# Understanding the good life during ageing:
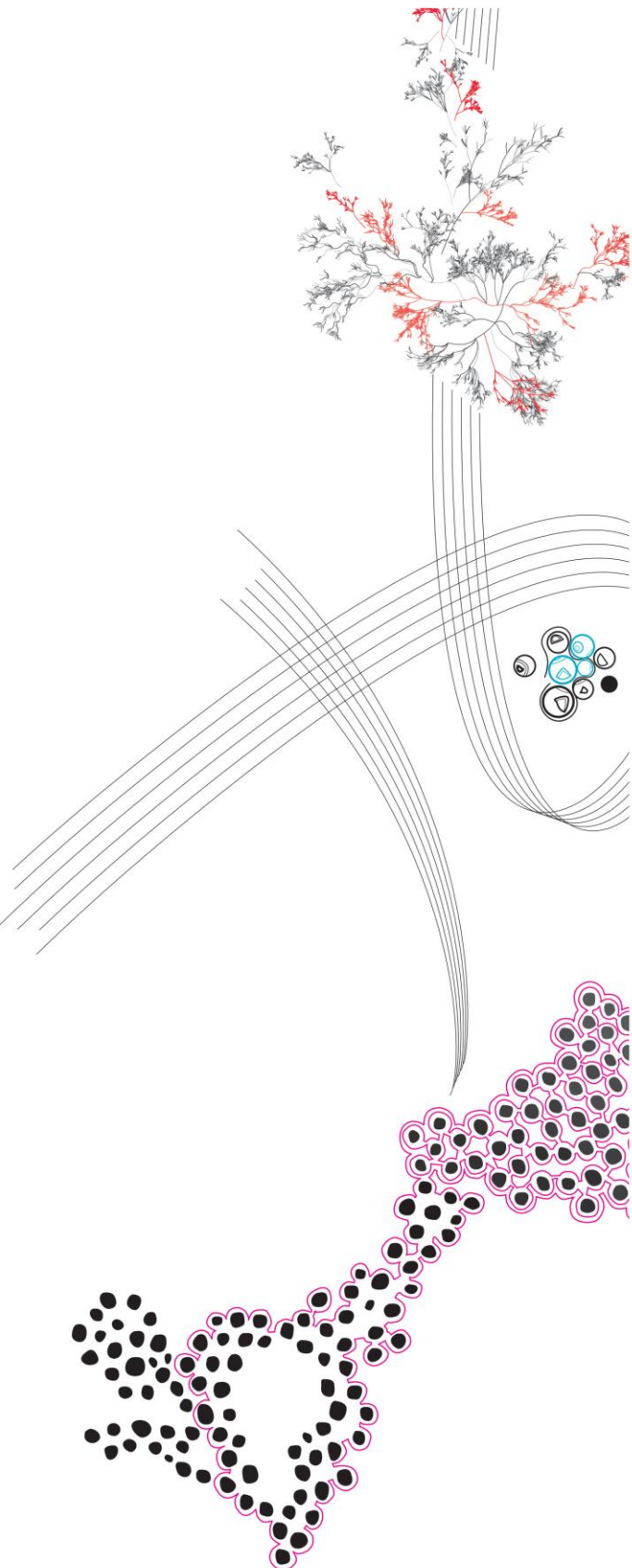# a qualitative study

**Bachelorthesis**
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**Abstract**

Focusing on the good life is not a new, but still an important topic as an increased wellbeing can act as a protector for several health problems. Especially age is important to consider when it comes to a good life, as motivations change during lifespan. The PERMA model (Seligman, 2011) provides factors for high states of wellbeing and includes Positive Emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning and Accomplishments. This led to the first research question, which aimed to find out, if the PERMA model is a sufficient description for a good life, regarding to the perceptions of people at different ages. The second research question aimed to explore, whether the perceptions of a good life differ among age-groups.

A semi-structured interview scheme was used, about the good life and the PERMA model. Twenty-five people between the age of 22 and 86 were recruited on the basis of three age criteria (young age: 20-40, middle age: 41-65, old age: 66 and beyond). The statements of the participants were coded both deductive and inductive. The results showed that the elements of the PERMA model were perceived as important for a good life in every age group and related to the different topics as work or social factors. But also additional elements for a good life were found, as health, satisfaction and carefreeness. Furthermore, young individuals were found to be mostly concerned with their own person and interest, as well with work and achievements. Middle-aged people focused on their family and saw work as a necessity to earn money. Old people were also family-focused and expressed to find it important to have a meaningful task, after reaching pension.

The findings were in line with the theory of motivations during life-span (Heckhausen, Wrosch & Schulz, 2010), where motivations change according to biological and social events at different life stages, e.g. marriage and child birth. Also a change of identity seems to play a role during life-span. Future research regarding the PERMA model should consider that there might be more important elements, in order to create a complete picture of a good life. When it comes to increasing wellbeing through PERMA, differences between age groups should be considered, as motivations especially for social and work factors change during life-span.

# Samenvatting

Veel mensen houden zich bezig met het goede leven, omdat het een invloed heeft op het welbevinden van mensen. Door het welbevinden te vergrootten kunnen klachten over de fysische gezondheid voorkomen worden. Daarom had dit onderzoek het doel om te weten te krijgen, wat belangrijke factoren voor een goed leven zijn. Vooral als het gaat om verschillen met betrekking tot leeftijd is verder onderzoek noodzakelijk. Dit omdat motivaties en ook de identiteiten van mensen gedurende hun leeftijd ontwikkelen en daardoor per leeftijdsgroepen verschillen. Om te weten te komen welke factoren het meest belangrijk zijn voor een goed leven, werd het PERMA model van Seligman (2011) gebruikt met factoren zoals Positive emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning en Accomplishment. Hieruit volgen twee onderzoeksvragen: Is het PERMA model een voldoende beschrijving van het goede leven? En verschillen die opvattingen van mensen over het goede leven per leeftijdsgroepen?

Een semi-gestructureerde interview schema werd gebruikt over het goede leven en het PERMA model. Voor de interviews werden 25 mensen tussen 22 en 86 jaren verzameld, gebaseerd op drie leeftijdsgroepen: jong (20-40), middeloud (41-65) en oud (65 en ouder). Met een zowel deductieve als ook een inductieve manier werden de interviews geanalyseerd. De resultaten lieten zien dat mensen de elementen van het PERMA model belangrijk vonden, maar daarnaast nog meer elementen noemden, zoals gezondheid, tevredenheid en zorgloosheid. Verder zijn er verschillen tussen de leeftijdsgroepen gevonden worden. Met betrekking tot de jonge leeftijdsgroep, is gebleken dat mensen meer op zichzelf gefocusseerd waren, dan middeloude of oude mensen. Ook vonden jonge mensen het belangrijk om succes binnen het werkveld te hebben, wat voor die ander leeftijdsgroepen nauwelijks of geen belang had. Middeloude en oude mensen waren meer op hun familie gefocusseerd en vooral voor oude mensen was het belangrijk om een taak in hun alledaagse leven te hebben en voor anderen een belangrijke rol te spelen.

