

## Social cognitive predictors of well-being in African college students<sup>☆</sup>



Robert W. Lent<sup>a,\*</sup>, Maria do Céu Taveira<sup>b</sup>, Joana Carneiro Pinto<sup>b</sup>, Ana Daniela Silva<sup>b</sup>,  
Ángeles Blanco<sup>c</sup>, Susana Faria<sup>d</sup>, Arminda Manuela Gonçalves<sup>d</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Department of Counseling, Higher Education, and Special Education, University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742, USA

<sup>b</sup> Department of Applied Psychology, University of Minho, Braga, Portugal

<sup>c</sup> Department of Educational Research Methodology, Complutense University of Madrid, Spain

<sup>d</sup> Department of Mathematics, University of Minho, Braga, Portugal

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### ABSTRACT

Lent and Brown's (2006, 2008) social cognitive model of work well-being was tested in two samples of African college students, one from Angola ( $N = 241$ ) and one from Mozambique ( $N = 425$ ). Participants completed domain-specific measures of academic self-efficacy, environmental support, goal progress, and satisfaction, along with measures of global positive affect and life satisfaction. Path analyses indicated that the model fit the data well overall, both in the full sample and in separate sub-samples by country and gender. Contrary to expectations, however, self-efficacy predicted academic satisfaction only indirectly, via goal progress; and goal progress predicted life satisfaction only indirectly, via academic satisfaction. The predictors accounted for substantial portions of the variance in both academic domain satisfaction and life satisfaction. Implications for research and practice involving the social cognitive model are considered.

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### 1. Introduction

The social cognitive model of educational and vocational well-being (Lent & Brown, 2006, 2008) represents an effort to extend the explanatory range of social cognitive career theory (SCCT; Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994). SCCT originally consisted of models of educational and vocational interest, choice, and performance. The newer well-being model seeks to explain satisfaction and other aspects of positive adjustment to school and work environments. Like the earlier SCCT models, the well-being model draws on basic elements of general social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1997), yet it also incorporates a variety of additional (e.g., affective, personality) variables from the literatures on domain (e.g., job) and overall life satisfaction.

A general version of the well-being model (Lent, 2004) is shown in Fig. 1. The model posits that people are more likely to be satisfied with particular life domains, such as school and work, to the extent that they (a) engage in goal-directed activity and make progress at their central goals in that domain; (b) perceive themselves as efficacious at and (c) as likely to receive positive outcomes through their involvement in the activities of that domain (i.e., high self-efficacy and outcome expectations); and (d) have access to environmental supports and resources that enable them to successfully pursue their goals or otherwise to perform effectively in that domain. In addition, domain satisfaction is seen as partly a reflection of (e) certain personality traits (e.g., one's characteristic level of positive affect) and (f) level of overall life satisfaction (i.e., a general tendency to be happy across life domains). The model also posits that life satisfaction is likely to result from the possession of favorable personality traits, progress in the pursuit of one's key domain-specific goals, and satisfaction in one's central life domains (i.e., the relation between domain and overall life satisfaction is seen as bidirectional).

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\* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: [boblent@umd.edu](mailto:boblent@umd.edu) (R.W. Lent).

