THE INFLUENCE OF GOAL STRIVING AND SELF-EFFICACY ON LIFE SATISFACTION, MEDIATED BY HOPE, AMONG THAI WORKING PERSONS

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Abstract: This investigation attempted to examine the influence of goal striving and self-efficacy on life satisfaction, being mediated by hope, among Thai working persons. Data were collected from 523 working persons in the Bangkok area. A self-administered survey questionnaire in Thai was employed for data collection. The questionnaire consisted of the following: a researcher-constructed set of questions to elicit demographic information, the Goal Striving Scale (GSS) to measure the level of goal attainment in various areas of life, the General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSE) to measure optimistic self-belief or self-efficacy, the Adult Trait Hope Scale (ATHS) to measure the global concept of hope, and the Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS) to measure global cognitive judgments of satisfaction with one's life. The results of Study I revealed that the Thai versions of the GSS, GSE, ATHS, and SWLS are psychometrically sound and, therefore, reliable and valid for use with Thai participants. In Study II, the fully identified path model demonstrated that both goal striving and self-efficacy have indirect significant influence on the criterion variable of hope and, subsequently, effected a higher level of life satisfaction, whereas only goal striving has direct positive influence on life satisfaction. It was also found that the full indirect model best explains the interrelationships among the core variables.

Keywords: Goal Striving, Self-Efficacy, Hope, Life Satisfaction, Thai Working Persons.

Introduction
High level of stress and long hours of work culture has led to mental health problems among working people worldwide. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimated that nearly half of the world's population is affected by mental illness, with an impact on their self-esteem, relationships, and ability to function in everyday life. More than 450 million people suffer from mental disorders, and many more have

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undisclosed mental problems (WHO, 2003). By the same token, Thailand has concerns about working people with mental health issues. In recent years, besides high stress level and long hours of work, Thai workers have been affected by high competition and influx of technology, coupled with economic uncertainty, political unrest, and natural disasters. All these factors contribute to stress in daily life which could lead to mental health problems.

The current researcher posited that there are factors that can help the *working person* enhance significantly his or her level of *goal striving*, along with improvements in metacognitive processing (i.e., self-reflection and insight). An individual's expectation that he or she will, subsequently, develop a high sense of *self-efficacy* in order to effectively fulfill one's goals in various stages of life would help generate more *hope*, *life satisfaction*, and advancement in life.

Individuals have fundamental needs for competence, relatedness, and autonomy, and every behavior and resulting well-being is influenced by his or her ability to satisfy these needs through goal pursuits (Deci & Ryan, 2000). In so doing, it would be a preventative means towards psychological well-being by lowering one's levels of depression, stress, and anxiety, an assertion echoed by Green, Grant, and Rynsaardt (2007). By being happy, the working person's commitment towards his or her work and the organization would definitely increase and, thus, generate more productivity and happiness towards their surrounding circle of co-workers and immediate family.

Objectives

The principal aim of the current study was to examine the causal relationship model on how goal striving and self-efficacy impact on well-being outcomes, specifically life satisfaction, being mediated by hope, particularly among Thai working persons. In the process, this study attempted to explore the relationships among four latent variables (i.e., goal striving, self-efficacy, hope, and life satisfaction).

To meet its objectives, this investigation was divided into two separate but interrelated phases or studies (i.e., Study I and Study II). Study I involved the translation of selected Western standardized instruments into Thai and establish the psychometric properties of the Thai-translated versions of the Goal Striving Scale (GSS), the Adult Trait Hope Scale (ATHS), the General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSE), and the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS). Study II aimed to: (1) investigate the direct and indirect structural relationships among goal striving, general self-efficacy, and the criterion variable of life satisfaction, being mediated by the factor of hope, among Thai working persons, and (2) identify the path model that best explains the interrelationships among the core variables.

Literature Review

The following abridged review of literature contains theoretical perspectives and empirical findings which demonstrate interrelationships among the key variables of goal striving, self-efficacy, hope, and life satisfaction.