De verschillenden motivaties konden terug gevonden worden in een 'motivational theory of life-span development' (Heckhausen, Wrosch & Schulz, 2010), die verklaard dat vooral biologische en sociale omstandigheden voor verschillende motivaties zorgen. Ook een verband met de psychosociale ontwikkelingsfasen van Erikson (1950) kond gevonden worden. Verder onderzoek met betrekking tot het PERMA model moet rekening houden met toevoegende elementen voor het model. Bovendien moeten ook verschillen in motivaties en identiteitsontwikkelingen betrokken worden, als het om leeftijdsverschillen en het goede leven gaat.

## Introduction

In the history of Psychology, the meaning of a good life has been a fundamental topic. Already 400 BC the Greeks argued about the nature of 'a good life' (Hergenhahn & Henley, 2014). So, the good life is not a new topic, but still important these days. The recent discipline Positive Psychology is concerned with studying the good life and factors that allow people to flourish (Seligman, 2014). For Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000), who are the founders of Positive Psychology, focusing on wellbeing and well functioning is essential to lead a fulfilling and meaningful life. Studying strengths and characteristics that enable individuals to thrive, enhances the understanding of wellbeing. Through a broader understanding of wellbeing, interventions can be created that help people to focus rather on positive aspects of life than on negative ones. By that, beneficial skills can be obtained, which help to increase wellbeing (Frederickson, 2001). Higher states of wellbeing bring several advantages, as it reduces the impact of physical health problems and can act as a protector of health (Steptoe et al, 2015). Also, positive life evaluations and a state of happiness predict lower levels of mortality and morbidity (Chida & Steptoe, 2008). Studies have shown that a good life with a sense of meaning motivates individuals to cope with stressful and illness-related events (Aspinwall & Tedeschi, 2010). Therefore, wellbeing and experiencing a good life are linked to a better overall health status, which makes it necessary to focus on in order to promote a healthy society.

**Wellbeing as the key for a good life**

Wellbeing can be seen as a focal topic of Positive Psychology and for Seligman it is a 'birthright' for everybody (Seligman, 2014). Huppert and Johnson (2010) define wellbeing as a combination of functioning well and feeling good, thus it is a state beyond not suffering. Literature provides multiple constructs and dimensions of wellbeing. For example, it is distinguished between two approaches: the hedonic approach and the eudaimonic approach (Deci & Ryan, 2001). The hedonic approach concentrates on subjective happiness and the experience of pleasure. The good and bad elements of life, pleasure and displeasure define the state of wellbeing. In contrast, the eudaimonic approach concentrates on more than happiness: meaning and self- realization are important elements. Eudaimonic wellbeing is defined by the full functioning of a person (Deci & Ryan, 2001). Waterman (1993) stated that people experience wellbeing in an eudaimonic way when they live in accordance with their true self, and their actions are congruent with their values. Although the two approaches are built on

distinct philosophies, they are both important for wellbeing, and when lay people were asked to comment on their perceptions of a good life, both happiness and meaning were present (King & Napa 1998).

Keyes (2002) rather suggests 'flourishing' as an important construct to describe wellbeing, and describes flourishing as a state in which someone is filled with positive emotions, and is well functioning in both psychological and social ways. So, high emotional wellbeing (individual's satisfaction), psychological wellbeing (intrapersonal reflections), and social wellbeing (social integration) together build a state of flourishing. Also Seligman (2011) is concerned with the concept of flourishing. He defines flourishing as a state, in which someone is capable to build strengths that help to overcome challenges and increase wellbeing (2014). Even though wellbeing can be explained with different constructs, they all together reflect the multidimensionality of wellbeing.

**PERMA model - a description of wellbeing**

With the goal in mind, to give Positive Psychology a tool that helps people to flourish and promote a good life, Seligman (2011) formulated the PERMA model. By formulating a model that includes factors to flourish, he first thought about 'happiness' as the major element for a good life, in his 'Authentic Happiness Theory' (Seligman, 2004). The elements describing happiness were Positive emotion, Meaning and Engagement. But research has shown that the Authentic Happiness Theory referred to the mood of people rather than to 'happiness' as an overall wellbeing construct. Later, Seligman (2011) presented his new well-being theory (WBT) or PERMA model that includes five elements: Positive emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning and Accomplishment. In order to flourish all these elements have to be present and each of them can be raised.

**Positive emotion** is the first out of five components of the PERMA model. According to Seligman, positive emotion addresses a pleasant life and includes happiness and a range of emotions like hope, compassion, amusement, gratitude or interest. It can be described as a hedonic element that covers subjective feelings of wellbeing as pleasure and comfort (Khaw & Kern, 2014).

**Engagement** is experienced when people are involved in a situation or a project, where they intensely focus on. When the concentration during a situation is '*so intense that there is no attention left over to think about anything irrelevant or to worry about problems'* a state of flow is experienced (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Seligman (2011) describes the state of flow, when the engagement is so intense that one is oblivious of time or environment.

Experiencing a state of flow is according to Seligman the highest state of engagement and can be achieved, when a task is very challenging and one's own skills to solve this task are adequate to it.

**Relationship** is the third component and describes every positive relationship a person can have: family, friends, partner, colleagues or bosses (Seligman, 2011). In those relationships feelings of integration, being cared for and satisfied are included (Khaw & Kern, 2014). For Seligman (2011) wellbeing is something that is experienced collectivisticly, not alone. He states that most of the things responsible for wellbeing are experienced around other people, for example laughing as a positive emotion or feeling proud of an accomplishment. By experiencing these forms of wellbeing, others are mainly involved either by being around or by the inert feeling to share those emotions with other people.

**Meaning** is the fourth component of Seligman's PERMA model and an eudaimonic element. Different sources can provide the feeling that one's life matters, like work, other people or a belief in something that is bigger than the self. It is defined as having direction in life and that one's life is valuable and worthwhile (Steger, 2012).

**Accomplishment** is described as a sense of achievement, competence or mastery. It enhances motivation and self- discipline. Reaching a goal and getting rewards for it makes a person feel proud. For Seligman it is a pursuit for a goal itself and not for other things that go along with it. So, it is not important how often one achieves something, but what is achieved in order to feel good.

**The Good Life and Age**

When it comes to perceptions of a good life, age is an influential factor, as it includes many changes during life-span. Heckhausen, Wrosch & Schulz (2010) investigated a 'motivational theory of life span development', where they state that individuals face different opportunities and obstacles during life stages. The opportunities a life stage offers often depend on external events such as biological maturation (e.g. for child birth) or societal institutions (e.g. chance to graduate). Through this, the goals that individuals can or have to achieve, in order to fulfill the own expectations or social norms, are influenced by age (Klinger, 1977).

