

Need satisfaction, goal content and subjective well-being

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Self determination theory highlights how satisfaction of the three needs of autonomy, competence and relatedness leads to higher subjective well being. However it also specifies that the nature of the goal will finally affect SWB. Extrinsic goals lower well being while intrinsic goals enhance SWB. This study assesses SWB in a sample of 100 respondents to verify this proposition. There is a significant difference in the aspiration index of males and females, yet there is no corresponding significant difference in their SWB. This study questions the assumptions of SDT that only intrinsic goals can enhance SWB. Also, using factor analysis, the goal of health is clearly categorised as being part of the intrinsic goals. The goals were also ranked in order of importance for males and females.

Keywords: self determination theory, extrinsic and intrinsic aspirations, need satisfaction and subjective well being

Researchers have finally arrived at the same conclusion that religious and spiritual leaders have been emphasizing for years, namely that material goals cannot make one happy and peaceful. It is only in looking inwards and attaining goals that allow personal development and growth that one can truly achieve peace. The increasing emphasis on personal growth and the disillusionment with material success is creating a greater need for personal growth and an inward bound journey. The mushrooming of various cults and societies promising lasting peace is a prime indicator of the growing need for close personal relationships and community living.

One such theory that confirms this phenomenon is Self determination theory (SDT) (Deci & Ryan, 2000). SDT is a theory of motivation that bases its premise on need satisfaction leading to higher SWB in most adults. Deci and Ryan began with the concept that all need based behaviours are not necessarily motivated by drive reduction. Certain classes of behaviours like curious exploration, thrill seeking acts, stimulation arousing activities etc. cannot be explained by basic stimulus response mechanisms. Individuals are driven by an innate need to fulfill certain psychological needs that serve to enhance their well being (Deci and Ryan, 2000).

Innate psychological needs integrate the differentiations of goal directed behavior. The extent to which the needs of autonomy, competence and relatedness are satisfied will determine the type of goals people have. When people are experiencing reasonable need satisfaction behavior is more likely to be directed towards activities they found interesting and important (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Finding an activity interesting reflects intrinsic motivation and the goal of performing this activity is an example of an intrinsic goal. There is no other fulfillment besides just experiencing the event.

Most activities that people indulge in for pleasure are challenging and stimulating and at the same time increase their individual perception of well being.

Extrinsic goals on the other hand have the distinctive quality of being externally oriented. According to Kasser and Ryan (1993, 1996), extrinsic goals such as attaining wealth, fame and image are less likely to provide direct need satisfaction. They are related to approval or external signs of worth. Goals based on attaining wealth, fame and image are examples of external goals and are not ideal ways to increasing one's sense of well being.

SDT refers to people's life goals as aspirations. Specifically SDT research focuses on relative strength of intrinsic aspirations vs. extrinsic aspirations. Besides looking at the importance placed on these aspirations, SDT also studies the consequences of actually achieving these goals and the strength of their belief that they will achieve the goal.

Research has revealed that having strong relative aspirations for extrinsic outcomes was negatively associated with mental health indicators; whereas, placing more importance on intrinsic aspirations was found to be positively associated with mental health indicators (Kasser & Ryan, 1993; 1996). Studies have also shown that, whereas self-reported attainment of intrinsic aspirations was positively associated with well-being, attainment of extrinsic aspirations was not (Kasser & Ryan; Ryan, Chirkov, Little, Sheldon, Timoshina, & Deci, 1999). Further, Sheldon and Kasser (1998) found in a longitudinal study that well-being was enhanced by attainment of intrinsic goals, whereas success at extrinsic goals provided little benefit. Finally, evidence suggests that controlling, uninvolved parenting is associated with the development of strong relative extrinsic aspiration, whereas autonomy-supportive, involved parenting is associated with the development of stronger intrinsic aspirations (Kasser, Ryan, Sameroff, & Zax, 1995; Williams, Cox, Hedberg, & Deci, 2000). Kasser, Ryan, Zax and Sameroff (1995) found that adolescents whose maternal care was more cold and controlling placed greater value on extrinsic goals. This reinforces the suggestion that extrinsic goals become more central in the context of insecurity about basic needs.

Competence is the tendency in individuals to operate even in the absence of a direct homeostatic need or a biological deficit. Relatedness is the desire to connect to others. Autonomy concerns the experience of integration and freedom (Ryan, 1993).

Objectives of this study

The present study aims to explore the assumption by SDT that intrinsic aspirations lead to higher well being whereas extrinsic aspirations lower an individual's well being. The study will also explore if this relationship between aspirations and well being differs among the genders. Finally, the aspiration of health will be clearly categorized as either intrinsic or extrinsic as it is not clearly identified in all studies and the measure of aspirations itself does not categorize it as clearly extrinsic or intrinsic.

Method

Participants

The sample (n=100) consists of 48 females (Mean age = 34.20) and 52 males (Mean age = 30.34) from the suburb of Goregaon in Mumbai. All respondents were employed and had a minimum work experience of at least one year. Purposive sampling technique was used to select the location and then using the snowball technique each respondent was recruited to identify other suitable respondents from the same area.

