

Exploring the Theoretical Perspective of Life Satisfaction and Its Applications

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Article History	Abstract
Original Research Article	<i>This paper explores the theoretical perspectives of life satisfaction, focusing on Self-Efficacy Theory and Goal Setting Theory. Life satisfaction refers to an individual's overall evaluation of their life as a whole. The paper discusses the key concepts, strengths, and criticisms of both theories, as well as their applications in various fields, including education, healthcare, and sports. Self-Efficacy Theory, developed by Bandura (1977), posits that individuals' beliefs in their ability to perform tasks influence their motivation and behavior. The theory identifies four sources of self-efficacy: mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and emotional states. Goal Setting Theory, developed by Locke and Latham (2002), emphasizes the importance of specific, challenging, and attainable goals in motivating behavior. The theory identifies five principles: clarity, challenge, effort, feedback, and task complexity. The integration of Self-Efficacy Theory and Goal Setting Theory provides valuable insights into enhancing life satisfaction. Recommendations include setting achievable goals, developing a growth mindset, seeking feedback and support, practicing self-care, setting meaningful goals, and focusing on the present moment. Understanding the theoretical perspectives of life satisfaction can inform strategies for enhancing overall well-being and life satisfaction. By applying the principles of Self-Efficacy Theory and Goal Setting Theory, individuals can increase their life satisfaction and improve their overall quality of life.</i> Keywords: Life Satisfaction, Self-Efficacy Theory, Goal Setting Theory, Motivation and Behaviour, Psychological Well-Being, Quality of Life.
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Introduction

Life satisfaction is a person's overall evaluation of the quality of his or her life. It reflects one's own opinion of the overall quality of his/her life. Assessing life satisfaction can be a comprehensive process where an individual's life situation is compared to his or her ideals, social expectations, aspirations, goals, past experiences and individual needs. These assessments could be made throughout the life course or during a specific life stage. Global assessment of life satisfaction, life satisfaction with life as a whole, and domains of life satisfaction (health, education, family, social relations, work, housing, leisure) are possible. Overall life satisfaction is well linked to satisfaction in specific areas of life, but there can be variation in overall assessments and satisfaction in specific areas. Life satisfaction has generally been viewed as the cognitive aspect of subjective well-being (SWB), while the emotional aspect has been viewed as emotional

experiences. While related, the importance of the dimensions can vary between cultures. For example, people from individualistic societies might give more weight to personal enjoyment or pleasure, while those from more collectivistic societies may prioritize life satisfaction, social harmony, or meaning, which may not necessarily be linked to instant gratification. The relative importance of the different components of subjective well-being may also vary according to individual characteristics, such as age, personality, personal values, and life goals.

Overall, life satisfaction appears to be fairly stable at the individual level, but is sensitive to social, economic, demographic and cultural changes. It is possible to see in this way differences in life satisfaction across countries and population groups (e.g., by gender, age, and educational attainment). Helliwell, Layard, and Sachs' (2012, 2013) World Happiness Reports suggest that much of the cross-

national differences in average evaluations of life might be accounted for by factors that have already been demonstrated in the empirical literature. These encompassed gross domestic product (GDP) per capita, healthy life expectancy, social support, perceived corruption, generosity and freedom of making life choices. These results, combined, show that subjective well-being is not only influenced by personal evaluations but also by macro-level social and/or environmental factors, and thus serve as a valuable measure to gauge subjective well-being in various social and cultural contexts.

Age

Age can influence life satisfaction (LS) differently depending on the prevailing social and economic conditions. Research indicates that patterns of psychological well-being across the lifespan vary among regions and populations. In high-income English-speaking countries, psychological well-being has been observed to follow a U-shaped pattern, with higher levels during younger and older adulthood. However, in other regions, including Latin America and Eastern Europe, well-being has been reported to decline progressively with age. The reasons for these regional differences are not yet fully understood (Steptoe, Deaton, & Stone, 2014).

