

Know Thyself: Insight Moderates the Relationship Between Goal-Concordant Motivation and Positive Emotions

Robert M Kirk^{1*} and Danielle Oetjen²

¹State University of New York (SUNY Oneonta), Oneonta, United States

²University of Denver, Morgridge College of Education, United States

***Corresponding Author**

Robert M Kirk, State University of New York (SUNY Oneonta), Oneonta, United States.

Submitted: 2024, Jun 26; **Accepted:** 2024, Jul 19; **Published:** 2024, Aug 12

Citation: Kirk, R. M., Oetjen, D. (2024). Know Thyself: Insight Moderates the Relationship Between Goal-Concordant Motivation and Positive Emotions. *J Edu Psyc Res*, 6(2), 01-16.

Abstract

The present study had three primary objectives: examine goal-concordant motivation throughout the adult lifespan, assess the relationship between goal-concordant motivation and subjective well-being (operationalized as life satisfaction, positive affect, and negative affect), and examine private self-consciousness (operationalized as insight and rumination) for potential moderation effects on the relationship between goal-concordant motivation and subjective well-being. Data were collected in person and online from 433 participants (55% female) between the ages of 18-79 ($M = 31.8$, $SD = 13.7$). Results showed that introjected motivation decreased with age, goal-concordant motivation predicted all aspects of subjective well-being, and private self-consciousness (insight, specifically) had significant moderation effects on the relationship between goal-concordant motivation and positive affect. Findings are discussed with relevance to goal pursuit and attainment, their association to well-being, and mindful self-attention that can strengthen the relationship between motivation and positive emotional experience.

Keywords: Goal Concordance, Motivation, Self-Consciousness, Insight, Well-Being, Positive Affect

1. Introduction

1.1. Goal-Concordant Motivation

Conceptually, goal-concordant motivation is “the degree to which one’s self-chosen initiatives match and represent one’s developing interests and core values” and is therefore thought to represent “a state of congruence between one’s self-generated goals and deeper, growth-relevant aspects of one’s personality” [1]. From a maturational perspective, some researchers have suggested that what we want out of life and how we go about attaining it is one of the primary drivers in human development across the lifespan [2-4]. This assertion is supported by the fact that lifespan differences have been found in goal-concordant motivation throughout adulthood, with middle-aged and older adults typically exhibiting fewer externally-motivated goals and more intrinsically-motivated goals than younger adults [5-7].

Concordance has also been shown to play a key role in the level of meaningfulness, motivation, progress, and likelihood of goal attainment [8-10]. Of particular note is Werner, Milyavskaya, Foxen-Craft, and Koestner’s findings that subjective ease of goals, not effort, mediated the relationship between self-concordance and

goal accomplishment [11]. It is not unrealistic to think that effort is the driving force behind goal attainment. However, through multilevel structural equation modeling, Werner et al. discovered that self-concordant goals were perceived as easier by participants and that this subjective ease, not effort itself, successfully mediated the relationship between goal-concordant motivation and subsequent goal attainment [11].

The importance of goal-concordant motivation appears to be widespread and relevant across domains, demonstrating a variety of benefits in areas such as academic, vocational, and physical health and activity goals [9,12,13]. The primary theoretical framework behind the goal concordance model is Deci and Ryan’s Self-Determination Theory (SDT), which is an organismic metatheory focused on the nature of optimal motivation [14,15]. The SDT investigates people’s inherent tendency for growth and innate need for psychological health stemming from personality integration and self-determined behavior, as well as the circumstances and conditions that foster these processes [16]. According to Deci and Ryan, self-determined people endorse their actions at the highest level of reflection and experience a sense of freedom to do what is

interesting, personally important, and vitalizing to them [17].

1.2. Subjective Well-Being

Happiness means different things to different people and there are undoubtedly different routes through which it can be obtained, yet one common measurement technique is through the assessment of subjective well-being. Three separate components have been identified and frequently used to determine a person's subjective sense of well-being: positive affect, negative affect, and life satisfaction [18,19]. Research on goal-concordant motivation has shown a consistent link to subjective well-being, demonstrating that individuals with higher levels of concordance tend to have fewer negative emotional experiences and more positive emotional experiences, as well as higher levels of life satisfaction [20]. Support for this association has even been found in cross-cultural research. Sheldon et al. found that goal concordance successfully predicted aggregate subjective well-being scores in South Korea ($r = .27, p < .01$), Taiwan ($r = .40, p < .01$), China ($r = .33, p < .05$), and the United States ($r = .33, p < .01$) [21].

The concept of increasing and sustaining well-being is far from new, and at face value may seem to offer little more than a revitalization of the work of famed psychologists such as Abraham Maslow, Erik Erikson, and Carl Rogers. Maslow's concept of self-actualization, Erikson's proposition of identity achievement, and Rogers' notion of a fully-functioning individual have all played an important role in laying the foundation for many contemporary theories on happiness and well-being, including Self-Determination Theory [22-24]. Unraveling the mechanisms behind these paradigms, however, is a much more objective endeavor and a vibrant area of study, particularly within positive psychology, developmental research, and clinical work [17,25-28].

1.3. Private Self-Consciousness

Dimensions of personality are essential when examining theories on motivation, emotion, and well-being. A significant portion of the literature on personality emphasizes the five-factor model as a means of assessment [29]. However, as McAdams suggests, the "Big Five" relate to only one level of analysis when attempting to understand the structure of personality [30]. According to McAdams, these broad trait constructs are grossly insufficient in understanding the "big picture" to personality. Conscientiousness, for example, may generally be a good predictor of job performance, but does little to explain the motivation behind applying for a particular position, or how happy an individual is with their selected position [31]. This is where the evaluation of "personal concerns" should be taken into consideration, which McAdams uses to refer to the motivational, developmental, and strategic dimensions of personality. Goal concordance resides within this level of analysis [30]. Are people choosing schools/jobs/lifestyles that are more conducive to their identity/personality/inner self? If so, can this concordance be used to predict happiness and well-being? Previous research indicates that it can, and a central proposition of the current work is that certain self-consciousness processes can serve a useful purpose in further understanding this relationship.

The overarching concept of self-consciousness is a subordinate category nested within the neuroticism (a.k.a. negative emotionality) trait encompassed by the five-factor model [32]. When examined more extensively, the subordinate category of self-consciousness is further broken down into two distinct types: public and private. Public self-consciousness has been described as the disposition to be aware of one's social self [33]. From a practical and theoretical standpoint, its emphasis on social reflection make it less imperative for self-determined people, who Deci and Ryan claim are more intrinsically driven and less concerned with external pressures [17]. Private self-consciousness, in contrast, relates to an awareness stemming from internal sources and is therefore more focused on self- rather than social reflection. Due to its inherent tie to the SDT and goal concordance model, the present work focuses solely on the private aspect of self-consciousness.

