

Delayed Gratification: A Double-Edged Sword?

A Study on the Relationship Between Delayed Gratification, Work-Life Balance & Career Burnout

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LITERATURE REVIEW

Delay Gratification

- Definition: Postponement of immediate gratification for long term rewards.
- Mischel (1961) first studied delayed gratification in the Stanford Marshmallow Experiment and identified delayed gratification as an ability with only positive correlates.
- Funder and Block (1989) argue for a more balanced understanding of delayed gratification which correlates to both positive and negative outcomes depending upon the situation.
- The table below outlines both the positive & negative correlates of instant gratification and delayed gratification.

Instant Gratification		Delay Gratification	
Adaptive	Maladaptive	Adaptive	Maladaptive
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Correlated to adaptive outcomes in unstructured situations (i.e. personal life) such as: Enjoyment of life Facilitates interpersonal warmth, intimacy & friendliness Spontaneity Creativity Openness to new experiences Satisfaction from the process rather than the outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Correlated to maladaptive outcomes in structured situations (i.e. work and school) such as: Erratic behaviours Impulsivity Being unorganized Distractedness Dangerous behaviours 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Correlated to adaptive outcomes in structured situations (i.e. work and school) such as: Later academic achievement, SAT scores, high school & college completion rate Income & occupational status Saving behaviours, financial security Physical and mental health Lower rates of adolescent pregnancy, substance abuse and criminal convictions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Correlated to maladaptive outcomes in unstructured situations (i.e. personal life) such as: Lower levels of joy and flatter emotional life Lack of spontaneity Decreased creativity Viewed as excessively inhibited, constrained and conformist Puts young women at risk for depression Inability to find life satisfying without a continuous sense of purpose and effort

Work-Life Balance

- Definition: “An individual’s ability to meet their work and family commitments, as well as other non-work responsibilities and activities” (Delecta, 2011).
- One-third of individuals experience work-life conflict, which causes them a significant amount of stress (American Psychological Association, 2007).
- The table below outlines the professional, personal and interpersonal correlates of work-life conflict

Work Related Difficulties	Personal Difficulties	Interpersonal Difficulties (for those married or with kids)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lower job satisfaction Low productivity Absenteeism Employee turnover Lower sales income Career burnout 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lower life satisfaction General stress Increased cognitive difficulties Poorer physical health Poorer mental health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lower satisfaction with the family Impaired marital functioning Dissatisfaction with the role of working parent, for mothers

Career Burnout

- Definition: A work-related state of ill-being characterized by a three-dimensional syndrome of exhaustion, cynicism, and reduced professional efficacy of one’s ability to perform (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996).
- The table below outlines the physical, psychological and work-related consequences of burnout (Bakker & Costa, 2014; Salvagioni, Melanda, Mesas, González, Gabani, & de Andrade, 2017).

Physical Consequences	Psychological Consequences	Work-Related Consequences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hypercholesterolemia Type 2 diabetes Coronary heart disease Hospitalization due to cardiovascular disorder Musculoskeletal pain Changes in pain experiences Prolonged fatigue Headaches Gastrointestinal issues Respiratory problems Severe injuries Mortality below the age of 45 years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Insomnia Depressive symptoms Anxiety Use of psychotropic and antidepressant medications, Hospitalization for mental disorders Alcohol dependence Psychological ill-health symptoms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Job dissatisfaction Absenteeism New disability pension Job demands Job resources Presenteeism

I need to get good grades to get into college. Then I can relax...
I need to get good grades in college to get a good job. Then I can relax...
I need to work hard to get a promotion at work. Then I can relax...
I need to work hard so then I can retire. Then I can relax...

