unemployed (Cotroneo 2017), that there is no research about SEM as a tool for labor integration of people affected by armed conflicts, and that our literature review does not show studies about work adjustment in people affected by armed conflicts, we have proposed, as a general aim, to study the work adjustment from a multilevel perspective by understanding the relationship between people and their work setting in an employment program inspired in SEM. To achieve this, we proposed two specific aims: (1) to describe the work personality profile of the workers that are part of the employment program studied and (2) to describe the work setting of the employment program analyzed.

People Involved in the Colombian Armed Conflict

In Colombian armed conflict, two types of population are directly involved. On one side are the people who are or were part of illegal armed groups, and on the other side are the victims who have suffered violence in its different forms (death, kidnappings, forced displacement). For this research, we studied demobilized people currently in a reintegration process and victims of armed conflict.

According to the Sub-Directorate of Follow-up for the Agencia para la Reincorporación y la Normalización (2022), in Colombia, 51,791 people who left the GAOML have been admitted into the reintegration process The reintegration process (also called the reintegration route) into civil life has a total duration of approximately six-and-a-half years, during which time the individual receives support in eight areas: personal development, family, environment, health, citizenship, education, security, and productivity. To support job creation for people in the reintegration process (PRP), the ARN has an employability program through which it promotes the labor relationship of PRP in public and private companies. The ARN follows through with the hiring process and monitors the workers' performance. The productive area is particularly important regarding the entire reintegration route, and many authors consider it to be one of the factors associated with staying legal (Grueso et al. 2016). However, finding employment and establishing relationships with other people are not easy tasks for people undergoing the process of reintegration (Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica 2017). According to Guerrero (2017), the unemployment rate of this population is higher than the national average (18.2% vs. 8.7%) as well.

Victims represent the other side of armed conflict in Colombia. The attention and reparation system for Colombia's armed-conflict victims was established by Law 1448/2011. This law establishes a set of state actions in the area of housing, health, education, income generation, and employment programs. According to the Unified Victims Registry (RUV is its acronym in Spanish), in Colombia, there are 8,650,169 registered victims (Cruz 2018). Aysa-Lastra (2011) indicated that this population faces higher levels of unemployment than the national average, explained by a set of individual, organizational, and environmental barriers (Cruz 2018).

The present investigation then explores the work adjustment of both victims of armed conflict and people in the reintegration process who are currently working on the largest special employment program offered by a private company in Medellín (Colombia) and inspired by the supported employment model.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Work Adjustment

Work adjustment (WA) is seen as a relevant factor in maintaining employment, especially in vocational rehabilitation contexts where people need to improve their employment outcomes (Strauser et al. 2021). WA consists of adaptive and proactive behaviors that help to achieve and keep the person–environment adjustment (Bayl-Smith and Griffin 2018). Two models of WA have received considerable attention in the scientific literature (Strauser and Lustig 2003; Strauser et al. 2021). The Dawis and Lofquist model (Dawis and Lofquist 1984) gives rise to the theory of work adjustment (TWA) and explains work adjustment from a Parsonian trait-and-factor approach (Hershenson 1996). The TWA states that work adjustment occurs to the extent that the characteristics of the individual correspond to the characteristics of the organization.

On the other hand, the Hershenson Work Adjustment Model, on which this research is founded, adopts a developmental approach and posits that "work adjustment is the interaction among three interacting domains (or subsystems) within the person and the person's work environment" (Hershenson 1996, p. 442), as shown in Figure 1.

Hershenson's Work Adjustment Model (Hershenson 1996) is structured into three major elements and five explanatory levels (Figure 1). The three elements are related to each other from a systemic perspective: the work personality, work competencies, and work goals are the core components of the model. According to Hershenson (1996), the work personality consists of the self-concept of the person as a worker. Additionally, the work competencies consist of mental and physical skills applicable in work, interpersonal skills and work habits, and finally work goals, which are influenced—at least partially—by the person's peer group. Because work personality has been studied more extensively in the framework of supported employment programs (Williams 1997), it is privileged in this research and is discussed in detail below.

2.2. Work Personality

In supported employment programs, work personality (WP) has been widely studied (Williams 1997). Hershenson (1996) defines WP as the "person's self-concept as a worker, the person's system of work motivation, and the person's work-related needs and values" (p. 442). According to Williams (1997), WP is a good measure of current behavior and an appropriate indicator to measure progress at work and multiple future results and can be used as a mechanism to study the cost/benefit ratio of supported employment services. Research on the subject has shown that work personality is a construct that is related to successful job readiness, work motivation, job maintenance, and work adjustment (Liu et al. 2021).
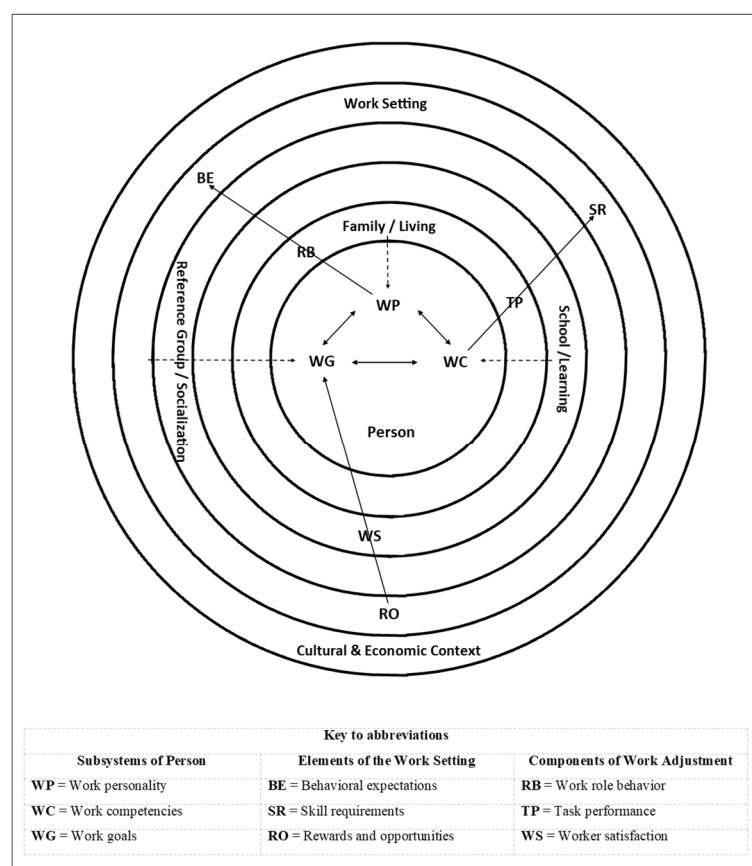
Figure 1. Hershenson's Work Adjustment Model (Source: Hershenson 1996, p. 444).

