

**Be Careful What You Wish for but also Why You Wish for It
– Goal Striving Reasons and Affective Subjective Well-Being**

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ABSTRACT

Individuals' subjective well-being (SWB) when attaining their goals is moderated by the characteristics of their goals. Two significant moderators are whether goals are approach or avoidance oriented and their content. Within goal setting literature, these characteristics have been applied to goals as such, focussing on what it is people try to achieve. However, they can equally be applied to analyse why individuals pursue their goals. By applying the dimensions of approach and avoidance orientation as well as goal content to the analysis of goal striving reasons a framework has been developed encompassing the following four goal striving reasons: goals pursuit because of pleasure, for altruistic reasons, out of necessity and for self-esteem reasons. The empirical findings (N = 174), show that goal striving reasons are significantly associated with affective SWB. Therefore goal striving reasons provide an additional level of analysis, when analysing the relation between goals and affective SWB.

KEYWORDS: Personal Goals; Goal Striving Reasons; Goal Characteristics; Affective Subjective Well-Being.

Be Careful What You Wish for but also Why You Wish for It

There are no perfect men in this world, only perfect intentions.
Pen Densham

Many people want to achieve their goals because they believe that achieving them will make them happy (Carver & Scheier, 1999; Emmons, 1996; McGregor & Little, 1998; Ryan & Deci, 2001; Tkach & Lyubormirsky, 2006). At the same time, research suggests that happiness or subjective well-being (SWB) is not simply a result of achieving one's goals, but also a matter of having the right kind of goals (Schultheiss, Jones, Davis & Kley, 2008). In particular, the content of goals (what it is individuals strive for) and whether goals are aimed at achieving desired outcomes or try to avoid undesired outcomes (approach or avoidance goals) have proven to moderate the relationship between goal achievement and SWB (Carver & Scheier, 1999; Kasser & Ryan, 1993, 1996).

Research on approach and avoidance goals and goal content in relation to happiness has mainly been focused on the goal itself. By doing so, the analysis of goals is about the form in which a goal is expressed in, which has been criticised as a rather superficial level of analysis (Coats, Janoff-Bulman & Alpert, 1996; Dickson, 2006; Ryan, Sheldon, Kasser & Deci, 1996). Not least because it does not consider why a person strives for a particular goal. As a result, the analysis of goals as such fails to take into account that goals are the end product of a complex thought process which includes a person's elaborations as to why a particular goal is important. This distinction is most commonly represented in Gollwitzer's (1990) action phase model which distinguishes between a *deliberative mindset* where individuals ponder which goals to select and the *actual decision phase* where people select which goal to pursue further (*cf.* Heckhausen &

Gollwitzer, 1987; Sheldon & Elliot, 1999). Thus any goal pursuit is inevitably linked to the reasons for which it has been selected. It is therefore not surprising that the *why of goal pursuit* is seen as an essential element within the relationship between goals and SWB (Carver & Baird, 1998; Deci & Ryan, 2000; Ryan & Connell, 1989; Sheldon & Elliot, 1999).

Despite the plethora of authors emphasising the importance of goal striving reasons there is little variety with regard to the theoretical frameworks used to analyse them. For instance, all authors mentioned above use either self-determination theory (SDT) or the self-concordance model which are in essence very similar. As a result, the analytical frameworks employed all revolve around the degree of autonomy (external pressures, introjected behaviour, behaviour guided by identified motives and intrinsic behaviour) with which goals are pursued. The theorising of goal striving reasons must therefore be judged as limited.

The main purpose of the study at hand is therefore to show that goal characteristics are, in their own right, relevant when analysing the reasons behind peoples' goal pursuits, particularly in relation to affective SWB. Consequently, this paper aims to identify characteristics of goal striving reasons which are related to affective SWB and are explicitly derived from the application of goal characteristics. It further aims to show that these relevant characteristics of goal striving reasons are not, at least not fully, captured within SDT which consequently offers an alternative framework to SDT when analysing peoples reasons behind their goal pursuits.

Therefore the remainder of this paper argues, in the first instance, that the distinction between approach and avoidance as well as the consideration of different goal contents differs from the distinction between autonomous and controlled behaviours as described in the SDT. This provides the rationale for disregarding the SDT as a potential framework with which to analyse goal-striving reasons from a goal setting perspective. It then moves on to demonstrate how the two goal characteristics can be applied onto the level of goal striving reasons and that it is a highly important level of goal analysis in relation to affective SWB. Following on from there, it develops a framework of four major categories of goal striving reasons which in the empirical part are related to affective SWB. The correlation-based findings, based on $N = 174$, aim to highlight the significance of the four categories of goal striving reasons for affective SWB. Their significance but also their conceptual difference to SDT is further demonstrated by empirically showing the unique amount of variance explained on affective SWB above and beyond the classes of motivation as described in SDT. The paper concludes by discussing the implications of the study. Particular focus is given to the notion that the application of goal characteristics onto the level of goal striving reasons offers an additional and potentially more primary level of goal analysis not captured by the analysis of the goal itself. Finally, the conclusion outlines a potential extension of SDT by two of the four goal striving reasons identified in the study at hand.