Also the identity of a person develops and changes during the life-span, which Erikson (1950, 1963) describes in his stages of psychosocial development. He introduces eight stages of 'crisis' a person experiences during life span development, whereby the last three stages are concerning adulthood. This theory has been updated in many ways during the last centuries, in order to correct it for influential factors as cultural backgrounds (Hendry &

Kloep, 2002), but the general concept still belongs to the most eminent concepts of psychology (e.g. Haggbloom et al. 2002). According to Erikson, the sixth of eight stages is 'young adulthood', in which an individual builds his or her identity, and also important friendships and love relationships. This stage occurs during the age of 20 to 40 (Koger, 2007). Also Rider & Sigelman, (2010), confirm that during these ages most people are more self-focused and explore their identity, but also form long-lasting relationships. Later, at 'middle adulthood', during the ages of 41 to 65 the task of generativity is focused on (Koger, 2007). Erikson explains that people want to build something meaningful in their lives. That can be expressed in either raising children or making contributive work. In a stage of 'old adulthood' mostly careers and employments end; a life stage of pension and grandparenthood begins, whereby new goals are attained (Heckhausen, Wrosch & Schulz, 2010). Erikson argues that individuals over 65 years have the task to achieve integrity, by evaluating the own life positively and accepting ageing (Koger, 2007). So, during life-span people change in motivations and identity, that can have influence on the perceptions of a good life.

**Age & the PERMA model**

When the elements of the PERMA model are considered, differences can be found regarding to age. For example, when Positive emotion is taken into account, it was found that people gain their feelings of happiness from different sources depending on their age. Research has found that happiness correlates positively with marital status (Graham, Eggers, & Sukhtankar, 2004). Compared to this, college students reported to base their happiness on domains as friendship, health and work performance (Lyubomirsky et al., 2005). Furthermore, when it comes to Meaning, research has shown that older adults face problems with purpose, personal growth and self-realization (Ryff, 1989). Even when they were well-educated, healthy and economically comfortable they experienced less meaning in life with increasing age. Next to that, the perceptions of achievement differ between age groups. Young adults and middle-age adults have different expectations regarding education, jobs and material goods (Twenge & Kasser, 2013). Those are important for young people, but less for middle-age adults.

Several studies provide also additional factors, which seem to be important for a good life and are not mentioned in the PERMA model. King & Napa (1998) compared the perception of a good life of a college students sample and an adolescent community sample. Adults reported wealth as an important impact for a good life. Here, happiness was valued five times higher and meaning six times higher than wealth in judging a good life, but still rated as important. Students reported the value of money lower than adults.

Additionally, the factor health was seen as having an impact on the experience of happiness, reported by students (Lyubomirsky, King & Diener, 2005). But also older adults are mostly dealing with chronic and functional health problems, which have a huge impact on life satisfaction. Hall (1976) reported that family relationships, social contacts and activities are as important as health and general functioning. In fact, those social contacts and activities require and depend on health and functional status. Therefore health has a great impact on the experience of wellbeing, which is not mentioned in the PERMA model.

**The current study**

Since the PERMA model is a relative new theory, literature provides only little support for it. Research regarding a sample of Australian adolescent students found that the five components of the PERMA model were positively correlated with each other. But the investigated research about PERMA (Kern, et al., 2015; Butler & Kern, 2016) also considered physical health as an influential factor. Hereby, it was found that health variables positively correlated with wellbeing (Kern, et al., 2015). This supports the finding of several studies that describe health as a relevant factor for a good life (Hall, 1976; Lyubomirsky, King & Diener, 2005), as mentioned in the previous section. Further researches in the context of PERMA, which take other additional elements than health into account, are not existent. But it can be expected that at least health is a relevant factor for a good life, which is not mentioned in the PERMA model.

Furthermore, Seligman (2014) described it as a goal to teach whole populations positive psychology skills, in order to promote flourishing in an entire population. So, with the PERMA model he wanted to provide a universal tool that is valid for every person. This intention got supported by a study of Butler & Kern (2016), who developed the PERMA-Profiler as a multidimensional measurement of flourishing, and demonstrated the elements of PERMA as appropriate across a large sample. Even though literature provides no research about the PERMA model and age, it is expected that the model will be suitable for different ages, as it tends to be appropriate for large samples. Age is a topic which concerns everyone due to the changes people make during life-span and Butler & Kern (2016) recommend to further study the influence of age regarding to the PERMA model. Therefore, the aim of this study is to explore whether the PERMA model is a sufficient description of a good life when people of different ages have different perceptions regarding wellbeing and a good life. This leads to the following research questions:

To what extent does the PERMA model fit with the perceptions of people with different ages? And do perceptions of the good life differ among age-groups?

**Methods**

**Participants**

In this study, 11 women and 14 men were interviewed. Their age ranged from 22 to 82, with a mean age of 50.64 years (SD = 19.06). Here, the participants were interviewed on the basis of three age groups, whereby eight of the participants were young, nine participants were middle-aged and eight participants were old. Thirteen of the participants were married, three divorced and one widowed; six of them were never married. Seventeen participants had children, whereby they belong to the middle-aged and old group; none of the young participants had a child. Thirteen of the 25 interviewees were high educated and 12 were middle educated. All of them were currently living in Germany when the interview took place, whereby 11 of the participants were born in a collectivistic country and 14 of them in Germany.

Tabel 1

*Information Participants*

|  | N | Mean age (in years) | Education | | Country of Origin | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  |  |  | High | Middle | Collectivistic | Individualistic |
| Young Age | 8 | 27.29 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| Middle Age | 9 | 49.11 | 5 | 4 | 4 | 5 |
| Old Age | 8 | 73.5 | 4 | 4 | 0 | 8 |

**Procedure**

A qualitative interview design was used, and 25 participants were recruited by purposive sampling. The study was conducted by three researchers, who study the topic of a good life, but with a different research focus. Therefore the study recruited individuals on the basis of three inclusion criteria: education, cultural background and age. To fulfill the criterion of education they had to be highly educated (university degree or title as foreman/ technician) or middle educated (graduation and apprenticeship), and to fulfill the cultural background

criterion they had to be born in an individualistic country (Germany) or a collectivistic country (Portuguese, Brazil, Russia). For the criterion of age, participants were recruited on the basis of three age groups: young (20-40), middle (41-65) and old (66 and beyond) (Koger, 2007). In order to fulfill the requirements of the inclusion criteria the participants were distributed almost equally on each criterion.

An ethical approval was obtained at the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Behavioral Sciences at the University of Twente (requestnumber: 17202).  The participants were personally invited and provided information about the purpose and procedure of the interview. Then, the participants signed an informed consent to participate in the study. The interview scheme was semi-structured and in German (sees Appendix B). The three researchers interviewed an equal amount of participants, whereby eight of 25 interviews were conducted via Skype, and 17 interviews face-to-face. The interviews took between 11 to 60 minutes (mean 22.41 minutes). At the end of the interview, the participants had the chance to ask questions and were provided the opportunity to inspect their own data and the results after the research had taken place.

Furthermore, it was necessary to make use of a translator at two Brazilian and one Portuguese interview. The translator explained several German words to the participants to guarantee that they understand the right meaning of the words. The data from one interview (young age) was omitted from analysis because of the problems in language and articulation.