Goal Striving

Goal striving is the foundation of successful self-regulation in which a person may take control over (i.e., self-regulate) the setting of a goal(s) by making if–then plans

(i.e., form implementation intentions) that specify an anticipated critical situation and link it to an instrumental goal-directed response. Individuals select personal goals from a variety of life domains and work towards their attainment. It had been recognized that the possession of and progression towards important life goals are associated with increased well-being (Sheldon, Kasser, Smith, & Share, 2002). Furthermore, goals also represent an individual's strivings to achieve personal self-change and enhance the meaning of and purpose in life. In this study, goal striving was measured by means of the Goal Striving Scale developed by the researcher.

Self-Efficacy
Self-efficacy is the "belief in one's capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required in order to manage prospective situations" (Bandura, 1994, p. 71). In other words, it is a person's belief in his or her ability to succeed in a particular situation. Bandura described these beliefs as determinants of how people think, behave, and feel. Virtually all people can identify goals they want to accomplish as well as things they would like to change and achieve. However, most people also realize that putting these plans into action is not quite so simple. Bandura (1997) demonstrated that an individual's self-efficacy plays a major role in how goals, tasks, and challenges are approached. In this study, self-efficacy was measured by means of the General Self-Efficacy Scale developed by Schwarzer and Jerusalem (1995).

Hope
Hope is how people think about goals (Snyder, 1995). It is a cognitive set that involves a reciprocally derived sense of successful goal-directed determination. It also involves finding or planning different ways to achieve those goals (Snyder, 2002). Hope theory has three components: goals, pathway thinking, and agency thinking. In this study, hope was measured by means of the Adult Trait Hope Scale developed by Snyder and associates (1991).

Life Satisfaction
Life satisfaction refers to a global cognitive judgmental process of one's life (Diener, 2000; Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985). The significant characteristic of life satisfaction is that it is people's own opinion about themselves; that is, it is people's overall judgment of how satisfied they are with their present state of life, compared to their own standards. In the present study, life satisfaction was measured by means of the *Satisfaction with Life Scale* (SWLS), developed by Diener, Emmons, Larsen, and Griffin (1985).

Methodology

Participants
A total of 523 participants (male: *n*=191, 36.5%; female: *n*=332, 63.5%) were involved in the confirmatory factor analysis phase of the study. The participants' ages ranged from 18 to 60 years, with a mean age of 31.91 years (*median*=30 years).

Instrumentation

The researcher used a self-administered survey questionnaire with Likert-type rating scales for data gathering. The questionnaire consisted of a researcher-constructed Personal Information section and the following psychometric scales: Goal Striving Scale (GSS), Adult Trait Hope Scale (ATHS), General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSE), and the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS).

Pretest

Prior to the actual study, a pretest of the Thai version of the survey questionnaire was conducted to check for errors and for readability. A total of 30 participants aged between 25 and 55 years (mean age=33.5 years) were invited to fill in the Thai questionnaire and requested to report any errors and/or difficulties in the readability of the directions and item statements. Upon verifying that the questionnaire was free from errors and comprehension problems, the researcher proceeded to conduct the actual study.

Data Collection

The convenience sampling method was used to recruit participants. To increase the probability of obtaining a larger sample, completion of the questionnaire was conducted in person. Potential participants were approached in various offices around Bangkok, and were informed about the general nature of the study. Those who met the inclusion criteria were invited to fill in the survey questionnaire. They were also informed that they could withdraw from the data gathering exercise at any time, that no names would be recorded to guarantee participants' anonymity, and that the data collected would only be used for the purposes of this study and accessed only by the researcher and research advisor.

Results

Study I

As the GSS, GSE, ATHS, and SWLS were translated into the Thai language, it was necessary to investigate their psychometric properties in order to ensure their cross-cultural reliability and construct validity, prior to their use in the present study. This involved the following procedural steps.