Private self-consciousness was once thought to be a unidimensional construct but is now viewed as consisting of two distinct subcomponents: self-reflection and insight [34]. The insight dimension appears to represent an introspective process that encourages and promotes positive change within the self or in one's conditions. The self-reflection aspect, on the other hand, lacks a clear understanding and has had mixed results across studies. Anderson, Bohon, and Berrigan discovered a link between self-reflection and mild psychopathology but found that insight was not associated with such negative outcomes [35]. Grant et al. reported that self-reflection was positively correlated with anxiety and stress, but not depression or alexithymia [34]. Consistent with other studies, they found that insight was negatively correlated with depression, anxiety, stress, and alexithymia, and positively correlated with cognitive flexibility and self-regulation. While the findings for insight are generally positive and consistent across studies, self-reflection has shown considerable variance and reported to be largely unrelated to well-being [36,37]. A potential explanation for the inconsistencies in self-reflection, according to Trapnell and Campbell, is that some studies, and measures, confound self-reflection and rumination [38]. Rumination is a term often found in clinical psychology, referring to a psychologically maladaptive form of self-attention wherein individuals excessively dwell or ruminate on the past or negative aspects of the self. If self-reflection confounds with rumination, as Trapnell and Campbell suggest, it makes intuitive sense that the overarching construct of self-consciousness is nested within the neuroticism trait under the five-factor model. Insight and rumination, then, appear to be fundamentally distinct elements within the realm of private self-consciousness [39]. Harrington and Loffredo found that insight was a strong positive predictor of both life satisfaction and psychological well-being, whereas rumination was found to be a significant negative predictor of psychological well-being [36]. Due to a clear distinction between these two constructs, as well as a lack of consistency in empirical findings for self-reflection, private self-consciousness was operationalized as insight and rumination in the current work.

While a link between goal-concordant motivation and subjective well-being has been demonstrated in previous studies, little is

known about the underlying mechanisms that contribute to this association [21,40]. With respect to private self-consciousness, it appears that the self-reflection aspect may be tapping into clinical dimensions such as rumination, which could lead to a decrease in the strength of this relationship. Conversely, insight may be providing valuable self-information that can enhance the relationship between goal-concordant motivation and subjective well-being. Chen et al. show support for the hypothesis that insight may positively moderate the relationship between goal-concordant motivation and subjective well-being [5]. Their study found that actual work time was positively related to older adults' subjective well-being while actual recreation time was negatively associated with subjective well-being for both younger and older adults. Surprisingly, ideal recreation time (time that reflects leisure involving preferred activities) was found to be negatively related to older adults' subjective well-being. Despite this, older adults still reported a desire for more recreation time even though regression analysis found it to be negatively related to their well-being. One interpretation of their results is that "individuals do not always have insights on what kinds of activities may be good for their Well-Being" [5]. As a primary objective and unique contribution of the current work, we aim to fill a gap in the extant literature by testing this supposition. With respect to their findings, it stands to reason that sufficient insight would moderate the relationship between goal-concordant motivation and subjective well-being in a positive fashion, while the inverse should hold true for rumination.

1.4. The Present Study

The present study had three primary objectives: 1) examine age-related differences in goal-concordant motivation across the adult lifespan, 2) assess the nature of the relationship between goal-concordant motivation and subjective well-being, and 3) examine

potential moderating effects of private self-consciousness on the association between goal-concordant motivation and subjective well-being. It was hypothesized that (1) goal-concordant motivation would increase throughout adulthood (i.e., external motivators decrease while intrinsic motivators increase), (2) goal-concordant motivation would show a significant relationship to subjective well-being such that it has a positive association with life satisfaction and positive affect and a negative association with negative affect, and (3) private self-consciousness would moderate the relationship between goal-concordant motivation and subjective well-being. Specifically, greater insight will enhance this association while higher levels of rumination will hinder it.

2. Methods

2.1. Participants and Procedure

Four hundred and thirty-three adults (55% female) between the ages of 18-79 ($M = 31.8$, $SD = 13.7$) participated in the current study. Emerging adults ($n = 176$, median age of 21 years), adults ($n = 232$, median age of 32 years), and older adults ($n = 25$, median age of 63 years) were U.S. residents who either had English as a first language or could speak/read English fluently. See Table 1 for descriptive statistics of demographic variables. Informed consent was obtained from all individuals prior to participation in the study. The study protocol conforms to the ethical guidelines of the "World Medical Association Declaration of Helsinki – Ethical Principles for Medical Research Involving Human Subjects" adopted by the 18th WMA General Assembly, Helsinki, Finland, June 1964 and amended by the 59th WMA General Assembly, Seoul, South Korea, October 2008, as reflected in a priori approval by the appropriate institutional review committee, the Human Subjects Review Board at Bowling Green State University.

Variable	level	# of participants	% of participants
Education	No degree/diploma	8	18
	H.S. Diploma/GED	183	41.9
	Associate's Degree	53	12.1
	Bachelor's Degree	137	31.4
	Master's Degree	41	9.4
	Doctoral Degree	13	3.0
Annual Income	Less than 20,000	117	26.8
	20,000-39,000	107	24.5
	40,000-59,000	74	16.9
	60,000-79,000	61	14.0
	80,000-99,000	29	6.6
	100,000 or more	47	10.8
Self-Reported Health	Poor	16	3.7
	Fair	86	19.7
	Good	243	55.6
	Excellent	88	20.1

Marital Status	Single	235	53.8
	Married	110	25.2
	Divorced	32	7.3
	Widowed	2	0.5
	Cohabiting	58	13.3
Race/Ethnicity	Race/Ethnicity	357	81.7
	African American (Black)	18	4.1
	Asian	37	8.5
	Hispanic	13	3.0
	Native American	2	0.5
	Other	10	2.3

Table 1: Demographic Variables

Data were collected in-person and online. Participants who provided data in-person gave written informed consent and were either Ohio residents or students at a large midwestern university. As stated by the informed consent page, all online participants provided consent by reading the consent statement and clicking “Continue” to move forward with the study. Online participants were recruited via Mechanical Turk, a labor market owned and operated by Amazon.com. Mechanical Turk began in 2005 as a means to crowd source labor intensive tasks but has evolved over the years to be a rich source of data collection for research purposes [41]. The Mechanical Turk participant pool has been found to be slightly more diverse than the standard Internet sample and just as reliable as data collected using traditional methods [42]. All participants were compensated with a payment of \$0.50 for completing a series of short surveys. Average completion time was 18 minutes. Third-party software (SurveyGizmo) was utilized for survey creation and data management. The collection process took approximately two months to complete.

2.2. Measures

Demographics Questionnaire. Standard background and demographic information (race/ethnicity, self-reported health, annual household income, sex/gender, education, etc.) were collected through an initial questionnaire before measures of goal concordance, private self-consciousness, and subjective well-being were administered. Some of these variables were used as covariates/controls during data analysis and did not change the nature or significance of results (See Appendix A).

