

# A theoretical analysis of the implications of self-determination theory in explaining the effectiveness of feedback-seeking behaviors and the seeker's reaction to feedback: A research agenda

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## ABSTRACT

This paper proposes that Self-Determination Theory (SDT) has considerable potential for filling some crucial feedback-seeking behavior (FSB) literature gaps. Some key issues are theoretically addressed. First, the influence mechanism of FSB on performance improvement may be explained by the role of motivational factors introduced by this theory in forming positive feedback reactions and the quality of feedback received by the feedback seeker. Second, SDT can be used to explain the feedback seekers' subjective well-being during the FSB process, which is almost overlooked in the FSB literature despite its importance. Third, this paper also relates motivational self-regulation mechanisms to FSB dimensions (e.g., method, sign, type) beyond the popular dimension of FSB frequency analyzed in the literature. The paper also suggests that the quality of FSB, based on these dimensions, is related to the quality of the feedback-seeker's motivation. This paper presents avenues for future empirical studies on different aspects of FSB based on SDT.

Feedback as information about the success or failure of a performance outcome or process has been examined from two perspectives: feedback-giving (e.g., by the direct supervisor) (Kluger & DeNisi, 1996) and feedback-seeking (e.g., from the direct supervisor) (Ashford, De Stobbeleir, & Nujella, 2016). While feedback-giving has been historically famous in human resource management and organizational psychology literature, feedback-seeking is a relatively recent topic for inquiry (Ashford et al., 2016).

The importance of feedback-seeking behavior (FSB) in personal growth and development and performance management has been emphasized in the literature (Ashford et al., 2016; Ashford, Blatt, & VandeWalle, 2003). FSB can be considered a proactive behavior, which is complementary to feedback provided by managers (Ashford & Cummings, 1983). This is expected in organizations where employees perform non-routine tasks with relatively high ambiguity. FSB can reduce ambiguities associated with tasks or situations, such as when employees are newcomers with new tasks or are involved in an organizational transition or a transformation that causes uncertainty. In addition, it is a method for enhancing individual learning and knowledge sharing in organizational contexts (Ashford et al., 2016). Despite the importance of FSB in today's organizations, the literature on FSB still needs further theoretical and empirical investigations from different

perspectives (Ashford et al., 2016). Although the effectiveness of performance feedback can be analyzed from cognitive and motivational perspectives (Kluger & DeNisi, 1996), in this paper, some specific gaps in the FSB literature are addressed from a motivational viewpoint discussed in Self-Determination Theory (SDT) (Deci, Olafsen, & Ryan, 2017).

The FSB literature can be criticized because some classic and advanced motivational theories such as SDT (Deci et al., 2017), goal-setting theory (Locke & Latham, 2002), and social cognitive theory (SCT) (Bandura, 1989) have rarely been used to explain the FSB process and the way individuals react to feedback. However, some theories, especially goal-setting theory, have been discussed in the literature on feedback-giving (Ilgen, Fisher, & Taylor, 1979; Kluger & DeNisi, 1996). Surprisingly, even in the classic literature reviews of FSB studies, such as the review conducted by Ashford et al. (2016), there is no indication of such critical motivational theories named above.

Motivational aspects of FSB are critical because the frequency and content of FSB can be related to the feedback seeker's motivation, and how individuals can consequently use the feedback they receive to improve their performance can be influenced by their motivation. Although the FSB literature has used some theories of motivation for addressing these purposes, it seems that the potential of the above-

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mentioned classic theories is still underdeveloped in the FSB. These theories have been used in several contexts (e.g., Bandura, 1997; Deci et al., 2017; Latham, 2012) and demonstrated great potential in explaining different phenomena from different viewpoints, such as the agentic (Bandura, 2001), organismic (Deci et al., 2017; Gagné & Deci, 2005), and goal-oriented (Locke & Latham, 2002) perspectives that all are arguably helpful in understanding different aspects of FSB considering its nature. FSB can result from an agentic-oriented behavior, a goal-oriented effort, and an organismic attempt resulting from a drive for human growth. Although the concept of feedback and its influence has been included in the theories mentioned above, these perspectives are seemingly overlooked in the FSB literature despite their relevancy to the nature of FSB. The current paper focuses explicitly on SDT and its implications in addressing gaps in the FSB literature from an organismic viewpoint for the reasons discussed in the following sections. It is emphasized here that this paper does not intend to devalue other theoretical perspectives used in the literature to explain the FSB process and its determinants. Still, it tries to demonstrate that SDT can also have considerable potential for being incorporated into the field.

As an initial and seemingly only theoretical attempt to implement SDT in understanding the FSB process, De Stobbeleir (2006) proposed a theoretical model on how aspects of SDT may be used to explain the FSB process. De Stobbeleir provided general arguments and hypotheses regarding the impact of individual attributes, Basic Psychological Need Satisfaction (BPNS), and contextual factors on autonomous and controlled motives for FSB. BPNS refers to satisfying three basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Deci et al., 2017). In addition, autonomous versus controlled motivation refers to the process of motivation based on volitional and self-endorsed motives versus materialistic or social external incentives (Deci et al., 2017). Although De Stobbeleir's model is valuable and inspiring for starting to use SDT in exploring the antecedents and consequences of FSB, the model has some significant limitations and requires further development to provide a research agenda. These issues are discussed in the Theoretical Background section of the current paper.

## 1. Research questions and the approach

Based on the research gaps identified in the FSB literature and discussed in the following sections, the main questions addressed in this paper using SDT are: (1) How does SDT help understand the link between FSB and performance? (2) How can SDT be used to explore the feedback seeker's subjective well-being during the FSB process? (3) How can autonomous/controlled motivation be used to determine other dimensions of FSB (e.g., sign, method, and source) beyond feedback frequency as the most frequently used dimension of FSB in the literature? As a theoretical paper, it uses a deductive approach widely used in theoretical papers and theory-building frameworks (Miner, 2005). The paper proposes arguments based on premises derived from the literature and provides testable propositions for further empirical investigations.

It must be acknowledged that this paper, similar to other papers on FSB, focuses on different aspects of feedback-seeking and distinguishes feedback-seeking from feedback-receiving. However, it is inevitable and essential to analyze the effectiveness of FSB after analyzing the consequences of the received feedback. This includes how the feedback is appreciated, processed, and used by the feedback seeker to improve their performance. In addition, the current paper argues that the quality of feedback received during the FSB process depends on some factors, such as the content or frequency of FSB. Therefore, both seeking and receiving feedback behaviors are essential for understanding the effectiveness of FSB.

Moreover, in this paper, only employees' FSB was discussed, and leaders' FSB may be analyzed from other perspectives. Although SDT may also be used for this area, some contextual factors of leaders' FSB may differ. For example, the political context of the organization may be a barrier for FSB and may be analyzed using SDT differently.

## 2. The significance of answering the research questions

The significance of answering the research questions mentioned above is reviewed as follows. Regarding the first question, the literature emphasizes that there is a gap in understanding how the feedback seeker's reactions to the feedback (e.g., feedback acceptance) after receiving it can result in performance improvement (Ashford et al., 2016; Christensen-Salem, Kinicki, Zhang, & Walumbwa, 2018). Although feedback reaction has been defined differently in various studies (e.g., Anderson & Jones, 2000; Elicker, Levy, & Hall, 2006; Feys, Libbrecht, Anseel, & Lievens, 2008; Pichler, Beenen, & Wood, 2020; Wang, Burlacu, Truxillo, James, & Yao, 2015), the initial reaction is emotional after receiving feedback. This emotion may be positive or negative (Cron, Jr, VandeWalle, & Fu, 2005), influencing the feedback seeker's motivation and intentions for consequent actions (Ilgen et al., 1979). The individual reacts to the emotion based on their motivational regulation afterward. Although SDT has paid attention to different forms of positive feedback as a way to satisfy basic psychological needs and improve autonomy supportive climate instead of providing a controlling environment (Deci, Connell, & Ryan, 1989; Rigby & Ryan, 2018; Ryan, 1982), the reaction to negative feedback that we receive after FSB can be a complex phenomenon. According to Fong, Patall, Vasquez, and Stautberg (2019), the influence of negative feedback on intrinsic motivation depends on the instructional guidance accompanied by negative feedback, criterion-based feedback, and whether the feedback is delivered in person. However, it seems that how individuals react and perform after receiving negative feedback due to FSB is a more complex phenomenon requiring further theorizing and examination.

