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Review Paper

Understanding Life Goals - A Narrative Review Paper

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ABSTRACT

Background: Life goals play a significant role in every individual's life. They are one of the important components of meaning-making, the purpose of life, and accomplishment. There is an exhaustive literature on life goals and their influence on an individual's life. Only a few papers in the past have focused on the underlying mechanisms of life goals, nonetheless, they are scattered. Comprehensive knowledge and a one-stop guide on the underlying mechanisms to understand life goals in totality are scarce. **Objective:** This narrative review study aims at compiling the existing literature on the underlying mechanisms of life goals. The paper also aims at providing a ready reckoner / quick guide to understand life goals. **Methods:** The search was conducted in PubMed, ResearchGate, APA PsycNet, MEDLINE and ScienceDirect published from January 2000 to September 2023. Two Reviewers independently reviewed the articles and books which met the criteria. The final set includes 36 academic articles, 9 additional articles related to the topic and 3 books. **Results:** Results are grouped thematically as follows: a) Types of life goals, b) Factors that influence Life goals, and c) Goal attainment process. **Conclusions:** Life goals hold greater importance in the wellbeing of an individual, therefore holistically understanding them in depth becomes necessary. The current review paper was able to provide the nitty-gritty of different types of goals, factors that influence life goals, and their attainment process. This review paper has successfully attempted to provide a comprehensive outlook to life goals and can serve as a quick reference guide to health practitioners and the population in general to study life goals and plan any life goal-related intervention. Goal setting along with mentoring and guidance has been demonstrated to be effective in past research. These findings may help researchers to better understand life goals and ways to promote these in individuals through goal setting and goal management.

Keywords: *Life Goals, Goal-Setting, Psychological Wellbeing, Goal Motivation, Goal Attainment*

Human behaviour and actions are driven by conscious goals, plans, intentions, and errands (Moskowitz & Grant, 2009). Nothing is so intolerable to man as to be completely at rest, without passion, business, diversion, and without effort for then he feels nothingness, loneliness, insufficiency, weakness, and emptiness. (Emmons, 2005) During the life course, people plot their lives and anticipate their future with personalized intents. These intents, which describe motivational features behind people's actions, have been hypothesized as, personal strivings, projects, and goals. (Radomski et al., 2015)

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Meaning-making is a distinctly human activity, a function of how the human brain is organized. (Emmons, 2005) Having a purpose in life is one of the most central human needs (Schippers & Ziegler, 2019) and has been quoted consistently as an indicator of healthy aging, for its potential to reduce mortality risk. (Hill & Turiano, 2014) When people describe their ideas about living a happy and meaningful life, they usually discuss their life goals and wishes for the future. (Rijavec et al., 2011) Life goals are one of the important components of meaning-making, purpose of life, and accomplishment as per psychologists & and theorists Carol D. Ryff (2013) and Martin Seligman (2012). Life goals are defined as the aim, purpose, focus, and desired states that people seek to achieve, maintain, or avoid (Radomski et al., 2015) and they're much more meaningful than just daily routines or short-term objectives, they drive our behaviours over the long run. (Moore, 2021) Meaningful goal pursuit has been linked to healthy psychological functioning and positive life outcomes, including subjective well-being*. (Boudreaux & Ozer, 2012) People spend significant amounts of their daily lives reflecting on, deciding between, and pursuing personally significant goals. (Emmons, 2005)

Goals provide structure (Emmons, 2005) and guide behavior by influencing performance levels. (Ioniţa, 2013) Goals are also cognitive representations that lead behavior to a desired outcome. A large portion of our actions are directed towards achieving these objectives since our thoughts, feelings, and behaviours are connected to the things we value and strive for. (Rijavec et al., 2011) Empirical and theoretical findings suggest that goals are potentially related to life satisfaction. (Wang et al., 2017) It has been demonstrated that our preoccupations, thoughts and the emotions we feel are tied to the nature of our goals and the position of these pursuits. (Emmons, 2005) Since life goals hold such importance in the well-being of an individual it is critical to understand them in depth by studying the underlying mechanisms of goal setting and their achievement. The objective of this review paper is to compile existing literature to understand life goals by categorizing them under three main mechanisms as shown in Figure 1.
  a) Types of life goals
  b) Factors influencing Life goals
  c) Goal engagement, disengagement, and reengagement process.

