Designing for motivations in community managed rural water supply: A Malawi case study

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WATER & WASH FUTURES 2023

Achieving SDG6 in a Changing Climate

#WaWF23

Research questions

1. What motivated members to participate in the water committee?

2. How did members' motivations influence their management performance?

3. How might motivations be supported/thwarted?

Research design

- Mixed method case study in rural Malawi

- Qualitative: 49 interviews across 6 committees

- Quantitative: questionnaires and water point surveys

- Analysis:

    - Determine and categorise member's motivations

    - Assessment of water management performance

Motivation theory: Self-determination Theory

More **controlled** motivation
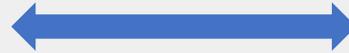
- **External** reasons: carrot and stick

- **Internal** reasons: pride and shame

Motivation theory: Self-determination Theory

More **controlled** motivation

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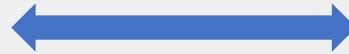
More **autonomous** motivation

- **External** reasons: carrot and stick
- **Internal** reasons: pride and shame

- Values-based reasons
- **Interest and fun**

Ref: Ryan & Connell, 1989, Ryan and Deci, 2000

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What motivated members to participate in water committees?
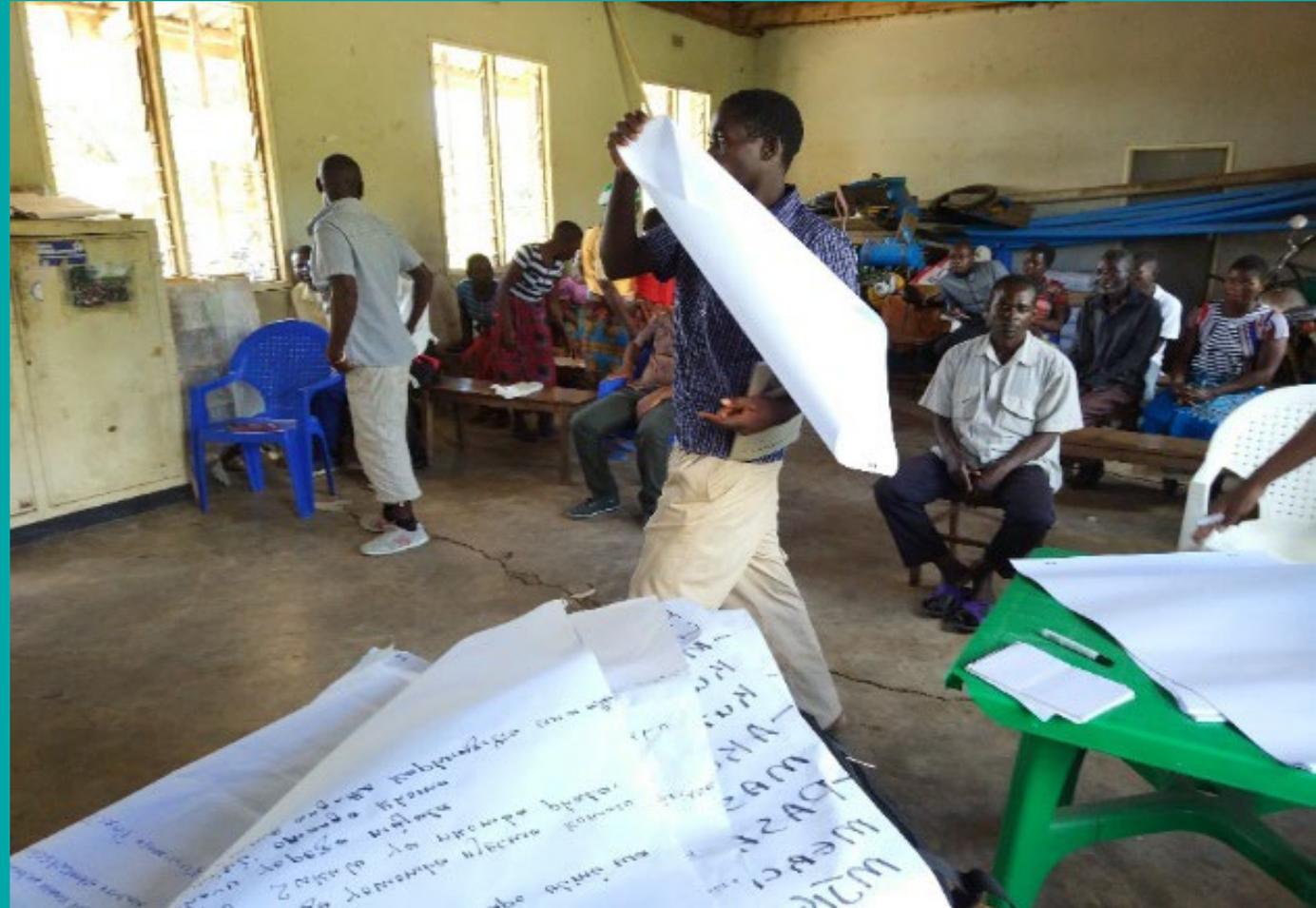
Autonomous motives