There is no conclusive evidence in the FSB literature supporting that FSB is directly related to performance in every situation. Still, Ashford et al. (2016) proposed conducting further empirical studies on how FSB may lead to performance through some mediators. It has been argued that one's cognitive and emotional reactions to the feedback they receive may facilitate or hinder the impact of feedback sought on performance. This issue has been proposed for further exploration in future studies (Ashford et al., 2016). A mini theory of SDT, namely Organismic Integration Theory (OIT), in work contexts (Gagné & Deci, 2005) may help understand why some individuals become more engaged in FSB based on their autonomous motivation comprising identified and integrating regulations.

This paper proposes that OIT can contribute to the FSB literature by considering the role of different motivational regulations classified as autonomous and controlled motivation defined earlier (Ryan & Deci, 2017) in explaining how they react to the feedback they receive after FSB, especially when it is negative and may cause initial frustration. In the traditional feedback literature (e.g., Ilgen et al., 1979), individuals are expected to react to the discrepancies between the actual performance and the goal standard. However, this literature seems to have paid little attention to the fact that autonomously motivated individuals may react differently than when their motivation is controlled (or whether there is an intrinsic or extrinsic goal) (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Acceptance of feedback may partly be related to how the individual is autonomously motivated to perform their tasks. In addition, during feedback seeking, the extent to which the feedback seeker's basic psychological needs are satisfied may influence the well-being and satisfaction from the feedback received, which improves their acceptance and consequently affects the feedback's productivity in enhancing individual performance.

SDT emphasizes the distinction between the quality of motivation (the degree of autonomous motivation) and the quantity of motivation (Vansteenkiste, Sierens, Soenens, Luyckx, & Lens, 2009). This distinction helps understand why the feedback the seeker receives may not help predict performance in complex tasks. Past theoretical and empirical papers (e.g., Kluger & DeNisi, 1996) have reported that feedback interventions may not lead to performance when dealing with complex and non-routine tasks. Interestingly, empirical evidence in the SDT

literature has shown that autonomous motivation versus controlled motivation (Deci et al., 2017) is a stronger predictor of non-routine task performance. Thus, the current paper proposes that considering autonomous motivation may help explain how FSB and autonomous work motivation results in receiving feedback that can also be beneficial for complex tasks. This idea can be considered a development of Feedback Intervention Theory (Kluger & DeNisi, 1996), which overlooks the distinction between autonomous and controlled motivation in its discussion of the weak influence of feedback interventions on complex tasks.

Concerning the second research question, an essential and novel proposition discussed in this paper is that SDT can also be used to expand the limited literature on the impact of FSB on subjective well-being (SWB) (Ng et al., 2012; Tian, Zhang, Jia, & Zhang, 2021). SWB refers to “the subjective experience of feeling good and feeling authentic and meaningful in one’s life.” (Sonnentag, 2015, p. 17.3), and work stress and positive affect are some key determinants of it (Van den Broeck, Ferris, Chang, & Rosen, 2016). SDT is theoretically unique among other motivational theories in considering performance and well-being as the outcomes of motivational processes (Deci et al., 2017). SWB may be endangered during constant FSB because of stress and fears of being humiliated or frustrated by feedback seeking. In addition, as Ashford et al. (2016) suggested, further investigation in this literature is required to explore the image and ego costs that hinder individuals from FSB (Hays and Williams, 2011). OIT as a mini theory of SDT (Deci et al., 2017) may be helpful for such explanations as stress and discomfort by external motivation, and feelings of guilt and shame resulting from introjected regulation may be indicators of such costs. This notion is a theoretically significant contribution to the FSB literature because SWB during the FSB process has rarely been investigated.

Regarding the third research question mentioned above, SDT may help understand the motivational causes of other dimensions of FSB (e.g., content or method) rather than only the FSB frequency (how often individuals engage in FSB) (Ashford et al., 2016). Investigating other dimensions of FSB beyond FSB frequency, which requires theoretical foundations, has been emphasized in this literature. The current paper argues that SDT helps understand individuals’ motives for seeking feedback considering such dimensions due to the potential of SDT for analyzing different types of motives within an integrated theoretical framework. For example, using autonomous motivation (intrinsically motivated or based on internalized motives) may reduce stress and increase a sense of true self-esteem (one’s self-esteem based on the satisfaction of basic psychological needs and stable self-worth) in individual behavior (Ryan & Brown, 2006). This state may enhance employees’ FSB for identifying performance gaps by inquiring from their immediate supervisor as a source. However, controlled motivation based on external motives such as rewards, punishments, or social approval may increase stress and the possibility of failure during ambiguous situations. This state may influence contingent self-esteem (based on others’ reactions to their successes or failures) to consider FSB for interacting with the immediate supervisor. In addition, controlled motivation may be a better predictor of using monitoring instead of direct inquiry when feedback-seeking. Direct inquiry and monitoring are two methods for seeking feedback, which refer to asking questions directly or indirectly seeking feedback by monitoring others’ behavioral reactions to one’s performance. Monitoring may be more helpful in avoiding receiving negative feedback that may cause feelings of shame and guilt as the motivational components of introjected regulation (Gagné & Deci, 2005). Such theoretically novel relationships are discussed in the current paper.

The following sections present a literature review based on seminal works and comprehensive review papers on SDT and FSB conducted so far to provide theoretical foundations. Second, the latest but limited literature on the relationships between the FSB and SDT literature is presented. Based on the gaps and research questions, the third section contains deductive reasoning on how different aspects of SDT can be used to fill the gaps in FSB literature. This section proposes two testable

models of the relationships between SDT and FSB constructs, including propositions provided in this section. Finally, a research agenda is provided for future empirical investigations.

### 3. Theoretical Background

This section contains short reviews of different literature areas used as inputs (premises) for theorizing the models and propositions provided in this paper. Table 1 summarizes the main ideas extracted from these areas and is reviewed in the following sub-sections. It should be noted that the content of this Table is selective rather than the outcome of a comprehensive systematic review, only to demonstrate the main ideas (premises) used in this paper to develop the propositions. The premises about SDT have been extracted from seminal and comprehensive literature review articles in this area (e.g., Deci et al., 2017). These premises are well-established in the literature on SDT and required no new literature review. In addition, FSB research gaps are also extracted from the review articles published on the antecedents and consequences of FSB (e.g., Ashford et al., 2016) and specifically following up these review articles as the references in other papers that address “feedback seeking motives” and “the relationship between FSB and performance”. In addition, after searching for articles using keywords related to SDT and FSB, very few published and unpublished articles were found that explicitly used SDT and FSB together, demonstrating a narrow understanding of FSB from the viewpoints of SDT theoretically and empirically. These works are also revised in this section.

#### 3.1. Feedback-seeking behavior (FSB)

It seems that research on FSB backs to a published work by Ashford and Cummings (1983) criticizing organizations for only focusing on performance appraisal and feedback giving and emphasizing FSB as a necessary practice in today’s organizations. Since almost 40 years ago, several researchers have studied the antecedents of FSB and its consequences (e.g., Anseel, Beatty, Shen, Lievens, & Sackett, 2015; Ashford et al., 2003; Ashford et al., 2016; Song, Wang, & He, 2022; VandeWalle, Ganesan, Challagalla, & Brown, 2000). A short review of the main themes of this literature is presented here.

FSB has been studied abundantly using the frequency dimension, which refers to how often individuals seek feedback (Ashford et al., 2016). FSB dimensions comprise some other topics in addition to FSB frequency, namely method (inquiry or monitoring), timing (e.g., seeking feedback immediately after performing a task or seeking after a delay), target (immediate supervisors or colleagues), and topic (e.g., about a failure or success) need further investigation.

Inquiry refers to a type of FSB when the feedback seeker asks questions for feedback. Monitoring is a type of FSB in which the feedback seeker observes and monitors the reaction of others to their performance as a sign of their feedback. Although both methods have been recognized in the literature, Ashford et al. (2016) proposed that future research must pay more attention to the antecedents and consequences of FSB based on the monitoring method. The monitoring method seems more complex because it is not a direct behavior as the inquiry method is.

Past studies of FSB proposed and identified different types of motives for FSB as one of this literature’s main lines of investigation. First, according to Ashford and Cummings (1983), FSB has three motives: instrumental, ego-defensive, and image-defensive. Instrumental-based motives emphasize the value and usefulness of the information received from FSB. Individuals seek feedback for instrumental motives when they intend to use feedback to identify whether they have achieved their goals, performed their tasks satisfactorily, or what work expectations are for their roles. Instrumental motives have been shown to cause FSB and some other phenomena, such as learning goal orientation (a preference for setting goals about learning a skill or knowledge that is required to achieve a performance goal) (Ashford et al., 2016) and the perceived importance of the goal to the employee.