METHOD

In this literature review, the authors have conducted a narrative analysis and covered a broad range of topics by using studies of various complexity and design. The search was conducted between June 2022 and September 2023 in the databases PubMed, CINAHL, APA PsycNet, MEDLINE, and ScienceDirect, originally using the author's keywords/terms 'Life goals, Personal goals, and Achievement goals' and condensed using the keywords for sub-categories used in this review paper i.e., 'motivation, intrinsic, extrinsic, psychological well-being, values, goal engagement, disengagement, and reengagement'. Inclusion criteria were English language, empirical research, and review articles to contextualize the findings. The first author excluded articles based on the selection criteria and checked the abstracts of the remaining articles. Selected articles have been read by both the reviewers. Notes have been compared and arranged thematically. Besides these 36 selected articles, authors have used another 3 books in the results section to contextualize and interpret their findings. Additional articles were found through snowballing, including selected articles' references, and were included when they helped to contextualize the findings. Recent papers, less than 12 years, and a few papers for specific topics prior to 2011 were selected. The authors first reviewed individual papers and then compiling relevant information that contributed to the three main mechanisms through which life goals could be understood- types, sources of goal setting, and goal attainment process which is the objective of this narrative review paper.
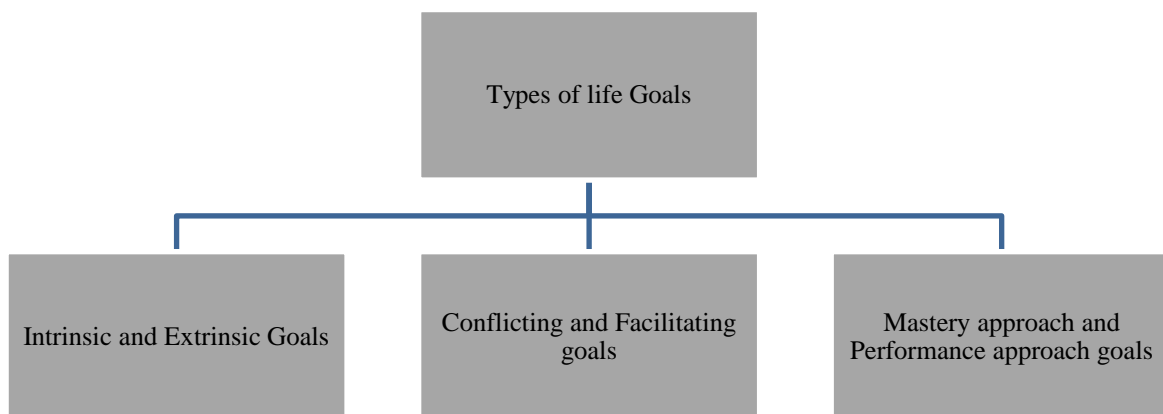
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Figure 1: Underlying mechanisms of life goals

Types of Life Goals

Authors have further categorised Life goals under three types as:

Figure 2: Types of life goals

Intrinsic Goals and extrinsic goals

Intrinsic goals are oriented towards personal growth, health, relationship, and service. (Zhang & Yu, 2012) And, sometimes known as Self-concordant goals are those goals that are pursued

to fulfil intrinsic values or to support an individual's self-concept. (Koestner et al., 2002). It was found in a study that females were more oriented towards a meaningful life and assessed intrinsic goals as more crucial than extrinsic ones and consistently expressed more intrinsic orientation than men. In the aspect of age differences, it was found that the transition from high school to college resulted in stronger orientation towards higher intrinsic goals. (Brdar et al., 2009). Past research has shown that when individuals are in pursuit of intrinsic goals, their experiences satisfy their needs and contribute to their Subjective Well-Being. (Zhang & Yu, 2012) For example: Physical health goal attainment related most strongly to well-being improvements, and significantly more than material wealth goals. (Stauner, 2013)

Extrinsic goals are focused on financial success, fame, physical appearance, and power. (Zhang & Yu, 2012). Extrinsic rewards are found to be neither positive nor negative but excessive focus on it distracts a person from the more important intrinsic goals and aspirations (Brdar et al., 2009). A high expectation of extrinsic goals signals an alienation from inherent psychological needs and spiritual values. A plausible reason for this is that extrinsic goals such as "financial success" and "power" focus on obtaining external rewards and others' evaluations, and that they often reflect one's inner sense of insecurity. In addition, many studies showed that extrinsic goals are significantly negatively correlated with anxiety and physical problems. Interestingly, the data showed that extrinsic goals such as physical appearance and fame positively associated with both non-spiritual and spiritual values, one possible reason being that image and popularity are somewhat important, regardless of the values individuals hold (Zhang & Yu, 2012; Parker & Ivtzan, 2016; Kasser, 2016). Psychological research literature and past studies have emphasized on the potential pitfalls of material wealth seeking goals with well-being and its attainment. Stauner (2013) It was found that extrinsic goals are not always detrimental to well-being and can in fact promote the attainment of intrinsic goals and well-being. The value of extrinsic and intrinsic goals varies in different cultures and nations. It was found that the people in poorer countries were more materialistic than people in rich countries. The feelings of deprivation and insecurity that rise out of poor economic conditions leads to materialistic aspirations as they make them feel secure. In transitional countries people aim for extrinsic goals as their achievement could mean hope to achieve more important intrinsic goals in the future. In richer nations financial success is a symbol of status but in poorer nation it is the basic means to survive, safety and security. People in poorer nation strive for financial goals to provide better and ensure the welfare of near and dear ones. Richer nations seem to follow individualism whereas poorer countries seem to follow collectivism. Thus, in collectivistic nations there is more emphasis on extrinsic goals such as social recognition or honoring elders. In collectivistic nations individual well-being is not as important as social well-being which leads to pursuit of extrinsic goals. (Brdar et al., 2009) Extrinsic goals positively related to a pleasant life which in turn related to subjective well-being. (Brdar et al., 2009).

