

Concept: Self-determination theory

Brief overview of concept:

Self-Determination Theory (SDT; Deci & Ryan, 1994, 2008, 2012; Ryan & Deci, 2000, 2017) focuses on the innate psychological needs that drive human motivation and well-being. SDT posits that individuals have three basic psychological needs: Autonomy, Competence and Relatedness. The satisfaction of these needs is crucial for the development of intrinsic motivation and overall psychological well-being. Self-Determination Theory provides a comprehensive framework for understanding human motivation, emphasizing the importance of internalisation and the fulfilment of basic psychological needs for optimal functioning and well-being.

Autonomy: The need to feel in control of one's actions and choices. Autonomy involves acting in accordance with one's values and interests, rather than feeling controlled by external forces.

Competence: The need to experience effectiveness and mastery in one's activities. Competence is satisfied when individuals feel capable and successful in their pursuits.

Relatedness: The need for social connection and positive relationships with others. Feeling a sense of belonging and connection is essential for well-being.

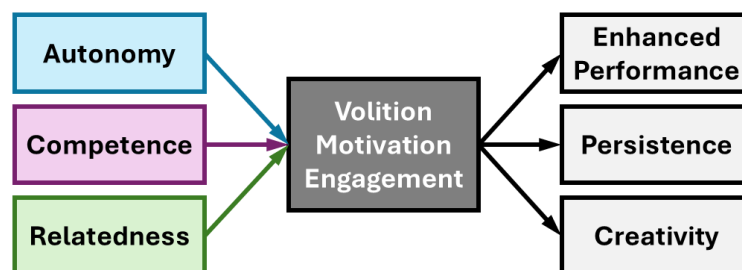


Figure 1: Features and effects of Self-determination theory

These factors lead to increased volition of taking on the requirements of learning, as well as motivation for learning and engagement with the learning process. In particular, motivation can be conceptualised (Ryan & Deci, 2000) on two complementary dimensions – the source of motivation, and the degree of autonomy of the learner (summarised in Figures 2 and 3).

Motivators: Intrinsic Motivation: Engaging in an activity for its inherent satisfaction and enjoyment. Intrinsic motivation is driven by the individual's interest and personal satisfaction.

Extrinsic Motivation: Engaging in an activity for external rewards or to avoid punishment. Extrinsic motivation can be further categorized into external regulation, introjected regulation, identified regulation, and integrated regulation, representing varying degrees of internalisation.

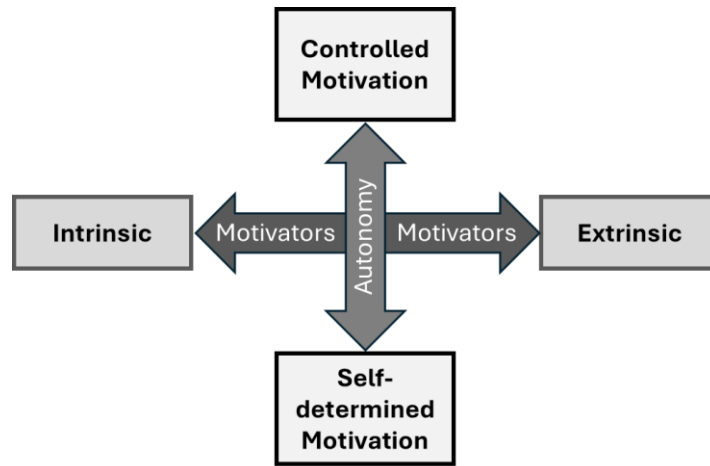


Figure 2: Complementary dimensions of motivators and autonomy. Motivators impact upon the degree of motivation, which in turn is perceived as either controlled externally (low autonomy), or self-determined (high autonomy).

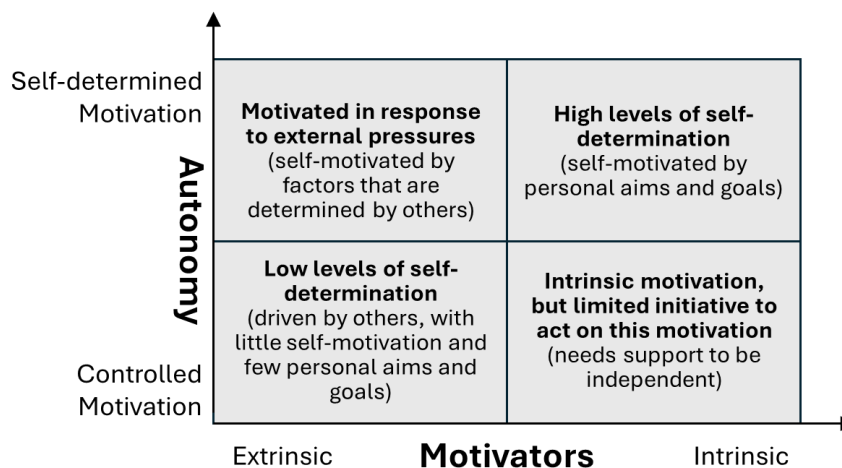


Figure 3: Interaction of the motivators and autonomy. Motivators influence the degree of independence, and the autonomy factors influence the setting of personal goals, or the goals set by others.

Autonomy: Autonomy ranges from *low autonomy* (controlled motivation) to *high autonomy* (self-determined motivation). Individuals may develop different ‘causality orientations’ based on their predominant motivational factors. Autonomy-oriented individuals are more likely to have self-determined motivation, while control-oriented individuals may rely on external factors for motivation.

The goal of self-determination is to foster more self-determined forms of motivation for sustainable and fulfilling behaviour. Assessment has a fundamental role to play in the development of self-determination, but enhancing student agency and the ability to self-evaluate and self-regulate learning. The ‘student agency’ element of EAT is of particular relevance in this theory. Sub-dimensions, such as AL3 (clarifying student entitlement) and AL4 (highlighting the requirements of the discipline) emphasise the importance of encouraging the learner to have investment in their learning process, and identify with the assessment and its potential impact. Similarly, the design of assessments that are inclusive (AD3) and meaningful to the student (AD2), with a clear purpose and parameters (AL2, AD1) emphasise the relevance

of the assessment to the student, and are more likely to encourage engagement and the personal development of intrinsic goals and personal aims.

The investment in the learning, and sense of agency are enhanced by the student feeling they have a degree of autonomy and impact on the assessment process as a whole, so the inclusion of the student in the review process (AD4) and active participation in feedback through peer and self-feedback activities (AF3 and AF4) underline the importance of the individual student in the learning process, and underpin self-determination.

Developing assessments that are relevant, interesting to the student, and align with their long-term development, supports a student in the development of goals and in their intrinsic motivations to succeed, and therefore enhance the extent to which they are self-determined independent learners.

References

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