**Interviews**

The questionnaire started with ten questions concerning the demographic variables of the interviewees, which was paper-based in the face-to-face interviews and verbal in the Skype-interviews. Then, 14 open and five closed questions were asked. The first open question asked the participants about their general conception of a good life, and a follow-up question asked for a more detailed description of this conception. A third question asked whether or not they experience differences between life-stages, e.g. 'What does a good life mean for you in different stages of life?'. Thereafter, the PERMA model was introduced to the participants and questions about the different elements of the model were asked, e.g. 'What do you understand of Positive Emotions?'; 'Can you describe situations where you experience positive emotions?'. After these open questions, a closed question followed, e.g. 'Are Positive Emotions important for you for a good life?'. In total ten open questions and five closed questions were asked, concerning each of the five elements of the PERMA model. At the end, the participants were asked a final open question about whether they can imagine other

elements besides the one Seligman mentioned, which are important for them concerning a good life. Some questions were answered poorly, so it was necessary to ask follow up questions to get sufficient answers. Hereby, the interviewers reformulated the questions to follow-up questions without changing the content or explained the questions without giving too much information about possible answers.

**Analyses**

The interviews were transcribed verbatim and the selected quotes were translated into English. The data was imported to ATLAS.ti (1993). The interviews were coded by the three researchers, whereby one coded nine interviews and each of the other two coded eight interviews. To guarantee that the way of coding was the same for every researcher, everyone coded three interviews independently from each other. Then similarities and differences of coding were worked out and adjusted, so on the basis of the codes from the first three interviews an equal code scheme (see Appendix C) could be produced. Hereby, the content was sometimes overlapping, so context information determined which code was used. As an example, relationships and meaning were sometimes not clearly distinguished in the statements of the participants. So, when they were asked what gives meaning to their life and the answer was 'family', the code 'meaning' was used, not the code 'relationships'. The coding scheme was then used for all the other interviews, whereby a few codes were added during the process. Sentences and phrases were coded and also context information was used.

The coding procedure was an inductive approach in terms of analyzing additional elements and differences between groups, as well as deductive, when the elements of the PERMA model were considered. Through this mixed approach, additional elements to the model were found. In the analysis the statements about each element of the PERMA model was listed and compared. Hereby it was found that the participants made a distinction between two topics within the description of every element: a social and a work-related view point. So, both topics included different perspectives on each element, which can be seen in the following result section.

**Results**

In the analysis two main topics concerning a good life could be found, which were reported as important for every age group: self orientation vs. family orientation and the importance of work. Moreover, additional elements were mentioned as important, which are summarized as attitude and circumstances. In the following sections differences and similarities of age-groups are described with regard to the main themes and the included PERMA elements, as well as additional elements.

**Self orientation vs. Family orientation**

The first topic is about the difference of being primarily self-focused or family-focused between age-groups. Here, young people focused more on themselves and their own interests compared to the middle-age and old age group, who emphasized social environments, especially family more than young people did. This difference could be seen though all elements of the PERMA model.

When it came to **Positive Emotions**, all participants described that it is important to have positive emotions in a good life. But the different age groups gained their positive emotions from different sources. Young individuals described mainly fun as a positive emotion. Also braveness, laughter and happiness were mentioned here, which they experienced alone or with friends at free time activities like doing sport, going on parties or travelling.

> *'Positive emotions, at a nice day when I can enjoy life and can finally stop learning. Also for example, I do a lot of sport (…) and by that I am happy to get away from my daily routine.' (young age)*

In contrast, the middle-aged and old age group of participants described to experience positive emotions more related to their family. Harmony within the family, experiencing the joy of family members, happiness during shared activities and to feel beloved and needed by the family were valued by both groups.

> *'Being in accordance with my family. That there are frictions that can be solved.' (middle-age)*

> *'[Positive emotions are] feelings I experience every day (…) when I fetch my granddaughter from kindergarten and she raises her arms and does not know how to handle her enthusiasm, that are positive emotions for me.' (old age)*

**Engagement** is another element where young people were more self-focused compared to the other age groups. Young people interpreted engagement as personal engagement for the own interests. Thereby, they described to be committed to their job and work success, as well as with the preservation of their friendships or doing things for their own passion.

> *'Work and my social life, that's where I have to be committed with, otherwise I run the risk to lose my work (...). The same with my friends, when I do not cultivate my contacts, they will not have any reason to stay in contact with me. An important point would get lost for me.' (young age)*

The engagement for the own person was mentioned as less important for middle-age people, compared to the younger ones. But they described, that it is important for them to have periods of rest, where they just can concentrate on themselves. Old people, in contrast, did not mentioned personal engagement

> *'At the moment, I'm committed with myself, because I am so tired after work, that there is no room for improvement left. Only [engage] that much, that it's still good for you. That you feel: 'it's good for me'. And then I need a period of rest. It is important to know that.' (middle-age)*

Also social and political engagement was described. Most young people said that it is important to help other people and engage socially in something meaningful, but they also said that a lack of time, money and energy restrained them from social engagement.

> *'It is a privilege and luxury to find the time [for social and political engagement]' (young age)*
>
> *'Engaging in charitable associations [besides my daily work] would demand too much and reduce the good life for me. I could not enjoy my time for myself.' (young age)*

Social engagement was described similar in the middle-aged group. To engage socially was described as very time-consuming and therefore not many middle-aged people were committed with social and voluntary engagement. Work was reported as very debilitating, so participants explained the plan to socially engage when they would reach pension, because in that period more time and energy would be left to focus on other things. These arguments got supported in the statements of older individuals, who actually did engage in voluntary activities. Old people explained that it is a privilege of age to have the time for social engagement. It was also a necessity for many old people to engage in something after pension, otherwise they felt useless and empty. They often described that they want to have a meaningful task for others and want to feel needed. Engaging in voluntary and charitable projects therefore helped to feel needed, gave a task and company.

> *'[Social] engagement is (...) absolutely necessary to avoid emptiness (...) in everyday life. There is a hole at the beginning of pension (...) which I find very dangerous (...). That's why I only can recommend (...) to engage voluntary or with the family, relatives or neighbors.' (old age)*

When it came to **Relationships**, young people mentioned family as important, as well as middle-aged and old age individuals. But young individuals talked more about the importance of good friendships or romantic relationships instead of mentioning their family as a main source, where they gain their happiness and wellbeing from.

> *'If I had not the relationship to my best friend, I would not have anyone to talk with. And if I had not the relation to my girlfriend, I would also miss something. People I can talk to, people I can trust.' (young age)*

Trust, loyalty and harmony are values which were important for young individuals within relationships, especially in their friendships. Those were also a source of fun and activities. Middle-aged people had their focus mostly on their family. The most important relations were to their children, spouse, or other family members as siblings or parents, which seem to change over time compared to younger individuals.

> *'Today I appreciate the time with my family more [than when I was young].' (middle-aged)*

> *'The relationship to my children [is important for me]. To have a relationship, where we can trust each other. (...) The relation to my parents, to my siblings [is also important].' (middle-aged)*

Also old people described that family is the type of relationship they are most concerned with. Especially children and grandchildren were mentioned as important relationships for a good life, but also spouses, siblings and other relatives. Being around other people and having harmonic relationships was highly valued, also because it gave old people the feeling to be needed, as well as it was described with engagement. The participants described to need fewer relationships particularly friendships, as they got older compared to when they were younger. It was still important for them to stay in contact with other people and not to be alone, but intensive relationships were described to be limited.