2.3. Work Setting

Following the Hershenson Work Adjustment Model (Hershenson 1996), the work setting is explained by: (a) behavioral expectations and organizational culture, (b) skill requirements and job demands, and (c) rewards and opportunities available to the worker (Figure 1). From the interaction between the work environment and the subsystems of the individual, work adjustment will be developed. In this regard, work adjustment consists of three components: (1) role behavior in the work context, which is mainly related to the worker's work personality and behavioral expectations in the work environment; (2) task performance, which refers to the quality and quantity of work output; and (3) the degree of worker satisfaction, which involves the gratification resulting from the work. Finally, Hershenson (1996) concludes his model by pointing out that although it provides a general framework, further research is needed.

2.4. Supported Employment Models

Supported employment models are defined as models "supporting people with disabilities and other disadvantaged groups to obtain and maintain paid employment in the open labor market" (The European Union of Supported Employment 2010, p. 9). The adoption of the SEM in organizations allows for setting up a work environment that favors the labor inclusion of people in a socially disadvantaged condition (Izuzquiza and Rodríguez 2016), people with mental health conditions (Bond et al. 2023; Ow et al. 2022; Park et al. 2022; Probyn et al. 2021; Sundermann et al. 2022; Zürcher et al. 2023), former prisoners, former drug addicts, and young people at risk of exclusion (European Union of Supported Employment 2010). As a way of labor insertion, SEM promotes people's empowerment, social integration, dignity, and respect toward human beings based on eight values and principles and five phases (European Union of Supported Employment 2010).

Based on the research gaps evidenced in the introduction and guided by the theoretical framework developed, we propose, as a general aim of this research, to study the work adjustment from a multilevel perspective by understanding the relationship between people and their work setting in an employment program inspired by SEMs. To achieve this, we propose two specific aims: (1) to describe the work profile of the workers that are part of the employment program studied and (2) to describe the work setting of the employment program analyzed.

3. Research Setting

This study was carried out in one of the largest private employment programs that offers employment opportunities to people who have been involved in armed conflict: people in the process of reintegration (former paramilitary and guerilla members) and victims of armed conflict. The program was created in 2006 as a result of an alliance between private companies in Colombia and supported by ARN and the Medellín Town Hall (Colombia). Given that the employment program analyzed is not an independent company, but an initiative managed by one of the partner companies, the administrative structure is composed of a manager who has been in charge of structuring and developing all the processes that occur within the employment program. At the time of the investigation, the employment program had 64 participants with between 1 and 10 years of seniority.

4. Method

In order to achieve the purpose of the research, we developed a nonexperimental multilevel mixed-methods research design—MMRD. According to Headley and Plano Clark (2020), this kind of design helps to obtain a better understanding three characteristics of a system: the holistic structure of the system; the individual components (levels) that emerge from, give rise to, or evolve in tandem with the structure; and the processes (mechanisms) at work between the components and the structure (p. 153). Thus, in this research, the holistic structure to be studied is the work adjustment as proposed by Hershenson (1996). Similarly, two levels are addressed: the work personality, which is part of the person subsystem; and the work setting. Finally, this research also addresses the processes that act between the levels (person and organization) and the structure (the work adjustment process).

Given the existence of different proposals for developing multilevel mixed research, in this study, we have adopted the recommendations made by Headley and Plano Clark (2020), who propose a definition and methodological considerations for this kind of research designs. The six design features considered in our research are in Table 1.

Table 1. Features of multilevel mixed-methods research designs (MMRD). Source: adapted from Headley and Plano Clark (2020).