Step 1: Reliability Analysis

Examination of the Cronbach's alphas for the Goal Striving Scale (GSS = .90), the General Self-Efficacy scale (GSE = .83), the Adult Trait Hope Scale (ATHS= .88), and the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS=.85) showed that they ranged from .83 (GSE) to .90 (GSS). Examination of their items' I-T correlations showed that 9 items from the GSS have corrected item-total correlations lower than the criterion of .33, but that their deletion would have lowered the scale's overall Cronbach's alpha. As such, these items were retained. Thus, the factor of 'goal striving' (GSS) is represented by 40 items, the factor of 'self-efficacy' (GSE) is represented by 10 items,

the factor of 'hope' (ATHS) is represented by 8 items, and the factor of 'life satisfaction' (SWLS) is represented by 5 items.

Step 2: Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was carried out to evaluate the factor structures of the GSE, the ATHS, and the SWLS (it should be noted that the factor of 'goal striving' was employed as a measurement variable in the present study, due to its inability to converge as a latent construct represented by its 40 items). CFA, unlike exploratory factor analysis, allows the researcher to explicitly posit an *a priori* model (e.g., on the basis of the factors identified in the western-based original scale) and to assess the fit of this model to the observed data. After ensuring that the collected data set meets the assumptions underlying CFA, the X^2 goodness-of-fit test (via structural equation modeling) was employed to test the null hypothesis that the sample covariance matrix for the model was obtained from a population that has the proposed model structure. The following Figure 1 depicts the three-factor measurement model representing the latent constructs of self-efficacy, hope, and life satisfaction and Table 1 presents the goodness-of-fit indices for the three-factor model.
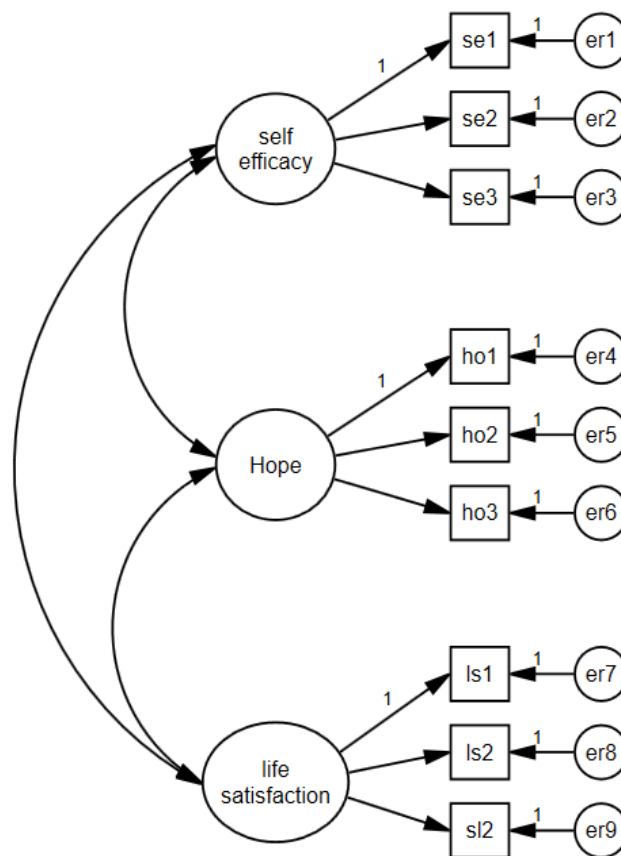

Figure 1: Three-Factor Measurement Model Representing The Latent Constructs Of Self-Efficacy, Hope, and Life Satisfaction

Table 1: X² Goodness-of-Fit Value, Normed Fit Index (NFI), Incremental Fit Index (IFI), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA)

3-Factor Model	X² (*N*=523)	*df*	*p*	NFI	IFI	TLI	CFI	RMSEA
Null Model	12779.46	55	<.001	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.66
3-Factor Model	286.33	41	<.001	0.98	0.98	0.97	0.98	0.10
(GSE, ATHS, and SWLS)								

