

**The Role of Goal Attainment and Goal Importance in Migrant Well-Being: An
Exploration of Migrant's Self-Set Goals**

Sophia Meyer

S3195279

Department of Psychology, University of Groningen

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Supervisor: dr. Ágnes Tóth-Bos

Second evaluator: dr. Burkhard Wörtler

In collaboration with: Kor Bolhuis, Laura Fabricius, Alexandra Schumacher, Lotta
Spielmann, and Andra Todorut
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Abstract

Setting and attaining goals that are personally important has been widely shown to improve one's well-being and may thus be a good approach for migrants to help them adjust to their host society. Previous research on goal pursuit lacked a clear picture of how goal contents may differ depending on the demographic sampled. For this reason, in a mixed-method research design ($N = 288$) we first categorized the goals of migrants, then we subsequently investigated how the attainment and the importance of these goals influence the well-being of migrants, and further explored how the different contents of their self-set goals might influence their well-being. We propose that the attainment of goals has a positive effect on migrant well-being, and that goal importance moderates this effect, as well as that this relationship may be more prevalent in some rather than other goal categories. Results revealed that generally, the attainment of goals, irrespective of their content, had a positive effect on migrants' well-being. Furthermore, we found that migrants who placed more importance on goals related to achievement, such as striving for wealth and success, experienced less well-being. We conclude that the attainment of goals is generally beneficial to one's well-being, but that one should be careful not to place too much importance on goals related to achievement. Lastly, theoretical and practical implications, as well as future research directions, are discussed.

Keywords: well-being, self-set goals, goal attainment, goal importance, migration

The Role of Goal Attainment and Goal Importance in Migrant Well-Being: An Exploration of Migrant's Self-Set Goals

Migrating to a different country can come with many cultural, social, economic, and psychological changes highly variable to the individual (Berry, 1997). Although migrants often leave their home country in the hopes to better their lives (Tóth-Bos et al., 2019), previous research revealed that migration can decrease one's well-being (Liebkind & Jasinskaja-Lahti, 2000), can lead to increased alcohol and drug use (Caetano & Clark, 2003; Polednak, 1997), and heightened depression (Bhugra, 2004).

When confronted with the challenges that migrating to a different country brings, how can migrants increase their well-being? The answer may lie in the pursuit of goals: Emmons (1986) found that individuals who pursue goals they personally value report higher well-being than those who are less goal-driven. Similarly, Sheldon & Elliot (1999) argued that goal attainment acts as a top-down influence on well-being. They found that individuals pursuing goals that are self-concordant (i.e., that align with one's personal interests and values) will put more effort into achieving these goals, making goal attainment more likely and thus experiencing increased feelings of self-efficacy, bringing about approval from others and positive life circumstances.

Goal attainment has been widely proven to increase well-being (Elliot et al., 1997; Sheldon & Kasser, 1998; Sheldon & Elliot, 1999), but there has been less research on how goal importance, namely how important the goal is to the individual, might moderate this relationship. In the context of migration, Yang et al. (2018) found that students experienced more subjective well-being when the decision to move abroad reflected their intrinsic motivation. Similarly, Tóth-Bos et al. (2018) posited that the more intrinsic goal attainment and the importance of that goal are in agreement, the more satisfied individuals are in their lives.

Beyond the interplay of goal attainment and goal importance, research revealed that the content of the goal matters too. Beach and Mitchell (1990), as well as Winell (1987), referred to goal content consisting of the life domain (e.g., family, work, financial) and the underlying motive of a goal (e.g., achievement, affiliation, power). Austin and Vancouver (1996) argued that because goals are inherently dynamic, assessing goal content is difficult, with much research in the last decades attempting to categorize goals. An established theory comes from Kasser and Ryan (1996), who categorized goal contents as either intrinsic, i.e., related to loving relationships, community, health, and personal growth, or extrinsic, i.e., related to one's image, fame, and wealth. Since commonly used measurements like the Aspiration Index use a set of goals that are not generated by the participants themselves (Tóth-Bos et al., 2018), we focused our research on asking migrants to report some of their goals without any given pre-fixed goal category. Conducting more self-set goal category assessments might add valuable information.

With this in mind, we aim to test how the attainment of goals affects the well-being of migrants and if goal importance strengthens or weakens this effect. Furthermore, we will explore if the categorization of goals can give insight into which goals may have a greater positive effect on migrant well-being.