Goal-Concordant Motivation. Goal-concordant motivation was measured using the method developed by Sheldon and colleagues wherein goals or personal strivings were listed by participants (e.g., finish remodeling the kitchen, earn a degree, volunteer, find a better job) [15,20,43]. These goals were then evaluated based on four sources of motivation: external motivation (i.e., acting to please others or for reward), introjected motivation (i.e., acting to avoid guilt or self-recrimination), identified motivation (i.e., acting to express important values/beliefs), and intrinsic motivation (i.e., acting out of inherent interest and enjoyment). The responses were assessed along a 7-point scale where 1 = *not at all for this*

reason and 7 = *completely for this reason*. In addition to assessing these individual components of motivation, an aggregate goal concordance score was calculated by summing the identified and intrinsic ratings and subtracting the external and introjected ratings, as has been done in previous research [44]. Cronbach’s alpha for the aggregate score method was .79, indicating that this measure has acceptable internal consistency (See Appendix B).

Satisfaction with Life Scale. The Satisfaction with Life Scale has been found to assess global life satisfaction without tapping into related constructs like positive affect or loneliness [19]. The scale is a 5-item questionnaire that makes direct statements about life satisfaction (e.g., I am satisfied with my life). Responses were evaluated along a 7-point scale where 1 = *strongly disagree* and 7 = *strongly agree*. The item-total correlations for these 5 items ranged from .64 to .84 with a Cronbach’s alpha of .90, demonstrating that this scale has high internal consistency (See Appendix C).

Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS). The PANAS is a well-validated and often-used measure of positive and negative affect by Watson, Clark, and Tellegen [45]. It consists of two 10-item scales that assess positive (e.g., enthusiastic, determined) and negative (e.g., hostile, distressed) mood states. All responses were assessed on a 7-point scale where 1 = *strongly disagree* and 7 = *strongly agree*. Cronbach’s alphas for positive and negative affect were .88 and .90 respectively, indicating that this schedule has good internal consistency (See Appendix D).

Private Self-Consciousness. The Self-Reflection and Insight Scale (SRIS) was designed by Grant et al. as an improvement on the Private Self-Consciousness Scale by Fenigstein, Scheier, and Buss [34,46]. The insight subscale of the SRIS consists of 8 items measuring the generally positive aspect of private self-consciousness (e.g., I usually have a very clear idea about why I behaved a certain way). Cronbach’s alpha for this subscale was .86, indicating that the measure has good internal consistency (See Appendix E). The rumination subscale of the Rumination-Reflection Questionnaire (RRQ), developed by Trapnell and Campbell, consists of 12 items that assess ruminative aspects of private self-consciousness (e.g., I often reflect on episodes in my

life that I should no longer concern myself with) [38]. Cronbach's alpha for this subscale was .94, demonstrating that the measure has high internal consistency (See Appendix F). The SRIS and RRQ are both self-report measures that score responses along a 7-point

continuum where 1 = *strongly disagree* and 7 = *strongly agree*. Presentation of the SRIS-insight subscale and RRQ-rumination subscale were counterbalanced to combat potential order effects. See Table 2 for means and standard deviations of study variables.

Variable	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Age	433	31.79	13.63
Goal Concordance	433	10.13	7.67
Insight	433	43.61	8.44
Rumination	433	54.35	16.21
Life Satisfaction	433	21.43	7.49
Positive Affect	433	33.65	7.37
Negative Affect	433	21.94	8.11

Table 2: Means and Standard Deviations of Study Variables

3. Results

Most of the covariates/control variables demonstrated a non-significant pattern during hypothesis testing. Bivariate correlations among study variables are shown in Table 3. Only self-reported

physical health remained significant across all models tested, while annual household income was significant in some models but not others. For the sake of consistency, these two variables were included in all hypothesis testing.

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Age	—						
2. Goal Concordance	.04	—					
3. Insight	.13**	.16**	—				
4. Rumination	-.23**	-.20**	-.24**	—			
5. Life Satisfaction	-.05	.25**	.28**	-.29**	—		
6. Positive Affect	.07	.28**	.27**	-.31**	.49**	—	
7. Negative Affect	-.14**	-.23**	-.43**	.37**	-.41**	-.33**	—

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

Table 3: Bivariate Correlations Among Study Variables

Hypothesis 1

A one-way between subjects ANOVA was performed to test the main effect of age on goal-concordant motivation across three age groups: emerging adults (ages 18-25), adults (ages 26-59), and older adults (age 60 and above). It was predicted that motivation stemming from external sources would decrease as people got older while motivation based on intrinsic factors would increase. Results showed partial support for this hypothesis. While there was no difference for intrinsically-based motivations, significant differences were found when examining externally-oriented

motivations. Specifically, age had a main effect on introjected motivation, $F(2, 430) = 8.26, p < .001$. Post hoc analyses using Tukey's HSD showed significant mean score differences in younger adults ($M = 7.90, SD = 3.01$) when compared with adults ($M = 6.88, SD = 3.25$) and older adults ($M = 5.76, SD = 2.70$). Adults did not differ from older adults (See Figure 1). Our results suggest that, in comparison to emerging adults, adults and older adults are significantly less motivated by a sense of guilt/shame, social pressure, or obligation (See Table 4).