Conflicting and Facilitating Goals
Goal conflict specifies that the pursuit of one goal decreases the likelihood of achieving another goal. (Wiese & Salmela-Aro, 2008). Examples include, getting into medical school and working on my illustration skills become a great artist, keeping in touch with my roots, joining more clubs and activities with my hallmates. The conflict attainment relation varied significantly between people, and when averaged across, goals conflict associated significantly and negatively with attainment. Individuals with more conflict tended to be less successful in attaining their goals, but the goals they failed to attain were not necessarily the ones in conflict. (Boudreaux & Ozer, 2012) In supportive environments both attainment and failure to attain conflicting goals did not bring in well-being change. However, in unsupportive

environments well-being was drastically lowered when individuals failed to attain conflicting goals. Well-being decreases more drastically when people fail at conflicted goals than when people fail at mutually facilitative goals. (Stauner, 2013) The data suggests that people are quite competent at pursuing and achieving their goals despite problems and conflict with some others seem to struggle. Individuals tend to be contemplative and preoccupied with possible choices, alternate goals and ways through which desired goals can be achieved. Pursuit of multiple goal is a salient feature of everyday life. Rather than abandoning one goal for another, many people may learn to deal with conflict by identifying various means that satisfy multiple goals. Conflict resolution is also important for psychological well-being. Conflicts are generally seen to impair and facilitation seen to enhance. Higher rates of conflict lead to greater negative affect and higher rates of facilitation leads to positive affect. Facilitating goals did not lead to long-term improvements in well-being, suggesting that its benefits are more immediate. (Boudreaux & Ozer, 2012).

Goal facilitation occurs when the pursuit of one goal simultaneously increases the likelihood of reaching another goal. (Wiese & Salmela-Aro, 2008). Examples include, Volunteer for community service, become a better person, get in shape for the summer, eat healthier; Make new friends, be more optimistic. (Boudreaux & Ozer, 2012) Goals that facilitate one another gain the benefits of attainment for lack of challenge. Flow theory identifies optimal challenge as a factor that fosters the enjoyable and psychologically salutary experience of flow. Perhaps this experiential benefit stands apart from any practical benefits contingent upon attainment. (Stauner, 2013) Just as in supportive environments, when people succeed at goals that support each other, they appear to gain no additional well-being relative to those who fail at mutually facilitative goals. It was demonstrated that inter-goal conflict relates more strongly to well-being than does inter-goal facilitation. (Stauner, 2013)

Performance Approach and Mastery Approach Goals
Performance approach (PAp) goal orientation is characterized by a focus on normative performance, outperforming others, and demonstrating competence. (Louw et al., 2016). Examples- Work, academic and sports. Performance approach goals were significantly associated with higher perceived goal attainment, satisfaction, and positive affect. (Gaudreau & Braaten, 2016). Autonomous motivation of Performance approach goals significantly moderated the relationship between PAp goals, perceived goal attainment, satisfaction, and positive affect. Goal attainment is found to be higher when people have high PAp goals combined with high autonomous goal motivation. PAp goals are not inherently detrimental as generally believed, they can be part of goal complex that can be potentially beneficial as long as individuals are pursuing them for pleasure, importance and in manners that are consistent with their values, interests and priorities. (Gaudreau & Braaten, 2016)

Mastery approach (MAp) goal orientation is conceptualized as a focus on achieving self-referent (intra-individual) competence through learning and development. (Louw et al., 2016) MAp goals are significantly associated with perceived goal attainment satisfaction and positive affect while being negatively associated with negative affect. (Gaudreau & Braaten, 2016). Autonomous motivation for pursuing MAp goals is significantly related to higher levels of perceived goal attainment satisfaction and positive affect. In contrast, the controlled goal motivation of MAp goals was negatively associated with satisfaction and positively associated with negative affect and perceived goal attainment. (Gaudreau & Braaten, 2016). Achievement goals should probably be seen as a special case of personal goals in which a person aims at mastering task demands and outperforming others in relation of specific achievement related activity. (Gaudreau & Braaten, 2016)

Factors Influencing Life Goals

Research suggests that the source of impetus that gives rise to a goal has direct implications for how goal pursuit is regulated and its outcome. (Koestner et al., 2002) The striving for specific life goals significantly affects not only how and why individuals are motivated to execute their actions, but also how they deal with setbacks and frustrating goal striving. (Sijbom et al., 2018) Therefore, it is important to study why a goal is being pursued than just the content of the goal. (Rijavec et al., 2011)

In the current review paper authors have broadly classified these factors as:

Figure 3: Factors influencing life goals
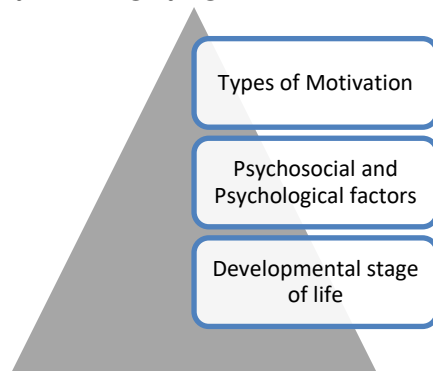
Types of Motivation:

Self-determination theory conceptualizes autonomous motivation as intrinsic, identified, and integrated motivation. In contrast, controlled motivation refers to engaging in an activity to not feel guilty termed introjected motivation or extrinsic motivation to avoid a negative consequence. The outcomes of Life goals depend on the extent of the type of motivation controlled or autonomous.