The chi-square goodness-of-fit value for the 3-factor model is statistically significant, (*df*=41)=286.33, *p*<.001, suggesting that the covariance matrix for the posited 3-factor model does not fit the sample covariance matrix well, the incremental fit indices (Normed Fit Index – NFI, Incremental Fit Index – IFI, Tucker-Lewis Index – TLI, Comparative Fit Index – CFI) are all above 0.90. These fit indices indicate that the 3-factor model provides a very good fit relative to its null or independence model (i.e., the posited model represented over 90% improvement in fit over its null or independence model), and support the hypothesized structure of the posited 3-factor model. The RMSEA value of 0.10 is slightly above the range (.04-.08) suggested by Browne and Cudeck (1993) and indicates that the model offers only a fairly good fit relative to the population covariance matrix.

While the above fit indices can be used to evaluate the adequacy of fit in CFA, it must be noted that this is only one aspect of model evaluation. As pointed out by Marsh and colleagues (e.g., Marsh, 1996; Marsh & Balla, 1994; Marsh, Hau, & Wen, 2004), model evaluation should be based on a subjective combination of substantive or theoretical issues, inspection of parameter estimates, goodness-of-fit, and interpretability. Table 2 presents the standardized regression weights, residuals, and explained variances for the 3-factor model.

Table 2: Standardized Regression Weights, Explained Variances, and Residual Variances for the GSE, ATHS, and SWLS Indicator Variables

Parameter			Standardized Regression Weights	Explained Variances	Residual Variances
GSE					
se1	<---	GSE	.85	.72	.28
se2	<---	GSE	.84	.70	.30
se3	<---	GSE	.83	.69	.31
ho1	<---	ATHS	.93	.86	.14
ho2	<---	ATHS	.85	.73	.27
ho3	<---	ATHS	.70	.49	.51
ls1	<---	SWLS	.87	.75	.25
ls2	<---	SWLS	.91	.83	.17
sl2	<---	SWLS	.82	.67	.23

The standardized regression coefficients (factor loadings) for the measurement indicators are all positive and significant by the critical ratio test, *p*<.001. Standardized loadings ranged from 0.82 to 0.93 (*M* = 0.84). These values indicated

that the indicator variables hypothesized to represent their respective latent GSE, ATHS, and SWLS constructs did so in a reliable manner. The percentage of residual (unexplained) variances for the 9 indicator variables ranged from 14% (i.e., 86% of the variance explained) to 51% (i.e., 49% of the variance explained).

The result of confirmatory factor analysis confirmed and further clarified the adequacy of the factor structures in representing attitudes toward self-efficacy (GSE), hope (ATHS), and life satisfaction (SWLS). Tests of both convergent and criterion-related validity showed that the GSS, GSE, ATHS, and SWLS are valid by these two criteria. Together, these findings point to the sound psychometric properties of the Thai-translated versions of the GSS, GSE, ATHS, and SWLS, and support their use within the Thai setting.

Study II
Study II aimed to investigate the direct and indirect structural relationships among goal striving, general self-efficacy, and the criterion variable of life satisfaction, being mediated by the factor of hope, among Thai working persons as well as identify the path model that best explains the interrelationships among the core variables.

Path analysis was conducted to evaluate the posited path model as to its efficacy in explaining the influence of the identified antecedent factors of goal striving and self-efficacy on the participants' reported level of life satisfaction, both directly and indirectly, being mediated by the factor of hope.

The fit of this fully identified path model was tested via structural equation modeling. Although the overall chi-square goodness-of-fit value was significant, $x^2(df = 49) = 331.336$, $p < .001$, the incremental fit indices (NFI, IFI, TLI, CFI) were all above 0.90 (range: 0.966 – 0.978). These fit indices indicated that the model provided a very good fit relative to a null or independence model (i.e., the posited model represented between 96.6% to 97.8% improvement in fit over the null or independence model), and support the hypothesized structure of the posited path model. The RMSEA value of 0.105 indicates some error of approximation and indicates that the model fits the population covariance matrix fairly well. Table 3 presents the goodness-of-fit indices for the fully identified model. This is followed by Figure 2 which depicts the fully identified mediation model.