Design Feature	Specification	Research Specification
1. Theoretical grounding	Incorporates a theory about a multilevel system with assumptions about the system as a whole (structure), the components of the system (levels), and processes that contribute to the maintenance or evolution of the system (mechanisms)	Theory: The Hershenson Model of Work Adjustment (Hershenson 1996) Levels: Person (work personality) and work setting: (a) behavioral expectations and organizational culture, (b) skill requirements and job demands, and (c) rewards and opportunities available to the worker Mechanisms: interaction between the individual level and the work setting level.
2. Mixed-methods research design	Includes at least two strands of inquiry (qualitative and quantitative), each of which investigates structure, level(s), and/or mechanism(s)	Quantitative study: work personality profile in workers Qualitative study: the work setting description from the program manager

Table 1. *Cont.*

Design Feature	Specification	Research Specification
3. Sampling strategy	Involves more than one level of the system	Quantitative: census Qualitative: purposeful sampling strategy
4. Data collection	Generates evidence about more than one level and/or between level mechanisms	Quantitative: survey Qualitative: interview and documental research
5. Data analysis	Generates within- or between-level inferences for each strand Generates findings sufficient to support across-level meta-inferences during integration	Quantitative: descriptive analysis of employees Work personality dimensions. Qualitative: thematic analysis of features of work setting from employment program management
6. Integration	Supports across-level meta-inferences about more than one aspect of the system: 1. Characteristics of structure 2. Characteristics of levels 3. Nature of between-level mechanisms	Structure: display of work adjustment as a multilevel phenomenon Levels: descriptive dimensions facilitate quantitative description and emergent qualitative themes facilitated interpretation of qualitative exploration Mechanisms: multilevel joint discussions of quantitative participants and qualitative interview and documental review.

4.1. Theoretical Grounding

According to Headley and Plano Clark (2020), an MMRD must be developed within the framework of a multilevel theory and seek to achieve a multilevel purpose. Thus, the Theoretical Model of Work Adjustment developed by Hershenson (1996) is built on five levels (person, family/living, school/learning, work setting, and cultural and economic context) and seeks to explain the concept from a systemic and complex perspective. In this research, we analyze two of these levels, namely, work personality from the person level and work-setting level: (a) behavioral expectations and organizational culture, (b) skill requirements and job demands, and (c) rewards and opportunities available to the worker. Finally, we describe the mechanisms that explain the interactions between the individual level and the work setting level (see Figure 2).
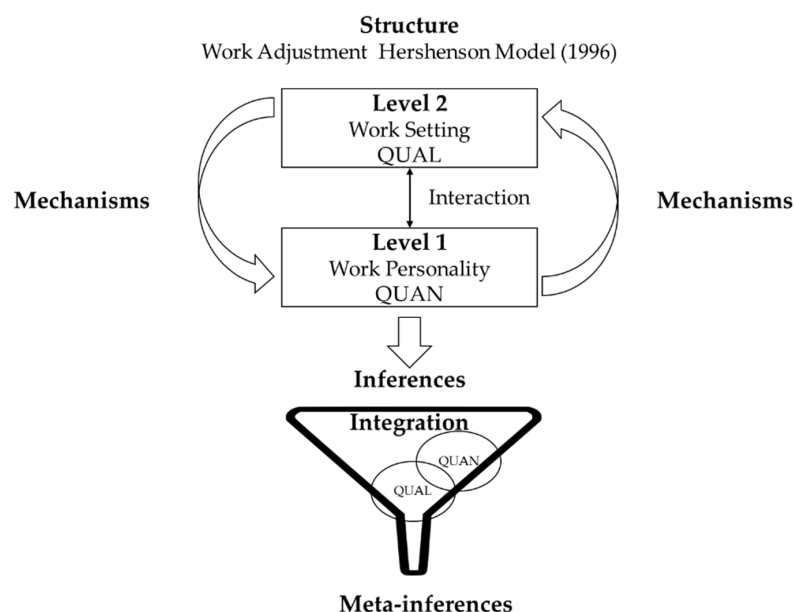

Figure 2. Conceptualization of the multilevel mixed-methods research design.

4.2. Mixed-Methods Research Design

With the aim to study the work adjustment from a multilevel perspective by understanding the relationship between people and their work setting in an employment program inspired in SEM, a mixed-methods (quantitative and qualitative) study was developed.

4.2.1. Quantitative Study

The quantitative study was developed to describe the work personality profile and the five dimensions of the workers that were part of the employment program studied: Task orientation, social skills, work motivation, work conformance and personal presentation.

4.2.2. Qualitative Study

The qualitative study was developed to describe, from an administrative perspective, the work setting in the employment program studied in our research. The main characteristics of the program were studied in terms of the culture and human resources practices adopted, including job description, personnel hiring, performance management, and training.

4.3. Sampling Strategy

Following the recommendations of Headley and Plano Clark (2020), in an MMRD, the sampling strategies must be justified in terms of the underlying multilevel theory, which, in our case, is the work adjustment model, the overall multilevel purpose (to understand work adjustment in a population of workers who are part of an employment program), and the unique purpose of each chapter that is employees and program administrators. This study uses a multilevel mixed methods sampling design, which has already been studied (Teddlie and Stringfield 1993; Savaya et al. 2000). In our study, this involved the use of two or more sets of samples that were extracted from different levels of the study (i.e., different populations).

4.3.1. Quantitative Study

In this regard, the population census was the sampling strategy used for the quantitative study. Sabino (2002) refers to the population census as the study that uses all the available elements of a defined population. A total of 64 volunteers who were working on the employment program participated in the study. After a review of the valid questionnaires, 62 participants remained. A total of 46.8% of the participants were men and 53.2% were women. Regarding age, 43.5% were less than 30 years old, 33.9% were 30–39 years of age, and 22.6% were 40–49 years old. Moreover, 71% of the participants were undergoing the process of reintegration (former paramilitary or guerrilla) and 29% were victims of armed conflict.

