

# Conceptualization, Construction and Validation of the Existential Fulfilment Scale

## Citation for published version (APA):

Loonstra, B., Brouwers, A., & Tomic, W. (2007). Conceptualization, Construction and Validation of the Existential Fulfilment Scale. *European Psychotherapy*, 7(1), 5-18.  
[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/239856480\\_Conceptualization\\_Construction\\_and\\_Validation\\_of\\_the\\_Existential\\_Fulfilment\\_Scale](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/239856480_Conceptualization_Construction_and_Validation_of_the_Existential_Fulfilment_Scale)

## Document status and date:

Published: 01/01/2007

## Document Version:

Peer reviewed version

## Please check the document version of this publication:

- A submitted manuscript is the version of the article upon submission and before peer-review. There can be important differences between the submitted version and the official published version of record. People interested in the research are advised to contact the author for the final version of the publication, or visit the DOI to the publisher's website.
- The final author version and the galley proof are versions of the publication after peer review.
- The final published version features the final layout of the paper including the volume, issue and page numbers.

[Link to publication](#)

## General rights

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the public portal for the purpose of private study or research.
- You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
- You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the public portal.

If the publication is distributed under the terms of Article 25fa of the Dutch Copyright Act, indicated by the "Taverne" license above, please follow below link for the End User Agreement:

<https://www.ou.nl/taverne-agreement>

## Take down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us at:

[pure-support@ou.nl](mailto:pure-support@ou.nl)

providing details and we will investigate your claim.

Downloaded from <https://research.ou.nl/> on date: 04 Dec. 2021

Open Universiteit  
[www.ou.nl](http://www.ou.nl)



Bert Loonstra, André Brouwers, Welko Tomic  
The Open University, Heerlen

## Conceptualization, Construction and Validation of the Existential Fulfilment Scale

### ABSTRACT

This study presents the development and validation of the Existential Fulfilment Scale. Following Frankl's concepts of life meaning and existential vacuum, the authors elaborate the construct of existential fulfilment. Three basic attitudes are distinguished, viz. self-acceptance, self-actualization, and self-transcendence, all of which deal with overcoming the conflicts caused by the human existential boundaries. A new scale has been developed out of Längle's Existence Scale, the Existential Fulfilment Scale. Its advantage is that it distinguishes psychologically unhealthy, self-alienating purposes in life from healthy ones. Well-known measures such as Purpose in Life Test, Life Regard Inventory, and Sense of Coherence, fail to do so. The Existential Fulfilment Scale has been tested among 812 Dutch individuals. The results of a confirmatory factor analysis make clear that the three basic attitudes of existential fulfilment should be interpreted as distinct dimensions.

**Key words:** existential fulfilment; self-acceptance; self-actualization; self-transcendence; questionnaire; validation; CFA

### Introduction

#### *Existential Fulfilment*

Existential fulfilment might be of crucial interest in psychological well-being. Viktor Frankl's adepts introduced the concept (LÄNGLE, ORGLER & KUNDI, 2003). FRANKL (1962) coined the term 'existential vacuum' for a mode of existence without any life-meaning and purpose, characterized by boredom and attempts to escape this by distraction, and prone to neuroticism. The opposite, existential fulfilment, refers to a way of life full of meaning and purpose. The construct of existential fulfilment reveals an existential psychological approach to life. Characteristic of existential psychology is the attention paid to the boundary experiences of human beings as determinants of human existence (Yalom, 1980). Human existence is confronted with several existential boundaries. To obtain a fulfilled existence, human beings have to overcome the psy-

chological conflicts evoked by these boundaries. In three directions people meet with their limitations: the limits of their lifetime, caused by death (PYSZCZYNSKI, GREENBERG & SOLOMON, 1999), the limits of their power and potential (ADLER; ANSBACHER & ANSBACHER, 1956), and the limits caused by the presence of others (BUBER, 1970; LEVINAS, 1969), and, more generally, the outer world. So, humans have to meet several tasks: they have to accept their own mortality, the limitations of their potentialities, as well as their being only a part of reality. They have to be eager to explore and develop their limited potentialities, and they have to recognize the otherness of the outer world and relate themselves to it. In fulfilling these existential tasks, people find life-meaning, and a fulfilled existence. The three existential tasks can be summarized as self-acceptance, self-actualization, and self-transcendence.