Figure 4: Illustrated from

(Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation from a self-determination theory perspective: Definitions, theory, practices, and future directions) (Ryan & Deci, 2020)

Intrinsic or Autonomous Motivation

Autonomous motivation is defined as engaging in a behavior because it is believed to be consistent with intrinsic aims or outcomes and originates from the self. Individuals engaging in behaviors feel a sense of choice, personal endorsement, interest, and satisfaction and, as a consequence, are likely to persist with a self-regulated behavior without any external reinforcement and contingency. The behaviour aligns with individuals' fundamental demands for autonomy, personal agency, competence, and a sense of control over their actions. (Ryan & Deci, 2020) Technically intrinsic motivation pertains to activities done "for their own sake," or for their inherent interest and enjoyment (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Play, exploration, and curiosity-spawned activities exemplify intrinsically motivated behaviors, as they are not dependent on external incentives or pressure, but rather provide satisfaction and joys. Intrinsic motivation is responsible for the majority of human learning throughout life, as opposed to externally mandated learning and instruction (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Intrinsic motivation offers clear benefits in formal schooling. Taylor et al.'s (2014) meta-analysis found that intrinsic motivation has a major effect in school achievement and followed this meta-analysis with additional studies showing that intrinsic motivation was consistently associated with higher performance. Froiland and Worrell (2016) found that intrinsic motivation predicted student engagement, which predicted higher achievement (GPA).

Extrinsic or Controlled Motivation

Controlled motivation, involves engaging in behaviours for external motives, such as gaining rewards or praise from others, avoiding punishment, or feeling guilty. When participating in externally regulated behaviour, people experience pressure and a sense of obligation. They are also more inclined to stick with the behaviour as long as the external contingency is there. Therefore, control-motivated people are less likely to be self-regulated. Instead of being seen as meeting psychological needs, the behaviour is probably seen as need-thwarting. (Hagger et al., 2014)

Example 1: In an organizational or work environment, evidence indicated that leaders' mastery-approach goals and leaders' performance-approach goals are related to employee burnout over and above the effects of employees' own achievement goals. (Sijbom et al., 2018) Often contrasted with intrinsic motivation is the heterogeneous category of extrinsic motivation, which concerns behaviors done for reasons other than their inherent satisfactions. From a Self-Determination Theory (SDT) view, the contrast is not a simple one, because instrumental motivations can vary widely in content and character. As a result, SDT has long identified four major subtypes of extrinsic motivation, illustrated in Fig. 4 as External regulation, Introjection, Identification, and Integration. (Ryan & Deci, 2020)

Example 2: An experience-sampling study of subjective happiness during a variety of activities found that physical health goals such as exercising are associated with concurrent subjective happiness (enjoyment - the basis of intrinsic motivation) more strongly than any other activity except sex. Physical health goal pursuit may not be as motivated by the kind of enjoyment that SDT refers to as intrinsically motivating as it is by personal identification with the significance of such efforts. (i.e., a belief in their importance). Likewise, self-directed negative emotions such as guilt, shame, and anxiety resulting from evaluations of one's overall fitness, body shape, or weight may motivate physical health goals through introjection similar to the desire for extrinsic reward (e.g., modeling career) or the sensitivity to extrinsic demand (e.g., the expectations of one's coach, teammates, or the opposite sex). (Stauner, 2013)
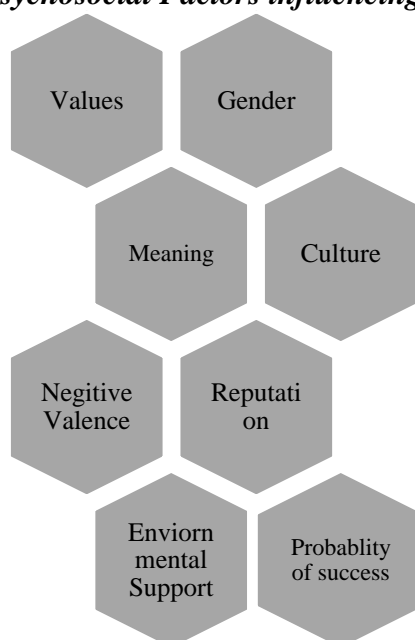
Example 3: It was seen that autonomous motivation for pursuing achievement goals both MAP and PAP goals is significantly related to higher levels of perceived goal attainment satisfaction

and positive affect whereas, in contrast, the controlled goal motivation of these goals was negatively associated with satisfaction and positively associated with negative affect and perceived goal attainment. It was also found that motivation for one goal might generalize or transfer to the motivation of the other goal through a process of generalized goal endorsement. (Gaudreau & Braaten, 2016)

Psychological and Psychosocial Factors influencing Life goals

Figure 5: Psychological and Psychosocial Factors influencing life goals

Values Gender Meaning Culture Negitive Valence Reputation Enviornmental Support Probablity of success

Individuals discover, rank, and create evaluative meanings for their needs. Therefore, when individuals set life goals, they are often a result of their values, beliefs, and meanings from their family and environment. (Ajzen, 2012) Women tend to set role-based goals, and men tend to set achievement-based goals. People also tend to set identity-based goals. (Champion & Power, 1995)

