

Enhancing Adolescent's Well-Being: Addressing The Impact of Character Strengths

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Abstract

Well-being is a multifaceted concept closely linked to character strengths. By understanding the various character strengths of adolescents, we can foster their overall well-being, supporting their mental health and enabling them to flourish during this crucial developmental period. This study aimed to investigate how character strengths contribute to predicting well-being in adolescents. Data were collected from a sample of 200 students from Central Board of Secondary School and Indian Certificate of Secondary Education school using a convenience sampling method. To gather information, two standardized tools were utilized: the Values in Action Inventory (VIA-Y-R2) and the PERMA Profiler. The data were analysed using correlation and regression techniques. Findings revealed a significant positive relationship between character strengths and well-being of adolescent. The study highlights the importance of this positive personality traits for enhancing psychological well-being in adolescents. Additionally, it discusses the implications of applying positive psychology principles to improve adolescent well-being.

Key terms- Character Strengths, Well-being, Positive Psychology, Adolescents.

INTRODUCTION

Well-being was earlier described as an individual's evaluation of their status within society, considering personal goals, standards, and concerns. This concept is shaped by several factors including physical health, mental wellness, personal values, and social interactions (Rodrigues et al., 2020). Reflecting the significance of mental health within this framework, a 2017 WHO report notes that 10-20% of children and adolescents face mental health issues (Keles et al., 2020); studies also reveal that half of all mental disorders manifested by the age 18 (Kessler et al., 2007; Kim-Cohan et al., 2003). These findings emphasize the critical role of

mental well-being in overall quality of life and highlight the need for addressing mental health issues in early life to improve life quality.

Well-being is defined as "a positive mental state characterized by the presence of positive emotions and the absence of negative ones, alongside a sense of life satisfaction and purpose" (Butler & Kern, 2016). In adolescents, well-being is closely associated with various developmental as well personal factors. These may include engagement in school, academic achievement, optimism, effective coping strategies, resilience against health challenges and positive personality traits (Proctor et al. 2009). In the present study

we examine the role of positive personality traits in well-being in adolescent students. Positive psychology has always aimed to enhance the understanding and practical development of character strengths and virtues (Park & Peterson, 2009). Character strengths, defined as positive personality traits, helps individuals in accomplishing tasks, enhancing job commitment, and improving interpersonal relationships (Harzer et al., 2014). These traits are relatively stable and universal, expressed through cognition, emotion, volition, and behaviour. They are viewed as fundamental components of human goodness and flourishing, with the potential to benefit others (Peterson & Seligman, 2004).

Character strengths are categorized into 24 positive traits organized into six virtue classes: wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, temperance, and transcendence (Seligman & Myerson, 2006). These virtues guide individuals in acquiring knowledge, achieving goals despite challenges, demonstrating civic virtues, and experiencing life beyond previous limits. Additionally, character strengths and virtues are found across various cultures, nations, and belief systems worldwide (Dahlsgaard et al., 2005; Park et al., 2006), serving as a foundation for optimal development and flourishing (Park & Peterson, 2009).

Character strengths are associated with numerous positive long-term outcomes in various aspects of life. They can also lead to more immediate results and be instrumental in achieving specific objectives. The manifestations of character strengths can serve multiple functions beyond those outlined by Peterson and Seligman (2004). Harzer and Ruch (2012) demonstrated that strengths such as resilience and self-regulation enhance an individual's ability to cope with stress and adversity. This ability to manage stress effectively contributes to greater overall well-being.

Schutte and Malouff (2019) discussed that emotional intelligence, a component of character strengths, significantly enhances interpersonal relationships and social support, which in turn contributes to well-being. Gander et al. (2022) conducted a meta-analysis of longitudinal studies, demonstrating that character strengths predict long-term well-being outcomes. Their research indicates that individuals who cultivate character strengths experience sustained improvements in well-being over time.

Strengths like perseverance and self-control facilitate the process of enhancing well-being by helping individuals overcome emotional challenges and remain focused on long-term objectives. Davis (1983) found that empathetic individuals are better equipped to demonstrate kindness and act in socially responsible ways, thereby reinforcing their character strengths in social contexts. Character strengths such as enthusiasm and grit are instrumental in sustaining motivation. By aligning their strengths with their emotional drives, individuals can achieve higher levels of performance and personal fulfilment (Duckworth et al., 2007).

Although numerous character profiles have been proposed for adults, it is crucial to examine multidimensional character profiles for adolescents, particularly in relation to their well-being (Moreira et al., 2015). On the basis of existing literature, for the present study it was hypothesized that character strength would have significant and positive impact on adolescents' well-being.