LÄNGLE ET AL. (2003) analyze the construct of existential fulfilment in a slightly different way. To them, the prerequisite for attaining self-transcendence is self-distancing, the ability to distinguish oneself from the surrounding world, to not make oneself dependent of other persons or circumstances, and to accept things as they are. Based on this self-distancing one can transcend the self: enter into relationships with people and other objects and value them, and arrive at a fundamental feeling of harmony between the world and oneself. Transcending the self may lead to a life in freedom and responsibility, the two additional dimensions they identify. The differences between this conception and the present analysis can be harmonized as follows. Self-distancing refers to being free from emotional dependence of other people's opinions and attitudes. So, self-distancing includes freedom from fixations. This comes close to self-acceptance. Beside freedom from fixations there is freedom to realize one's potencies. This comes down to self-actualization. Moreover, responsibility is very near to self-transcendence. In self-transcending, people recognize the otherness of the outer world and respond to it. In the way they respond, they accept their responsibilities. So, responsibility reflects self-transcendence.

Humanistic psychology, being cognate to existential psychology, has taken due note to the ideas of self-acceptance and self-actualization. The first basic attitude of self-acceptance or authenticity, is opposed to self-alienation. FROMM (1962) borrows the term 'alienation' from Marxist social theory, to indicate not only social but also psychological estrangement. He distinguishes two modes of existing: the being mode and, as its opposite, the having mode (FROMM, 1976). The being mode points towards self-acceptance, the having mode is characterized by self-alienation: a way of life determined by possession, a consumptive lifestyle, jealousy, and fear of loss. In order to pass from the having mode into the being mode, life has to be freed from its contradictions and irrationality occurring in the having mode. For ROGERS (1961) self-acceptation is frustrated by a behavior in which individuals pursue values, which will bring social approval, affection, and esteem. In this way they try to 'buy love' (ROGERS, 1964).

Self-actualization is the second notion related to existential fulfilment. Maslow holds self-actualization to be the pinnacle in the hierarchy of human needs. He defines the concept as the desire for self-fulfilment, or, the tendency to become more and more who one is (MASLOW, 1943). Among the features of an actualized self he reckons an efficient perception of reality, acceptance of the self, others, and nature, spontaneity, a problem-centered, rather than an ego-centered approach, autonomy, peak experiences, community feeling, and creativeness (MASLOW, 1970). FROMM (1947) means the same, but uses the term 'self-realization'; in it the total personality is involved, by the active expression of both emotional and intellectual potentialities. In line with this view, ROGERS (1961) identifies self-actualization as the growth tendency of the individual. It is the urge to express and activate all the innate capacities, become autonomous, and develop mature. In more recent inquiry and literature these theoretical impulses have been adopted and more developed. SHELDON AND KASSER (1995) relate 'personality integration' to the pursuit of intrinsic goals that are assumed to fulfill people's psychological needs. DECI AND RYAN (2000) introduce the self-determination theory, which maintains that an understanding of human motivation requires a consideration of innate psychological conditions for competence, autonomy, and relatedness. SHELDON (2001) extends it to a self-concordance model that accounts for the individuals' striving for personal meaning. In this context words like authentic becoming (KASSER & SHELDON, 2004) are used to characterize the concept.

The third concept playing a part in connection with existential fulfilment is the concept of self-transcendence. It is understood in different ways. FROMM (1959) uses the notion to explain that human individuals have the need to unite themselves with the world and the need for relatedness. FRANKL (1962) considers self-transcendence as the essence of human existence. This is linked up with the spiritual dimension of human beings that distinguishes mankind from all other living organisms. Through this spiritual ability the individual is able to make intentional contacts with the world beyond the self, which imposes ultimate meaning on life. From a developmental perspective REED (1991) defines self-transcendence as the expansion of one's conceptual boundaries, inwardly through introspective activities, outwardly through concerns about others' welfare, and temporally by integrating perceptions of one's past and future to enhance the present. To CLONINGER, SVRAKIC AND PRZYBECK (1993) self-transcendence is a personality trait, consisting of a sense of wholeness, a consciousness of extraordinary powers, and flashes of insight.