Table 3: Chi-Square Goodness-of-Fit Values and Incremental Fit Indices (NFI, IFI, TLI, CFI)

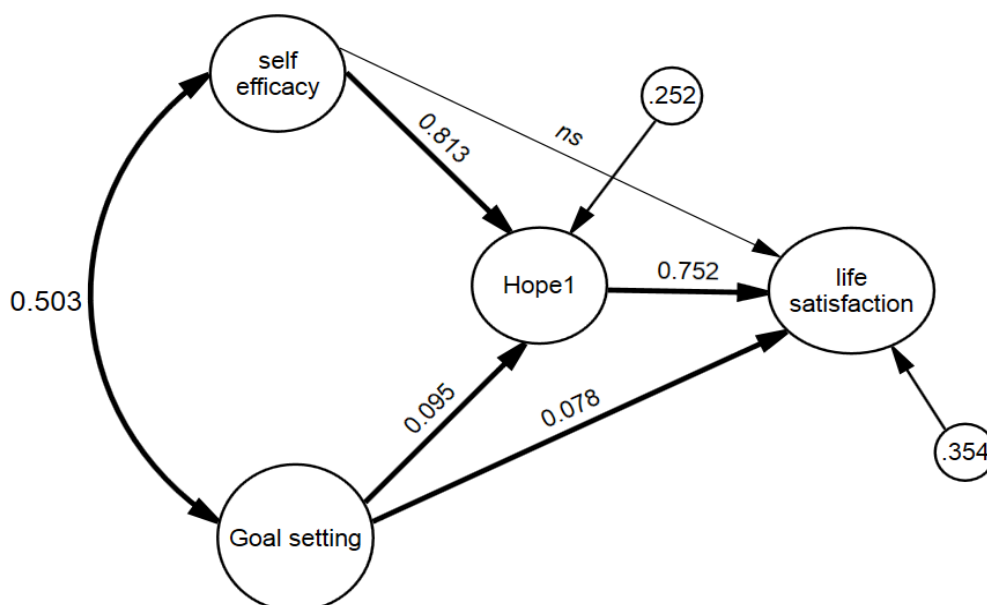| Model	X^2 (N=523)	df	p	NFI	IFI	TLI	CFI
Fully Identified Model	331.336	49	<.001	0.975	0.978	0.971	0.978
Independence Model	12995.795	66	<.001	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000

(See Figure 2 on the next)

Figure 2: Fully Identified Mediation Model Showing The Hypothesized Direct and Indirect Relationships among Self-Efficacy, Goal Striving, and The Dependent Variable of Life Satisfaction, Being Mediated by Hope

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The results of path analysis revealed that the posited path model fitted the data set well, with the factor of goal striving having both direct and indirect positive influences on the participants' reported level of life satisfaction. Thus, the higher the participants' level of goal striving, the higher is their reported level of life satisfaction. In addition, the higher the participants' level of goal striving, the higher their reported level of hope and, subsequently, the higher is their reported level of life satisfaction.

The participants' reported level of self-efficacy was found to have only an indirect influence on the criterion variable of life satisfaction. Thus, the higher their reported level of self-efficacy, the higher their reported level of hope and, subsequently, the higher is their reported level of life satisfaction.

Discussion

The results demonstrated that only goal striving has a direct and positive relationship with the criterion variable of life satisfaction, whereas both goal striving and self-efficacy were found to have an indirect influence on the criterion variable of life satisfaction. This current finding is in accord with past findings in that one of the most important factors to regulate and adapt individuals to their lives is goals (Diener & Seligman, 2002; Emmons, 1999). The self-determination theory investigates subjective well-being in individuals with respect to goals and satisfaction of needs (Sheldon & Kasser, 1998). According to this model, people must determine intrinsically their goals. Then, they should attach themselves to their goals, and spend effort to actualize their goals. When people actualize their goals, they should also

satisfy their needs (Ryan & Deci, 2001). Thus, their level of subjective well-being gets a better position (Sheldon & Elliot, 1998).

