

## TYÖRYHMÄT/WORKSHOPS 3, la/Sat 22.11.klo: 9.30-10.35

Current directions in research on self-determination theory in Finland

1. Physical activity: The role of autonomous motivation and self-regulation strategies, Nurmi et al.
2. Elements of meaning in life: Autonomy, competence, relatedness, and benevolence as the four needs of meaningfulness, Martela et al.
3. How to combine organizational performance and employee well-being?, Leivo
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### **1. Physical activity: The role of autonomous motivation and self-regulation strategies, Johanna Nurmi (1), Ari Haukkala (1), Vera Araujo-Soares (2), Nelli Hankonen (1)**

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**Background:** Lack of physical activity brings about numerous unfavourable long term health outcomes and is therefore a major public health concern. There is consistent evidence that physical activity is better predicted with autonomous than controlled forms of motivation. Meta-analyses have also shown that self-regulatory techniques, such as planning or self-monitoring, are related to increased behavioural execution.

**Objectives:** A model integrating Self-Determination Theory and Control Theory was tested to examine the influence of autonomous motivation and self-regulatory techniques, including their interactions, on adolescents' physical activity. The relationship between the autonomy of motivation and action planning, coping planning and self-monitoring was compared to the leisure time physical activity.

**Methods:** Finnish adolescents (N =411, mean age 17.8 years) from ten upper secondary schools responded to an electronic survey during school hours. A follow-up measurement was conducted 3-5 weeks later.

**Results:** The stronger the autonomy, the stronger was the association with both physical activity and the use of self-regulation techniques. External regulation was not associated with physical activity nor self-regulation techniques. Action planning, coping planning and self-monitoring were found to partially mediate the relationship of autonomous motivation and physical activity. The quality of motivation has a similar effect on physical activity for both girls and boys even though boys had higher PA.

**Conclusions:** Research on the determinants of adolescents' physical activity increases understanding on this topic that has not been sufficiently studied and guides the way to effective intervention planning. Autonomous motivation and self-regulation techniques are complementary determinants of physical activity. The support of both can be recommended while targeting adolescents.

### **2. Elements of meaning in life: Autonomy, competence, relatedness, and benevolence as the four needs of meaningfulness, Frank Martela, PhD (1), Richard Ryan, PhD (2)**

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**Introduction:** Research interest in meaning in life has increased, but despite few theoretical suggestions (Baumeister, 1991; Wong, 2012), empirically tested models of the psychological constituents of meaningfulness have been lacking.

The present research examines the existence of four psychological elements of meaningfulness: autonomy, competence, relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2000), and benevolence (Aknin et al., 2013).

**Method & Results:** Two cross-sectional studies administered through Amazon Mturk (n = 332 & 151). First study showed that all four needs were positively correlated (0.65, 0.71, 0.61 and 0.68 respectively) with

presence of meaning in life (Steger et al., 2006). A multiple regression analysis with all four elements as independent variables and presence of meaning as dependent variable showed that all four needs had statistically significant ( $p < 0.03$ ) and independent effects on presence of meaning ( $R^2 = 0.61$ ,  $F(4, 327) = 126$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

Second study asked subjects to recall “the single most personally meaningful event” from the last two weeks. All four needs were positively correlated with purpose in life (0.74, 0.64, 0.48, and 0.65, respectively). A multiple regression analysis ( $F(4, 146) = 89$ ,  $p < .001$ ) showed that all four needs had independent and statistically significant effects on purpose in life ( $p < 0.02$ ) and together they were able to explain a remarkable amount of variance ( $R^2 = 0.71$ ).

The third study investigated meaningful work and aims to find support for the proposal that meaningful work would similarly be predicted by autonomy, competence, relatedness, and benevolence. The data has been gathered and is currently analyzed.

**Conclusion:** The three studies demonstrate that the proposed four elements of meaning are able to explain a significant amount of variance in meaning in life and meaningful work, both generally and event-specifically.

### **References**

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### **3. How to combine organizational performance and employee well-being? Jarmo Leivo, Aalto University, Finland**

In business organizations high motivation is believed to lead to perseverance in actions, to improved performance, and hopefully, to employee satisfaction and overall well-being. Though motivation is principally an internal phenomenon, external factors can shape it powerfully. Especially in situations where external conditions or the whole environment keeps on changing leading to continuous reorientation of goals, it is hard to retain motivation. When working for many years in high-technology telecommunications business-to-business industry, in which customer specific requirements and market priorities tended to change continuously forcing product development teams to re-adjust or completely rewrite their priorities on a continuous basis, I could not avoid wondering how all the talented people overcame these deeply

discouraging situations where they had to immediately drop their tools, grab new ones, and re-start working towards a new target.

Especially in the light of Self-Determination Theory (SDT; Deci & Ryan, 1985), which emphasizes the importance of satisfying one's basic needs particularly that of autonomy, to preserve vitality and well-being, this kind of interruptive and seemingly incoherent leadership, though necessary for the survival of the organization, is undoubtedly detrimental. On the other hand another renowned theory, the Goal-Setting Theory (GST; Locke & Latham, 1990), suggests that motivation, and further performance, can be assured by setting specific and difficult goals, and by giving continuous feedback on the work progress vis-à-vis the targets. Despite the continuously changing business environment in the example above, if the new target is difficult to achieve and specific in definition, the goal-setting should work well and motivate people to work hard for this new target, too. But can the perception of autonomy, and thus well-being, be preserved in these circumstances? Moreover, is there any leadership approaches or attitudinal elements, which could compensate the perceived loss of autonomy. Undoubtedly leadership can nurture motivation, but a thorough inspection of extrinsic and intrinsic motivation as well as hedonic and eudaimonic well-being may reveal that high work motivation does not necessarily guarantee enduring well-being. In my research the role of superior relationship quality (Leader-Member Exchange) and organizational commitment (OC) in compensating the impact of loss of autonomy on well-being (SDT) is studied. As a research premise, though not as a prerequisite, it is assumed that goals set in line with Goal Setting Theory, especially if they change rapidly due to difficult market conditions, lead to a perceived loss of autonomy.

#### **4. Autonomous motivation and knowledge-based work.** Minna Stenius, University of Helsinki

Knowledge is considered a critical organizational resource in today's knowledge-based economies. Knowledge-based organizations, however, face a dilemma: the operations are dependent on efficient use and exchange of knowledge, yet the organizations have limited control over it. The critical resource, knowledge, resides with the employees. Organizations can therefore not force its use, only facilitate it. For an individual knowledge sharing means contributing the hard-won expertise, the very essence of what makes one valuable for the organization, to common use. This may be risky and therefore for knowledge sharing to take place, an individual must perceive it as meaningful behavior and genuinely want to engage in it. It is therefore argued that autonomous motivation is highly important for knowledge sharing.

The purpose of the study was to examine the role of motivation and specifically motivational quality as per SDT (Ryan & Deci, 2000) (external, introjected, identified, intrinsic) for knowledge sharing in a Finnish expert organization. Furthermore, the role of psychological need satisfaction for the quality of motivation was examined.

Initial findings (n=200) suggest that identified motivation, i.e. autonomous extrinsic motivation, explains knowledge sharing more than any of the other qualities of motivation. Furthermore, the findings indicate that the psychological need satisfaction was more important for identified motivation than for the other motivational qualities. If confirmed, the result can be highly relevant for organizations.