Gender

Evidence from various studies indicates that women report slightly higher average levels of evaluative well-being than men across many countries. However, this finding presents an interesting contrast because women also experience higher reported rates of depression than men in many populations. This apparent contradiction suggests that life satisfaction and mental health are related but distinct dimensions of well-being, and that gender differences may vary according to the indicators, populations, and circumstances being examined.

Employment

Compared with employed individuals, unemployed people generally report lower life satisfaction, reduced satisfaction across specific life domains, poorer psychological health, and lower overall happiness. Numerous studies suggest that unemployment can diminish well-being beyond the effects associated with reduced income alone. Losing employment may also result in the loss of social status, workplace relationships, self-esteem, daily structure, and a sense of purpose. These social and psychological consequences help explain why unemployment can have a substantial negative influence on life satisfaction, even when financial losses are considered separately.

Personality

Personality characteristics are important individual-level factors associated with life satisfaction throughout the lifespan. Research has linked traits such as extraversion, neuroticism, agreeableness, and conscientiousness with differences in reported life satisfaction. In addition to these personality dimensions, self-satisfaction is an important predictor of overall life evaluation. Interpersonal relationships, participation in community activities, and engagement in meaningful pursuits also contribute to life satisfaction by providing individuals with social connections, a sense of belonging, and opportunities for personal development.

Health

Good health, assessed through individuals' perceptions of their health and the presence or absence of illness or disability, is generally associated with higher levels of well-being. In general, individuals with better health may experience greater life satisfaction, although the magnitude of the effect depends partly on the type and severity of the health condition. National survey findings have suggested that mental health problems can have a greater negative impact on life satisfaction than some physical illnesses (Steptoe et al., 2014). Furthermore, experimental and longitudinal research indicates that the relationship between well-being and health may operate in both directions. Positive subjective well-being has been associated with favourable outcomes in cardiovascular health, immune functioning, reproductive health, and pain management, including lower pain perception and greater pain tolerance. These associations highlight the potential importance of psychological well-being as one factor contributing to overall health.

Life Events

Life satisfaction can also be influenced by individuals' experiences and perceptions of changes in their circumstances. Following many life events, satisfaction may gradually return towards its previous level as individuals adapt to their new situations. This process is commonly described as adaptation. However, adaptation does not occur uniformly for everyone or after every event. Highly stressful experiences, traumatic incidents, and major adverse life changes may have prolonged effects on psychological well-being and life satisfaction. The extent and duration of these effects can depend on individual characteristics, available social support, and the nature of the event.

Historical background

This research tradition (Life Satisfaction) is ideologically anchored in the 18th century Enlightenment. In this view life itself is the purpose of existence, not the service of King or God. The central ideals are happiness and self-fulfilment.

Society itself is understood as a resource that provides the essentials of a good living for citizens. In the 19th century this notion expressed itself in the Utilitarian Creed that the finest society is one which produces 'the greatest happiness for the greatest number'. In the 20th century this has spurred wide scale initiatives at social reform and fostered the formation of the Welfare State. Efforts towards the creation of a better society manifested themselves in attacks on the evils of ignorance, illness and poverty. Consequently, progress was measured by literacy, control of epidemic disease and the elimination of hunger. Social statistics were developed to record the extent to which progress in these areas had been achieved. Advances in the combat of these social ills were followed by efforts to create welfare-states that ensure a good life for everybody, in particular a good material standard of living. The extent of progress in that area was expressed in terms of monetary gains, security of income and the degree of income-equality. This gave rise to an abundance of social research on poverty and social-inequality, which today is still a major research tradition. In the 1960s, by which time most Western Nations had extensive Welfare-States, the new theme of 'limits to economic growth' appeared on the political agenda, and values came to shift to 'post-materialism'. This called for a broader conceptualization of the good life and its measurement. As a result, the term 'quality of life' was introduced. The initial use of the concept was polemical, serving to denote that there is more to human existence than material welfare.

Objectives of the study

As a main objective, this seminar paper seeks to understand the theoretical perspective of Life Satisfaction. The sub-objectives of this present study are as follows:

1. To evaluate Self-efficacy Theory and Goal Setting theory.
2. To examine the applications of Self-efficacy Theory and Goal Setting theory
3. To critique the Self-efficacy Theory and Goal Setting theory.
4. Lastly, to determine the Application and implications of these selected theories in clinical psychological practice.

