

**The moderating role of goal importance between goal attainment and well-being among
Central-Eastern European Migrants in the United Kingdom**

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Abstract

The present study aims to investigate what goals migrants pursue and how the attainment of these goals relates to their well-being. Next to the relation between goal attainment and well-being, the study also investigates the role of goal importance on this relationship. Previous research showed that striving for and attaining goals positively influences well-being, but some contradicting findings regarding the role of importance on this relationship raised questions about how the role of goal importance holds across different types of goals. To investigate this, we set out to generate a categorization of the aspirations that migrants pursue using a grounded theory. After that, we posited that for every generated category, the attainment of goals within that category would be associated with increased well-being and decreased ill-being. Furthermore, we posited that the relationship would be stronger when goals are perceived as more important. We tested our hypothesis by asking 288 Central-Eastern European migrants living in Great Britain to report three of their current aspirations, the extent to which they perceived their goals as important, and to what extent they already attained their self-set goals. The categorization generated a nice overview of migrants' aspirations. The regression analysis resulted in significant support for the hypotheses that goal attainment was associated with an increase in well-being or a decrease in ill-being in every goal category. The second hypothesis that importance moderated the relationship between goal attainment and well-being was supported in one category. Furthermore, we discuss the theoretical and practical implications, limitations, and future directions to get a better understanding of the relationship between migrant goal attainment and wellbeing and the role of importance on this relationship.

**The moderating role of goal importance between goal attainment and well-being among
East European Migrants in the United Kingdom**

The quest to find the answer to what makes us happy has been of all times. To this day, it is something that interests lots of people and research (Tatarkiewicz, 1966). In the past decades, a vast body of research has been done to explore the link between life goals and well-being. According to such research evidence, the understanding of the mechanisms between life goals and well-being might help us get closer to the answer on how to pursue happiness (Schmuck & Sheldon, 2001).

Goal theories and well-being

There is a broad conceptual and empirical foundation for the positive influence of successful goal-pursuit on well-being (Brunstein, 1993; Diener, 1984; Emmons, 1986; Little, 2014). Goals can be defined as internal representations of desired states, where the states are defined as outcomes, events, or processes (Austin & Vancouver, 1996). These personal strivings are often hierarchically organized, meaning that they usually come with subgoals, for instance, when someone aspires to pursue a certain career, a subgoal might be to get a degree for a study related to that career (Kruglanski et al., 2002). Goals reflect cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects of human nature (Little, 1983), and therefore it can be useful to learn about goals and under which conditions they predict optimal well-being.

Multiple humanistic and existential theories state that well-being is promoted by satisfying individuals' innate needs and thrives to personally grow (Maslow, 1954 & Ryff, 1987). By setting, progressing, and attaining goals that enhance the aspects above, well-being increases substantially (Schmuck & Sheldon, 2001). Another way through which goals influence well-being is through goal outcome emotions. This is because working towards a goal is

associated with anticipatory emotions (e.g., “If I pass this course, I will be happy”). Once a goal is attained this causes goal outcome emotions (e.g., “Because I passed this course, I am happy” Bagozzi et al., 1998). According to McGregor and Little (1998), goal attainment and goal progress can positively impact well-being because goal attainment causes the experience of efficacy, which relates to happiness, positive affect, and life satisfaction.

McGregor and Little (1998) also pose another effect of goal progress, they suggest that goal progress can positively influence feelings of meaningfulness when goals are integrated with one’s identity. By goals that are integrated with one’s identity McGregor and Little (1998) meant that when goals are consistent with the important facets of the identity of an individual, for instance, if a person has a communion-oriented identity, this person would experience more meaning when their goals are communal. In line with this notion Sheldon and Kasser posed something similar to McGregor and Little (1998) by stating that ‘not all progress is beneficial,’ (1998, pp. 1319) by which they meant that if the goal someone attains does not represent their inner values or interests, their mood and wellbeing might not be enhanced and the more goals are consistent with oneself, the more they benefit from the goal attainment. Sheldon and Kasser (1998) suggested the explanation that attaining goals that are more reflective of inner values and interests, is satisfying the psychological needs more than goals that are not, or less consistent with oneself. Satisfying these personal needs enhances the individual experiences of personal growth which subsequently increases their well-being.

Goal importance

The self-concordance theory (Sheldon & Elliot, 1999) is based around the concept of consistency with the self that is mentioned above, and it suggests four degrees of internalization. The degree of internalization ranges from external motivation which is driven by external

rewards to intrinsic motivation which exists out of pleasure and curiosity. The more goals are internalized (e.g., self-concordant), the more well-being, positive mood, and life satisfaction increase (Sheldon & Elliot, 1999). Therefore, it can be suggested that the more an individual deems a goal as important because they are personally meaningful, the relationship between goal attainment and wellbeing would be stronger.

In some domains, it appears that goal importance indeed is a moderating factor. Harris et al. (2003) found, with a diary study, that the affective well-being of employees increased more when the employees deemed their goals important. However, it seems that the effect varies over different types of goals. Toth-Bos et al. (2019) found that the congruence between goal attainment and goal importance predicted greater well-being in some of their studies, but the results varied. In two of the four studies, they found that the attainment of intrinsic goals is associated with greater wellbeing if the goals are deemed important. However, in another study, they found no interaction effect and they even found a negative effect of goal importance in another study, meaning that higher goal importance was associated with lower well-being. Since this finding was against their expectation, more research on the moderating effect of goal importance could be done in which more or other variables are considered. An example of a variable that could be interesting to consider would be different goal categories since different types of goals might influence well-being differently.