- Values:
  - Benefits as a user from improved water supply
  - Community service
- Interest: Relationships, creativity in the role, learning

"We couldn't sleep, we used to fetch water from very far. The past water problems motivates [me] to participate on the committee…" *Modester, Treasurer*

Controlled motives

- Internal and external pressure:
  - Pride/shame
  - Avoiding blame, donor pressure
- No motivation: no options or resources
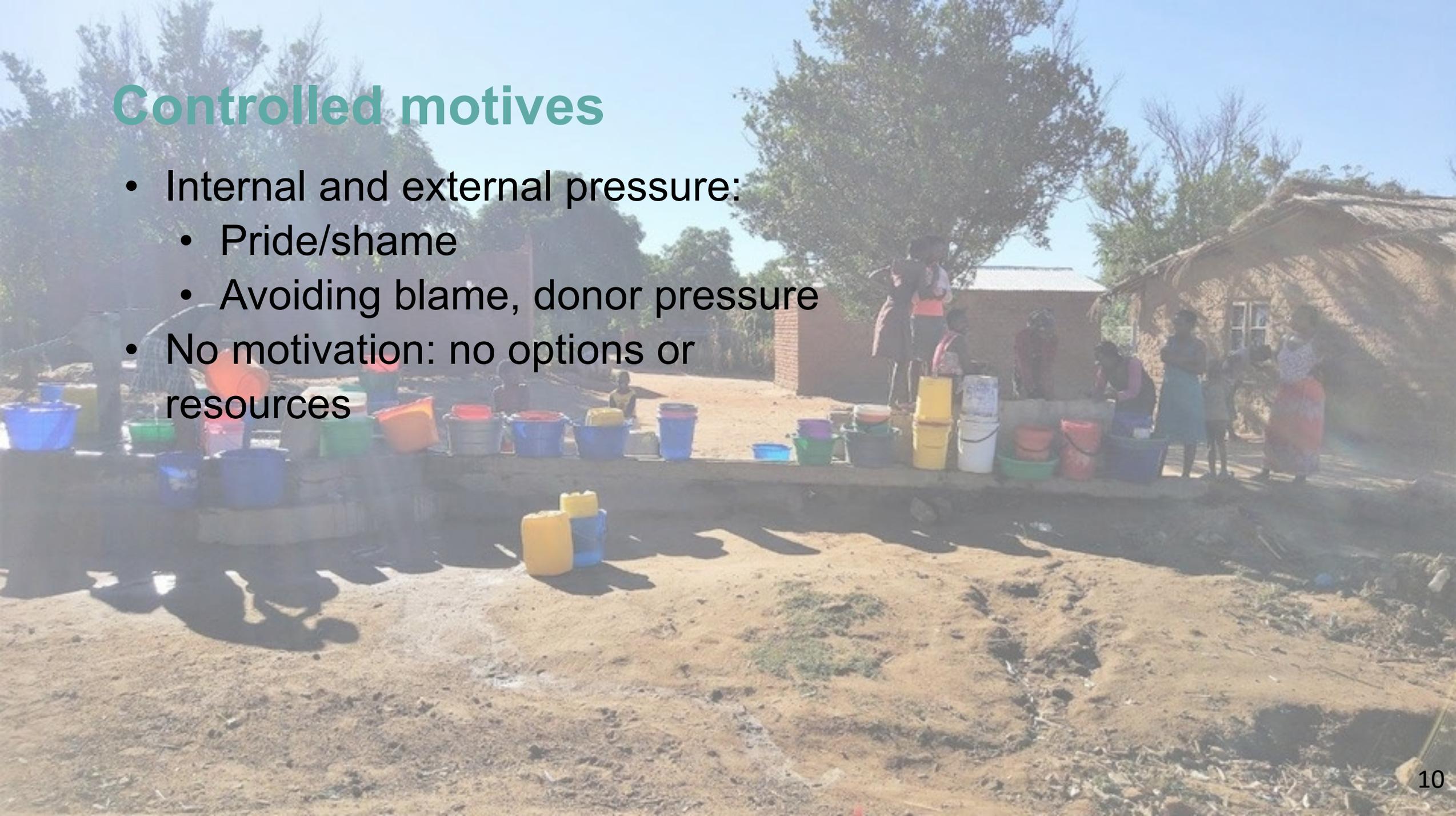
"…we remain committed to the committee, because if the borehole is to stop functioning, we are the ones to be blamed…"

