



University of Messina

ISSN 2612-4033

Journal of Clinical & Developmental Psychology

Journal homepage: <http://cab.unime.it/journals/index.php/JCDP/index>



Editorial

Gugliandolo M.C.* 

¹ *Department of Clinical and Experimental Medicine, University of Messina, Italy*

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this issue of JCDP is to contribute to the expansion of research in the theoretical field of Self-Determination Theory (SDT) and, in particular, to the deepening of the role of the satisfaction and frustration of basic psychological needs in the developmental trajectories. Through an organized collection of mini studies, conducted by young psychology students, we aim to expand knowledge on SDT by taking into consideration more social environments and different levels of analysis.

Keywords: *Self-Determination theory; Basic Psychological needs; Motivational processes*

* *Corresponding author:* Maria Cristina Gugliandolo, *Department of Clinical and Experimental Medicine, University of Messina, Italy*

E-mail address: mgugliandolo@unime.it

<https://doi.org/10.6092/2612-4033/0110-2859>

Introduction

Promoting healthy and optimal growth is certainly one of the main goals of developmental psychology. If people have a natural tendency to shape and optimize their own life conditions, developing towards a more coherent functioning on both an intra and interpersonal level, this process does not happen automatically. Under the influence of a series of individual and contextual factors, in fact, a person could also run into maladaptive outcomes and ill-being during his growth path.

For many years, research has focused on individual vulnerability and on the factors responsible for maladaptation, with the aim of suggest effective interventions in cases of atypical development. However, recently, positive psychology has gained more widespread, aiming to shifting the focus no longer on disease or psychopathology, but on well-being and on its related constitutive factors, such as gratitude, empathy, etc. Nevertheless, are mechanisms responsible for the healthy tendency to growth and for the vulnerability to maladaptation different or could be explained through a single underlying principle?

Following this second perspective, Self-determination theory (SDT) is a comprehensive theory that finds in the satisfaction and the opposite frustration of the three basic psychological needs, the cause of both the good and bad functioning of each person (Deci, & Ryan, 2002). SDT, in fact, postulates that the psychological well-being of every human person is based on three fundamental needs: competence, autonomy and relatedness. When these needs are satisfied, the person walks towards integrity and psychological thriving; when they are frustrated, the person tends to fragmentation and ill-being (Ryan, & Deci, 2017). Likewise, SDT recognizes that there are social contexts that can be supportive, depriving or frustrating, depending on whether the socialization agents (parents, teachers, co-workers, etc.) actively promote, are indifferent to or hinder the satisfaction of these basic psychological needs. It follows that, depending on the contexts and the personal experience of satisfaction / frustration of needs, it is possible to reach more or less adaptive developmental outcomes (Vansteenkiste, & Ryan, 2013). Furthermore, since these psychological needs seems to be universal and transversal to every social context, the satisfaction of basic psychological needs could be the key to explain the emergence of any psychological outcome at multiple levels of analysis and with any reference sample. Research is trying to move in this direction and, consequently, to demonstrate the comprehensiveness and applicability of this theory.

In this perspective, we wish that JCDP may contribute to the expansion of research on basic psychological needs taking into consideration more social environments and different analysis levels. Furthermore, this issue of JCDP sets a second objective: offer a space to young psychology students of University of Messina. In fact, in this issue we present an organized collection of mini-studies entirely conducted and written by psychology students during the course of a workshop activity. By

experiencing firsthand the construction and drafting of a research, we wish students could understand the effective value of psychology, as a discipline that continually asks itself questions, in order to promote well-being and optimal growth.

This current issue of JCDP opens with the article “*Basic psychological needs’ antecedents and outcomes: a contexts analysis from a Self-Determination Theory perspective*” by Sireno, Papa, Nocito and Meneghini. The article aims to deepen the theoretical framework of SDT, as a theory on human personality and motivational processes. Six mini-theories, that compose SDT, will be described and, above all, the role of basic psychological needs in promoting well-being will be deepened, also through the analysis of the main supportive and frustrating environments. The second article “*Family Functioning, Basic Needs and Psychological Well-Being*” presents some studies focused on family contexts and in particular on parenting, highlighting how both at the levels of children and parents, a supportive family functioning and non-controlling parenting practices can promote satisfaction of needs and well-being. The paper “*Inter-role conflict in Work and Family: is a Healthy Balance Possible?*”, instead, aims to analyse the inter-role conflict between work and family requests within the theoretical framework of SDT, offering new insights starting from motivational processes and satisfaction of psychological needs. The fourth article “*Parenting Strategies: how they Affect Adolescents’ Degree of Life Satisfaction*” focuses on psychological wellbeing of adolescents, highlighting the relation between emotional dysregulation and controlling and unsupportive parenting practices, taking a SDT perspective. Finally, the article “*Dysfunctional Eating Behaviors in Adolescents: A SDT Perspective*” presents some studies related to dysfunctional eating behaviors, analysing their relationships with controlling parenting practices and with low satisfaction of needs.

References

- Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2002). Overview of self-determination theory: An organismic dialectical perspective. *Handbook of self-determination research*, 3-33.
- Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2017). *Self-determination theory: Basic psychological needs in motivation, development, and wellness*. Guilford Publications.
- Vansteenkiste, M., & Ryan, R. M. (2013). On psychological growth and vulnerability: basic psychological need satisfaction and need frustration as a unifying principle. *Journal of psychotherapy integration*, 23(3), 263. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0032359>