

# Conservation of resources and regulatory mode: the passageways that bind us

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## 1. Introduction

This paper provides an overview of the theoretical framework of research on the constructs of Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory, and Regulatory Mode Theory through self-regulation. Understanding human actions can be bound by theories, isolating efforts and occasionally allowing gaps in our comprehension. This research project aims to identify commonalities in two research streams that will create new avenues for research, advancing and enhancing both theories. Four key questions will be addressed: (1) how do an individual's locomotor and assessor mode orientations at a specific time, relate to their COR situation (2) the associations between how an individual values time as a resource, and their resource caravan passageway (3) how an individual's time management behaviours are associated with their resource situation and ecology (4) the extent to which social support is a key resource in both constructs. In addition, support for the psychological well-being of parents caring for children with chronic health conditions will be identified.

## 2. Self-Regulation and Conservation of Resources

Self-regulation focuses on two facets of goal pursuit; locomotion and assessment (Kruglanski et al., 2000). Assessment concerns the extensive evaluation of options, and locomotion concerns a drive to initiate and sustain progress toward goals (Higgins et al. 2003). Both are central, dispositional motivational orientations (De Carlo et al., 2014), and linked to important personal and societal outcomes, not least psychological distress, a present or future focus, and differential valuations of time itself (Whillans & Dunn, 2019).

COR Theory is a stress and resilience, and motivation theory outlining a process for interpreting and predicting the positive and negative impacts of stressors on individuals in determining their consequent behaviour and resilience (Chen, Westman & Hobfoll, 2015). Humans are naturally motivated to protect and acquire resources (Westman et al. 2004), with the loss of valued resources disproportionately more salient than their gain (Hobfoll et al, 2018). Caravan passageways facilitate the development of resource packs created in ecological circumstances, that either limit and block or foster and nurture individual and families' resource caravans (Hobfoll, 2012). Individuals employ their accumulated resources to respond to stressors, and also to build and enhance their reservoir of resources to sustain them for future needs (Holmgreen, Tirone, Gerhart, and Hobfoll, 2017). Resource use is therefore set with an emphasis on time, focus, and consistency linking it with regulatory mode theory, where the role of time is also established as a crucial resource (Whillans & Dunn, 2019).

High locomotor orientation links to a personal drive to move forward (Lucidi et al., 2016), and consequentially, though not explicitly within self-regulation literature, this will augment their resource reservoir through protecting and acquiring resources. COR recognises that individuals with adequate resources perceive greater personal control through a sense of mastery, and so will be more capable of resource gain, less vulnerable to loss, and more able to protect their resources (Hobfoll, 2001).

## 3. Time, its value, and use

Time affects individuals as a flow and as a resource, and each is distinct, but both are required to achieve goals. One person is likely to consider the value of time differently from another (Kruglanski, Pierro, & Higgins, 2016). However, as a resource, time is a vital element in achieving our plans and is,

therefore, a key component within our resource reservoir to achieve a physical and psychological flow. Effective use of resources is likely to be seen in higher locomotors, but optimal resource management is most likely in individuals with a sound balance of their assessor and locomotor modes (Cornwell, Franks, & Higgins, 2019). The evaluation of time and its effects on emotions, attitudes, and behaviours, alongside the cognitive impacts within regulatory mode theory is also likely to link to individuals' resource caravan passageways, whereby people who develop resources are more able to affect change, and utilise time effectively through their greater psychological and temporal capacity to move on, through locomotion. This suggests an association between high (vs. low) locomotion orientation and COR's basic tenet of our primary need to protect, retain, obtain or foster that which is of value to us; i.e. to progress and prosper. It also suggests locomotors are more likely to value their time as a quantifiable resource for enabling movement (Amato et al., 2019).

The value of time as a resource becomes more consequential in the context of its scarcity, such as when a deadline looms, when its value surges and procrastination becomes an increasingly less viable option (Fischer, 2001). These effects will be significant for the sample group of this research; severely stressed, time-constrained parents. Cognitive and behavioural consequences resulting from the way we value time include hope for the future (Di Santo et al., 2021), optimism, self-esteem (Jansen et al, 2022), a tendency to impulsiveness and less acceptance of delays, along with more decisiveness and even impulsivity in pursuing goals (Mauro et al., 2009). These behavioural and cognitive outcomes link to principal 2 (the investment principle) of COR theory such that the emotional consequences of viewing time as a resource in self-regulation equate with impatience (De Voe & Pfeffer, 2011) and frustrations from delay (DeVoe & House, 2012) in COR theory. This is reinforced by statements in Amato et al., (2019, p. 1117), that when people 'lose their time beyond repair, they experience negative feelings more than people with low locomotion orientation', suggesting that while both locomotors and assessors will struggle with wasteful use of resources, the effect will be more likely, but also more profound for high locomotors. It may be reasonable to assume high locomotors would feel higher stress if their resource reservoir, particularly the time element, was restricted. Therefore, by considering time a key resource within regulatory mode, Amato and colleagues (2019) may also have linked its importance as a key resource in regulatory mode, to the COR construct, moving its consideration on from its stated narrower link between time and money (Zauberman and Lynch, 2005) within regulatory mode theory.

#### **4. Implications**

Whilst this short paper only touches on the extent of the associations between regulatory mode and COR in one common area; time, even within the limitations, important links appear apparent, but not hitherto acknowledged. Establishing firm ties may open new avenues for research into both constructs, enabling advances in our understanding of the more detailed functioning of both constructs. By establishing clear links this research project may also support the development of more profound support measures for the research group of highly stressed and time-constrained parents with chronically ill children.

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