Goal categories

One of the most commonly used goal categorizations consists of intrinsic and extrinsic goals. Goals that have tendencies to enhance personal growth and self-actualization are also referred to as intrinsic goals (Kasser & Ryan, 1996). In contrast, extrinsic goals are based on obtaining approval from external factors. Examples of these types of goals are social recognition

or material achievement, which are dependent on the reaction of someone else (Kasser & Ryan, 1996). In widespread research, it has been found that the attainment of intrinsic goals is associated with greater wellbeing, but for attaining extrinsic goals this effect is less strong. Furthermore, when importance is considered, these findings showed that placing strong importance on extrinsic goals was associated with a decrease in well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2000). According to the Self-Determination Theory, the satisfaction of three needs that are necessary for personal growth and well-being can explain this effect. These three needs autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Since intrinsic goals are strongly related to these psychological needs whereas extrinsic goals are not, intrinsic goal attainment is associated with an increase in well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Next to the distinction between extrinsic and intrinsic goals, there have been many attempts to categorize goals over time. For instance, Maslow (1954) posed five needs which he organized hierarchically. These needs are physiological, safety, social, esteem, and self-actualization. Other approaches involved looking at life domains (Austin & Vancouver, 1996). An example of this is the categorization proposed by Winell (1987), she organized the goals into 6 domains: career, family, leisure, social-community, personal growth, and materials. In 1984, Wicker et al. also attempted to structure goals into categories by asking participants of a study to rate goals. The results showed 6 labels: interpersonal concern, competitive ambition, exploration-play, balanced success, economic status, and intellectual orientation. After another cluster analysis of the responses, they found four corresponding clusters: Security, personal growth, transpersonal orientation, and tranquility seeking. When looking at both the categorization of Maslow and Wicker, some overlap can be seen. For instance, Maslow's 'self-actualization

corresponds with Wicker's 'personal growth', 'esteem' with 'competitive ambition', 'social' with 'interpersonal concern,' and 'safety' with 'security' (Wicker et al., 1984).

These are a few examples of the many attempts to categorize goal content by analyzing pre-fixed goals. Presenting respondents with fixed categories is the customary strategy in goal research. Asking participants to report their own goals is less commonly used, even though self-set goals might be more ecologically valid. Using goal categorizations might be useful to investigate how a certain type of goal, when attained or/and valued, relates to wellbeing.

Migrant goal pursuit and well-being

Research into the relationship between successful goal pursuit and well-being might be interesting in a migrant population. Firstly, this is a group that is taking a big step in striving for a better life by maximizing their goal potential (Toth-Bos et al., 2019), but also because there are gains to be made in the subjective well-being of migrants. The increase in happiness after migrating varies between migrants and migrant streams, but only on a few occasions, their level of happiness is as high as that of natives (Hendriks & Berger, 2015). It is important to focus on this issue since we are living in a globalizing world and already 3.6% of the global population are migrants (International Organization of Migration [IOM] 2020) and in the European region approximately 10% of the population is estimated to be either migrants or refugees (World Health Organization Europe, 2020).

The decision to migrate is impactful and often done in hopes to improve life, but migrating is associated with decreased mental health, increased depression rates, and more alcohol and drug use (Carballo et al., 1998). Even though migrants might experience the societal and political environment as improved, their subjective well-being does not necessarily improve and is often lower than that of natives (Bălțătescu, 2007). One of the explanations suggested by

Hendriks (2015), is that migrants focus more on achieving external goals, like earning money, than intrinsic goals, such as improving relationships with other people. This can, according to some research like that of Ryan and Deci (2000), lead to a decrease in well-being. Therefore, it might be beneficial to explore what kind of goals do increase well-being when they are valued and attained by migrants.

Research into migrant goal-pursuit is scarce, but a few studies explored the relationship between goal pursuit and acculturation. For example, Chirkov et al. (2007) used the self-determination construct with regards to the motivation to migrate as a predictive tool to predict cultural adaptation. Within their sample of students who went to study abroad, they found that the ones who were self-determined to make that choice adapted better to the new culture than those that were less self-determined. Toth-Bos et al. (2020) posited that intrinsic goal attainment increased the wellbeing of migrants through the process of acculturation and that that effect is larger when goals are perceived as important. As mentioned before, in their research the mediating role of acculturation was supported, but the goal importance had different effects on the relation in the four studies that were included, which was against their expectations. Also, when considering goal theories like the self-concordance theory (Sheldon & Elliot, 1999), it would be expected that goals that are integrated with the self, and therefore important to a person, is associated with a greater increase in well-being than less important goals. Because of this discrepancy between the expectancy about the role of importance and the findings of Toth-Bos et al. (2020), taking some other variables into account might help us get a better understanding of the role of importance on the relationship between migrant goal-attainment and well-being. For instance, the study was done on intrinsic goals using pre-fixed goal categories.

Therefore, asking migrants themselves to report their own goals might give a more realistic picture of the interplay of attainment and importance on well-being.

The current study

In this paper, we will investigate what kind of goals migrants pursue and categorize them. Furthermore, we want to explore the effect of goal importance on the relationship between migrant goal attainment and well-being and compare this between these different categories. We will form these categories by analyzing goals that migrants came up with themselves instead of previous research where pre-fixed goal categories were used. Knowledge about the role of goal content and goal importance might help understand better if some goals are better to pursue or value than others. This could be beneficial to increase migrant well-being.

We will test the following hypotheses on all goal categories:

Hypothesis 1a: An increase in migrant goal attainment is associated with an increase in migrant well-being.

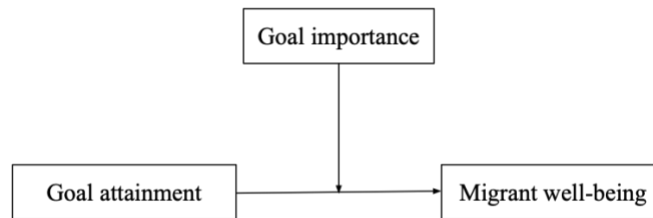
Hypothesis 1b: An increase in migrant goal attainment is associated with a decrease in migrant ill-being.

Hypothesis 2a: The positive relationship between migrant goal attainment and well-being is stronger when goals are perceived as more important.