Inadequate representation of goal characteristics through SDT

With regard to the dimension of approach and avoidance evidence suggests that although there is some overlap with the concept of autonomy (Elliot & Sheldon, 1998; Ryan & Connell, 1989) it would be incorrect to assume that approach is autonomous

and avoidance is controlling. One reason for this is that actions that have an approach orientation as its core motivational basis can still be controlled (Carver & Scheier, 2000). Deci and Ryan (2000) also repeatedly argue that the distinction between approach and avoidance is unrelated to the distinction between autonomous and controlled behaviour (*cf.* Ryan & Deci, 1999). It can therefore be concluded that the distinction between autonomous and controlled behaviour does not adequately represent the distinction between approach or avoidance driven goals.

With regard to the content of goal striving reasons the conceptual overlap with SDT is even smaller. In fact, it seems fair to state, that SDT does not consider the content of goal strivings at all. For example, Sheldon and Elliot (1999) see as one of the shortcomings of their self-concordance model that even a terrorist could act very self-determined but essentially manifestly evil. This is why, the analysis of the actual content of goal striving reasons offers an additional dimension not explicitly captured within SDT.

Approach and avoidance orientation and the application to goal striving reasons

In the goal setting literature avoidance goals are characterised as ones which aim to avoid undesired outcomes whereas approach goals are seen to encompass attempts to move towards desired ones (Carver & Scheier, 1990; Coats *et al.*, 1996). In this respect, research has conclusively shown that approach goals relative to avoidance goals contribute more strongly to SWB (Carver & Scheier, 1999; Dickson, 2006; Elliot & Sheldon, 1997; Ryan & Deci, 2001).

The distinction between approach and avoidance goals also applies to goal striving reasons. Thus, one can ask whether the reasons why people strive for a goal are characterised by either moving away from something negative or towards something positive. For example, the goal of getting promoted at work could be underpinned by the motivation to earn more money or the need to climb up the hierarchy in order to avoid the feeling of having failed in one's career. The first reason is of an approach nature, while the latter is driven by an avoidance reason.

Since the differentiation of goals into approach and avoidance goals is associated with different levels of SWB, it can be hypothesised that it is equally associated with different levels of SWB when applied to goal striving reasons. If this is the case, then similar to research on approach and avoidance goals (Carver & Scheier, 1990; Coats *et al.*, 1996), avoidance reasons should focus more strongly on the negative repercussions of not attaining the goal and lead to more negative thinking. In contrast, approach reasons, by focussing on something positive will lead to a form of positive thinking. Consequently, goals driven by avoidance reasons should contribute less to SWB, compared to approach ones. Some tentative empirical support for this assumption has been found recently by Dickson, Moberly and Kindermann (2011) who could show that depressed participants report significantly higher avoidance reasons compared to approach reasons when compared to a non-depressed control group.

Goal content and the application to goal striving reasons

The content of goals is also related to SWB. Early research (Fromm, 1976; Maslow, 1954; Rogers, 1961) shows that goals aimed at personal growth and self-actualisation

are important contributors to SWB. Kasser and Ryan (1993) found that the content of the aspiration is as important as the likelihood of achieving an aspiration in determining one's well-being. When respondents' beliefs about the likelihood that they would achieve their aspirations were measured, their estimated likelihood of attaining intrinsic aspirations (e.g. personal growth) was positively related to SWB, whereas the likelihood of attaining extrinsic aspirations (e.g., fame or money) was negatively correlated with self-reported SWB indices. On the basis of the research presented, it seems justified to conclude that the main difference in goal content in relation to SWB is whether goals are aimed at personal growth or at accumulating materialistic wealth (Kasser & Ryan, 1993; Maslow, 1954; Rogers, 1961).

The distinction between personal growth and materialistic wealth can however be criticised for focussing primarily on self-centred goals and as a consequence does not take into account goals that are pursued because of what is happening around or outside of a person. Such a limited focus means that goals being pursued for pro-social reasons are not considered which is why any classification of goal striving reasons purely on self-centred goals has to be judged as too narrow and not suitable to reflect the whole range of goal striving reasons. Therefore another classification is required when analysing peoples' goal striving reasons.