Peter Chairperson

How did motivations impact committee performance?

More autonomously motivated committees
(as assessed via interviews and questionnaires)

1. Faster repairs (<1 week)

2. Mixed financial transparency & mixed committee-user relationship

3. Moderate savings & spare parts stock

4. Persistence and creative with challenges

More **controlled** ⟷ More **autonomous**

More controlled motivated committees

1. Slower repairs (1 week plus)

2. Low financial transparency & poor committee-user relationship

3. No to low savings & no spare parts stock

4. Mixed persistence

Implications for practitioners

The **quality** of motivations matter, for people's experience (i.e. well being) as water managers, **and** for rural water sustainability.

Rural water programs should aim to a) support autonomous motivations and b) limit controlled motivations.
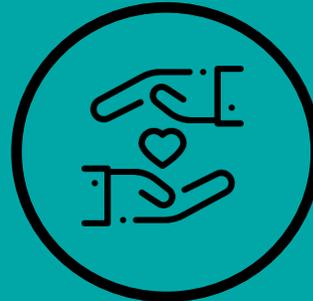
Three ways to support autonomous motivations (and limit controlled motivations)

1. **Support autonomy, e.g.**
   - Integrate engagement/choice into program design
   - Build on existing ways of 'managing', rather than imposing new approaches
2. **Support relatedness, e.g.**
   - Relationship management AND water management
   - Supportive committee and user/donor/village head relationships
3. **Support competence/mastery, e.g.**
   - Support members' confidence and capacity to complete maintenance

Conclusion

- Motivation is a fuzzy but central concept in community-managed rural water.

- People experience a range of motivations to participate in committees. **Not** just a vested interest in supply that drives motivation.

- Motivations range from poor quality, controlled; to higher quality, autonomous motivation.

- Rural water program design can foster autonomous motivations by supporting autonomy, relatedness and competence.

More information:

