

Collaboration engagement form

A Cross-national Study on Democracy, Basic Psychological Needs, and Well-being across the World

Research focus

Over the past century, global human development has advanced significantly, as signaled by a reduction in poverty and increase in economic growth and safety (Pinker, 2011). At the political level, an increasing number of nations and regions have evolved to a democracy, the political system that is considered most supportive of citizens' well-being according to the United Nations (Fukuyama, 1989). Yet, recent reports highlight a democratic decline over the past decade, with an increasing number of citizens questioning their country's democratic integrity and even considering autocratic alternatives.

Relying on Self-Determination Theory, this study aims to explore the relation between type of political regime (i.e., democratic, autocratic) and citizens' well-being through experiences of individual and collective need satisfaction and frustration. Specifically, we aim to examine whether variation in countries' adherence to democratic principles predicts variation in citizens' well-being through the explanatory role of the basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness.

Expectations for collaboration

We aim to recruit a highly diverse set of countries and regions that differ in their level of democracy and autocracy and test the proposed model at an inter-continental level. If you agree to contribute to this project, your tasks as a collaborator would be the following:

- **Participant recruitment:** You would take the lead in the recruitment of adult participants within your country or region, aiming for a diverse sociodemographic representation of citizens in your country or region.
- **Measures:** You are asked to follow a standardized protocol to recruit participants, who will complete a brief questionnaire measuring key constructs under investigation.
- **Authorship and acknowledgment:** In exchange for your role in the recruitment process and given that you read over a final version of an empirical contribution to provide inputs, you will be credited as a co-author. You will be involved during several online meetings throughout the entire process during which you can provide your opinion on the conceptual model, the chosen measures and data-analytical phase. The main authors will take the lead in this process.

Timing

This invitation is part of a research proposal developed by Joachim Waterschoot, which he will submit for funding to a Belgian funding agency. The project is scheduled to commence in the summer of 2025, with the data collection planned during the Fall of 2025 and the Winter of 2026. Please consider this timeline when deciding on your involvement. We kindly ask that you confirm your commitment to this project by **November 25, 2024**. Signed engagement letters will be sent to the funding agency to support the research proposal of Joachim.

Additional comments or questions

Please include any additional comments, concerns, or requests for clarification regarding your role or the project:

Commitment

Please indicate whether you plan to contribute to this unique, worldwide project:

- ☒ Yes ☐
- ☐ Perhaps ☐
- ☐ No ☐

Required information

- **Name:** Xiaorong Zhang
- **Institution:** George Mason University
- **Country:** Located in United States, but I am a Chinese, so I can also help collect data in China
- **Email Address:** xzhang31@gmu.edu

Signature: Xiaorong Zhang

Place & date: Fairfax, VA, U.S. November 12, 2024