Demographic variables

All participants answered some basic questions about age, education level and highest level of education attained by their parents. This was to ensure comparability of samples in terms of family environment. All participants were raised by parents who had completed at least their tenth/matriculation/twelfth.

Instruments

Aspiration Index (AI): The Aspiration Index was developed to assess people's aspirations. There are 7 categories of aspirations with five specific items within each category. The seven categories include: the extrinsic aspirations of wealth, fame, and image; the intrinsic aspirations of meaningful relationships, personal growth, and community contributions; and the aspiration of good health which is reported not to be clearly either extrinsic or intrinsic. Participants rate: (1) the importance to themselves of each aspiration, (2) their beliefs about the likelihood of attaining each, and (3) the degree to which they have already attained each. The goals were rank ordered based on the relative importance score assigned by each subject. Finally the top three goals and the least scoring goals were identified through this ranking method. The scale yielded a reliability of Cronbach's alpha of .90

Subjective Well Being Inventory (SUBI): Nagpal and Sell (1992) developed the Subjective Well Being Inventory (SUBI) and identified 11 factors through a 40 item questionnaire that measures feelings of well or ill-being as experienced in day to day life concerns. In this study the scale shows high reliability with alpha of 0.80.

Basic Need Satisfaction General (BNSG): This scale is a part of a family of scales which test need satisfaction in different contexts like work and relationships. The needs of autonomy, competence are relatedness are the basic innate psychological needs which direct growth and well being. The present version tests need satisfaction in general and this study has yielded Cronbach's alpha of .73.

Procedure

All participants met in small groups at various times within a fortnight. Questionnaires were administered in English with both written and verbal instructions given at the start of each session. Participants were told this was a study of life goals and experiences.

Results

General Analytic Procedures

The first step was to identify the value for the health aspiration. As the AI does not clearly specify whether health is intrinsic or extrinsic, the test was subjected to factor analysis with varimax rotation to identify the components. All seven goals were identified as components with

health clearly showing a high loading on the intrinsic factor. The accompanying graph makes it clear that health should be counted along with the other intrinsic goals when calculating the subject's aspiration index.

Table 1: Means and SD of males and females on all the scales.

	Female		Male		Total	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
SWB	75.98	17.11	78.77	15.92	77.40	16.48
Intrinsic	120.52	17.01	121.54	14.40	121.04	15.65
Intrinsic Likelihood	108.98	17.85	112.44	16.59	110.74	17.26
Intrinsic Attainment	93.02	20.76	86.71	18.04	89.80	19.57
Extrinsic	65.46	17.14	78.15	14.50	71.94	17.00
Extrinsic Likelihood	64.61	16.23	73.17	12.57	68.98	15.02
Extrinsic Attainment	55.89	16.75	53.46	13.64	54.65	15.21
AI	55.07	19.10	43.40	13.11	49.11	17.26
NAuto	4.91	.84	5.00	.95	4.96	.89
NComp	5.13	.86	5.04	1.03	5.09	.95
NReltd	5.04	.84	5.17	.83	5.11	.84

An aspiration index (AI) was worked out by subtracting the importance for intrinsic minus the importance for extrinsic scores. This procedure has been used in the past (Ryan, Chirkov). The AI was subjected to a one way analysis of variance to see if there was any significant difference between genders (Table 2). The resultant table shows that women have a higher aspiration index (M= 24.15, SD = 17.02) than men (M = 12, SD = 12.20) and this difference is statistically significant. This means that women generally place a greater emphasis on intrinsic goals whereas men emphasize extrinsic goals.

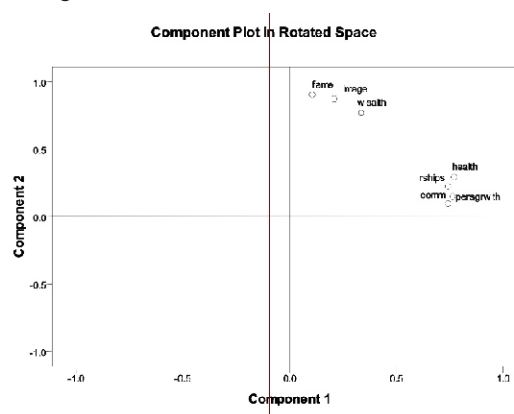


Figure 1: Component Plot of factors 1 and 2 (Intrinsic and Extrinsic goals).

Table 2: One way ANOVA indicating the gender difference in AI Aspiration Index

	Sum of Squares	df	MS	F	Sig.
Between Groups	3198.65	1	3198.65	12.01	.001
Within Groups	24502.28	92	266.33		
Total	27700.94	93			

The correlation matrix (table 3) provides some theoretical confirmations as well as raises some questions. As expected the three needs of autonomy, competence and relatedness are positively correlated with SWB. The needs for competence and relatedness are

positively correlated with the attainment of intrinsic goals. All three needs show negative correlation with extrinsic goals although this correlation is not statistically significant. The results are again reflected in the relationship between SWB and intrinsic and extrinsic goals. Positive associations with intrinsic and negative associations

with extrinsic goals further emphasize how SWB can be enhanced through setting up of intrinsic goals. AI is positively correlated with SWB and Intrinsic goals but negatively associated with all the three indices of extrinsic goals. Extrinsic and intrinsic goals show positive correlations with each other.