> *'So, Family, yes [they are important]. And we also have friends (...) that we meet from time to time, but concrete relationships (...) I prefer to keep them in distance.' (old age)*

Furthermore, young individuals described **Meaning** as an important factor for a good life, whereby they again were more self-focused than the other age-groups. They described work-

related achievements as giving meaning to their life, but also goals that were not related to work gave their life meaning. Personal goals as getting married and having children was mentioned by the majority of young participants. In those statements, not the spouse or the children self were meant to give meaning to their life, but to attain these big goals in life was described as meaning.

> *'(…) if I would have children, I would like to bequeath something to them (…), to be able to afford something for them.' (young age)*

This is different compared to middle-age people. They described family and also raising their children and parenting as meaning in life.

> *'Meaning today means for me, to raise a family, bring up children and when the children lead an independent life, then life makes sense to me.' (middle-age)*

For old people, meaning was mainly related to social contacts as well as to social engagement. Having a task, being a role model and teaching others one's own skills was interpreted as a sort of engagement which gives meaning to life. Next to that, meaning was not only related to engagement but also to relationships. Having a good and harmonic relation and bringing joy to others, was reported as meaning, too.

> *'Bringing others joy, too. (…) Life is not about arguing and fighting.' (old age)*

The last element was **Accomplishment**. For young people, accomplishments were work-related, which will be discussed later in more detail. In contrast, middle-aged and old people described to appreciate accomplishments mainly in a social form. Having a healthy and satisfied family, stable relationships and a good time together was valued as great accomplishments.

> *'Accomplishments for me are stabile relationships. By that everything is included: family, siblings, children. That doesn't come from nothing, you have to work for that, so that's why this is an accomplishment for me.' (old age)*

Taking all elements of the PERMA model into account when concerning social factors for a good life, it can be concluded that young people concentrate mostly on themselves when they think about a good life. When people get older and raise a family, the focus on only personal interests becomes less important. For middle-aged and old people social relations, especially family is the center of a good life and all other PERMA elements are related to that.

**The Importance of Work at different ages**

The second topic is concerning work, which played a significant role in the life of young and middle-aged people. Here, a difference of the content of work could be found. Old people were beyond the age of 65, therefore had already reached pension and job-based working was not important anymore. In this section, the focus will first lie on the differences in the perception of job-based working, between young and middle-old people regarding to the PERMA model. At the end the perception of work for old people will be explained.

For young people **Positive Emotions** also contained work-related emotions like pride, getting appreciation and enjoyment of work. Those emotions were expressed as important by for example a successful apprenticeship, solving a task perfectly or the daily approval of colleagues and bosses.

> *'When my boss gives me approval or an advancement, that's of course success for me!' ( young age)*

Middle-aged people also mentioned to value work-related approval, but it was reported as less important than other emotions. **Engagement** for young people was described as personal engagement for goals to be successful at work

> *'Of course [I am committed] with work. So that I can have a good position and also to learn a lot.' (young age)*

The middle-aged individuals reported personal engagement as doing things that are good for the own person, whereby it was often mentioned to have periods of rest besides work. Many middle-aged people describe their work as stressful and exhausting, so they are committed with finding a Work-Life Balance.

> *'It is a daily struggle to survive at work and there between you have to find your Work-Life Balance.' (middle-aged)*

So, in contrast to young individuals, middle-aged ones did not engage for the achievement of work success, but for a compensation of work.

Furthermore, work-relationships where mentioned as important **Relationships** for both age groups. Young people as well as middle-aged people valued harmonic relationships at work, to have a positive work environment. Especially, middle-aged people reported to value respectful relations because of the ongoing years they had to work until they reach pension.

> *‚A negative example is a lady, who works in the kitchen [of the restaurant I work]. She is very unappealing, a very stressful person. And every time I interact with her, I face big problems (…)'(young age)*

When it came to **Meaning**, young people again addressed work. They wanted to have influence, leave marks in the world and achieve something meaningful with their work.

> '(…) maybe I develop something after my study, which is important for humankind, where I can be meaningful.' (young age)

This was very different to the middle-aged group, because they did not address work when they described meaning. When it came to **Accomplishments**, there were accomplishments of work mentioned, that were related to meaning for young individuals.

> 'I don't want to live only to work and to do the things others want me to, but I want to have my own ideas (…) and people that support me.' (young age)

But young participants also discussed actual and past accomplishments, they were proud of. So, work-related accomplishments were also a source of positive emotions.

> 'Under accomplishment I also understand, to have my master. That's something I worked for in my apprenticeship. To have success and obtain my master, that's great!' (young age)

Furthermore, work- related accomplishments were in a direct causation to the potential of earning money, which was another important factor for young people. By that, work was not seen as working for its own sake, but as a necessary component to earn money and by that they afforded things as cars, clothes, a house or a holiday journey.

> 'Having a lot of money of course, to buy clothes and being dressed-up, and looking neat. So, that I drive a nice car (…).' (young age)

When people came from young to middle-age, individuals described work only as a necessity to earn money. It was important for them not to worry about finances and therefore an accomplishment, when they earned enough money with their job.

> '(…) it is important for me to afford something or having less financial worries, that is of course nice.' (middle-aged)

> 'Earning money with my job is an accomplishment. When I manage that, in a stressful, exhausting job with a lot of challenges, it's an accomplishment for me.' (middle-aged)

Middle-aged people also often described to be afraid of old-age poverty.

> 'And since I have to work until pension, it is very important for me, that I have a job that I can achieve with old bones, just to have the money and not being poor in old-age. That's very important for me.' (middle-aged)

Taking old age at this point into account, a similarity between accomplishments and earning money could be seen. Old people beyond the age of 65 were not working anymore, but the

participants reported that it is important for them to have an appropriate income in old age as a tribute for life-long and hard work. Although job-based work played no role anymore, in the life of older adults, another type of 'work' was described. Managing everyday life, like doing chore-work or handle financials were expressed as things old people were concerned with. This is related to Positive Emotions and Accomplishments. Often small things that were undertaken, like baking or chore work were stressful when people were older and therefore interpreted as accomplishments. Managing these things in everyday life was not only experienced as accomplishments but also caused positive emotions, as pride.

> *'When I bake cakes and it was a success. That is accomplishment for me!' (old age)*
> *'If I would wake up in the morning and would think that everything I do during the day is meaningless (…) No, I am happy (…) when I managed it to iron the laundry and put everything back to the wardrobe. (…) Even though I am tired and done, but being able to do that makes me happy.' (old age)*

So, work seemed to be a central aspect of a good life, which could be found back in every element of PERMA. But the content and motivation why people work were different in young and middle-age. Next to that, earning and having money was very important for each age-group and perceived as an essential factor for a good life. When people get older, smaller achievements were valued compared to younger age groups.


**Additional elements**

Finally, there were other important elements mentioned in every age group as additional elements to PERMA. Those additional elements were summarized in two topics 'attitude' towards life and the given 'circumstances'.

Considering the first topic of additional elements 'attitude', it could be seen that having a positive attitude to life was reported as important by all age groups. By that satisfaction was reported as essential for a good life.  This meant for the young and middle-aged, to be satisfied and value the things you actually have, regardless of any external factors.