One classification of goal contents which does consider goals being pursued for reasons outside a person as well as for self-centred reasons has been introduced by Ford and Nichols (1987; *cf.* Austin & Vancouver, 1996; Eccles & Wigfield, 2002; Ford, 1992). It distinguishes between *within-person* and *person-environment* goals. This categorisation being one that can be seen to constitute a continuous thread running

through many other taxonomies, where ego-involvement (Nicholls, Cobb, Yackel, Wood & Wheatley, 1990) or the emotional drivers of goals such as pleasure and pain (Ryan & Deci, 2000) have been opposed to goals with non-ego involvement and therefore more focussed on changing external circumstances. Ford and Nichols's (1987) goal taxonomy is particularly pertinent as it distinguishes between approach and avoidance goals within each of the two categories. At the same time it is not limited to a particular kind of goal, such as achievement goals, for which similar goal taxonomies have also been developed (Elliot, Murayama & Pekrun, 2011).

It is readily apparent that the distinction between *within-person* and *person-environment* goals is equally applicable to goal striving reasons. This is because one can ask to what degree the reason for goal pursuit is aimed at a change within the person or aimed at change of an external situation which the person feels related to. Within-person as well as person-environment goal striving reasons can, in turn, be reasonably assumed to have implications for a person's SWB. This is most obviously the case for within-person driven goals since the predominant driver is to enhance positive emotions or to avoid negative ones. However, in the case of person-environment driven goals, it can also be argued that they, indirectly, can lead to an increase in positive emotions because an external situation has either been improved or an undesired situation has been prevented. For example, to see another person being better off, due to one's own actions, can be a source of personal satisfaction and therefore contribute to SWB.

The distinction between within-person and person-environment goal striving reasons ultimately reflects a difference in the degree of ego-involvement within goal pursuit. Within-person goal striving reasons represent a high ego-involvement whereas person-

environment reasons are characterised through a comparatively low ego-involvement. As a consequence, the associations with positive and negative affect after the attainment or non-attainment of a goal is likely to depend on the degree of ego-involvement. Where ego-involvement is high, failure should be more strongly associated with negative affect compared to the non-attainment of a goal with low ego-involvement. Similarly, successful goal attainment should be more strongly associated with positive affect when compared to the attainment of a goal with low ego-involvement.

A framework for goal striving reasons

The dimensions of approach and avoidance and within-person and person-environment goal striving reasons can be combined into a matrix that produces four distinct categories of goal striving reasons: approach/within-person; approach/person-environment; avoidance/within-person and avoidance/person-environment. Each of these four categories has been further specified by reference to one particular goal striving reason (see figure 1).

< Figure 1 About Here >

The four goal striving reasons representing the four categories have been chosen on the basis that each represents one of the more prominent goal striving reasons for each category. Evidence of their prominence can be derived from the fact that Austing and Vancouver (1996) listed very similar goal contents for each of their four categories. Those are : *Experiencing feelings of joy, satisfaction or well-being* (pleasure); *Avoiding feelings of failure, guilt or incompetence* (avoiding loss of self-esteem); *Giving approval, support, assistance, advice or validation to others* (altruism) and *Avoiding threatening, depriving, or harmful circumstances* (necessity). Each of the four goal

striving reasons have also been the focus of a substantial number of studies exploring their relationship to SWB, albeit not necessarily in the context of goal striving reasons.

With respect to approach and within-person goal striving reasons, the desire to experience pleasure can be seen as an important representative of this category. The pursuit of enjoyment or pleasure is clearly approaching in nature as it involves individuals moving towards something desirable. It is also characterised by a predominant focus on the improvement of one's emotional state (Austin & Vancouver 1996). The relevance of pleasure or positive emotions in general as an underlying force of human behaviour and personal goals in particular is widely acknowledged (Brunstein, 1993; Csikszentmihalyi, 1988; Deci & Ryan, 2000; Kehr, 2004a; Latham, 2007; Pervin, 1983). Additionally, the importance of pleasure as a goal striving reason is further supported by its similarity to *intrinsically* motivated goals within self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000), where people strive for goals because of the pleasure they naturally bring (Carver & Baird, 1998). Indeed, within the self-determination literature, including studies using the self-concordance model (Sheldon & Elliot, 1999), it has been conclusively shown that goals pursued because of the pleasurable emotions associated with them coincide with heightened SWB (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Sheldon & Elliot, 1999).