Table 3: Correlation matrix for needs, aspirations, SWB and aspiration index

	SWB	Intrinsic	Intrinsic Likelihood	Intrinsic Attainment	Extrinsic	Extrinsic Likelihood	Extrinsic Attainment	AI	NAuto	NComp	NReltd
SWB	1										
Intrinsic	.009	1									
Intrinsic Likelihood	.208*	.710**	1								
Intrinsic Attainment	.288**	.244*	.578**	1							
Extrinsic	-.255*	.470**	.444**	.119	1						
Extrinsic Likelihood	-.102	.398**	.631**	.331**	.843**	1					
Extrinsic Attainment	.003	.053	.352**	.685**	.453**	.669**	1				
AI	.270**	.420**	.185	.098	-.603**	-.507**	-.418**	1			
NAuto	.391**	.046	.046	.097	-.111	-.135	-.088	.151	1		
NComp	.426**	.122	.150	.223*	-.137	-.010	.014	.246*	.604**	1	
NReltd	.343**	.168	.196	.245*	-.005	.026	.035	.157	.396**	.464**	1

** Correlation significant at the 0.01 level, *Correlation significant at the 0.05 level

Studying the intrinsic and extrinsic goals individually between the two genders also highlights some differences. The importance and likelihood of wealth, fame and image attainment is significantly higher for men than for women. The attainment of community contributions on the other hand is significantly higher for women than for men. The group as a whole ranked health, relationships and community contributions as the three highest goals and image was ranked last. There was no difference in this ranking between men and women.

Discussion

The results obtained have successfully replicated other studies that highlight the association between well being and intrinsic goals. However since this instrument was not used among the Indian population it made sense to repeat it with an instrument standardized on an Indian population (SUBI).

The differences between men and women in their goal emphasis points to the cultural factors that have always oriented man towards achieving material goals and are congruent with his image as the bread winner of the family. Women, on the other hand, are considered more sensitive and although they are no longer restricted to domestic roles, still have the upper hand when it comes to awareness of personal needs and reaching out to others. This is reflected in the statistically higher scores obtained by women on how much they have attained on the goal of community contributions. Men have traditionally been known to be more selfish and self centered whereas the woman is considered the giver and the nurturer. Consequently her focus on intrinsic goals is aligned with her role of the more sensitive and giving gender.

Both men and women have ranked the goal of health as the number one goal. A huge 56 % of individuals have identified maintaining

good health as their number one goal, 31% have relationships as the number two goal and 30% have community as their number three goal. This distribution confirms that for most individuals intrinsic goals matter more than extrinsic goals.

Table 4: Showing the ranking of goal importance for both males and females

Females	Males	Overall
Health	Health	Health
Relationship	Relationship	Relationship
Personal Growth	Personal Growth	Personal Growth
Community	Wealth	Community
Image	Fame	Wealth
	Image	Image

In spite of the statistically significant difference between both genders on extrinsic goals and the negative correlation between SWB and extrinsic goals, it was found that there was no statistically significant difference between both genders on SWB. Intrinsic goals are positively correlated with extrinsic goals, yet this same difference is not found in intrinsic goals. It can be seen that although men do place a greater value on extrinsic goals than women, and have a greater expectancy of achieving these goals, there is not much difference between men and women in what they achieve in terms of extrinsic goals. Men may not show lowered SWB on account of the correlation between intrinsic and extrinsic goals. Intrinsic goals are positively associated with the importance given to extrinsic goals and the likelihood that those goals will be achieved. So although extrinsic goals are not directly responsible for increasing well being, they indirectly impact an individual's SWB by their correlation to the importance given to intrinsic goals.

Looking at the means of intrinsic goals, we find that women and men give similar importance and have equal expectations that they

will achieve those goals. Yet women are more likely to achieve their intrinsic goals as compared to men.

Conclusion

Although past research has constantly devalued extrinsic needs (Ryan, 1982; Ryan, Koestner & Deci, 1991) the present study questions if this devaluation is justified. There exists a possibility that the positive correlation between intrinsic and extrinsic goal importance could be the result of a third unrelated factor. As per SDT, greater need satisfaction can be bought about by an emphasis on intrinsic goals. This study however found that the correlation that existed was restricted to attainment of intrinsic goals with the needs for competence and relatedness.

Further research into the missing links will help clarify the theory and make it more relevant and applicable to societal requirements. Need satisfaction is positively related to SWB and this theory was further confirmed in this study. The perceived expectancy of achieving an intrinsic goal and finally actually achieving that goal is far more important to SWB than merely establishing the goals. However greater emphasis on extrinsic goals will assuredly hamper SWB. Women do have a significantly higher aspiration index than men but yet this does not result in a significantly higher SWB score than men. The reasons for this need to be studied and future research may shed light on this discrepant result.

In this study the results with intrinsic goals are not statistically

significant but they do create enough curiosity to warrant further research.

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