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Slides/more info via QR code and:
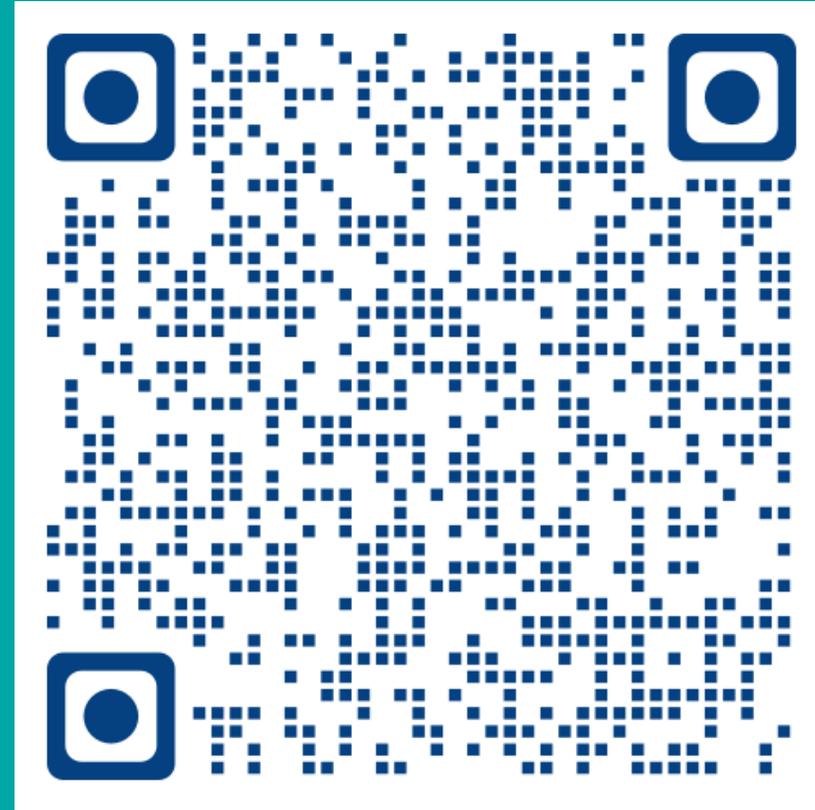
http://bit.ly/3E49RPd

Annex

Motivation theory: Self-determination Theory

"I'm at WASH Futures because my boss made me"

"Improved WASH is important for society"

"I don't want to be here...zzz"

| External pressure | Internal pressure | Personal value | Intrinsic (fun / interesting) |

"I'd feel guilty if I didn't come to the conference"

"The learning here is fun and interesting."

More **controlled** motivation

More **autonomous** motivation
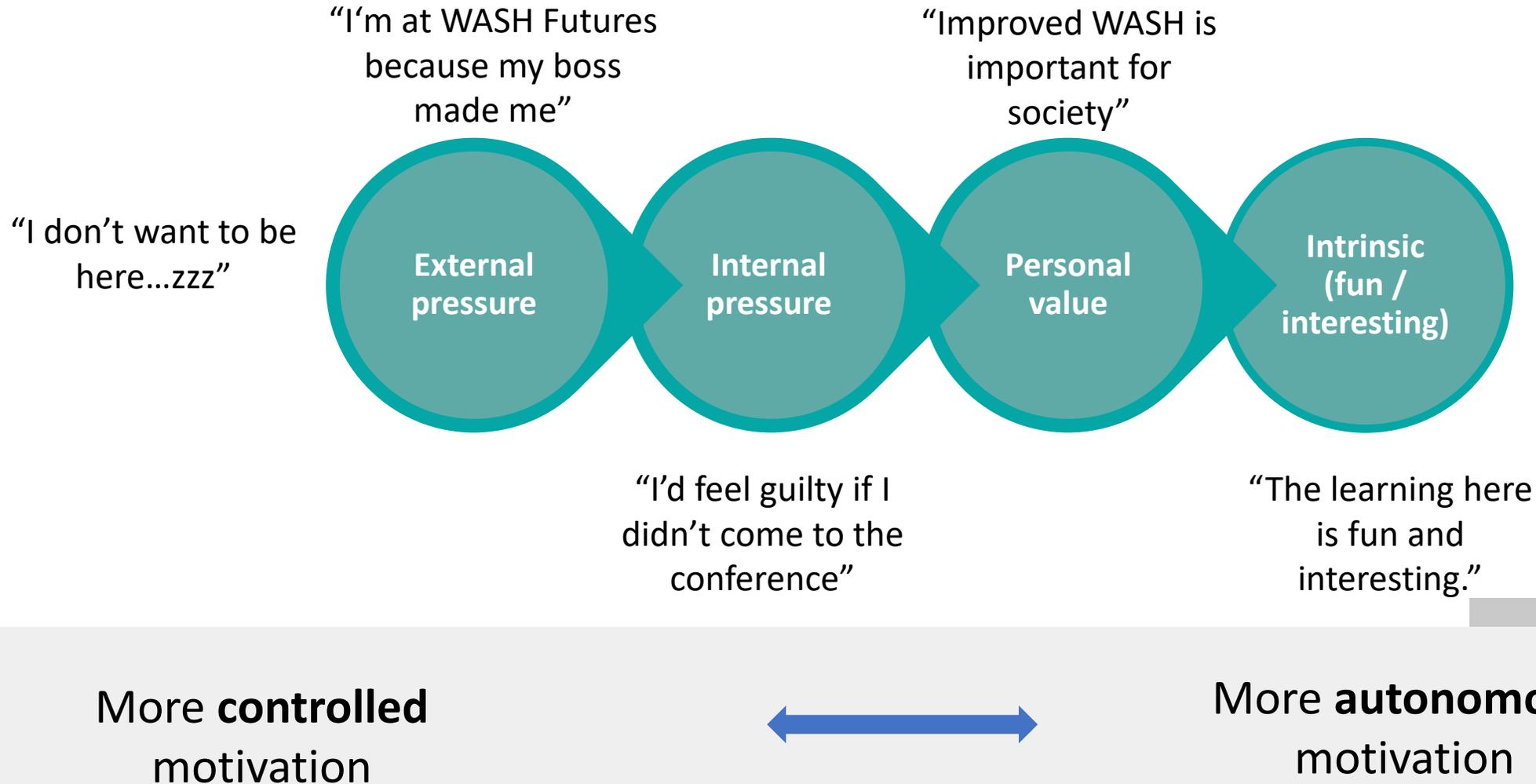
Autonomous motives (examples)

