



Full Length Article

Subjective value fulfillment: A new way to study personal values and their consequences [☆]

Shani Oppenheim-Weller ^{a,*}, Sonia Roccas ^b, Jenny Kurman ^a^a Department of Psychology, University of Haifa, Israel¹^b Department of Education and Psychology, The Open University of Israel, Israel

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 26 October 2017

Revised 12 July 2018

Accepted 13 July 2018

Keywords:

Subjective value fulfillment

Value importance

Identities

Satisfaction with life

ABSTRACT

We propose and test a theory of subjective value fulfillment. Participants from five samples reported their feelings of value fulfillment in general and in the context of specific identities: Student, Israeli, Arab, and Druze. Findings show that subjective value fulfillment has the same circular structure as value importance, but the two constructs differ extensively in their hierarchies. While hierarchies of value importance were similar across different identities in both the present study and prior reports, subjective value-fulfillment hierarchies differed in the present study, reflecting attributes of each identity. For most identities, subjective value fulfillment predicted well-being over and above value importance. The findings show that subjective value fulfillment can be a strong theoretical tool to study effects of social identities.

© 2018 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

Values are a core aspect of one's identity. They are desirable abstract goals that serve as guiding principles in people's lives (Feather, 1971; Rohan, 2000; Rokeach, 1973; Schwartz & Bilsky, 1990; Schwartz, 1992). People are highly satisfied with their values, do not wish to change them, and perceive them as very close to their ideal selves (Roccas, Sagiv, Oppenheim, Elster, & Gal, 2014). But do people believe that they can fulfill their values? Or are these values seen as remote, unreachable goals and ideals? Whereas the importance of values has been studied extensively, very little research has been devoted to understanding feelings of value fulfillment (for our first study on this topic, see our research on the relationship between subjective value fulfillment and bicultural identity integration; Oppenheim-Weller & Kurman, 2017). In the present research we present a thorough theoretical discussion of our new model of subjective value fulfillment and examine its similarities with and differences from value importance in five samples across nine identities.

[☆] Preparation of this manuscript was supported in part by Academic Scholarship Award from the University of Haifa and the Open University Research Fund given to the first author.

* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: shaniopp@edu.hadassah.ac.il (S. Oppenheim-Weller).

¹ Author contributions: All authors were responsible for study conceptualization and data analyses, the first author was responsible for data collection and for writing the first draft.

2. Similarities and differences between value importance and subjective value fulfillment

Value importance and subjective value fulfillment are similar constructs in that they both refer to the motivational goals that people hold. The two constructs differ, however, in their focus: Value importance represents what people desire and is portrayed as a hierarchy of desirable goals. Subjective value fulfillment represents the extent to which people feel they can attain what they desire. Attributing high importance to a specific value does not necessarily imply a feeling that one has been or will be able to fulfill it. Consider, for example, "independence" as a value. People can attribute high importance to independence, admire people who exhibit independence, and try to educate their children to be independent. However, they may feel, for example, that their work environment is highly structured and hierarchical and may not allow employees opportunities for expressing independence. In this case, there is a potential discrepancy between the high importance attributed to independence and the feeling that one cannot fulfill this value at work.

Similarly, the subjective feeling that one can fulfill a specific value does not necessarily imply attributing high importance to that value. Thus, people may feel that their environment allows them many opportunities to express independence, even if they do not attribute particularly high importance to this value.

Another difference between value importance and subjective value fulfillment relies on the extent to which the two

constructs are embedded in specific social identities. A key aspect of value importance is that values transcend specific situations (Hitlin, 2003). A person who attributes high importance to independence, for example, will value it both in the workplace and when among friends in a social setting. We reason, however, that subjective feelings of value fulfillment can be both general and context-specific. Thus, in addition to a general sense of value fulfillment, people have specific, context-dependent feelings of value fulfillment associated with their social identities. Group memberships provide the social settings that facilitate or inhibit the attainment of specific values (Reid & Hogg, 2005; Roccas, Schwartz, & Amit, 2010). Differences between groups are likely to be reflected in the feelings of subjective value fulfillment among their members.

In the present research we examine feelings of subjective value fulfillment both in general and in the context of specific social identities. We investigate the circular structure of subjective value fulfillment, seeking to determine if the perceived fulfillment of a specific value is compatible with the perceived fulfillment of similar values. We also examine subjective value-fulfillment hierarchies as reflected in values perceived as most fulfilled versus those perceived as least fulfilled. We further study the susceptibility of subjective value fulfillment to influences of the social context, and aim to find out whether perceived fulfillment of a specific value differs across social identities. Finally, we examine the relationship between subjective value fulfillment and well-being. This research was conducted among five samples, studying subjective value fulfillment in general and in a number of different identities: student, Israeli, Arab, and Druze.