Hypothesis 2b: The negative relationship between migrant goal attainment and ill-being is stronger when goals are perceived as more important.

Figure 1

The proposed model of the effects between the variables goal attainment and well-being (and ill-being).



Method

Participants and Procedure

The study included 288 first-generation migrants living in the United Kingdom (70% female, M age = 34.55 SD = 10.43). The participants originally came from Central-Eastern European countries (e.g., 61% from Poland, 12% from Hungary, 6% from the Czech Republic). They had been living in the United Kingdom for approximately 10 years and around 56% had been living in another country than their country of origin before they migrated to the United Kingdom. At the time of the study, 84 percent of the participants had a paid occupation and 70 percent had at least a high school degree. The study consisted of a questionnaire about some demographic details, personal goals, level of goal attainment, goal importance, depression, well-being, and acculturation. The participants were selected via the Qualtrics Panel platform, which is recognized as a highly trusted online sampling source (Roulin, 2015). Also, the respondents were rewarded with money for their participation. The study received ethical approval from the university (17444-P).

Measures

Self-set Goal importance: Participants were asked to state three current life goals by answering 3 questions (e.g., “I aspire to...”; “I want to...”; and “My goal is to...”). Also, they

were asked to use a 7-point scale (1 = *not at all*; 7 = *very much*) to rate how much they perceived the goal as important. Furthermore, Cronbach's alpha is .6

Self-set Goal attainment: After rating the importance of their life goals, they were asked to use another 7-point scale (1 = *not at all*; 7 = *very much*) to indicate to what extent they attained their goals. Furthermore, Cronbach's reliability is .7.

Well-being: Subjective well-being was measured with the satisfaction with life scale (SWLS; Diener et al., 1985). This scale measures life with 5 items of which "in most ways, my life is close to my ideal" is an example. The scale uses 7 points (1 = *Strongly Disagree*; 7 = *Strongly Agree*), thus a higher score indicates a greater life satisfaction. The scale has good reliability since its Cronbach's alpha is .89.

Ill-being: The GAD-7 scale was used to measure ill-being (Spitzer et al., 2006). This scale contains 7 items to assess generalized anxiety disorder. An example of such an item is: "How often have you been bothered by worrying too much about different things in the past two weeks." Participants can answer on a scale from 1 (*never*) to 4 (*nearly every time*). The scale is reliable since Cronbach's alpha is .95.

Strategy of Analysis

The current study employed a grounded theory methodology (Glaser & Strauss., 1967; Chun Tie et al., 2019). A grounded theory sets out to generate a theory by analyzing data quantitatively and qualitatively. This generation is done by comparing the data systematically. The method exists out of purposive sampling, collecting data, coding, and then creating the theory (Chun Tie et al., 2019). In this study, we wanted to have more information about migrant goals and the effect of importance and attainment on migrant well-being. The effects of attainment and importance could be hypothesized beforehand because of already existing theories but getting a view on the types of

goals that migrants strive for has hardly been done. Therefore, a migrant group was sampled (purposive sampling) and by asking them to give three current life goals the data was collected (data collection). After collecting the data, we started coding goals in multiple steps (coding). First, goals were coded in small categories to align similar goals, for instance, the goal ‘to get a job’ was coded ‘getting a job’. Then we coded the goals with middle categories to narrow them down some more, like coding ‘getting a job’ with ‘occupational’. At this point, we narrowed the 867 goals down to 25 categories. Lastly, we narrowed it down even more by generating broad categories, for instance, the ‘occupational’ example was coded ‘professional.’ After each step, we checked if the lower categories still fitted under the bigger categories and if changes needed to be made. This eventually resulted in a clear overview of the goals that migrants pursue (creating the theory). The current study used these categories to explore if attaining goals from certain categories of goal content leads to a bigger increase in well-being than others and how the possible moderating effect of importance holds across the categories.