**Table 1**  
The main ideas from the literature used in the development of theoretical arguments and propositions.

Literature	Subject	Sample References	Main ideas used in the theorizing of this paper
Performance Feedback and Feedback Seeking Behavior (FSB)	Dimensions and methods	Ashford et al. (2016); Ashford and Cummings (1983); Anseel et al. (2007).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feedback-seeking frequency has been used in several studies.</li> <li>• Exploring other FSB dimensions is required as the outcome of FSB may be related to other dimensions of FSB beyond its frequency.</li> <li>• It is important to explore different factors that impact other dimensions of FSB.</li> <li>• Most research has focused on the inquiry method, but it is important to explore what factors impact choosing other different methods (e.g., monitoring)</li> <li>• There is an ambiguity regarding when individuals use self-enhancement motives or self-verification motives for FSB.</li> </ul>
	Antecedents and motives	Ashford and Cummings (1983); Brown and Dutton (1995); Levy et al. (1995); Anseel et al. (2007); Swann et al. (1989); Sung and Choi (2021); Ashford et al. (2016); Sherf and Morrison (2020); De Stobbeleir et al. (2020); Sung and Choi (2021).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Different types of motives have been proposed while overlooking some key motivational theories, such as SDT.</li> <li>• Some motivational theories such as SDT may be helpful to provide a more parsimonious and comprehensive framework rather than a variety of motives.</li> <li>• Unlike SDT, which considers both the quantity and quality of motivation (magnitude and degree of internalization), the FSB literature considers only the magnitude of different motives for FSB.</li> <li>• Some motives for FSB explored in the FSB literature can also be viewed from the quantity and quality of motivation proposed by SDT (e.g., autonomous instrumental motives vs. controlled instrumental motives)</li> <li>• There is limited use of the potential of SDT in explaining the FSB phenomenon in the literature concerning the different outcomes that autonomous and controlled motivation may have for the formation of FSB.</li> <li>• There is no conclusive understanding of the role of self-esteem in determining individuals' reactions to feedback.</li> </ul>
	Feedback reaction and consequences	Ilgen et al. (1979); Cooper-Thomas et al. (2014); Tian et al. (2021); Feys et al. (2008);	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Literature is inconclusive regarding the impact of FSB on performance.</li> <li>• Investigating mediators and moderators for the relationship between FSB and performance is proposed.</li> <li>• Feedback seekers' reactions to the feedback they receive may not always be positive and productive for improving performance.</li> <li>• Feedback seekers' motivational regulations may be important in determining their reactions to feedback and using it.</li> <li>• The impact of FSB on performance may also be related to the context and the nature of task.</li> <li>• Studying the well-being of feedback seeker during the FSB process is scarce.</li> <li>• Relationship between feedback seeking and performance is a dynamic process, and both feedback seeker and provider interact in determining the performance outcome.</li> </ul>
Self-Determination Theory (SDT)	FSB process	Kluger and DeNisi (1996)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is no theoretical or empirical indication of attention to the quantity and quality aspects of motivation or intrinsic and extrinsic goal content regarding how individuals react to feedback they receive.</li> </ul>
	Mini-Theories	Ryan and Deci (2017); Vansteenkiste, Niemiec, and Soenens (2010); Gagné and Deci (2005).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SDT is a grand theory containing six-mini theory each explain how human beings can be autonomously motivated and determine their performance and well-being.</li> <li>• These mini theories are interrelated. For example, basic psychological needs satisfaction facilitate internalization and enhances well-being.</li> </ul>
	Advantages and differentiation from other theories Regulation mechanisms and their consequences	Ryan and Deci (2017) Ryan and Deci (2017); Gagné and Deci (2005).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attention to human well-being in relation to performance and proposing different motivational regulations based on the degree of internalization are unique aspects of SDT.</li> <li>• Autonomous motivational regulation impact performance in complex and non-routine situations, while controlled motivation influence performance in routine tasks.</li> </ul>
	Goal content True and contingent self-esteem	Deci and Ryan (2000) Ryan and Brown (2006)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Autonomous motivation is related to true self-esteem and high well-being. However, controlled motivation is related to low well-being and contingent self-esteem.</li> <li>• Intrinsic and extrinsic content of goal influence individuals' quality of motivation and their well-beings.</li> <li>• Goal content regulates individuals' motivation and outcome performance.</li> <li>• True self-esteem is more stable and more internalized.</li> <li>• Contingent self-esteem is fragile and depends on external stimuli.</li> </ul>

(continued on next page)

Table 1 (continued)

Literature	Subject	Sample References	Main ideas used in the theorizing of this paper
FSB and SDT	Satisfaction of basic psychological needs and feedback seeking	ten Cate (2013); Henry, Vesel, Boscardin, and van Schaik (2018); Beenen et al. (2017).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Satisfaction of basic psychological needs during the feedback process may facilitate the following feedback seeking.</li> <li>• The impact of autonomy-supportive supervision on FSB through the satisfaction of basic psychological needs.</li> <li>• There is a limited use of SDT and its potential in studies of FSB, while some gaps in this literature can be addressed using this theory.</li> <li>• General arguments and propositions are provided regarding the impact of individual attributes, BPNS, and contextual factors on autonomous and controlled motives for FSB.</li> <li>• No specific arguments and propositions are provided on how SDT may be used to explain the feedback seeker's reaction to the feedback which is essential for influencing performance improvement.</li> <li>• No specific arguments and propositions are provided regarding SWB of feedback seekers, as an important factor in the FSB process, especially in work contexts with ambiguity and stressors.</li> <li>• There are general discussions on whether autonomous and controlled motivation can influence dimensions (facets) of FSB (e.g., method, sign, source, etc.) but still need more specific theorizing for each dimension.</li> </ul>
	Theoretical models	De Stobbeleir (2006)	

The second motive discussed in the literature is the ego-defensive motive. If individuals feel threatened by negative feedback, they may not be motivated to seek it, and they are expected to protect their self-esteem in such circumstances (Brown & Dutton, 1995; Levy, Albright, Cawley, & Williams, 1995). However, if they perform satisfactorily, they may seek feedback to enhance their ego. This potential for injury and bad feelings about oneself can occur for individuals with performance goal orientation (a preference for setting goals about the final achievements). Third, image defensive-based motives may also be motives when an individual is concerned with the impact of feedback they receive on their image in the eyes of others, such as co-workers. Research supports that image-defensive motives are essential for choosing the source of feedback. The more an image-defensive motive influences an individual, the less they may seek feedback from the immediate supervisor and the more the individual seeks feedback from coworkers (Ashford et al., 2016). This motive is also essential when choosing the FSB method. When an individual uses the image-defense motive to regulate their FSB in a failure situation, the inquiry method may be less used because one protects their self-image (Ashford, 1986).

Anseel, Lievens, and Levy (2007) introduced other typologies for such motives. In addition to the idea of motives of self-enhancement and self-verification for FSB that has been suggested (Swann, Pelham, & Krull, 1989), Anseel et al. added and introduced self-assessment and self-development motives. They proposed the SCENT self-motivation model (Self-Concept Enhancing Tactician Model) from Social Psychology (Sedikides & Strube, 1997) to respond to the lack of an integrated model for explaining the motives of FSB. Based on this model, a possible explanation is that individuals with self-enhancement motives may seek feedback to enhance their sense of worth. Individuals with self-verification motives seek feedback to reconfirm their self-conception, even if the conception is negative, and avoid feedback that differs from how they understand themselves. The self-assessment motive, proposed later in this literature, is to receive feedback containing diagnostic information that reduces the ambiguity about oneself. The self-improvement motive also refers to a drive to obtain feedback that helps individuals develop their competencies, attitudes, and traits for genuine development and betterment.

Although different types of motives for FSB have been proposed in the literature, the dominant cognitive factor, which is still the primary antecedent of this behavior, is the cost-value analysis for seeking feedback and its dimensions (Ashford & Cummings, 1983). Recently, Sung and Choi (2021) found that the trade-off between cost and value of FSB could predict the emergence of inquiry and monitoring. A study of 194 individuals across 76 working teams identified that the perception of low cost-high value is positively related to using the inquiry method, and the perceived high cost-low value is negatively associated with inquiry. However, this incongruence combination of cost and value of FSB did not impact the monitoring method. They additionally identified that congruence or ambiguous combinations of perceived cost and value (high-cost, high-value/low-cost, and low-value) predicted monitoring.