In this diversity of interpretations the one by FRANKL (1962) is preferable, for it accounts for the otherness of the transcendent reality. In the encounter the outer world appeals to the subject to respond. This element is lacking in the presentations by REED (1991) and CLONINGER ET AL. (1993), who see self-transcendence as a kind of self-expansion, and as a sort of sixth sense, respectively. BATSON AND STOCKS (2004) notice the same shortfall of lacking otherness with

Maslow. They recall that Maslow hinted at the possibility of transcendence, but that he conceived it as a 'need for transcendence', consistent with his emphasis on personal needs. The same applies to FROMM (1959). Real self-transcendence, however, should be a qualitatively different process, because it transcends personal needs. The authors suggest that the self-transcendent function might be the most promising for shedding new light on the nature of the human psyche.

### *Dimensions*

Can the three concepts, self-acceptance, self-actualization, and self-transcendence, be treated as three distinct dimensions of the construct existential fulfilment? The humanistic and existential oriented literature does not say a lot about their inter-relationships, but suggests that they are part of one dimension. MASLOW (1970) mentions 'acceptance of the self' as a component of self-actualization. ROGERS (1961) suggests that the opposites of self-acceptance, self-alienation, and self-actualization, or self-realization, form the extremes of one and the same dimension. He observes that the tendency to self-actualize might become deeply buried under layer after layer of encrusted psychological defenses, but that it could be released and expressed in every individual. So, self-realization seems to be the result of being released from self-alienation. Contemporary researchers, too, tend to see both concepts in a one-dimensional perspective. They connect self-actualization with intrinsic goals or goals chosen for autonomous reasons, and self-alienation with extrinsic goals or goals chosen for controlled reasons (SHELDON & ELLIOT, 1998; KASSER & RYAN, 2001). As to the relationship between self-actualization and self-transcendence, Frankl sees the former as a side-effect of the latter (FRANKL, 1970). People find themselves only to the extent to which they lose themselves for the sake of something or somebody else. The struggle for one's self and identity is doomed to failure unless it is enacted as dedication and devotion to something beyond the self (FRANKL, 1962). Here self-transcendence is introduced as the necessary and sufficient cause of self-actualization. As a by-product of self-transcendence, self-actualization cannot be regarded as a separate dimension.

The third connection is the one between self-alienation and self-transcendence. On this matter only Frankl and his adepts have offered explicit reflections. To FRANKL (1962), self-transcendence is the essential condition for human existence. Without self-transcending and finding ultimate meaning beyond the self, one falls into an existential vacuum, a phenomenon also referred to as existential frustration. In other words, lack of self-transcendence seems to involve self-alienation, because it implies missing the essence of life.

Although humanistic and existentially oriented literature tends to favor a one-dimensional approach of self-acceptance, self-actualization and self-transcendence, however, other relationships are easily conceivable. For instance, one could think of a dimension being the necessary

but not sufficient condition for another. The issue of the interdependence will be dealt with in a later publication.

### ***Existential Fulfilment: Definitions***

Existential fulfilment is understood as the life-purpose that aims at doing full justice to the nature of human existence. Human beings pursue this life goal by accepting the self, by actualizing the self, and by transcending the self. These three notions can be interpreted as basic attitudes to pursue existential fulfilment, and to overcome the psychological conflicts caused by human limitedness. Someone who accepts the self accepts his/her potentialities and intrinsic limitations. Intrinsic limitations are limitations that are not imposed by others, but stem from one's own nature. For example, being left alone is not an intrinsic limitation, but a limitation imposed by others. Feeling alone, however, and having difficulties with being alone, are intrinsic limitations. Someone who actualizes the self explores and develops his/ her possibilities and potentialities for the sake of personal growth in understanding and abilities. Someone who transcends the self recognizes the otherness of the reality beyond the self, looking for respectful relationships with it, deriving life-meaning from these relationships, feeling responsible for them, feeling part of a larger whole, distinguishing interests that surpass self-interests, and being able to see the self in perspective of the outer reality.

### ***Measures for Existential Fulfilment***

Is there a satisfying measure for existential fulfilment? Such a measure would have to meet two criteria. First, it should measure the extent to which people lead a purposeful and meaningful life, as existential fulfilment denotes the life goal that aims at doing full justice to the nature of human existence. Second, the measure should account for the qualitative differences between values, objectives or life-meanings that people can cling to, as noticed above.