Goal Attainment and Well-Being

Most people, no matter in which social context they grow up and later find themselves in, feel a need to be proactive in reaching their life goals. The self-determination theory (SDT) posits that people are striving for the fulfillment of three basic innate needs, namely competence, autonomy, and relatedness. According to this theory, attaining goals that fulfill these innate needs will increase well-being, whereas extrinsic goals do not (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Indeed, Kasser (2002) found that the more materialistic people's goals are (e.g., money and fame), the higher they score on depression, anxiety, and other psychological problems.

Although some researchers argued that all goal striving is beneficial (Emmons, 1986), Sheldon et al. (2004) found that even though extrinsic goals can be associated with the satisfaction of basic needs, it is important to keep them in balance with intrinsic goals, otherwise, they may negatively influence well-being. Indeed, when comparing individuals with intrinsic motivation to those who are more controlled by external forces, individuals with intrinsic motivation demonstrated more persistence and creativity (Deci & Ryan, 1991; Sheldon et al., 1997), as well as heightened self-esteem (Deci & Ryan, 1995) and well-being (Ryan et al., 1995). These are potentially important attributes that could facilitate migrants to reach their goals. However, when migrating, many goals and challenges one faces may be more external, may it be expectations of significant others or the community one belongs to. Ryan & Deci (2000) argued that the internalization of these expectations, for example by understanding their value in regards to one's own goals, would help to internalize them, thus enhancing one's well-being and assimilation in one's social group (Ryan et al., 1997). Although Ryan & Deci (2000) theorized that how individuals express their competence, autonomy, and relatedness would differ depending on their sociocultural contexts, the need to fulfill them is universal across cultures. In conclusion, the internalization of culturally endorsed values could motivate migrants to attain their goals in the host country while simultaneously increasing their well-being.

Goal Importance and Well-Being

Tóth-Bos et al. (2018) posited that having personally important life goals can sometimes be more meaningful than the attainment of those goals. They found that for goals related to personal growth, the importance of the goal added more to a person's well-being than the attainment of said goal. However, they also found that the opposite was true for extrinsic goals, where the attainment of those goals added more to a person's well-being than the importance of the goal. Both goal importance and goal attainment may influence how

people feel about their personal projects (i.e., goals). Research by Palys and Little (1983) has shown that individuals who were satisfied with their lives had personal projects that were important to them at the moment and which were less difficult to attain and more enjoyable compared to individuals that were more dissatisfied with their lives. They further posited that dissatisfied individuals often had projects that were more important in the long-term, but which were less enjoyable and more difficult to attain. Since migrating to a different country can impose difficult challenges, sharing responsibilities in the pursuit of goals might help, when possible. Palys and Little (1983) found that individuals high in life satisfaction reported having more support from their social network in terms of practical help for the execution of projects as well as mental support compared to those low in life satisfaction. Yetim (1993), who followed up on Palys' and Little's findings that people are more satisfied with life when they are engaged in projects that are important to them, argues that they might reflect western values. They could not replicate the findings in a Turkish sample, with a possible explanation being that unstable economic conditions make it harder for people to fulfill their individualistic needs, having to place more importance on the fulfillment of their and their families basic needs, such as housing and their children's educational expenses. Perhaps because the attainment of these important long-term goals requires continuous hard work in the face of economic difficulty, dissatisfaction among said individuals is more likely. Additionally, Mayser et al. (2008) argued that trying to attain personally important goals, but being unsuccessful in doing so, can lead to dissatisfaction and a sense of longing. Tóth-Bos et al. (2018) suggested that even though having important intrinsic goals makes people happy, placing too much importance on intrinsic goals, for example relating to personal growth or relationships, can become burdensome and have a negative effect on well-being. They further posited that generally, the benefits that come from attaining goals may be stronger for

personally important goals, but further research is needed to understand the moderating role of goal importance in regard to goal attainment and well-being.

