

Theoretical and methodological foundations of the study of self-regulation, ego depletion and personality motivation

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Abstract: The article examines the theoretical and methodological foundations of studying self-regulation, ego depletion, and personality motivation. It analyzes the interrelation between self-regulation and motivation as key mechanisms of psychological resilience and individual adaptation. Particular attention is paid to the role of motivational factors in restoring self-regulatory resources under ego depletion. Based on the theoretical frameworks of R. Baumeister, A. Bandura, V.I. Morosanova, and other scholars, the study demonstrates that motivation is an essential element of the self-regulation system, enabling individuals to overcome internal conflicts between natural impulses and cultural norms. The article concludes with the necessity of incorporating the motivational component into the modern model of self-regulation.

Keywords: self-regulation, self-control, ego depletion, personality motivation, willpower, motivational processes, psychological resilience, self-awareness, emotional regulation, cognitive mechanisms, adaptation, volitional effort, behavioral regulation, internal motivation, personal development, self-management, psychological activity, motivational conflict, social adaptation, mental energy.

Self—regulation is the ability of a person to change their own behavior. It significantly increases the flexibility and adaptability of human activity, allowing people to adapt their actions to an extremely wide range of social and situational requirements. Self-regulation serves as an important basis for the popular notion of free will and for socially acceptable behavior. It benefits both the individual and society as a whole. Moreover, a high level of self-control seems to contribute to a variety of positive results, including task performance, academic and work success, popularity, mental health and adaptation, as well as harmonious interpersonal relationships [1] Most researchers recognize in psychological science that self-regulation is considered as a process of conscious management of a person's own mental states, behavior and activity (K. Bandura, R. Baumeister, V.I. Morosanova, A. B. Orlov, and others). Self-regulation acts as a central link in the subjective activity of the individual and ensures the alignment of internal needs with external social requirements. [2,1,3,4]

According to V.I. Morosanova, self-regulation is a multilevel system that includes cognitive, emotional and behavioral components that ensure the purposeful activity of the subject.[3] Our research has shown that self-regulation cannot be considered outside the context of motivation, since it is motivational factors that determine the choice of goals and behavioral strategies. Motivation is an internal source of activity that underlies the formation and implementation of self-regulatory mechanisms. [5]

Motivation is an internal source of activity underlying the formation and implementation of self-regulatory mechanisms. However, under conditions of increased stress or emotional stress, motivational resources may decrease, which leads to a weakening of self-control and the manifestation of the phenomenon of ego depletion (R. Baumeister). [1] Thus, the study of the relationship between motivation and self-regulation allows for a deeper understanding of the mechanisms of psychological stability of a personality and its ability to restore resources. This study analyzes the phenomena of self-regulation and willpower, considered in the context of motivational processes. Self-regulation is often used to restrain motivation, but motivation for self-regulation is often a crucial factor in the successful implementation of self-regulatory actions. Self—regulation means the ability of an organism (in this case, a human) to overcome and change its reactions. [5]

This is the process by which people try to restrain unwanted urges in order to take control of the reactions that occur.

Regulation implies change, especially change aimed at bringing behavior (or other states) in line with a certain standard, such as an ideal or goal. Changing one's own behavior to comply with rules, conform to ideals, or achieve goals is a (and very useful) form of self—regulation.

Changing a reaction does not always mean suppressing it: although self—restraint is a common form of self-regulation, however, strengthening or prolonging a reaction are also its forms. However, the most common type of regulation remains suppression and containment. Ego depletion refers to a condition in which the "I" is deprived of some of its usual resources. R. Baumeister suggests that the executive function of the Ego, including self-regulation, volitional choice and active initiative, depends on a limited resource that is consumed in the process of such actions. Ego depletion makes a person temporarily less able and less willing to function normally or optimally.

The motivational aspect of ego depletion is one of the key focuses of this article. Previous analyses of self-regulation (for example, R. Baumeister et al.,) [1] identified three main components of the process of self-regulation, but now we have found that it is necessary to add a fourth component. This fourth element is. "Components of self-regulation and the role of motivation". To properly understand

the role of motivation, it is necessary to consider all four components of self-regulation.

