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# Depression, goals and motivations in people with persecutory delusions

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## Abstract

Goals motivated by avoidance, rather than approach, and by external, rather than internal, motivations, have been implicated in the persistence of depression. This paper reports the first empirical investigation of the goals and motivations of individuals experiencing persecutory delusions. Participants completed assessments of goals and motivations, depression and paranoia. Higher levels of depression were associated with more avoidant motivations and lower goal self-concordance, but not with numbers of approach motivations. More avoidant motivations were also associated with greater paranoia. The findings are consistent with proposals that avoidant and externally-motivated goal pursuit could contribute to symptom persistence.

Keywords: Delusions, Goals, Motivations

## 1. Introduction

Persecutory delusions are thought to be maintained by some of the same processes that perpetuate depression (Freeman and Garety, 2014). A growing area of research concerns motivations, which drive goal-directed behaviour. Studies of depressed and non-clinical groups have indicated that depression is associated with more avoidant motivations (e.g. “to not get into debt”), relative to approach motivations (e.g. “to meet like-minded people”) (Sherratt and MacLeod, 2013; Vergara and Roberts, 2011) and with more external

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