Goal Content and Well-Being

Some researchers claimed that the motives behind goals are more important than their content (Emmons, 1986; Carver & Baird, 1998), meaning that an individual striving for an extrinsic goal like fame and an individual striving for an intrinsic goal like spiritual growth would experience the same level of well-being as long as both would feel equally autonomous in their goal pursuit. Sheldon et al.'s (2004) findings contradicted that claim, who argued that both the what (i.e., striving for intrinsic or extrinsic goals) as well as the why (i.e., autonomous goals or goals controlled by others) of motives independently influence well-being. Simply put, goal content matters. These findings could be important in regards to migrant well-being, indicating that goals of connection, personal growth, and contributing to the host society would have a more positive impact on migrants' lives than extrinsic goals like money, fame, and influence (Sheldon et al., 2004). Yet other researchers argued that extrinsic goals can certainly influence one's satisfaction as well, e.g., when comparing one's current financial state to one's financial goal. The motivation to attain this goal would promote behaviors that improve one's financial situation, which in turn would positively influence one's well-being (Crawford Solberg et al., 2002). Tóth-Bos et al. (2018) tested these opposing hypotheses and found that extrinsic goal attainment and extrinsic goal importance were neither negatively nor positively related to well-being, meaning that they neither added benefit nor detriment to one's well-being. Further research is needed to examine if some goal contents may be more beneficial to migrants than others.

Previous research on goals, as well as their attainment and importance, were usually conducted using the Aspiration Index questionnaire (Kasser & Ryan, 1996), which is comprised of pre-fixed goal categories related to intrinsic goals (e.g., personal growth, loving

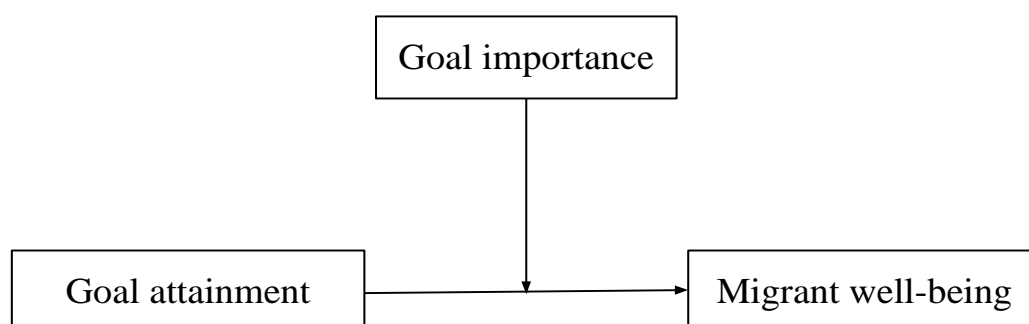
relationships, community, health) and extrinsic goals (e.g., fame, wealth, and one's image). These studies often use samples of college students (Sheldon & Elliot, 1999; Ryan et al., 1999), which raises the question if the goal contents that emerged in these studies might be of relevance to migrants, who may have different life circumstances and goal motivations when arriving in their host country: Tartakovsky and Schwartz (2001) posited that the motivation to migrate can be summarized in three overarching goal motivations, namely preservation goals (e.g., physical, social, and psychological security), self-development goals (e.g., developing one's knowledge, skills, and abilities), and materialistic goals (e.g., financial well-being and amassing wealth). Since we cannot assume that the pre-fixed goal categories resonate with our respective sample of migrants, we focused our research on self-set goal categories, i.e., goals that are generated by the migrants themselves and thus allow for a more accurate picture of goal contents they deem personally important. In line with previous findings, we posit the following hypotheses, which we are going to compare throughout different goal categories:

Hypothesis 1. Goal attainment has a positive effect on migrant well-being per goal category.

Hypothesis 2. Goal importance positively moderates the effect of goal attainment on migrant well-being per goal category.

Figure 1

The Proposed Model of the Effects of Goal Attainment and Goal Importance on Well-Being.



Methods

Participants and Procedure

A total of 334 first-generation migrants living in the United Kingdom participated in this study. The final sample consisted of the migrants who gave complete answers only ($N = 288$, 70.2% female, $M_{age} = 34.6$, $SD = 10.43$). Respondents were from Central and Eastern Europe (e.g., 61% were from Poland, 11.8% from Hungary, 6.3% from the Czech Republic). Of the respondents, 83.7% had a paid job at the time, and 57.3% had obtained a bachelor's degree or higher. Furthermore, respondents had lived in the United Kingdom for an average of almost 10 years ($M = 9.62$, $SD = 6.43$). First, the respondents were asked to answer some demographic questions. After, they were asked to write down three of their current goals in life, as well as their perceived level of importance of said goals and to what extent they have attained them. Additionally, their level of well-being was measured. The recruitment of respondents was done through the Qualtrics Panel platform and respondents were paid for their participation. The ECP code of this study is 17444-P.