1. Standards. The first element is the availability of standards. As indicated in the definition, self-regulation implies changing behavior in such a way as to bring it in line with a certain standard. Therefore, effective self-regulation requires a well-defined and clearly understood standard. Vague, contradictory, or unclear standards make the process of self-regulation difficult. The research conducted by E.Tori Higgins, [6] showed that different types of standards can change both emotional reactions and behavioral processes.

2. Monitoring. The second element of self—regulation is monitoring. It is almost impossible to regulate behavior unless it is constantly monitored. The theory of self-regulation is largely based on the classical works of Ch. The main contribution of these researchers was the application of the feedback model to human self-regulation. [7] The process of self-regulation includes a sequence of actions aimed at comparing the current state of a person with set standards, norms or goals. At the first stage, a person performs a so—called evaluative check ("test") - he compares his real state, behavior, or individual characteristics of the "I" with an internal or external standard.

If a comparison reveals a discrepancy between the actual and desired condition, a self-regulation mechanism is triggered, requiring the activation of corrective actions aimed at reducing this discrepancy. Such actions may include changing behavior, emotional reactions, cognitive attitudes, or ways to achieve a goal.

In the process of implementing self-regulation, the individual periodically conducts repeated checks (re-tests), which make it possible to assess the dynamics and the degree of approximation to a given standard. When a state of correspondence between the actual results and the target parameters is reached, the need for further regulatory activity disappears, and the process of self-regulation is temporarily completed until a new goal or discrepancy appears.

This cycle reflects the classical model of self-regulation proposed by K. Carver and M. Shyer, in which human behavior is considered as a system of continuous feedback aimed at achieving consistency between the current and ideal state of the subject.[7]

3. The power of self-regulation (will). The third component is the power of self—regulation, commonly referred to as willpower. Actions aimed at changing oneself are difficult and require certain resources. Self-regulation seems to rely on a limited resource that functions like energy, which is depleted as a result of volitional efforts.

4. Motivation The fourth component is motivation, namely, motivation to achieve a goal or meet a standard, which in practice boils down to motivation for self—regulation.

Even if the standards are clear, monitoring is effective, and resources are sufficient, a person can still fail at self-regulation if they are not interested in achieving the goal. The role of motivation as one of the four components. Thus, motivation should be considered as one of the four main ingredients of self-regulation. As the term "ingredients" implies, each of them is necessary for effective self-control. However, the four components can compensate or replace each other to a certain extent. If the motivation is strong — for example, a person is very eager to meet a standard —this can compensate for a lack of willpower or difficulty monitoring. A decrease in the effectiveness of self-regulation is observed in situations where the ability to self-observe and control one's own behavior is weakened.[8]

In such circumstances, a person may exhibit impulsive or inappropriate reactions, as the internal feedback mechanism functions less accurately, but high motivation can partially compensate for these difficulties. For example, if a person is aware of the significance of an event — an important public appearance, an interview, or interaction with an authority figure — they mobilize internal resources and strive for self-control, even with reduced regulatory capacity. This compensatory effect of motivation demonstrates its key function in ensuring the sustainability of self-regulatory processes. Motivation is especially effective as a substitute for willpower. Even if the power of self-regulation (or self-control) has been exhausted by previous efforts, a person can continue to successfully regulate himself if the level of motivation remains high. At the same time, motivation may not be enough if there is no clear standard. In this case, a person will want to self-regulate, but not know which reactions are correct.

As for monitoring, motivation can partially compensate for a decrease in the ability to self-observe, but this effect is limited.

Of course, there are degrees of will exhaustion in which no motivation can compensate for the loss of a resource, although this thesis still requires empirical confirmation. Motivation is subject to change under the influence of many circumstances. Until recently, the theory of self-regulation paid little attention to the question of how motivated people are to regulate themselves. However, it seems that motivation for self-regulation, like other types of motivation, varies depending on expected satisfaction, perceived benefits, performance attitudes, and other factors. In the course of a theoretical study, it was revealed that a person has the ability to self-regulate. Without motivation, it would not be necessary. Self-regulation primarily serves to prevent the realization of certain motivational impulses that could lead to behavior harmful to the individual, even if they promise short-term benefits in the

form of satisfying current needs and desires. Thus, some basic functions of self-regulation are opposed to motivation.