The following theories are reviewed: Self-efficacy Theory and Goal Setting theory,

Self-efficacy Theory

The self-efficacy theory was propounded by Bandura (1977) as a means of explaining how an individual develops his/her self-efficacy. In this theory, Bandura (1977) suggested that people's beliefs in their efficacy are developed by four main sources of influence, which include

(i) mastery experiences, (ii) vicarious experiences, (iii) social persuasion, and (iv) emotional states.

Mastery experiences refer to the experiences one gains when they take on a new challenge and are successful at doing so. In his words, Bandura said that "Mastery experiences are the most influential source of efficacy information because they provide the most authentic evidence of whether one can muster whatever it takes to succeed. Success builds a robust belief in one's personal efficacy. Failures undermine it, especially if failures occur before a sense of efficacy is firmly established" (Bandura, 1997). Lopez-Garrido (2020) noted that one of the best proven ways to learn a new skill or to improve one's performance in a given activity is by practicing and part of the reason this works so well is that people unknowingly throughout this process are teaching themselves that they are capable of acquiring new skills (Lopez-Garrido, 2020).

The second important source of self-efficacy is through the vicarious experiences provided by social models. Bandura (1977) posits that "seeing people similar to oneself succeed by sustained effort raises observers' beliefs that they too possess the capabilities to master comparable activities to succeed." Vicarious experiences involve observing other people successfully completing a task. When one has positive role models in their life (especially those who display a healthy level of self-efficacy) - one is more likely to absorb at least a few of those positive beliefs about the self.

Social persuasion is one of the most significant sources of self-efficacy, and gives the individual encouragement, instruction, and evaluative feedback from important people. According to Lopez-Garrido (2020), verbal feedback encouraging an individual during a challenging task can build their confidence in their capacity and skills to be successful. In the same way, Redmond (2010) noted that positive and negative feedback received from people about their performance or perceived ability can affect their self-efficacy. For example, by saying things like: "I know you can do it," "You can do anything you put your mind to," and "You can achieve your goals," when a child is in elementary school and is being encouraged to believe he can do it, pursue big dreams, and work to make them come true, this is a form of social persuasion. While verbal persuasion can be effective at various ages in life, it is possible that giving constructive persuasion early in life may create a stronger base for self-efficacy formation (Lopez-Garrido, 2020).

The emotional and physical conditions are also a critical source of self-efficacy. Self-efficacy theory indicates that one's feelings and bodily responses may affect one's judgments of one's own competence to successfully execute certain behaviors. Anxiety and fear of a challenging activity may, for instance, cause a person to undervalue themselves

and doubt their chances for success. On the other hand, teaching people how to control anxiety, regulate their emotional responses and keep a more positive mood when encountering challenging situations can help strengthen their self-confidence. In this light, the ability to learn how to regulate their emotions effectively could lead to greater self-efficacy and increased confidence and persistence in dealing with difficult tasks.

Summarily, the four sources of self-efficacy as posited by Bandura's theory showed that self-efficacy is a learned human pattern of thinking that can be cultivated. An individual will have high self-efficacy if he/she successfully cultivates this belief that he/she is able to deal with problems or any obstacles or the persuasion that he/she will be successful. This belief in an individual's ability to no doubt is useful in facing the daily stress events of life an important in determining happiness and satisfaction with life.

Key Concepts of self-efficacy Theory

1. Self-Efficacy: An individual's belief in their ability to perform a specific task or behavior.
2. Efficacy Expectations: An individual's confidence in their ability to execute a specific behavior.
3. Outcome Expectations: An individual's beliefs about the consequences of their actions.
4. Self-Regulation: The process by which individuals' control and direct their own behavior.
5. Observational Learning: Learning through observing others, which can influence self-efficacy.
6. Performance Accomplishments: Past experiences of success or failure that shape self-efficacy.
7. Verbal Persuasion: Encouragement or discouragement from others that can impact self-efficacy.
8. Physiological States: Emotional and physical states, such as anxiety or fatigue, that can influence self-efficacy.
9. Reciprocal Determinism: The dynamic interaction between personal factors (cognition, emotion), behavior, and environmental factors.
10. Self-Referent Thought: Individuals' thoughts about their own abilities and behaviors.
11. Task-Specific Self-Efficacy: Self-efficacy beliefs related to specific tasks or situations.
12. Domain-Specific Self-Efficacy: Self-efficacy beliefs related to broader domains, such as academic or social self-efficacy.

