**How do People Handle Competence Frustration? The Role of Resilience and Attentional Bias**

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In daily life, people face countless situations in which they experience failures in their attempts to reachgoals. Grounded in the Self-Determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2002), it is argued such situations impact the psychological need for competence. For instance, various studies have demonstrated that the provision of negative feedback thwarts the need for competence, with thwarted competence in turn undermining motivation for the task (Ryan & Deci, 2013). However, research examining how people deal with feelings of competence frustration is fairly scarce. Herein, we argue that individuals’ attentional bias towards competence-relevant cues (e.g. Radel, et al., 2011) may operate as a recovery mechanism after experienced competence need frustration. In line with the studies of Radel et al. (2011, 2013), we thus expected to observe a greater accessibility of competence-related information in individuals after being exposed to a competence-frustrated situation, with this attentional bias to competence-related cues in turn relating positively to feelings of competence in the later phases of the experiment. Further, we addressed the possibility that some people recover more quickly from competence need thwarting than others (e.g. through attentional bias towards competence-relevant cues). In this regard, we examined the construct of resilience as protective factor for need-thwarting situations and, thereby, as contribution to the urge to restore the need for competence after being frustrated (Vansteenkiste & Ryan, 2013). We expected that particularly individuals scoring high on resilience would display an attentional bias towards need-related information following competence need-thwartingand that the association between attentional bias and recovery from negative feedback (as reflected in intrinsic motivation, competence, and persistence in the later phases of the experiment) would be most pronounced in these individuals.

In an experimental design, we asked 90 participants (*M*age = 21.97) to complete a questionnaire concerning levels of resilience before they entered the lab. At the day of the experiment, they performed a Tangram puzzle task after which they received positive (e.g. “You did better than 50% of your peers”, *N* = 30), no (*N*  = 30) or negative (e.g. “You did worse than 50% of your peers”, *N* = 30) feedback. The effect of this manipulation was measured by a questionnaire including levels of competence frustration and intrinsic motivation (time 1). Next, a dot probe task was designed and validated in a preliminary study (*N* = 80, *M*age = 19.06) in which participants were instructed to locate the position of the probe on the screen (left or right) after a word-pair appeared. These were trials including neutral, incompetence- and competence-related words. After completing the dot probe task, the experimenter left the lab for a period of seven minutes inducing a free-choice period. Participants were able to continue puzzling or even to start a new set of puzzles. In the meantime, their persistent behavior was observed by the experimenter behind a one-way mirror. At the end of the experiment, levels of competence frustration were assessed for the second time (*time 2*).

Results revealed significant effects of negative, versus no and positive feedback on levels of competence frustration and intrinsic motivation after the puzzle task. In line with previous research, negative feedback resulted in higher levels of competence frustration. Remarkably, these significant differences between conditions concerning competence frustration at time 1 disappeared at the end of the experiment (time 2). Also, results showed positive bias scores as measured by the dot probe task for competence-related words when participants received negative feedback. This finding indicates a stronger attentional approach towards words that are related to the construct of competence (e.g. “competence”, “skills”, etc.) when participants experienced feelings of competence frustration. Further, repeated measures analyses showed that these bias scores for competence-related cues were significantly predictive for a decrease of competence frustration over time. Confirming the third hypothesis, multiple regression analyses demonstrated significant interaction effects between resilience and condition in the prediction of these bias scores. This indicates that only high-resilient participants showed a positive attentional bias for competence-related cues after they received competence frustrated feedback.

Based on these findings, we found evidence for resilience as a driving force of an attentional bias for need-relevant information in favor of competence restoration. However, more research is needed to define resilience as personality factor and to determine its functionality in the preservation of people’s psychological well being when exposed to adverse events. In addition, the present study is, to the best to our knowledge, the first to introduce the dot probe task into the framework of the SDT. Such objective measurements of need frustration are noteworthy contributions to the SDT literature and provide meaningful perspectives for the psychological needs.