With regard to goals that are driven by the intention to avoid negative emotions, the desire not to feel unworthy and invaluable can be seen as an important representative of the *avoidance/within-person* category of goal striving reasons (Ellis, 2005; Kernis, 2003). According to Crooker and Park (2004), the desire not to lose a positive view about oneself is an important behavioural driver. Where goal strivings are underpinned

by such a reason, non-attainment of goals has been found to have negative repercussions on a person's self-esteem (Crocker, 2002; Crocker & Knight, 2005; Judge, Erez, Bono & Thoresen, 2003). Although self-esteem is normally treated as a stable personality trait, (Diener, 1984; Judge *et al.*, 2003; Rosenberg, 1979), studies have shown that attainment or non-attainment of goals does influence peoples' *state self-esteem* (Crocker & Knight, 2005; Crocker & Park, 2004). Such studies can be seen to accord with the argument of Crocker and Park (2004) that people are motivated to achieve goals important to them so as to avoid a drop in state self-esteem which would have negative emotional consequences. The differentiation between trait and state self-esteem also explains why individuals can have goals driven by the fear of non-attainment regardless of their level of trait self-esteem (Deci & Ryan, 1995; Kernis, 2003). To conclude, the avoidance of any self-esteem loss by attaining one's goals can be seen as an important driver for many individuals (Deci & Ryan, 1995; Ellis, 2005; Kernis, 2003; Rogers, 1961).

In the case of avoiding an unwanted external situation, one important representative of this category is peoples' desire not to lose essential material wealth (Austin & Vancouver, 1996; Kasser & Ryan, 1993; Wicker, Lambert, Richardson & Kahler, 1984). For example, by losing one's job an individual might find it difficult to maintain a necessary standard of living. Therefore an individual's goal might be to perform to a certain standard in their job in order not to lose it. Such a goal would be underpinned by the necessity to earn money in order to make a living. Typically, this kind of goal striving reason is characterised by a person's feeling of *having to* attain one's goal in order to avoid a negative situation. It is also very similar to behaviour driven by *external pressures* as described in SDT, where people feel compelled or pressured into

doing something (Carver & Baird, 1998; Deci & Ryan, 2000; Ryan & Connell, 1989). It also accords with findings that show such pressures to have a negative influence on SWB (Sheldon & Elliot, 1999).

The last kind of goal striving reason revolves around the notion of improving a given situation for others. With respect to helping others, Adler (1937) first argued that altruistic helping is an innate human disposition which results in positive feelings. More recent studies also support the notion of altruistic behaviour being associated with higher levels of SWB (Batson, Ahmad & Lishner, 2009; Schwartz, Meisenhelder, Ma & Reed, 2003), albeit the majority of these studies is based on older people (Dulin & Hill, 2003; Liang, Krause & Bennett, 2001; Post, 2005). Nevertheless, on the basis of the literature on altruism, it seems justified to conclude that altruistic behaviours are generally associated with greater psychological well-being (Midlarsky, 1991; Post, 2005).

To summarise, from the descriptions of the four goal striving reasons, it can be hypothesised that approach reasons (pleasure, altruism) are more likely to be associated with positive affect (Hypothesis 1). In contrast avoidance driven goal striving reasons (loss of self-esteem, necessity), are more likely to be associated with negative affect (Hypothesis 2). Furthermore, correlations should be stronger for reasons aimed at improving one's own emotional state, compared to reasons aimed at improving an external situation, when comparing the two approach and the two avoidance reasons with each other (Hypothesis 3).

Given the fact that people can pursue their goals for any combination of the four reasons, it seems further justified, if not necessary, to create an overall index which takes into account the relative strength of each of the four reasons for each goal pursuit. Building on the expected correlation patterns of approach and avoidance reasons (Hypothesis 1 and 2) such an overall *index for SWB-enhancing goal striving reasons* needs to reflect the relative strength of the two approach reasons (pleasure and altruism) over the two avoidance reasons (self-esteem and necessity). An index, based around the content of goal striving reasons seemed to be less relevant as the degree of ego-involvement is merely assumed to alter the magnitude of correlations within the two approach and the two avoidance reasons (see hypothesis 3). Building on the first two hypotheses, where approach reasons are more strongly associated with positive affect, whereas avoidance reasons are thought to be more strongly associated with negative affect, the overall SWB-enhancing goal striving index should correlate with affective SWB in a way that the higher the index the higher a person's affective SWB (Hypothesis 4).

Finally, it seems important to analyse empirically, if the overall index of SWB-enhancing goal striving reasons is able to predict affective SWB above and beyond peoples self-determination or degree of self-concordance. Based on the theoretical arguments presented earlier, where it has been shown that the degree of autonomy is not adequately represented in the approach and avoidance dimension nor does it adequately account for differences in the content of peoples' goal striving reasons, it can be hypothesised that the overall SWB-enhancing goal striving index is capable of predicting affective SWB above and beyond any SDT measure (Hypothesis 5). This is despite the fact that two of the four goal striving reasons (pleasure and necessity) are relatively

similar to two classes of motivation within the self-concordance model (intrinsic and external pressures).