These key concepts form the foundation of Self-Efficacy Theory, which has been widely applied in various fields, including psychology, education, health, and sports.

Strengths of Self-Efficacy Theory:

1. Empirical support: Self-Efficacy Theory has been extensively researched and supported by numerous studies.
2. Practical applications: The theory has been applied in various fields, including education, healthcare, and sports.
3. Encourages personal agency: Self-Efficacy Theory emphasizes the importance of individual control and agency in achieving goals.
4. Improves motivation: The theory suggests that self-efficacy beliefs can enhance motivation and performance.

Criticisms of Self-Efficacy Theory

1. Oversimplification: Critics argue that Self-Efficacy Theory oversimplifies the complex relationships between self-efficacy, motivation, and performance.
2. Lack of longitudinal research: Many studies on self-efficacy have been cross-sectional, limiting our understanding of the long-term effects of self-efficacy beliefs.
3. Insufficient attention to power dynamics: The theory may overlook the impact of power imbalances on self-efficacy beliefs and behaviors.
4. Overreliance on self-report measures: Some critics argue that the theory relies too heavily on self-report measures, which may be subject to biases and limitations.

Applications of Self-Efficacy Theory

1. Education: Self-Efficacy Theory informs teaching practices, emphasizing the importance of building students' self-efficacy beliefs.
2. Healthcare: The theory guides health behavior changes interventions, aiming to enhance patients' self-efficacy for healthy behaviors.
3. Sports and exercise: Self-Efficacy Theory is applied in sports and exercise settings to improve performance and motivation.
4. Workplace development: The theory informs employee training and development programs, focusing on building self-efficacy for job-related tasks.

Implications of Self-Efficacy Theory (SET), for clinical psychology

Implications of Self-Efficacy Theory (SET), for clinical psychology particularly in the areas of behavior change,

motivation, and treatment outcomes. Here are some clinical psychology implications of SET:

Behavior Change

1. Enhancing motivation: SET can be used to enhance motivation in individuals with mental health conditions, such as depression or anxiety, by increasing their sense of self-efficacy.
2. Overcoming phobias: SET can be applied to exposure therapy, helping individuals build confidence in their ability to confront feared situations or objects.
3. Promoting healthy behaviors: SET can be used to promote healthy behaviors, such as exercise, healthy eating, or smoking cessation, by enhancing individuals' sense of self-efficacy in performing these behaviors.

Treatment Outcomes

1. Improved treatment adherence: SET can improve treatment adherence by increasing individuals' confidence in their ability to manage their mental health condition.
2. Enhanced coping skills: SET can enhance coping skills by helping individuals develop a sense of self-efficacy in managing stress, anxiety, or other difficult emotions.
3. Better mental health outcomes: SET can lead to better mental health outcomes by helping individuals develop a sense of self-efficacy in managing their mental health condition.

Goal Setting theory

The Goal-Setting Theory was developed by Edwin Locke and Gary Latham. They published their seminal paper, "Building a Practically Useful Theory of Goal Setting," in 2002, which outlined the core principles of the theory.