> *‚A good life, of course satisfaction is a big word. A good life is (…) when you value the things you have. (…) Having an iPhone and being used to this standard, and still many people are dissatisfied, because (…) the display of their iPhone is broken. (…) many people don't value what they have (…) but it's important.' (young age)*

Old individuals described satisfaction different. Satisfaction in present days included for older individuals to value what they have, like relationships or a house and a garden, which was similar to the other age-groups. But, they also found it important to value what they were able

to do, like managing everyday life. Looking back and having reached all goals in life, like raising a family and making a career was satisfying for old people. But still they were satisfied by the small goals and accomplishments they can reach know.

> *'When you are older, goals and wishes which cannot be attained anyway are useless. I could not go on vacation with my husband, well, it would be possible (…), but it would also be exhausting and demanding. (…). That's life (…), you have to value what you have and what you are able to do.' (old age)*

This is different, compared to the other age groups. Young people reported that reaching big goals is important for them. They described traveling as a huge goal. Six of the seven people in the young aged group mentioned traveling as important.

> *'[I feel good] when I do something adventurous, that I haven't done before. (…) I want to travel a lot, explore the world and take a lot [experiences] with me. That's what increases my wellbeing.' (young age)*

In comparison to that, middle-aged people reported to find it important to go on holidays, but they did not interpret this as an important goal for a good life. Even if young people described to find the achievement of big goals important, they also valued small goals and the enjoyment of small things like nature, good weather or food. This was also valued by the middle-age and old age people.

> *'Enjoying small moments, enjoying the nature and small things which are there anyway. To see more the positive things I have, instead of things that I miss. (…) That's where I get my positive emotions from. And of course the weather plays an important role, if there's wonderful summer weather I feel better.' (middle-aged)*

The second topic of additional elements 'circumstances' includes the elements carefreeness and health, that both were mentioned by every age group. Carefreeness describes to live a life without worries that are burdens for people. Young people reported to find it important not to worry about finances, as having a house and a car, and safety within relationships and work. But also health was reported as a main factor for a good life. Both mental and physical health were mentioned here.

> *'As long I am healthy, surrounded by good people, especially friends, everything is fine. And of course, no financial worries (…).' (young age)*

For middle-aged people the wellbeing of family members was reported as important and related to the own carefreeness, which was reported as significant for a good life. But also being and staying healthy, and no financial worries also regarding to the future were reported.

> *'(...) that my family is doing fine. And of course I wish to be healthy and to stay healthy in the future, and to a sufficient pension later.' (young age)*

People in the old age also appreciated it not to worry about their health and their future. Many people were afraid to be helpless in the future and to be depended on others, regarding to their health.

> *'In my current situation, a good life means to me, being autonomous and not directed by others' (old age)*

Both topics attitude and circumstances, with their included elements, are important to mention when it comes to the most important factors for a good life. Especially satisfaction, health and carefreeness are elements which were perceived as important by every age group. Those elements were described as an addition to the general elements of the PERMA, so none of the five elements was able to sufficiently cover the content of satisfaction, health and carefreeness.

**Discussion**

This study had the aim to explore to what extent the PERMA model fits with the perceptions of people at different ages and whether the perceptions of a good life differ among age groups. The statements of the participants about a good life showed that there are differences among age groups. Especially the interpretations of the elements differed by age; still all of the elements were perceived as important regardless of the age group, and additional elements were mentioned that are not included in the PERMA model.

The first research question is concerned with the integrity of the PERMA model for a good life. Here, it can be said, that all of the elements provided by the model, were perceived as important within all age groups. Hence, it is important to mention here, that the elements were interpreted different by the participants. Especially 'Engagement' was interpreted in different ways. While Seligman (2011) describes Engagement as a state of flow and being absorbed by a task or a situation, none of the participants interpreted Engagement as a flow. The participants described Engagement whether as personal engagement, where people are committed with their own person and interests, or as social and political engagement, where people are committed with helping others or improve political aspects. So, the different elements cause different associations for people, which Seligman does not take into account. Therefore the PERMA model does not exactly match with the perceptions of people about a good life. But still, it was found that the mentioned factors are important for a good life. In order to create a complete picture of what is important for a good life, it might be necessary to consider more elements than the five mentioned in the PERMA model, as the participants described additional elements that are important for them. Elements as satisfaction, health and carefreeness were highly valued by the people in this study. This finding is in line with other studies, which also concluded that health has a great impact on life and reported as important as social relationships (Hall 1976; Lyubomirsky, King & Diener, 2005).

With regard to the second research question two main topics were identified in the descriptions of the participants: 'self orientation vs. family orientation' and 'the importance of work'. Besides that 'additional elements' as attitude towards life and its circumstances were found. So, especially the first and the second topic were focused by every age group, and all the elements of the PERMA model were included. But every age group focused on different perspectives within these topics. While the young people focused mainly on their own interests and on work success for their own satisfaction, middle-aged people were more family orientated and saw work only as a necessity. Old people were also more family

orientated, whereby they reported to find it important to have a task and manage everyday life. The additional elements satisfaction, goals, enjoyment, carefreeness and health were mentioned as important factors for a good life. Those elements were not directly related to the elements of PERMA, but still perceived as important for every age group. Here, the perspectives were also different with regard to the age groups. Young people were satisfied when they were able to reach goals, could enjoy their free time and did not have to worry about finances or health. In contrast, old people could not attain many goals anymore and had to be satisfied with the life they lived and the goals they already attained. Middle-aged people can be seen as right in the middle of both groups, as they still had goals but less than the younger ones. It was important for them to be satisfied, which they achieved while enjoying small things and when they had to worry less.

So, in general it could be seen, that the motivations of living a good life differ among age groups. This finding is in line with other literature as the motivational theory of lifespan development (Heckhausen, Wrosch & Schulz, 2010). The theory describes the regulation of motivations as a central feature during lifespan. Changes in life-course opportunities are reflected by selecting, pursuing, and adapting developmental and personal goals. With a 'general life-course trajectory', Heckhausen, Wrosch & Schulz (2010) describe that the opportunities at different life-stages first increase in young age and then decrease by getting older. The opportunities are influenced by biological and social factors, and therefore shape the motivations of people at different ages.

This current study found, that achievements change from personal work-related goals to more social forms of achievement through life-span. According to this Hill, Burrow, O'Dell and Thornton (2010) found, that also the definitions of meaning in life become more social with increasing age. So, people's motivations develop and change during life-span, and therefore can be seen as an indicator for shaping the perception of what a good life contains for people in different ages.

