

Abstract

Fulfillment in life is a key criterion of a good life and a frequently cited concept in the field of positive psychology. Nevertheless, the concept lacks a theoretical and empirical foundation. The three primary aims of this dissertation were: (a) establishing a theoretical foundation by providing a conceptualization and a model of fulfillment in life, (b) exploring lay perceptions of a fulfilled life across the lifespan, and (c) developing and validating a measure of a fulfilled life. Qualitative and quantitative methodological approaches were used to arrive at a comprehensive understanding of a fulfilled life. A theoretical conceptualization of fulfillment in life was proposed that comprises an affective and a cognitive component, the latter consisting of a 3×3 model. Results from the lay perspective on a fulfilling life confirmed the multifaceted nature of the construct, were broadly consistent with the scientific model, and encompassed several aspects related to antecedents and correlates. The Fulfilled Life Scale (FLS) was developed, and its factor structure was replicated in a second sample. Construct and criterion validity for the FLS were demonstrated across several related constructs. Cognitive and affective fulfillment uniquely predicted a global assessment of a fulfilled life and mental well-being above and beyond hedonic and eudaimonic well-being. This dissertation is the first comprehensive investigation of fulfillment in life. The findings provide a solid basis for future research and application.