Values are commonly defined as guiding principles in people's lives. They guide us to set goals that match specific value types and motivate us to work persistently towards those goals. Values motivate goals that comprise systems of meaning: people experience meaning as they progress toward goal fulfilment and define their lives 'purposes in terms of their most strongly motivated goals and values. Values are "the persistence of motivational goals" at the highest level, and goals are representations of values. Example: The quantitative analysis of a survey data provided evidence of the positive correlation between spiritual values and intrinsic life goals in young adulthood (i.e., conformity, universalism, tradition, and benevolence). All spiritual values correlated positively with two of the four intrinsic goals and most of the non-spiritual values (i.e., self-direction, stimulation, hedonism, achievement, and power) correlated positively with at least one of the four extrinsic goals and none of the non-spiritual values correlated positively with intrinsic goals. (Zhang & Yu, 2012) On average, the overall, subjective experience of life improves in general over short periods when one can claim many personal accomplishments and worsens when one can claim few or none. (Stauner, 2013)

Reputation can be a very powerful tool for promoting hard work and achievement of performance goals. People care about perception and pursue what looks good rather than what

makes them good. Reputational concerns also influence the effects of interventions intended to promote learning-focused behavior or growth mindsets. Such interventions emphasise the malleability of intelligence and the possibility of improving one's performance via effort. Example, Achievement goals develop and operate in social contexts when a student's behaviour and performance are often public and evaluated by others, as a result student's aim might be to prove themselves and their ability to others. This can lead to them opting for easy achievable tasks and avoiding challenging ones. No matter how much growth mindset interventions shape a child's mindset toward learning goals, in public the awareness that they also are being evaluated by peers and teachers could motivate performance-oriented behaviors. Perceived reputational risks could act as significant barriers for students who may be less likely to attempt different tasks that could make them lose/fail in the eyes of others and seem relatively smarter. Peer attitudes also affect a child. By middle school, putting hard work into academics may seem cool to teachers but uncool to their peers. (Good & Shaw, 2021)

Individuals set goals with negative valence (*Negative valence refers to the aversiveness of a stimulus on our emotions, such as fear, rage, or sadness.*) to avoid unfavorable emotions like fear, rage, or sadness which are connected to unpleasant, difficult, or stressful experiences. Fear of failure might negatively influence the adoption of mastery-approach goals. Perfectionism and concern over mistakes are associated with negative outcomes such as high levels of anxiety and low levels of confidence and also direct individuals to compare their accomplishments with others. Perfectionism might lead to a negative reaction to mistakes and they might also anticipate disapproval from others. This might lead to them adopting goals with negative valence and goals that prove their competence. High standard holding has a positive influence on goals with positive valence (*Positive valence refers to an entity's ability to elicit pleasurable emotions such as joy, satisfaction, or love.*) and can direct people to use their own or others' accomplishments to judge how well they are doing. (Puente-Díaz, 2013)

The three ratings (probability of success, environmental support, and conflict) moderated the relationship between goal attainment and well-being change, and some related to well-being change directly. Theoretically, those who meet their basic needs regularly tend to develop more advanced, complex, and longer-term goals, so those who haven't developed these goals might more likely lack basic need satisfaction and thus well-being. (Stauner, 2013)

Culture played a very important role. The decision is made by family even though young people have large agency in collaboration with practitioner and less consideration is given to young people's perspective in some countries. In some parents seek help from family and religious leaders over professional therapists and practitioners. Some countries do not even have a concept of setting goals. Goals are pressured upon young people and these goals often feel like a burden. (Jacob et al., 2022)

Goals are essential components of a person's experience of his or her life as meaningful and contribute to the process by which people construe their lives as meaningful or worthwhile. For example, a generative goal to "teach my son to make a difference in his community" lends meaning and direction to the role of parenthood. However, many goals are trivial or shallow and, although necessary for daily functioning, have little capacity to contribute to a sense that life is meaningful. (Emmons, 2003)

Developmental stage of life:
Age-specific expectations are known as "developmental tasks" and are thought to influence behaviour when set as goals. Adaptive developmental goals should align with the peak

opportunity time for certain experiences and should follow a normative sequence (e.g., career entry and family formation in early adulthood).

1. Life goals oriented toward developmental gains (i.e., career success, personal fulfilment, travel) are perceived as more important in young adulthood and decrease over the adult life span.
2. Life goals related to social interaction (i.e., being there for others, being socially or politically involved) increase in importance across the life span.
3. Prosocial engagement goals increase throughout young adulthood, peak in middle adulthood, and decline towards late adulthood.
4. The perceived importance of having children increases throughout early adulthood and decreases after middle adulthood.
5. The importance of having a happy marriage or relationship and being able to afford things remains relatively stable throughout early, middle, and late adulthood.
6. Throughout the adult life span, the perceived importance of family-related life goals (i.e., having children and having a happy relationship) is higher in women.
7. Throughout the adult life span, the perceived importance of career success is higher in men.
8. The trajectories of perceived importance of career success and home ownership may differ between individuals aligning to their respective social context.
9. Healthy aging and financial independence become important during older adulthood. As people grow older, they face more health-related challenges and try to improve their health consciously and thus rate health goals as more important. The most common goals picked among older adults were increased socialization (need for personal contact), intellectual pursuits, increased physical activity, and improved quality of life. Most older adults seem to be satisfied with their level of spirituality and thus not many goals were picked in that aspect. Younger older adults seemed to pick cohort affiliation goals as that brought them more happiness and older adults picked more group altruistic goals which gave them life satisfaction.
10. It was seen that young adults pursue goals with growth orientation and middle adults and older adults focus on maintenance and loss prevention.