Age Differences in Introjected Motivation

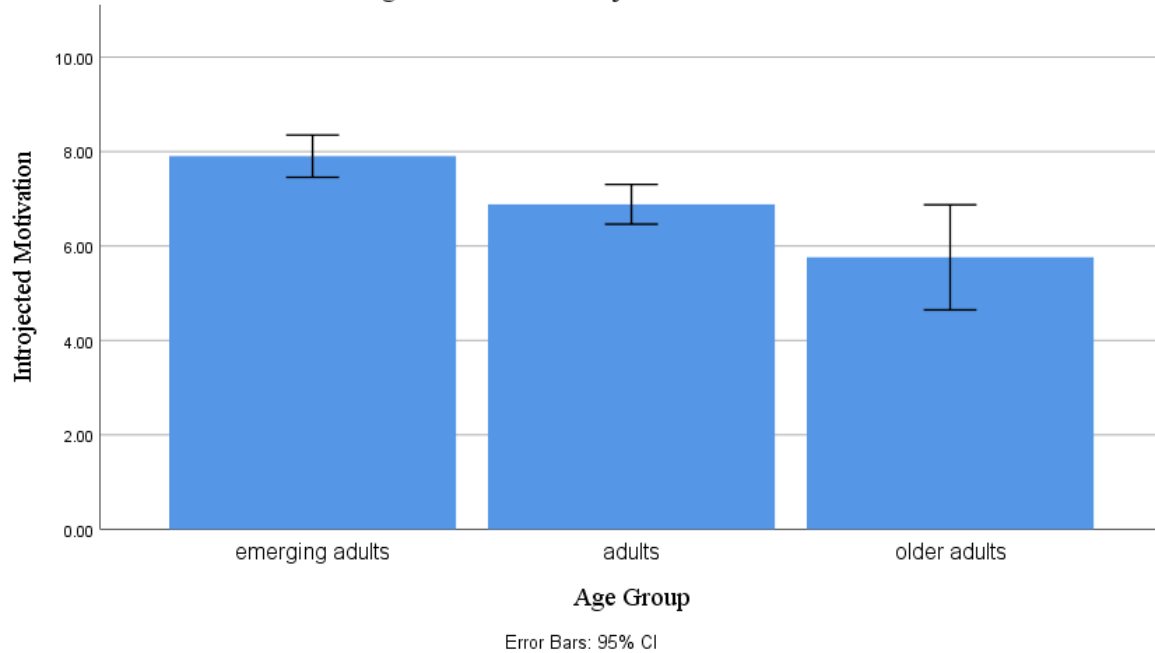


Figure 1: Main Effect of Age on Introjected Motivation

Source	df	SS	MS	F	p
Between groups	2	161.67	80.83	8.26	.000
Within groups	430	4205.78	9.78		
Total	432	4367.44			

Table 4: One-Way Analysis of Variance for Age Groups by Introjected Motivation

Hypothesis 2

The second hypothesis was tested using hierarchical regression. It was predicted that goal-concordant motivation would be associated with subjective well-being such that a positive association would be found for life satisfaction and positive affect and a negative association would be found for negative affect. Consistent with previous literature, results support this contention, showing a significant positive relationship between goal concordance and life

satisfaction ($\beta = .20, t(427) = 4.86, p = .000$) and positive affect ($\beta = .23, t(427) = 5.37, p = .000$), and a significant negative association to negative affect ($\beta = -.19, t(427) = -4.08, p = .000$). See Figures 2-4 for graphical depictions of these linear relationships. All three beta coefficients were in the small effect size range based on the standard set by Cohen, and all three relationships remained significant at the $p < .01$ level after controlling for annual household income and self-reported physical health (See Tables 5-7) [47,48].

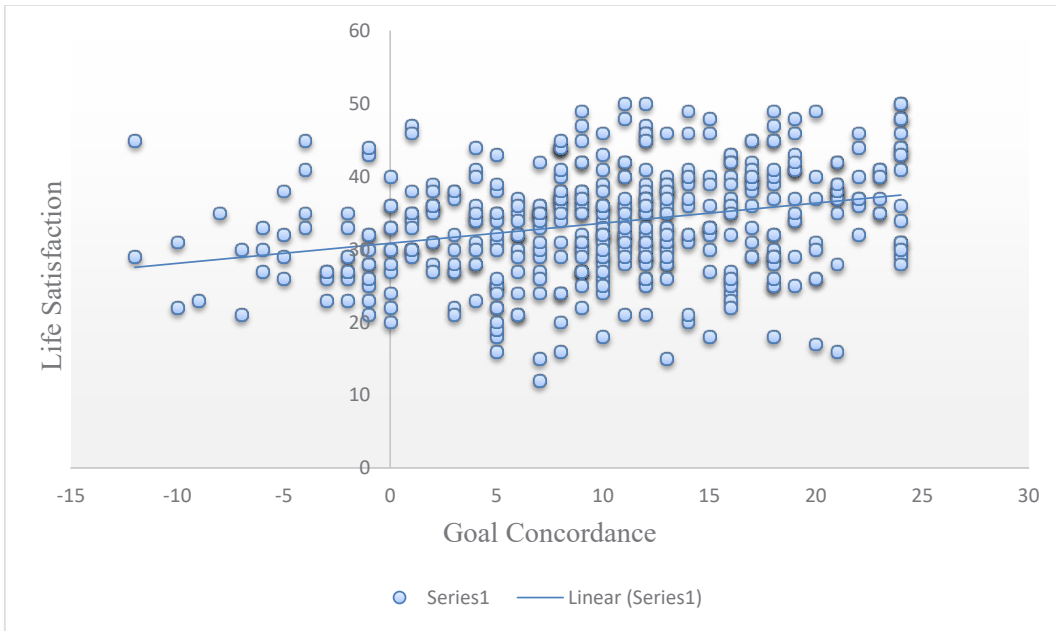


Figure 2: Positive Linear Association Between Goal Concordance and Life Satisfaction

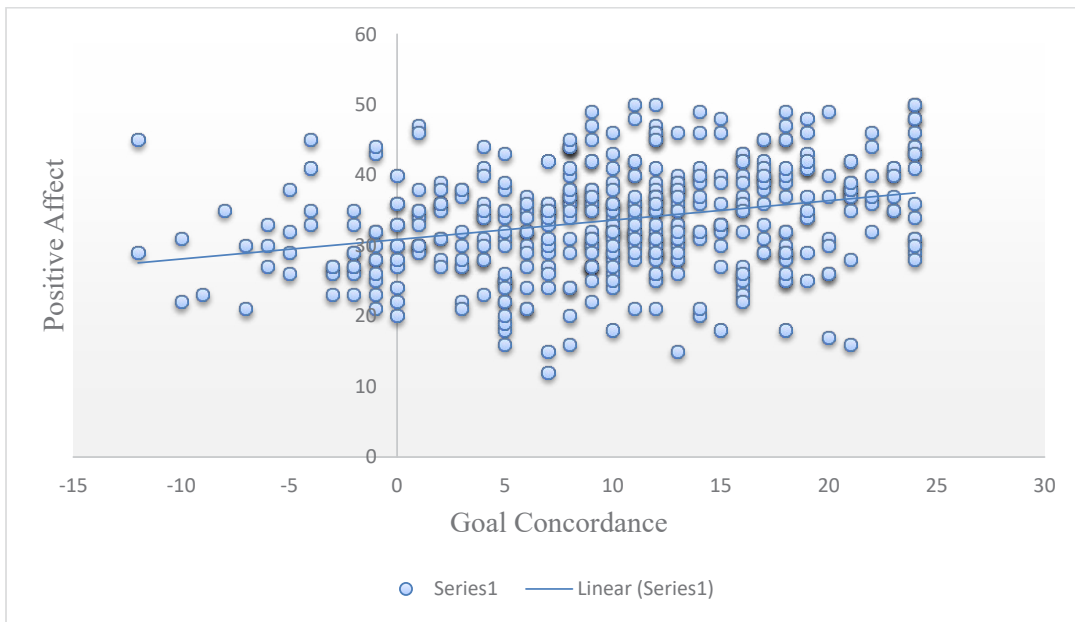


Figure 3: Positive Linear Association Between Goal Concordance and Positive Affect