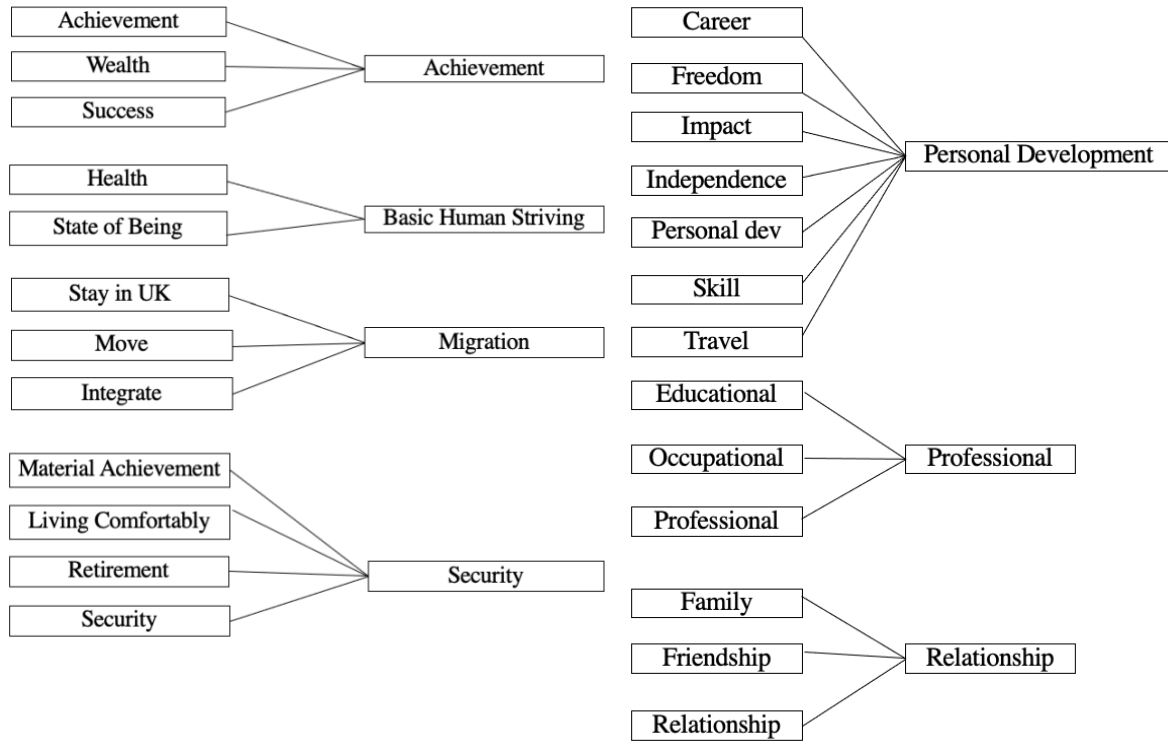
Results

Goal content analysis

Using the grounded theory, we generated categories by coding the goals three times. As stated before, this resulted in small categories, middle categories, and broad categories. Eventually, seven broad goal categories were generated. These were: Achievement, Basic Human Striving, Migration, Personal Development, Professional, Relationship, and Security. These seven categories contain 25 middle categories and are shown in figure 2. The middle categories consist of small categories, which subsequently consist of the original goals that were reported by the migrants. For instance, the original goal ‘earn lots of money’ was streamlined with similar goals

to the small category ‘becoming rich’. After that, the ‘becoming rich’ goals were labeled ‘wealth,’ which finally were labeled with the broad category ‘achievement.’

Figure 2 Illustration of middle categories and broad categories.



Preliminary Analysis and Hypothesis testing

The following section provides the results of the descriptive analysis and correlations of the scales for every category. These are shown in Tables 1-7. Furthermore, the results of the regression analysis of the relation between the variables goal attainment, goal importance, and well-being (and ill-being) are explained. For the analysis of our hypotheses, we used the Process macro of Hayes in SPSS (model 1). We entered the perceived goal attainment as the predictor variable, the SWLS and GAD-7 scores as outcome variables, and perceived goal importance as the moderating variable. We used a filter to explore the relationship between the variables above

for every category that resulted from the data analysis. The regression tables can be found in the appendix (Table 8-15).

Achievement

Correlations of the SWLS and GAD-7 with goal attainment and importance for the goal category *achievement* are shown in table 1.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations of Variables for the Goal Category Achievement.

	Mean	SD	SWLS	GAD7	Importance	Attainment
SWLS	3.91	1.42				
GAD7	2.11	.75	-.67**			
Importance	6.27	1.07	-.10	.28*		
Attainment	3.19	1.63	.53**	-.38**	.24*	

Note. $p^* < .05$; $** < .01$ (two-tailed significance).

The regression analysis revealed a significant main effect for the relation between goal attainment and well-being ($b = .53, p < .00$) and ill-being ($b = -.23, p < .00$) within the goal category *Achievement*. This confirms hypothesis 1a and 1b. Furthermore, no moderating effect of importance was found on the relation between attainment and well-being ($b = -.07, p = .44$) or ill-being ($b = .03, p = .54$). This disconfirms hypotheses 2a and 2b this category. Lastly, we found importance has a negative effect on well-being ($b = -.39, p < .01$) and a positive effect on ill-being ($b = .31, p < .00$) (see table 8 for the regression analysis).

Basic Human Striving

Correlations of the SWLS and GAD-7 with goal attainment and importance for the goal category *basic human striving* are shown in table 2.

Table 2*Descriptive Statistics and Correlations of Variables for the Goal Category Basic Human Striving.*

	Mean	SD	SWLS	GAD7	Importance	Attainment
SWLS	4.2	1.3				
GAD7	2.03	.74	-.34**			
Importance	6.78	.60	.16	-.25 **		
Attainment	4.31	1.58	.42**	-.42**	.20*	

Note. $p^* < .05$; $** < .01$ (two-tailed significance).

The regression analysis revealed a significant main effect for the relation between goal attainment and well-being ($b = .22, p < .00$) and ill-being ($b = -.19, p < .00$) within the goal category *basic human striving*. This confirms hypothesis 1a and 1b. Furthermore, no moderating effect of importance was found on the relation between attainment and well-being ($b = .11, p = .43$) or ill-being ($b = .10, p = .21$). This disconfirms hypotheses 2a and 2b this category. (see table 9 for the regression analysis).

Migration

Correlations of the SWLS and GAD-7 with goal attainment and importance for the goal category *migration* are shown in table 3.

Table 3*Descriptive Statistics and Correlations of Variables for the Goal Category Migration.*

	Mean	SD	SWLS	GAD7	Importance	Attainment
SWLS	4.21	1.17				
GAD7	1.79	.74	-.67**			

Importance	6.29	.81	.01	-.09	
Attainment	4	1.5	.46*	-.45*	.07

Note. $p^* < .05$; $** < .01$ (two-tailed significance).

The regression analysis revealed a significant main effect for the relation between goal attainment and well-being ($b = .36, p < .05$) and ill-being ($b = -.22, p < .05$) within the goal category *Migration*. This confirms hypothesis 1a and 1b. Furthermore, no moderating effect of importance was found on the relation between attainment and well-being ($b = .13, p = .66$) or ill-being ($b = -.01, p = .96$). This disconfirms hypotheses 2a and 2b this category. (see table 10 for the regression analysis).

Personal Development

Correlations of the SWLS and GAD-7 with goal attainment and importance for the goal category *personal development* are shown in table 4.