In addition to motives, some contextual factors have also been identified as antecedents of FSB (Ashford et al., 2016). More specifically, some factors, such as ambiguity in context, change, and organizational support, have been reported as antecedents. Sherf and Morrison (2020) also identified that when feedback is valued, and perspective-taking occurs during FSB, the seeker's self-efficacy can positively predict FSB. Otherwise, self-efficacy hinders FSB. When FSB occurs from peers, De Stobbeleir, Ashford, and Zhang (2020) found that high task interdependence and psychological safety within a team could enhance FSB from peers.

Different consequences of FSB have been identified in the literature. In recent studies, understanding how FSB may lead to creativity has been the subject of some studies. Sijbom and colleagues (2018) identified that under time pressure and high-performance dynamism (which refers to a situation in which performance standards change), the source variety of FSB increases employees' creativity. Sung and Choi (2021)

also identified that when the inquiry and monitoring methods are used at high levels, the chance of creativity is higher than when there is an incongruent combination of them (high and low levels of each). The turnover intention has also been studied based on the role of FSB for newcomers (Vandenberghe et al., 2021). In two longitudinal studies, Vandenberghe and colleagues found that decreasing the level of FSB negatively influenced socialization and diminished affective commitment across time, which in turn increased turnover intention. They also found that the decreasing affective commitment also negatively impacted FSB. The influence of FSB on subjective well-being (SWB) has also been investigated in a few studies (Ng et al., 2012; Tian et al., 2021). It has been proposed that FSB can enhance one's career adaptability, improving SWB. In addition, they identified that when person-environment fitness is low, there is a stronger relationship between FSB and career adaptability than when it is high.

### 3.2. Self-determination theory (SDT)

SDT is a grand theory of motivation developed over almost 50 years (Ryan & Deci, 2017; Van den Broeck, Howard, Van Vaerenbergh, Leroy, & Gagné, 2021). This theory has been reviewed extensively in several empirical and meta-analysis articles. Thus, it is shortly reviewed here, emphasizing the key concepts and evidence of the theory used to develop this paper's propositions.

SDT comprises six mini theories proposed over time (Ryan & Deci, 2017; Vansteenkiste, Niemiec, & Soenens, 2010). It started with cognitive evaluation theory (CET) (Deci, 1972; Deci, Koestner, & Ryan, 1999), supported by different experiments proposing that external motives diminish intrinsic motivation despite the previous understanding that extrinsic and intrinsic motivation are complementary. Basic psychological needs satisfaction (BPNS) is another important mini theory introducing three basic psychological needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness (Deci et al., 2017). Although the number three is not a magical number, empirical research has supported that at least these three needs are universal, and the satisfaction of these needs is required for the healthy functioning of human beings. Recently, the idea of psychological need crafting has been proposed and tested in some contexts (e.g., Laporte, Soenens, Brenning, & Vansteenkiste, 2021). According to this viewpoint, from an agentic perspective, humans may intentionally use different strategies to satisfy their basic psychological needs, e.g., by seeking new environments or creating opportunities to satisfy these needs more effectively. Organismic Integration Theory (OIT), another mini-theory based on an organismic view of human beings, considers intrinsic motivation a critical mechanism for advancing performance, growth, and well-being (Deci et al., 2017; Gagné & Deci, 2005).

Intrinsic motivation refers to a motivational regulation that focuses on the inherent value of the activity and the enjoyment of doing the activity. On the other hand, external motivation refers to a mechanism by which an individual regulates their actions and behaviors based on external reward or punishment. However, it can be material or social types. OIT proposed that extrinsic regulation may be internalized into introjected, identified, and integrated regulations (Gagné & Deci, 2005). Introjected regulation refers to a motivational mechanism based on obligations or rules that are relatively internalized but are not fully autonomous. That is, individuals may possess introjection regulation if guilt or shame motivates them for their actions and behaviors. Identified regulation is the internalization of an external motive in a way that is valued and essential autonomously because it links to an internal value.

Integrated regulation is also an internalized motive with a high level of autonomy, which guides behavior based on an integrated view of identity. In general, external and introjected regulations are called controlled motivation. The group of identified, integrated, and intrinsic regulations is called autonomous motivation (Deci et al., 2017). It should be noted that BPNS is crucial for internalization and autonomous motivation. While these two types of motivations can be studied as separate variables from a person-centered perspective, the SDT

literature has shown that individuals can possess a motivational profile containing both types of motivations simultaneously with different degrees (Vansteenkiste et al., 2009). According to the next mini-theory, called causality orientation theory (COT), employees' personality traits regarding the extent to which they are autonomy-oriented or control-oriented across situations may play essential roles in motivational regulations (Vansteenkiste et al., 2010).

Another important mini theory of SDT is goal contents theory (GCT). It refers to the influence of individual differences in their goal contents (intrinsic vs. extrinsic) on their performance and well-being (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Vansteenkiste, Lens, & Deci, 2006). According to studies of SDT, these two types of goal contents comprised aspirations for different aspects of life. Intrinsic goals deal with aspirations for other aspects of life, such as personal growth, community contribution, health, and affiliation. However, extrinsic goals are associated with aspirations for aspects of life such as money, fame, and physical appearance (Vansteenkiste et al., 2006). Research has shown that intrinsic versus extrinsic goals have an independent influence on outcomes (e.g., well-being and deep learning) from the influence of autonomous versus controlled motivation on those outcomes.

The implications of SDT have been explored in different organizational and non-organizational contexts (Deci et al., 2017). In corporate settings, SDT has been used to provide explanations and evidence for several issues in the areas of technology acceptance and continuance intention (e.g., Roca & Gagné, 2008), authentic leadership (e.g., Leroy, Anseel, Gardner, & Sels, 2015), knowledge sharing (e.g., Wang et al., 2015), and compensation and reward systems (Deci et al., 2017). Recently, some articles have paid attention to SDT in explaining aspects of FSB (e.g., Beenen, Pichler, & Levy, 2017), but it seems that the full potential of SDT for explaining FSB processes is still unexplored.

### 3.3. SDT and FSB

The implication of SDT in the feedback literature is limited, and there is no use of the full potential of this theory. In an initial attempt, De Stobbeleir (2006) developed a theoretical model explaining avenues for using SDT in the FSB literature. De Stobbeleir proposed a model including individual (causality orientation and work value orientation-intrinsic and extrinsic values) and contextual factors (leadership styles, autonomous/controlled work climate, and goal framing-intrinsic and/or extrinsic goals) as the antecedents of feedback-seeking motives. In addition, those individual and contextual factors were the determinants of satisfaction of basic psychological needs, influencing feedback-seeking motives. Although she paid attention to SDT as the theoretical foundation of the model, the motives of FSB were ego concern, impression management, and instrumental, as described earlier in the FSB literature (Ashford & Cummings, 1983). In addition, while different dimensions of FSB (e.g., source, timing, and content) were included in the model, the antecedents of these dimensions were not elaborated separately. As the model's outcomes, the performance of employees and their leader were considered; however, their well-being was ignored. As mentioned in the introduction, although this was a helpful insight regarding how SDT can contribute to understanding the FSB process, some key aspects of the FSB process have been neglected, such as employees' well-being, autonomous and controlled work motives, and specific arguments for each FSB dimension (e.g., sign, timing, and content) considering the importance of other dimensions beyond feedback-seeking frequency. In addition, mechanisms by which FSB can result in quality feedback and how feedback reactions can influence performance improvement require further development.

In conclusion, some gaps can be highlighted by examining De Stobbeleir's (2006) model as the framework for implementing SDT to explain the effectiveness of the FSB process. First, no specific arguments and propositions are provided on how SDT may be used to explain the feedback seeker's reaction to the feedback. This is essential for

understanding the consequent actions required to influence performance improvement (Ashford et al., 2016). Second, no specific arguments and propositions are presented regarding the SWB of feedback seekers as an essential factor in the FSB process, especially in work contexts with ambiguity and stressors (Cooper-Thomas, Paterson, Standler, & Saks, 2014). This is theoretically crucial because SWB is a vital employee outcome. Third, although there are general discussions in De Stobbeleir (2006) on whether autonomous and controlled motivation can influence FSB's dimensions (facets), these have been limited to the motives introduced in the FSB literature (e.g., instrumental or impression management). FSB motivation still needs more specific theorizing by using the potential of SDT to understand different motivational regulations proposed in this theory. Finally, De Stobbeleir suggested that autonomous and controlled motivation for FSB can impact facets of FSB (e.g., methods, source, etc.). Still, these arguments are general rather than specific for each facet, which can relate autonomous and controlled motivation to specific dimensions of FSB.