Key Contributors of Goal setting theory include: Edwin Locke (1938-present): An American psychologist who, along with Gary Latham, developed the Goal-Setting Theory. Locke's work focused on the importance of specific, challenging, and attainable goals in motivating behavior And Gary Latham (1947-present): A Canadian psychologist who collaborated with Edwin Locke to develop the Goal-Setting Theory. Latham's research has explored the application of goal-setting principles in

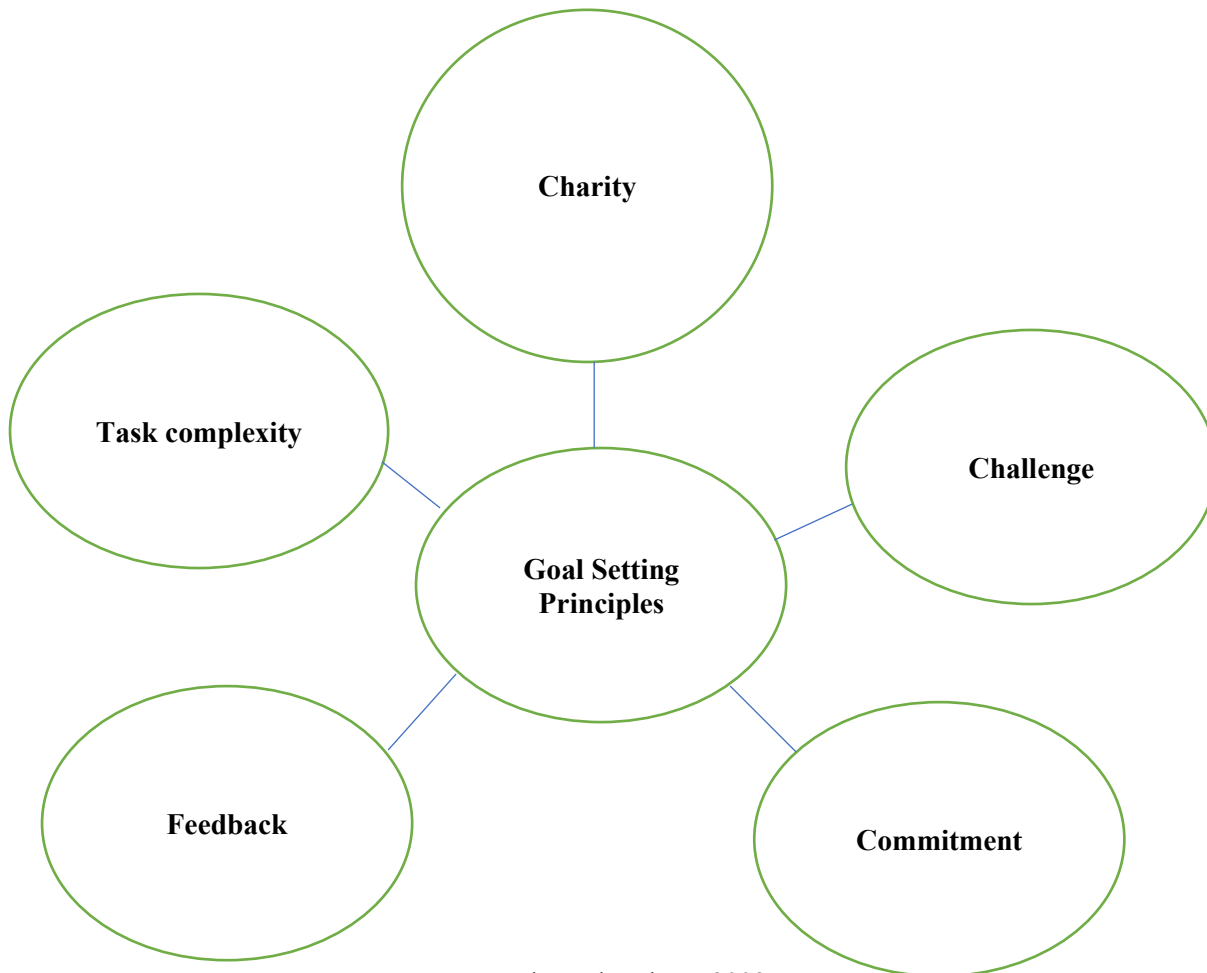
various contexts, including education, business, and sports.

key concepts of Goal Setting Theory (GST):