Several questionnaires about purpose and meaning in life have been developed and are being used. CRUMBAUGH AND MAHOLICK (1964; CRUMBAUGH, 1968) presented the *Purpose in Life Test*. They define purpose in life as 'the ontological significance of life from the point of view of the experiencing individual'. One of the 20 items runs as follows: 'in life I have: (1) no goals or aims at all – (7) very clear goals and aims'. BATTISTA AND ALMOND (1973) devised an alternative test, the *Life Regard Inventory*, consisting of 28 items to be rated on a 5-point scale. This test claims to be value free, and consists of two dimensions, framework and fulfilment. An example from the framework dimension is: 'There are things that I devote all my life's energy to.' The fulfilment dimension consists of items like 'When I look at my life I feel the satisfaction of really having worked to accomplish something.' Within another theoretical framework ANTONOVSKY (1987) designed the *Sense of Coherence* scale. He departed from the bio-psycho-social model of health, and assumed that sense of coherence in life will favor (psycho)somatic well-being. He distinguishes three dimensions in it, viz. comprehensibility, manage-

ability, and meaningfulness. An example of the last mentioned dimension is: 'How often do you have the feeling that there's little meaning in the things you do in your daily life?'

All these scales do meet the first criterion, namely that they measure the extent to which people lead a purposeful and meaningful life. They fall short, however, in the sense that they do not account for the differences between extrinsic and intrinsic goals, nor between self-oriented and self-transcending goals. So, they show no difference between self-alienated, self-actualizing, and self-transcending values and goals (second criterion). Especially the lacking clarity about the difference between self-alienated goals and the other two sorts of goals is problematic. Somebody dedicating all of his energy to the gain of riches would score high on purposefulness and meaningfulness in the three mentioned measures. Still, that person would lead a self-alienated life. In consequence, the measures are unfit for identifying existential fulfilment, for if a high score refers to extrinsic goal pursuit, it does not indicate any progress in striving after existential fulfilment.

Beside these measures there is one scale that claims explicitly to measure existential fulfilment, namely the Existence Scale by LÄNGLE ET AL. (2003). The problem with this questionnaire is that the scores of a large group of respondents do not confirm the theoretical factor structure (see below). So there is a need for a new scale.

### ***Construction of the Existential Fulfilment Scale***

The starting point for a new measure was the Existence Scale by LÄNGLE ET AL. (2003), in a Dutch translation. Alas, a confirmatory factor analysis of the data of 1187 respondents following several professions with an intense involvement with other people, did not confirm the theoretical factor structure. As LOONSTRA, BROUWERS AND TOMIC (in press) showed, the fit of the four-factor model – as suggested by Längle – was not better than that of one or two-factor models. The highest CFI-value was .72, far below the criterion of .90 (BENTLER & BONNET, 1980). A principal component analysis, however, revealed five factors that were covered by 24 of the 46 items, loading  $\geq .50$  on one of these factors. After leaving out a factor that could be labeled 'egocentrism', the 20 remaining items covered three factors that could be labeled 'involvement', 'satisfaction in doing things', and 'self-transcendence'. The first two labels get near the sense of 'self-actualization' and 'self-acceptance', respectively. All of the 20 remaining items had been formulated in the negative. In a revised scale, some were left out, many of them were reformulated in the positive, and new items were added, in order to make the concepts of 'self-acceptance', 'self-actualization', and 'self-transcendence' more operational. In the present study we tested the revised scale using confirmatory factor analysis.

### ***Central Question and Hypotheses***

The central question in this investigation is: May the three terms that are used to describe the basic attitudes to pursue existential fulfilment be regarded as three distinct dimensions, or are they to be seen as two dimensions or even one? The zero-hypothesis, which can be inferred from the literature is that self-acceptance, self-actualization, and self-transcendence make up only one dimension. The alternative hypotheses are that they form two or even three distinct dimensions.

## **Method**

### ***Participants***

Individuals eligible for participation in this study were Dutch speaking former students of two university psychology departments. We randomly selected 1500 individuals and asked them to participate in our study. The students' administration departments provided us with a current directory containing a complete list of alumni addresses from 1990 to date. A simple random sample of 1500 individuals received the survey questionnaire at their home address by mail. As 1500 persons were approached and 812 persons participated, the response rate was 54%, which is not only adequate according to BABBIE (2006), but also in accordance with the findings of ASCH, JEDRZIEWSKI, & CHRISTAKIS (1997). The average age of the respondents was 42.60 years with a standard deviation of 8.84. The breakdown of the total sample (N = 812) in terms of sex is as follows: male respondents 187 (23%), female respondents 625 (77%). The average male age was 44.15 years (SD = 10.10), and the average female age was 42.14 (SD = 8.40). Former female students were younger:  $t(267) = 2.48$ ;  $p < .001$ .