While empirical works are generally scarce in this research area, few published works have focused on BPNS in the context of medical education. ten Cate (2013) argued that current feedback practices in the medical education context negatively impact basic psychological needs satisfaction. The way surgeons provide feedback to medical students shows weaknesses, limits students' autonomy, and decreases the quality of relationships because of the negative emotions that feedback may cause. However, he argued that if one receives helpful feedback that improves their competence, it is probable that they seek feedback afterward, considering prior experiences.

On the other hand, Ajjawi and colleagues (2021) argued that if feedback interventions provide situations in which basic psychological needs are satisfied, university students become more motivated to engage in feedback, resulting in higher self-efficacy and academic success. Henry and colleagues (2018), in a mixed-method study, identified that intrinsic motivation for participating in simulation-based training for pediatric residents was not a significant predictor of FSB for improving the performance of the simulation game. However, they identified in their qualitative study that intrinsic motivation toward the long-term career goal and basic psychological needs satisfaction with the career choice might impact the extent to which participants of the simulation training seek feedback. Participants of this study emphasized that satisfaction of the needs in developing competencies about the career they seek and relationships with the individual who gave them feedback in a dialogue-based conversation were the determinants of their motives for FSB.

In a business management context, Beenen et al. (2017), in a longitudinal quantitative study, provided evidence that perceived autonomy-supportive supervision influenced MBA interns' FSB through the mediation of informal supervisor feedback and subordinates' relationship building. Autonomy-supportive supervision was related to how

individuals perceived that their work contexts supported their satisfaction of basic psychological needs. Considering the limited literature on the implications of SDT for explaining the FSB process and its effectiveness, the current paper uses a theoretical perspective to provide a research agenda for future empirical investigation.

#### 4. Theoretical framework and proposition development

As mentioned earlier, a deductive approach (Miner, 2005) was used to develop theoretical arguments to utilize SDT in the context of FSB. Such argumentations are based on premises from the literature on SDT and FSB, following logical reasoning on how they can be related to provide testable propositions and models. The main ideas listed in Table 1 are also used as inputs for having the required premises for the argumentation. Propositions are divided into three sections, demonstrated in Table 2, associated with the research questions provided in the introduction.

##### 4.1. How can FSB improve performance by having positive feedback reactions?

This section proposes that there are motivational factors introduced by SDT that help lead FSB to performance improvement. More specifically, the following discussions suggest that autonomous work motivation, basic psychological needs satisfaction (BPNS), and intrinsic goals help feedback-seekers react positively to the feedback they receive, gain quality feedback from their direct manager, and use it effectively to improve performance.

###### 4.1.1. BPNS and feedback reaction

The more basic psychological needs are satisfied during FSB, the more likely autonomous motivation can be fostered to regulate the feedback seeker's reactions to the feedback, even when the feedback is negative. For example, when a feedback-seeker works in an environment where feedback-seeking is interpreted as a productive and positive behavior, they feel appreciated by their direct manager (as the feedback giver), and consequently, their needs for relatedness are likely to be satisfied. In addition, based on previous experiences, when feedback seeking is considered a tool for increasing one's capabilities and performance, their needs for competence are likely to be satisfied during FSB. In such an environment, when individuals feel that their direct manager gives them autonomy and space to seek feedback, their needs for autonomy are likely to be satisfied. BPNS is essential for autonomous regulation (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2017). This will help the feedback seeker adapt effectively to any uncomfortable situation after receiving feedback about shortcomings or failures because the feedback seeker is likely to regulate themselves autonomously about the activity's intrinsically enjoyable nature (intrinsic regulation) or due to the

**Table 2**  
The main issues addressed in the propositions.

Main issue	Sub-issue	Explanation
How can FSB Improve performance by having positive feedback reaction?	Basic Psychological Needs Satisfaction (BPNS) and Feedback Reaction (Proposition 1) Autonomous/controlled Motivation and Feedback Reaction (Proposition 2 and Proposition 3) Autonomous/controlled Work Motivation and The Quality of Feedback Received (Proposition 4 and Proposition 5)	Autonomous work motivation, BPNS, and intrinsic goals help feedback-seekers to react positively to the feedback they receive, gain quality feedback from their direct manager, and use the feedback effectively to achieve performance improvement.
Subjective Well-Being (SWB) During the FSB Process	BPNS and Feedback Seekers' SWB (Proposition 6) Autonomous/controlled Motivation and Feedback Seeker's SWB (Proposition 7 and Proposition 8)	Feedback-seeker's SWB during the FSB process can be explained based on basic psychological needs satisfaction during feedback seeking and autonomous/controlled work motivation.
SDT and FSB dimensions	Autonomous/controlled Work Motivation and Dimensions of FSB (Proposition 9 to Proposition 14) Proposing the Quantity and Quality of FSB based on the Quality of FSB motives (Proposition 15 and Proposition 16)	The quality and quantity of motivation (Autonomous versus controlled motivation) influence the relatively overlooked dimensions of FSB (e.g., source, method, and sign) beyond FSB frequency.

importance of the activity (internalization). In addition, BPNS may provide a situation in which, after receiving feedback, the feedback seeker may become more determined to use the information to improve their performance than when the needs are thwarted.

The above arguments seem consistent with the relational communication theory (Rogers, 2008). According to this theory, the quality of human relationships between two parties and the quality of communication in information exchange are interrelated and can enhance each other. This idea has been explored in the context of FSB in the online context (Wu, Xu, Kang, Zhao, & Liang, 2019), and relational value has been identified as a predictor of intention for FSB along with its informational values. From this perspective, an autonomy-supportive climate that enhances employees' basic psychological needs satisfaction may be helpful for the relational value of FSB, which helps initiate FSB. Thus, it is concluded that.

**Proposition 1.** *The more feedback-seeking occurs between a feedback seeker and their immediate supervisor in a supportive environment for satisfying basic psychological needs, the more likely the autonomous regulation is fostered for adapting to negative feedback received in the feedback-seeking process, resulting in the effective use of the feedback for improving individual performance.*

Given the proposition developed above and considering the results of the study by Vandenberghe et al. (2021), BPNS may be used to expand our understanding of the findings. According to their findings, decreasing FSB across time diminished affective commitment. It increased the turnover intention of newcomers, having reverse negative effects on FSB for the following stages of their careers. SDT may be used to argue that enhancing an autonomy-supportive climate and providing situations in which basic psychological needs are satisfied may break this vicious circle. BPNS has been identified as the antecedent of autonomous motivation and affective commitment (Van den Broeck et al., 2016), which can enhance the FSB of newcomers during their socialization.

#### 4.1.2. Autonomous/controlled motivation and feedback reaction

When an individual is autonomously motivated based on identified or intrinsic regulations, they can positively deal with the negative feedback and overcome failures and shortcomings by relying on regulations that motivate them to pursue task accomplishment autonomously. These ideas may be consistent with a study by Kim, Cable, Kim, and Wang (2009), supporting the significance of providing followers autonomy at work by creating a situation wherein proactive behaviors, including feedback-seeking, can predict task performance. These regulations can help the individual because negative feedback is more likely to be perceived as information that allows the individual to perform something important or a task with a more incredible experience of joy or satisfaction. In contrast, when one possesses controlled motivation, they may negatively react to negative feedback and experience negative feelings that hinder utilizing the information generated by the feedback to improve performance. The reason is that controlled motivation causes stress, shame, guilt, and uncomfortable feelings when one faces failure (Gagné & Deci, 2005; Holding et al., 2021).

In addition, SDT discusses the association of true and contingent self-esteem with autonomous and controlled motivational regulations (Ryan & Brown, 2006). Past studies have been unable to support the significant impact of self-esteem on FSB across all situations (Levy et al., 1995). By analyzing self-esteem based on the true and contingent types, there may be some explanations for the inconsistent results of this literature. Because an individual may not feel bad when receiving negative feedback based on their true self-esteem. However, an employee with contingent self-esteem may feel bad and tensed when receiving negative feedback, which may be perceived as a punishment or an external pressure reducing the chance of feedback seeking. The above arguments lead us to the following propositions.