1. Specificity: Goals should be clear, specific, and well-defined to provide direction and focus.
2. Difficulty: Goals should be challenging but achievable, as overly easy goals may not motivate individuals.
3. Attainability: Goals should be realistic and attainable, taking into account the individual's skills, resources, and constraints.
4. Relevance: Goals should be meaningful, relevant, and aligned with the individual's values and priorities.
5. Time-bound: Goals should have a specific deadline or timeframe for completion to create a sense of urgency and focus.
6. Feedback: Regular feedback is essential to track progress, adjust goals, and maintain motivation.
7. Self-Efficacy: Individuals' beliefs in their ability to achieve their goals play a crucial role in goal-setting motivation and success.
8. Goal-Setting Process: The process of setting goals involves identifying, prioritizing, and committing to specific objectives.
9. Goal Orientation: Individuals' goal orientation (e.g., mastery, performance, or avoidance) influences their motivation, behavior, and goal-setting outcomes.
10. Moderating Variables: Factors like personality, culture, and organizational context can influence the effectiveness of goal-setting interventions.
11. Goal Hierarchies: Goals can be organized in a hierarchical structure, with higher-level goals providing a framework for lower-level goals.
12. Goal Conflict: Conflicting goals can undermine motivation and goal achievement, highlighting the importance of goal alignment and prioritization.

These key concepts form the foundation of Goal Setting Theory, which has been widely applied in various fields, including psychology, education, business, and sports.

Figure i: theoretical framework of Goal setting theory



Source: Locke and Latham, 2002

1. Clarity

- A clear goal can be measured; no room for misunderstandings;
- Explicit goals with regard to which result is desired and how it will be measured;
- Comparable to the SMART principles that help to understand the task, measuring the results and achieving success.

Goal Setting Theory of Motivation in workplace

- Clear: accept new technology to reduce the time required to produce the product from 15 minutes to 12 minutes by the end of the financial year.
- Unclear: shorten the time required to manufacture the product.

2. Challenge

The setting of ambitious goals requires a careful balance for the correct degree of challenge. Goals that are too easy or too challenging have a negative impact on motivation and lower performance. Motivation is best achieved when goals are set halfway between easy and hard.

- Setting challenging goals demands an accurate balance to guarantee the right level of challenge;
- Goals that are too easy or too difficult negatively impact motivation and may reduce the performance;
- The highest level of motivation is achieved upon the right balance between easy and difficult.

When you set next goals, make sure these are challenging yet realistic, difficult yet achievable. Ask yourself the following questions when setting goals. Are they challenging enough? Are they significant enough to be motivating? Are they realistic and achievable?

Locke's goal setting theory in workplace

- Challenging: convert 70% more potential customers to customers in AB1 2017-18 compared to AB2 2017-18
- Easily achievable: Converting more prospects into customers in AB3 FY 2017-18 compared to AB2 FY 2017-18

3. Effort

- Fully understanding and coordinating the set goals;
- Motivation due to own input when setting goals;
- People have the tendency to work harder for a goal when they were involved in setting it, particularly in a team;
- Staying motivated as long as the goal is actually achievable and is in accordance with the aspirations of all those involved.

Locke's goal setting theory in workplace

- Correct: the project manager determines the expected results in a meeting, depending on the possibilities of the subordinate.
- Incorrect: the project manager prescribes goals to all his/her team members without taking into account their bandwidth and possibilities.

4. Feedback

In addition to selecting the right goal, you must also listen to feedback to determine whether you're doing it right. This allows you to adjust the goal and your approach to achieve it. Feedback doesn't necessarily have to come from other people. Feedback can also come from within.

- Listening to feedback to check whether you're headed in the right direction;
- If necessary, adjusting the goal and approach to achieve the goal;
- Feedback both from others and yourself.

Locke's goal setting theory in workplace

- Correct: checking in weekly to inspect the progress of the design department and providing feedback as to whether they're on schedule or the process needs to be speed up.
- Incorrect: setting a deadline and forgetting about the task until this approaches the deadline.

5. Task complexity

- Takes into account the complexity of the goals, given the fact that complexity can influence morale, productivity and motivation;
- Complex goals can be overwhelming to people;
- Make sure there's enough time, allowing everyone enough time to work towards the goal and improve the performances;
- If necessary, adjusting the complexity and level of difficulty of the goal.