4.3.2. Qualitative Study

This study also employed a purposeful sampling strategy (Given 2008), which involved the selection of individuals that meet the criteria previously determined by the researchers: (a) knowledge of the program from its foundational framework, (b) having a leadership role in the program, and (c) having autonomy to provide information about the program to the researchers. The manager of the special employment program was the participant for the qualitative study using the "elite interview". Elites can be defined as those with a close proximity to power. This category includes, among others, executive officers of organizations (Lilleker 2003). However, in order to reduce the risk of bias that this type of information collection approach may present, this information was triangulated with reports and official documents shared by the director of the program.

In addition to the technical reasons stated above, the participation of a single informant in the qualitative study is explained from a contextual perspective as follows: (1) the program manager is the only person who has access to the program and program participants, for security and confidentiality reasons; (2) the conditions related to work setting are

established and monitored by the program manager; for such reason, she has the precise and necessary information on the processes, practices, and strategies carried out there; (3) the program contemplates the processes from the participants' hiring until their retirement (firing) or graduation (completion of the accompaniment process); therefore, administrative interactions with other areas of the organizations that are part of the alliance are scarce or null; and (4) the people work in one of the companies that are part of the alliance but very few people know about their condition, except for the supervisors.

4.4. Data Collection

The data-collection tools must generate evidence about mechanisms and/or multiple levels of the system (Headley and Plano Clark 2020). On top of the above, the data-collection tools and analytic techniques must be planned with explicit connections between quantitative and qualitative strands to facilitate integration across levels (Headley and Plano Clark 2020). The tools for data collection and analysis are described below.

4.4.1. Quantitative Study

To carry out the quantitative study, Bolton's WPP Self-Report (WPP-SR) (Bolton 1992) was used. It is a measurement frequently used in rehabilitation settings and is a valid standard for evaluating work behavior in vocational rehabilitation (Strauser et al. 2010). The WPP-SR is also recognized as an appropriate instrument for use with employees receiving supported employment services (Tyerman and Tyerman 2009). Bolton's WPP-SR (Bolton 1992) consists of 58 items, 5 factors, and 4 anchors. In this research, the full questionnaire developed for Bolton (1992) was employed, except two items, which were excluded as they were not applicable to the population group studied. First, because when a pilot study with people in reintegration process was conducted, they did not understand the item ("Sufficient level of alertness and awareness"). Regarding the second item: "He/She gets along well with the center's team of professionals" was not used because the people under study do not work in one center but in different companies. As a result, the final questionnaire consisted of 56 items. A rating scale of five response anchors was used (the higher the score, the stronger the factor).

4.4.2. Qualitative Study

For the qualitative study, a triangulation strategy was developed using interviews and analysis of documents, a combination that provides deepened understanding and unbiased analysis (Mik-Meyer 2020). Regarding the interview as data collection method, an unstructured and a semi-structured interview were conducted. The first had the purpose to understand how the employment program works. The second interview had the purpose of deepening knowledge on one topic (work setting) based on two theoretical references: work adjustment from the Hershenson model (Hershenson 1996) and conflict-sensitive human-resource practices from Reade (2015). Two in-depth interviews were conducted, the first one in November 2016 and the second one in March 2018. Table 2 shows topics and the theoretical references used in this research.

Regarding the analysis of documents, we used program documents such as their webpage, manuals of hiring, developing, evaluating, and maintaining the participants. In addition to the above, we considered the guidelines established by the ARN as public policy regarding the labor inclusion of people affected by the armed conflict.

Table 2. Topics, themes, and theoretical references.

Topic	Themes	Categories	Some Examples	Theoretical References
Work setting	(a) Behavioral expectations and organizational culture	Dominant cultural values, leadership practices, strategic emphasis	What are the most representative cultural values of this organization?	Work Adjustment from Hershenson Model (Hershenson 1996) Conflict Sensitive Human Resources Management (Reade 2015)
	(b) Skill requirements and job demands	Human resource management and conflict-sensitive human resource management practices	What are the competences required to be hired in this program?	
	(c) Rewards and opportunities available to the worker	Human resource management and conflict-sensitive human resource management practices	What are the opportunities offered to the employees for develop their abilities?	

Source: authors.

4.5. Data Analysis

As mentioned above, the analytic techniques must be planned to stablish connections between quantitative and qualitative strands, to facilitate integration across levels (Headley and Plano Clark 2020).

4.5.1. Quantitative Study

The quantitative study was carried out with the SPSS statistical package. The items were grouped according to the scale developed by Bolton (1992). A reliability analysis was used to verify the internal consistency of the measurement scales; descriptive statistics were also performed to describe the WPP-SR factors. Previous research has reported WPP reliability coefficients between 0.78 and 0.93 (Bolton 1992). The Cronbach's alpha calculated for this research was between 0.78 and 0.90 (see Table 2).

Bearing in mind the purpose of the quantitative study, which was to describe the work profile of the employees from the special program using the WPP-SR, descriptive statistics were calculated for each of the factors analyzed. For the sample studied, the Mean of the factors was between 4.4/5.0 and 4.8/5.0 (See Table 3).

Table 3. Mean, standard deviation, and Cronbach's alpha.

Factor	# of Items	Mean	SD	Cronbach's Alpha
Task orientation	21	4.6	0.04473	0.90
Social skills	12	4.4	0.05041	0.79
Work motivation	8	4.5	0.06020	0.80
Work conformity	9	4.8	0.04795	0.86
Personal presentation	6	4.6	0.05441	0.78

Source: authors.

Task orientation: based on Bolton and Roessler (1986) and Bolton (1992) task-orientation definition, the results obtained indicated that program participants have the ability to learn quickly and have high initiative (4.6/5.0). The European Union of Supported Employment points out that the ability to learn helps people understand their job and the organizational culture. If people can understand the dynamics of the organization, they can feel more confident in doing their jobs and more integrated into them.