**Proposition 2.** *When the feedback is negative, the stronger autonomous work motivation is, the more likely the individual will react positively to the feedback to use the information for better performance.*

**Proposition 3.** *When the feedback is negative, the stronger the controlled work motivation is, the more likely the individual will react negatively to the feedback for using the information, leading to poor performance.*

#### 4.1.3. Autonomous/controlled work motivation and the quality of feedback received

An employee's motivational regulation when interacting with their immediate supervisor may also be necessary for the quality of the dyadic relationship. This relationship may, in turn, influence the quality of the feedback the individual receives during the feedback-seeking process. This paper suggests that the stronger the autonomous work motivation of the feedback seeker is when interacting with the immediate supervisor, the more likely they may develop a trusting relationship due to the supervisor's perception of the feedback seeker's willingness to improve individual performance. More specifically, the supervisor's perception of the autonomous work motivation of the feedback seeker during work activities may influence the supervisor's perception of integrity and benevolence (Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995) of the employee during their feedback-seeking process. This may also increase the supervisor's perception of the expectancy that the feedback seeker can use the feedback effectively to improve performance. Thus, the feedback seeker's autonomous work motivation may increase the chance of providing quality feedback if the seeker seeks it. In addition, it may increase the adaptability of the feedback seeker with feedback that exposes their weaknesses. This is also consistent with the idea of psychological need crafting (Laporte et al., 2021) when the feedback seeker with a strong autonomous motivation with an agentic view can actively seek feedback to develop stronger relationships and receive quality information to improve competency and establish autonomy.

Research in the context of the socialization of newcomers has suggested that employees' tendencies to gain control over their work activities during the entry stage motivate them to engage in proactive behaviors such as relationship-building with their supervisor (e.g., Kim, Cable, & Kim, 2005). This argument is also consistent with the leader-member exchange theory, suggesting that the quality of the dyadic relationship may enable the dynamic of idea exchange between the follower and their leader. The high quality of the relationship enhances the development opportunity for the follower. When there is special treatment (e.g., providing more feedback) in combination with the quality of the relationship, individuals' commitment increases (Van Breukelen, Konst, & Van Der Vliet, 2002).

Considering the study conducted by Sung and Choi (2021) identifying that perceived congruent and ambiguous situations of high-high and low-low levels of cost and value of FSB enhanced using the monitoring method, autonomous motivation may be helpful. An autonomously motivated feedback seeker can improve the quality of exchange with their immediate supervisor, enhancing the chance of initiating FSB using the inquiry method because increasing the exchange quality may reduce the perceived costs of FSB. In this situation, the inquiry method can help receive diagnostic information regarding performance improvement. In contrast, when motivation is controlled to regulate the interaction, the employee may not be sufficiently trusted by the supervisor to provide them with quality feedback. Employees may be perceived as inconsistently willing to improve their performance due to their contingent behavior based on rewards, punishment, or social approval. This may negatively impact the relationship and the quality of feedback received. The extent to which the feedback seeker is perceived to be reliable in paying adequate attention to the feedback and using it effectively in work processes can also influence the supervisor's intention to provide quality feedback. Therefore.

**Proposition 4.** *The more feedback seekers are autonomously motivated in their interactions with the immediate supervisor, the more likely they can improve the quality of their relationship with the supervisor, resulting in receiving high-quality feedback.*

**Proposition 5.** *The more feedback seekers' motivation is controlled when interacting with the immediate supervisor, the less likely they can develop a high-quality relationship with the supervisor resulting in receiving low-quality feedback.*

#### 4.2. Subjective well-being (SWB) during the FSB process

This section proposes that the feedback-seeker's SWB during the FSB process, as a relatively under-researched phenomenon in the FSB literature, can be explained based on basic psychological needs satisfaction during feedback seeking and autonomous/controlled work motivation.

##### 4.2.1. BPNS and feedback seekers' SWB

Research suggests that BPNS affects individuals' SWB (Deci & Ryan, 2000, Ryan & Deci, 2017). BPNS has been described as the psychological nutrients necessary for individuals' health and growth (Ryan & Deci, 2017). In some organizational contexts, FSB may bring about some consequences regarding the SWB of feedback seekers. For example, newcomers have been the subjects of several studies of FSB. Almost all these studies have focused on motivational antecedents or consequences of newcomers' FSB (Ashford et al., 2016), and only a few have paid attention to the well-being of employees' FSB as a part of the socialization process (e.g., Cooper-Thomas et al., 2014). Newcomers to an organization may face ambiguities and experience considerable stress realizing what they must perform, what performance standards they must meet, and how they should behave based on organizational culture. This may require newcomers to regularly seek feedback to overcome their performance problems, which may exert negative effects on the well-being of newcomers during the feedback-seeking process. Therefore, it is essential to foster an FSB environment that can support BPNS and positively affect newcomers' SWB if the socialization process for newcomers takes time.

Another example of an organizational situation that endangers the SWB of feedback seekers is when they work online in virtual teams for a long time or carry out complex projects when there is no sufficient human interaction, but FSB is required. The lack of adequate human interactions may provide a climate wherein team members' FSB makes them experience heavy stress and dissatisfaction, endangering their SWB. This sub-section suggests that if there is an autonomy-supportive climate between employees and their immediate supervisor, feedback seekers have positive experiences regarding their SWB, and their motives are supported for initiating FSB. The main feature of this environment is immediate supervisors' skills in providing feedback when needed to improve feedback seekers' competence (e.g., being specific and clear in feedback) by recognizing individual differences and abilities and giving reasonable options for their actions. Consequently, feedback seekers' autonomy-related needs are satisfied more effectively, and feedback can be provided in a trust-based climate, satisfying the need for relatedness. In this environment, there is more chance to support the feedback seekers' SWB due to BPNS. Thus.

**Proposition 6.** *The more feedback-seeking occurs between a feedback seeker and their immediate supervisor in a supportive environment for satisfying basic psychological needs, the more likely the feedback seeker's SWB is supported during the feedback-seeking process, given the threatening and stressful nature of feedback-seeking.*

The above arguments help expand the study by Tian et al. (2021) by proposing that the effect of FSB on SWB through career adaptability may be strengthened by autonomous motivation. Autonomous work motivation can enable individuals to react positively to the feedback received during career stages and use the information acquired by FSB to adapt to

their careers more effectively, improving SWB in return. In contrast, controlled work motivation can negatively affect FSB for career adaptability due to the possible negative reaction to the feedback received, which diminishes SWB across career stages in return. The model examined by Tian et al. (2021) can be tested again by incorporating autonomous and controlled motivation.

#### 4.3. Autonomous/controlled motivation and feedback Seeker's SWB

An essential contribution of SDT to the motivation literature is that subjective well-being (SWB) is an outcome of motivational regulations and individual performance (Deci et al., 2017). It should be noted that BPNS makes motivation more autonomous and increases subjective well-being (Meulenbroeks & van Joolingen, 2022). Autonomous motivation can enhance SWB, while controlled motivation diminishes it. The notion of the feedback seeker's SWB is almost neglected in the literature on FSB, except for a few studies, such as Tian et al. (2021). More specifically, individuals are expected to experience stress if the work context requires them to seek feedback constantly (e.g., for newcomers during their first months of employment). The stress level may be higher for individuals with stronger controlled motivation (Van den Broeck et al., 2021). From this perspective, in such an environment, it can be expected that individuals with autonomous work motivation may experience less stress during the feedback-seeking process.

In contrast, they can experience considerable stress when work motivation is controlled. Autonomous motivation in terms of intrinsic and internalized extrinsic motivation positively influences the feedback-seeking process to improve SWB, as these motivational regulations can increase the positive affections and meaningfulness of work-related tasks. However, controlled motivation influences negative affect during the feedback-seeking process, eventually decreasing SWB.

**Proposition 7.** *When FSB is required for a considerable period, the more individuals with autonomous motivation seek feedback, the more likely they experience SWB.*

**Proposition 8.** *When FSB is required for a considerable period, the more individuals with controlled motivation seek feedback, the less likely they are to experience SWB.*

##### 4.3.1. Psychological need crafting and feedback Seeker's SWB

The above ideas used to develop propositions 6 and 7 may also be consistent with the recent notion of needs crafting (Laporte et al., 2021). The more an employee is autonomously motivated and feels agentic, the more likely they may be involved in behavioral strategies such as seeking feedback that satisfies their basic psychological needs, resulting in feedback that improves their performance and a sense of competence or relatedness. These may also foster their SWB as a result of BPNS during FSB. In addition, such behavioral strategies may foster an autonomy-supportive climate of the work context by which FSB is supported and help improve employees' well-being.

