



Teaching, Motivation, and Self Determination Theory

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Overview

COVID-19, Students and Faculty

Teaching and mental health

Self Determination Theory

Applications to practice

COVID-19, Students and Faculty

Student Mental health

- 71% indicated increased stress, anxiety, and depressive thoughts. Stressors included:
 - Fear and worry about personal and family health;
 - Difficulty concentrating;
 - Disruptions to sleeping;
 - Decreased social interactions;
 - Increased concerns on academic performance.
- To cope, participants:
 - sought support from others
 - adopting either negative or positive coping mechanisms.

(Son et al., 2021)

COVID-19, Students and Faculty

Student Mental health

- Being a woman, having fair/ poor general health status, being 18 to 24 years old, spending 8 or more hours on screens daily, and knowing someone infected predicted higher levels of psychological impact when risk factors were considered simultaneously. (Browning et al., 2021)

COVID-19, Students and Faculty

Faculty Impact:

- Overwhelming and exhausting. Participants described as being stuck in a cycle of never-ending repetitiveness, sadness and loss, or managing life, teaching and other professional responsibilities with little sense of direction (Van Leeuwen, Veletsianos, Johnson & Belikov, 2021)
- Three views emerged: Techies who like to teach (the view most positive in relation to teaching online); Overwhelmed as human beings (populated by caregivers); and It's about what cannot be done online (those who are focused on the limitations of technology and abilities for online instruction). Generally, faculty felt frustrated with their ability to best support their students within the online format (Ramalo, 2020).

COVID-19, Students and Faculty

Faculty and student perspectives:

- Findings indicate that students and faculty agreed that the move to online instruction was necessary and that online learning is less effective than face-to-face instruction.
- Faculty, however, misjudged the degree to which students were concerned about balancing work, school, and family obligations and changes to course material. (Ryan, 2020)

Key Issues

Student Issues:

Increased personal mental health ill-being

Challenges balancing work, school, and family obligations

Pedagogical response:

Focus on teaching that supports student well being

Theorized through Self Determination Theory

Self Determination Theory

Introduction:

Self determination theory is a psychological theory of well-being.

SDT is concerned with motivation and its relationship to personal well being.

It posits three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness.

Self Determination Theory

SDT is a meta-theory supported by six research-based mini theories:

Cognitive Evaluation Theory

Organismic Integration Theory

Causality Orientations Theory

Basic Psychological Needs Theory

Relationships Motivation Theory

Goal Contents Theory

Self Determination Theory

A theory of motivation (and well-being)

It looks at intrinsic and extrinsic motivation to act and how our experiences support—or thwart—three basic needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness.

- Empirically tested
 - Lab experiments: Self assessment scales; observed choice activities
 - Field studies: Observational and self assessment scales

Self Determination Theory

Posits three basic psychological needs:

- Autonomy (self sufficiency, empowerment, and volition)
- Competence (our ability to exercise, expand, and express our capacities and talents)
- Relatedness (having a sense of belonging)

Self Determination Theory

Basic Psychological Needs Theory:

- People whose basic psychological needs (for autonomy, competence, and relatedness) are met experience more energy, vigour, vitality and reduced anxiety.
- Activities that frustrate or thwart one's basic psychological needs (autonomy, competence, or relatedness) result in depleted vitality and increased anxiety and ill-being.
- Motivational: Experiences stemming from intrinsic motivation support autonomy, competence and relatedness.

Self Determination Theory

Cognitive Evaluation Theory (motivation)

Considers factors that support or undermine our intrinsic motivation:

Behaviours that are driven by rewards experienced internally. These might include the satisfaction of completing a task, a sense of achievement, or finding something interesting.

This form of motivation is internal to the individual, as they are naturally energized to engage in these behaviours regardless of any extrinsic (external) reward such as a grade or award.

Self Determination Theory

Locus of causality

When we are intrinsically motivated, we perceive an internal locus of control (we are of our own volition deciding to engage in a behaviour). The concept of Flow highlights the power of intrinsic motivation.

When we are extrinsically motivated, we perceive an external locus of control (the volition for the behaviour comes from outside of ourselves—it may feel compelled and not the result of our own choices). Think about most approaches to teaching...

Self Determination Theory

Relationships Motivation Theory

Relationships are a core part of our psychological wellbeing and SDT. The same three psychological needs that support our well-being are also necessary components of the relationship we are engaged in. Satisfaction of our need for relatedness increases our wellness while frustration of relatedness results in greater illbeing.

Student experiences in the pandemic demonstrate a particular challenge here as isolation is a key part of their experience.

Self Determination Theory

Goal Contents Theory

Goal contents theory looks at how life goals relate to wellness. It stems from work looking at extrinsic life goals (wealth, image, respect, fame) and intrinsic life goals (personal growth, relationships, and contributing to the community).

A focus on extrinsic goals tends to lead to lower levels of well-being and self-value, as extrinsically driven individuals define value in controlled areas rather than through autonomous, integrated values.

Summary

Self Determination Theory			
Motivation	Wellness		
Intrinsic	Autonomy	Competence	Relatedness
Extrinsic	Control	Achievement / attainment	Objectification

Self Determination Theory

Implications for Teaching

SDT mini-theories	Link to individual, social and organizational context
Autonomy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strengthen student choice<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Types or frequency of assignments to complete• Flexible deadlines• Choice in topics or problems to solve (PBL)
Competence	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Focus work on demonstrating competence / formative assignments<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mastery assessment• Revision of work• Ungraded assignments (doesn't mean unassessed)• Flipped classrooms
Relatedness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strengthen the community in class<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Flexible group work (ungraded; open ended; discussion based)• Strengthen community between classes<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Study groups around flipped classwork• Faculty availability
Incentives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reduce emphasis on extrinsic factors<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Grades (and grade penalties); GPA• Hard deadlines• Competition (curved grading)

SDT Applied

My Teaching (EDUC 817: Education Policy)

SDT mini-theories	Link to individual, social and organizational context
Autonomy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strengthen student choice<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Two papers (policy analysis; policy proposal on any topic)• A reflective paper on their own personal policy beliefs• Flexible deadlines (target deadlines set, all flexible)• Choice in topics on weekly writing prompts• Choice on homework: weekly quizzes or chapter exercises
Competence	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Focus work on demonstrating competence / formative assignments<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mastery assessment: unlimited revisions / ungraded feedback• Scored but ungraded quizzes with unlimited re-takes• Grade evaluation meeting for final grade
Relatedness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strengthen the community in class<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Flexible group work (ungraded; open ended; discussion based)• Strengthen community between classes<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Encouraged voluntary study groups• Classes based on between class reading• Faculty availability before and after class and by appointment
Incentives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reduce emphasis on extrinsic factors<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ungraded assignments; final grades negotiated• No hard deadlines• Grades individualized (not curved or comparable)

Further reading

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