We compared our sample with a known value for the population of psychology students, in this instance gender. According to national university data the percentage of female and male psychology students is 75% and 25%, respectively (ASSOCIATION OF DUTCH UNIVERSITIES, 2005). A comparison with other university students shows that our sample was representative in terms of gender ( $\chi^2(1) = .11$ ,  $p > .05$ ).

### ***Procedure***

The design is simple and involves a large random sample of alumni who were asked to complete a questionnaire. We mailed a self-administered survey to alumni homes. The survey addressed topics in the following order: existence scale, and demographic characteristics like gender, respondent age, and years of work experience. The accompanying cover letter stated that the purpose of the study was to better understand respondents' feelings of existential fulfilment and well-being. The letter also explained that participation was elective and that responses would be anonymous and contained an assurance of confidentiality. Specific hypotheses were not revealed in the cover letter. After the survey was mailed to all participants, one reminder was sent by mail fourteen days later. In order to raise the response rate, we fol-



lowed suggestions from GREEN, BOSER AND HUTCHINSON (1997): we provided respondents with postage-free envelopes, we sent the questionnaires to the respondents directly, the respondents could contact us at any time if necessary, and we used a fairly brief questionnaire.

### **Measure**

In order to measure existential fulfilment, as being composed of the three dimensions self-acceptance, self-actualization, and self-transcendence, the *Existential Fulfilment Scale* has been developed. In its present shape the scale consists of 15 items, 5 items for each dimension, to be measured on a 5-point Likert scale, running from 0 to 4, meaning 'not at all' to 'fully' appropriate to respondent. The items about self-acceptance and self-alienation refer to the urge to prove oneself towards others, rejection of the self, inner uncertainty, and psychological reliance. For example: 'Often I am doing things more because I have to, than because I want to.' When the scores on items measuring self-alienation are inverted, they can be regarded as indications for self-acceptance. The self-actualization items are about intrinsic motivation, the passion towards one's own ideals, and feeling free and calm to pursue one's goals. One item is, for instance: 'I stay motivated to go on, even when the odds are against me.' The items regarding self-transcendence are about the feeling to be part of a larger meaningful whole, conceiving a sense of life that transcends personal interests, and being convinced that life has a meaning, for example: 'I think my life has such a deep meaning that it surpasses my personal interests.'

### **Analysis**

In order to test the proposed factorial structure of the Existential Fulfilment Scale, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) with maximum likelihood estimation was used utilizing the AMOS 3.61 computer program (Arbuckle, 1997). In this confirmatory factor-analytic approach, the fit of five factorial models was tested against the null model (Model 0): Model 1, a one-factor model in which all items of the three subscales were allowed to load on one general meaning-in-life factor; Model 2, a two-factor orthogonal model in which the items of the self-transcendence subscale were allowed to load on one factor, whereas the items of the self-acceptance and self-actualization subscales were allowed to load on a second factor (the two subscales were not allowed to correlate); Model 3, a two-factor oblique model (the same model as Model 2 with the difference that the two subscales were allowed to correlate); Model 4, a three factor model in which the items of the self-transcendence subscale were allowed to load on one factor, whereas the items of the self-acceptance subscale as well as those of the self-actualization subscale were allowed to load on respectively a second and third factor (the three subscales were not allowed to correlate); Model 5, a three-factor oblique model (the same model as Model 4 with the difference that the three subscales were allowed to correlate).

Evaluation of model fit was based on the chi-square likelihood ratio, the Root Mean Square Residual (RMR), the Goodness of Fit Index (GFI), the Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI), the Normed Comparative Fit Index (CFI; BENTLER, 1990), and the Parsimony Normed

Comparative Fit Index (PCFI). To assess CFI and PCFI, null models were specified, in which the variables are mutually independent (Model 0). Following the recommendations of BENTLER AND BONETT (1980), the fit of a model was considered to be acceptable as CFI exceeded .90. PCFI was used to assess a model's parsimony, which is especially useful when comparing models (MULAIK, JAMES, VAN ALSTEIN, BENNETT, LIND, & STILWELL, 1989).

### Results

Results of the confirmatory factor analysis showed chi-square ratios, which indicate a poor absolute fit, most likely due to the large sample size. Inspection of the CFI, which is relatively insensitive of the sample size (McDONALD & MARCH, 1990), indicated that the three-factor oblique model (Model 5) fitted the data best (see Table 1). The fit was virtually adequate since its CFI of .89 comes close to the recommended criterion of .90 (BENTLER & BONETT, 1980).

