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ORIGINAL PAPER

The Motivated Chatterbox: Examining the Motives of Goal Sharing

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Abstract
Across six studies, we examined the motives that drive individuals to communicate their goals with others (i.e., goal sharing). Using a new scale constructed across two preliminary studies, Study 1 examined the multidimensional and hierarchical structure of goal-sharing motives and demonstrated its consistency across different cultures. Study 2 found that the motives uniquely predicted goal-sharing intentions and behavior beyond related constructs. Employing longitudinal designs, Studies 3 and 4 ascertained the temporal stability of goal-sharing motives and established its predictive utility in different domains. Furthermore, Study 4 explored the downstream implications of goal-sharing motives and behavior: goal-sharing motives predicted achievement and life satisfaction through goal sharing. Implications, limitations, and future directions are discussed. Our research elucidates the structure and predictive utility of goal-sharing motives, opening new avenues for studying social influence in goal pursuit.

Keywords Goal-sharing motives · Communication · Social influence · Goal pursuit · Social goal chatter

Introduction

As a gregarious species, humans enjoy the company of others and have the proclivity to share the big and small occurrences in their lives. Because goals, aspirations, and strivings are central to one's self-identity and purpose (Kaplan & Flum, 2010; Shrum et al., 2013), goal-related contents often find their way into people's conversations (Fitzsimons et al., 2015; Klein et al., 2020). People discuss their aspirations, celebrate accomplishments, lament missed opportunities, and express their frustration with imposing roadblocks. Despite the ubiquity of goal sharing and communication, there is a lack of formal scholarly attention to the antecedents and consequences of this important human experience. In this paper, we fill the gap by identifying the motives underlying goal-sharing behavior and examining the dynamic role goal-sharing motives play in goal communication and pursuit.

Interpersonal Communication and Goal Pursuit

Goals are desirable end states, often requiring great effort, that people strive to achieve (e.g., academic achievement, financial security) or maintain (e.g., a fit body, relationship fidelity) in the long run. Successful goal pursuit is instrumental for one's well-being (Wiese, 2007), and the importance of long-term pursuit has led psychologists to devote substantial effort to identifying its various components, such as goal activation, goal setting, progress monitoring, and sustained striving (Higgins, 1996; Kruglanski, 1996; Milyavskaya & Werner, 2021). Notably, social influence has been shown to be a contributing factor to each of these components. Through mechanisms such as social comparison (e.g., Lockwood & Kunda, 1997), norm compliance (e.g., Aarts & Dijksterhuis, 2003; Holland et al., 2005), goal contagion (e.g., Aarts et al., 2004), and social support (e.g.,

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Burns et al., 2018; Song et al., 2015), the presence of and interaction with social others exert a profound impact on the way people aspire and strive. Surprisingly, the intersection between communication processes and such social influence has rarely been studied. The role of communicative processes is often assumed in the domain of goal pursuit, such as in research on social support (Burns et al., 2018), or actively avoided, such as in research on goal contagion or normative influence (Aarts et al., 2004; Holland et al., 2005). Within the communication literature, research on how variances in individual motives can influence communication approaches is plentiful (e.g., Barbato et al., 2003; Dillard et al., 1989; Martin & Rubin, 1998; see below for a review). There is, however, a lack of empirical examination of these motives within the context of goal pursuit, as well as their downstream regulatory effects for one's pursuits.

Despite the lack of direct research, examples underscoring the importance of communication for one's goals are easy to identify. The strongest support comes from work on public commitment regarding goal pursuit (Hollenbeck et al., 1989; Nyer & Dellande, 2010; Turner-McGrievy et al., 2013). For instance, Klein et al. (2020) found that students who made their goals known to an important social other displayed enhanced goal performance, which was mediated by increased goal commitment. Sharing the content of one's goal thus facilitates striving (cf. Gollwitzer et al., 2009). Other lines of inquiry hint at the importance of goal-related communication. For example, the Transactive Goal Dynamics (TGD) Theory (Fitzsimons et al., 2015) posits a dynamic interplay between goal pursuit and close relationships: goal pursuit provides a rich context in which close relationships may nurture (when a couple's goals complement each other's) or sour (when a couple's goals conflict); in return, close relationships can facilitate or hinder goal pursuit. Importantly, the theory highlights that the extent to which goal pursuit and close relationships influence each other is determined – at least in part – by the degree to which partners communicate about their goals.

Defining Goal Sharing

In this paper, we define the phenomenon of conveying various aspects of one's personal and long-term goals with social others as *goal sharing*. The content of goal sharing includes, but is not limited to, the obstacles one has (or has yet to) overcome, frustrations regarding one's progress, and exhilarating stories of success. We consider goal sharing to be compelled by the conscious and subconscious needs generated by one's personal traits and/or circumstances (Mahatoo, 1989; see also Dillard, 1997). This notion of needs driving one's behavior is consistent with the arguments put forth by classic motivational, regulatory, and behavioral theorists (Carver & Scheier, 1982, 2000; Madsen, 1965; Maslow, 1954; Hull, 1943; Lewin, 1951), and has been extended towards the study of interpersonal communication (Martin & Rubin, 1998; see also Barbato et al., 1997; Dillard, 1997; Graham, 1994; Graham et al., 1993; Van Ruler, 2018).

There are two implications of such a needs-based conceptualization: firstly, we believe goal sharing to be self-initiated. Indeed, there are pronounced differences when it comes to voluntarily chatting about one's goals with a friend compared to being asked to do so in a corporate setting (e.g., a goal-setting meeting at work). The informal and volitional nature of the former enables the sharing of goals which are more intimate and relevant to the individual. In contrast, the formal setting of the latter compels them to communicate their goals in a structured manner (e.g., the SMART framework; Afolabi et al., 2022; Weintraub et al., 2021) and often restricts the conversation such that its focus is usually on addressing the company's aims rather than one's personal needs. In light of this, we argue that the processes and outcomes involved in formal goal conversations to be distinct from those of goal sharing, and as a result beyond the scope of our current endeavor. Secondly, we posit goal sharing to be functional. This suggests that rather than occurring for its own sake, goal sharing arises with intent and – much like other forms of communication – are shaped by specific motives (Barbato et al., 2003; Martin & Rubin, 1998; Rubin et al., 1988; Van Ruler, 2018; Schutz, 1966) which we henceforth refer to as "goal-sharing motives".

Goal-sharing Motives

Goal-sharing motives can heavily influence different facets of one's goal sharing given the cognitive adjacency of motives to one's behavior (see Mahatoo, 1989). Leveraging on findings from extant communication motives research (Barbato et al., 1997; Graham, 1994; Martin & Rubin, 1998), we postulate that goal-sharing motives are likely to shape different facets of goal sharing, namely: *whom* people share their goals with (e.g., close friends vs. an academic adviser), *how* they share their goals (e.g., in a depressed vs. an uncertain manner), and *what* aspects of their goals are shared (e.g., talking about failures related to the academic goal vs. how ill-prepared one feels). These motives likely stem from an individual's disposition or goal-related circumstances and would in turn have consequences for both the responses to, and functional outcomes of, one's goal sharing.

Consider the following illustration: Tom and Sally are final-year undergraduates with the common goal of entering a prestigious graduate program. Being a naturally anxious person (i.e., a trait), Tom chronically struggles with

managing his feelings and has the tendency to feel overly anxious whenever he is pursuing a challenging goal. Consequently, the need to regulate the overwhelming negativity he feels leads to the emergence of the motive to engage in goal sharing to obtain emotional support, compelling Tom to share his struggles (i.e., the what) with his close friends (i.e., the who) in a somber (i.e., the how) manner. This, in turn, elicits the sympathy and encouragement (i.e., the response) of his friends, ultimately allowing him to feel better and refocus on the pursuit of his goal (i.e., the functional outcome). In contrast, Sally is rather adept at regulating her own emotions and is not compelled to engage in the same form of goal sharing as Tom. She is, however, concerned that she will be alone when she enters graduate school, as none of her close friends are interested in applying for the program (i.e., a circumstance). Thus, to ensure that she will have a strong social network to tap into once she enters the program. Sally is driven to share her goal (i.e., the what) with an acquaintance who is planning to enroll in the same program (i.e., the who) in an exuberant (i.e., the how) manner. In turn, this acquaintance responds with excitement at the prospect (i.e., the response) and Sally successfully befriends her (i.e., the functional outcome).

Findings from the communicative literature concur with the notion that the various facets of goal sharing are ultimately a function of the underlying goal-sharing motives that propel them (Barbato et al., 1997; Graham, 1994; Martin & Rubin, 1998). Therefore, any attempts to understand the phenomenon of goal sharing should rightfully begin with scrutinizing its antecedent motives. Most closely aligned with our current work would be the endeavors of Dillard and colleagues (1989; 1997; 2008), who highlight the centrality of goals to interpersonal communication in their Goals-Plan-Action (GPA) framework. Dillard (2008; see also Dillard et al., 1989) argues that communication is fundamentally purposeful and that goals at different levels of abstraction (i.e., primary vs. secondary goals) serve to either initiate the process of message production (e.g., gaining assistance, persuading, attaining consent, etc.) or influence the content of the message (e.g., impression management, resource management, etc.). Notably, Dillard (1997, 2008) uses the term "goals" to refer to the *intentions* that underlie communicative behavior – akin to what the literature commonly defines as interpersonal communication motives (Barbato et al., 1997). Dillard (2008) articulates several common "goals" for engaging in communication that overlap with our conceptualization of the motives that propel goal sharing. For instance, in our illustration above, we proposed that Tom may choose to share his goal-related struggles to attain emotional support from others. This aligns with what Dillard (2008) coins as "affect management goals". In the same vein, Sally's sharing of her personal goal to deepen her existing social circle is reminiscent of "relational resource goals" (Dillard, 2008).

Notwithstanding these similarities, our current research stands apart in several key areas. Firstly, Dillard and colleagues operationalize goals broadly, encompassing not just long-term plans but short-term aims as well – such as getting someone to pass the salt during dinner or managing the duration of a conversation (Dillard, 2008). In contrast, we exclusively refer to goals as personally meaningful pursuits that are effortful and often require a longer time horizon to accomplish (e.g., getting an A for a course, completing a marathon, etc.); consequently, Dillard et al.'s (1989; 1997; 2008) work examines the motives impelling message production at a general level, while ours pertains more towards the communication of goal-relevant content. Secondly, given the specific scope of our work, we consider needs and communication motives beyond those conceptualized by Dillard (2008): for example, we propose below that an individual may be driven to engage in goal sharing to seek epistemic certainty with regards to goal-related challenges, or to strategically regulate their commitment and motivation towards achieving a certain goal. Finally, while message production is the targeted end state within the GPA model, we instead look at the long-term consequences that goal-sharing motives and behavior can have for self-regulation and the attainment of personal goals.

Put differently, we are not claiming that the motives we articulate in the ensuing sections are wholly novel. Rather, we believe the value of our work lies in the systematic articulation of the needs and motives that emerge within the context of goal pursuit, examining how these motives can influence interpersonal communication, and postulating how they could potentially benefit, or even obstruct, long-term goal attainment. Specifically, our present work seeks to examine the factor structure of goal-sharing motives, establish their predictive utility for goal-sharing behavior, investigate their nature as a latent construct, and explore their downstream implications. In doing so, we hope to lay down the theoretical groundwork and the means necessary for future researchers to systematically scrutinize goal sharing and how it pertains to an individual's pursuit.

The Dimensionality of Goal-sharing Motives

We propose a hierarchical, and multidimensional structure of goal-sharing motives. Eight first-order motives lay the foundation of the framework, wherein the individual engages in goal sharing: to attain *emotional support*, to *vent* to others, to *seek certainty*, to obtain *instrumental help*, to be *prosocial*, to make a *public commitment* towards one's goals, to *strengthen one's social bonds*, or to enhance one's *positive self-concept*. Depending on their broader (intended)

regulatory outcomes, we propose that the eight motives can be categorized under one of two second-order motives. Specifically, motives that originate from the need to recover from goal-related stressors are classified as *recovery* motives. In contrast, motives that stem from the desire to preemptively leverage on goal sharing to build up psychological and social resources for future goal striving are designated as *capitalization* motives.