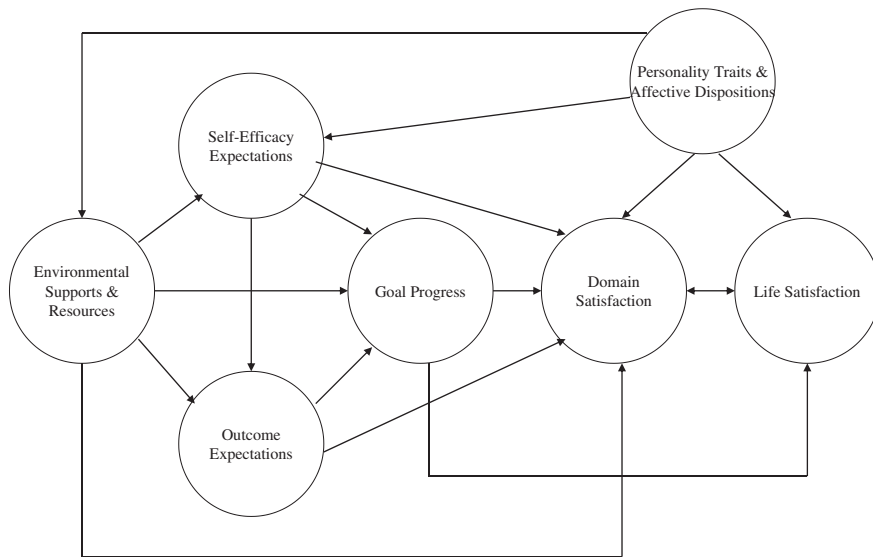


Fig. 1. Social cognitive model of domain and life satisfaction. From Lent (2004). Reprinted with permission.

In addition to these direct paths to domain and life satisfaction, the model specifies a number of linkages among the predictors of domain and life satisfaction. For example, people are more likely to make progress at their goals to the extent that they hold favorable self-efficacy and outcome expectations and experience ample environmental supports relative to their goal pursuit. Self-efficacy and environmental support facilitate goal progress both directly and indirectly by promoting positive outcome expectations. Likewise, particular personality traits, such as general positive affect, nurture goal progress and domain satisfaction indirectly by promoting positive perceptions of self-efficacy and of the availability of environmental support.

In a cross-sectional test of the well-being model in general samples of U.S. college students, Lent et al. (2005) found good fit to the data in predicting both academic and social domain satisfaction. Other cross-sectional studies have found that full or abbreviated versions of the model also offered good overall fit to the data in predicting academic satisfaction in college samples comprised of Mexican American students (Ojeda, Flores, & Navarro, 2011), Asian American students (Hui, Lent, & Miller, 2013), and (predominantly) European American engineering students (Lent, Singley, Sheu, Schmidt, & Schmidt, 2007). The Ojeda et al. and Hui et al. studies each added culture-specific variables to the social cognitive model, finding that acculturation and/or enculturation were linked to academic satisfaction indirectly through various social cognitive predictors. Feldt (2012) reported

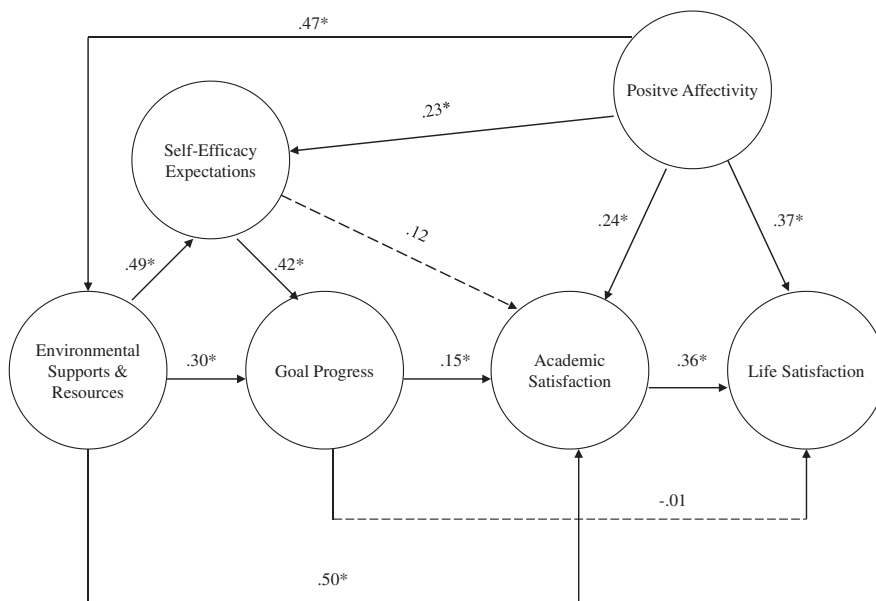


Fig. 2. Structural coefficients from the test of the abbreviated model of academic and life satisfaction in the full sample ( $N = 666$ ). \*  $p < .05$ .

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