**Table 1. Chi-Squares and Fit Indexes of the Existential Fulfilment Scale (N = 812)**

	Chi square	df	RMR	GFI	AGFI	CFI	PCFI
Model 0	4478.08	105	.35	.45	.37	.00	.00
Model 1	1945.31	90	.13	.65	.54	.58	.49
Model 2	955.96	90	.15	.85	.79	.80	.69
Model 3	917.64	89	.12	.85	.79	.81	.69
Model 4	884.21	90	.16	.88	.84	.82	.70
Model 5	588.65	87	.08	.91	.88	.89	.73

Chi-square difference tests showed a significantly better fit of the three-factor oblique model (Model 5) over the one-factor model (Model 1;  $\Delta\chi^2(3) = 1356.66$ ,  $p < .001$ ), the two-factor orthogonal model (Model 2;  $\Delta\chi^2(3) = 367.31$ ,  $p < .001$ ), the two-factor oblique model (Model 3;  $\Delta\chi^2(2) = 328.99$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and the 3-factor orthogonal model (Model 4;  $\Delta\chi^2(3) = 295.56$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

A higher-order-factorial model in which the self-control and the self-expression factors were allowed to load on a second-order factor was also calculated. This model showed the same chi-square, fit indices and parameter estimates as the current study's final model, Model 5. Evaluation of the pattern of its standardized regression coefficients revealed that all of the factor loadings were between .50 and .92.

**Table 2. Completely Standardized Solution of the Three Factor Oblique Existential Fulfilment Scale**

Item nr.	Item	M	SD	Loading
<b>Self-Acceptance</b>				
11.	I find it very hard to accept myself	.64	.80	.67
12.	I often do things because I have to, not because I really want to do them	.68	.80	.66
1.	I often feel uncertain about the impression I make on other people	.98	.88	.64
3.	I do a lot of things that I would actually rather not do	.83	.81	.60
8.	I often feel I have to prove myself	1.46	1.02	.50
<b>Self-Actualization</b>				
5.	Deep inside I feel free	2.55	1.09	.69
14.	I completely approve of the things that I do	3.01	.71	.58
2.	I'll remain motivated to carry on even in times of bad luck	3.00	.80	.57
7.	Even in busy times I experience feelings of inner calmness	1.92	1.03	.55
15.	My ideals inspire me	2.57	.94	.52
<b>Self-Transcendence</b>				
6.	I think I am part of a meaningful entity	2.03	1.36	.92
4.	I feel incorporated in a larger meaningful entity	2.24	1.26	.81
13.	I think my life has such a deep meaning that it surpasses my personal interests	1.60	1.35	.74
10.	I have experienced that there is more in life than I can perceive with my senses	2.13	1.39	.70
9.	It is my opinion that my life is meaningful	2.70	1.09	.69

Table 3 shows significant relations between self-acceptance and self-actualization as well as between self-actualization and self-transcendence (respectively Pearson's  $r = .41, p < .001$  and  $.40, p < .001$ ). The data revealed no significant relation between self-acceptance and self-transcendence (Pearson's  $r = .06, p > .05$ ).

**Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of the Subscales of the Existential Fulfilment Scale**

	M	SD	alpha	1	2	3
1. Self-Acceptance	.92	.61	.74	–		
2. Self-Actualization	2.62	.62	.71	.41***	–	
3. Self-Transcendence	2.14	1.06	.88	.06	.40***	–

Note. \*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

## Discussion

This study tested the factorial validity of the Existential Fulfilment Scale. The Existential Fulfilment Scale comprises three subscales to assess (1) the urge to prove oneself towards others, rejection of the self, inner uncertainty, and psychological reliance, conceptualized as self-alienation or reversed as self-acceptance; (2) intrinsic motivation, the passion towards one's own ideals, and feeling free and calm to pursue one's goals, conceptualized as self-actualization; and (3) the feeling to be part of a larger meaningful whole, conceiving a sense of life that transcends personal interests, and being convinced that life is meaningful, conceptualized as self-transcendence. Theoretical notions of three building blocks of humanistic and existential psychology, as described by Fromm, Maslow, and Frankl, pointed to the hypothesis that the three attitudes, self-alienation, self-actualization, and self-transcendence, are all part of one and the same dimension. Explicitly was reckoned with the alternative hypothesis, however, that existential fulfilment subscales comprised three different attitudes towards one's own life. The results showed an adequate fit of the three-factor oblique model, in which the items of the three subscales were allowed to load on their respective factors. Since the fit of the three-factor oblique model was significantly better than both a two-factor model and a one-factor model, it was concluded that existential fulfilment consists of three mutually correlated but different concepts.