While conducting an early review of the literature on the problem of self-regulation [1] P. Baumeister noted that the most common function of self-regulation is to inhibit impulsive reactions before they develop into real behavior. Most (though not all) manifestations of self-regulation can be considered as forms of self-restraint, when an individual consciously controls his impulses. For example, a student seeking to improve academic performance refuses to engage in distracting activities.; a person experiencing irritation restrains emotional manifestations in order to maintain constructive interaction; a person who adheres to a healthy regime controls habits that hinder the achievement of goals.

Thus, a significant part of the processes of self-regulation is aimed at suppressing or preventing impulsive behaviors, which ensures consistency of actions with internal goals and social norms.

The key answer is a motivational conflict, which creates the necessary context for understanding self-regulation. When a person wants something unconditionally and without internal conflict - for example, when his canoe sinks and he needs to swim to shore in order not to drown — there is no motivational conflict, which means that self—regulation is not required. But when motivations collide, self-regulation becomes necessary and can be the key to success.

For example, humans have been evolutionarily programmed to seek, eat, and accumulate as many calories as possible. However, cultural development has changed the environment — now chronic hunger has been replaced by chronic abundance. Modern Westerners who eat whatever they want gain excess weight, which harms their health and social status. There is a motivational conflict: the desire to eat delicious food contradicts the desire to be healthy and slim. Self-regulation is necessary to resist the natural urge to eat delicious and affordable food.

Perhaps the most important motivational conflict arises from the clash of natural impulses and cultural demands. P. Baumeister proposed to consider nature and culture as complementary forces, since evolution has taken away human traits that allow him to create and function in complex social systems. [4]

However, short-term selfish interests remain a source of constant conflict. Selfishness is natural: the brain and many psychological traits have evolved to help the body survive and reproduce successfully. Animals that did not act in the best interests of themselves and their loved ones gave way to those who did. Culture, on the other hand, is a group system, and often what is good for the group is not profitable for the individual. Waiting in line, respecting the property of others, paying taxes, and risking life in war are all examples of behavior that is beneficial to the group but costly to the individual. Such behavior is not natural; on the contrary, it is

natural to do the opposite. Therefore, self-regulation is necessary and, perhaps, vital for the successful existence of culture.

The key motivational conflict in these collisions of natural impulses and cultural norms is the desire for social acceptance. The need to belong to a community is one of the most basic and comprehensive human needs. Baumeister and Leary have provided significant evidence that this drive is universal and underlies a wide range of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral responses. [9] Similarly, the theory of self-determination (Deci and Ryan) asserts that the desire for social connections is one of the three most fundamental human motivations.[10] It is this motivation that conflicts with egoistic impulses (Heatherton and Vos).[11] Selfish people may temporarily get what they want, but soon others begin to avoid them. Therefore, people learn to restrain selfishness for the sake of social approval and acceptance.

Social acceptance is not a whim or a luxury, but a central mechanism related to basic survival needs. This is also a criticism of Maslow's famous pyramid of needs (Wahba and Bridwell). According to Maslow, the desire for belonging arises only after the satisfaction of basic needs — food, shelter, security. However, observations show that hunger and danger often increase the desire to communicate and seek support (Shakhter, Taylor, et al.). Moreover, people often risk their lives for belonging (Leary, Tchivigian, and Kraxberger).

Thus, returning to the topic of the origins of self-regulation, we can conclude that a significant part of it is aimed at curbing selfish motivations in order to achieve social recognition and approval (Heatherton and Vos). In essence, this is a manifestation of enlightened selfishness, when a person chooses long-term benefits (social acceptance, respect, cooperation) instead of immediate satisfaction of their impulses. Thus, based on the theoretical analysis, we concluded that motivation can temporarily overcome exhaustion, encouraging a person to use the remaining resources. However, the effect of ego depletion does not indicate a complete loss of the ability to self-regulate, but rather the body's natural tendency to conserve limited energy resources. Summarizing the results of the theoretical analysis, we can conclude that motivation is a fundamental aspect of life, and, probably, personality as an active subject has evolved precisely in order to contribute to the achievement of goals related to basic human motives. However, in order to manage conflicts between internal motivations, as well as between external constraints and internal urges, self-regulation becomes a vital function of the active subject.

Modern theories of self—regulation seem to have insufficiently taken into account the role of motivation in ensuring the success of self-regulation, even in cases where self-regulation is used to restrain motivation itself.

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