Measures

Self-set Goal Importance. Respondents were asked to think of three of their current life goals by completing three statements (e.g., "I aspire to..."; "I want to..."; and "My goal is to...") and to rate their respective importance on a scale from 1 (*not at all important*) to 7 (*very important*). Cronbach's alpha was $\alpha = .59$. This value might be low because the questions were qualitative in nature (Shenton, 2004). Additionally, the cutoff point for Cronbach's alpha is often lower than 0.7 for short and single-item questionnaires (Wanous & Hudy, 2001).

Self-set Goal Attainment. After indicating their perceived importance, respondents were asked to rate the degree to which they had attained the three respective goals on a scale from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*very much*). Cronbach's alpha was $\alpha = .7$.

Well-Being. We used the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS; Diener et al., 1985) as a self-report measure, a 5-item assessment for life satisfaction ($\alpha = .91$). One example question was “In most ways, my life is close to my ideal”. Respondents were asked to what degree they agree with each statement on a scale of 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*completely*).

Strategy of Analysis

The goal of the current research was to not only analyze the role goal attainment and goal importance play in relation to migrant well-being but to define goal contents and analyze how they relate differently to migrant well-being. Since there is not much known about goal contents in regards to migrant well-being (Tóth-Bos et al., 2019), our research was exploratory in nature. Grounded Theory (GT) is a methodology that is flexible and allowed us to explore a construct that is not well known yet. GT can be used to construct a theory from data by systematically analyzing it via comparative processes (Chun Tie et al., 2019). We oriented ourselves on Chun Tie et al.’s research design framework to generate our goal categories. Firstly, we selected respondents that were of interest to our research question, namely migrants of Central and Eastern European descent living in the United Kingdom (purposive sampling). Then, we asked them to list three of their current life goals and measured their perceived level of goal attainment, goal importance, and well-being (collecting data). The first dataset was comprised of 867 goals, which we coded by identifying and labeling important groups of words, and through that creating small categories named similar to the original goal (initial coding). We developed the categories further by comparing each small goal category (constant comparative analysis). This was done through frequent documenting of our thoughts on the goal contents and possible category names (memoing), until the data saturated from specific into more abstract concepts (intermediate coding), resulting in 26 mid-categories in total. Through additional memoing and constant comparative

analysis, a total of seven big categories emerged which best represented the data (advanced coding), allowing us to integrate and construct a grounded theory of migrant's self-set goals.

Results

Goal Categories

The migrant goal categories we generated in the initial coding, the intermediate coding, and the advanced coding stage can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1

Overview of Migrant Goal Categories Generated with the Grounded Theory Methodology.

| <i>Big Categories</i> | <i>Mid-Categories</i> | <i>Small Category Example</i> |
|---|--|--|
| Achievement (<i>N</i> = 70) | Achievement Wealth Success | Being famous Being rich Being successful |
| Basic Human Striving (<i>N</i> = 129) | Health State of being | Being healthy Being happy |
| Migration (<i>N</i> = 24) | Integration Move Staying in UK | Being a British Citizen Moving to Australia Staying in the UK |
| Personal Development (<i>N</i> = 237) | Travel Career Freedom Impact Independence Personal development Skill | Traveling the world Starting a business Being free Helping others Being independent Improving self-esteem Learning English |
| Professional (<i>N</i> = 107) | Educational Occupational Professional | Getting a degree Getting a job Finding a better job |
| Relationship (<i>N</i> = 121) | Family Friendship Relationship | Taking care of family Having friends Getting married |
| Security (<i>N</i> = 147) | Financial security Living comfortably Material advancement Retirement Security | Being debt-free Having a comfortable life Buying a house Retiring comfortably Having a stable life |

Preliminary Analyses and Hypothesis Testing

To test the hypotheses, we conducted regression analyses using Hayes' (2018) Process macro (Model 4) for SPSS. Our model consisted of self-set goal attainment as the predictor variable and perceived well-being (SWLS) as the outcome variable. Self-set goal importance was the moderator variable of self-set goal attainment and SWLS. We ran the analyses for every goal category, of which all the regression tables for SWLS can be found in the Appendix (Tables 9-15).