A Model of the Implications of SDT in The Role of FSB on The Feedback Seeker's Performance Improvement and Subjective Well-Being.

After integrating the above propositions, a model is proposed in Fig. 1 for further empirical investigation on how SDT contributes to understanding how FSB can influence performance improvement and SWB.

#### 4.4. SDT and FSB dimensions

The quality and quantity of motivation (Autonomous versus controlled motivation), as SDT suggests (Deci et al., 2017), may contribute to the FSB literature in terms of how the quantity/quality aspects of motivation influence the relatively overlooked dimensions of FSB (e.g., source, method, and sign) beyond FSB frequency. Although

arguments can explain the relationships between autonomous/controlled work motivation and different dimensions of FSB, only three dimensions are discussed in this section.

#### 4.4.1. Autonomous/controlled work motivation and the dimensions of FSB

Autonomous work motivation reduces stress when performing tasks (Ryan & Brown, 2006). Individuals with a high level of autonomous work motivation perceive that they intend to complete the work task by their own will, which can help them focus on the job with less distraction from external stimuli (Elphinstone, Egan, & Whitehead, 2021; Gagné & Deci, 2005). In addition, autonomous motivation helps individuals develop true self-esteem without relying on external regulations (Ryan & Brown, 2006). The FSB literature suggests that the low self-esteem of individuals is detrimental to reconsidering or modifying their motives and intentions for initiating FSB from their immediate supervisor because of stress and negative reactions to receiving negative feedback (Levy et al., 1995). However, the current paper suggests that having true self-esteem caused by autonomous work motivation (Ryan & Brown, 2006) can help individual regulate their intention to seek feedback from their immediate supervisor (the dimension source).

In contrast, when controlled motivation is the primary motivational regulation, the individual may prefer not to seek feedback from their immediate supervisor due to contingent self-esteem and work-related stress associated with the situation to reduce stress and negative emotional reaction. This may make the individual seek feedback from their co-workers to avoid difficulties in seeking feedback from the immediate supervisor. This idea may be helpful for future research, as Ashford et al. (2016) proposed to conduct studies on the antecedent of FSB from other sources, such as colleagues. Thus, the following proposition can be developed.

**Proposition 9.** *Autonomous work motivation can impact choosing the source of FSB in a way that the more an individual is autonomously motivated to perform their tasks, the more likely they become motivated to seek feedback from the immediate supervisor due to their true self-esteem.*

**Proposition 10.** *The more a feedback seeker possesses controlled work motivation, the more likely they become motivated to seek feedback from co-workers instead of the immediate supervisor due to the stress caused by contingent self-esteem in interacting with the immediate supervisor because of controlled regulation.*

Autonomous/controlled work motivation may also cause an individual's preference for seeking feedback by choosing between the direct inquiry and monitoring methods (the method dimension). As proposed above, having autonomous work motivation may increase true self-esteem and decrease stress for feedback seeking. In addition, autonomous motivation may help identify creative approaches to performing work tasks (Gupta, 2020). In contrast, when motivation is controlled, the individual may not enjoy task performance and avoid interaction, which causes stress, negative feelings, and a sense of lack of worth (Gagné & Deci, 2005). Autonomous work motivation may be more helpful as the direct inquiry method requires an individual to interact with their immediate supervisor to initiate a conversation to seek feedback. The reason is that it impacts self-esteem and initiatives for engaging in activities that resolve deficiencies by focusing on details. In contrast, when motivation is controlled, because the individual may perceive that direct inquiry increases the chance of receiving direct criticism, they may be more likely to engage in FSB using the monitoring method to decrease the risk. This may also be related to contingent and fragile self-esteem, which hinders using the direct inquiry method. In addition, using introjected regulation as a type of controlled motivation may also cause shame or guilt (Gagné & Deci, 2005) when using a direct inquiry method causes negative performance feedback. Therefore, using the monitoring method is expected to protect the individual from experiencing such feelings when there are deficiencies or failures in performance. Thus.

**Proposition 11.** *Autonomous/controlled work motivation can affect choosing the method of FSB in a way that the more an individual is autonomously motivated to perform their tasks, the more likely they seek feedback using direct inquiry when there is a deficiency or failure due to true self-esteem.*

**Proposition 12.** *However, the more the feedback seeker's motivation is controlled, the more likely they will seek feedback using the monitoring method in such situations due to contingent self-esteem.*

Given the nature of autonomous and controlled work motivation explained earlier, these regulations may also influence the sign of FSB (the sign dimension). One with controlled work motivation is expected to seek feedback when individual performance is perceived as satisfactory to increase a sense of self-worth due to their contingent self-esteem. External motivation based on positive feedback can enhance one's contingent self-esteem (Ryan & Brown, 2006). Furthermore, introjected regulation may cause a good feeling in terms of satisfying the individual that a rule or an obligation is met, resulting from positive feedback. One is unlikely to seek negative feedback based on controlled motivation because it will cause negative reactions and frustration. On the other hand, when individuals are autonomously motivated, they may be less likely to avoid seeking negative feedback that improves their performance and less likely to depend on positive feedback to make themselves feel good by seeking positive feedback. Thus, the following proposition is provided.

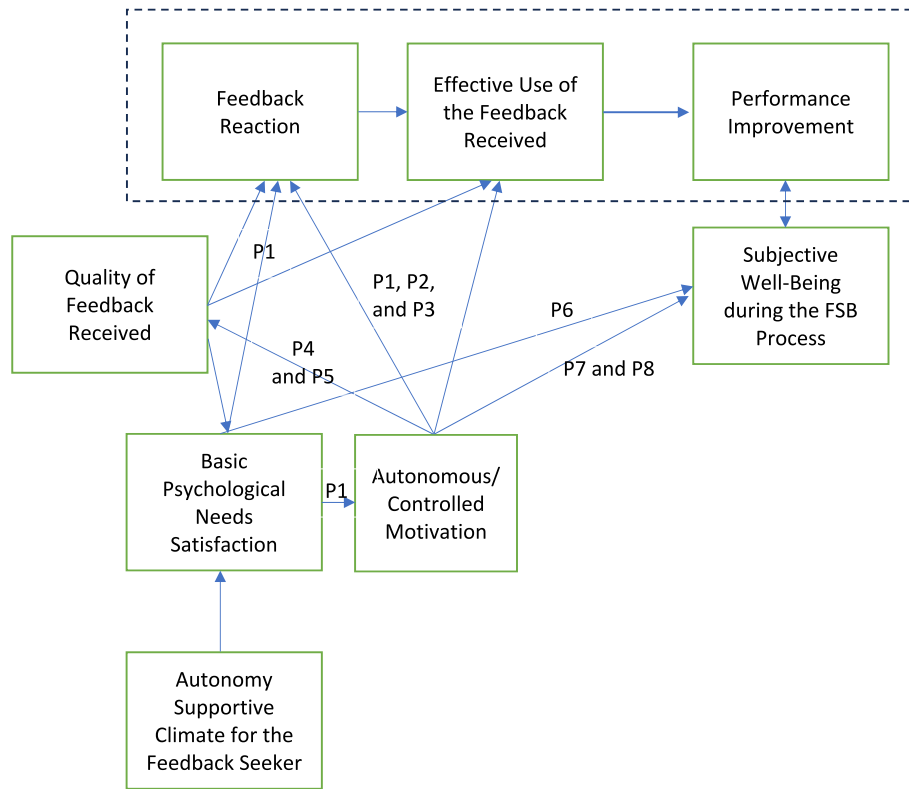
**Proposition 13.** *Autonomous/controlled work motivation can impact the sign of FSB in that the more an individual is autonomously motivated to perform their tasks, the less likely they are to avoid seeking negative feedback due to their true self-esteem.*

**Proposition 14.** *However, the more the feedback seeker's work motivation is controlled, the more likely they are to seek positive feedback instead of negative feedback because of their fragile self-esteem.*

#### 4.4.2. Proposing the quantity and quality of FSB based on the quality of FSB motives

Based on the arguments mentioned above, one can expect that all types of motivational regulations proposed by OIT are the antecedents of the frequency of FSB as a quantity of this behavior. However, consistent with the SDT literature emphasizing both the quantity and quality of motivation (Deci et al., 2017), the current paper suggests that the more individuals are autonomously motivated at work, the more likely they not only seek feedback frequently if required but also seek for feedback that can help them for psychological need crafting, resulting in receiving high-quality feedback. Such feedback can help them acquire helpful information to satisfy their need for competence and autonomy and develop high-quality relationships with their supervisors. This may be interpreted as the 'quality of FSB,' which can be used in analyzing FSB and the outcomes rather than solely studying feedback-seeking frequency. FSB quality may be related to the seeker's framing of their behavior using the direct inquiry method, seeking negative feedback for improvement, and providing adequate information to the supervisor regarding the feedback seekers' performance problems essential for receiving effective feedback. These may be related to some dimensions of FSB, such as method, source, and type beyond the feedback-seeking frequency. This paper suggests that the quality of FSB can be enhanced when work motivation is autonomous, given that autonomous work motivation positively affects autonomous actions for performance and growth rather than gaining external material or social-based rewards or avoiding punishments. In contrast, controlled regulation for work motivation may lead employees to seek feedback in terms of its quantity, primarily for self-enhancement based on others' judgment and avoiding self-threats. Thus.