METHODOLOGY

A questionnaire was distributed, in class, to 174 British university Business School students who were enrolled in one of two modules which both focus strongly on issues around personal development. The questionnaire was split into two parts. Part one contained questions about the two most important personal goals which participants were currently pursuing. It was emphasised, in the written instructions given to the participants, that the goals were not limited to their student life but could also be about their private life. Most importantly the students should describe the two goals they feel are currently most important to them. The participants were free to phrase their goals as approach or avoidance goals.

The rationale behind focussing on the two most important goals, rather than making the participants create a list of all their personal goals, was based on the assumption that such goals should have a far stronger effect on affective SWB than for example their sixth or seventh most important goal. However, a further consideration informing this approach was that, as participants were being asked to answer a substantial number of goal-related questions, the inclusion of additional goals would act to substantially increase the time needed to complete the questionnaire and thereby serve to lower the response rate. The second part contained questions about participants' affective SWB.

Measures

Goal striving reasons. The four groups of goal striving reasons were measured with items generated by the author (see table 1). The items were preceded by the following text: “This goal is important to me because.... “. This ensured that participants did not describe their goal but stated the degree to which a particular reason is an important reason for their goal striving. Each of the participant’s two goals was followed by the same set of questions, which meant that participants had to answer the same question with respect to their most and second most important goal. Answers ranged from 1 (not true at all) to 7 (very true). The two answers to the same question for goal one and two were then averaged.

As the items were newly developed, an itempool of 26 items was initially generated from which 16 items have been selected for the final measurement. Item selection was largely based on internal consistency indices revealing satisfactory cronbach alpha scores for each of the four goal striving reasons (see table 2). The validity of these 16 items is further supported by a principal component analysis revealing four distinct factors reflecting the four different goal striving reasons (see table 1).

< Table 1 About Here >

SWB. For the measurement of affective SWB, the study employed a measure by Brunstein, Lautenschlager, Nawroth, Poehlmann and Schultheiss (1995) which is very similar to other SWB measures (Brunstein, 1993; Lucas, Diener & Suh, 1996). It consists of 16 adjectives with a reported internal consistency of $\alpha = .95$ (Brunstein *et al.*, 1995). The instrument can be further divided into the following four subscales: elated mood, active mood, dejected mood and an energy deficit subscale. The participants had to rate how often they experienced these affects during the last few

month, ranging from 1 (never) to 7 (very frequently). Particular focus has been given to the subscales of elated mood (happy, excellent, pleased, joyful) as well as dejected mood (dejected, sad, distressed, depressed) as these two were felt to represent positive (PA) and negative affect (NA) most closely. This is why they have been considered separately in the subsequent analysis.

Goal Success. With respect to their two most important goals, participants were also asked to rate how successfully they were working towards the achievement of their goals (1 not very successful to 7 very successful). This control variable was included as goal progress is an important contributor to SWB (Brunstein, 1993; Emmons, 1986; Sheldon & Hoon, 2007).

Self-Concordance. Although the four classes of motivation within the SDT are not adequately represented within the approach and avoidance dimension, they do show some degree of overlap to these motivational classes. This is why Sheldon and Hoon's (2007) measure of goal-concordance was included in the study, in order to compare the two concepts with regard to the amount of variance explained on affective SWB.

Sheldon and Hoon's (2007) measure consists of four items, each of which represents one class of motivation: *external pressures* (I strive for this goal because I have to or my situation demands it), *introjected reasons* (I strive for this goal because I would feel guilty, anxious, or ashamed if I did not), *identified reasons* (I strive for this goal because I identify with it, even when it's not fun and enjoyable), and *intrinsic goal motivation* (I strive for this goal because it is intrinsically interesting or challenging). Participants were asked to answer on a scale from 1 (not true at all) to 7 (very true).

FINDINGS

Descriptive Analyses

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics of the study variables. With regard to affective SWB the sample shows a moderate degree of affective SWB. The mean scores of the four goal striving reasons reveal that all four reasons are on average seen as relevant categories of goal striving reasons as all mean scores are above the central point of the scale which is 3.5.

< Table 2 About Here >

Correlative Analyses

The correlation coefficients between the four goal striving reasons and affective SWB were, in the first instance, mostly insignificant, and are therefore not explicitly reported. This changes when the correlations are presented separately for people who reported that they were working on their goals successfully and unsuccessfully (see table 3). The two groups have been created through median split on the averaged reported goal progress over the two most important goals ($Mdn = 4.50$). This split resulted in two groups of 74 (low goal progress) and 100 (high goal progress) respectively. The uneven size is due to 21 participants reporting a mean score of 4.50 and as such they were all allocated to the high goal progress group.