Table 4

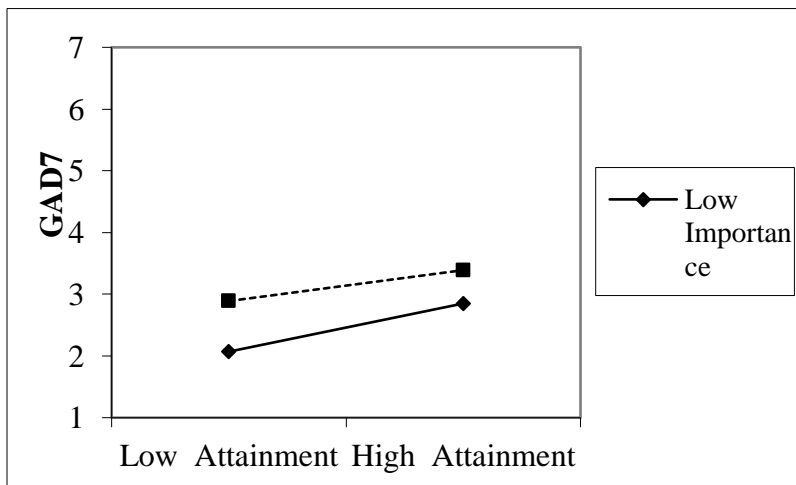
Descriptive Statistics and Correlations of Variables for the Goal Category Personal Development.

	Mean	SD	SWLS	GAD7	Importance	Attainment
SWLS	4.23	1.3				
GAD7	2.03	0.72	-0.36**			
Importance	6.44	.89	-.06	.10		
Attainment	3.67	1.63	.21**	-.29**	.08	

Note. $p^* < .05$; $** < .01$ (two-tailed significance).

The regression analysis revealed a significant main effect for the relation between goal attainment and well-being ($b = .16, p < .00$) and ill-being ($b = -.13, p < .00$). This confirms hypotheses 1a and 1b within the goal category *personal development*. For the relationship between goal attainment and ill-being, results showed that importance moderates the effect ($b = -.07, p = .03$). Personal achievement goal attainment predicted GAD7 for people with high goal importance (effect = -0.17 , 95% CI $[-0.22, -0.1]$), and for people with low goal importance (effect = -0.09 , 95% CI $[-0.16, -0.03]$). The relationship between the attainment of personal development goals and GAD7 appeared to be stronger when those goals were believed to be more important (see Table 11 and Figure 3) rather than less important. This confirms hypothesis 2b and disconfirms 2a for this category.

Figure 3. GAD7 as a function of the importance and the attainment of 'Personal Development' goals.



Professional

Correlations of the SWLS and GAD-7 with goal attainment and importance for the goal category *professional* are shown in table 5.

Table 5

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations of Variables for the Goal Category Professional.

	Mean	SD	SWLS	GAD7	Importance	Attainment
SWLS	4.16	1.37				
GAD7	2	.79	-.36**			
Importance	6.47	.78	-.13	.03		
Attainment	3.88	1.64	.20*	-.04	.21*	

Note. $p^* < .05$; $** < .01$ (two-tailed significance).

The regression analysis revealed a significant main effect for the relation between goal attainment and well-being ($b = .20$, $p < .05$), but not for ill-being ($b = -.02$, $p = .71$) within the goal category *professional*. This confirms hypothesis 1a and disconfirms 1b. Furthermore, no moderating effect of importance was found on the relation between attainment and well-being ($b = .05$, $p = .57$) or ill-being ($b = -.06$, $p = .29$). This disconfirms hypotheses 2a and 2b this category. (See table 12 for the regression analysis).

Relationship

Correlations of the SWLS and GAD-7 with goal attainment and importance for the goal category *relationship* are shown in table 6.

Table 6

Descriptive Statistics and Correlation of Variables for the Goal Category Relationship.

	Mean	SD	SWLS	GAD7	Importance	Attainment
SWLS	4.46	1.46				
GAD7	1.87	.67	-.22*			
Importance	6.72	.64	.02	.04		

Attainment	4.29	1.84	.39**	.13	.30**
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Note. $p^* < .05$; $** < .01$ (two-tailed significance).

The regression analysis revealed a significant main effect for the relation between goal attainment and well-being ($b = .33, p < .00$), but not for ill-being ($b = -.06, p = .11$) within the goal category *relationship*. This confirms hypothesis 1a and disconfirms 1b. Furthermore, no moderating effect of importance was found on the relation between attainment and well-being ($b = .04, p = .71$) or ill-being ($b = -.03, p = .65$). This disconfirms hypotheses 2a and 2b this category. (See table 12 for the regression analysis).

Security

Correlations of the SWLS and GAD-7 with goal attainment and importance for the goal category *security* are shown in table 7.

Table 7

Descriptive Statistics and Correlation of Variables for the Goal Category Security.

	Mean	SD	SWLS	GAD7	Importance	Attainment
SWLS	3.91	1.48				
GAD7	1.99	.70	-.38**			
Importance	6.54	.85	.01	.18*		
Attainment	3.29	1.86	.49**	-.33**	.05	

Note. $p^* < .05$; $** < .01$ (two-tailed significance).

The regression analysis revealed a significant main effect for the relation between goal attainment and well-being ($b = .38, p < .00$) and ill-being ($b = -.13, p < .00$) within the goal

category *security*. This confirms hypothesis 1a and 1b. Furthermore, no moderating effect of importance was found on the relation between attainment and well-being ($b = .08, p = .31$) or ill-being ($b = -.02, p = .55$). This disconfirms hypotheses 2a and 2b this category. Lastly, we found importance has a negative effect on ill-being ($b = .16, p < .01$) (see table 14 for the regression analysis).

Discussion

In this study, we investigated what types of goals migrants pursue, the relation between goal attainment and well-being (and ill-being), and whether goal-importance influenced this relationship. This was analyzed for all goal categories that were generated from a collection of self-set goals reported by migrants. We stated two hypotheses, which are both divided into 2 parts. Hypothesis 1a was that increased goal attainment is associated with increased well-being and 1b that goal attainment is associated with decreased ill-being. Hypothesis 2a was that the positive relationship between goal attainment and well-being is stronger when the goals are perceived as more important. Hypothesis 2b was that the negative relationship between goal attainment and ill-being is stronger when goals are perceived as more important.