Next to that, changes in identity during life-span can also be seen as an influential factor. The statements of young people in this study were mainly about personal goals and own interests, which is in line with Erikson's theory about psychosocial development (1959, 1963), where the stage of 'young adulthood' is described as a phase were individuals are more self-focused and explore their identity (Rider & Sigelman, 2010). Also the task of generativity, which is focused during 'middle adulthood' (Erikson, 1963), could be found back in the current study, where middle-aged people stated that raising children give their life meaning, and in general were found to be more family orientated. The task of integrity for the

stage of 'late adulthood', which includes a positive evaluation of life (Erikson, 1963) could also be found in some statements of old people about satisfaction. Here, they state that it is important for them to be satisfied with the life they lived. But more important for them was, to find new tasks and roles after reaching pension. Furthermore, research has shown that many old people view themselves no longer as responsible for the 'maintenance of the world' (Erikson, Eriskon, & Kivnick, 1986). By getting older and adapting new roles, people become able to enjoy their life more, e.g. as a grandparent or as a provider of experience and wisdom for their social network (Koger, 2007). This could be found back in the current study, where old people described to find it important to have a task and also to act like a role model for others. Also the family orientation and the enjoyment of grandparenthood are factors that are important for old people, when they obtain new roles in old age. So, motivations as well as identities seem to change over life-span, which both can have an influence on the perceptions of people in different ages regarding a good life.

**Limitations and Recommendations**

One limitation of the study occurs in the context of the interview scheme. First, the participants were asked about their general conception of good life, afterwards they were asked to describe their perception of the different elements of PERMA and whether they find them important for a good life. Through this approach, the participants addressed the PERMA elements in their statements about a good life, which probably would have been different with another way of asking questions. If the participants were asked in a more open manner and without explaining the PERMA model to them, they might not have mentioned the elements of PERMA. This would have given a clearer identification of what is important for a good life and whether the single PERMA elements are a part of this description.

Next to that, the inter-rater reliability was not measured. Through that, it is not possible to draw conclusions about the coherence between the three researchers with regard to the conduction of the interviews. Even though, specific arrangements between the researchers were made, bias cannot be excluded in this study. For example, the researchers evaluated if the questions were answered sufficiently or if follow-up questions were necessary to ask. Therefore it is possible, that different evaluations influenced how detailed the answers were given, and by that influenced the available information's for this study. This can also be found in the duration of the interviews, which varied in a between 11 and 60 minutes.

Furthermore, the coding procedure is based on the agreement to include content information. Thereby, the interpretation of the statements which could be assigned to more

than one code, referred to the asked question. For example, when participants were asked what they find meaningful in their life and they answered with 'family', the answer was coded as 'meaning' instead of 'relationship'. Coding the answer as 'relationship' could also have been a reasonable way of coding, but rejected here because the coding procedure intended to figure out the content of the mentioned factors instead of the frequency of words. Therefore, interpretations could have been different if the content information would not have been taken into account. This means that only mentioning a factor would have led to the interpretation that the factor is important, without considering the content and *why* the factor is important. Also distinctions between 'important' and 'unimportant' for a good life would not have been taken into account, if only words without content information were coded. Therefore, the use of content information was chosen here as the best possible option for coding.

Moreover, the use of three inclusion criteria based on the cooperation of the three researchers may have caused bias. The criteria of education and the country of origin were taken into account, which were not important for this current study. Even though, it was described to distribute the participants equally on every criteria, it occurred that the old participants were only individualists and none of them collectivist. This could have influenced the results, as research has found that people from individualistic countries are more self-concerned (Huff & Kelley, 2003). But instead, in the current study it was found that the individualistic participants in the old age-group were family-orientated. By that, it is not clear how the other two criteria influenced the results of this study.

Another point that has to be considered is the variation between biological age and social age. The purposive sample included participants on the basis of biological age, but did not considered factors that are relevant for social age. Neugarten (1996) described social age as marked by biological and social events, whereby e.g. marriage and childbirth often mark the end of one social age period and cannot be exactly marked by biological age. In this study, all participants between the age of 20 and 40 had no children and only one person was married, which cannot only be a cause of biological age. Even if marriage and child birth typically begins and ends later than it did two centuries ago, chances are high that people between the ages of 20 to 40 are already married or have children (Heckhausen & Schulz, 1999). If that would have been the case in this study, the answers of young people could have been more family orientated, as seen in middle-aged group. This means for the current study, that the generalizabilty for the conclusions of the different age groups are limited and therefore not applicable for every person within the different age groups. Therefore, it is

necessary to distinguish in future research between biological and social age, which can have an influence on the motivations and perceptions regarding a good life.

Future research could also consider, that there may be more elements than the five of the PERMA model, that need to be addressed in order to create a complete picture of what is important for a good life. In this study, it was found that especially health, satisfaction and carefreeness were reported as important. The fact that those were highly valued by people indicates that those elements can be important to include, in order to get a better overview of essentials for a good life. Therefore, future research may consider these additional elements to PERMA.

In this study, the PERMA model was found to be an indicator for important aspects concerning a good life, but not sufficient to give a complete description, as aspects like health, satisfaction and carefreeness are also important to consider. Also differences between age-groups concerning self-orientation vs. family orientation, as well as the perceptions of work were found across the elements of the PERMA model. A more detailed view on the different perceptions of a good life should be taken into account when it comes to promoting wellbeing through PERMA in a large sample.

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Appendix A: Informed Consent Form

## Informierte Einwilligung

Titel der Studie: Was beinhaltet ein gutes Leben?

Verantwortlicher Untersucher: Noortje Kloos

Ausführende Studenten: Meike Keseberg, Tizian Eckhardt, Sarah Leimkötter

## Informationen

Die Frage nach dem guten Leben beschäftigt Menschen schon seit vielen Generationen. Im Auftrag der Universität Twente suchen auch wir nach einer Antwort auf die Frage nach dem guten Leben. Wir wollen wissen was Sie unter einem guten Leben verstehen. Dafür werden wir Ihnen in Form eines Interviews einige Fragen stellen.

Das Interview wird ungefähr 20 Minuten dauern. Wichtig ist, dass es hierbei keine falschen Antworten gibt. Die Teilnahme an dieser Studie ist vollkommen freiwillig und das Interview selbst kann jederzeit abgebrochen werden. Das Gespräch wird aufgenommen um es im Nachhinein zu verschriftlichen. Dabei werden alle persönliche Daten anonymisiert, sodass keine Rückschlüsse mehr auf Ihre Person gezogen werden können. Die Daten werden nur zu wissenschaftlichen Zwecken verwendet und nicht an Unbeteiligte weitergegeben.

## Durch den Teilnehmer auszufüllen

Ich erkläre hiermit, dass ich auf eine für mich verständliche Art und Weise über die Art, Methoden und das Ziel der Studie informiert worden bin. Ich weiß, dass die Ergebnisse der Studie nur anonym und vertraulich an Dritte weitergegeben werden. Meine Fragen sind zur Zufriedenheit beantwortet worden. Ich akzeptiere, dass der Inhalt des Gesprächs aufgenommen wird und für eine wissenschaftliche Analyse verwendet wird. Ich nehme absolut freiwillig an dieser Studie teil. Dabei behalte ich mir das Recht vor zu jedem Moment und ohne Angabe von Gründen die Teilnahme an dieser Studie zu beenden.

Name des Teilnehmers.......................................................................................................

Datum…………………………………………………………………………………

Unterschrift des Teilnehmers…………………………………………………………

**Durch den Untersucher auszufüllen**

Ich habe sowohl schriftlich als auch mündlich über die Studie informiert. Weitere Fragen über die Studie werde ich bestmöglich klären. Der Teilnehmer wird durch einen vorzeitigen Abbruch der Studie keine negativen Konsequenzen tragen müssen.


