Abstract:

One major area of study in the burgeoning field of positive psychology is virtues, the strengths of human character that engender excellence. However, the empirical assessment of these strengths of character requires further clarification, development, and validation. The present research study sought to develop and refine a virtues scale – the Comprehensive Inventory of Virtuous Instantiations of Character (CIVIC) scale – and establish evidence for its construct validity. In Study 1, virtue items were generated using the integrative classification system (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). In Study 2, the measure was further refined and the factor structure examined. Results revealed eight broad virtue dimensions: appreciation, wisdom, fortitude, interpersonal consideration, sincerity, temperance, transcendence, and empathy. In Study 3, character traits’ convergence with extant individual differences measures and personality measures as well as discriminability from social desirability and moral cognitive development were examined. Study 4 contrasted virtues’ and personality’s differential associations with morally-salient constructs showing that virtues were more strongly related to evaluative constructs. In Study 5, virtues was shown to predict performance and psychological well-being outcomes above and beyond personality. The implications of our findings for the assessment and taxonomy of virtues are discussed.