Achievement

Descriptive statistics and correlations of the variables for the goal category *Achievement* are displayed in Table 2.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations of Well-Being (SWLS), Goal Importance, and Goal Attainment for the Goal Category Achievement.

| | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>SWLS</i> | <i>Importance</i> | <i>Attainment</i> |
|------------|----------|-----------|-------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| SWLS | 3.91 | 1.42 | | | |
| Importance | 6.27 | 1.07 | -.10 | | |
| Attainment | 3.19 | 1.63 | .53** | .24* | |

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

For the goal category *Achievement*, we found a significant positive main effect of goal attainment on SWLS ($b = .53, p < .01$), confirming Hypothesis 1. Additionally, a significant negative main effect of goal importance on SWLS was detected ($b = -.39, p < .05$). Contrary to Hypothesis 2, no significant interaction effect of goal attainment and goal importance on SWLS was found ($b = -.07, p = .44$).

Basic Human Striving

Descriptive statistics and correlations of the variables for the goal category *Basic Human Striving* are displayed in Table 3.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations of Well-Being (SWLS), Goal Importance, and Goal Attainment for the Goal Category Basic Human Striving.

| | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>SWLS</i> | <i>Importance</i> | <i>Attainment</i> |
|------------|----------|-----------|-------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| SWLS | 4.20 | 1.30 | | | |
| Importance | 6.78 | .60 | .16 | | |
| Attainment | 4.31 | 1.58 | .42** | .20* | |

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

For the goal category *Basic Human Striving*, a significant positive main effect of goal attainment on SWLS was found ($b = .33, p < .01$), confirming Hypothesis 1. However, we could not find a significant main effect of goal importance on SWLS ($b = .24, p = .25$). No significant interaction effect of goal attainment and goal importance on SWLS could be detected ($b = .11, p = .43$), disconfirming Hypothesis 2 for this category.

Migration

Descriptive statistics and correlations of the variables for the goal category *Migration* are displayed in Table 4.

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations of Well-Being (SWLS), Goal Importance, and Goal Attainment for the Goal Category Migration.

| | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>SWLS</i> | <i>Importance</i> | <i>Attainment</i> |
|------------|----------|-----------|-------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| SWLS | 4.21 | 1.17 | | | |
| Importance | 6.29 | .81 | .01 | | |
| Attainment | 4.00 | 1.50 | .46* | .07 | |

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

For the goal category *Migration*, we found a significant positive main effect of goal attainment on SWLS ($b = .36, p < .05$), confirming Hypothesis 1. We could not find a significant main effect of goal importance on SWLS ($b = -.05, p = .88$). Contrary to Hypothesis 2, no significant interaction effect of goal attainment and goal importance on SWLS was found ($b = .13, p = .66$).

Personal Development

Descriptive statistics and correlations of the variables for the goal category *Personal Development* are displayed in Table 5.

Table 5

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations of Well-Being (SWLS), Goal Importance, and Goal Attainment for the Goal Category Personal Development.

| | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>SWLS</i> | <i>Importance</i> | <i>Attainment</i> |
|------------|----------|-----------|-------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| SWLS | 4.23 | 1.30 | | | |
| Importance | 6.44 | .89 | -.06 | | |
| Attainment | 3.67 | 1.63 | .21** | .08 | |

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

For the goal category *Personal Development*, a significant positive main effect of goal attainment on SWLS was found ($b = .16, p < .01$), supporting Hypothesis 1. We could not detect a significant main effect of goal importance on SWLS ($b = -.10, p = .27$), as well as no significant interaction effect of goal attainment and goal importance on SWLS ($b = .06, p = .28$), disconfirming Hypothesis 2 for this category.

Professional

Descriptive statistics and correlations of the variables for the goal category *Professional* are displayed in Table 6.

Table 6

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations of Well-Being (SWLS), Goal Importance, and Goal Attainment for the Goal Category Professional.

| | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>SWLS</i> | <i>Importance</i> | <i>Attainment</i> |
|------------|----------|-----------|-------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| SWLS | 4.16 | 1.37 | | | |
| Importance | 6.47 | .78 | -.13 | | |
| Attainment | 3.88 | 1.64 | .20* | .21* | |

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

For the goal category *Professional*, we found a positive main effect of goal attainment on SWLS ($b = .20, p < .05$), confirming Hypothesis 1. We could not find a significant main effect of goal importance ($b = -.29, p = .11$) on SWLS. Furthermore, no interaction effect of goal attainment and goal importance on SWLS was found ($b = .05, p = .57$), disconfirming Hypothesis 2 for this category.