Social skills refer to the ability to relate co-workers and work with other people (Bolton 1992). Although previous studies have shown that people affected by armed conflicts have poor social skills (Aysa-Lastra 2011), these results show that research participants can establish appropriate interpersonal relationships in their context (4.4/5.0).

Work motivation: the results indicate that people who are part of the studied employment program are highly motivated to work (4.5/5.0), which is of importance in this study for two reasons. First, when people have a high work motivation, they adjust more easily to the work environment (Feißel et al. 2018). On the other hand, previous studies have demonstrated that minorities (Feißel et al. 2018) and disadvantaged people have a high motivation to work, concluding that the disadvantage condition is not related to work motivation (Kocman and Weber 2018).

Work conformance: according to Bolton and Roessler (1986) and Bolton (1992), work conformance has been defined in terms of the ability to adapt to the requirements of the role of work and to control self-expression. In this research, work conformance scored appropriately (4.8/5.0), which may be because people who are part of armed conflict, both victims and people in the reintegration process, have received comprehensive care for a few years before joining the world of work.

Personal presentation is defined as the ability of people to respond appropriately to authority figures (Bolton 1992). In this research, personal presentation scored 4.6/5.0, which is understandable insofar as both government employment inclusion programs for both types of population (victims and people in the reintegration process) and the special employment program focus on the development of skills to relate to bosses.

In sum, the results show that the employees of the employment program studied have an appropriate personality profile in each of their five dimensions of analysis. To understand the working conditions that could contribute to these results, we analyzed the work setting (qualitative study). The results are presented below.

4.5.2. Qualitative Study

The purpose of the qualitative study was to describe the work setting of the studied program. A thematic analysis was carried out to analyze one prominent manifestation and latent meanings (Saldaña 2011). Attending to the research purposes, we proceeded with the first-order coding process (open coding). Then, we carried out a second-order coding (focused), which searched for the most significant or frequent initial codes to identify emergent categories (Saldaña 2013). Finally, we carried out axial coding, which allows us to identify categories of their properties and dimensions, as well as to identify subcategories and relate them to categories. It also helps to identify causes and consequences of a process, which allows the researcher to know "when, how and why" (Saldaña 2013). This resulted in a network of relationships between the identified categories (see Figure 3).

From the axial coding and based on the literature review, we identified five topics: program background (1, 2, 3), program philosophy (4), program operation (5, 6, 7, 8), program outcomes (9, 10, 11), and external conditions of the program (12); then, we proceeded to develop the network of relationships (Figure 3). In order to ensure the reliability of the qualitative study, two strategies were used: data triangulation and member checking (Creswell and Miller 2000).
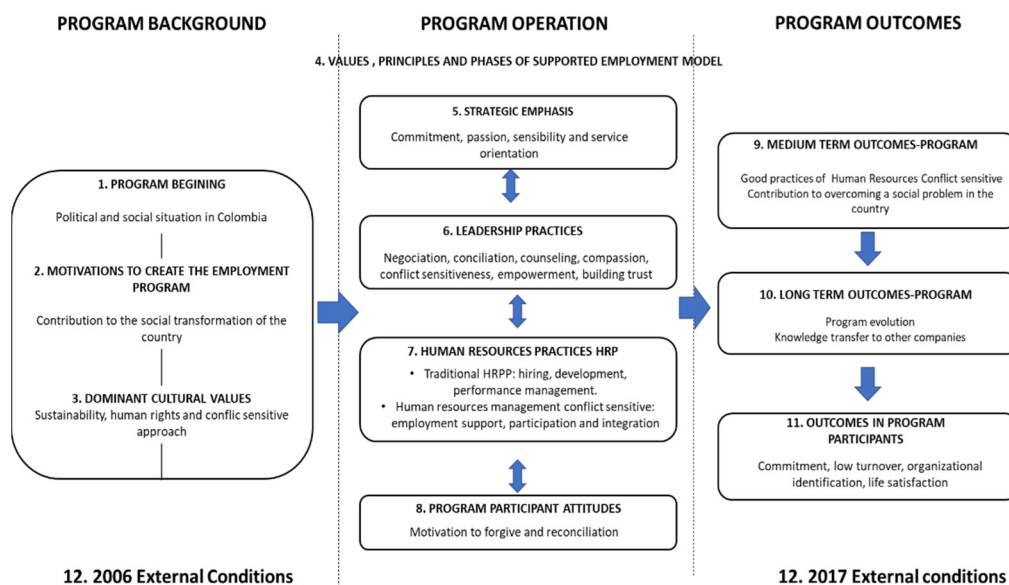
PROGRAM BACKGROUND   **PROGRAM OPERATION**   **PROGRAM OUTCOMES**

4. VALUES , PRINCIPLES AND PHASES OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT MODEL

5. STRATEGIC EMPHASIS

Commitment, passion, sensibility and service orientation

9. MEDIUM TERM OUTCOMES-PROGRAM

Good practices of Human Resources Conflict sensitive Contribution to overcoming a social problem in the country

1. PROGRAM BEGINING

Political and social situation in Colombia

2. MOTIVATIONS TO CREATE THE EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM

Contribution to the social transformation of the country

3. DOMINANT CULTURAL VALUES
Sustainability, human rights and conflic sensitive approach

6. LEADERSHIP PRACTICES

Negociation, conciliation, counseling, compassion, conflict sensitiveness, empowerment, building trust

7. HUMAN RESOURCES PRACTICES HRP
- Traditional HRPP: hiring, development, performance management.
- Human resources management conflict sensitive: employment support, participation and integration

8. PROGRAM PARTICIPANT ATTITUDES

Motivation to forgive and reconciliation

10. LONG TERM OUTCOMES-PROGRAM

Program evolution
Knowledge transfer to other companies

11. OUTCOMES IN PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

Commitment, low turnover, organizational identification, life satisfaction

12. 2006 External Conditions   **12. 2017 External conditions**

Figure 3. Work setting from the manager program perspective. Source: authors.