There is evidence highlighting the distinction between these two second-order motives. On the one hand, interacting with social others can help an individual respond more adaptively in the face of adversities (e.g., demonstrating greater persistence; Caprariello & Reis, 2011; Fitzsimons et al., 2015) or rebound from failure (Malecki & Demaray, 2003). On the other hand, people are known to interact with social others even in the absence of an apparent crisis. Indeed, individuals gravitate towards partners who are instrumental for their goals (Fitzsimons & Fishbach, 2010; Gomillion & Murray, 2014; Orehek et al., 2018), hinting at a general sensitivity towards the utility that social others possess for their goals. Likewise, people who are lower in trait self-control prefer interacting with social others who exhibit higher levels of self-control (Shea et al., 2013; vanDellen et al., 2015). Importantly, this preference emerges as part of an intentional, self-regulatory strategy to maximize goal attainment, rather than due to the likability of the social target in question (vanDellen et al., 2015). The distinction between recovery and capitalization motives can also be understood in light of research on goal orientations (Dillard, 1997; Elliot et al., 2001; Feltman et al., 2012). Avoidance motivation reflects a propensity to move away from negative stimuli while approach motivation reflects a greater tendency to move towards positive stimuli (Feltman et al., 2012). Applied to our current framework, recovery motives conceptually align with avoidance motivation as they focus on diminishing the setbacks of goal failure while capitalization motives align with approach motivation as they entail seeking out resources to maximize goal success. Put differently, individuals higher in these second-order motives would either be more strongly oriented towards avoiding setbacks or taking advantage of opportunities for goal advancement.

The implications of this overlap are two-fold: first, a recent meta-analysis of 47 studies by Lochbaum et al. (2017) found intercorrelations between goal orientations to be small to medium in meaningfulness, providing evidence for the notion that approach and avoidant motivations are related yet unique from each other. We expect the relationship between recovery and capitalization motives to share a similar trend. Second, studies have also established goal orientations as stable dispositions that have bearings on an individual's behavior (e.g., Wimmer et al., 2018). To this end, it is possible that these second-order motives – and goal-sharing motives in general – may also exhibit trait-like tendencies.

Finally, we posit that these two second-order motives can be further subsumed under a third-order motive that represents a general tendency to share goal-related information with others. Below, we elaborate on what each of these goal communication motives entails, why we believe an individual might possess them, and how they might encourage the communication of one's goals with others.

Recovery Motives

Goal pursuit is rarely a smooth-sailing endeavor (Oettingen et al., 2009). People are often prevented from attaining their goals, prompting feelings of confusion, frustration, uncertainty, and a sense of failure (Marguc et al., 2015; Kruglanski et al., 2002). These cognitive and affective stressors can douse motivation and hinder attainment (see Beal et al., 2005; Jones et al., 2013; Moberly & Watkins, 2010; Rowe & Fitness, 2018; Schmitt et al., 2019; Strauman, 2002). As a result, people who encounter obstacles during goal pursuit may be inclined to use goal sharing for regulatory purposes, so as to get back on track. We posit five such recovery motives:

Emotional Support Impediments in goal pursuit can lead to sadness and rumination (Jones et al., 2013; Martin & Tesser, 1996), prompting the pursuer to turn to social others for emotional validation, warmth, and encouragement (Briskin et al., 2019). Indeed, traumatic events have been shown to induce support-seeking behavior (Anseel et al., 2015; Calhoun et al., 2022; Islam et al., 2022). Attaining emotional support has been found to reduce distress (Cunningham & Barbee, 2000; Gottlieb, 1994; Burleson, 2009; Burleson & Goldsmith, 1996), buffer against the detrimental impacts of adversities on one's mental health (Calhoun et al., 2022; Van der Velden et al., 2020; Shyu et al., 2009) and improve life satisfaction (Adams et al., 2016). Research on supportive communication provides robust evidence for how supportive messages can be utilized to lift one's spirits or soothe negative affect (Barbee et al., 1995; Jones et al., 2014). In a similar fashion, individuals may be inclined to share their goals with social others to upregulate positive emotions and/or downregulate negative ones.

Venting Setbacks in goal pursuit can also kindle "hotter" emotions (e.g., anger; Berkowitz, 1989; Beal et al., 2005; Wilkowski et al., 2009) that can be harmful to one's goal pursuit (Schmitt et al., 2019). To keep such feelings in check, individuals might verbally express or vent their frus-

tration to those around them (Tonnaer et al., 2020). Unlike emotional support, venting is premised on the notion that negative affect can be relieved simply via the mere act of *expressing* it (i.e., the Catharsis Theory; Bushman, 2002). Empirical support for this proposition has been somewhat mixed (Rimé, 2009; Tonnaer et al., 2020). In fact, evidence suggests that venting can backfire and may end up increasing one's anger instead (Drake & Winner, 2012; Parlamis et al., 2010; Zech & Rimé, 2005). However, the narrative of venting as an efficacious regulatory strategy has largely pervaded our culture (Bushman, 2002; Tonnaer et al., 2020). Indeed, venting has been weaved into psychological therapies (Scheff, 2001) and is often misconstrued as an effective form of emotional catharsis (Gentile, 2013; Tonnaer et al., 2020). Therefore, we argue that the average individual may engage in goal sharing to vent and (supposedly) reduce their goal-related frustrations.

Seeking Certainty Being exposed to a variety of goal-related adversities may threaten one's self-esteem (Bongers et al., 2009; Rosi et al., 2019) and induce feelings of doubt (Chen et al., 2015; Zhao et al., 2019), which could lead to reduced performance (Light et al., 2018) and motivation (Oyserman et al., 2014). Hence, it is often in the goal pursuer's best interest to reduce this sense of uncertainty. Consistent with past arguments on how humans communicate to seek feedback and affirmation (Sip et al., 2015), we propose two mechanisms through which goal sharing can reduce uncertainty in one's pursuits. Firstly, goal sharing can help eliminate concerns of one's personal aptitude. People often compare themselves to the shortcomings of others after interacting with them, helping them buffer against the influence of failures on their affect and self-esteem (Waring & Kelly, 2019; Wood et al., 1999). Realizing that others are going through the same tribulations can help normalize one's struggles (e.g., being unable to understand a psychology lecture) and shift failure attributions away from internal factors (e.g., personal competence) towards the external situation (e.g., the difficulty of the topic). Secondly, engaging in goal sharing can yield validation for one's planned solutions to goal obstacles. Indeed, communication has been found to provide epistemic certainty (Echterhoff, 2012; Echterhoff et al., 2009). For example, while conversing, students have been found to engage in audience tuning – the act of tailoring one's message according to the knowledge and attitudes of one's audience (Higgins, 1999) – to satisfy their need for certainty and gain more confidence in their own views (Kopietz et al., 2010). Thus, we believe that individuals may engage in goal sharing to dispel any uncertainty regarding their competence and validate the aptness of their planned solutions to the problem.

Instrumental Help One effective way to cope with and recover from goal hindrances is to ask for aid from social others. Indeed, communication is an efficient and ubiquitous means of seeking practical help from one's social network in response to life stressors or adversities (Flynn & Lake, 2008; Thoits, 1995). Interestingly, people do not always put forth direct requests for help, presumably because they are deterred by the potential awkwardness that might follow from a rejection (DePaulo & Fisher, 1980; Flynn & Lake, 2008). Within the context of goal sharing, an individual may choose to talk about frustrations in their goal pursuit in the hopes of indirectly soliciting help from the social target — an approach that allows for plausible deniability, enabling both parties to save face should the help-provider choose to ignore the help-seeker's request (Downey & Feldman, 1996; Goffman, 1955; Pinker et al., 2008). In sum, upon encountering goal-related struggles, we argue that individuals may be motivated to engage in goal sharing as a means of indirectly incurring instrumental help to resolve those challenges.

Prosocial Reasons Communicating one's goals for prosocial reasons entails sharing with others both moments of triumph and the challenges one had to overcome. Such sharing can motivate others or warn them about the potential obstacles they may face should they choose to pursue a similar goal (Bazarova & Choi, 2014; Duprez et al., 2015). The desire to help others is posited to be an innate part of human nature (Curry & Dunbar, 2011; Warneken & Tomasello, 2009; See also Gleason et al., 2003). However, we believe that the motive to share one's goals for prosocial reasons can also arise from regulatory needs. The economic model of *warm-glow giving* regards the act of helping others to be innately pleasurable (Andreoni, 1989, 1990). Engaging in prosocial acts has been found to produce an instantaneous, rewarding effect (Liao et al., 2022) and has been linked to various psychological benefits, such as enhanced positive emotions (Anik et al., 2013; Dunn et al., 2008) and self-efficacy (Midlarsky & Kahana, 1994). Thus, we propose that individuals who are compelled to engage in goal sharing for altruistic

motives may do so to reap the affective benefits of the warm glow to rebound from past disappointment.

Capitalization Motives

Goal sharing may also be driven by the intent to build up relevant resources to help goal striving. We identify three resources crucial for goal striving that can be enhanced through goal sharing. Individuals may capitalize on goal sharing to: (a) increase their commitment towards their goals, (b) strengthen their social bonds with others, or (c) enhance their positive self-concept.

Public Commitment In line with Salancik's (1977) postulations, individuals whose self-generated goals were made known to others became more committed to them (Hollenbeck et al., 1989). Similarly, participants in a weight loss program lost more weight when their goals were publicly announced instead of kept private (Nyer & Dellande, 2010). Further still, people are more likely to share their career goals with others rather than keep them to themselves (Klein et al., 2020), suggesting an innate reliance on public commitment as a goal pursuit strategy. Hence, we opine that individuals may be motivated to proactively make their goals public as a means to bolster their commitment to their pursuits.

Strengthening Social Bonds Strong relationships can provide support and resources that help promote goal pursuit (Lee & Yabarra, 2017; Sias & Bartoo, 2007). Individuals may thus be driven to fortify the existing pool of social relationships they can tap into to support goal striving. The desire to solicit future support has recently been identified as one of the key motivations for making friends (Apostolou et al., 2021), and recent studies have found that individuals are generally drawn toward others who are instrumental to their goals (e.g., Orehek & Forest, 2016; Orehek et al., 2018; vanDellen et al., 2017). One means through which individuals can strengthen their social relationships with others is by disclosing intimate information about themselves (Altman & Tylor, 1973; Christophe & Rimé, 1997; Luminet et al., 2000; Rimé, 2009; Sprecher et al., 2013). Thus, given the personal nature of goals, we argue that individuals may be motivated to disclose related failures or successes as a means to strengthen their social relationships with others – enabling them to build up a stronger social support network to overcome obstacles and persist in their pursuits.

Positive Self-concept A positive self-concept acts as a buffer against the consequences of negative feedback (Brown, 2010) and predicts subjective well-being, happiness, and life satisfaction (DeNeve & Cooper, 1998; Diener, 1984; Swann, 1990). It is thus often in an individual's best interest to maximize and maintain a positive sense of self (Bracken & Lamprecht, 2003). One study found that individuals with higher (vs. lower) self-esteem tend to be more resilient upon receiving failure feedback and are much less likely to disengage from their pursuit of competency goals (Park et al., 2007). Individuals can engage in self-enhancing communication (e.g., bragging) to ward off the esteem-threatening effects of life stressors (Bonanno et al., 2002; Cuperman et al., 2014; Dufner et al., 2019), and have even been found to pre-emptively engage in them to diminish potential self-esteem threats (Sedikides & Gregg, 2008; Sherman & Cohen, 2006). Taken together, we argue that individuals may be motivated to share their prestigious goals (e.g., obtaining first place in an upcoming marathon) or prior achievements (e.g., successfully graduating with a perfect GPA) to fortify their positive self-concept.

A General Motive for Goal-sharing

Finally, drawing on the alignment between goal orientations and second-order goal-sharing motives, we posit that both the recovery and capitalization motives can be subsumed under a general motive for goal sharing. Avoidance and approach motives have been conceptualized as distinct yet overlapping constructs (Lochbaum et al., 2017), as they both entail the energization of behavior in a certain direction (Elliot, 2006; Elliot & Church, 1997). In much the same way, we theorize both recovery and capitalization motives to have downstream influences on goal-sharing behavior despite their differences. Identifying a general factor is common in the study of communication motives; when studying individuals' inclination toward approaching or avoiding communication, for example, researchers identified seven sub-motives (Willingness-To-Communicate scale; McCroskey & Colleagues, 1985; 1992) and used a composite score to represent a general proclivity towards initiating communication when given a chance (Zarrinabadi & Tanbakooei, 2016). This general factor is stable across time (McCroskey, 1992) and predicts communicative behavior in various contexts (e.g., Chan & McCroskey, 1987; Combs, 1990). Here, we similarly predict the existence of a third-order motive

that reflects stable, individual differences in one's general propensity to engage in goal communication.

