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Exploring the relationship between individual Sustainable Development Goals actions and positive behaviour.

Abstract

The aim is to study if individual general positive behaviour is related to the specific actions individuals can undertake to support the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). To identify these relationships, the SDG-actions questionnaire is developed. Factor analysis identified eight scales: Defend People & Planet, Live a Hippie Life, Improve Global World, Care for Nature, Optimize Natural Resources, Seek Fairness, Cherish Humans and Embrace Education. To measure positive behaviour, the Virtues Mirror (VM) is used. Analyses demonstrated a significant relationship between total SDG-action scores and total VM scores. VM scales Brave, Thankful and Likeable related significantly to several SDG-actions scales. Future research will show if moral education directed to this positive behaviour increases SDG-actions.

Many actions could be executed by individuals to meet the UNs Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). However, knowledge about how to increase individual SDG actions is lacking (Janoušková et al., 2018) which hinders selecting education or training interventions. Using the concept of general transfer of training, one could develop interventions directed at generic skills to be applied in many different situations (Barnard et al. 2001). Positive behaviour might be the generic skills needed for SDGs training, since it can be learned and has a positive and contagious effect on the environment of the individual (Geisel, 1944). This study examines whether there is a relationship between positive behaviour and SDGs.

Data has been collected through convenience sampling (N=197). To measure positive behaviour, the Virtues Mirror (VM) is used (Theunissen, 2018). To measure individual SDG actions, a questionnaire is developed using the Good Life Goals for SDG awareness raising (Futerra & One Planet Network, 2018). Both questionnaires used statements preceded by 'In the last two weeks' and a 7-point Likert Scale.

Factor analysis with the 68 SDG-actions items resulted in eight scales. The six VM scales were confirmed (see Table 1).

Table 1. SDG-actions and VM scales, Means, Standard Deviations (SD) and Cronbach's alphas.

SDG-actions scales	Mean (SD)	alpha	VM scales	Mean (SD)	alpha
Defend People & Planet	41 (20)	0.91	Likeable Person	82 (11)	0.85
Live a Hippie Life	72 (17)	0.83	Brave Person	74 (15)	0.77
Improve Global World	49 (22)	0.85	Enthusiastic Person	70 (18)	0.86
Care for Nature	40 (21)	0.81	Careful Person	72 (16)	0.82
Optimize Natural Resources	50 (22)	0.76	Balanced Person	73 (15)	0.91
Seek Fairness	54 (20)	0.77	Thankful Person	70 (15)	0.77
Cherish Humans ^a	76 (14)	0.61			
Embrace Education	38 (30)	0.81			
<i>Total SDG-actions score ^b</i>	<i>50 (16)</i>	<i>0.95</i>	<i>Total VM score</i>	<i>74 (11)</i>	<i>0.95</i>

^a Scale excluded from further analyses because $\alpha < .70$; ^b Without the ‘Cherish Humans’ items.

Hierarchical linear regression analysis revealed a significant relationship between the Total SDG-actions score and the Total VM score, corrected for personal characteristics (see Table 2).

Table 2. Regression analysis with Total SDG-actions as dependent variable.

Variables	β	ΔR^2
Step 1: Personal characteristics		0.08*
Year of Birth	-.10	
Highest level of education	.11	
Gender	-.01	
Step 2: Positive Behaviour		0.18*
Total VM score	.44 *	
	R^2	0.26
	Adjusted R^2	0.24

Note: Final R^2 and β are the result of step 2 of the regression analysis. * $p < .01$.

A series of regression analyses, with the subsequent SDG action scales as dependent, personal characteristics as Step 1, and the VM scales as Step 2, revealed that three scales relate significantly ($p < .05$) to several SDG-action scales: Brave, Thankful and Likable. Future research will reveal if moral education directed to this positive behaviour increases SDG-actions for a better world.

References

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