Name der ausführenden Studenten...................................................................................

Datum…………………………………………………………………………….

Unterschrift der ausführenden Studenten……………….…………………………….

Appendix B: Interview Scheme

## 1. Fragebogen zum Interview

Um das Interview später für unsere Studie analysieren zu können, werden einige allgemeine Informationen über Ihre Person benötigt. Bitte füllen Sie die nachfolgenden Fragen gut lesbar aus und kreuzen Sie die zutreffende Antwort an.

1. Wie lautet ihr Geburtsdatum?  …...../…...../………….

2. Was Ihr höchster Bildungsabschluss?
   - ☐ Kein Schulabschluss
   - ☐ Hauptschulabschluss
   - ☐ Realschulabschluss
   - ☐ (Fach-) Abitur
   - ☐ Abgeschlossene Ausbildung
   - ☐ Meister/ Techniker
   - ☐ Bachelor/ Master/ Diplom
   - ☐ Promotion
   - ☐ Sonstige, nämlich

     …………………………………………………………..

3. Sind Sie im Moment noch im Bildungssystem?
   - ☐ Ja
   - ☐ Nein

4. Sind Sie berufstätig?
   - ☐ Ja
     - ➢ Welchen Beruf üben Sie aus? ………………………………………….…….

   - ☐ Nein

   - ☐ Anders, nämlich (Student, Renter, Hausfrau o.ä.):

     …………………………………………………………………….…..

5. Wie ist Ihr derzeitiger Familienstand?

☐ Ledig

☐ Verlobt

☐ Verheiratet

☐ Geschieden

☐ Verwitwet

6. Haben Sie Kinder?

☐ Ja

☐ Nein

7. In welchem Land sind Sie geboren? …………………………………………………………

➢ *Falls Sie nicht in Deutschland geboren sind:*

Wie lange leben Sie schon in Deutschland? ...........................................

## 2. Fragen über das gute Leben

Nun möchte ich Ihnen gerne einige offene Fragen stellen, die sich darauf beziehen wie Sie ein "Gutes Leben" definieren würden. Die erste Frage lautet:

1. Was beinhaltet ein "Gutes Leben" für Sie?

1a. Fällt Ihnen noch was anderes ein?

2. Was beinhaltet ein "Gutes Leben" für Sie in unterschiedlichen Lebensphasen? Denken Sie dabei an die Vergangenheit, an das Jetzt und an die Zukunft.

## 3. Fragen zum PERMA model

Auch in der positiven Psychologie versucht man herauszufinden was ein gutes Leben beinhaltet. Seligman, einer der Psychologen auf diesem Gebiet, hat ein Modell entwickelt, welches versucht das gute Leben zu beschreiben. Laut des Modells gehören zu einem guten Leben positive Emotionen, Engagement, Beziehungen, sinnhaftes Leben und Erfolg. Ich werde zu diesen Punkten nun nach und nach Fragen stellen.

1.        Was verstehen Sie unter positiven Emotionen?

1a.       In welchen Situationen empfinden Sie positive Emotionen?

1b        Gehört dies für Sie zu einem guten Leben dazu?

2.        Was verstehen Sie unter Engagement?

2a.       Wofür würden Sie sich engagieren/ einsetzten?

2b.       Gehört dies für Sie zu einem guten Leben dazu?

3.        Was verstehen Sie unter Beziehungen?

3a.       Können Sie mir Beispiele für Beziehungen nennen?

3b        Gehört dies für Sie zu einem guten Leben dazu?

4.        Was verstehen Sie unter einem sinnhaften Leben?

4a.       Was gibt Ihrem Leben einen Sinn?

4b.       Gehört dies für Sie zu einem guten Leben dazu?

5.        Was verstehen Sie unter Erfolg?

5a.       Wo ist Ihnen Erfolg wichtig?

5b.       Gehört dies für Sie zu einem guten Leben dazu?

Also, wir haben ja jetzt über positive Emotionen, Engagement, Beziehungen, sinnhaftes Leben und Erfolg gesprochen. Und wie gesagt, Seligman sagte, dass diese Aspekte alle zu einem guten Leben gehören.

6.        Gibt es noch Aspekte die für Sie zu einem guten Leben dazu gehören und hier fehlen?

Wir sind nun am Ende des Interviews angelangt. Vielen Dank für ihre Teilnahme!

Wenn Sie Interesse an den Ergebnissen unserer Studie haben, können Sie gerne Ihre E-mail Adresse in die Liste eintragen, wir werden Sie dann informieren.

Appendix C: Code Scheme

| General topic | 2nd Level | 3rd Level | Example | Citation |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Self-focused | Positive Emotion | | Braveness, laughter, happiness | 'I do a lot of sport (…) and by that I am happy to get away from my daily routine' |
| | Engagement | Personal engagement | Doing things for own passion, for the own person/ interests | 'At the moment, I'm committed with myself' |
| | Relationship | | Friends | '(…) to have a friend I can trust' |
| | Meaning | | Work, travel, marriage, house | '(…) if I would have children, I would like to bequeath something to them' |
| | Accomplishments | | Good grade, success at work or activities | 'I of course like to win' |
| Social/Family orientated | Positive Emotions | | Harmony within family, joy of family members, happiness during shared activities | 'When I fetch my granddaughter from kindergarten and she raises her arms and does not know how to handle her enthusiasm' |
| | Engagement | Social engagement/ Political engagement | Charitable activities, helping others | '[Social] engagement is (…) absolutely necessary to avoid emptiness' |
| | Relationship | | Family: spouse, children, siblings, cousins, relatives | 'Being in accordance with my family.' |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Meaning | | Family, raising children | 'Meaning today means for me, to raise a family' |
| | Accomplishments | | Having a healthy/ satisfied family | 'Accomplishments for me are stabile relationships' |
| Work | Positive Emotions | | Pride, appreciation, enjoyment of work | 'When my boss gives me approval' |
| | Engagement | | Success at work, work-life balance | 'Of course [I am committed] with work. So that I can have a good position(…)' |
| | Relationships | | Bosses, Colleagues | 'It's important to work in harmony with your colleagues' |
| | Meaning | | Having influence, leaving marks | '(…) maybe I develop something after my study, which is important for humankind, where I can be meaningful.' |
| | Accomplishments | | Success, earning money | 'Having a lot of money of course, to buy clothes and being dressed-up, and looking neat. So, that I drive a nice car (…).' |
| Additional elements | Satisfaction | | Value things, past and present, | 'A good life is (…) when you value the things you have' |
| | Goals | | Reaching goals, small goals, travel | 'I want to travel a lot, explore the world and take a lot [experiences] with me' |

| | Enjoyment | | Enjoying nature, weather, free time, activities, good food | 'Enjoying small moments, enjoying the nature and small things which are there anyway' |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Carefreeness | Personal Carefreeness | No worries about own health, family, money, future | 'As long I am healthy, surrounded by good people, especially friends, everything is fine. And of course, no financial worries (…).' |
| | | General Carefreeness | Peace, environment | 'An peaceful environment is of course important.' |
| | Health | | Mobility, no pain, functioning well | 'Health is very important. When you were really ill once (…), that are really hard times' |