Relationship

Descriptive statistics and correlations of the variables for the goal category *Relationship* are displayed in Table 7.

Table 7

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations of Well-Being (SWLS), Goal Importance, and Goal Attainment for the Goal Category Relationship.

| | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>SWLS</i> | <i>Importance</i> | <i>Attainment</i> |
|------------|----------|-----------|-------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| SWLS | 4.46 | 1.46 | | | |
| Importance | 6.72 | .64 | .02 | | |
| Attainment | 4.29 | 1.84 | .39** | .30** | |

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

For the goal category *Relationship*, we found a significant positive main effect of goal attainment on SWLS ($b = .33, p < .01$), confirming Hypothesis 1. We could not find a significant main effect of goal importance ($b = -.19, p = .45$) on SWLS. Furthermore, no significant interaction effect of goal attainment and goal importance on SWLS was detected, disconfirming Hypothesis 2 for this category ($b = .04, p = .71$).

Security

Descriptive statistics and correlations of the variables for the goal category *Security* are displayed in Table 8.

Table 8

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations of Well-Being (SWLS), Goal Importance, and Goal Attainment for the Goal Category Security.

| | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>SWLS</i> | <i>Importance</i> | <i>Attainment</i> |
|------------|----------|-----------|-------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| SWLS | 3.91 | 1.48 | | | |
| Importance | 6.54 | .85 | .01 | | |
| Attainment | 3.29 | 1.86 | .49** | .05 | |

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

For the goal category *Security*, a significant positive main effect of goal attainment on SWLS was found ($b = .38, p < .01$), confirming Hypothesis 1. However, no significant main effect of goal importance on SWLS could be detected ($b = -.00, p = .97$). Lastly, no significant interaction effect of goal attainment and goal importance on SWLS was found ($b = .08, p = .31$), disconfirming Hypothesis 2 for this category.

Discussion

In the present study, we investigated the interplay of goal attainment and goal importance as a function of goal-pursuit and how they relate to migrant well-being. Furthermore, we aimed to test if this interplay is more prevalent in some rather than other goal categories. Our hypotheses were in line with previous research on goal pursuit and well-being, namely that the attainment of goals increases people's well-being and that this is, even more, the case when the attained goal is deemed personally important (Emmons, 1986; Elliot et al., 1997; Sheldon & Kasser, 1998; Sheldon & Elliot, 1999).

The 867 migrant goals we analyzed were narrowed down to seven main goal categories. We posited that we would find similar patterns in all seven goal categories, namely that goal attainment has a positive effect on migrant well-being. The results of the current study provided support for Hypothesis 1: Goal attainment indeed had a positive effect on migrant well-being in all of the goal categories tested. It seems like no matter for which area of life these goals were set, attaining them generally helped migrants to feel more satisfied in their lives, supporting the notion that goal attainment fosters well-being by increasing feelings of self-efficacy and bringing about positive life circumstances (Sheldon & Elliot, 1999).

However, we could not find evidence in support of Hypothesis 2, as there was no significant positive moderating effect of goal importance on goal attainment and migrant well-being found in any of the goal categories. These findings are inconsistent with previous

goal pursuit literature (Palys & Little, 1983; Emmons, 1986; Tóth-Bos et al., 2018). A reason for this inconsistency could be the presence of one or more lurking variables that suppressed goal importance as a moderator of goal attainment and migrant well-being. As previously mentioned, migrants might deal with different life circumstances and challenges than the respondents that studies regarding goal pursuit often sample, meaning that there could be many other factors that have an impact on their well-being apart from goal importance, for example, their level of acculturation to the host society. Acculturation refers to the process of psychological, sociocultural, and economic adaptation that happens when a person migrates to a different country (Berry, 1997), and has been revealed to be an important contributing factor to migrant well-being (Yoon et al., 2013; Tóth-Bos et al., 2020). Another possible reason why we could not find support for Hypothesis 2 might lie in the assessment of goal importance. It might be easier to indicate for migrants to which degree they have attained a goal, but it might take more self-knowledge to know how personally important this goal truly is. For example, is it a goal one tries to attain out of necessity, because it will allow one to reach other goals one actually values or is it a goal one deems important because one feels a lot of intrinsic motivation to achieve it? Arguably, one might then perceive the level of importance of an extrinsically motivated goal (e.g., getting a job to cover living expenses) to be the same as that of an intrinsically motivated goal (e.g., learning the host countries' language to find a community) but they might not elicit the same level of well-being when attaining them. Ryan et al. (1995) posited that people with intrinsic motivation report higher well-being than extrinsically motivated people, even when they report the same level of confidence in achieving that goal. Further research is needed to establish the role of goal importance as a moderator, as well as to examine other factors potentially important to migrant well-being.