Program Background

The program background has been classified as the program beginning, motivations to create the employment program, and the program founders' organizational culture.

Program beginning according to the report from the Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica (2017), the Cacique Nutibara Paramilitary Group operating in the Antioquia territory was the first to demobilize in 2003. The presence of this demobilized population in the region was a motivation for the start of the program being investigated. On this subject, the manager of the Special Employment Program noted: "We had just demobilized 800 people from Cacique Nutibara GAOML and we had to contribute to the issue".

Motivations: there are some proposals regarding why companies adopt actions that help to overcome armed conflict (Katsos and Fort 2016). Rettberg (2016) identifies three types of motivation: need, creed, and greed. The results of the research show that, apparently, the companies that started this program were motivated by the "creed", in which a social change is positive, and were therefore willing to promote the necessary transformations so that armed conflict could end. On this subject, the manager of the Special Employment Program noted: "In this group of companies, they were convinced that if we wanted to get out of that difficult situation in which we were 10–12 years ago, we had to do something".

Cultural values: it is widely accepted that organizational culture explains the behavior in organizations (Palumbo 2014). Based on the research outcomes, we believe that the cultural values of the companies that supported the creation of the employment program also contributed to the consolidation of a particular culture and philosophy for the program studied. Some cultural values evidenced in the research were context sensitivity, diversity, inclusion, trust, and development orientation. On this subject, the manager of the Special Employment Program noted: " . . . by values, the companies that supported the creation of the employment program wanted to give other people who might need it a chance. The businessmen knew that there were opportunities that were not given by what some people (the demobilized) had been in their past".

Program Philosophy

The special program seems to be inspired by SEM. According to the European Union of Supported Employment (2010), the SEM is based on eight values, which are supported by a five-stage process. The research shows that in the management of the employment program, SEM values such as respect, self-determination, individuality, empowerment,

flexibility, confidentiality, and accessibility are present in the day-to-day activity. On the other hand, the research shows that the employment program studied is developed in five phases as proposed by the European Union of Supported Employment (2010): client engagement, vocational profiling, job finding, employer engagement, and on-and-off job support.

Program Operation

According to the research outcomes, there are four factors involved in the operation of the employment program: (1) strategic emphasis, (2) leadership practices, (3) human resources practices, and (4) participant attitudes. The first three factors correspond to the dimensions proposed by Cameron and Quinn, as shown in Table 1 (strategic emphases, leadership, and management of employees), and the fourth is an emerging factor.

Strategic emphases: according to Cameron and Quinn (2006), "The strategic emphases that define what areas of emphasis drive the organization's strategy" (p. 151). It may be that: (a) organization is emphasized in human development, (b) organization is emphasized in acquiring new resources and creating new challenges, (c) organization is emphasized in competitive actions, or (d) organization is emphasized in stability and achievement. In the program analyzed, the teamwork dynamic is service-oriented, demonstrating an organizational emphasis on human development. On this subject, the manager of the Special Employment Program noted: "we are a super committed and passionate team with what we do".

Leadership practices: leaders create and sustain organization cultures, strategies, and practices (Spreitzer 2007). More recently, Katsos and Fort (2016) pointed out that leaders of companies are key drivers in achieving peacebuilding in areas affected by armed conflicts, especially when they are focused on corporate social responsibility, employee rights, gender equity, and employee voices. In the studied program, some attributes of the leadership style were negotiation, conciliation, trust, discipline, respect, contribution to the empowerment and self-determination of the participants, empathy, sensitivity to conflict, a differential approach, mediation and counseling, and a leadership style supportive of values and principles of SEM.

Human resource management practices: HRMPs have been analyzed in the context of labor inclusion of people with disabilities (Reade 2015). Additionally, they have been studied in armed conflict contexts. In her research paper, Reade (2015) proposed a model of conflict-sensitive human resource management with three elements: employee support, employee participation, and employee integration. In our research, two types of HRM emerged: traditional HRM (hiring, training, and performance evaluation) and conflict-sensitive HRM according to Reade's model. On this subject, the manager of the Special Employment Program noted: "Well, that's why we've learned that we can't rule out a person who arrives to an interview in flip flops. We proceed to ask: what happened to you? Why did you come in flip flops?"

Employee's program attitudes: the employee's attitude is a relevant topic in the work-place associated with work productivity. There is empirical evidence about its relationship with personnel retention, withdrawal, and turnover (Podsakoff et al. 2007). In the program analyzed, employees show, for instance, motivation to forgive and reconcile. On this subject, the manager of the Special Employment Program noted: "Among the program participants are demobilized of the paramilitary, guerrillas and victims of armed conflict. One of them says no, very difficult, very difficult; but I am not who to take the opportunity from someone who wants to do something different in his life".