It bears mentioning that our decision to hypothesize a third-order factor structure of goal-sharing motives was driven not just by theoretical precedent (as explicated above), but also by practical considerations. Indeed, establishing a broader factor structure would enable researchers to flexibly examine narrower or broader goal-sharing motives according to their theoretical focus, hence encouraging and facilitating more empirical work on this understudied, yet crucial, phenomenon.

Current Studies

Using a novel 27-item measure developed in our preliminary studies – the *Goal-Sharing Motives Scale* (G-SMS) – we investigated the factor structure, predictive utility, long-term stability, and the downstream implications of goal-sharing motives. Study 1 tested the hypothesized hierarchical structure of goal-sharing motives and ascertained its invariance across cultural groups (i.e., USA vs. Singapore). Study 2 evaluated the predictive power of goal-sharing motives on goal-sharing intentions and behavior, striving to establish their utility above and beyond that of extant communication motives. Building upon this, Study 3 adopted a longitudinal design to examine working adults' goal sharing regarding career development. Specifically, we aimed to assess the temporal stability of goal-sharing motives and determine whether they would be capable of predicting goal-sharing behavior across a one-year lag. Study 4 sought to establish the functional nature of goal sharing within the context of students' academic pursuit: we investigated whether students would share their difficult academic pursuits more frequently over the semester, and how goal-sharing motives would modulate the strategic use of goal sharing. Finally, we explored the downstream associations of goal-sharing motives and behavior with achievement and life satisfaction, while simultaneously demonstrating how the first-, second-, and third-order goal-sharing motives could be flexibly applied in predictive models.

The Creation, Refinement, and Validation of the G-SMS

In Preliminary Study 1, our research team first generated an overinclusive pool (Clark & Watson, 1995) of 236 items before pruning them down to 66 items. Aligning with our theorization, the results of our analyses favored the extraction of eight factors, and our exploratory factor analysis subsequently revealed that these eight factors accounted for 49% of the variance. After further pruning, we arrived at a 42-item version of the measure. Preliminary Study 2 began with a confirmatory factor analysis. The fit indices produced mixed results, suggesting that the items in our measure could be further optimized. We thus pruned an additional 15 items based on both judgmental and statistical criteria (Brown, 2015; Wieland et al., 2018), resulting in a 27-item measure that had good model fit, high internal consistency, and theoretical congruence (see **Appendix S8** for all three versions of the G-SMS; see **Appendix A** for the 27-item version of the G-SMS). Henceforth, we employed the 27-item version of the G-SMS in our ensuing studies. In our core studies, we tested and validated the ability of the G-SMS in capturing the higher-order dimensionality of goal-sharing motives (Studies 1 to 4; Table 1 & S8). We also assessed the cultural invariance (Study 1), construct validity (Study 2; **Table S6**), and test-retest reliability (Study 3) of the measure. Noteworthily, the results of certain validation procedures had meaningful theoretical consequences for goal sharing. Thus, we retained these analyses within the main manuscript. All other details pertaining to scale construction can be found within the supplementary materials. **Table S12** provides an overview of the entire scale construction process, including where the details for each stage can be found.

Table 1 Confirmatory Factor Analysis Results for All Three Factor Solutions (Study 1)

Index/Test Statistic	Models		
	Model A (Third-order)	Model B (Second-order)	Model C (First-order)
CFI	0.94	0.94	0.95
TLI	0.93	0.93	0.94
SRMR	0.06	0.06	0.05
RMSEA [90% CI]	0.05 [0.05, 0.06]	0.05 [0.05, 0.06]	0.05 [0.04, 0.05]
Vs. Baseline: X^2 (*df*), p-value	1009.85 (316), p<.001	1006.30 (315), p < .001	822.17 (296), p < .001
Vs. Model A: X^2 (*df*), p-value	N.A.	3.55 (1), p = .06	187.68 (20), p < .001

Note.CFI: Comparative Fit Index, *TLI:* Tucker-Lewis Index, *SRMR:* Standardized Root Mean Square Residual, *RMSEA:* Root Mean Square Error of Approximation, X^2 : Chi-square statistic

Study 1: The Factorial Structure and Cultural Invariance of Goal-sharing Motives

The main aim of Study 1 was to test the hypothesized multidimensional and hierarchical factor structure of goal-sharing motives. Specifically, we sought to establish that the eight first-order motives can be subsumed under two second-order motives and, in turn, a general third-order motive. Moreover, as there are between-culture variances in both goal pursuit (Laurin et al., 2018; Jiang & Gore, 2016) and communication strategies (Zhu et al., 2006), we also assessed if this theorized hierarchical structure would remain invariant between an East Asian (i.e., Singapore) and a North American (i.e., USA) sample. Successfully doing so would support future cross-cultural investigations of goal sharing.

Participants

A minimum target sample of $N = 297$ for our CFA was computed (Soper, 2023), assuming a small-medium effect size (power = 0.8, 11 latent variables, 27 observed variables, α = 0.05). Further, Kline (2016) recommends a sample of $N = 100$ per group when conducting a multi-group CFA. Given the intricate nature of our hypothesized third-order factor structure, we aimed for a more conservative sample of $N = 300$ per group. In total, we collected data from $N = 807$ individuals from Singapore ($N = 432$; 118 males, 314 females, $M_{age} = 21$, $SD_{age} = 4.85$) and the USA ($N = 375$; 198 males, 177 females, $M_{age} = 39$, $SD_{age} = 12.08$). Participants accessed the survey on *Qualtrics* and received $5 or course credit for their time.

Measures

The 27-item G-SMS was administered. The internal consistency of the eight G-SMS subscales ranged from α = 0.75 to α = 0.91.

Procedure

After signing up for the study, participants indicated their consent and accessed the survey on *Qualtrics*. They were then instructed to complete the entire study within a single sitting without any distractions. Participants were thanked and debriefed after completing the G-SMS and a demographic questionnaire.

Results

CFA

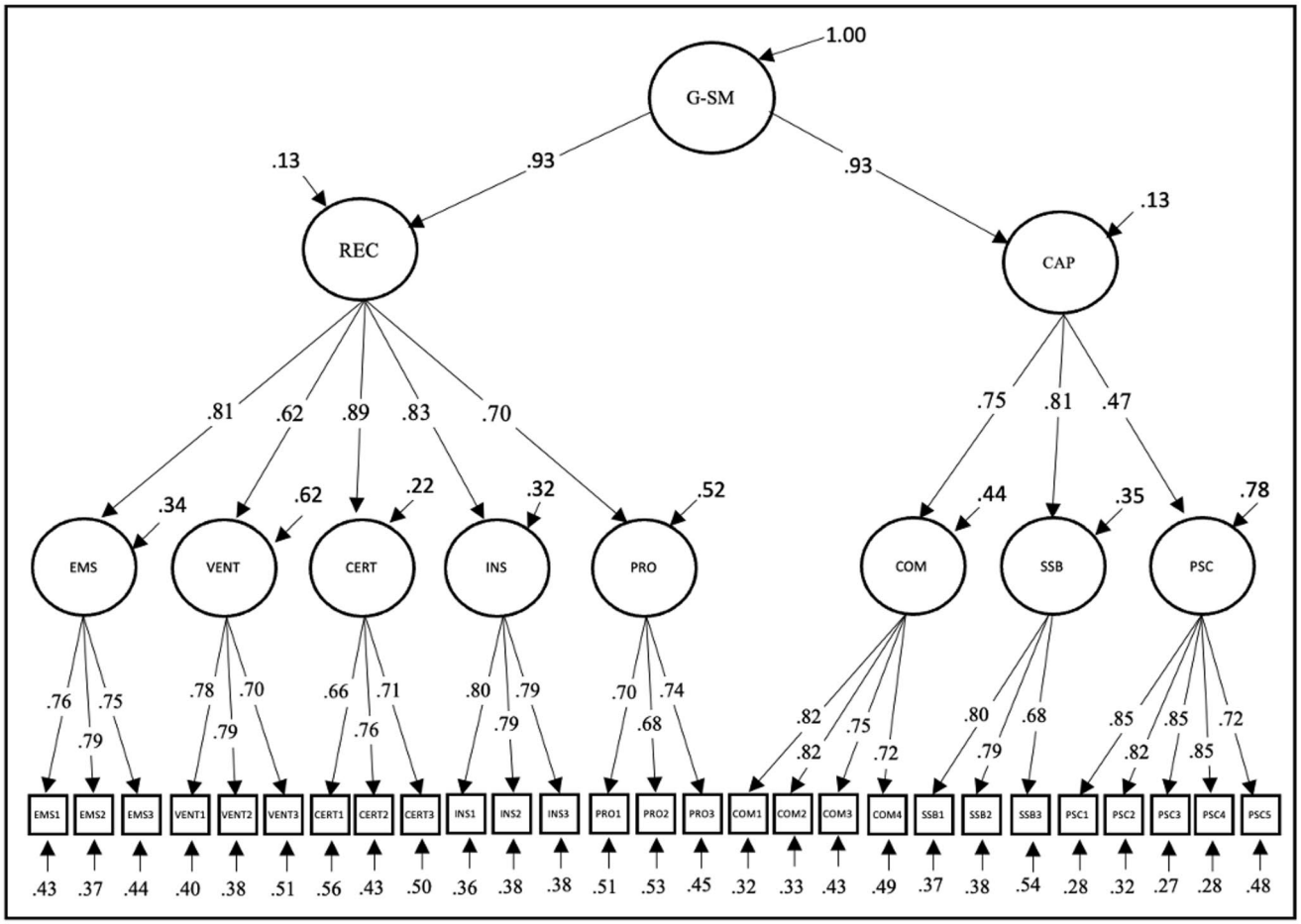
We first tested the model fit of our hypothesized third-order factor solution: the eight first-order dimensions were subsumed under two second-order motives (i.e., the recovery and capitalization motives), which both load onto a general, third-order factor of goal-sharing intent (Model A). The maximum likelihood method of estimation (MLR) was adopted to address any missing data. See **Appendix S2** for the constraints we imposed on the model for identification purposes. The fit indices suggested that the third-order factor solution fits the data well (Table 1)[1]. In addition, the loadings of all items and factors also exceeded the 0.4 threshold. Figure 1 illustrates the path diagram and standardized parameter estimates for the third-order factor solution.

Two nested models, a model which eliminated the third-order motive while retaining the two second-order factors (Model B), and the non-hierarchical, eight-factor model that we tested for in Preliminary Study 2 (Model C), also fit the data well (Table 1). Guided by a holistic assessment of both quantitative and qualitative considerations (Falk & Muthukrishna, 2023; Brown, 2015; Vandekerckhove et al., 2015; Rudnev et al., 2018), we regarded the third-order factor structure as the optimal solution since it had good model fit, allowed us to maximize parsimony (i.e., the higher-order structure enables us to explain the variance in the dataset with a smaller number of latent dimensions) and enhanced the versatility of the G-SMS (i.e., composite scores are available for the first-, second-, and third-order variables) as a psychometric tool – all while aligning with our a priori, hierarchical and multidimensional conceptualization of goal-sharing motives.

Higher-order Measurement Invariance

To test for measurement invariance between Singaporean and American participants, we conducted a series of multigroup CFAs, each incrementally constraining relevant parameters to be the same across groups (e.g., Steinmetz et al., 2009; Buchholz & Hartig, 2020; Kim & Yoon, 2011). The multigroup CFAs were conducted using the *Lavaan* (Rosseel, 2012) package in *R*. A total of seven invariance models were assessed and compared (see Table 2). See **Appendix S3** and **Table S7** for additional details on the

[1] For rigor, a bifactor CFA was also conducted on the dataset. While the model fit the data well, we did not include it as a potential factor solution since a bifactor model presumes that all latent variables are orthogonal and does not align with our theorization regarding the association between the lower-order goal-sharing motives (Chen et al., 2006). Fit indices for the bifactor CFA can be found in the supplementary materials (**Table S13**).



Note. N= 807; EMS: Emotional Support; VENT: Venting; CERT: Seeking Certainty; INS: Instrumental Help; PRO: Prosocial; COM: Public Commitment; SSB: Strengthen Social Bonds; PSC: Positive Self-concept; REC: Recovery; CAP: Capitalization; G-SM: General Goal-sharing Motive

Fig. 1 CFA Results of Third-order Factor Solution (Study 1)

thresholds adopted and equality constraints we imposed at each tier of invariance.