The goal setting theory of motivation highlights the strong association between goals and performance. 2. Goal setting theory of performance management.

It supports the predictions that are most effective when the goals are defined and difficult, when they are utilised to evaluate performances and when they are associated with feedback.

Finally, check the results and confirm acceptance and commitment. But the motivational effect of objectives is moderated by variables like skill and self-reliance. Effective goal setting is a terrific technique for gaining job satisfaction among employees.

Strengths of Goal-Setting Theory

1. Clear direction: Goal-Setting Theory provides a clear direction for behavior, motivating individuals to work towards specific objectives.
2. Improved performance: The theory has been consistently shown to improve performance, particularly when goals are specific, challenging, and attainable.
3. Enhanced motivation: Goal-Setting Theory suggests that goals can enhance motivation, particularly when individuals are committed to achieving their goals.
4. Wide applicability: The theory has been applied in various contexts, including education, business, sports, and healthcare.

Applications of Goal Setting Theory

1. Education: Goal setting is used to enhance student motivation, engagement, and academic achievement.
2. Sports and Exercise: Goal setting is used to improve athletic performance, increase motivation, and enhance overall well-being.
3. Business and Organizational Development: Goal setting is used to enhance employee motivation, performance, and job satisfaction.
4. Health and Wellness: Goal setting is used to promote healthy behaviors, increase motivation, and enhance overall well-being.

Implications for clinical psychology

Implications for clinical psychology, particularly in the areas of motivation, behavior change, and treatment outcomes. Here are some clinical psychology implications

1. Enhancing motivation: GST can be used to enhance motivation in individuals with mental health conditions, such as depression or anxiety, by setting specific, achievable, and meaningful goals.

2. Increasing engagement: GST can increase engagement in therapy by involving clients in the goal-setting process, which can lead to greater autonomy, self-efficacy, and motivation.

Behavior Change

1. Behavioral activation: GST can be used to activate behaviors that are essential for mental health, such as exercise, socializing, or practicing relaxation techniques.

2. Habit formation: GST can help individuals form healthy habits by setting specific, achievable, and consistent goals.

3. Reducing procrastination: GST can help individuals overcome procrastination by breaking down large tasks into smaller, manageable goals.

Treatment Outcomes

1. Improved treatment adherence: GST can improve treatment adherence by setting specific, achievable, and meaningful goals, which can lead to greater engagement and motivation.
2. Enhanced self-efficacy: GST can enhance self-efficacy by helping individuals set and achieve goals, which can lead to greater confidence and motivation.
3. Better mental health outcomes: GST can lead to better mental health outcomes by helping individuals set and achieve goals that are aligned with their values and priorities.

Criticisms

1. Overemphasis on Outcome Goals: GST has been criticized for overemphasizing outcome goals, which can lead to an overfocus on results rather than the process.
2. Neglect of Emotional and Social Factors: GST has been criticized for neglecting the role of emotional and social factors, such as emotions, relationships, and social support, in goal setting.
3. Limited Generalizability: GST may not be universally applicable, as cultural and individual differences can influence goal setting and motivation.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the theoretical perspectives of life satisfaction provide valuable insights into the factors that contribute to life satisfaction. Understanding these theories can inform strategies for enhancing overall well-being and life satisfaction. The integration of these perspectives highlights the complex of life satisfaction.

Recommendations

Recommendations based on the theoretical perspectives of life satisfaction is stated below:

- i. Set Achievable Goals: Setting specific, achievable goals can enhance self-efficacy and motivation.
- ii. Develop a Growth Mindset: Embracing challenges and viewing failures as opportunities for growth can increase self-efficacy.
- iii. Seek Feedback and Support: Receiving feedback and support from others can help build self-efficacy and confidence.
- iv. Practice Self-Care: Engaging in activities that promote physical and emotional well-being can increase life satisfaction.
- v. Set Meaningful Goals: Setting goals that align with personal values and passions can increase life satisfaction.
- vi. Focus on the Present: Focusing on the present moment and letting go of worries about the past or future can increase life satisfaction.

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