Since we could not find evidence for goal importance as a moderating variable, we could not assess if the interplay of goal importance and goal attainment on migrant well-being

is more prevalent in some rather than other categories. In fact, we could not find a positive main effect of goal importance on migrant well-being in any of the goal categories. We could only detect a significant negative effect of goal importance on well-being in the category *Achievement*, indicating that when it comes to goals e.g., related to wealth and success, placing too much importance on them can have a negative effect on one's well-being. This is in line with research by Kasser (2002), who posited that people who are setting materialistic goals like money and fame score higher on depression. Perhaps because the importance of success, wealth, and fame has become so popularized in today's consumer culture (Hall et al., 2013), placing too much importance on these goals may evoke pressure in people to achieve a lot, for example by being financially successful. Even though many migrants leave their home country with goals of economic improvement in mind (Ward et al., 2001), they might not always be attainable to migrants, since they are often struggling to fulfill lower-level motives (i.e., physical, safety, or esteem motives) upon arrival in the host country (Kruglanski et al., 2002). Migrants who have to place more importance on attaining these lower-level motives may potentially feel frustrated when engaging in social comparison to the wealthy of their host country, who enjoy a higher income and have more access to consumer culture (McDonald et al., 2017). Future research could explore further why the potential negative impact of goal importance on migrant well-being might be more prevalent in some rather than other categories.

Strengths, Limitations and Future Directions

A clear strength of our study was its mixed-methods design. While quantitative research allows for accurate measurement of a specific construct and can examine the strength of association between variables, its limitation lies in its lack of generalizability to the "real-world" context (Moghaddam et al., 2003). Qualitative research on the other hand allows for observation of complex human experiences but has limited capacity to produce generalizable

findings (Castro et al., 2010). By combining qualitative and quantitative elements, we aimed for an increase in the viability of the findings. Moreover, an exceptional strength of our study was that we asked almost 300 migrants about their goals, which allowed us to get a personal glimpse into their thoughts on what they want to pursue in life, thus allowing us to get a clearer picture of different goal contents that might be relevant to migrants. Instead of using pre-fixed goals or surveys only, this approach allowed us to increase the study's ecological validity. To further enhance the validity, we only included migrants with geographically close origins, namely from Central and Eastern Europe living in the UK. Additionally, having a sample consisting of a high number of self-initiated and working migrants is unique, since they are not often sampled in scientific research (Dickmann & Doherty, 2008).

A limitation of this study might be that the sample size of some goal categories was potentially not large enough to find significant results for the effect of goal importance on migrant well-being. Future research could address this by using an even bigger sample or by asking respondents to generate more than three life goals. Another possibility would be to further reduce the number of goal categories, for instance by combining the goal category *Professional* with the goal category *Achievement*, thus creating a larger sample while still maintaining similar goal contents per category. Another limitation might be that the motives behind the goals might not always be clear. For example, a person with the goal to have a successful career could want this for various reasons: Maybe they want the status and money that might come with it, maybe it is what their family or community expects of them, or maybe the mastery of their profession is an important virtue to them. Arguably, the importance of that goal to the person and how likely they are to attain it would differ depending on the underlying motive. Future research could focus not just on the self-set goals of migrants, but also ask them about the underlying motive. This might give us valuable insight into which goals with which underlying motives are likely to increase well-being.