The fit measures of model 1 indicated decent fit, implying configural invariance at the first order. That is, the eight first-order constructs had the same pattern of free and fixed loadings across both cultures. The fit of models 2, 3, and 4 was also good. Furthermore, the change in CFI, SRMR, and RMSEA values from models 1 to 2, 2 to 3, and 3 to 4 were within the specified threshold, simultaneously indicating configural invariance at the second- and third-order, and metric invariance at all three orders (Rudnev et al., 2018). Therefore, the multidimensional and hierarchical structure of goal-sharing motives and the factor loadings at each level were invariant across cultural groups.

The multigroup CFA results for models 5, 6, and 7 suggested adequate fit. The Δ in SRMR and RMSEA values were well within the established boundaries for all three models, and the Δ in CFI was acceptable for both models 6 and 7. Notably, the Δ in CFI from model 4 to model 5 marginally exceeded the allowable threshold. However, recent publications have cautioned against overinterpreting a single fit index and instead recommend consulting all indices in tandem (Fan & Sivo, 2005; Lai & Green, 2016). Based on the collective results of SRMR, RMSEA, and CFI, we thus concluded that there was sufficient evidence to establish scalar invariance of the G-SMS at the first-, second-, and third-order.

Discussion

Based on a comprehensive appraisal of statistical (i.e., model fit), theoretical (i.e., our a priori theorization), and pragmatic considerations (e.g., parsimony), the third-order factor structure of goal-sharing motives was established[2]. Additionally, we ascertained third-order scalar invariance

[2] We further validated the third-order factor structure in each of our subsequent studies (Studies 2–4), with all CFAs yielding good model fit (see **Table S8**).

Table 2 Results of Higher-order Measurement Invariance (Study 1)

	Invariance Models						
	Model 1 (First-order configural)	Model 2 (First-order metric)	Model 3 (First- and second-order metric)	Model 4 (First-, second-, and third-order metric)	Model 5 (First-order scalar)	Model 6 (First- and second-order scalar)	Model 7 (First-, second-, and third-order scalar)
CFI	0.920	0.918	0.918	0.918	0.908	0.902	0.901
SRMR	0.064	0.067	0.069	0.069	0.071	0.073	0.076
RMSEA [90% CI]	0.059 [0.055, 0.063]	0.059 [0.055, 0.063]	0.059 [0.055, 0.063]	0.059 [0.055, 0.063]	0.062 [0.058, 0.065]	0.063 [0.060, 0.067]	0.063 [0.060, 0.067]
X^2 (*df*), p-value	1520.739 (631), $p < .001$	1566.523 (650), $p < .001$	1576.990 (656), $p < .001$	1577.149 (657), $p < .001$	1710.449 (676), $p < .001$	1779.019 (682), $p < .001$	1793.090 (683), $p < .001$
Δ in fit indices	N.A.	Δ CFI = 0.002 Δ SRMR = 0.003 Δ RMSEA = 0 Δ X^2(df) = 45.784 (19)	Δ CFI = 0 Δ SRMR = 0.002 Δ RMSEA = 0 Δ X^2(df) = 10.468 (6)	Δ CFI = 0 Δ SRMR = 0 Δ RMSEA = 0 Δ X^2(df) = 0.159 (1)	Δ CFI = 0.01 Δ SRMR = 0.002 Δ RMSEA = 0.003 Δ X^2(df) = 133.300 (19)	Δ CFI = 0.006 Δ SRMR = 0.002 Δ RMSEA = 0.001 Δ X^2(df) = 68.570 (6)	Δ CFI = 0.001 Δ SRMR = 0.003 Δ RMSEA = 0 Δ X^2(df) = 14.071 (1)

Note. CFI: Comparative Fit Index, *SRMR*: Standardized Root Mean Square Residual, *RMSEA*: Root Mean Square Error of Approximation, X^2: Chi-square statistic, Δ: "change in"

of the G-SMS between Singaporean and American participants. This means that between individuals from these cultural groups, goal-sharing motives possess the same hierarchical and multidimensional factorial structure (i.e., third-order configural invariance), factor loadings (i.e., third-order metric invariance), and origin values (i.e., third-order scalar invariance). In other words, using the G-SMS, goal-sharing motives can be meaningfully measured and compared between individuals hailing from different cultures.

Study 2: Investigating the Predictive Utility of Goal-sharing Motives

A good way to showcase the practicality of goal-sharing motives would be through demonstrating its influence on goal sharing. To this end, we tested whether the G-SMS subscales would predict corresponding goal-sharing *intentions* – a causal and proximal antecedent of actual behavior (Ajzen, 1991; Fishman et al., 2020). Further, we employed a hierarchical regression to examine if goal-sharing motives would predict self-reported goal-sharing *frequency* above and beyond generalized motives that propel general interpersonal communication (Rubin et al., 1988) and the sharing of emotional events (Duprez et al., 2015). As mentioned, Study 2 also assessed the construct validity of the G-SMS. Measures of the two aforementioned communication motives and a Big Five inventory (Soto et al., 2017) were used in this assessment; further details can be found in the supplementary materials. Beyond convergent validity, we also briefly explore the theoretical congruency of the correlations between certain Big Five traits and goal-sharing motives.

Participants

According to Schönbrodt and Perugini (2013), a minimum sample size of $N = 250$ is needed to obtain stable correlation estimates. Data was thus collected from 540 undergraduates (164 males, 376 females; $M_{age} = 21.35$, $SD_{age} = 4.04$) from an English-speaking Asian university, recruited using online platforms and physical advertisements.

Measures

G-SMS

The 27-item G-SMS was employed. The internal consistency of the G-SMS was α = 0.89 for the third-order motive, α = 0.84 to α = 0.85 for the second-order motives, and α = 0.64 to α = 0.87 for the first-order motives.

Interpersonal Communication Motives Scale

The Interpersonal Communication Motives Scale (ICMS) by Rubin et al. (1988) captures six motives an individual may possess when engaging in interpersonal conversations. Participants read the 28 items and rated the extent to which they believed each statement described them on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *Does not describe me*; 5 = *Describes me extremely well*). The internal consistency of the ICMS was α = 0.92 for the composite score and α = 0.75 to α = 0.92 for its various subscales.

Social Sharing Motives Scale

The Social Sharing Motives Scale (SSMS; Duprez et al., 2015) measures seven motives behind the sharing of emotional events with others. Participants were first instructed to recall a recent affective episode they shared with others. They then rated on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *not at all*, 7 = *very much*) the extent to which they agreed with each of the 39 reasons for sharing that particular emotional experience with others. The internal consistency of the SSMS was α = 0.93 for the composite scores and α = 0.73 to α = 0.89 for its subscales.

Big Five Inventory – 2 Short Form Measure (BFI-2)

Created by Soto et al. (2017), this scale comprised 30 items, each rated by participants on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *Disagree Strongly*, 5 = *Agree Strongly*). The BFI-2 has five subscales, measuring the personality constructs of openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism. The Cronbach Alpha of the five BFI-2 subscales ranged from α = 0.73 to α = 0.85.

G-SMS Vignettes

To measure participants' goal-sharing intentions, we generated 27 vignette items (see **Appendix S9**). A detailed explanation of how the vignettes were crafted can be found in **Appendix S4.** The Cronbach's Alpha for the vignette ratings were: α = 0.90 for the third-order motive, α = 0.81 to α = 0.87 for the second-order motives, and α = 0.37 (strengthening social bonds) to α = 0.85 (positive self-concept). **Appendix S5** explains why we retained the three *strengthening social bonds* vignettes despite the low alpha value.

Frequency of Goal-sharing Measure

Depending on the various needs that goal sharing serves, one may choose to divulge to others the goal itself (Klein et al., 2020; Nyer & Dellande, 2010), goal-related progress (Turner-McGrievy & Tate, 2013), goal achievement (Dalsky, 2011), and goal-related failures, struggles or hindrances (Weekly, 2021). Thus, we generated a brief, 4-item measure using a 7-point Likert Scale (1 = *Never*, 7 = *Always*) to capture the frequency with which participants would share these core aspects of their goals with social others on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *Never*, 7 = *Always*), α = 0.91. Participants responded to these items with reference to the goals they thought of while completing the G-SMS. All four items can be found in **Appendix S10.**

Procedure

Participants were given a link to complete the survey on *Qualtrics* after registering for the study. Once consented, participants were asked to complete the G-SMS, ICMS, SSMS, the G-SMS vignettes, the frequency of goal-sharing measure, and a demographic questionnaire. Participants were then debriefed and compensated for their time.

Results

Goal-sharing Intentions

A path analysis was conducted using the Lavaan package (Rosseel, 2012) in R. The eight average vignette scores (one for each corresponding G-SMS first-order motive) were simultaneously entered as criterions for the first-order G-SMS subscale scores. **Table S9** presents all significant pathways. As expected, each motive subscale predicted the intention score of their corresponding vignette. Noteworthily, each G-SMS subscale had the largest effect on its corresponding vignette. For instance, the EMS motive was the strongest predictor of the intention of engaging in goal-sharing for the sake of eliciting emotional support, compared to the VENT, INS, SSB, and PSC motives.

Goal-sharing Frequency

A two-stage hierarchical multiple regression tested the incremental utility of goal-sharing motives in predicting goal-sharing frequency. In the first block, the average goal-sharing frequency score was regressed on the ICMS and SSMS scores. In the second block, the composite score of the G-SMS was entered. **Table S10** details the results of the hierarchical regression. In the first block, the ICMS and SSMS accounted for 12% of the variance in goal-sharing frequency, $R^2 = 0.12$, $F\ (2, 537) = 35.97$, $p < .001$. Adding the composite G-SMS score into the second block allowed the model to explain an additional 6% of the variance in goal-sharing frequency, $\Delta R^2 = 0.06$, $F\ (1, 536) = 37.03$, $p < .001$. More important, the predictive power of both ICMS

and SSMS weakened. In particular, the effect of SSMS on goal-sharing frequency became non-significant, leaving the G-SMS as the strongest predictor, $\beta = 0.31$ $p < .001$.

Multiple Correlation

We ran a Pearson correlation analysis between the eight first-order G-SMS subscale scores, two second-order G-SMS subscale scores, third-order G-SMS composite score, six ICMS subscale scores, the nine SSMS subscale scores, and the five BFI-2 subscale scores using the *corr.test* function of the *psych* package (Revelle, 2022) in *R*. Holm-adjusted *p*-values were used to account for the use of multiple tests (**Table S6**). The main purpose behind this analysis was to assess the construct validity of the G-SMS (see supplementary materials). Notably, we also found positive associations between neuroticism and the recovery motive ($r = .21$, $p < .001$), and between extraversion and the capitalization motive ($r = .15$, $p = .04$). We discuss the implications of these results below.

Discussion

Study 2 established the utility of goal-sharing motives in predicting goal-sharing behavior. Goal-sharing motives predicted both goal-sharing intentions (within the context of academic pursuits) and frequency beyond the communication motives regarding interpersonal relationships or emotional expression. We also found significant associations between the neuroticism and recovery subscales, as well as the extraversion and capitalization subscales. These correlational findings underscore the distinctions between recovery and capitalization motives and provide initial support for how individual differences can function as antecedents of goal-sharing motives. Research has shown that neurotic individuals not only have higher levels of negative affect, but also tend to adopt maladaptive coping strategies (Chen et al., 2020; Lonsdorf & Merz, 2017). It stands to reason that such individuals may find it more effective to regulate themselves using sources external to the self, thereby making them more likely to rely on goal sharing for its recovery properties. In contrast, the capitalization motive entails preemptively engaging in goal sharing to strengthen one's existing pool of resources, even in the absence of a clear impetus (e.g., goal obstacles/failures). Hence, it is plausible that individuals who are high in extraversion – a trait associated with higher levels of locomotion, and a greater inclination towards initiating interpersonal communication and spending more time conversing with social others (Frederick & Hofmans, 2014; Hampson, 2012; Kruglanski et al., 2000; Miceli et al., 2018) – would possess higher levels of this motive. We provide suggestions for future research on the role of dispositional traits in the general discussion.