METHODOLOGY

Participants

Participants for the study were selected through a convenience sampling approach. Data were gathered from senior secondary students in the Varanasi district of Uttar Pradesh, enrolled in CBSE and ICSE board schools. The sample included 100 male and 100 female students, aged 15 to 18 years, with an average age of 15.30

years and a standard deviation of 1.01 years.

Psychometric Tools

In addition to collecting demographic information (such as participant’s name, age, gender, and school type), the following instruments were utilized for data collection in this study:

Value in Action – Youth-2 (VIA-Y-R2): The Value in Action – Youth-2 (VIA-Y-R2) inventory was employed to assess character strengths in terms of 6 virtues namely wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, temperance and transcendence. This tool evaluates all 24-character strengths using a 5-point Likert scale and consists of 98 items. It was developed through a partnership between Columbia University's Spirituality Mind Body Institute and the VIA Institute on Character (Jermann & McGrath, 2022). The reliability of the scale, measured by Cronbach's Alpha, was .850 for the current sample.

PERMA PROFILER (Butler & Kern, 2015): This instrument comprises 23 items with responses rated on an 11-point scale from 0 to 10, with clearly labelled endpoints. It is created to be more intuitive and attractive than other measures (Butler & Kern, 2015). The PERMA Profiler exhibited high internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .815 for the current sample.

Procedure

Permissions for data collection were secured from the administrations of CBSE and ICSE schools. Following the selection of participants and receipt of their signed consent, rapport was established with the students to facilitate data gathering. The questionnaire was then handed out, and students were instructed to read the guidelines thoroughly. They were allowed to take as much time as needed to complete the questionnaire. Participation was voluntary, and no compensation was provided. Scoring for all instruments adhered to the guidelines specified in their respective manuals. The study employed a correlational design, and the collected data were analysed using both correlation and regression analyses.

RESULT

To explore the relationship between character strengths (6 virtues) and well-being, a correlation analysis was conducted. The results are presented in the table 1.

The examination of table-1 revealed significant positive correlations among all dimensions of six virtues and Well-being, except for the virtue of Justice ($p < .01$). The correlations suggest that virtues are also interconnected. Virtue of transcendence is highly associated with well-being. These findings suggest that higher levels of character strengths are associated with greater well-being of adolescents.

Table-1; Pearson Correlation Coefficients, Means, and Standard Deviations for Character Strengths (6 virtues), and Well-being

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
Character	1.Wisdom	53.82	8.27	-				
	2.Courage	43.17	4.69	.288**	-			
	3.Humanity	35.07	4.28	.229**	.550**	-		
	4.Justice	34.12	6.02	.563**	.106	.029	-	
	5.Temperance	42.23	5.77	.496**	.423**	.403**	.275**	-
	6.Transcendence	60.52	6.48	.333**	.590**	.613**	.177*	.505**
7.Well-being	125.95	12.49	.254**	.562**	.594**	.087	.390**	.724**

N = 200. ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$

To explore the association of all the six virtues with well-being, a multiple regression analysis was performed. In this

analysis all the six virtues used as predictors of well-being. The findings

from this analysis were presented in table 2.

The results reported in Table 2 revealed that virtue of courage ($\beta = 0.152, p < 0.05$), humanity ($\beta = 0.191, p < 0.01$) and transcendence ($\beta = 0.526, p < 0.001$), were significant positive predictors of well-being. Here virtue of transcendence

Table-2: Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Well-being from Six Virtues (N=200)

Predictors		Criterion Variable
		Well-being
Character strengths	Wisdom	.019
	Courage	.152*
	Humanity	.191**
	Justice	-.034
	Temperance	-.017
	Transcendence	.526***
R		.758
R Square		.575
F		43.528***

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

Note- Standardized Beta (β) is reported in the table.

Discussion

This study was focus to explore the association of six virtues (which was measured in terms of 24-character strength) with well-being among adolescents. Using correlation and regression analysis this study illuminates how these six virtues are related to and influence overall adolescent well-being.

Our result is aligned with existing literature emphasizing the importance of character strengths in promoting well-being. For instance, a study by Ruch et al. (2020) examined the relationship between character strengths and various dimensions of well-being in adolescents, including life satisfaction, self-esteem, and overall happiness. The study found that strengths such as gratitude, hope, and perseverance were strongly associated with higher levels of well-being.

Virtue of transcendence, includes character strengths of appreciation of beauty, gratitude, hope, humour, and spirituality. These strengths are vital for enhancing

emerges as the strongest predictor of well-being of adolescents. On the other hand, virtue of wisdom, justice, and temperance did not show significant association with well-being. Table two further shows that all the six virtues explain 57.5 percent of total variance in explaining well-being among adolescents.

adolescent well-being. Adolescents who engage in transcendent activities or find meaning and purpose experience higher well-being, aligning with developmental theories on identity formation and existential contemplation.