The attainability of intrinsic life goal domains related to immediate and later life satisfaction and were largely independent of age. Prosocial engagement and status goals depend on and reflect the personality of the individual. People who evaluate their goals as significant and are driven to achieve them perceive these goals as more achievable. But at certain times in cases such as work goals, goals are pursued as they are deemed important and socially desirable. Therefore, the Content of goals, goal importance, and goal attainability are sensitive to age. The results all seem to prove the fact that goals reflect what is possible and normative for different people of different ages and goals also reflect what is desirable for people of different ages (Howard & Louvar, 2017; Bühler et al., 2019; Buchinger et al., 2021).

Goal Attainment Process
The goal attainment process can be looked at in three stages, Goal engagement, disengagement, and reengagement. Goal engagement refers to the process of actively pursuing a goal, goal disengagement refers to the process of slowly ceasing pursuit of a goal that is no longer relevant and goal reengagement refers to renewing goal pursuit after having faced setbacks or having disengaged with a goal. In this section, authors have identified factors that assist individuals to engage, disengage, and reengage in life goals to demonstrate the goal attainment process.

Figure 6 Goal attainment process
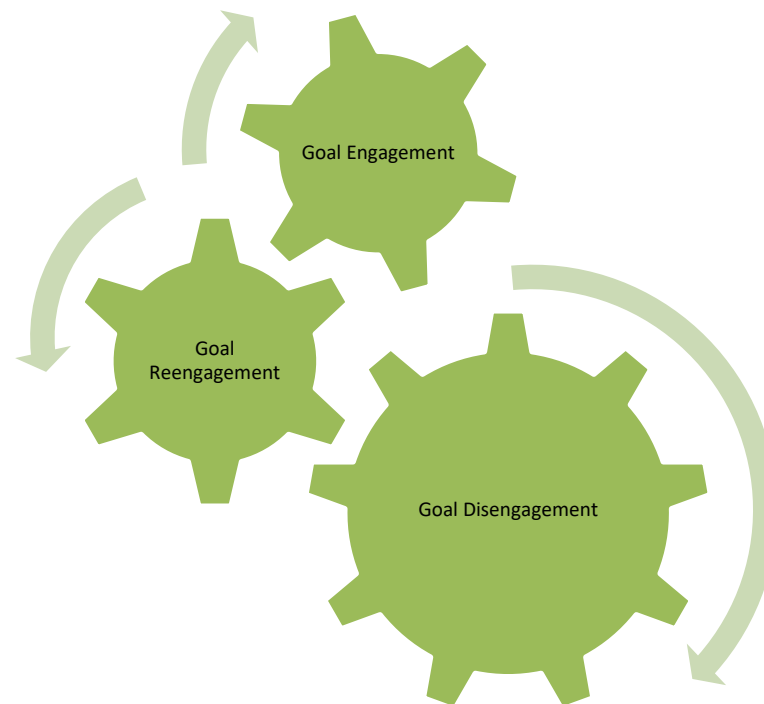
Goal Engagement: Factors that were found to affect goal engagement are an individual's personal values, personal desire for achievement and environment along with the probability of success. (Stauner, 2013)

Predicting the outcome:
It is postulated that all humans recognize naturally desirable outcomes or the prevention of the undesirable as incentives. Theoretically, operant conditioning teaches individuals to prioritise lifestyles and ethical systems that optimise behaviour and outcomes. In turn, values motivate goals that comprise systems of meaning: people experience meaning as they progress toward goal fulfilment and define their life's purposes in terms of their most strongly motivated goals and values. (Britt et al., 2010)

Social/Environmental Support:
The role of the external environment plays a significant role in goal pursuits and its attainment and few papers confirmed conducive environments facilitated goal engagement. Research evidence indicated that external support plays a role in moderating the relationship between goal attainment and well-being change. (Stauner, 2013) Children imitate parents' behavior in response to challenging tasks and this behavior could be transferred to a new type of task where no experiences of difficulty could be gathered beforehand from the observing model. Parents' Functional goal regulation in the face of obstacles is set apart by successful interaction between persistent goal pursuit and flexible goal adjustment. These findings are consistent with earlier studies that study the role of adult models in influencing children's behavior. (Kappes & Thomsen, 2022) Similarly in a hospital setting, Patient-centered goal setting is essential to ensure and promote effective goal engagement by addressing Patient-centered and organizational barriers. Focusing on developing interventions directed toward provider behaviors can improve the application of patient-centered goal-setting. (Crawford et al., 2022)

Type of goals:

Studies confirm the finding that self-concordant goals (goals that are formed because of intrinsic values and motivation) were significantly positively associated with goal progress, then those who set goals due to extrinsic pressure. Studies also confirm the fact Goals that are both self-concordant and carefully planned can be highly successful. People invest more resources into their goals when they are personally motivated. Implementation intentions can be particularly helpful as they can result in the automatization of goal-related behaviors in response to environmental cues. (Koestner et al., 2002) Characteristics of a goal can decide if the goal will be pursued or not, it was seen that challenging and specific goals bring about more persistence than vague goals. Goals are also pursued with more persistence if they are of personal importance, inherently enjoyable, and in line with one's values and interests. Immediate and intrinsic goals are worked for with more persistence than extrinsic/delayed goals. People are also more likely to pursue a goal if they have a growth mindset rather than a fixed one. It is also suggested by the concept of grit that some people have more perseverance and passion for long-term goals. Mental contrasting, implementation intentions, and their combination is an easy and flexible strategy to support goal persistence. (Brandstätter & Bernecker, 2022)