Relationships, creativity and learning-driven

"How we work with the ladies in the committee...in addition to the understanding of the community… that makes my work really enjoyable…", Joseph

Values: community service, benefits as a user

"We couldn't sleep, because we used to fetch water from very far at Nambazo…
The past water problems motivates everyone to participate on the WPC... so that we do not experience the previous situation…", Modester

Controlled motives

Internal pressure: pride, avoiding shame or disappointing others

"If you do not value [the role], you disappoint the people…". Anjelina

External pressure: avoiding blame, donor pressure

"…we remain committed because if the borehole is to stop functioning, we are the ones to be blamed", Peter

Amotivation: Competency based, interest based

"I considered quitting…. we had been requesting different organisations for help… to no avail. As such we cannot do anything…." Symoni

Motivational climate

BPN supportive motivational climate

- Relevance of RWS for members and users
- Positive relationships between members
- Positive relationship with NGO
- Animator support
- Village head support
- Area mechanic support
- User trust (and subsequent tariff payment)
- Confidence to complete or coordinate minor repairs

BPN thwarting motivational climate

- Autocratic village leadership
- User mistrust
- Negative relationship with NGO
- Limited ongoing support (government, regulatory, donor)
- Mundane activities
- Major works are challenging

Motivation types

Intrinsic motives

- Opportunity to learn
- Working together, positive relationships associated with the role
- Creative activities

Identified motives

- Community service
- Benefits as a user

Approach introjected motives

- Pride in skills
- Pride in position

Avoidance introjected motives

- Avoiding shame or disappointing community members
- Avoiding disappointing donors

Extrinsic motives

- Responding to donor power / resources
- Responding to social pressures (status, blame, accountability)

Amotivation

- Unable to repair failed water point
- Uninteresting or unenjoyable role

Management effectiveness

High

- Creative approaches to management
- Proactive approach to infrastructure
- Moderate savings / spare parts
- Persistence in face of challenges
- Transparent approach to management
- Positive relationship with users
- Rapid repairs

Moderate

- Attitude of compliance rather than proactive approach to management
- Low to moderate savings / spare parts
- Mixed reports of transparency
- Mixed relationship with users
- Persistence in face of challenges
- Rapid repairs

Low

- Low / no savings
- Poor relationship with users
- Uncertainty on future role in WPC
- Longer repair times

Approaches to support autonomy

- Providing informational rather than directive guidance;

- Emphasizing the interesting or challenging aspects of tasks and acknowledging tedious aspects;

- Avoiding contingent rewards and surveillance;

- Acknowledging participants' perspectives;

- Providing relevant information in a noncontrolling way; offering choice (not control); and

- Encouraging self-initiation rather pressuring participant to behave in specified ways (Gagné & Deci, 2005; Stone et al., 2009).