Studies show that gratitude boosts well-being and reduces depression (Emmons & McCullough, 2003; Froh et al., 2008), while hope enhances resilience and coping (Snyder et al., 1991). Spiritual practices and beliefs contribute to greater life satisfaction and emotional stability (King & Boyatzis, 2004). Humour reduces stress and improves coping (Martin, 2001), and appreciation of beauty elevates mood and fosters a positive outlook (Kralik, 2016). Peterson and Seligman (2004) argue that character strengths, such as gratitude, hope, and perseverance, are fundamental to enhancing psychological well-being. Their research suggests that these strengths contribute to higher levels of life satisfaction and overall happiness, supporting our finding that virtue of

transcendence is a robust predictor of well-being among adolescents.

For adolescents, virtue of humanity—encompassing love, kindness, and social intelligence—and emotional intelligence—reflecting the ability to manage emotions—are crucial for well-being. A study by McGrath et al. (2022) focused on the impact of individual character strengths, such as kindness and social intelligence, on well-being among teenagers. The research found that strengths related to social interactions and emotional regulation, such as empathy and teamwork, were particularly influential in fostering well-being. Research shows that love and kindness enhance mental health, with Layous et al. (2012) finding that acts of kindness boost happiness and life satisfaction. High social intelligence improves social interactions and coping skills, leading to better well-being (Mayer et al., 2008). Emotional intelligence is associated with lower stress and better emotional adjustment (Schutte et al., 2019), and supportive relationships with peers and family are vital for psychological health (Wentzel, 1998; Bukowski et al., 2007). Effective emotional regulation is linked to lower anxiety and depression (Gross & John, 2003), underscoring its importance for resilience and overall well-being in adolescents.

Our finding also highlights the crucial role of virtue of courage—encompassing honesty, bravery, persistence, and zest—in adolescent well-being. Facing fears and overcoming challenges during this developmental stage significantly impacts psychological health. Snyder et al. (2002) demonstrated that bravery enhances resilience and stress management. Peterson and Seligman (2004) showed that honesty builds trust and positive relationships, vital for emotional stability. Dweck (2006) found that persistence increases life satisfaction and self-esteem, while Fredrickson (2001) linked zestful engagement with positive emotions and

resilience. Luthar and Cicchetti (2000) confirmed that courage supports resilience and mental health through traits like bravery and persistence.

Overall, the regression analysis highlights the importance of certain character strengths in predicting well-being among adolescents. The findings suggest that promoting transcendence, courage, and humanity can lead to improved well-being, while wisdom, justice, and temperance may not yet play significant roles at this developmental stage. This understanding can inform educators, parents, and mental health professionals in creating supportive environments that foster these key strengths.

Implications, Limitations and Direction for future Research

The study's results have important implications for enhancing adolescent well-being. The strong relationships identified between transcendence, courage, and humanity suggest that interventions promoting these strengths can significantly improve well-being. Programs that encourage awe, appreciation for beauty, and kindness, as well as activities that build courage through facing fears, are particularly effective. However, the limited influence of wisdom, justice, and temperance indicates that these traits may need different approaches or support to impact well-being during this developmental stage. Educators and mental health professionals should focus on strategies that cultivate the key strengths identified, while acknowledging that some traits may mature later in adolescence. This understanding can guide the development of targeted educational programs and therapeutic practices that foster the essential character strengths needed to enhance adolescent well-being. The study's findings may be limited by several factors. The use of convenience sampling from a specific educational context and geographic area may affect the generalizability of the results to broader

populations. Reliance on self-report measures introduces potential response biases, as adolescents might inaccurately report their traits due to social desirability or self-perception issues. Finally, using only self-reported data from adolescents limits the perspective; including inputs from teachers or parents could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the adolescents' attributes.

Future research should focus on several key areas to build on this study's findings. First, incorporating a more diverse and representative sample of adolescents from various locations and backgrounds will improve the generalizability of results. Utilizing objective measures and multiple informants, such as teachers and parents, can provide a more accurate assessment of these traits and reduce self-report biases. Additionally, exploring contextual factors like family dynamics and peer relationships will offer deeper insights into how these elements interact with character strengths. Finally, intervention research

should be conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of programs designed to enhance these traits, providing practical applications for improving adolescent well-being. Addressing these areas will refine our understanding of adolescent well-being and enhance interventions for positive psychological development.

Conclusions

Fostering key character strengths in adolescents is essential for enhancing their overall well-being. By prioritizing these strengths in educational and therapeutic settings, we can create supportive environments that empower young people to thrive. The findings of this study underscore the significant role that specific character strengths—particularly virtue of transcendence, courage, and humanity—play in promoting the well-being of adolescents. By prioritizing these strengths, we can cultivate an atmosphere that encourages young people to thrive.

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