

# The Mediating Role of Goal Striving in the Effect of Personality Trait on Experience Meaningfulness

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*Received: August 03, 2022; Accepted: December 05, 2022*

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**Abstract:** Goal striving is a continual motivating approach that influences an employee's performance at work on a current day as well as how they perceive and how they handle work the next day. This study's goal was to investigate the mediating function that goal-striving autonomy devours in the consequence of personality trait openness to experience the psychological state of experienced meaningfulness. The literature contains rare studies on the link among personality trait openness to experience, goal-striving autonomy, and experienced meaningfulness. The study used self-determination theory and goal-striving autonomy as a mediator, which improves the novelty of the study. This study was supported to subsidize the related research. Utilizing survey-based data, this study analyzed the responses of 753 employees working for the last five years in various sectors (e.g. pharmaceuticals, pesticides, fast-moving consumer goods) in Pakistan. The study used a time log method of data collection and the PROCESS macro Model 4 was used to analyze the data. The results show that goal-striving autonomy has a significant and positive impact on the relationship between the personality trait openness to experience and the psychological state of experienced meaningfulness. The core objective of the study is that when autonomy motivation force associated with personality trait openness to experience in recital by these persistent motivational goal strivings, persons practice the emotional condition of experience meaningfulness.

**Keywords:** Autonomy striving; experienced meaningfulness; self-determination Theory  
**JEL Classification Codes:** D9

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## 1. Introduction

Goal striving is a continual motivating approach that influences an employee's performance at work on a current day as well as how they perceive and how they handle work the next day. Additionally, striving-induced actions may assist in meeting workers' psychological demands in a way that could make this procedure conscience throughout a workday (Ryan & Deci, 2017; Ryan, 2012). The pursuit of goals that are connected to meaningful experiences serve as an important method by which task and personality characteristics impact intentional conduct and decision at work. Cho et al., 2018 indicates a positive association of motivation striving with performance.

Experienced meaningfulness is the imagined importance or significance a person derives from performing work-related behavior (Pratt & Ashforth, 2003; DeShon & Gillespie, 2005). Experiencing meaningfulness consents an individual to accomplish excellent work because they may be "themselves" in their occupation roles to realize chore (Allan et al., 2018). Additionally, being more realistic at work is more on track with daily life goals.

A personality attributes model can be advantageous since it offers work assignments and goals which are person-focused and capitalize on each person's unique qualities and energy (Inceoglu & Warr, 2021). According to research, personality traits are useful for illuminating a range of work-related significances, such as motivation. Several empirical studies have demonstrated that personality features vary from person to person and are significant predictors and elucidators of employee motivation and behavior (Hogan & Holland, 2003; Judge & Ilies, 2002; Barrick & Mount, 1991; Salgado, 1997). Multiple types of research showed that people's motives change both within and between individuals. (Weinstein & Ryan, 2010; Conway et al., 2015; Patall, et al., 2016; Morgenstern et al., 2016; Koopmann, Lanaj, Bono, & Campana, 2016).

This study investigates that people feel more experienced meaningfulness when goal-striving autonomy relates to the personality trait openness to experience. This study is based on the self-determination theory (STD), according to Deci and Ryans' (2000); this theory proposes that personalities are inspired to realize an essential goal: autonomy. Barrick et al., 2013, suggest that the suggested implied goal autonomy broadly explains personality variances in the intrinsic inspiration that regulates determination and meaningfulness at duties. Former studies have trusted SDT as a theoretic contrivance that elucidates significant organizational and worker consequences such as intrinsic inspiration (Hur et al., 2018), and worker commitment (Rupp et al., 2018). The theory claims that autonomy is a basic psychological prerequisite that motivates high-quality inspiration. According to SDT, the need for autonomy signifies the intrinsic human necessity of taking the logic of inventiveness, desire, and sharing in policymaking at work (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

Additionally, it has been revealed that intrinsic and extrinsic accomplishment motivations are distinctively correlated with the Big Five personality traits. Openness to experience and intrinsic motivation were discovered to be positively linked (Hart, Stasson, Mahoney & Story, 2007). Anticipating and analyzing employee motivation and behavior, individual variances in personality traits are significant (Hogan & Holland, 2003; Judge & Ilies, 2002; Salgado, 1997; Barrick & Mount, 1991). The core objective of this study examines the association of the openness to experience personality trait with striving types namely autonomy striving and experienced meaningfulness.

