

**Project Summary for IAL Website**

The following information is for publication on the IAL website. Please be reminded not to include any confidential information.

<b>Project Title:</b>	Regulatory Focus and SSG Career Development Course Use: A Brief Online Intervention
<b>Project Number:</b>	GA18-03
<b>Year of Approval:</b>	2019
<b>Funding Source:</b>	WDARF
<b>Objectives and intended outcomes of the project:</b>	Design, implement, and test an online intervention to encourage Singaporean adults’ use of SSG resources.
<b>Project Team</b>	
<b>Principal Investigator:</b>	Associate Prof Jia Lile
<b>Summary of Project (up to 300 words)</b>	
<p>Career development allows individuals to maximise personal growth and prepare themselves for career uncertainties in the fast-changing global economy. Given the complex demands in everyday life, career development calls for a high ability to self-regulate to motivate the planning, the monitoring, and the use of available resources (e.g., SkillsFuture resources). Regulatory focus theory (RFT) postulates that individuals have two parallel regulatory systems that underlie different strategies in ongoing personal goal pursuit: a promotion system that focuses on accomplishing ideals, and prevention system that highlights fulfilling duties and obligations. While RFT has been applied to improve workplace outcomes, it has yet to be tested as an intervention to influence the process of career development. Our team designed an RFT based intervention to motivate career development and planning. We then test the intervention in a two year study within the sample of 24- to 40-year-old Singaporean working adults. Participants are randomly assigned to one of four intervention conditions presenting varying information about the relevant of regulatory focus for career goal pursuit. During the 24 months, participants are regularly assessed on career development outcomes of the intervention. This includes their usage of career resources, current career status and job satisfaction; career challenges (e.g., unexpected layoffs, changes in management), and wellbeing variables (e.g., self-efficacy, resilience, and general health). Changes in participants’ cognition, feelings and communication styles are also recorded to understand the psychological process underlying the effect chronic regulatory focus and the regulatory focus intervention. We predict that the best career development outcome will occur when the type of regulatory focus intervention matches the individual participant’s motivational style, thus, providing insights to motivation research on career development. Preliminary results suggest the superiority of interventions that inculcate a promotion focus among participants.</p>	
<b>Summary of Project Findings, Deliverables and Impacts (up to 500 words)</b>	
<p><b>Key Project Findings</b> This project investigated how individual motivational styles—specifically regulatory focus—affect Singaporean working adults' engagement with SkillsFuture Singapore (SSG) career development resources. The research yielded several critical insights into lifelong learning behaviors:</p>	

- **The Role of Promotion Focus:** Adults with a chronic promotion focus (driven by aspirations and gains) exhibited significantly greater workplace self-efficacy, career confidence, and adaptability. However, this motivation also correlated with taking on higher job demands.
- **Work Stress as a Barrier:** The study identified that high job demand (work stress) is the primary negative predictor of SSG credit utilization. When adults are highly motivated at work, the resulting "busy work" reduces the time and mental capacity available for continuing education and training (CET).
- **Intervention Efficacy and Risks:** While promotion-focused messaging yielded positive psychological dividends, prevention-focused messaging (highlighting losses or duties) risked backfiring, actively reducing actual course enrollment among certain demographics.
- **Well-being and Self-Regulation:** Follow-up analyses confirmed that psychological well-being actively predicts future self-control and self-regulation, while career commitment directly drives career adaptability.

**Core Deliverables** The project successfully designed and tested a scalable, 30-minute automated online intervention aimed at motivating career planning. Academically, the research has generated a pipeline of high-impact outputs. Key publications include:

- Khoo, S. S., Jia, L., Ismail, I., Li, Y., Xing, L., & Pek, J. (2025). Feeling Well, Functioning Well: How Psychological Well-Being Predicts Later Self-Control, but Not the Other Way Around. *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, OnlineFirst. <https://doi.org/10.1177/19485506251385007>
- Quek, T., Jia, L., Ismail, I. et al. The Motivated Chatterbox: Examining the Motives of Goal Sharing. *Motiv Emot* (2026). <https://doi-org.libproxy1.nus.edu.sg/10.1007/s11031-026-10210-z>
- Xing et al. (In Prep): Exploring integrated and identified motivation in career development via Experience Sampling Methods (Target: *Journal of Vocational Behavior*).
- Li & Jia (In Prep): Examining how growth mindsets increase aspirations across academic and career domains (Target: *Nature Human Behaviour*).

**Societal Impacts and Stakeholder Engagement** The research has catalyzed meaningful dialogues regarding data-sharing protocols between academic researchers and government agencies (IAL/SSG) to better track objective lifelong learning metrics.

The findings have been disseminated to key policymakers and the public. Presentations at the Social Science Research Nexus (Feb 2023) resonated strongly with audiences regarding the negative impact of work stress on upskilling. Furthermore, these insights were shared with prominent leaders, providing stakeholders with a holistic view of the drivers behind lifelong learning.

**Future Developments.** The project's insights have directly shaped the lifelong learning framework in community-based research endeavours. For example, recognizing that lower stress and higher well-being drive continuous education, the research team is working within Health District @ Queenstown, a major multi-sectoral initiative involving NUS, NUHS, and HDB, to develop intergenerational engagement programs to promote active learning within the community. The team is also collaborating with other IAL-funded researchers to leverage this dataset for broader societal applications.