The non-significant correlation found in terms of the direct influence of self-efficacy on the criterion variable of life satisfaction is inconsistent with past findings. For example, Magaletta and Oliver (1999) reported that self-efficacy in young adults significantly predict their life satisfaction and that a high level of self-efficacy is of importance as it determines psychological well-being and psychological harmony (Cutler, 2005). Moreover, self-efficacy is the most effective belief in oneself relative to solving real life problems in order to experience life satisfaction and be happy (Dora, 2003).

The current study found a positive correlation between goal striving and self-efficacy, and demonstrated that one influences the other mutually. This particular result confirms a theoretical perspective reported in various researches on the relationship between goal setting and self-efficacy. For example, Locke and Latham (2002) posited that goal-setting theory is consistent with social-cognitive and expectancy theory because they underline the importance of consciously set goals and self-efficacy.

Another current finding is that hope mediates the impact of goal striving and self-efficacy on life satisfaction. Furthermore, a stronger correlation was found in terms of the indirect influence of self-efficacy, being mediated by hope, as evidenced by a Beta of .813, compared to the indirect influence of goal striving, being mediated by hope, with a Beta of .095 from the path model being tested. The result showed a closer relationship between self-efficacy and hope. Both hope and self-efficacy theories stipulate that goal-directed behavior is important and worthy of an individual's persistent attention as both evaluate whether goal-directed behavior will produce a desired result (outcome expectancy in Bandura's model; pathways thinking in Snyder's model). Additionally, both predict that an individual can assess one's capacity to perform the required behavior (*efficacy expectations* in Bandura's model; *agency thinking* in Snyder's model) (Snyder et al., 2002). In particular, it had been demonstrated that self-efficacy is related to academic performance (ranging from r=.27 to r=.54). A study by Wood and Locke (1987) showed that students often employ specific strategies to monitor their progress and support their goal pursuit, and that these strategies can also be influenced by self-efficacy. Whereas self-efficacy emphasizes the expectation that one can perform appropriate goal-directed behaviors, hope includes additional cognitive elements of planning and motivation.

The current study reported a positive correlation between hope and the criterion variable of life satisfaction, with the result indicating a strong Beta of .752. This outcome confirms a statement by Bailey, Eng, Frisch, and Snyder (2007, p. 173) that "overall, `believing that one can achieve goals leads to increased well-being." In a similar vein, Snyder et al. (2002) found positive correlations between hope, self-efficacy, and feelings of self-worth. By the same token, Irving et al. (2004) found that "those who were higher in hope reported a greater ability to cope with stress and regulate distressing emotions" (p. 437).

Park, Peterson, and Seligman (2004) posited that hopeful individuals tend to have a positive view about the future. This belief allows them to have a positive outlook about themselves that would help increase their motivation and lead to

activities and means that are directed toward actively pursuing personal goals (Hartley, Vance, Elliott, Cuckler, & Berry, 2008). It had been established that individuals who are high in hope feel more competent of their own skills which, in turn, allows them to be able to generate more ways and sustain their motivation towards goal attainment in order to achieve goals in various aspects of their life, increasing their chances of fulfilling their goals and, thus, gain a sense of satisfaction rather than harboring pessimistic thoughts about failure and challenges as threats that may contribute toward negative feelings and emotions (Lyubomirsky, King, & Diener, 2005).   Hence, hopeful individuals, more likely, succeed in their endeavors, allowing them to gain a sense of fulfillment or satisfaction, thereby increasing their life satisfaction.