To better understand how personality factors impact self-regulation, the goal-striving approach may be enormously beneficial. Conducive to accomplishing a task, a person needs to control their feelings and actions which are referred to as goal striving (Gollwitzer & Brandstaetter, 1997; Diefendorff, Hall, Lord, & Strean, 2000). Employees must constantly exert conscience in the job as they try to complete numerous tasks and goals. VandeWalle, Brown, Cron,

and Slocum (1999), observed in a research study of salespeople, a focus on learning (but not a performance goal orientation) anticipated a focus on skill development, which in turn, determines higher sales performance.

Organizations are facing the problems of hiring the right person for the right job, so it's important to investigate the potential existence of a trait depicting meaning derived from internal motivation (Campbell et al., 2022). If an individual is intrinsically motivated then he /she feels meaningfulness in his/her work and gives a maximum output which is the primary requirement of the organizations. Furthermore Levine et al., (2021) suggested investigating how strivings helpful for individuals in successful attainment of their goals. This study will contribute to fulfilling these gaps by utilizing the time log method in the Pakistani context.

## **1.1 Literature Review**

### **1.1.1 Openness to Experience and Autonomy Striving**

Striving for autonomy is related to an aspiration to ensure grip above what, when, and how to do about the task (Mount et al., 2005; Morgeson & Humphrey, 2006). De Charms (1968: 215) sustains that attainment control and the sympathetic above situation are the utmost essential aims individuals struggle to achieve. This is exemplified in his proclamation that fellow's main motivational inclination is to be active in creating variations in his surroundings. A person who evolves and develops is much more likely to acquire the ability to change (i.e., control) the surroundings, hence pursuing autonomy also contains desired objectives. It has been demonstrated that openness to experience and autonomy go hand in hand (Mount et al., 2005; Zengin & Döngül, 2022).

The personality trait, Openness to Experience has created an association with striving for autonomy objectives. Individuals with greater openness to experience qualities experience an aspiration for autonomy goal strivings (Mount et al., 2005), because of their inventive, erudite, inquisitive, unique, broad-minded, intellectual, and imaginatively thoughtful (Costa & McCrae, 1992; Barrick & Mount, 1991). They, therefore, have strong preferences for manipulating ideas, finding appeal in irrational behavior, and making use of things that are imperfect or unique.

***H1: There is a positive and significant relationship between the personality trait openness to experience and goal-striving autonomy.***

### **1.1.2 Autonomy and Experience Meaningfulness**

Autonomy in the job refers to the level to which an occupation permits independence, individuality, and preference to plan work, make verdicts, and select the approaches used to execute jobs (Wall, Jackson, & Mullarkey, 1995; Wall, Jackson, & Davids, 1992; Breugh, 1985). Thus, work with high autonomy consents persons to involve in deviating and inspired psychological events which are the core of striving for autonomy. Autonomy is an interior power that may be extra pertinent to experiencing and pursuing meaning (Steger et al, .2008).

Hackman and Oldham's, (1980), stated that autonomy is controlled by a practiced obligation for the consequences of the profession. The more dutiful individual's sense of the outcomes of their effort, the additional expected they are to practice the exertion as meaningful. Kahn, (1990) initiates validation for an association between meaningfulness and autonomy in his research. He indicated that "when organization members were doing work that was challenging, clearly delineated, varied, creative, and somewhat autonomous, they were more likely to experience psychological meaningfulness. Consequently, current study aims to discover that the extra autonomy

workforces are assumed in their work, the additional expected that work is to have meaning for them. Self-determination theory classifies autonomy as a basic psychological need that is important for ideal outcomes. Autonomy denotes to entities' sense that they are the carter of, and have choice and control over, their activities (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Person who practices fulfillment of this simple psychosomatic prerequisite that is, autonomy satisfaction reports several optimistic results (e.g., meaningfulness, enthusiasm; Martela et al., 2022).