Program Outcomes

Medium-term outcomes: several authors have pointed out how, in a post-conflict context, the company is a relevant actor in the peacebuilding process (Katsos and AlKafaji 2019; Oetzel and Miklian 2017). The program studied has contributed to peacebuilding, even during conflict. On this subject, the manager of the Special Employment Program

noted: "There have been many important transformations and the truth is that an initiative like this is the one that will have results to show, so that many other entrepreneurs will be convinced of what they can do".

Long-term outcomes: alliances constitute a key strategy for business peacebuilding actions (López-Santamaría et al. 2017). The program investigated has linked up to other organizations in this initiative, forming a working alliance. On this subject, the manager of the Special Employment Program noted: "One of the interests is to be able to take this initiative (employment program) to other companies. We do not want political spaces, but we want academy spaces and business spaces, from the same companies. The more companies know this; they will say I want to bet on this initiative".

Participant outcomes: previous research has reported higher work satisfaction and self-esteem among individuals who used a supported employment approach (Wehman 2013). The quantitative phase of this research shows the positive psychosocial effects in the participants of the program analyzed in terms of task orientation, social skills, work motivation, work conformity, and personal presentation. During the qualitative phase, the program manager also indicated that the beneficiaries of this model of labor inclusion also showed a high degree of commitment and identification with the organization.

External Conditions Program

Hannan and Freeman (1984) argue that corporate strategy is conditioned by the context and, in the same way, the survival of the organization. The organization studied has been linked to this context and continues to be interested in contributing to peacebuilding.

In conclusion, the qualitative study evidenced the circumstances that gave rise to the employment program, its main characteristics, the impacts it has had on the workers, their prospective future, and the interaction between those elements. The qualitative study was also useful to identify different explanatory levels and components of the work adjustment model and identify the relationships between these.

4.6. Integration

Through this study, we aimed to study the work adjustment process by understanding the relationship between people (work personality—quantitative study) and their work setting (qualitative study) in an employment program inspired by the Supported Employment Model for Colombian people involved in armed conflict. To explain the integrated findings of the study, we used an adapted Hershenson's model of work adjustment (Figure 4). The model presents five explanatory levels (person, family, reference group, work setting, and cultural and economic context) and three elements: person subsystems, work environment elements, and work adjustment components. The findings obtained both in the quantitative and qualitative study allowed to build, adapt, and describe the work adjustment model.

Regarding the "economic and cultural context" level, the findings obtained show that the political situation (PC) in the country (collective demobilization of the paramilitary) was one of the main triggers for the adoption of this employment program aimed at people who were involved in armed conflict. In a complementary way, the social context (SV) experienced by the city where the case was studied (Medellín Town) was decisive, so the organizations that participated in the creation of the employment program had a special sensitivity to promote the creation of a work environment that is inclusive and diversity oriented.

On the other hand, the study allowed to understand, in depth, the "work setting" level. According to Hershenson (1996), the work setting includes three elements: (1) the behavioral expectations and organizational culture, (2) the skill requirements and job demands, and (3) the opportunities and rewards to the worker. In our investigation, we found that these elements are part of this level, although with a different configuration. Consequently, two components were identified at the work-setting level: an organizational component and task component. The organizational component consists of organizational culture, human resource practices (which include the rewards and opportunities of the Hershenson

model), and leadership. The task component consists of the behavioral expectations and skill requirements (see Figure 4).
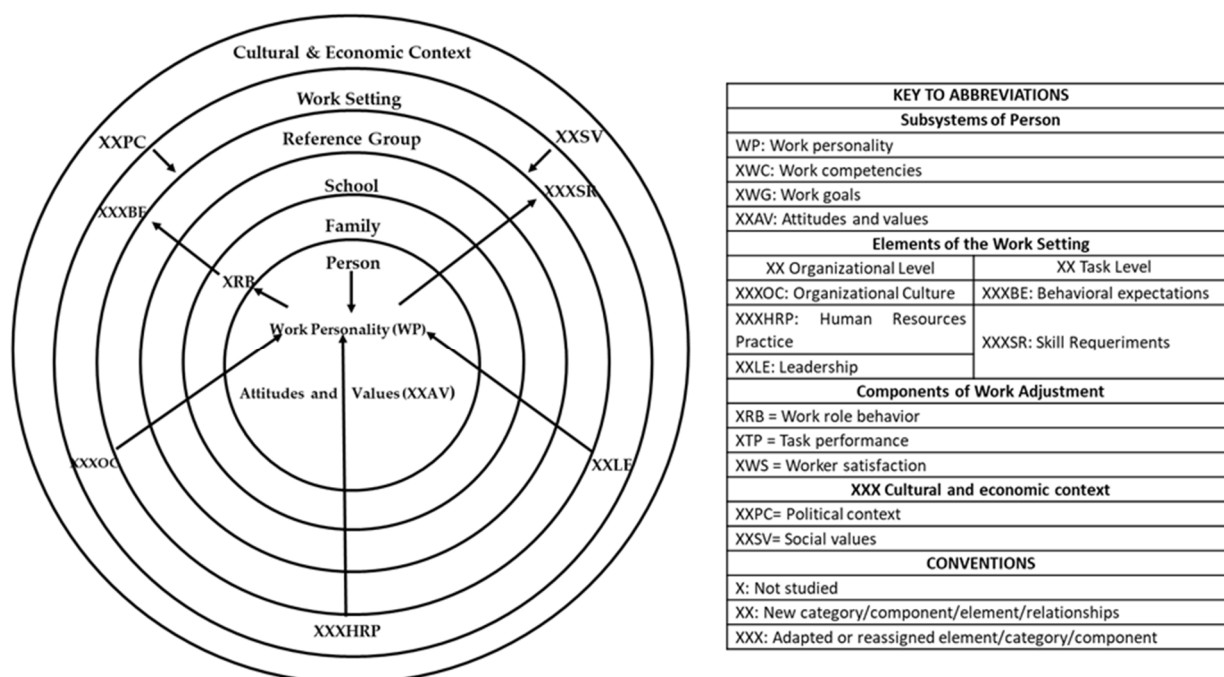

Figure 4. Integrated findings. Source: authors.