The exploratory attempt to categorize migrant goals resulted in a unique overview of migrant goals which can be found in figure 2. Furthermore, results revealed significant positive associations between goal attainment and well-being, which confirms hypothesis 1a for all 7 categories. For all categories except *professional* and *relationship*, a negative association was found between goal attainment and ill-being, which confirms hypothesis 1b for these categories. For hypothesis 2a, no evidence was found since the results revealed that goal importance did not influence the relationship between goal attainment and well-being. However, for one category, *personal development*, goal importance did influence the relationship between goal attainment

and ill-being, which confirms hypothesis 2b for this category. So, the more one perceives a personal development goal as important, the more this impacts the relationship between goal attainment and ill-being. Next to the findings that resulted from the hypothesis testing we also found that importance was associated with well-being and ill-being in the categories *achievement* and *security*. Goal importance was negatively associated with well-being and positively with ill-being in the category *achievement*, meaning that higher importance is associated with lower well-being and higher ill-being. In the category *security*, importance was negatively associated with ill-being, meaning that higher importance is associated with lower ill-being.

Limitations and Future Directions

One limitation of the current study is that when categorizing the goals that migrants pursue it was not always clear what the motive was for pursuing the goal. For instance, when someone has the goal to lose weight, this could be because the person has the intrinsic motivation to feel better, but it could also be for the extrinsic motivation that others would like the person's appearance more. Another example is when one wants to earn money, it could be that this person wants to be rich and its external motivation or it could be that this person needs it to buy food and survive. These differences in motivation which are not always clear make it harder to categorize the goals optimally. Even though we were precise and based our categorization on language differences that suggested the motive and on comparing the goals with other goals, the categorization could be improved when also the motives would be completely clear. A strength of the current study is that we used a big data set consisting of 867 goals reported by 288 participants, which is supporting the validity of the research. To our knowledge, there has not been a categorization of migrants' aspirations using such a big amount of data. Next to the strength that the study is based on a big amount of data and many

participants, the data consists of self-set goals which, compared to the traditional pre-set goals, has high ecological validity. This makes that our study provides a unique overview of goals that migrants pursue which to our knowledge, has not been done before. In future directions, a next step might be to increase the validity of the categorization by asking migrants to report their motivation to pursue a goal. Next to this, the current research showed associative relationships, but it might also be interesting to see if this relationship is also causal. For instance, this could be done with multiple measuring moments and a control group.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

The present study has both theoretical and practical implications. Regarding the theoretical implications, the categorization has some overlap with other attempts to categorize goals. For example, the widely known model of Maslow has some similarities with our generated categorization (Maslow, 1954). Maslow stated physiological, safety, social, esteem, and self-actualization needs. Our goal category basic human striving overlaps with physiological goals since both entail health, security is similar to safety, relatedness overlaps with social, achievement has some similarities with esteem, and lastly, personal development overlaps with self-actualization. We generated two more categories namely professional and migration. The similarities could indicate that our generated categorization is valid, meaning that it accurately reflects the goals of migrants and that these goals reflect moderately acknowledged basic human needs.

Another theoretical implication is that the results of this study are consistent with previous research into the relationship between goal pursuit and well-being since a positive relation was found between goal attainment and well-being (Brunstein, 1993; Diener, 1984; Emmons, 1986; Little, 2014). Next to this, we found indications that the effects of goal

importance on well-being and ill-being vary across the categories. For the category personal development, goal importance moderated the relationship between goal attainment and ill-being. It indicates that the more people perceive a *personal development* goal as important, the stronger the attainment of that goal is associated with a decrease in ill-being. This is in line with some of the studies in the research of Toth-Bos et al. (2020) and the research of Harris et al. (2003). However, more research should be done to see if this is also applicable to other goal categories and to strengthen the evidence for this effect on personal development-oriented goals.

Furthermore, the finding that increased importance is associated with increased well-being in the category *security* possibly indicates that valuing security-related goals could be beneficial for well-being, regardless of attaining those types of goals. Lastly, for achievement-related goals, results showed that higher importance is associated with lower well-being and higher ill-being. This finding supports the research of Ryan & Deci. (2000), which shows that placing importance on extrinsic goals is associated with a decrease in well-being. In the current research, the achievement category mainly consists of goals that could be regarded as extrinsic, for example, to become wealthy or to become successful. The findings can be interpreted as supportive of existing literature into the positive effects of goal pursuit on well-being since it supports that focusing on certain types of goals increases well-being more than others (Sheldon & Kasser, 1998). A possible explanation for the findings might be that the goals that are deemed important show the aspects of life which an individual values and maybe being occupied with ‘the right things’ increases purpose in, or satisfaction with life. This explanation however should be further examined, for instance by using a longitudinal research design, a control group, and by asking participants to also report the motivation behind the goals.

Concerning the practical implications, the categorization of the self-set goals that migrants pursue is to our knowledge a unique conceptualization of migrants' aspirations. This can be a useful perspective for societies, governments, and institutions that aim to aid the well-being of migrants.

Conclusion

Taken together, the current study supports previous research into goal pursuit and well-being. It broadens the research field by showing that also in a migrant population goal attainment is associated with increased well-being. However, for understanding the role of importance more research should be done. Even though we found multiple indications that the role of goal importance is a valuable factor when looking at the relationship between goal pursuit and well-being, the moderating effect was shown in one of the 7 categories. Lastly, the categorization of the goals is a unique feature of the present study that provides a clear overview of migrants' aspirations.

Appendix

Table 8

Regression Analysis Results for Assessing the Relationship Between Goal Attainment and Goal Importance on Well-Being (SWLS) and Anxiety (GAD-7) for the Goal Category Achievement.