Positive psychology is concerned with the impact of hope on well-being. Hope is seen as the belief in one's ability to initiate and maintain movement as well as conceptualize routes toward a goal. Snyder et al. (2002) purported that positive emotions result from unimpeded movement towards one's desired goals or successfully overcoming obstacles. Conversely, negative emotions result from the unsuccessful pursuit of goals, where agency and/or pathways thinking may not have been sufficient and/or obstacles have not been overcome. To support this claim, Snyder et al. (2002) referred to studies in which participants who encountered severe difficulties in attaining their goals reported lowered well-being.

Limitations and Recommendations

Despite this study's overall success in terms of meeting its objectives, there are limitations that need to be considered when interpreting the results of path model analysis. First, the present study relied exclusively on the Satisfaction with Life Scale to measure life satisfaction among working persons. It is possible that utilizing additional measures similar to those used in some previous related studies (e.g., Positive and Negative Affect Scale or PANAS; Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scale or DASS) might have led to a different outcome. Instrumentation may have been one of the factors why the current study did not find any correlation between self-efficacy and life satisfaction.

Second, this study was conducted with a limited sample that involved only office workers in Bangkok and suburbs, due to time constraints. It can be assumed that the sample may not have much difference in terms of income, education, and occupation. Although diversity was considered in the selection process, the external validity of the findings may still be questionable. As such, caution is advised when generalizing the current findings to other working persons in other areas of Thailand.

Third, this study utilized a self-report measure which required participants to recall and rate their perceptions. Such retrospective style of responding forces the participants to rely on their memory when responding to the questionnaire items. Reliance on memory, per se, is clearly subjected to memory errors/lapses which can adversely affect the accuracy of the participants' true feelings/responses.

Fourth, another important point is that this study was conducted in Thailand while most related studies were conducted in Western countries. Cultural differences may possibly explain different outcomes. This researcher acknowledges the lack of Thai-based theoretical perspectives and related studies. Discussion relied heavily on

Western perspectives and empirical findings which may not necessarily reflect Thai culture and values.

Finally, Thai society, being collectivistic, places great importance on the well-being of the extended family and community rather than on the individual per se. Future research that assesses the fit between theoretical conceptualizations of well-being and societal values is warranted.

With the above limitations in mind, the present findings carry a number of important implications relative to the influence of goal striving and self-efficacy on life satisfaction among Thai working persons. The results demonstrated that self-efficacy alone cannot influence well-being but, when coupled with goal striving and mediated by hope, can be a strong predictor of life satisfaction. In combination with previous related findings, a clear picture is beginning to emerge about the benefits of goal striving (goal setting) as an important element, thus, closing an important gap in the literature on the link between goal striving, self-efficacy, and life satisfaction.

The Thai-translated GSS provides future researchers with a valid and reliable tool in exploring life goals within the Thai context. The said Thai version also provides Thai practitioners with a psychometrically sound diagnostic tool for measuring the extent of various dimensions of life goals in terms of emotional, spiritual, and personal development, as well as health, finance, work, family, and social interaction among Thais of working age. Moreover, the theory-based path models employed in the present study and the obtained findings can serve as a knowledge resource and database for helping professionals such as counselors, psychologists, life coaches, and other practitioners who are concerned with the development and implementation of intervention strategies or therapies that could prove helpful in increasing psychological well-being. The other Thai-translated and validated measures used in the current investigation such as the GSE, ATHS, and SWLS could also serve as valuable assessment tools for the emerging coaching industry, a contemporary trend which brings about sustained cognitive, emotional, and behavioral changes that facilitate the attainment of goals and the enhancement of performance, either in work or personal life.

Finally, an important implication rests with the findings on the indirect and direct structural relationships hypothesized by the full-direct model on the influence of goal striving and self-efficacy on life satisfaction, being mediated by hope. With the knowledge at hand, counselors, life coaches, and training facilitators are well-advised on what key elements to look for when developing treatment programs or intervention strategies. Snyder et al. (2002) highlighted the use of 'hope theory' in psychotherapy and referred to hope as being a core ingredient in the process of change, which is in line with the present finding that hope aids in increasing goal striving and psychological well-being among non-clinical populations.

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