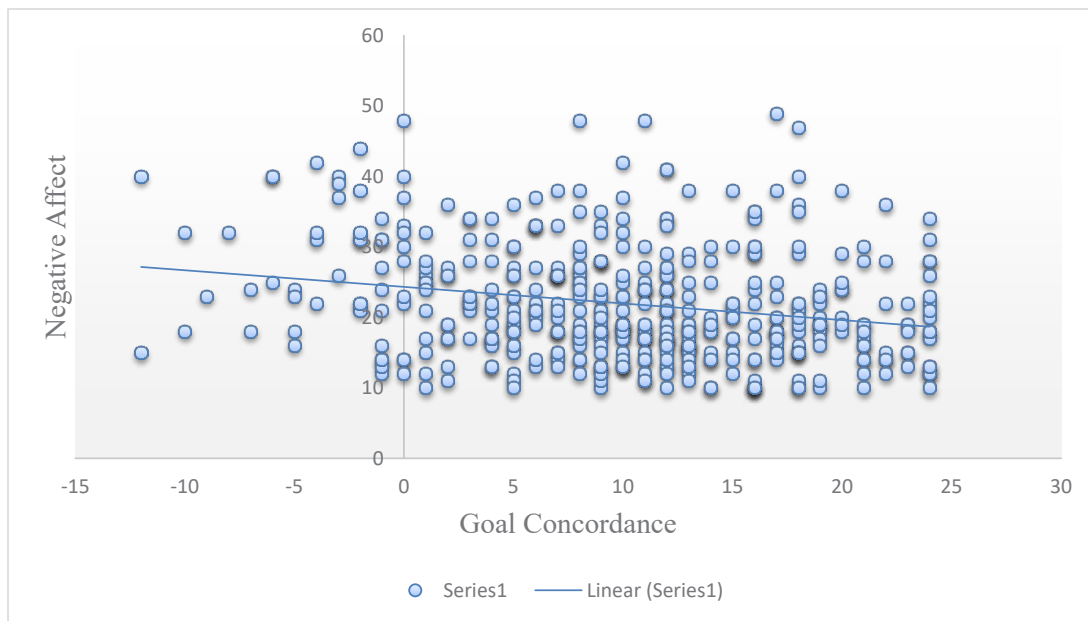


Figure 4: Negative Linear Association Between Goal Concordance and Negative Affect

Variable	Model 1			Model 2		
	B	SE B	β	B	SE B	β
Self-Reported Health	4.10	.43	.41***	3.79	.43	.38***
Annual Income	1.01	.20	.22***	1.04	.19	.23***
Goal Concordance				.19	.04	.20***
R^2		.26			.30	
F for change in R^2		73.50***			23.64***	

Note. All variables were centered at their mean.

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

Table 5: Hierarchical Regression of Goal Concordance Predicting Life Satisfaction

Variable	Model 1			Model 2		
	B	SE B	β	B	SE B	β
Self-Reported Health	3.86	.46	.39***	3.50	.45	.35***
Annual Income	.25	.21	.05	.27	.20	.06
Goal Concordance				.22	.04	.23***
R^2		.16			.21	
F for change in R^2		41.19***			28.78***	

Note. All variables were centered at their mean.

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

Table 6: Hierarchical Regression of Goal Concordance Predicting Positive Affect

Variable	Model 1			Model 2		
	B	SE B	β	B	SE B	β
Self-Reported Health	-2.90	.52	-.26***	-2.57	.52	-.24***
Annual Income	-.37	.24	-.07	-.39	.23	-.08
Goal Concordance				.20	.05	-.19***
R ²		.08			.12	
F for change in R ²		19.62***			16.62***	

Note. All variables were centered at their mean.

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

Table 7: Hierarchical Regression of Goal Concordance Predicting Negative Affect

Hypothesis 3

To test the third and final hypothesis, a moderator model was employed using hierarchical regression to assess potential moderation effects of private self-consciousness (operationalized as insight & rumination) on the relationship between goal-concordant motivation and subjective well-being. Hypothesis 3 anticipated that insight would enhance this relationship while rumination would hinder it. Our findings offer partial support for this hypothesis.

Although rumination was a significant predictor of all three components of subjective well-being, negatively for life satisfaction ($\beta = -.18$, $t(425) = -4.35$, $p = .000$) and positive affect ($\beta = -.21$, $t(425) = -4.72$, $p = .000$), and positively for negative affect ($\beta = .30$, $t(425) = 6.56$, $p = .000$), it was not shown to be a significant moderator of the association between goal-concordant

motivation and subjective well-being.

Insight, however, did significantly enhance the relationship between goal-concordant motivation and subjective well-being, specifically for positive affect. Once again controlling for annual household income and self-reported physical health, goal concordance and insight were used as separate predictors of positive affect in a hierarchical regression model while the interaction between them was used as a moderator. It was found that goal concordance ($\beta = .21$, $t(425) = 4.86$, $p = .000$) and insight ($\beta = .20$, $t(425) = 4.56$, $p = .000$) were both significant predictors of positive affect. The interaction proved to be significant, as well ($\beta = .10$, $t(425) = 2.39$, $p = .017$), demonstrating that insight acts as a successful moderator (See Figure 5), with the ability to enhance the relationship between goal-concordant motivation and positive emotional experience (See Table 8).

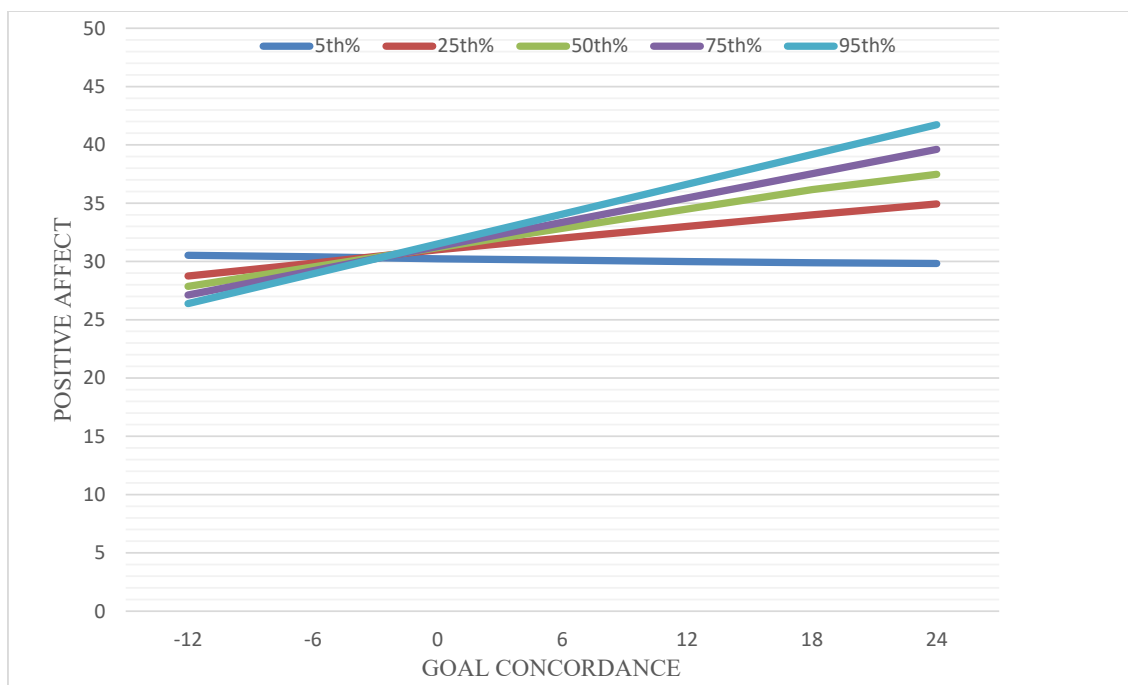


Figure 5: Moderation Effects of Insight on Goal Concordance-Positive Affect Relationship