DV	Predictor	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	LLCI	ULCI
SWLS	Constant	3.93	1.5	26.84	.00*	3.63	4.22
	Goal Attainment	.53	.09	5.75	.00**	.34	.71
	Goal Importance	-.39	.16	-2.51	.01*	-.70	-.08
	Goal Att. X Goal Imp.	-.07	.09	-.77	.44	-.25	.11
GAD	Constant	2.10	.08	26.41	.00**	1.94	2.26
	Goal Attainment	-.23	.05	-4.53	.00**	-.33	-.13
	Goal Importance	.31	.09	3.61	.00**	.14	.48
	Goal Att. X Goal Imp.	.03	.05	.62	.54	-.07	.13

Note. $p^* < .05$; $** < .01$ (two-tailed significance).

Table 9

Regression Analysis Results for Assessing the Relationship Between Goal Attainment and Goal Importance on Well-Being (SWLS) and Anxiety (GAD-7) for the Goal Category Basic Human Striving.

DV	Predictor	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	LLCI	ULCI
SWLS	Constant	4.17	.11	38.26	.00**	3.95	4.38
	Goal Attainment	.33	.07	4.75	.00**	.19	.46
	Goal Importance	.24	.21	1.15	.25	-.17	.65

	Goal Att. X Goal Imp.	.11	.15	.79	.43	-.17	.40
GAD	Constant	2.02	.06	33.39	.00**	1.90	2.14
	Goal Attainment	-.19	.04	-4.97	.00**	-.27	-.11
	Goal Importance	-.13	.12	-1.16	.24	-.36	.09
	Goal Att. X Goal Imp.	.10	.08	1.25	.21	-.06	.26

Note. $p^* < .05$; $** < .01$ (two-tailed significance).

Table 10

Regression Analysis Results for Assessing the Relationship Between Goal Attainment and Goal Importance on Well-Being (SWLS) and Anxiety (GAD-7) for the Goal Category Migration.

DV	Predictor	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	LLCI	ULCI
SWLS	Constant	4.20	.23	18.45	.00**	3.72	4.67
	Goal Attainment	.36	.15	2.32	.03*	.04	.68
	Goal Importance	-.05	.29	-.16	.88	-.65	.55
	Goal Att. X Goal Imp.	.13	.29	.44	.66	-.47	.73
GAD	Constant	1.79	.14	12.38	.00**	1.49	2.10
	Goal Attainment	-.22	.10	-2.25	.04*	-.43	-.02
	Goal Importance	-.05	.18	-.30	.77	-.44	.33
	Goal Att. X Goal Imp.	-.01	.18	-.04	.96	-.39	.37

Note. $p^* < .05$; $** < .01$ (two-tailed significance).

Table 11

Regression Analysis Results for Assessing the Relationship Between Goal Attainment and Goal Importance on Well-Being (SWLS) and Anxiety (GAD-7) for the Goal Category Personal Development.

DV	Predictor	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	LLCI	ULCI
SWLS	Constant	4.23	.08	51.04	.00**	4.07	4.39
	Goal Attainment	.16	.05	3.11	.00**	.06	.26
	Goal Importance	-.10	.09	-1.11	.27	-.29	.08
	Goal Att. X Goal Imp.	.06	.06	1.08	.28	-.05	.18
GAD	Constant	2.03	.04	45.70	.00**	1.95	2.12
	Goal Attainment	-.13	.03	-4.62	.00**	-.18	-.07
	Goal Importance	.09	.05	1.77	.08	-.01	.19
	Goal Att. X Goal Imp.	-.07	.03	-2.18	.03*	-.13	-.01

Note. $p^* < .05$; $** < .01$ (two-tailed significance).

Conditional Effect of the Predictor at Values of the Moderator.

	<i>Index</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>LLCI</i>	<i>ULCI</i>
Goal Attainment if Goal Importance is low	-.09	.03	-.16	-.03
Goal Attainment if Goal Importance is high	-.16	.06	-.22	-.10

Note. $p^* < .05$; $** < .01$ (two-tailed significance).

Table 12

Regression Analysis Results for Assessing the Relationship Between Goal Attainment and Goal Importance on Well-Being (SWLS) and Anxiety (GAD-7) for the Goal Category Professional.

DV	Predictor	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	LLCI	ULCI
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SWLS	Constant	4.15	.13	31.56	.00**	3.89	4.41
	Goal Attainment	.20	.08	2.44	.02*	.04	.36
	Goal Importance	-.29	.18	-1.63	.11	-.64	.06
	Goal Att. X Goal Imp.	.05	.10	.57	.57	-.14	.25
GAD	Constant	2.01	.08	25.60	.00**	1.86	2.17
	Goal Attainment	-.02	.05	-.37	.71	-.11	.08
	Goal Importance	.01	.11	.08	.94	-.20	.22
	Goal Att. X Goal Imp.	-.06	.06	-1.05	.29	-.18	.05

Note. $p^* < .05$; $** < .01$ (two-tailed significance).

Table 13

Regression Analysis Results for Assessing the Relationship Between Goal Attainment and Goal Importance on Well-Being (SWLS) and Anxiety (GAD-7) for the Goal Category Relationship.

DV	Predictor	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	LLCI	ULCI
SWLS	Constant	4.45	.13	34.26	.00**	4.19	4.71
	Goal Attainment	.33	.07	4.70	.00**	.26	.47
	Goal Importance	-.19	.25	-.76	.45	-.26	.31
	Goal Att. X Goal Imp.	.04	.11	.37	.71	-.07	.27
GAD	Constant	1.88	.06	29.22	.00**	1.75	2.01
	Goal Attainment	-.06	.04	-1.60	.11	-.13	-.01
	Goal Importance	.06	.13	.47	.64	-.19	.31
	Goal Att. X Goal Imp.	-.03	.06	-.45	.65	-.14	.09

Note. $p^* < .05$; $** < .01$ (two-tailed significance).

Table 14

Regression Analysis Results for Assessing the Relationship Between Goal Attainment and Goal Importance on Well-Being (SWLS) and Anxiety (GAD-7) for the Goal Category Security.