Study 3: The Long-term Predictive Utility and Stability of Goal-sharing Motives

We sought to replicate and extend our findings from Study 2. To this end, we adopted a longitudinal design. We were particularly interested in ascertaining whether one's general goal-sharing motive would be capable of predicting participants' goal-sharing frequency both *within* and *between* time points. Doing so would help to fortify the robustness of the relationship between goal-sharing motives and goal-sharing frequency established in our previous study. Furthermore, a different measure of goal-sharing frequency was adopted. The benefits of doing so were twofold: first, it would enable us to ensure that our findings from Study 2 would persist across different methodologies. Second, as the measure in question had participants rate how frequently they shared their *career* goals with others, we were able to examine the predictive power of goal-sharing motives within a different domain of goal pursuit (i.e., career goals).

We also assessed the stability of goal-sharing motives over an extended period (i.e., one year). Given our theorization that goal-sharing motives can stem from personal traits or current circumstances, we believed that they would be relatively trait-like constructs, while still possessing some state-like characteristics. In light of this, we predicted that the correlations of each G-SMS subscale across time points would have a medium to large effect size (i.e., $r > .3$).

Overall Study Design

A longitudinal design was adopted as part of a larger project on career development among working adults. Participants set a career-related goal in the first wave before being given a battery of self-report measures to complete in two subsequent waves. All waves were spaced to be a year apart. **Appendix S11** provides examples of measures unrelated to the current paper.

Participants

A minimum sample size of $N = 200$ is generally proposed for longitudinal analyses with two waves (e.g., Baribeau et al., 2022). As such, we recruited 238 working adults from an English-speaking Asian country (129 males, 109 females; $M_{age} = 29.9$, $SD_{age} = 4.92$). Each participant possessed a polytechnic diploma or higher. Participants were reimbursed $125 for completing all sessions. All participants completed the first two waves, and 234 participants completed Wave 3.

Any missing data were handled using the maximum likelihood estimator, and all waves were conducted online via *Qualtrics*.

Procedure and Materials

Wave 1

Following informed consent, participants were guided to set a career-related goal that they hoped to achieve. Specifically, they were told to think about their key aspirations in life (e.g., *"I aspire to be happy*, *to have a healthy family*, *to own a condominium*, *and to own a car"*) and set a career or job position that would help them to achieve those life aspirations (e.g., *"I aim to get promoted to section head by 36*, *and to department head by 50"*). They then completed a demographic questionnaire.

Wave 2

Participants completed a follow-up survey around 12 months after Wave 1. They were first reminded of the career-related goal they had set in Wave 1. They then completed, among other unrelated measures, the following measures:

G-SMS (27-item version) The 27-item version of the G-SMS was used. The internal consistency of this measure was α = 0.91 for the third-order motive, α = 0.87 to α = 0.88 for the second-order motives, and α = 0.69 to α = 0.90 for the first-order motives.

Frequency of Career Goal-sharing Measure On a 12-point scale, participants rated the frequency with which they shared the career goal that they had set in Wave 1 with social others the past six months. The 12 options on this measure ranged from "less than 1 time a month" to "more than 10 times a month".

Wave 3

A year after completing Wave 2, another follow-up survey was administered. Participants completed the G-SMS (α = 0.90 for the third-order motive, α = 0.87 to α = 0.87 for the second-order motives, and α = 0.73 to α = 0.90 for the first-order motives) as well as the goal-sharing frequency measure.

Results

Predictive Utility of Goal-sharing Motives Within and Between Timepoints

We analyzed the longitudinal data using path analysis[3] in *Lavaan* (Rosseel, 2012). We simultaneously regressed goal-sharing frequency at Waves 2 and 3 on the general goal-sharing motive scores from Wave 2. Notably, goal-sharing frequency at both waves were allowed to correlate. The maximum likelihood estimator was used to handle any missing data. As hypothesized, the general G-SMS score at wave 2 had a positive effect on goal-sharing frequency within the same wave, $\beta = 0.28$, $SE = 0.246$, $p < .001$, replicating our findings from Study 2. Moreover, even after controlling for goal-sharing frequency at Wave 2, general G-SMS scores at Wave 2 were able to predict goal-sharing frequency at Wave 3, $\beta = 0.23$ $SE = 0.214$, $p < .001$.

Long-term Stability of Goal-sharing Motives[4]

All scores from both time points, Waves 2 and 3, were simultaneously included in a multiple correlation analysis (Table 3) using the *corr.test* function from the psych package in *R* (Revelle, 2022), whereby Holm-adjusted p-values were once again utilized for each correlation. The Wave 2 scores for all eight first-order G-SMS subscales were correlated with their scores at Wave 3, $r = .51$, $p < .001$ to $r = .73$, $p < .001$. Similarly, the Wave 2 and Wave 3 scores were significantly correlated for second- and third-order motives, $r = .66$, $p < .001$ to $r = .76$, $p < .001$. As predicted, the effect size of all correlations ranged from medium-large to large.

Discussion

Building upon our previous findings, Study 3 demonstrated the general goal-sharing motive of participants to be capable of predicting goal-sharing frequency not only within the same time point, but also across a one-year lag. Importantly, the use of a different measure of goal-sharing frequency – one that utilized another scale and was answered with reference to a specific, rather than generic, goal (i.e., participants' career goals) – reduces the likelihood that our findings were due to the presence of a methods effect (see Schweizer, 2020) and generalizes the predictability of goal-sharing motives towards another domain of pursuit.

[3] The format of our data allowed for cross-lagged panel modeling to be conducted. Nonetheless, we refrained from doing so due to the known issues associated with the model, e.g., higher likelihood of spurious cross-lagged effects (see Hamaker et al., 2015; Lucas, 2023).

[4] This analysis simultaneously served to establish the test-retest reliability of the G-SMS.

Table 3 Multiple Correlation Results (Study 3)

	EMS (Wave 3)	VENT (Wave 3)	CERT (Wave 3)	INS (Wave 3)	PRO (Wave 3)	COM (Wave 3)	SSB (Wave 3)	PSC (Wave 3)	REC (Wave 3)	CAP (Wave 3)	G-SM (Wave 3)
EMS (Wave 2)	**0.60*****	0.39***	0.29***	0.39***	0.20	0.28***	0.37***	0.34***	0.54***	0.42***	0.56***
VENT (Wave 2)	0.38***	**0.61*****	0.32***	0.22*	0.14	0.03	0.15	0.11	0.48***	0.12	0.35***
CERT (Wave 2)	0.30***	0.32***	**0.51*****	0.32***	0.37***	0.29***	0.36***	0.19	0.50***	0.34***	0.49***
INS (Wave 2)	0.43***	0.24**	0.26***	**0.60*****	0.14	0.26***	0.25***	0.15	0.48***	0.27***	0.43***
PRO (Wave 2)	0.17	0.16	0.31***	0.19	**0.52*****	0.34***	0.24**	0.10	0.36***	0.27*	0.37***
COM (Wave 2)	0.12	0.18	0.31***	0.10	0.42***	**0.62*****	0.45***	0.27***	0.30***	0.55***	0.49***
SSB (Wave 2)	0.26***	0.23**	0.40***	0.19	0.31***	0.47***	**0.58*****	0.27***	0.38***	0.53***	0.52***
PSC (Wave 2)	0.26***	0.15	0.15	0.19	0.14	0.40***	0.28***	**0.73*****	0.26***	0.66***	0.52***
REC (Wave 2)	0.54***	0.50***	0.46***	0.49***	0.36***	0.32***	0.38***	0.25***	**0.66*****	0.40***	0.62***
CAP (Wave 2)	0.28**	0.23**	0.33***	0.21*	0.34***	0.62***	0.52***	0.60***	0.38***	**0.76*****	0.65***
G-SM (Wave 2)	0.47***	0.42***	0.45***	0.40***	0.40***	0.53***	0.51***	0.48***	0.60***	0.66***	**0.72*****

*$p < .05$; ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Coefficient values on the diagonal serve to establish the test-retest reliability of each subscale.

EMS: Emotional Support, *VENT:* Venting, *CERT:* Seeking Certainty, *INS:* Instrumental Help, *PRO:* Prosocial, *COM:* Public Commitment, *SSB:* Strengthen Social Bonds, *PSC:* Positive Self-concept, *REC:* Recovery, *CAP:* Capitalization, *G-SM:* General Goal-sharing Motive

Moreover, the results of our multiple correlation analysis established that goal-sharing motives are mostly trait-like in nature, although the effect sizes of our correlations were moderate enough to imply a state-like variability to them. This aligns with our postulation that goal-sharing motives stem from the needs generated by one's personal traits (e.g., an inability to regulate one's own motivation) and/or goal-related circumstances that may or may not be chronic in nature (e.g., the *persistent* lack of a strong support network vs. a *temporary* goal setback). We further discuss the implications these findings have for the etiology of goal sharing in the general discussion.

Study 4: The Functional Nature and Downstream Implications of Goal Sharing

Our final study adopted a semester-long, multi-wave design to illustrate the functional nature of goal sharing within an academic context. The demands of academic pursuit usually change dynamically over a semester, primarily due to an increase in workload and assignment deadlines towards the latter half. Given that communication is functional (Barbato et al., 2003; Dillard, 2008), we predict that students would increasingly adopt goal sharing across the semester to cope with this rise in academic demand. Furthermore, our conceptualization of the third-order motive as a general propensity for engaging in goal-related conversations suggests that it would moderate the relationship between time and goal-sharing behavior: the upward trajectory of goal-sharing frequency across each wave should be more pronounced among students with higher (vs. lower) G-SMS scores. That is, those with a stronger general motive for goal-sharing would be more likely to communicate their goals as a coping strategy over time.

We additionally explored the downstream associations of goal sharing. If goal sharing is indeed functional, then it could positively predict the attainment of one's goals (Fitzsimons et al., 2015). Relatedly, given that interpersonal communication can help one to cope with life stressors (Ruta et al., 2007; Segrin, 2014), goal sharing may also positively predict life satisfaction. In line with our findings from Studies 2 & 3, we expected goal-sharing motives to positively predict the frequency of academic goal sharing over the course of the semester. Consequently, this increase in goal sharing should then be associated with both academic goal achievement and life satisfaction. In addition, we probed the underlying motive(s) that would be responsible for driving the aforementioned mediation relationship. To this end, we iteratively utilized the third-, second-, and first-order motives as predictors. Doing so would provide us with theoretically meaningful insights at different levels of

granularity whilst simultaneously showcasing the versatility of the G-SMS as a psychometric tool.

Overall Study Design

We adopted a five-wave longitudinal design, wherein we administered various measures to participants at different intervals over an academic semester. See Fig. 2 for an overview of our data collection timeline.

Participants

A minimum sample of $N = 100$ is generally recommended when fitting growth models (Curran et al., 2010; Hutten-locher et al., 1991). Taking potential attrition into account, we aimed for a sample of at least $N = 300$. We recruited 379 undergraduates (88 males, 291 females; $M_{age} = 20.7$, $SD_{age} = 1.80$) from an English-speaking Asian university for this study. Students were reimbursed with either course credit or $10 for their participation, with a chance to win $50 if they completed all five surveys. Besides the first survey, missing a preceding survey would *not* preclude subjects from participating in the ensuing surveys. All 379 participants completed the 1st survey, 368 completed the 2nd survey, 358 completed the 3rd survey, 348 completed the 4th survey, and 216 completed the 5th survey. All five surveys were administered online via *Qualtrics*. Any missing data were handled using the maximum likelihood estimator for the latent growth curve and mediation analyses.

Procedure and Materials

Wave 1

Participants were recruited during the second week of the academic semester. They first set a specific and difficult-yet-achievable academic-related goal that they hoped to achieve by the end of the semester. Examples of some of the listed goals are: "*I hope to score an A for all my modules*" and "*I would like to achieve a GPA of at least 4.5*".

G-SMS Participants then completed the 27-item G-SMS. The internal consistency of the G-SMS was α = .92 for the third-order motive, α = .87 to α = .89 for the second-order motives, and α = .74 to α = .90 for the first-order motives.

Demographic Questionnaire The same demographic questionnaire as those of previous studies was used.

