COME ON, DO THE LOCOMOTION: WHY INTRINSIC MOTIVATION MIGHT NOT BE ENOUGH (SUMMARY)

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Principal Topic

The tendency to act or not act is captured in the variable locomotion, which is associated with individuals who are “high energy ‘doers’ and ‘go-getters’ who welcome the opportunity to act in relative disregard of the costs and who loathe merely waiting and watching rather than acting” (Kruglanski et al., 2000: 796). Self-regulatory factors facilitate high levels of performance in many contexts by guiding and monitoring goal progress. Self-control influences efforts to reach goals by helping individuals avoid distracting temptations and regulate competing motives so as to shift, effectively, between goals (Hofmann et al., 2012). Thus, the tendency to “take action” (locomotion), combined with the ability to refrain from actions that are not directed toward goal progress (self-control), contribute to goal progress, which leads to career success and well-being.

Method

Participants were selected from a nationwide list of university alumni who are business founders/owners. Participants completed an online survey (69% response rate, n=233). The survey included established validated measures for self-control (Tangney et al., 2004), locomotion (Kruglanski et al., 2000), entrepreneurial motives (Birley & Westhead, 1994; Carter et al., 2003), career success (Abel & Spurk, 2009), and subjective well-being (Deiner et al., 1985). To indicate goal progress, participants reported progress on their top three work-related goals. Control variables included age, sex, education, and ethnicity.

Results and Implications

Structural equation modeling indicates that intrinsic motives are positively significantly related to locomotion. Locomotion is significantly positively related to goal progress and career success, and fully mediates the relationship between intrinsic motives and goal progress. Self-control is significantly positively related to goal progress, and goal progress is significantly positively related to career success. Career success is significantly positively related to subjective well-being. Results suggest that intrinsic motives alone are not adequate for goal progress -- high levels of locomotion are also necessary. This finding contributes to self-determination theory by identifying why some individuals fail to act regardless of having high levels of intrinsic motivation. Practical implications suggest that helping entrepreneurs increase their self-regulatory skills can enhance their career success, leading to better performance and higher levels of subjective well-being.

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