Variable	Model 1			Model 2		
	B	SE B	β	B	SE B	β
Self-Reported Health	3.86	.46	.39***	3.25	.44	.33***
Annual Income	.25	.21	.05	.13	.20	.03
Goal Concordance				.20	.04	.21***
Insight				.17	.04	.20***
Goal Concordance x Insight (interaction)				.01	.01	.10*
R^2		.16			.26	
F for change in R^2		.01			18.41***	

Note. All variables were centered at their mean except the interaction term.

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

Table 8: Hierarchical Regression showing Predictors of Positive Affect and Moderating Effects of Insight on the Relationship between Goal Concordance and Positive Affect

4. Discussion

The three primary goals of the current study were to (1) assess potential changes in goal-concordant motivation across the adult lifespan, (2) examine the relationship between goal-concordant motivation and subjective well-being, and (3) test potential moderation effects of insight and rumination on the association between goal-concordant motivation and subjective well-being.

The findings of Hypothesis 1 showed partial support for changes in goal-concordant motivation throughout adulthood. These changes manifested while examining introjected motivation, suggesting that younger adults are more motivated by a sense of

obligation, feeling pressured by others, or that they “ought to” do something because they would feel ashamed or guilty if they didn’t. Conversely, older adults were less likely to be driven by this form of externally-based motivation. It should be noted that the general trend in aggregate concordance was consistent with previous research, such that overall goal-concordant motivation did increase throughout adulthood, but not significantly between age groups (See Figure 6). One of the potential reasons for this, specifically between emerging and older adults, could be the relatively small sample size for older adults ($n = 25$), resulting in wide variance and a lack of significant differences.

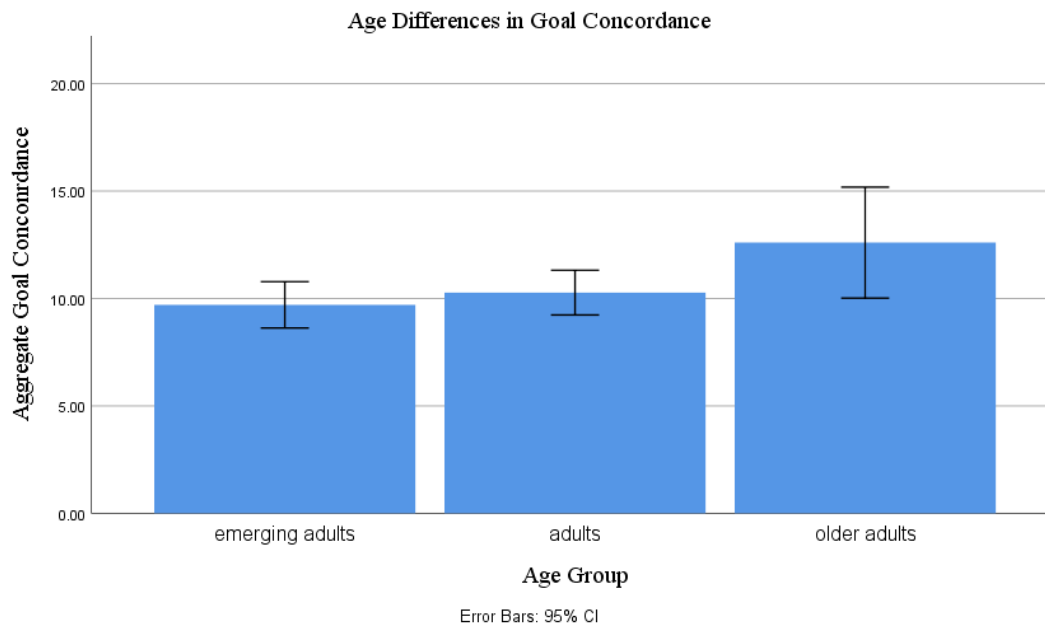


Figure 6: Non-Significant Age Differences in Aggregate Goal-Concordant Motivation

The results of Hypothesis 2 are consistent with previous research showing a significant association between goal-concordant motivation and subjective well-being. It was found that concordance successfully predicted all three components, exhibiting a positive relationship to life satisfaction and positive affect and a negative relationship to negative affect. Findings support theoretical assertions of SDT that intrinsically-oriented goals contribute to the enhancement of well-being. Our results remained significant while controlling for other highly influential factors (e.g., health and wealth), thus strengthening the argument that goal-concordant motivation is linked to greater life satisfaction and the experiencing of positive emotions, as well as a decrease in negative emotional experience.

The third and final hypothesis represented a unique contribution to existing literature. To our knowledge, this is the first study of its kind to demonstrate significant moderation effects of private self-consciousness on the relationship between goal-concordant motivation and subjective well-being. Although rumination did not moderate the relationship between concordance and well-being in any way, it is worthy to note that this study supports previous research indicating that rumination is detrimental to subjective well-being [36]. As opposed to rumination, the predictions made in Hypothesis 3 were partially supported by the insight subcomponent of private self-consciousness. Not only did insight significantly predict all three dimensions of subjective well-being, it also significantly moderated the relationship between goal-concordant motivation and positive affect. Essentially, insight appears to be a beneficial component of private self-consciousness that can enhance one's self-awareness and understanding, thereby increasing the strength of the relationship between goal-concordant motivation and positive emotional experience.

4.1. Limitations

With respect to limitations, we must first acknowledge that the study utilized survey methodology. Therefore, all data collected are subject to reporter bias. Furthermore, all relationships observed were correlational. While clear differences, associations, and moderations were present, no variables were manipulated in any way, so these results do not speak for causal mechanisms. Finally, as mentioned, another limitation is the small sample size for older adults. While considerable effort was made in data collection for all age groups, obtaining participants for our older demographic proved particularly difficult for this study, and likely contributed to a lack of aggregate goal concordance differences.

4.2. Implications

Findings of the current work may prove useful in both clinical and general populations. Professionals within a clinical setting, or those who work with adults facing normative age-graded loss, may be able to enhance motivation, life satisfaction, and positive emotional experience through the reinforcement of insightful self-attention and intrinsically-oriented behavior. Insight may also prove useful for those who assist adolescents and younger adults in making important life choices (e.g., guidance counselors and academic advisors). Choosing goal-concordant professions would likely increase subjective well-being, and based on the current findings, insight may help strengthen this association to ensure that people who are uncertain about prospective careers are choosing professions that are consistent with their values, compatible with their personalities, and beneficial to their well-being.