By distinguishing between individuals reporting high or low goal progress, the correlations with positive or negative affect reveal a distinctive pattern (see table 3). For individuals who report working successfully on the achievement of their goals, approach goal striving reasons (pleasure and altruism) are predominantly correlated

with positive affect, whereas correlations with negative affect are insignificant. The correlation pattern for the avoidance reasons (self-esteem loss and necessity) is diametrically opposed for individuals currently working unsuccessfully towards their goals. Avoidance of self-esteem loss and goals driven by necessity are strongly correlated with negative affect, whereas correlations with positive affect are insignificant. Therefore the findings suggest that individuals are most likely to experience positive affect when working successfully towards their goals on the basis of approach reasons (Hypothesis 1). In contrast, the strongest likelihood of experiencing negative affect resides among individuals working unsuccessfully towards goals driven by avoidance reasons (Hypothesis 2).

< Table 3 About Here >

Further, the goal striving reason not to lose self-esteem also correlates with positive affect when individuals feel they are working successfully towards their goals (table 3). However, the correlation with negative affect when working unsuccessfully towards one's goals is at $r = .32$ considerably higher (table 3). This indicates that people who pursue goals for self-esteem reasons are more likely to experience negative affect when being unsuccessful with one's goals than to experience positive affect when working successfully towards them. Similar findings have been found by others (Crocker, Sommers, Luhtanen & 2002, Crocker, Karpinski, Quinn, & Chase, 2003; Ellis, 2005; Lewis, 1993, Kernis, 2003; Mascolo & Fischer, 1995), providing further support for the assumption that the negative affective consequences of self-esteem driven reasons in the case of not achieving ones goals outweigh the positive consequences when working successfully towards one's goals.

Differences in the strength of correlations within the two approach and the two avoidance reasons can also be observed in relation to within-person and person-environment reasons. In both cases the within-person reasons, which do represent a higher degree of ego-involvement, reveal slightly higher correlations than the person-environment reasons (Hypothesis 3). This is the case for goals driven by the avoidance of self-esteem loss compared to goals pursued out of necessity. It is also the case for goals being pursued because of pleasure compared to those being pursued for altruistic reasons..

The correlation pattern detailed above shows the associations between each of the four goal striving reasons and affective SWB separately. In doing so, they give useful insights into the relationship between each goal striving reason and SWB. They do not, however, shed light on their relation to affective SWB when the relative strength of the four different reasons is taken into consideration simultaneously (Hypothesis 4). This is why, affective SWB has been correlated with the overall index of SWB-enhancing goal striving reasons. The correlations obtained are all significant and range from $r = .18$ ($p < .05$) with positive mood, through $r = -.22$ ($p < .01$) with negative mood to $r = .26$ ($p < .001$) with overall affective SWB. As there are several problems related to the use of difference scores (*cf.* Edwards, 1994; Kehr, 2004), the index has also been created by using z-scores which yielded similar results.

With regard to hypothesis 5 a hierarchical regression analysis has been performed to compare the predictive power of the newly developed index with Sheldon and Hoon's (2007) measure of self-concordance. Overall affective SWB was, in the first step, significantly predicted by self-concordance ($\beta = .24$, $p < .01$). In step two, the newly

developed index was able to explain a significant, incremental amount of variance on SWB ($\Delta R^2 = .03, p < .05$). This suggests, that the newly developed framework captures aspects of goal striving reasons that are not encompassed within the concept of self-concordance or indeed SDT.

DISCUSSION

Theoretical Implications

The principal purpose of this study has been to show that goal striving reasons, derived from goal characteristics, are significantly associated with affective SWB. Its findings do provide strong empirical support for the view that goal striving reasons are an additional and important level of analysis when conceptualising the relationship between a person's goals and affective SWB (*cf.* Deci & Ryan, 2000; Sheldon & Elliot, 1999). The findings also suggest that the most fruitful way to consider goal striving reasons is by simultaneously considering all four goal striving reasons and their relative strength to each other, as captured in the index of SWB-enhancing goal striving reasons. Such an index ultimately acknowledges the fact that individuals pursue their goals for a combination of reasons and therefore the relative strength of each of these reasons to each other is an important aspect to consider.

The analysis of goal striving reasons, as an additional level of analysis, seems especially relevant as the reasons underpinning a particular goal cannot be detected by analysing the goal itself. For example, a goal can be expressed as approaching, but the reasons for goal striving can either be approach or avoidance driven (*cf.* Carver & Baird, 1998). The same is the case for the content of goals, as what the actual goal is aimed at

might be very different to what the underlying reasons are focussed on. Hence, goal striving reasons convey additional information about a given goal which cannot be obtained from the goal itself.