Since this research was exploratory, more studies will be needed to examine how different goal contents influence migrants' goal pursuit in relation to their well-being.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

Our findings on goal attainment in regards to well-being add valuable information to the existing literature. The notion that the attainment of a goal increases one's well-being holds even when tested with self-set goals, further demonstrating that goal attainment is an important influencing factor of well-being. Our study findings unexpectedly challenge existing theories about goal importance and well-being, in that we could only find evidence that goal importance has a negative and not the expected positive impact on well-being, and that itself was only the case in the goal category *Achievement*. This inconsistency with previous goal pursuit literature is something that should be investigated further, specifically with self-generated goals, which might be a plausible reason for the difference in findings between this study and previous literature investigating the effects of goal importance on well-being.

The current findings are of interest to people who are thinking of migrating to a different country or to those who have already migrated so that they can be aware that what kind of goals they pursue and prioritize can have an effect on their well-being. This information is also useful for people who work with migrants so that they can better understand the potential challenges that migrants face and what steps they could take to increase their well-being when adapting to their host culture. For example, migrants could benefit from educational practices and policies that would foster bicultural competency, language classes, and identity development in their new environment (Yoon et al., 2013). Additionally, Balkir Neftci and Barnow (2016) found that migrants are in more need of psychological counseling compared to non-migrants, so clinicians working with migrants

could emphasize that goal-setting can be a powerful tool to increase well-being by giving one a sense of direction and motivation to improve one's life circumstances.

Conclusion

In the present study, we investigated migrants' self-set goals, and how the attainment and importance of these goals affect their well-being. Our results provided evidence that the attainment of self-set goals increases migrants' well-being, no matter for what areas in life they set these goals. Additionally, we found evidence that placing too much importance on goals related to achievement (e.g., wealth; success) can have a negative effect on migrants' well-being. Perhaps a more balanced approach to goal setting would be the most beneficial here, where one sets achievement goals but does not fixate too much on their importance. As the reality of migrating can be different from the expectations one had before migrating, adjusting achievement goals accordingly to the situation one finds oneself in may help migrants to feel less dissatisfied and maintain a positive outlook on life.

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Appendix

Table 9

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

| DV | Predictor | <i>B</i> | <i>SE</i> | <i>t</i> | <i>p</i> | <i>LLCI</i> | <i>ULCI</i> |
|------|-----------------------|----------|-----------|----------|----------|-------------|-------------|
| 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 |

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) for the Goal Category Basic Human Striving.

| DV | Predictor | <i>B</i> | <i>SE</i> | <i>t</i> | <i>p</i> | <i>LLCI</i> | <i>ULCI</i> |
|------|-----------------------|----------|-----------|----------|----------|-------------|-------------|
| SWLS | Constant | 4.71 | .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 |

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) for the Goal Category Migration.

| DV | Predictor | <i>B</i> | <i>SE</i> | <i>t</i> | <i>p</i> | <i>LLCI</i> | <i>ULCI</i> |
|------|-----------------------|----------|-----------|----------|----------|-------------|-------------|
| 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 |

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) for the Goal Category Personal Development.

| DV | Predictor | <i>B</i> | <i>SE</i> | <i>t</i> | <i>p</i> | <i>LLCI</i> | <i>ULCI</i> |
|------|-----------------------|----------|-----------|----------|----------|-------------|-------------|
| 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 |

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) for the Goal Category Professional.

| DV | Predictor | <i>B</i> | <i>SE</i> | <i>t</i> | <i>p</i> | <i>LLCI</i> | <i>ULCI</i> |
|------|-----------------------|----------|-----------|----------|----------|-------------|-------------|
| 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 |

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) for the Goal Category Relationship.

| DV | Predictor | <i>B</i> | <i>SE</i> | <i>t</i> | <i>p</i> | <i>LLCI</i> | <i>ULCI</i> |
|------|-----------------------|----------|-----------|----------|----------|-------------|-------------|
| SWLS | Constant | 4.45 | .13 | 34.26 | .00** | 4.19 | 4.71 |
| | Goal Attainment | .33 | .07 | 4.70 | .00** | .19 | .47 |
| | Goal Importance | -.19 | .25 | -.76 | .45 | -.70 | .31 |
| | Goal Att. X Goal Imp. | -.04 | .11 | .37 | .71 | -.18 | .27 |

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

Table 15

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

| DV | Predictor | <i>B</i> | <i>SE</i> | <i>t</i> | <i>p</i> | <i>LLCI</i> | <i>ULCI</i> |
|------|-----------------------|----------|-----------|----------|----------|-------------|-------------|
| 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 |

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