## **H2: The relation between goal-striving autonomy and experienced meaningfulness.**

### **1.1.3 Openness to Experience and Experience Meaningfulness**

Numerous personality traits are related to several work-related and individuals' different forms of meaningfulness (Stewart et al., 2022). Openness to experience denotes a personality creativeness and adventurousness; individuals with remarkably Openness to experience are normally creative, inquisitive, sensitive, and keen to attempt new possessions or dare concord. Openness to experience individuals energetically pursue prospects to increase creative behavior and also fulfill their motivational striving. When motivational striving autonomy is high then the individual feels his work is meaningful (Hogan & Holland, 2003; Mount et al., 2005). When the duty condition is considered by self-determinant, individuality, and choice and the worker is extraordinary in openness to experience, persons stand extremely inspired to follow autonomy striving and will observe great meaningfulness in the task that they completed.

## **H3: Openness to experience personality traits has a positive effect on experienced meaningfulness.**

### **1.1.4 Openness to Experience, Autonomy, and Experienced Meaningfulness**

Self-determination theory (SDT) supports explicating the outcome of intrinsic motivation on worker experienced meaningfulness. Former studies have exposed a positive relationship between workers' intrinsic motivation and several worker outcomes. Intrinsically inspired workforces incline to pursue new concepts that task the existing status quo and reassure adventuresome behavior; meanwhile, they are interested in personal attention and the contest of resolving complications and attempting multifarious responsibilities (Gagne´ and Deci 2005). Taken calmly, we recommend those workers' insights into personality distress worker experience meaningfulness through the mediation of workers' intrinsic motivation.

Personalities having extraordinary openness in occupations and also having excessive autonomy and job diversity would experience improved meaningfulness. Personalities, who are extraordinary in openness to experience, vigorously pursue prospects for personal progress and advance autonomy through inventive, inquisitive, and inspired manners. Furthermore, such types of personalities would proactively pursue occasions at duties that consent to realize their intrinsic motivation to pursue autonomy (Hogan & Holland, 2003; Mount et al., 2005). When the exertion condition has high autonomy, open personalities who are seeking autonomy find the circumstance to be very meaningful and will feel less restrained while appreciating creative accomplishments. They have superior self-determination to investigate and test using substitute approaches at duties and to content their enquiring mind.

## **H4: Autonomy striving has a mediation role in the effect of openness to experience personality on experienced meaningfulness.**

### **1.1.5 Research Model**

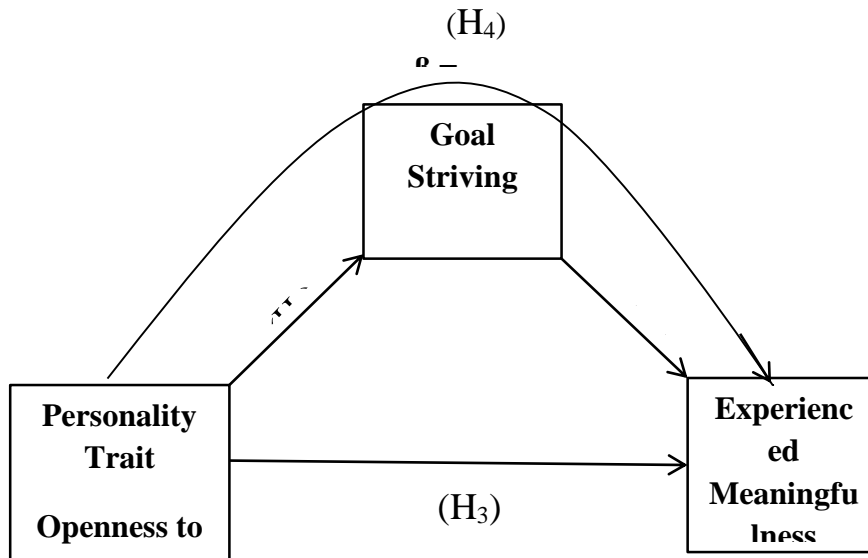


Figure 1: Research Model

Here personality trait openness to experience (ONE) represents the independent variable (X), goal striving autonomy (ATM) represents mediating variable (M) and experienced meaningfulness (EMF) represents the outcome variable (Y). H1, H2, and H3 indicate the hypotheses of direct effects and H4 denotes the indirect/mediating effect.

