

Summary: The contribution of individual and professional characteristics to general and work-related well-being.

This PhD thesis explored how individual characteristics and professional situations correspond to well-being. Positive psychology is interested in those factors that contribute to human flourishing and optimal functioning and in particular, this thesis explored two topics that are central to positive psychology; the importance of maintaining positive well-being, and the importance of individual resources that can be used to maintain well-being and face challenging situations. A number of the empirical studies forming this PhD thesis focused on career adaptability and belief in a just world. Career adaptability is a psychosocial coping resource, a set of self-regulation capacities or skills, important for problem solving, career transitions, participating in the work role and maintaining wellbeing. Belief in a just world, is a personal resource with adaptive functions that are important for health and well-being outcomes.

Drawing from various theoretical backgrounds, such as positive psychology, career construction theory, justice theory, models of job strain, and theories on subtle discrimination, a number of specific hypotheses are put forward pertaining to a selection of individual and professional aspects as well as general and work-related well-being. The six studies presented in this thesis focus on specific aspects and adopt different methodological and theoretical approaches.

The first two studies concern the validation of the career adapt-abilities scale and test the potential of career adapt-abilities to mediate the relationship between dispositions and outcomes. In particular, the second study made links between career adaptability and orientations to happiness, a concept from positive psychology. This study found that career adaptability plays an important role in implementing the endorsement of the orientations to happiness into practice in work life. Career adaptability seems to serve as one mechanism

through which individuals attain their desired life, as expressed by the orientations to happiness, at work.

The third study extends the hypothesis of career adapt-abilities as a mediator and finds that it mediates the effects of job insecurity and job strain on general and professional well-being, highlighting the important role that career adaptability may play in protecting individuals from the negative impact of unfavourable job conditions.

The fourth study adopts a longitudinal approach and tests the associations between personality traits and career adaptability and well-being in four different professional situations. It finds that career adaptability contributes to positive well-being as individuals face different professional situations. Furthermore, it presents the possibility that individuals can activate the resource of career adaptability to deal with different professional situations. Study five concerns another individual characteristic, belief in a just world, and illustrates how justice beliefs drive perceptions of organizational justice, which in turn impact, on well-being outcomes one year later. This study positions personal belief in a just world as an important yet largely overlooked resource for the work context. The final study focuses on the professional experiences of a specific population, immigrants in Switzerland, and confirms that being a target of incivilities is related to national origin.

Globally, this thesis finds that individual characteristics have direct and indirect influences on well-being and that these characteristics may also mediate the associations between professional situations and outcomes. It finds that individual resources such as career adaptability and belief in a just world are important contributors to well-being, and thus contribute to optimum human functioning. In particular, the professional situation may alter the display of individual characteristics, either by contributing to their activation or their depletion, and the ways in which individual factors influence well-being does seem to depend on the professional situation. It is thus necessary to adopt a “both...and” perspective when

studying the impact of individual and professional characteristics as these factors mutually influence each other.