Future research

The results of the study also point towards areas for future research. One of which revolves around a stronger differentiation between the four goal striving reasons derived in this study and the four classes of motivation described within SDT. At this point, the differences between the two concepts can only be hypothesised. Given the similarities between intrinsic and external pressure motivated behaviour with pleasure and necessity it seems most likely that the uniqueness of the newly developed framework of goal striving reasons is due to altruistic and self-esteem reasons which are, at least not fully, captured within SDT.

The goal striving reason of avoiding any loss of self-esteem can be seen as a more severe form of introjected motivated goals. With introjected goals, individuals feel they ought to pursue a particular goal because they feel this is something a good person should be doing. A notion that is rather different from people feeling they *have to* pursue a certain goal to avoid a loss of self-esteem. The latter would seem to be far more severe. It is not any more that people feel that they should attain a goal to adhere to an inner norm, and if they don't, they will feel a sense of guilt, anxiety or shame. Rather, with respect to goal striving reasons aimed at avoiding any self-esteem loss, people feel their sheer existence, their self-worth is dependent on the achievement of the goal.

The reason of altruism, or helping others, can similarly be seen as a particular form of identified goal strivings. Identified goals might aim at the improvement of ones own personal situation by doing something which people feel are important for them to do and are based on mature and self-disciplined values (Sheldon & Elliot, 1999). People identify with these goals but they are most likely pursued for personal benefits. The intention of helping others points to the fact that goals can also be driven by mature and self-disciplined values which are more of an idealistic nature and focussed on helping others. Hence helping others represents a particular form of identified goal strivings not explicitly accounted for within SDT. In summary, through the development of goal striving reasons from a goal setting perspective, two kind of goal striving reasons have been identified which potentially could be used to further differentiate between classes of motivation described in SDT. The usefulness of distinguishing further between different claseses of motivaition on the basis of what they are aimed at, such as helping others or the protection of self-esteem has however still to be tested empirically.

Limitations

From a methodological point of view, it has to be critically noted, that the importance of goal striving reasons for SWB has been studied without considering any differences in peoples' goal characteristics. This bears the risk that the simultaneous analysis of goals and goal striving reasons leads to insignificant partial correlations when used in a multivariate regression analysis. However even in the event of this being the case, the theoretical arguments given as to how an approach goal can be driven by avoidance reasons and the goal content can be different to the content of the goal striving reason would seem to justify the relevance of goal striving reasons as a separate

and important level of analysis. Furthermore it has to be noted that it is a cross-sectional, correlative study. Hence no causal effects can be inferred.

Finally, it has to be mentioned that the four goal striving reasons were used to clarify the degree to which each of them is an important driver of a particular goal. This is relevant in so far as the question of why one pursues a particular goal has, in other contexts, been used to elicit, idiosyncratic higher order goals or values (Austin & Vancouver, 1996; Little, 1983; 1989). The focus of this study however was to clarify to which degree each goal striving reason has been the reason for pursuing a particular goal rather than which idiosyncratic higher order goals were associated with it. Hence for the purpose of this study, the particular level of abstraction in which a goal was reported is irrelevant. In other words, the degree to which the four goal striving reasons were important drivers for a particular goal was similarly applicable to higher or lower order goals (Little, 1983, 1989). In both cases, the focus was on how important each of the four goal striving reasons was for each goal irrespective of its level of abstraction (Carver & Scheier, 1999).

To conclude, the presented study highlights the importance of taking into account the reasons underpinning individuals' goals. The findings provide strong empirical support for goal striving reasons being an additional level of analysis to fully understand the relation between personal goals and SWB.