**Proposition 15.** *Autonomous regulations positively influence the quality of FSB, comprising direct inquiry, seeking helpful feedback for improvement,*



**Fig. 1.** The influence mechanism of SDT motivational factors on the feedback seeker’s performance improvement and subjective well-being

Notes: Only propositions that are novel to the FSB literature are shown.

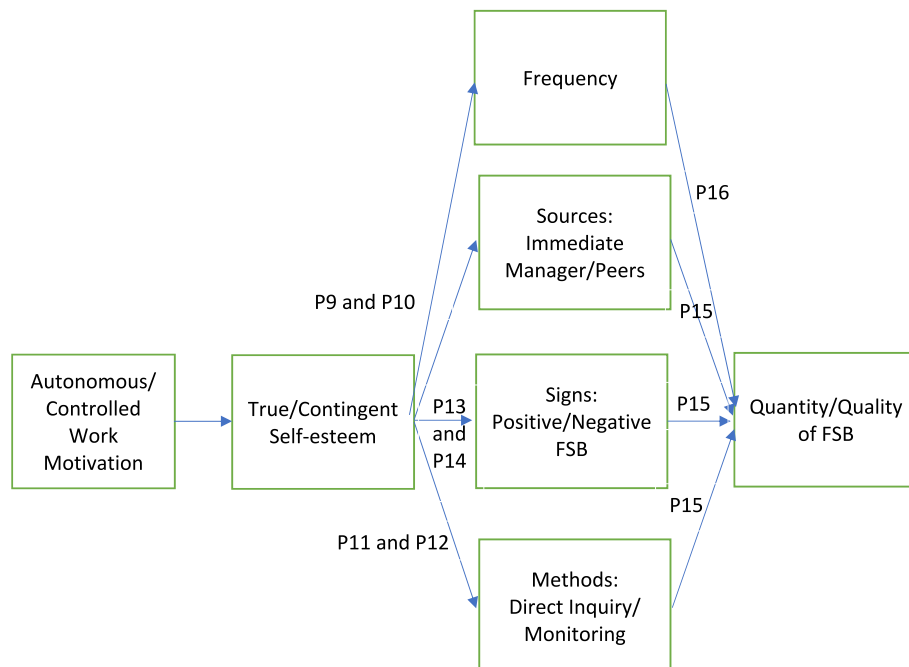
- The dashed rectangle contains variables that inform a process in which the feedback seeker’s reaction to the feedback is shaped and influences their subsequent actions (till FSB can improve their performance).

and providing essential information to the supervisor to receive quality feedback.

**Proposition 16.** *Controlled regulations positively influence FSB’s quantity (frequency) for protecting oneself against self-treats.*

**4.4.3. A model of the implications of SDT in understanding the dimensions of FSB**

Based on the above proposition, this paper contributes to the FSB literature by proposing that autonomous and controlled motivation impact FSB dimensions beyond feedback-seeking frequency (Ashford



**Fig. 2.** Autonomous/Controlled motivation and FSB dimensions.

et al., 2016) by mediating true and contingent self-esteem. In addition, the quality of motivation for FSB influences the quality of FSB conceptually proposed above. Fig. 2 depicts a model offering such theoretical contributions.

## 5. Conclusions

This paper presented some testable propositions on how self-determination theory (SDT) and mini-theories help explain some of the critical aspects and new issues of the FSB process. The main benefit is that SDT can provide an integrated view regarding the motives of FSB and how feedback seekers may react to the feedback they receive. Although using SDT in the FSB literature is not new (e.g., Beenen et al., 2017), its theoretical potential is mainly overlooked, with few aspects being realized and examined in the past literature (e.g., De Stobbeleir, 2006).

This paper provided some theoretical boundaries and limitations in developing arguments and propositions. First, this paper addressed FSB from the employees' perspectives. Although there may be similarities between the implications of SDT in the context of managers' FSB (Leaders' FSB) and the discussion on employees' FSB, there are some contextual differences (e.g., political aspects of the organization) when analyzing managers' FSB. Second, this paper focused on the motivational aspects of FSB, while its cognitive aspects need further exploration based on other theoretical perspectives. Third, this paper used the main ideas of related literature and addressed the key issues and gaps widely acknowledged in the FSB literature. Therefore, the literature review of previous publications was selective rather than exhaustive. Finally, not all the mini-theories of SDT are discussed in the paper, as other mini-theories can also have implications in the feedback-seeking literature. For example, there is a potential to discuss that intrinsic goals versus extrinsic goals are likely to positively influence the feedback seeker's reaction to the negative feedback received and their subjective well-being.

This paper proposes an agenda for future study in this area. First, it is essential to explore how FSB can impact individual performance. This is a critical issue as there is no conclusive answer to this issue based on previous studies. Without supporting theoretical mechanisms on how FSB can lead to performance, this literature may be limited in terms of practice. Regarding this issue, propositions 1 to 5 must be tested about the role of SDT in explaining feedback seekers' reactions to the feedback they receive and the quality of it, which may lead to performance improvement.

Second, as mentioned earlier, it is essential to consider feedback seekers' SWB during FSB. Because some employees may feel threats to their self-esteem during FSB. In addition, FSB may be essential in performing complex and non-routine tasks when employees experience stress and need feedback seeking at the same time. Thus, it is critical to examine how SDT can be used to identify what individual and contextual factors can support their SWB during the FSB process. Future research can be designed to test Propositions 6 to 8 in this regard.

Third, because FSB includes different dimensions (e.g., method, source, sign, timing, etc.), these aspects are also essential to explore the impact of FSB on performance. SDT can contribute to understanding what motivational regulations can help emerge types of FSB that can result in performance improvement. Future studies can test propositions 9 to 14 regarding FSB dimensions and performance.

The next area for future research is to provide a more comprehensive and parsimonious model for FSB motives. Although this issue was addressed in the initial version of this manuscript, it was excluded due to the word number limitation. As mentioned earlier, different types of motives have been presented in the literature for FSB based on various theoretical perspectives: cost/value of FSB, self-motives, self-verification/self-enhancement, self-improvement/self-assessment, and ego and image defensive and instrumental motives. Future research can examine if domain-specific motives for FSB can be related to a more parsimonious

model, including autonomous and controlled motivation. In addition, using this approach, the literature of FSB may be grounded in a more consistent theoretical foundation. These studies can also examine the role of job-related motivational regulations based on OIT in forming FSB and its dimensions compared with domain-specific motives for FSB.

## Author note

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## Plain language summary

This article suggests that Self-Determination Theory (SDT), a motivational theory, can potentially address some important research gaps in the study of feedback-seeking behavior (FSB). It focuses on a few key points. First, it explains how FSB can lead to improved performance by looking at the motivational factors described in SDT. These factors influence how people react to positive feedback and the quality of feedback they receive when seeking it from their boss or colleagues. Second, SDT can help explain how people's well-being is affected during feedback-seeking. This aspect is often overlooked in FSB research, even though it's important when individuals feel pressure during feedback-seeking. Third, the article connects the motivation to motivate oneself with different dimensions of FSB, such as the method, sign (positive or negative feedback), and type of feedback sought. These dimensions go beyond just how often someone seeks feedback. The article suggests that the quality of FSB, based on these dimensions, is linked to the extent to which individuals are pleased and convinced to seek feedback. Overall, the article offers testable ideas and theoretical models for future studies in this field.

## CRedit authorship contribution statement

**Seyyed Babak Alavi:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Conceptualization.

## Data availability

No data was used for the research described in the article.

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