Waves 2, 3, and 4

Waves 2, 3, and 4 were administered in Weeks 4, 8, and 12 of the semester, respectively. All surveys contained the same measure; at the start of each survey, participants were each reminded of the academic goal they had set during Wave 1. They then completed the following scales:

Perceived Academic Goal Difficulty Measure Participants completed an item that captured the perceived difficulty of their academic goal, i.e., *"I encountered setbacks and*

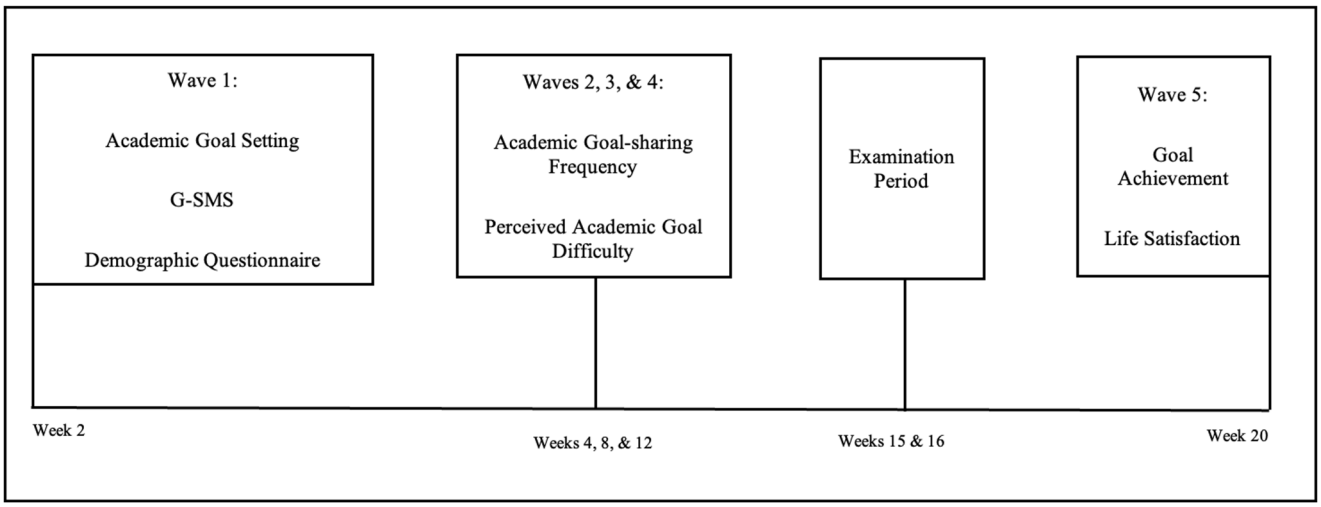


Fig. 2 Longitudinal Design of Study 4

challenges in pursuing this goal.", rated on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, Strongly Agree).

Frequency of Academic Goal-sharing Measure This measure was similar to that used in Study 2. The key difference is that participants completed the measure with regards to the academic goal they had set for themselves in Wave 1, $\alpha_{\text{Wave 2}} = 0.85$; $\alpha_{\text{Wave 3}} = 0.86$; $\alpha_{\text{Wave 4}} = 0.88$. See **Appendix S10**.

Wave 5

This fifth and final survey was administered to participants following the release of their semester results, around 8 weeks after the end of Wave 4. Participants were reminded of the academic goals they had set in Wave 1 and were then instructed to complete two measures:

Academic Goal Achievement Measure On a 7-point Likert scale, participants rated the extent to which they had accomplished the academic goal (1 = *Not at all*, 7 = *Totally*) they had set for themselves in Wave 1.

Life Satisfaction Measure This construct was measured using a 5-item scale developed by Diener et al. (1984; e.g., "*I am satisfied with my life*."). Each item was rated on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *Strongly disagree*, 7 = *Strongly agree*), and a composite index of life satisfaction was attained by averaging the scores of all five items. The internal consistency of the measure was α = 0.90.

Results

Perceived Difficulty of Academic Goals

A one-way repeated measures ANOVA analyzed the change in perceived academic goal difficulty scores across Wave 2, 3, and 4. The pattern of results confirmed that perceived academic goal difficulty did indeed increase over the course of the semester. See **Appendix S6** and **Figure S3** for more details.

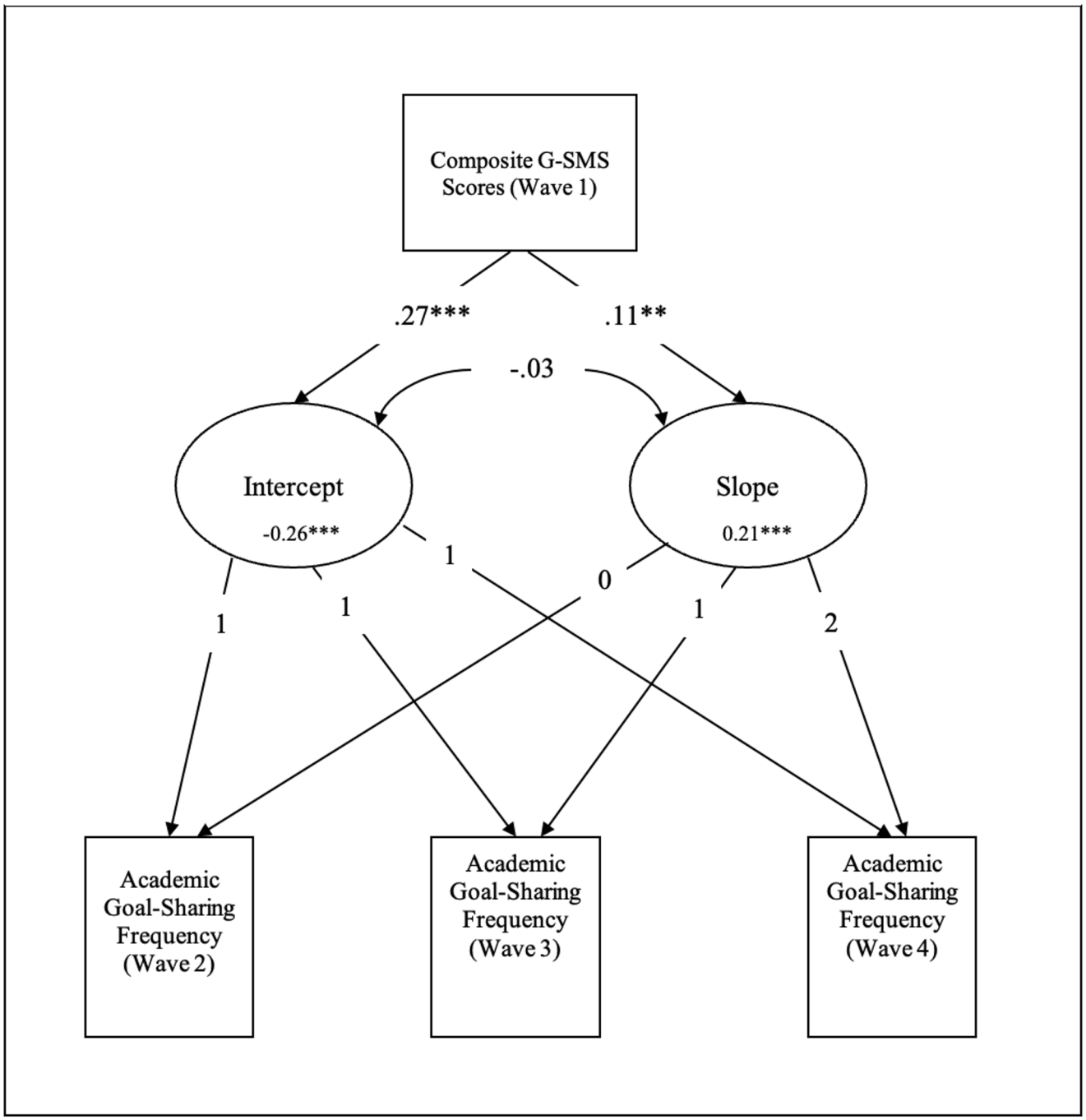
Latent Growth Curve Modelling

We then tested whether there would be a corresponding increase in goal-sharing frequency over the same duration and whether an individual's goal-sharing motives would moderate this increase. In service of this, we applied latent growth curve analysis using the Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) framework. Latent growth modeling was conducted using Rosseel's (2012) *Lavaan* package in *R*. Using the ML estimator, the final sample was $N = 378$. Our conditional growth model (see Fig. 3) loaded participants' goal-sharing frequency scores at the three time points onto the latent intercept and slope factors.

We first fixed the intercept factor loadings of each timepoint to 1. We then constrained the slope factor loadings of academic goal communication frequency at Waves 2, 3, and 4 to 0, 1, and 2, respectively. This constraint allowed us to model a positive linear growth trajectory of goal-sharing frequency over time and scale the mean of the intercept factor to be indicative of participants' goal-sharing frequency scores at Wave 2 (i.e., their baseline levels of goal-sharing frequency; Duncan & Duncan, 2009; Preacher et al., 2008). We regressed the slope and intercept latent factors onto participants' G-SMS scores to test the moderating role of goal-sharing motives on the trajectory of goal-sharing frequency. To aid interpretability, we group-mean centered the G-SMS scores and grand-mean centered the goal-sharing frequency scores (Enders & Tofighi, 2007).

Our analysis indicated acceptable fit, $CFI = 0.92$, $TLI = 0.77$, $RMSEA = 0.19$, 90% CI [0.135, 0.255], $SRMR = 0.048$. As such, we proceeded with interpreting the mean estimates of the model's growth parameters and the pathways between them and the G-SMS scores. We report only the unstandardized pathway and mean estimates (e.g., Bentein et al., 2005; Muniz-Terrera et al., 2017; Peterson et al., 2011). To begin with, the pathway between participants' G-SMS scores and the intercept factor was positive, $b = 0.27$, $SE = 0.07$, $p < .001$. The higher one's G-SMS scores were at Wave 1, the greater their academic goal-sharing frequency would be at Wave 2 (Time = 0), replicating our findings from Study 3 concerning the longitudinal predictive capabilities of goal-sharing motives. The mean of the slope factor was also positive, $\mu_s = 0.21$, $p < .001$, indicating that the frequency with which participants shared their academic goals with others increased over the semester.

More importantly, the G-SMS positively predicted the slope factor, $b = 0.11$, $SE = 0.04$, $p < .01$, suggesting an interaction between goal-sharing motives and time on goal-sharing frequency. We probed this with simple slope analyses (see Curran et al., 2004; Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002) using a web-based statistical interface developed by Preacher et al. (2008). The simple slope between time and goal-sharing frequency was significant at low (-1 SD), $b = 0.27$, $p < .001$, medium (mean), $b = 0.38$, $p < .001$, and high, (+1 SD), $b = 0.49$, $p < .001$, G-SMS scores, with a steady increase in effect size. Put another way, participants with a higher (vs. lower) general motive to engage in goal-sharing exhibited



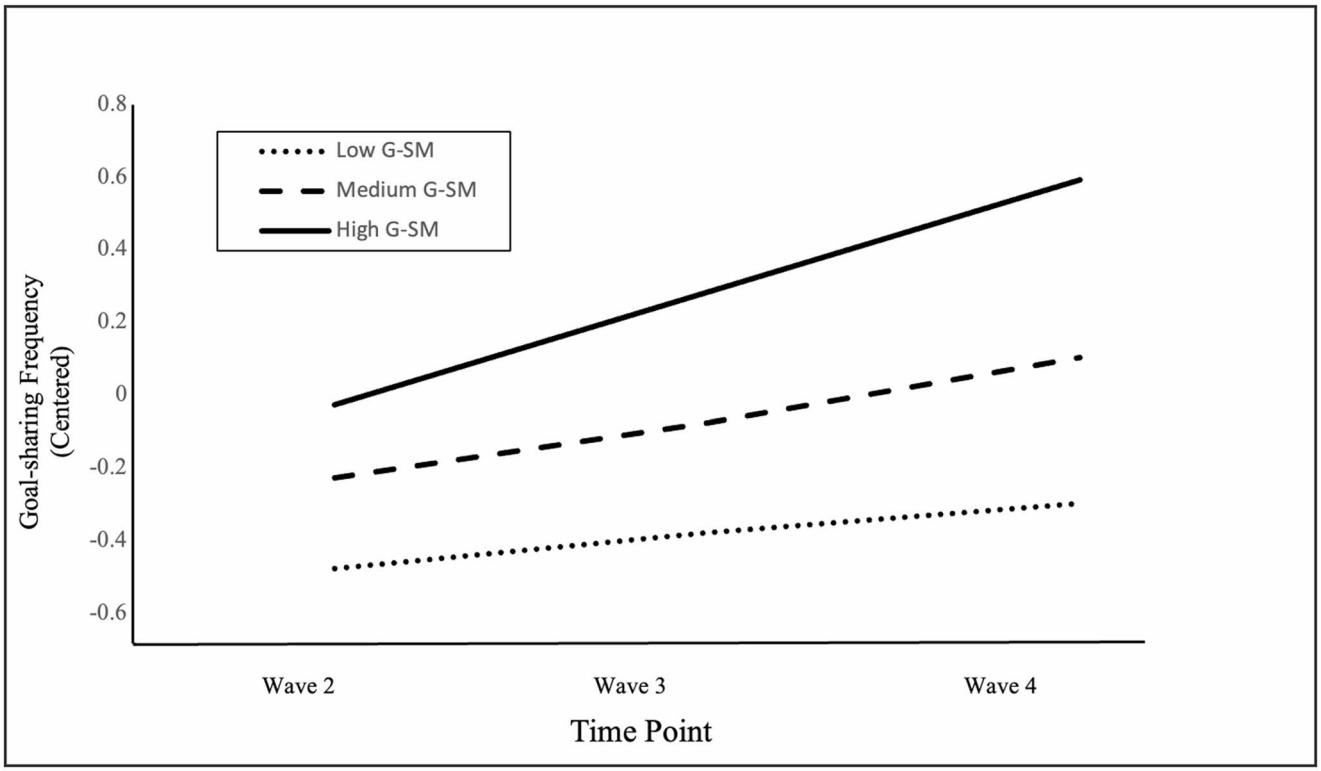
Note. *$p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$; Unstandardized pathways and latent factor estimates are presented here.