The present study's findings of a partial distinction between the three scales confirm the thesis that existential fulfilment is composed of three different concepts, called self-acceptance, self-actualization, and self-transcendence. Although the results confirmed the three oblique factorial structures, they did not allow drawing conclusions about the content of the scales. Therefore it is recommended to study the content validity of the scales in further detail in a follow-up, for instance by convergent and discriminant validity checks.

Correlation analysis showed that the three dimensions are significantly related to each other, except the relationship between self-acceptance and self-transcendence. The question remains what its theoretical rationale is. Is there any interdependence, for example one dimension being a necessary but not sufficient condition for another? It is recommended to investigate the inter-relationships between the three concepts that make up existential fulfilment in further detail. That kind of research can support the theoretical development of a model, which describes the growth process of attitudes toward a more existential fulfilling life.

By identifying three distinct dimensions in existential fulfilment, the presentation of the Existential Fulfilment Scale can be regarded as an improvement in measuring purpose in life. The scale distinguishes qualitatively different directions of goal pursuit, one of which is self-oriented and self-alienating, while the others are accepting, actualizing and even transcending the self. This qualitative distinction makes it possible to identify psychologically healthy ways of goal

pursuit in life, opposite to unhealthy ways, and to measure existential fulfilment, opposite to existential vacuum.

## References

- Ansbacher, H. L., & Ansbacher, R. R. (Eds.) (1956). *The Individual Psychology of Alfred Adler: A Systematic Presentation in Selections from His Writings*. New York, etc.: Harper & Row.
- Antonovsky, A. (1987). *Unraveling the Mystery of Health: How People Manage Stress and Stay Well*. San Francisco/ London: Jossey-Bass.
- Arbuckle, J. L. (1997). *Amos user's guide version 3.6*. Chicago: SPSS Inc.
- Asch, D. A., Jedrzejewski, M. K., & Christakis, N. A. (1997). Response rates to mail surveys published in medical journals. *Journal of Clinical Epidemiology*, 50(10), 1129-1136.
- Association of Dutch Universities (2005). *University Indicators*. <http://www.vsnunl.nl>.
- Babbie, E. R. (2006). *The Practice of Social Research*. 11th Edition. Belmont, CA: Thomson / Wadsworth.
- Batson, C. D., & Stocks, E. L. (2004). Religion: Its Core Psychological Functions. In J. Greenberg, S.L. Koole, & T. Pyszczynski (Eds.), *Handbook of Experimental Existential Psychology* (pp. 141-155). New York/ London: The Guilford Press.
- Battista, J., & Almond, R. (1973). The Development of Meaning in Life. *Psychiatry*, 36, 409-427.
- Bentler, P. M. (1990). Comparative Fit Indexes in structural models. *Psychological Bulletin*, 107, 238-246.
- Bentler, P. M., & Bonett, D. G. (1980). Significance tests and goodness of fit in the analysis of covariance structures. *Psychological Bulletin*, 88, 588-606.
- Buber, M. (1970). *I and Thou* (translated by W. Kaufmann). New York: Touchstone.
- Cloninger, C. R., Svrakic, D. M., & Przybeck, T. R. (1993). A Psychobiological Model of Temperament and Character. *Archives of General Psychiatry*, 50, 975-990.
- Crumbaugh, J. C. (1968). Cross-Validation of Purpose in Life Test Based on Frankl's Concepts. *Journal of Individual Psychology*, 24, 74-81.
- Crumbaugh, J. C., & Maholick, L. T. (1964). An Experimental Study in Existentialism: The Psychometric Approach to Frankl's Concept of Noogenic Neurosis. *Journal of Clinical Psychology* 20, 200-207.
- Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2000). The 'What' and 'Why' of Goal Pursuits: Human Needs and the Self-Determination of Behavior. *Psychological Inquiry*, 11, 227-268.
- Frankl, V. E. (1962). Psychiatry and Man's Quest for Meaning. *Journal of Religion and Health*, 1, 93-103.
- Frankl, V. E. (1970). *The Will to Meaning: Foundations and Applications of Logotherapy*. New York: New American Library.
- Fromm, E. (1947). *Man for Himself. An Inquiry into the Psychology of Ethics*. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.
- Fromm, E. (1959). Values, Psychology and Human Existence. In A. H. Maslow (Ed.), *New Knowledge in Human Values*. New York, etc.: Harper & Row.
- Fromm, E. (1962). *Beyond the Chains of Illusion: My Encounter with Marx and Freud*. New York: Pocket Books.