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FIGURE CAPTION

Figure 1: Framework of goal striving reasons

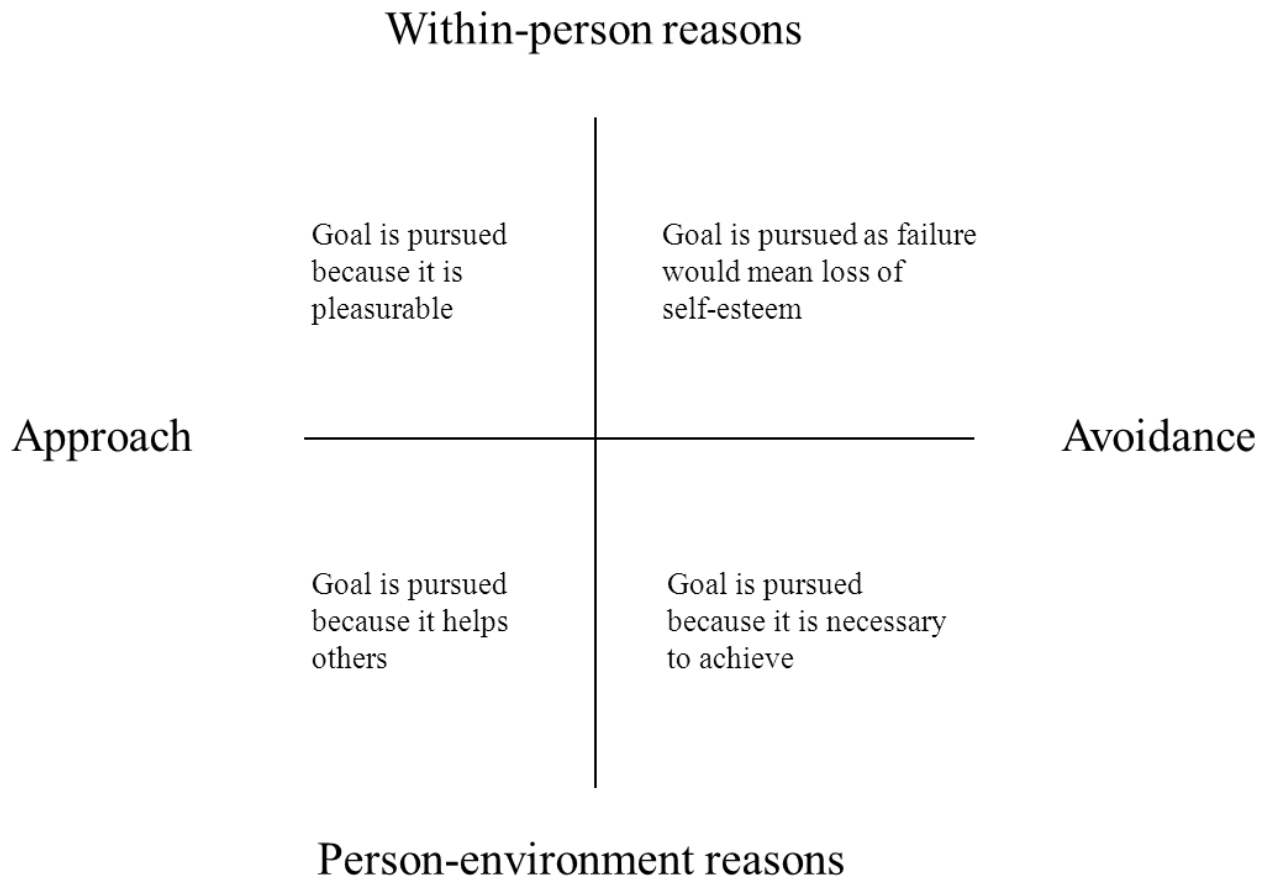


Figure 1.

TABLE CAPTION

Table 1 : Principal component analysis of goal striving reasons

Table 2 : Descriptive statistics of study variables

Table 3 : Correlations between goal striving reasons and affective SWB

Table 1: Principal component analysis of goal striving reasons

This goal is important to me because	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
If I fail, my reputation amongst other people would drop.	.78			
If I fail, my self-esteem would really suffer.	.76			
If I fail, other people would look down on me.	.81			
If I fail, I would feel like a loser.	.83			
If I fail, I could not look myself into the eyes.	.82			
I am having fun working on this goal.		.87		
I like doing it.		.87		
I actually enjoy working on this goal quite a lot.		.90		
I get a lot of energy from this goal.		.69		
It helps others.			.77	
It serves a good cause.			.82	
Other people do benefit from it.			.68	
Of the money.				.74
It is necessary to earn a living.				.83
It helps me to make a living.				.83
It makes ends meet.				.79

Note. Only loadings greater than .50 in absolute magnitude are presented (N =174).

Table 2: Descriptive statistics of study variables

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	α
Overall SWB	4.86	1.09	.95
Elated mood (PA)	5.00	1.31	.94
Dejected mood (NA)	3.03	1.31	.85
Pleasure	4.56	1.16	.84
Altruism	3.66	1.40	.77
Self-esteem	3.89	1.30	.88
Necessity	4.38	1.35	.85

Note: For overall SWB negative affect scores were reversed. (N = 174).

Table 3: Correlations between goal striving reasons and affective SWB

	Elated mood (PA)	Dejected mood (NA)	Elated mood (PA)	Dejected mood (NA)
	High goal progress		Low goal progress	
Pleasure	.28**	-.04	.09	.01
Altruism	.21*	-.14	-.12	.08
Self-esteem	.22*	-.06	-.20	.32**
Necessity	.08	-.01	-.06	.27*

Note: **. $p < .01$; *. $p < .05$.