Fig. 3 Parameter Estimates of Latent Growth Curve Model with Composite G-SMS Scores as a Predictor (Study 4)

a steeper upward trajectory in goal-sharing frequency over the semester (Fig. 4).

Mediation Analyses

Next, we explored the associations between goal sharing, academic achievement, and life satisfaction, and whether greater levels of goal sharing would indeed be predicted by prior levels of goal-sharing motives. As we were interested in overall engagement in goal sharing across the semester, rather than at a specific timepoint, we pooled participants' scores across the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th waves to compute an average index of academic goal-sharing frequency. Three mediation tests were conducted using path analysis in



Note. G-SM: General Goal-sharing Motive

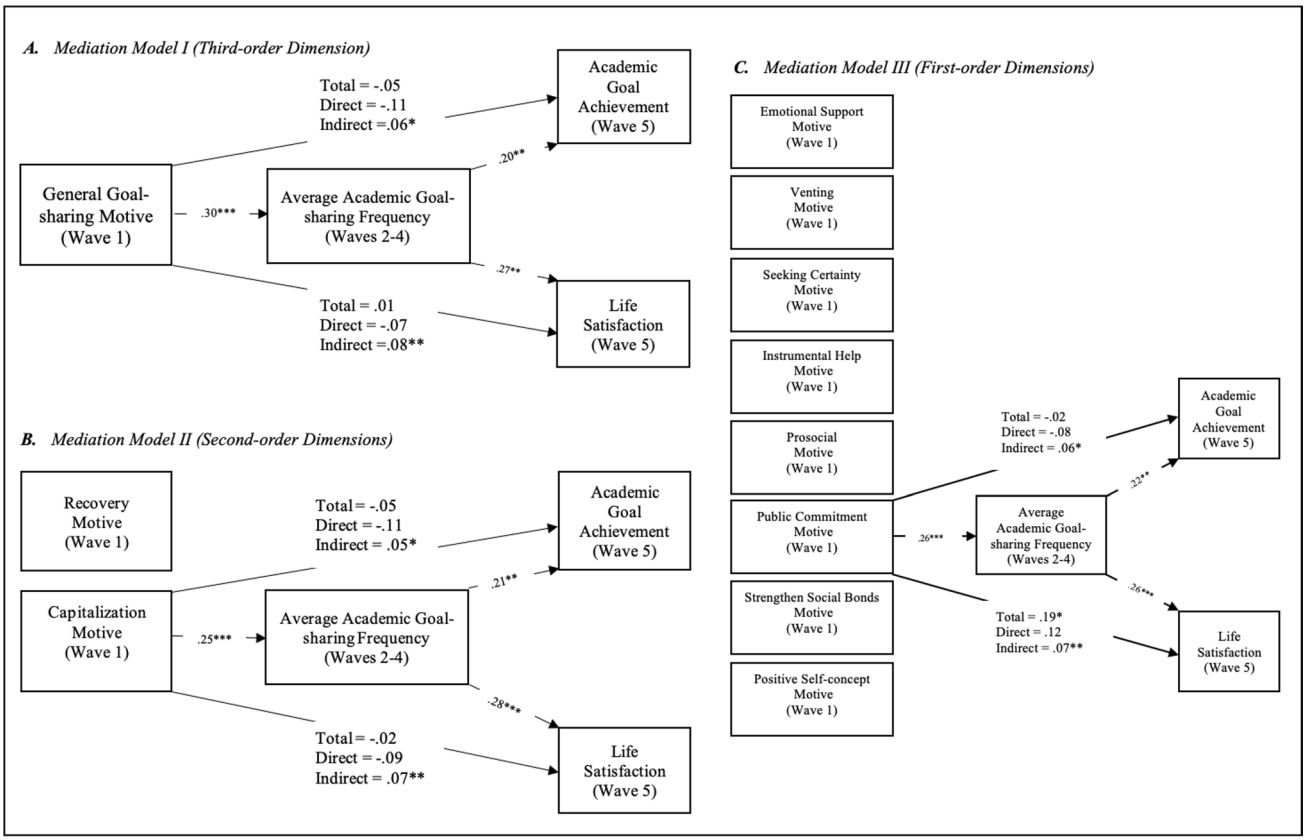
Fig. 4 Simple Slopes of Goal-sharing Frequency at Each Level of the General Goal-sharing Motive (Study 4)

Lavaan (Rosseel, 2012), with the only difference being the predictors included within each model. Using the ML estimator, the final sample for each analysis was $N = 378$. Bootstrapping ($n = 10{,}000$) was used to compute the 95% confidence intervals of the indirect effects found within all three models. Detailed results of the mediation models are reported in **Appendix S7.** Collectively, our analyses suggest that goal-sharing motives predicted academic goal achievement and life satisfaction via an increased frequency of academic goal sharing. Beyond demonstrating the effect of the general goal-sharing motive, we also identified the second-order motive of capitalization and the first-order motive of public commitment as more specific predictors of goal-sharing frequency. Figure 5 contains a side-by-side illustration of all three mediation analyses.

Discussion

Our results align with the notion that goal sharing plays a functional role in goal pursuit. Over the course of a semester – as academic goal demands increased – students exhibited a corresponding increase in goal-sharing frequency, hinting at the strategic utility of goal sharing. Notably, this increase in frequency could also have been facilitated by the tendency of students to form study groups near the end of the semester, with the increased presence of social targets providing a rich context for goal sharing to take place. The results of our simple growth trajectory analysis also demonstrate that individual differences in goal-sharing tendencies predict relevant behavior, as students with a higher general motive of goal sharing were more likely to adopt goal sharing over time.

The G-SMS scores of participants at Wave 1 also significantly and positively predicted their goal-sharing frequency at Wave 2, replicating our findings regarding the predictive utility of goal-sharing motives from Studies 2 and 3 while extending them towards the academic domain. Finally, our exploratory mediation analyses revealed that goal-sharing motives predicted both achievement and life satisfaction, as mediated by goal-sharing frequency. Finer-grained analyses using both the second- and first-order subscales of the G-SMS revealed the capitalization and public commitment motives to be responsible for driving the indirect effect. These findings shed light on the mechanism through which goal-sharing motives exert their functional influence on goal pursuit (at least within the context of academic pursuits) while simultaneously demonstrating how the hierarchical structure of goal-sharing motives allows the G-SMS to be flexibly utilized as an investigatory tool.



Note. * p <.05; ** p <.01; *** p < .001; Standardized regression coefficients are presented above. For simplicity, only the parameter estimates for the General Goal-sharing Motive (Model I), the Capitalization Motive (Model II), and the Public Commitment Motive (Model III) are illustrated. Additionally, in Models II & III, we did not illustrate the covariance paths between all exogenous motives, and the directional paths for the motives that did not have a significant indirect effect, for ease of presentation.

Fig. 5 Results of Mediation Analyses

General Discussion

In six studies, we established the initial framework for the novel construct of goal-sharing motives. Employing a theoretically driven and psychometrically sound tool (Preliminary Studies 1 & 2), we investigated the factor structure, conceptual soundness, predictive power, and stability of goal-sharing motives (Studies 1 to Study 3). We also explored the dynamic role these motives play in interpersonal communication, goal achievement, and life satisfaction (Study 4).

Theoretical Implications

The Factor Structure and Predictive Utility of Goal-sharing Motives

To our knowledge, our current work is the first to establish the factor structure of goal-sharing motives. In line with our theoretical conceptualization, there exists multiple goal-sharing motives at different orders of specificity. The eight first-order motives suggest that people talk about their goals for different reasons. This multidimensional factor structure aligns with that of other interpersonal communication motives (e.g., Duprez et al., 2015; Rubin et al., 1988) and implies that multiple intents can concurrently drive an individual's goal sharing.

The second-order motives suggest goal-sharing behavior to mainly be motivated by two broader needs in goal pursuit: recovering from goal-related adversities and capitalizing on the features of goal sharing to manage one's goal-pursuit resources, aligning with classic research on goal orientations (Dillard, 1997; Elliot et al., 2001; Feltman et al., 2012). In particular, individuals may either have a tendency to utilize goal sharing as a means to avoid goal-related stressors or approach beneficial opportunities to further their pursuits. The capacity to rebound from unfortunate events is positively associated with important life (Katana et al., 2019; McClelland et al., 2017) and goal outcomes (e.g., Al-Badareen, 2016; Sahranavard et al., 2018). Likewise, amassing psychological and social resources (e.g., goal commitment) are crucial for goal attainment (Hollenbeck et al., 1989;

Orehek & Forest, 2016; Park et al., 2007) and life satisfaction (Delhey et al., 2023). In line with this, we found that the capitalization motive indirectly predicted goal achievement via increased goal sharing.

The third-order dimension indicates that goal-sharing motives can also be conceptualized as a general propensity to engage in goal-related conversations with others. Consistent with past work on other communicative motives (McCroskey, 1992), we found that this general propensity predicts important outcomes. Indeed, the composite score of the G-SMS predicted general goal-sharing frequency above and beyond existing communication motives (Study 2) and goal-sharing frequency among working adults pursuing career development goals (Study 3). It also predicted the goal-sharing frequency of university students pursuing academic achievement, which in turn predicted goal attainment and life satisfaction (Study 4). In sum, this paper empirically investigated the factor structure of goal-sharing motives and provided strong evidence for their proximal relationship with goal-sharing behavior.

The Nature of Goal-sharing Motives

Goal Sharing is Functional Our findings also provide evidence for the functional nature of goal sharing. Study 4 demonstrates that goal sharing among students increased over the course of a college semester as their academic demands increased in tandem. Consistent with previous findings hinting at the benefits that interpersonal communication can have for one's pursuits (Fitzsimons et al., 2015; Suldo et al., 2009), it would appear that individuals do indeed have a natural proclivity to rely on goal sharing when they encounter challenges in their pursuits. Moreover, those who possess higher levels of goal-sharing motives exhibited a greater growth in goal-sharing frequency over the semester compared to those with lower goal-sharing motives; the results of our exploratory mediation analyses provide an additional layer of perspective into this moderation effect, specifically via revealing the relationship between goal-sharing motives and goal-sharing frequency to mainly be driven by the capitalization motive. Taken in tandem, one plausible conclusion is that those with higher levels of the capitalization goal-sharing motive were better able to recognize and leverage on the strategic utility of goal sharing.