Regarding organizational culture, as an element of the work setting in this research, values such as service orientation and sensitivity to people's needs were evidenced in the operation of the program. Similarly, the results evidenced the existence of both traditional Human resource practices (HRP) and conflict-sensitive human resource practices that support and encourage the participation and integration of people working in the employment program. Among the leadership practices (L), compassion, sensitivity to conflict, and trust building were evident.

Considering the "person level" proposed in the Hershenson model (1996), the evidence shows that there is a link between this level and the work setting level, particularly when the work setting is inspired by principles of the supported employment model. Through this study, we were able to verify two relevant elements at the person level: the work personality and a set of attitudes and values. Regarding the work personality (WP), the research evidenced a high level of task orientation, social skills, work motivation, work conformity, and personal presentation. Similarly, the study reported that the participants of the employment program studied were highly motivated to forgive and reconcile (AV) (Bayl-Smith and Griffin 2018).

In sum, the work adjustment approach is a useful framework to understand the relationship between the work setting and the individual.

5. Conclusions

Work is a significant issue for society (Bezyak et al. 2018) and for the wellbeing of individuals (Bendassolli and Tateo 2018). In the employment sphere, it is evident that the most vulnerable social categories, such as women (International Labour Organization 2017), young people (Crespo-Andrade et al. 2022), individuals with disabilities (Gustafsson et al. 2018), and those involved in armed conflicts (Ivlevs and Veliziotis 2018), take little part.

The results obtained in this research show that Hershenson's model (Hershenson 1996) is a useful framework with which to understand the work adjustment in a socially disadvantaged population such as people affected by armed conflict. Additionally, of the abovementioned points, the results allowed us to identify new elements that were not

considered in the original Hershenson model, for example, the existence of human resource practices (traditional and conflict sensitive) and leadership practices as elements that impact the development of the work personality profile. Similarly, the results evidenced the existence of elements of the economic and cultural context (political context and social values), which promote the consolidation of work environments with characteristics to favor the hiring and development of people affected by armed conflict. These new elements that emerged during the investigation contribute to the updating of Hershenson's model that may be relevant to the Colombian context or to the particularities of the population studied.

The analyses carried out led to three major conclusions from this study. Firstly, people who have been involved in armed conflicts, if they have an appropriate work environment, can develop their attitudes and abilities to properly develop their work. Secondly, the configuration of a labor inclusion model that fosters self-determination, individuality, and empowerment, through the development of conflict-sensitive human-resource practices and a compassionate/trust-oriented leadership style, is related to the sustainability of an employment program of these characteristics and over the results in the medium and long term, both in the program itself and in its participants and society. Thirdly, the SEM contributes to the effective inclusion of people affected by armed conflicts, who have low skills, scarce social contacts, and low educational levels.

Several contributions are made as a result of this study. First, people affected by armed conflict have been studied from different scientific perspectives such as those of psychology, anthropology, sociology, law, political science, and medicine. The organizational and occupational components have been scarcely used to study this population, and even less to understand how people who have been affected by armed conflicts adjust to their work context. Now, from a practical point of view, the results from the evidence contribute to intervention in the stigmatization that people undergoing the process of reintegration are exposed to in relation to their possibilities and willingness to perform effectively in a formal position.

6. Future Directions and Limitations of the Study

The study of work experiences among people who have been affected by armed conflicts has a future. An important step in this regard is the monographic issue published by the Journal of Vocational Behavior: "Vocational Behavior of Refugees: How Do Refugees Seek Employment, Overcome Work-related Challenges, and Navigate Their Careers?". This leads to the conclusion that as there are new social categories in disadvantageous conditions, it is necessary to deepen their dynamics to provide theoretical and practical solutions to these new realities.

In accordance with what was proposed by Drake et al. (2021), we consider it relevant to study supported employment models with populations in conditions of marginalization and disadvantage in critical global conditions such as those resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. In future studies, other components of work adjustment could be analyzed, particularly those related to a person's subsystem and its effects on psychosocial variables according to Hershenson's model (Hershenson 1996). In the future, we want to study the family and reference group level and its relationship with the work personality and the other explanatory levels. Previous studies, for example, Hofstede (1991), show that aspects related to social culture can determine the way families and groups behave.

This study also has limitations. For example, only one employment program constituted by 64 employees was analyzed. Although to date, more than 7000 people in the process of reintegration may be seeking employment or are employed, access to these populations is extremely limited, due to security issues for themselves and confidentiality of information, in consequence it would be desirable to expand the sample in future studies.

In addition, in this research we employed the elite interview, focusing the interview exercise on the director of the explored program, to understand the organizational architecture that was built to support the employment program. Even though this approach to data collection can be problematic, we employed the triangulation technique, using

reports and official documents of the program, in order to decrease bias (Natow 2020). In future studies employing populations similar to this one, it is recommended to expand the collection of qualitative information to the participants of the employment programs, although as mentioned above, in this research there were restrictions for the development of interviews, due to the level of risk that this could imply for the population under study and their condition of vulnerability.

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