“So it is for teenagers who have mortgaged their present lives to the future: noses to the grindstone, perseverant to a fault, stressed to the max. High school is just preparation for college, and college consists of collecting credentials for whatever comes next. Nothing has any value, or provides any gratification, in itself. These students may be skilled test-takers and grade grubbers and gratification delayers, but they remind us just how mixed the blessing of self-discipline can be”
-Kohn, 2008

LITERATURE REVIEW CONTINUED

- Shanafelt (2005; 2008) indicates that students training in medical oncology cope with school and residency related stress by
 - Delaying personal gratification, concentrating mostly on school with little focus on their personal life.
 - Believing that “things will get better in the future”, and believing they will have better work-life balance in the future when they finish medical school and their residency.
 - However, many practicing oncologists rated their current stress similarly to that experienced in medical school and residency.
 - Many practicing oncologists report ‘looking forward to retirement’ as an adaptive strategy to cope with work-life conflict (Shanafelt 2005).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

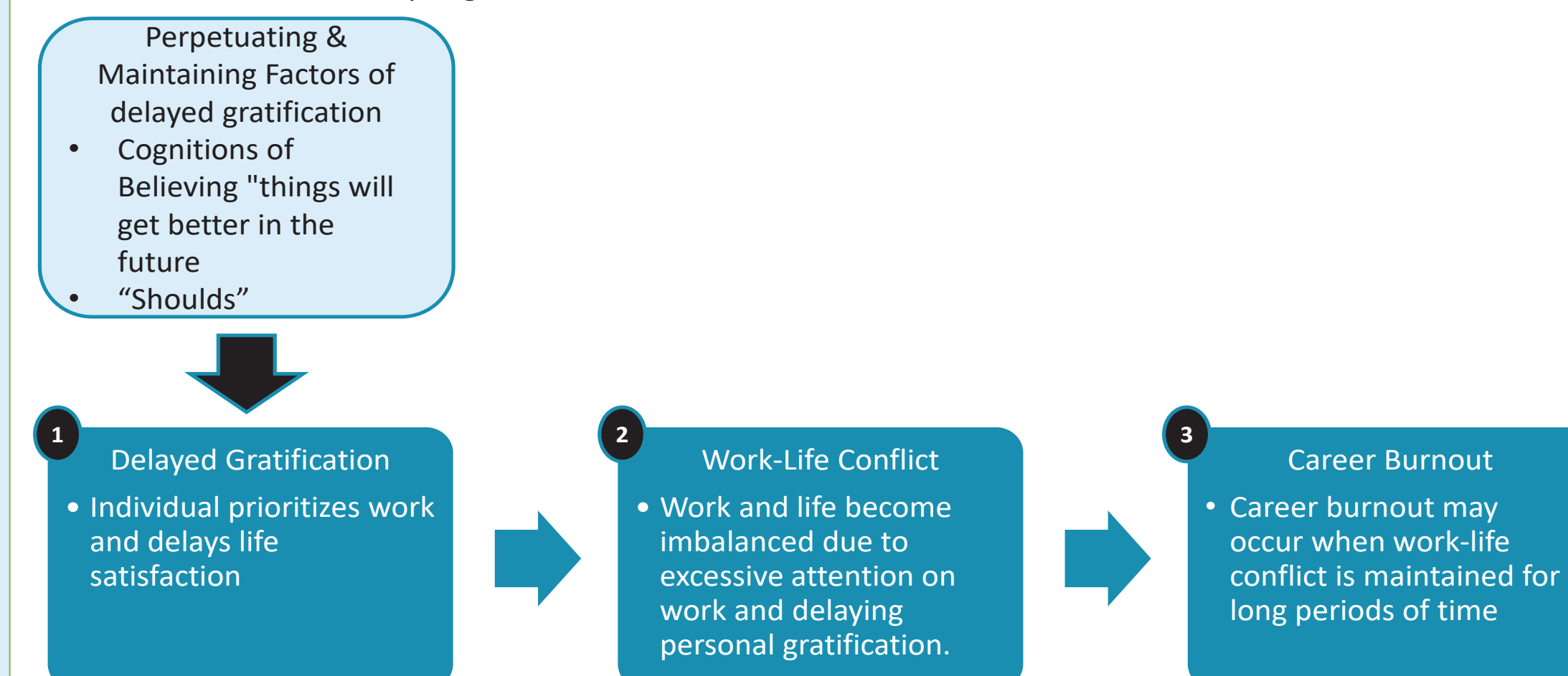
- Is delayed gratification negatively correlated to work-life balance?
- Is delayed gratification positively correlated to career burnout?
- Is work-life conflict and career burnout positively correlated? (replication of past research)