Emotional Value:

Goals that have emotional value provide meaning to goals and are pursued with more persistence. Many goals such as in sports are relatively hard and take years to master and the journey is full of regular defeats thus the emotion of enjoyment is necessary to fuel an individual to keep moving forward. The model of achievement goals and achievement emotions says that hope is a prospective outcome emotion in which people perceive they can succeed in obtaining positive outcomes. (Puente-Díaz, 2013) Seeking discomfort is suggested instead of feeling awkward or uncomfortable as a signal of self-growth-motivated engagement and increased perceived goal achievement. Because discomfort is usually experienced immediately and is easy to detect during difficult goal pursuits. (Woolley & Fishbach, 2022) An individual's commitment to goals, makes him more aware of and responsive to the external and internal cues associated with those goals. The responses may take the form of noticing the cues, storing them in memory, having thoughts or dream segments related to them, and/or acting. Protoemotional (Protoemotion is a State in an artificial system which despite the fact that doesn't share all the core properties of biological emotions it actually has some of them, so its study is meaningful in order to create synthetic emotions. (*What Is Protoemotion | IGI Global*, n.d.)) activity or full emotional arousal may precede such responses, and its amplitude correlates with the importance placed on the goal. When the individual is in a situation favorable to making progress toward attaining the goal, the response to goal cues takes the form of actions or operant mental acts that advance the goal pursuit. When conditions are unfavourable for goal-directed operant behaviour, the reaction may be solely mental, such as mind-wandering or dreaming, yet it still reflects the goal or connected content. The probability of thought is highest during relaxed periods, when the brain's default-mode network dominates, or during sleep. (Klinger, 2013)

Effects of goal engagement vary by goal context and content. Adolescents with more inner resources were more successful in achieving their goals. The study found that goal engagement predicted a stronger process in the attainment of peer group interactions, peer group integration, and building a romantic relationship except for gaining autonomy from parents. (Pfeiffer & Pinquart, 2012)

Personalization:

Personalisation of goals and tailoring them to an individual's preferences can improve motivation and enhance its chance of success. Personalization of sports sessions did foster higher engagement levels and was also found to have had positive effect on self-perceived performance. Personalization seems promising for promoting the frequency of physical activity as opposed to the intensity of the physical activity. The impact of personalized goals on a person was also seen to be limited. Engagement was higher in participants who had expressed an intention to improve their capabilities. (Davies et al., 2019) Promoting adaptive behaviors characterized by higher levels of academic engagement and task-oriented goal orientation can lead to improved and higher levels of academic self-concept in adolescents. This can impact their academic performance and psychological development positively. (Supervía et al., 2020) Acting Inconsistently with an important goal has a significant effect on perceived goal inhibition which leads to a higher level of regret and undertaking compensatory behaviours in individuals. For example, a person that has eaten a piece of birthday cake may avoid sweets until the end of the day, or skip a later meal. (Sorys & Byrka, 2021)

Other factors that influence goal engagement:

Goal-setting intervention, especially when accompanied by ongoing mentoring, would promote behavior change, and optimize engagement, leading to increased cognitive and physical activity, with benefits for cognitive, physical, social, and psychological functioning, health, and quality of life in people aged over 50. (Nelis et al., 2018) It was found that significant predictors of the client (those involved in Boston Violence) engagement with VIAP-violence intervention advocacy programs included younger age, black race, permanent home, existing mental health diagnosis, gunshot wound, and more severe injuries. It was seen that younger clients were more likely to engage with VIAP in comparison to older people. (Pino et al., 2020) Perhaps improvements in one's life circumstances or outlook facilitate goal attainment. Likewise, depression or hardship of external origins might deplete the willpower necessary to persevere in pursuit of one's goals, leading to unproductiveness, failure, or the abandonment of one's goals. Theory suggests positive affect may motivate goal pursuit, and thus attainment. Not all goals relate equally to global well-being in terms of the propensity to set and attain goals of various kinds. To whatever extent well-being change might affect goal attainment, it would seem extrinsic goal pursuits stand to gain or lose less from changes in well-being than more voluntary goals. Task engagement is a predictor of performance and a facilitator of positive feelings following success. Project engagement magnified the positive effects of a high probability of completing a project. (Britt et al., 2010)