## 2. Research Methods

### 2.1. Participant and procedure

The time log method was used in this study and data were collected in three lags (T1, T2 & T3). The gap between each lag was one month. At time T1, take a consent form, and at the same time after attaining the consent form the questionnaire about personality was taken from the sales representatives and supervisory staff of each sector. At time T2, after one month of T1 mediating variable goal striving items were administrated and data were collected about Autonomy striving. At time T3, after one month of T2, the outcome variable experienced meaningfulness items were administrated to all field staff, and data were collected. A simple convenience sampling technique was used for data collection from the sales representative and their supervisory staff of pharmaceuticals, pesticides, and FMCGs in Pakistan. 765 questionnaires were distributed for data collection and 753 were returned and filled. The response rate was 98.4%. As for the inclusion criterion, all accomplices were mandatory to have worked for at least five years in the working organization. After excluding participants who did not fall under the inclusion criterion, the sample consisted of 753 respondents. Data on variables of interest were collected through a questionnaire survey using hard copy instead online survey because it is common and highly practical to distribute a survey online by delivering a link to a website's questionnaire through email invitations, however, there may be restrictions (Duffy, 2002). Several email addresses that certain individuals may no longer use are possible. Some might use email filtration to separate undesired and trashed mail from critical and desired mail. These difficulties can make it hard for a scientist to get the sample they want, which would skew the sampling and decrease response rates.

The Likert scale closed-ended questionnaire was used to collect the data from the targeted population. The survey items were measured on a 5-point scale. The response scales ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Higher scores indicate higher levels of the core construct. The items were written in English and then interpreted into the Urdu language. In this study, the back-translation practice suggested by Brislin (1980) to convert items from English to Urdu was surveyed. Then a questionnaire was administrated in the Urdu language.

## 2.2. Instruments of the Study/Measures

### 2.2.1 The Personality Trait of Openness to experience

The personality trait openness to experience was assessed by using 4 items scales and an example item of openness to experience is “Sympathize with others’ feelings”, (adapted from Donnellan et al., 2006). Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  was 0.80.

### 2.2.2 The Goal Striving Autonomy

The goal striving Autonomy was measured by using 4 items scale and an example of Autonomy striving is “I want to express my ideas and opinions in this job,” (adapted from Van den Broeck et al., 2010). Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  was 0.82.

### 2.2.3 The Experienced meaningfulness

Experienced meaningfulness is measured by using a short scale of 3 items and an example of Experienced meaningfulness is “The work I do is connected to what I think is important in life” (adapted from Ashmos, D. P., & Duchon, D., 2000). Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  was 0.77.

## 3. Statistical analyses

In the research, the data were analyzed using MODEL-4 of the PROCESS macro by Hayes with the SPSS 20 package program (Hayes, 2018). Primary analyses included the reliability and validity test, and descriptive statistics. Reliability and validity were observed by Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  test. Descriptive statistics comprised of mean, standard deviation, and correlation analyses of the variables. In this research, bootstrap resampling (5000 samples) was used to estimate 95% confidence intervals. All analyses were two-tailed and used conventional significance thresholds ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ).

Predictors	AGA	COMS	EMF	Mean	SD
ONE	1	-	-	3.687	.766
ATM	.590**	1	-	3.677	.879
EMF	.622**	.663**	1	3.915	.826

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (Two tailed)

Table 1 Correlation Analysis and Descriptive Statistics (N=753)

Predictors	B	Se	T	P	LL95 %CI	UL95 %CI	Hypo	Conclusion
ONE → ATM	.678	.034	20.03	.000	.611	.744	H <sub>1</sub>	Supported
ATM → EMF	.425	.029	14.47	.000	.368	.483	H <sub>2</sub>	Supported
ONE → EMF	.383	.034	11.35	.000	.317	.450	H <sub>3</sub>	Supported

Table 2 Path analysis of Model 4 (N=753).

