

Basic Psychological Need Satisfaction in Relationships

Scale Description

Central to self-determination theory is the concept of basic psychological needs that are assumed to be innate and universal. According to the theory, these needs--the needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness--must be ongoingly satisfied for people to develop and function in healthy or optimal ways (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Many of the propositions of SDT derive from the postulate of fundamental psychological needs, and the concept has proven essential for making meaningful interpretations of a wide range of empirically isolated phenomena.

This 9-item scale addresses need satisfaction in interpersonal relationships. This scale was used in La Guardia, Ryan, Couchman, and Deci (2000).

Please use the following reference when using this scale: (La Guardia, Ryan, Couchman, & Deci 2000).

Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2000). The “what” and “why” of goal pursuits: Human needs and the self-determination of behavior. *Psychological Inquiry, 11*, 227-268.

Deci, E. L., Ryan, R. M., Gagné, M., Leone, D. R., Usunov, J., & Kornazheva, B. P. (2001). Need satisfaction, motivation, and well-being in the work organizations of a former Eastern Bloc country. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, in press.

La Guardia, J. G., Ryan, R. M., Couchman, C. E., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Within-person variation in security of attachment: A self-determination theory perspective on attachment, need fulfillment, and well-being. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 79*, 367-384.

Ilardi, B. C., Leone, D., Kasser, R., & Ryan, R. M. (1993). Employee and supervisor ratings of motivation: Main effects and discrepancies associated with job satisfaction and adjustment in a factory setting. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 23*, 1789-1805.

Kasser, T., Davey, J., & Ryan, R. M. (1992). Motivation, dependability, and employee-supervisor discrepancies in psychiatric vocational rehabilitation settings. *Rehabilitation Psychology, 37*, 175-187.

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Note: This questionnaire was designed for use with respect to need satisfaction in particular relationships. For example, it is to assess the degree to which a person experiences basic need satisfaction while relating to his or her spouse, or best friend, or mother, or children, or whomever. So, to use the questionnaire to assess need satisfaction in a relationship, replace the XXXXXXXX with the relationship you are studying. Although we have never done so, you could try using it for relationships in general if that is the question that interests you.

In My Relationships

Please respond to each statement by indicating how true it is for you. Use the following scale.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
not at all			somewhat			very
true			true			true

1. When I am with XXXXXXXX, I feel free to be who I am.
2. When I am with XXXXXXXX, I feel like a competent person.
3. When I am with XXXXXXXX, I feel loved and cared about.
4. When I am with XXXXXXXX, I often feel inadequate or incompetent.
5. When I am with XXXXXXXX, I have a say in what happens, and I can voice my opinion.
6. When I am with XXXXXXXX, I often feel a lot of distance in our relationship.
7. When I am with XXXXXXXX, I feel very capable and effective.
8. When I am with XXXXXXXX, I feel a lot of closeness and intimacy.
9. When I am with XXXXXXXX, I feel controlled and pressured to be certain ways.

Scoring Information. Form three subscale scores by averaging item responses for each subscale after reverse scoring the items that were worded in the negative direction. Specifically, any item that has (R) after it in the code below should be reverse scored by subtracting the person's response from 8. The subscales are:

Autonomy: 1, 5, 9(R)

Competence: 2, 4(R), 7

Relatedness: 3, 6(R), 8

Theoretical Note. There is something almost tautological about the statement that satisfying one's need for relatedness in an interpersonal relationship with, say, your best friend would predict the quality of that relationship. Indeed, as would be expected, research has shown a strong relation between degree of satisfaction of the relatedness need in a particular relationship and the security of attachment and the quality of relationship with that partner (La Guardia, Ryan, Couchman, & Deci, 2000). However, the more interesting point is that security of attachment and the quality of relationships with particular partners is also predicted by the degree to which one experiences satisfaction of the need for autonomy and the need for competence within those partners.

La Guardia, J. G., Ryan, R. M., Couchman, C. E., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Within-person variation in security of attachment: A self-determination theory perspective on attachment, need fulfillment, and well-being. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 79*, 367-384.