Goal Disengagement and Reengagement

Human striving is a continuous process that involves committing to objectives, allocating and withdrawing resources, increasing and decreasing effort, and letting go of an objective. The dynamics between perseverance and disengagement are always at play. Disengagement is the attempt to distance oneself from a personal objective, whereas perseverance is the ongoing or repeating action in support of a goal that a person sets. Goals need resources, and investing those resources creates a dual dilemma since they cannot be used for other purposes. First, one must divide their resources among their selected personal objectives as efficiently as possible. Secondly, one must recognise when it is no longer worthwhile to engage in a goal and, in that case, discover a prospective substitute. Most personal objectives are impossible to achieve and never will be without perseverance. Achieving personal objectives is positively correlated with wellbeing, and persistent failure suggests that the aim is not just pointless but unpleasant as well. Goal disengagement is a crucial strategy for safeguarding someone's time, resources, and well-being when their objectives are out of reach. Re- engaging with alternative

objectives after disengaging from pointless ones can provide benefits and improve wellbeing. Personality Systems Interaction theory suggests that the flexible downregulation of negative effects and upregulation of positive effects also help foster persistence and help people learn from setbacks and disengage from pointless goal pursuits. Based on the important role of value and expectancy for goal persistence it is inferred that people start to question whether to hold on to/let go of a personal goal when it becomes unfeasible/undesirable. Disengagement seems to be a matter of automatic non-conscious process. Depression also is found to play a functional role in goal disengagement. What makes people decide whether to hold on or let go of a personal goal? This question cannot be satisfactorily answered by any of the hypotheses presented. The idea of developmental deadlines appears to be the only theory that offers a plausible explanation. Goal achievement may occasionally appear unattainable due to a lack of resources and chances; in these situations, the person is forced to let go. When a goal has a key position in an individual's hierarchy, it may not always be simply replaced by other possibilities. Disengagement in these situations can be difficult as it necessitates a whole reconstruction of the motivational framework of the individual. Additionally, behavioural, emotional, and cognitive deactivation must end in order for disengagement to be successful. Simply stopping one's goal-achieving actions is insufficient. (Brandstätter & Bernecker, 2022) As developmental opportunities change across the lifespan, goal engagement and disengagement should be roughly congruent. (Howard & Louvar, 2017) Although difficulties when pursuing a goal are needed to value an achieved goal, it is also crucial to disengage from a futile goal to save resources, time, and well-being. The goal disengagement process shields the negative effects of unachievable goals on well-being. (Kappes & Thomsen, 2022) Disengagement from goal is a process that starts well before individuals definitively let go of their goals. An action crisis is defined as a circumstance in which individuals have already committed a significant amount into their goal. Individuals who experience recurrent setbacks or a loss of perceived desirability may find themselves torn between pursuing the objective and disengaging from it. They may question whether it is still worthwhile. To halt or go. Intrapsychic conflict can lead to affective, physiological, and cognitive effects that impact self-regulation. The resulting intrapsychic conflict is supposed to be associated with specific affective, physiological, and cognitive consequences relevant to self-regulation. When a goal is either no longer attainable or no longer worth an effort, a four-phase sequence of events starts the so-called incentive–disengagement cycle. First, the person works harder to achieve his or her goal (invigoration). If efforts fail, a cycle of rage (violence) and depression (resignation) may occur. In the third phase, commitment to the specific goal fades, and the individual is open to being engaged to new goals (healing). (Brandstätter et al., 2013) The intensity of an action crisis in the event of goal disengagement is positively associated with certainty about the decision to pursue a subsequently formed alternative goal. It was found that the extent of experiences of action crisis in the relinquished personal goal before goal disengagement, exerted a statistically significant effect on decisional certainty and the desirability of the newly defined alternative goal and its characteristics. No significant effect was observed for goal attainability. It is essential to reengage in an alternative goal as otherwise one would remain empty-handed lacking orientation and structure in life. (Brandstätter & Herrmann, 2015)

People with depression are more likely to give up on unreachable objectives and are less likely to set new ones. They typically exhibit a diminished approach to goal motivation, gloomy goal expectations, greater disengagement from goals, and decreased reengagement from goals when faced with challenges. By reducing commitment to unachievable objectives and averting long-term distress, goal disengagement might lessen psychological pain. But individuals with depression could find it difficult to change their objectives and might not be motivated to

participate in enjoyable activities, which might make it harder for them to reach new objectives. (Dickson et al., 2016) It was found that more precise perceptions of age-related losses such as one's aging and remaining lifetime were associated with lower goal re-engagement and goal flexibility. (Awareness of age-related change) AARC was found to be not associated with goal disengagement. Those with higher AARC gains may be more aware of future opportunities due to recognition of their resources and performance capacity, therefore remaining committed to goals for longer, and more readily engaging with new goals. (Wilton-Harding & Windsor, 2021)

Limitations:
There are a few limitations to this narrative review. First, to address the study aim, the existing literature was extended to last 23 years. Second, the literature on life goals, personal goals, and accomplishment objectives is dispersed. The author's predisposition to categorise their understanding of life goals may be restricted to their knowledge and skills, and it may not be the only method to categorise.

CONCLUSION

Life goals hold greater importance in the wellbeing of an individual, therefore holistically understanding them in depth becomes necessary. The current review paper was able to provide the nitty-gritty of different types of goals, factors that influence life goals, and their attainment process. This review paper has successfully attempted to provide a comprehensive outlook to life goals and can serve as a quick reference guide to health practitioners and the population in general to study life goals and plan any life goal-related intervention. Goal setting along with mentoring and guidance has been demonstrated to be effective in past research (Nelis et al., 2018; Healy et al., 2018). These findings may help researchers to better understand life goals and ways to promote these in individuals through goal setting and goal management.

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