OBJECTIVES

- The main objective of this research is to expand upon Shanefelt’s (2005; 2008) and empirically investigate the relationship between delayed gratification, work-life balance and career burnout in a general adult working population.
- Theoretically, this research is important, as the negative correlates of delay gratification are less known.
- In terms of social implications, this research may enlighten society to the benefits of a more balanced view of delayed gratifications, which involves flexibly decided whether to delay or not delay gratification depending upon the circumstance and personal values.
- Pedagogical implications may include a new view of delay gratification which is situationally, rather than universally, determined as positive or negative.

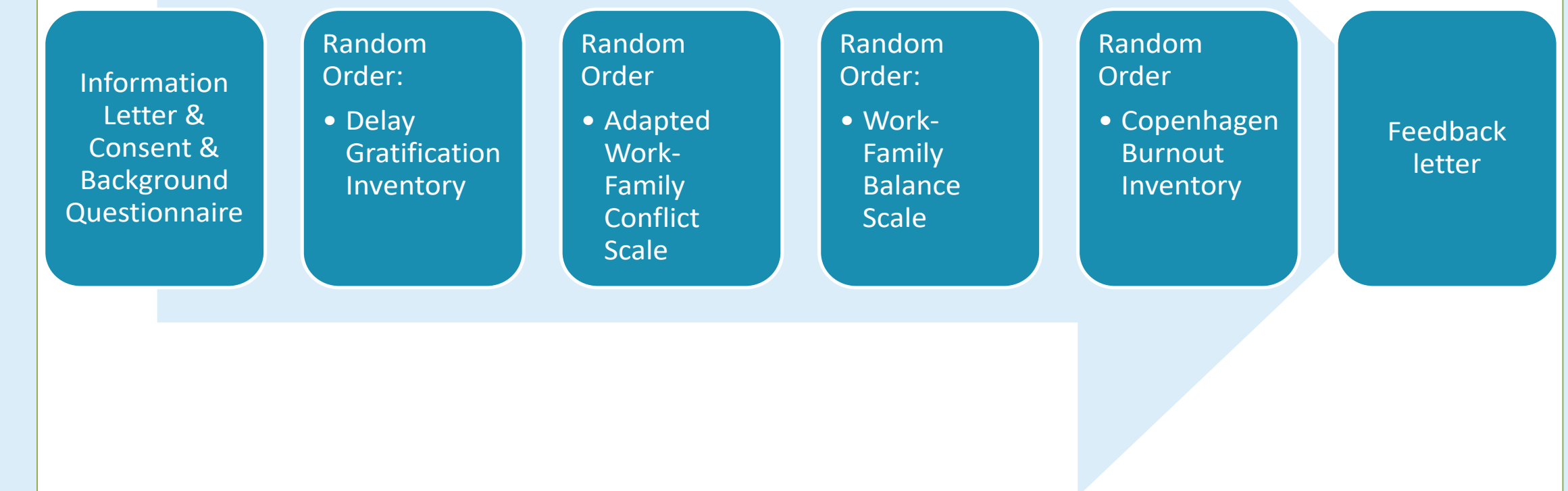
HYPOTHESES

- H1. Negative correlation between delayed gratification and work-life balance
- H2. Positive correlation between delay gratification and career burnout
- H3. Positive correlation between delay gratification and career burnout (replicating past research)
- Below is a theorized model of the interaction between delay gratification, work-life balance and career burnout.
- This cycle may continuously repeat itself as individuals strive for further success. Goal attainment may create a subsequently increasing goal and brief sense of gratification or no gratification at all. This mindset may create an ‘eternal staircase’ of delayed gratification.



METHODS

N= 90 Online Participants
Recruited through Mechanical Turk



RESULTS



Data Analysis to Begin January 2019

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