- Fromm, E. (1976). *To Have or To Be?* New York, etc.: Harper & Row.
- Green, K. A., Boser, J. A., & Hutchinson, S. R. (1997). *Effects of population type on mail survey response rates and on the efficacy of response enhancers*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Chicago, March. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 410252).
- Kasser, T. & Ryan, R. M. (2001). Be Careful What You Wish For: Optimal Functioning and the Relative Attainment of Intrinsic and Extrinsic Goals. In P. Schmuck, & K. M. Sheldon (Eds.), *Life Goals and Well-Being: Towards a Positive Psychology of Human Striving* (pp. 116-131). Seattle, etc.: Hogrefe & Huber.
- Kasser, T., & Sheldon, K. M. (2004). Nonbecoming, Alienated Becoming, and Authentic Becoming: A Goal-Based Approach. In J. Greenberg, S. L. Koole, & T. Pyszczynski (Eds.), *Handbook of Experimental Existential Psychology* (pp. 480-493). New York/ London: The Guilford Press.
- Längle, A., Orgler, C. & Kundi, M. (2003). The Existence Scale: A New Approach to Assess the Ability to Find Personal Meaning in Life and to Reach Existential Fulfilment. *European Psychotherapy*, 4, 1, 135-146.
- Levinas, E. (1969). *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority* (translated by A. Lingis). Pittsburgh PA: Duquesne University Press.
- Loonstra, B., Brouwers, A., & Tomic, W. (in preparation). *The Factorial Validity of Scores on Längle's Existence Scale*.
- Maslow, A. H. (1943). A Theory of Human Motivation. *Psychological Review*, 50, 370-396.
- Maslow, A. H. (1970). *Motivation and Personality* (2nd Edition). New York, etc.: Harper & Row.
- McDonald, R. P., & Marh, H. W. (1990). Choosing a multivariate model: Noncentrality and Goodness of fit. *Psychological Bulletin*, 107, 247-255.
- Mulaik, S. A., James, L. R., van Alstein, J., Bennett, N., Lind, S., & Stilwell, C. D. (1989). Evaluation of goodness-of-fit indices for structural equation models. *Psychological Bulletin*, 105, 430-445.
- Pyszczynski, T., Greenberg, J., & Solomon, S. (1999). A dual process model of defense against conscious and unconscious death-related thoughts: An extension of terror management theory. *Psychological Review*, 106, 835-845.
- Reed, P. G. (1991). Self-Transcendence and Mental Health in Oldest-Old Adults. *Nursing Research*, 40, 5-11.
- Rogers, C. R. (1961). *On Becoming a Person: A Therapist's View of Psychotherapy*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Rogers, C. R. (1964). Toward a Modern Approach to Values: The Valuing Process in the Mature Person. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 68, 160-167.
- Sheldon, K. M. (2001). The Self-Concordance Model of Healthy Goal Striving: When Personal Goals Correctly Represent the Person. In P. Schmuck, & K. M. Sheldon (Eds.), *Life Goals and Well-Being: Towards a Positive Psychology of Human Striving* (pp. 18-36). Seattle, etc.: Hogrefe & Huber.
- Sheldon, K. M., & Elliot, A. J. (1998). Not all personal goals are personal: Comparing autonomous and controlled reasons for goals as predictors of effort and attainment. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 24, 546-557.

- Sheldon, K. M., & Kasser, T. (1995). Coherence and Congruence: Two Aspects of Personality Integration. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 68, 531-543.
- Yalom, I. D. (1980). *Existential Psychotherapy*. New York: Basic Books.

**Correspondence address:**

**Welko Tomić**

Department of Psychology

The Open University

P.O. Box 2960

NL-6401 DL Heerlen

The Netherlands

Phone ++31 / (0)45 / 57 62 539

Fax ++31 / (0)45 / 5762939

e-mail: Welko.Tomic@ou.nl