We anchor our theory and research to the well-studied domain of value importance. To conceptualize and measure value importance, we rely on Schwartz's theory of the content and structure of human values (Schwartz, 1992, 2006). Theorizing about value importance, Schwartz distinguishes among ten types of values, with their similarities and differences arranged in a circle (see Fig. 1a): self-direction, stimulation, hedonism, achievement, power, security, conformity, tradition, benevolence, and universalism. Stronger similarities between values are reflected in higher proximity around the circle. Some values are farther apart, reflecting low similarity or even conflict. The circular structure can be summarized using four higher-order classes of values: *openness to change* values (self-direction and stimulation) differ most from *conservation of the status quo* values (tradition, conformity, and security). *Self-enhancement* values (power and achievement) differ most from *self-transcendence* values (benevolence and universalism). Studies conducted with more than 300 samples from over 70 countries provide strong support for this structure of value importance (e.g., Davidov, Schmidt, & Schwartz, 2008; Schwartz, 1992, 2006; Spini, 2003).

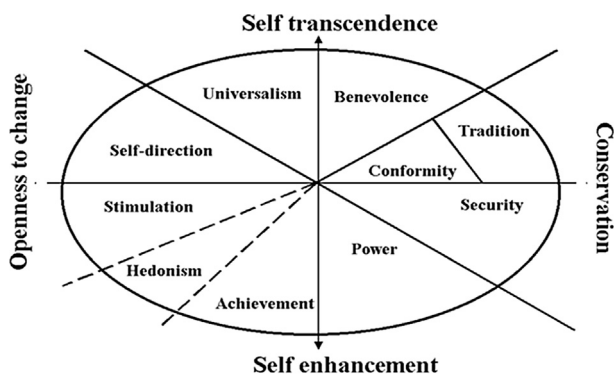


Fig. 1a. Circular structure of value importance.

3. Structure of value importance and subjective value fulfillment

3.1. Structure of value importance

In addressing the circular structure of value importance, Schwartz theorized that “actions taken in the pursuit of each type of value have psychological and social consequences that may be compatible with or conflict with the pursuit of other value types” (Bilsky & Schwartz, 1994, p. 166). Schwartz reasoned that the structure of value importance is determined by *objective* conflicts and compatibilities that result from pursuing fulfillment of the different values (Schwartz, 1992). Thus, implicit in the theory of value importance is the assumption that the structure of value importance is determined by the possibility of fulfilling the values.

3.2. Structure of subjective value fulfillment

We reason that Schwartz's analysis of the conflicts and compatibilities between behaviors that allow for *objective* fulfillment of the different values is also highly relevant to subjective value fulfillment. People are likely to be aware, at least to some extent, of whether they are able to fulfill their values, and they might feel it is difficult for them to fulfill conflicting values at the same time. Thus, analysis of the mutual constraints in objective fulfillment of different values can inform not only the structure of value importance but also the structure of *subjective* sense of value fulfillment. We hypothesize that subjective value fulfillment will have the same basic structure as value importance and will reveal two conflicts: a conflict between self-enhancement values and self-transcendence values, and a conflict between openness-to-change values and conservation values. Thus, we expect conflicts that determine the structure of subjective value fulfillment to emerge when people think about their subjective value fulfillment in general and when they think about subjective value fulfillment in the context of any specific social identity.

4. Hierarchy

4.1. Value importance

Extensive research points to a remarkable consistency in the rank-order of value importance across different cultures, ages, and professions. An examination of mean value importance scores among diverse student, teacher, and representative samples from more than 50 nations revealed that people almost always attribute the highest importance to benevolence and self-direction values, and the lowest importance to power, tradition, and stimulation values (Schwartz & Bardi, 2001; Schwartz et al., 2012).

Most studies of value importance were conducted without reference to a specific identity. That is, people were asked about the importance they attribute to a series of values as guiding principles in their lives. The few studies that examined value importance as contextualized in specific identities (Daniel, 2012) revealed that among adults the rank-order of contextualized values is very similar to the rank-order found in non-contextualized studies. Thus, for example, when people rated their values as student, friend, family member, and member of a national group, benevolence values were among the most important. (For different results see Daniel et al., 2012, which suggests that contextualized values may differ more among adolescents.)

4.2. Subjective value fulfillment

We discuss the expected hierarchy of a general sense of subjective value fulfillment separately from that of the sense of

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/7326256>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/7326256>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)