DV	Predictor	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	LLCI	ULCI
SWLS	Constant	3.90	.11	36.18	.00**	3.69	4.12
	Goal Attainment	.38	.06	6.48	.00**	.26	.50
	Goal Importance	-.00	.13	-.04	.97	-.26	.25
	Goal Att. X Goal Imp.	.08	.07	1.03	.31	-.07	.22
GAD	Constant	1.99	.05	37.06	.00**	1.88	2.10
	Goal Attainment	-.13	.03	-4.34	.00**	-.19	-.07
	Goal Importance	.16	.06	2.48	.01*	.03	.29
	Goal Att. X Goal Imp.	-.02	.04	-.60	.55	-.10	.05

Note. $p^* < .05$; $** < .01$ (two-tailed significance).

Figure 2 Illustration of middle categories and broad categories.

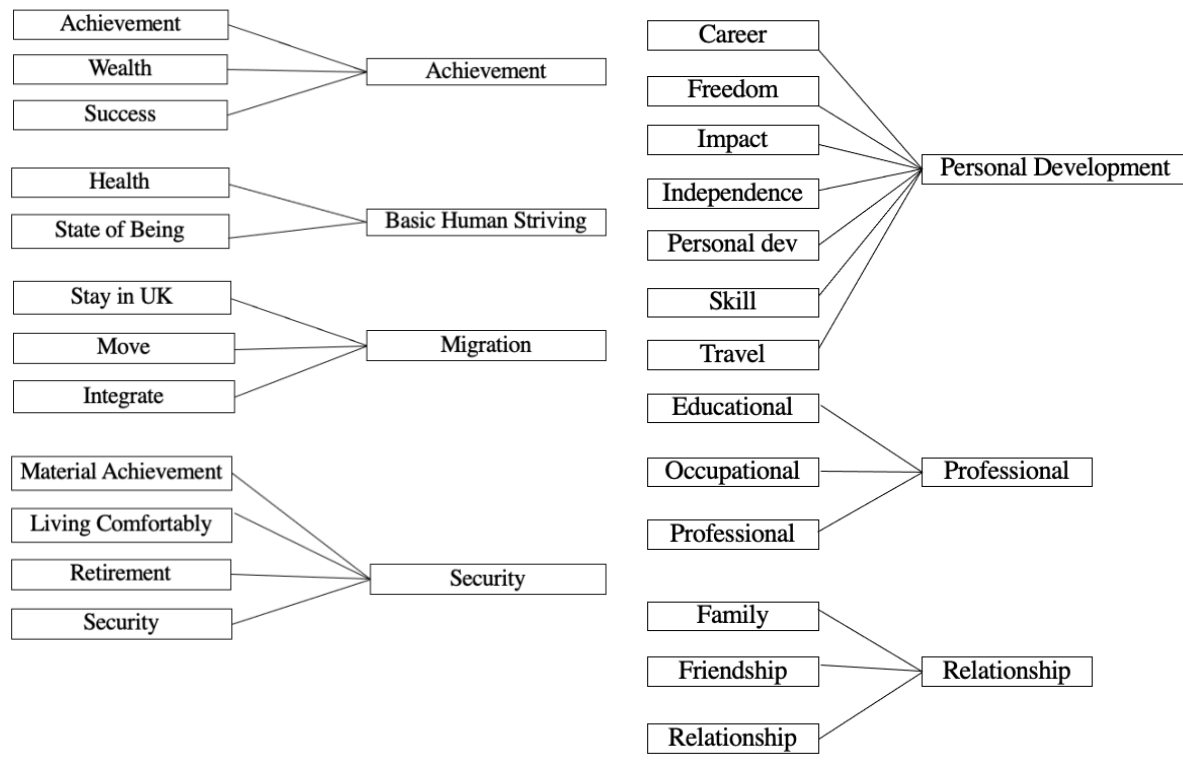
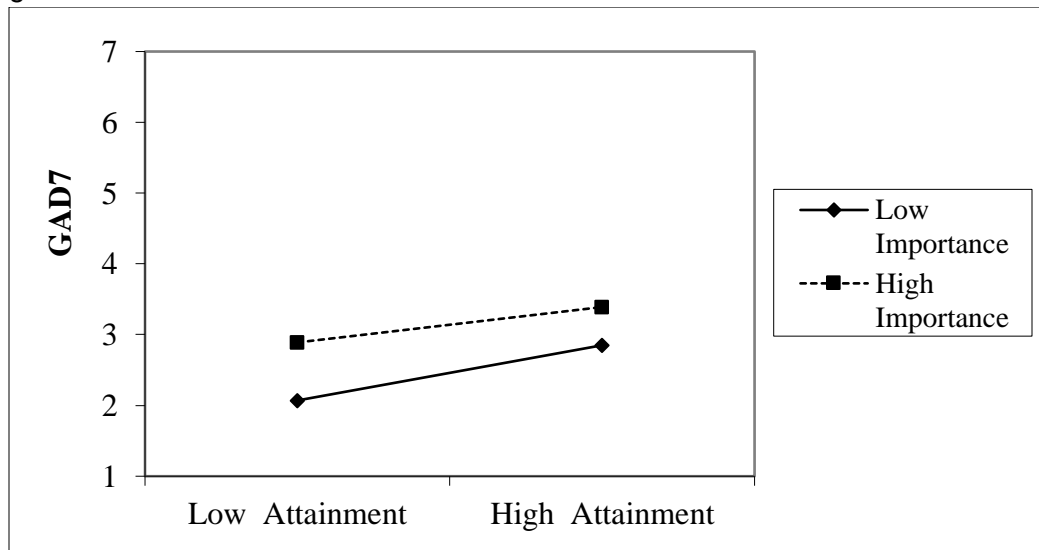


Figure 3. GAD7 as a function of the importance and the attainment of 'Personal Development' goals.



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