4.3. Future Directions

Future research in this area may want to consider the design and implementation of insight-focused clinical training for patients, career-selection advisement for adolescents and young adults, and quality-of-life programs for older adults. An experimental approach to our findings may offer further support and prove advantageous for those struggling with life satisfaction, affective issues, or long-term goal selection. As Sheldon, Prentice, and Osin highlight, "Personal goals have large effects on people's well-being, and long-term life-course" (127) [26]. Assessing the self-concordance of these goals prior to selection "may help people pick more fulfilling life-destinations to pursue" (p. 128). Perhaps one of the more intriguing recommendations stems from the post hoc qualitative content analysis of goals in this study. Some goals may be more strongly associated with well-being than others. Table 9 offers a breakdown of the 1,311 goals listed by participants. Inter-rater reliability was assessed using two independent raters to classify all three goals identified. Cronbach's alpha ranged between .86 and .91, suggesting that these classifications have good internal consistency. It is important to recognize that there is a developmental component to goal motivation. People strive for different goals at different points in their lives. Future research may benefit by focusing on the content analysis of goals and assessing their differential effects on well-being. This could offer valuable insight into which types of goals are more beneficial for individuals at different stages of life [49].

Goal Classification	frequency	percent
Health & Wellness	315	24.0
Work/Career	265	20.2
Education	228	17.4
Family/Relationships	124	9.4
Material Projects & Objects	116	8.8
Money/Finance	108	8.2
Leisure/Travel	71	5.4
Self-Improvement	42	3.2
Major Life Transitions	27	2.1
Philanthropy	9	.01
Spirituality/Religion	6	.01

Table 9: Classification, Frequency, and Percentage Of 1,311 Goals Identified by Participants

References

- Sheldon, K. M. (2008). Changes in goal-striving across the life span: Do people learn to select more self-concordant goals as they age?. In *Handbook of research on adult learning and development* (pp. 553-569). Routledge.
- Baltes, P. B., & Baltes, M. M. (1990). Psychological perspectives on successful aging: The model of selective optimization with compensation. *Successful aging*, 1-34.
- Brandstädter, J. (1999). The self in action and development. *Action and self-development*, 37-65.
- Heckhausen, J., & Schulz, R. (1999). Selectivity in life-span development: Biological and societal canalizations and individuals' developmental goals. *Action and self-development*, 67-103.
- Chen, Y., Lee, Y. T., Pethtel, O. L., Gutowitz, M. S., & Kirk, R. M. (2012). Age differences in goal concordance, time use, and well-being. *Educational Gerontology*, 38(11), 742-752.
- Karaoylas, E. C. (2011). *Changes in well-being across the lifespan: A cross-sectional survey of young, middle-age, and older adults*. University of Manitoba (Canada).
- Sheldon, K. M., Houser-Marko, L., & Kasser, T. (2006). Does autonomy increase with age? Comparing the goal motivations of college students and their parents. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 40(2), 168-178.
- Moore, A., Holding, A., Verner-Filion, J., Harvey, B., & Koestner, R. (2020). A longitudinal investigation of trait-goal concordance on goal progress: The mediating role of autonomous goal motivation. *Journal of Personality*, 88(3), 530-543.
- Davis, W. E., Kelley, N. J., Kim, J., Tang, D., & Hicks, J. A. (2016). Motivating the academic mind: High-level construal of academic goals enhances goal meaningfulness, motivation, and self-concordance. *Motivation and Emotion*, 40, 193-202.
- Koestner, R., Lekes, N., Powers, T. A., & Chicoine, E. (2002). Attaining personal goals: Self-concordance plus implementation intentions equals success. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 83(1), 231-244.
- Werner, K. M., Milyavskaya, M., Foxen-Craft, E., & Koestner, R. (2016). Some goals just feel easier: Self-concordance leads to goal progress through subjective ease, not effort. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 96, 237-242.
- Downes, P. E., Kristof-Brown, A. L., Judge, T. A., & Darnold, T. C. (2017). Motivational mechanisms of self-concordance theory: Goal-specific efficacy and person-organization fit. *Journal of Business and Psychology*, 32, 197-215.
- Fuchs, R., Seelig, H., Göhner, W., Schlatterer, M., & Ntoumanis, N. (2017). The two sides of goal intentions: Intention self-concordance and intention strength as predictors of physical activity. *Psychology & health*, 32(1), 110-126.
- Deci, E. L. & Ryan, R. M. (1985). *Intrinsic motivation and self-determination in human behavior*. Springer Science & Business Media.
- Sheldon, K. M., & Elliot, A. J. (1999). Goal striving, need satisfaction, and longitudinal well-being: the self-concordance model. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 76(3), 482-497.
- Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. *American psychologist*, 55(1), 68-78.
- Deci, EL, & Ryan, RM (2008). Self-determination theory: A macrotheory of human motivation, development, and health. *Canadian psychology/Psychologie canadienne*, 49(3), 182-185.
- Andrews, F. M. & Withey, S. B. (1976). *Social indicators of well-being: America's perception of life quality*. New York: Plenum.
- Diener, E. D., Emmons, R. A., Larsen, R. J., & Griffin, S. (1985). The satisfaction with life scale. *Journal of personality assessment*, 49(1), 71-75.
- Emmons, R. A. (1986). Personal strivings: An approach to personality and subjective well-being. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 51(5), 1058-1068.
- Sheldon, K. M., Elliot, A. J., Ryan, R. M., Chirkov, V., Kim, Y., Wu, C., ... & Sun, Z. (2004). Self-concordance and subjective well-being in four cultures. *Journal of cross-cultural psychology*, 35(2), 209-223.