Predictors	Bootstrap Results For Indirect Effect				Hypo	Conclusion
	B	Se	LL95%CI	UL95%CI		
ONE → ATM → EMF	.289	.029	.233	.346	H <sub>4</sub>	Supported

$\beta$ = Effect UL= Upper level LL= Lower level CI= Confidence Interval

Table 3 Bootstrap results for indirect effects (N=753)

## 4. Results and Discussion

### 4.1 Correlation Analysis and Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 indicates the standard deviations, correlation values, and mean values of the variables. The mean openness to experience ( $3.687 \pm 0.766$ ) and the mean autonomy striving ( $3.677 \pm 0.879$ ) was high; however, the mean experienced meaningfulness ( $3.915 \pm 0.826$ ) was also high. Conferring to the outcomes of the correlation analysis, the association between openness to experience personality and goal-striving autonomy was found positive ( $r = 0.590$ ). However, there was a positive relationship between openness to experience and experienced meaningfulness ( $r = .622$ ) and the relationship between autonomy striving and experienced meaningfulness was also positive ( $r = .663$ ). According to these results, as the sales representatives' experience of goal-striving autonomy and personality trait openness to experience increase, their experienced meaningfulness also increases.

### 4.2 Mediation analysis

The SPSS PROCESS macro model 4 was utilized to recognize the influence of openness to experience on experienced meaningfulness and mediator character of goal striving autonomy in this consequence. Tables 2 & 3 indicate, in detail, the outcomes of the path investigation assumed in Figure 1. Conferring to results the openness to experience had a positive and significant impact on goal-striving Autonomy ( $\beta = 0.678$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and there did not lie zero between the lower and upper confidence interval. So H1 is accepted. Both personality traits openness to experience ( $\beta = 0.383$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and Autonomy striving ( $\beta = 0.425$ ,  $p < .001$ ) had a positive effect on experienced meaningfulness at work. Additionally, goal-striving Autonomy played a positive and significant mediating role in the effect of personality trait openness to experience on experienced meaningfulness at work ( $\beta = 0.288$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

There were no zero lies between lower and upper confidence intervals in each analysis, so H2, H3, and H4 were accepted). Analysis shows that directed and indirect both effects are positive and significant so there presents a partial mediation.

## **5. Conclusion**

This study concluded that there is a positive and significant relationship between personality trait openness to experience, goal-striving autonomy, and experienced meaningfulness. Therefore, the hypotheses H1, H2, H3, and H4 are supported on the base of the self-determination theory that intrinsic motivation autonomy strivings when relates with the personality openness to experience then individuals experienced meaningfulness. Recognition of a life aim, which provides one's life meaningfulness, direction, and a sense of perspective, is essential for achieving autonomy. In this situation, a person is unafraid to take a chance and make a rational decision as they feel that experience can only be gained through intervening, which allows people to control their personal lives and, therefore, exercise their right to choose. Due to the addition of a dynamic component, this concept of autonomy is significantly broader. Becoming self-determined enables an individual to behave freely, independent of commitments or outside pressure. As a result, the degree of internal, or autonomy, motivation for one's acts increases. This is where the idea of "a freedom for...", or freedom as an action based on knowledge of options and their effects, first emerges.

### **5.1 Theoretical and practical implications**

This study will help managers in the hiring of individuals for their organization and the outcomes have significant ramifications for encouraging a state of meaningfulness in professions. Enhancing meaningfulness is essential for administrations considering that it has been linked to several desired job characteristics, including financial success (El Akremi et al., 2018), creativeness (Cohen-Meitar et al, 2009), and employee engagement (May et al., 2004). The results indicate that personality influences meaningfulness both directly and indirectly through favorable assessments of intrinsic motivation for goal strivings. Since employee attribution is a vital component of building employee experienced meaningfulness, employers need to consider how people attach meaning to enacted intrinsic motivation and manage it carefully. This study additionally supports intrinsic motivation autonomy as a key instrument for creating employee experienced meaningfulness by proving how autonomy goal-striving perceptions make workers' experiences at work more meaningful.

### **5.2 Limitations and directions for future work**

The following are some possible limits of this research endeavor. The scope of the results is questioned by the use of a sample from a particular nation. It is advised to imitate such type of study in diverse cultural circumstances to gain deeper compassion for the associations and develop the findings of the present study. This is because the nature and expression of intrinsically motivated goal-striving autonomy in underdeveloped nations may differ significantly from that in developed countries, which may influence the nature of the interactions between the studied variables. The study's second limit pertains to the use of the time log data collection method and the gap between each log was one month but the respondents daily perform their job tasks, so the daily diary method is used to predict the experienced meaningfulness. Additionally, future studies might examine the moderating role of the job characteristics model on the proposed relationships, which may provide additional insights.

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