The Etiology of Goal Sharing We proposed a needs-based origin of goal sharing, theorizing that the motives for goal sharing are a natural outcome of the needs that emerge from both individual differences and variations in one's life circumstances. Such a conceptualization lines up not just with research on communicative motives (Dillard et al., 1997; Mahatoo, 1989), but also with findings from the personality and social cognition literatures. Indeed, we found goal-sharing motives to be correlated with measures of individual differences (Study 2). Perhaps more importantly, across the span of a year, the test-retest coefficients of each G-SMS subscale ranged from medium to medium-large (Study 3), reflecting the effect sizes of psychological constructs that are known to have both trait- and state-like components: trait anxiety (Spielberger et al., 1971) and neuroticism (Wilberg et al., 2009), just to list two examples. One possibility is that goal-sharing motives are middle-level units of personality: aspects of one's psyche that straddle the line between traits and states (Buss & Cator, 1989; McAdams & Pals, 2006). These middle-level units, known also as *characteristic adaptations* (McAdams & Pals, 2006), tend to display greater consistency over time compared to states while being more susceptible to situational influences than traits are. Fortifying evidence for the trait-/state-like hybrid characteristic of goal-sharing motives comes from studies on social cognition, which posit that behavior can be influenced by elements of the situation and one's dispositional compulsions (Higgins, 1990; Kuper et al., 2024). Understanding the role of the situation on goal sharing is crucial considering the dynamic nature of goal pursuit. Indeed, the process of working towards one's goals is rarely a smooth-sailing process: motivation waxes and wanes, obstacles may arise, and one's life circumstances could change overnight. As a result, different goal-sharing motives may dominate at different stages of goal pursuit. For instance, a student who receives a lower-than-expected grade on a quiz may have their affective states perturbed, thus activating the emotional support goal-sharing motive. Conversely, this same student may later be invited to join a study group and find themselves having access to new peers with higher relative levels of self-control and competence. In this case, they may be compelled to engage in goal sharing to strengthen their social ties with the group – presumably so they can tap on their intellectual prowess should the need arise (e.g., Orehek et al., 2018).

Individual differences could similarly determine the extent to which certain goal-sharing motives are activated. In Study 2, we demonstrated extraversion to be significantly related to the capitalization motive, a relationship concordant with existing evidence (Frederick & Hofmans, 2014; Miceli et al., 2018). Other dispositional traits that could exert an influence on goal-sharing motives include the behavioral inhibition system (BIS) and the behavioral activation system (BAS). Notably, higher levels of BIS/BAS have been found to induce greater avoidance/approach tendencies (Marrero et al., 2008). Thus, one possibility is that individuals higher in BIS may have greater recovery goal-sharing motives due

to their enhanced sensitivity towards negative stimuli, while those with an elevated BAS are more likely to utilize goal sharing for capitalization purposes given their penchant for rewards, success, and goal achievement (Carver & White, 1994; Gray, 1981, 1982). Importantly, according to the social cognition perspective, behavior ultimately emerges as the result of a *person x situation interaction* (Rauthmann, 2020), and we believe the same applies towards goal sharing. For instance, assuming that recovery motives are indeed activated to a greater extent in those with a stronger BIS, such individuals are more likely to rely on goal sharing when encountering failures compared to high-BAS individuals, who may instead turn towards other reward-oriented solutions (e.g., alcohol; Franken et al., 2006). Put differently, individuals are expected to vary in their motives and propensity for goal sharing, even when facing the same situational triggers. In the following section, we propose testable hypotheses with regards to the role of metacognition as either a direct predictor or moderator of goal sharing for future researchers to consider.

Practical Implications

A peripheral, yet crucial, effort within our current work was the development of a psychometric tool for researchers to capture and study the novel construct of goal-sharing motives. One of the main objectives when constructing our psychometric scale was to create as comprehensive a measure as possible to aid researchers in understanding this hitherto understudied phenomenon. To this end, we conducted a comprehensive review of the existing literature, constructed a 27-item measure (i.e., the G-SMS; Preliminary Studies 1 & 2), validated its hypothesized third-order factor structure (Studies 1 to 4), and provided evidence for its cultural invariance (Study 1), construct validity (Study 2), test-retest reliability (Study 3), and predictive capabilities (Studies 2 to 4). The strong psychometric properties and versatility of the G-SMS render it suitable for a variety of research. For example, the G-SMS could be deployed to disambiguate findings within the extant goal pursuit literature. Gollwitzer et al. (2009; Study 4) found that students whose career goals were made known to others were less likely to engage in subsequent goal striving since the act of sharing their goals allowed them to prematurely attain their "aspired-to identity goal(s)" (p. 615). On the other hand, Klein et al. (2020; Study 3) showed that making one's goals public would help to enhance goal commitment and performance, contingent on the perceived status of one's audience. Notably, the two lines of work differ in terms of the audience (i.e., strangers vs. close ones), means (i.e., verbal vs. email), and content (i.e., behavioral intentions vs. grade goal) of goal sharing–aspects of sharing that one's communication motives can very much influence (Barbato et al., 1997; Graham, 1994). Future research could thus use the G-SMS to determine how various goal-sharing motives affect the way goals are shared, which could illuminate the internal and external conditions that influence when goal sharing would hinder or facilitate goal pursuit.

The G-SMS can also be used in a more exploratory manner. In Study 4, we iteratively narrowed down the specific goal-sharing motive(s) driving academic goal-sharing frequency and explored their impact on goal achievement and life satisfaction. Similar use of the G-SMS can help researchers generate and/or validate further theories concerning the nature of goal sharing at different levels of granularity. For instance, researchers interested in examining potential trait-like differences in the propensity for goal-sharing can adopt the general composite score of the G-SMS, while those seeking to understand the predictive power of specific motives can focus on the first-order subscales. In addition, given the academic downstream influences of goal-sharing motives (Study 4), education researchers could consider integrating the G-SMS into their arsenal of predictive measures to further explore the factors responsible for academic goal attainment.

Limitations and Future Directions

More research is needed to test just how universal the factor structure of goal-sharing motives is. We determined cultural invariance by comparing G-SMS scores on participants from the USA and Singapore. However, the two countries from which we recruited our participants are both first-world nations. The living circumstances in less wealthy countries may pose unique challenges to goal pursuit and broadly affect the type of needs individuals have (e.g., physiological vs. self-actualization needs), which can have profound implications for the goal-sharing motives of their citizens. To enhance generalizability, future studies should compare data from a broader range of countries, allowing us to critically examine which goal-sharing motives are universal and which are culture specific.

At its most fundamental level, communication involves the transmission of a message from a sharer to an audience via a medium (e.g., words, facial expressions, digital technology; Fatimayin, 2018; Munodawafa, 2008). Crucially, it is only when the receiver responds to the speaker by initiating another round of information transmission can communication be said to take place, implying an intimate connection between both goal sharing and the presence of social others. We put forth two potential avenues for future consideration: first, researchers can explore *how social targets enable the regulatory effects of goal sharing*. As a communicative phenomenon, the efficacy of goal sharing as a

regulatory tool likely hinges on how one's target audience responds as well (Bovée, 2008). Returning to our illustrative example, Tom's goal sharing would not have regulated his emotions if his friends had laughed at him instead of empathizing. In other words, how one's audience reacts is critical to the instrumentality of goal sharing; researchers should strive to systematically examine the hallmark features of a social target (e.g., power, status, appearance, tone, content of response, etc.) and articulate how they serve to either enable or hinder specific types of goal sharing.

Second, it is equally worth exploring *how goal sharing can influence one's social network*. In Study 4, we speculated that the formation of study groups could have accounted for the growth in goal-sharing frequency throughout the semester as well. This assumes that members of the study group provided helpful responses to the sharers' instances of goal sharing. However, what if their reactions do not fulfil one's goal-related needs (e.g., members of the group provided incorrect or unreliable answers)? According to scholars, people take intentional steps to draw closer to those who facilitate goal achievement, while distancing themselves from less helpful relationships (Fitzsimons et al., 2008; Orehek et al., 2018; Yong et al., 2021). This suggests that the individual is not entirely at the mercy of their social environment, but plays an active role in shaping it, with goal sharing acting as an important mechanism through which the individual probes the instrumentality of their existing networks. Future research should examine how goal sharing is affected by, and can in turn affect, the sharer's social environment.

Lastly, subsequent studies should empirically investigate our postulation regarding the person x situation etiology of goal sharing. The field of metacognition provides some promise in this regard. Recent studies reveal that individuals with greater metamotivational knowledge are more sensitive to the advantages afforded by various tactics and are thus more likely to adopt effective strategies to regulate their motivation and behavior (see Amos-Binks & Dannenhauer, 2019; Miele & Scholer, 2018; Miele et al., 2020). Relatedly, engaging in intentional conversations with significant others has been found to be a metamotivational strategy adopted by medical students to strengthen their motivation toward their academic goals (i.e., the regulation of relatedness; Norouzi et al., 2022). Building on these findings, we propose two testable hypotheses for how metacognition could relate to goal-sharing motives: (1) metacognitive knowledge, imbuing one with stronger strategic tendencies and a better grasp of one's own goal-related needs (Chen et al., 2020; Schraw, 2001), may directly predict motives which are more strategic in nature (e.g., the public commitment motive); (2) alternatively, metacognitive knowledge may instead function as a moderator, wherein its relevance towards predicting strategic goal-sharing motives only emerges in the presence of certain situational constraints, such as when one's foresees challenges in the road ahead. Future research should focus on ascertaining the veracity of these hypotheses, which would in turn provide invaluable insights into the psychological origins of goal-sharing motives.

Conclusion

Through our six studies, we constructed a versatile and psychometrically-sound tool to measure goal-sharing motives, examined their factor structure and long-term stability, and provided initial evidence for the real-world utility of these motives. This paper marks the first empirical foray into the motives behind goal sharing, and we believe it will provide a firm theoretical foundation on which to further develop our nascent understanding of goal sharing as a phenomenon.

Appendix A

The Goal-Sharing Motives Scale (27-item version)

People often hold goals about what they want to achieve. Before answering the following questions, please think about some of the important, long-term goals that you hold. These goals may be related to a wide variety of areas, including your academic studies, career aspirations, personal relationships, or physical health.

In pursuing important goals, there are often failures, problems, successes, thoughts and feelings related to the goal pursuit. We may share these aspects with others.

In this questionnaire, we are interested in the reasons why you share and communicate with others about your goal pursuits. There are no right or wrong answers, so please choose an answer that best represents your own behaviors and mental states in general.

Please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement:

1 – Strongly disagree 2 – Disagree 3 – Slightly disagree 4 – Neither agree or disagree 5 – Slightly agree 6 – Agree 7 – Strongly agree

Emotional Support

1. When I tell people about my struggles at work, I want them to encourage me.
2. When I tell others about my failures, I want to be comforted.
3. I want my friends to express concern when I complain to them about my frustrations.

Venting

4. I talk to others about my frustrations because I just want to "let off steam".
5. When I face an unexpected obstacle, I feel a need to vent to others about it.
6. I vent to help me put my frustrations behind me.

Seeking Certainty

7. I tell others about my problems to find out if they share the same problems.
8. When I talk to others about my goals, I am interested to know if they share the same sentiments as me.
9. I talk to others to find out if they share similar views as me on how best to tackle a problem.

Instrumental Help

10. When I share my frustrations with others, I am looking for guidance.
11. When I complain about my problems, I often hope that someone offers me a solution.
12. I hope people can offer their assistance when I tell them about my challenges.

Prosocial Reasons

13. I hope others can be motivated when I share about the failures that I have overcome.
14. I talk about the challenges I face so that people are aware of the challenges in engaging in a particular task.
15. I tell others about my failures hoping that they will not repeat the mistakes I made.

Public Commitment

16. I tell others about my tasks to feel more committed to them.
17. I share my goals with others to make me feel more driven to seen them through.
18. Telling someone about what I am working towards is the best way to get me motivated to achieve them.
19. I repeatedly talk about my goals to help me stay focused on them.

Strengthen Social Bonds

20. I share my successes with others to make them feel that they are important to me.
21. I share my failures with others to make them feel that they are important to me.
22. I talk to others about my failures because it makes me feel closer to them.

Positive Self-concept

23. I talk about my successes because I want people to think highly of me.
24. I want to tell others about my successes because it raises my social status.
25. I only talk about my aspirations or goals when it makes me look good.
26. When I let others know of my achievements, I am doing it to gain their praise.
27. I talk about my accomplishments because it makes me feel superior.

Supplementary Information The online version contains supplementary material available at https://doi.org/10.1007/s11031-026-10210-z.

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Data Availability All datasets and analysis codes used in this study are original, have been uploaded to the Open Science Framework repository, and can be accessed via the following view-only link: [https://osf.io/dfwj8/?view_only=6b0869b0a62b4978ba85253306df12fb].

Declarations

Conflict of interest We have no conflict of interest to disclose.

Ethical approval Ethical approval was obtained for all six studies from the Institutional Review Board and the Psychology Department's Ethics Review Committee at the National University of Singapore. Approval number: S-19-258.

Consent to participate Official approval for all studies was obtained at either the departmental or institutional level, and ethical standards were strictly adhered to over the course of data collection. Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in all studies.

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