-
22. Maslow, A. H. (1971). The farther reaches of human behavior. *New York: Biking*.
 23. Erikson, E. H. (1963). *Childhood and society* (Vol. 2). New York: Norton.
 24. Rogers, C. (1961). *On becoming a person: A therapist's view of psychotherapy*. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin.
 25. Seligman, M. (2018). PERMA and the building blocks of well-being. *The journal of positive psychology, 13*(4), 333-335.
 26. Sheldon, K. M., Prentice, M., & Osin, E. (2019). Rightly crossing the Rubicon: Evaluating goal self-concordance prior to selection helps people choose more intrinsic goals. *Journal of Research in Personality, 79*, 119-129.
 27. Bauer, J. J., & McAdams, D. P. (2010). Eudaimonic growth: Narrative growth goals predict increases in ego development and subjective well-being 3 years later. *Developmental psychology, 46*(4), 761-772.
 28. Scheibe, S., Freund, A. M., & Baltes, P. B. (2007). Toward a developmental psychology of Sehnsucht (life longings): The optimal (utopian) life. *Developmental psychology, 43*(3), 778-795.
 29. Costa, P. T., Jr., & McCrae, R. R. (1992). *Revised NEO Personality Inventory (NEO PI-R) and NEO Five-Factor Inventory*. Odessa, FL: Psychological Assessment Resources.
 30. McAdams, D. P. (1995). What do we know when we know a person?. *Journal of personality, 63*(3), 365-396.
 31. Barrick, M. R., & Mount, M. K. (1991). The big five personality dimensions and job performance: a meta-analysis. *Personnel psychology, 44*(1), 1-26.
 32. McCrae, R. R., & Costa Jr, P. T. (1997). Personality trait structure as a human universal. *American psychologist, 52*(5), 509-516.
 33. Froming, W. J., & Carver, C. S. (1981). Divergent influences of private and public self-consciousness in a compliance paradigm. *Journal of research in personality, 15*(2), 159-171.
 34. Grant, A. M., Franklin, J., & Langford, P. (2002). The self-reflection and insight scale: A new measure of private self-consciousness. *Social Behavior and Personality: an international journal, 30*(8), 821-835.
 35. Anderson, E. M., Bohon, L. M., & Berrigan, L. P. (1996). Factor structure of the private self-consciousness scale. *Journal of Personality Assessment, 66*(1), 144-152.
 36. Harrington, R., & Loffredo, D. A. (2010). Insight, rumination, and self-reflection as predictors of well-being. *The Journal of psychology, 145*(1), 39-57.
 37. Lyke, J. A. (2009). Insight, but not self-reflection, is related to subjective well-being. *Personality and Individual Differences, 46*(1), 66-70.
 38. Trapnell, P. D., & Campbell, J. D. (1999). Private self-consciousness and the five-factor model of personality: distinguishing rumination from reflection. *Journal of personality and social psychology, 76*(2), 284-304.
 39. Kirk, R. M., & Chen, Y. (2016). Aging and ageism: The roles of identity processing styles and self-consciousness. In C. Fields (Ed.), *Stereotypes and stereotyping: Misperceptions, perspectives, and role of social media* (pp 133-157). New York: NOVA Science Publishers, Inc.
 40. Riediger, M., Freund, A. M., & Baltes, P. B. (2005). Managing life through personal goals: Intergoal facilitation and intensity of goal pursuit in younger and older adulthood. *The Journals of Gerontology Series B: Psychological Sciences and Social Sciences, 60*(2), P84-P91.
 41. Paolacci, G., Chandler, J., & Ipeirotis, P. G. (2010). Running experiments on amazon mechanical turk. *Judgment and Decision making, 5*(5), 411-419.
 42. Buhrmester, M., Kwang, T., & Gosling, S. D. (2011). Amazon's Mechanical Turk: A new source of inexpensive, yet high-quality, data?. *Perspectives on psychological science, 6*(1), 3-5.
 43. Sheldon, K. M., & Kasser, T. (1995). Coherence and congruence: two aspects of personality integration. *Journal of personality and social psychology, 68*(3), 531-543.
 44. Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2000). The " what" and " why" of goal pursuits: Human needs and the self-determination of behavior. *Psychological inquiry, 11*(4), 227-268.
 45. Watson, D., Clark, L. A., & Tellegen, A. (1988). Development and validation of brief measures of positive and negative affect: the PANAS scales. *Journal of personality and social psychology, 54*(6), 1063-1070.
 46. Fenigstein, A., Scheier, M. F., & Buss, A. H. (1975). Public and private self-consciousness: Assessment and theory. *Journal of consulting and clinical psychology, 43*(4), 522-527.
 47. Cohen, J. (1988). *Statistical power analysis for the behavioral sciences*. Routledge.
 48. Cohen, J. (1992). A power primer. *Psychological Bulletin, 112*(1), 155-159.
 49. Sprouse, J. (2011). A validation of Amazon Mechanical Turk for the collection of acceptability judgments in linguistic theory. *Behavior research methods, 43*, 155-167.

disagree with each statement.

7-point scale: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = somewhat disagree, 4 = neutral, 5 = somewhat agree, 6 = agree, 7 = strongly agree

1. In most ways my life is close to my ideal. _____
2. The conditions of my life are excellent. _____
3. I am satisfied with my life. _____
4. So far, I have gotten the important things I want in life. _____
5. If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing. _____

Appendix D

PANAS

Instructions: Using the 7-point scale provided, please give a response in each blank space indicating how much you either agree or disagree with frequently experiencing the corresponding emotion.

7-point scale: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = somewhat disagree, 4 = neutral, 5 = somewhat agree, 6 = agree, 7 = strongly agree

- | | | | |
|--------------|-------|------------|-------|
| Interested | _____ | Irritable | _____ |
| Distressed | _____ | Alert | _____ |
| Excited | _____ | Ashamed | _____ |
| Upset | _____ | Inspired | _____ |
| Strong | _____ | Nervous | _____ |
| Guilty | _____ | Determined | _____ |
| Scared | _____ | Attentive | _____ |
| Hostile | _____ | Jittery | _____ |
| Enthusiastic | _____ | Active | _____ |
| Proud | _____ | Afraid | _____ |

Appendix E

SRIS-Insight Subscale

Instructions: Using the following 7-point scale, please respond to each statement in the blank spaces provided telling how much you either agree or disagree with each statement.

7-point scale: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = somewhat disagree, 4 = neutral, 5 = somewhat agree, 6 = agree, 7 = strongly agree

- I am usually aware of my thoughts. _____
- I'm often confused about the way I really feel about things. _____
- I usually have a very clear idea about why I've behaved a certain way. _____
- I'm often aware I'm having a feeling, but don't quite know what it is. _____
- My behavior often puzzles me. _____
- Thinking about my thoughts makes me more confused. _____
- I often find it difficult to make sense of the way I feel about things. _____
- I usually know why I feel the way I do. _____

Appendix F

RRQ-Rumination Subscale

Instructions: For each of the statements on this questionnaire, please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement using the scale provided below.

7-point scale: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = somewhat disagree, 4 = neutral, 5 = somewhat agree, 6 = agree, 7 = strongly agree

- I tend to "ruminate" or dwell over things that happen to me for a long time afterward. _____
- I often think about how I acted in a past situation. _____
- I always seem to be rehashing in my mind recent things I've said or done. _____

Long after an argument or disagreement is over, my thoughts keep going back to what happened. _____

I don't waste time rethinking things that are over and done with. _____

I often find myself reevaluating something I've done. _____

I often reflect on episodes in my life that I should no longer concern myself with. _____

I spend a great deal of time thinking back on my embarrassing or disappointing moments. _____

I never ruminate or dwell on myself for very long. _____

It is easy for me to put unwanted thoughts out of my mind. _____

Sometimes it is hard for me to shut off thoughts about myself. _____

My attention is often focused on aspects of myself that I wish I'd stop thinking about. _____

Copyright: ©2024 Robert M Kirk, et al. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.