

# Relationship between Character Strengths and Life Satisfaction among Emerging Adults

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## Abstract

Character strengths are positive traits that are critical in many positive life outcomes such as life happiness, life satisfaction etc. The present study examined the nature and strength of the relationship between character strengths and life satisfaction among emerging adults. The data was collected from 400 emerging adults and the Pearson's product moment correlation showed that Character strengths: Courage, Humanity, Justice, Temperance and Transcendence are positively correlated with life satisfaction among emerging adults. Whereas wisdom and knowledge character strength is not positively correlated with life satisfaction among emerging adults. The significance of the above findings for the field of positive psychology is discussed.

**Keyword:** Wisdom and knowledge, Courage, Transcendence, Humanity, Temperance, Justice and Satisfaction of Life.

## Introduction

Harzer and Ruch (2015) explored character strengths as the determinants of a satisfying, happy, and successful life, which can reflect on external factors, such as the conquest of good education, a stable social environment, or financial security. In this regard, according to Ovadia and Steger (2010), character strengths have been associated with subjective well-being (SWB). Proctor, Maltby and Linley (2011) state that within the scope of Positive Psychology, a study on happiness is often related to research on SWB - frequently used as synonyms.

According to Brdar, Anic and Rijavec (2011) studies on character strengths are important, since they refer to strengths that can contribute to an individual's well-being and happiness. Regarding the relationship between hope, vitality, gratitude, love, curiosity, persistence, and social intelligence strengths, and life satisfaction, indexes of correlation of low and moderate magnitude have been identified in this study. In the research conducted by Park *et al.* (2004), Brdar and Kashdan (2010), and Proctor *et al.* (2011), the strengths which were more related to life satisfaction were hope, vitality, gratitude, love, and curiosity, these are called heart strengths. Thus, it is possible to state that there is consistency between the data and the findings of the above mentioned authors, since vitality, gratitude, hope, and love have exhibited correlations of moderate magnitude with life satisfaction.

According to Park *et al.* (2004) among the strengths that best indicate life satisfaction, vitality is the most coherent one, for a person enjoying vitality is someone whose vivacity can be manifested not only in terms of productivity related to personal activities, but also as the contagious capacity of energizing the people around them. Likewise, there is an association between life satisfaction and gratitude strength, defined by Lambert, Graham, Fincham & Stillman (2009) as the recognition and valorization of an altruistic attitude, which favors the strengthening of social bonds and friendships, thus contributing to the happiness and satisfaction of an individual. Also, gratitude can be positively related to humor, which offers a useful perspective about life, and also helps restore positive aspects of a situation after a stressful event.

The hope strength also deserves to be highlighted, for it has shown its relationship with life satisfaction. On this regard, Bailey and Snyder (2007) point out that people who hope for something good about their future, by doing their best to achieve it, tend to be more satisfied. As to the love strength, Diener and Seligman (2002) suggest that individuals with good social relationships are happier, which leads them to experience a more accomplished life. The above mentioned authors highlight that social relationships can provide a necessary but insufficient condition for achieving happiness, that is to say, they do not guarantee a high level of joy, despite the fact that they influence this aspect considerably.

In relation to persistence, which in this research is one of the strengths most highly correlated to life satisfaction, Peterson *et al.* (2007) report that this finding may be related to the singularity of each nation. However, it has been verified that both the Swiss and the Brazilian samples share similarities in relation to persistence, for they are people used to persisting, notwithstanding the obstacle. It is important to point out that the social intelligence -strength has shown a significant correlation of low magnitude with life satisfaction, and that this finding is similar to Martí and Ruch(2014). Therefore, it seems that both the Brazilian and the Swiss samples are aware of their own motivations and feelings, but also of others, and that they know how to suit themselves to different social situations, which makes it easy for them to get a better feeling of life satisfaction.

The curiosity strength has also indicated significant correlation of low magnitude with life satisfaction, thus corroborating Park, *et al.* (2004) and Peterson's *et al.* (2007) results. However, these authors have found moderate magnitudes of that correlation. Kashdan and Steger (2007) report on curious people having an exploratory behavior, by seeking activities that facilitate learning, competence and self-determination, which in turn favors life satisfaction.

Subsequently, it has been observed that there is a difference between genders in relation to integrity, kindness, gratitude, and persistence strengths, and that for these four strengths women showed higher scores. Data are consistent with Brdar *et al.* (2011) findings which also found higher averages related to women regarding integrity, kindness, and gratitude strengths. Unlike Brdar *et al.* (2011) further researched

that women showed a higher average than men regarding the love strength. The authors also report that there are few studies assessing the differences between genders nevertheless, they considered as coherent the fact that women had higher scores regarding the strengths related to care and affection, such as vitality, gratitude, hope, and love. Although the results are related to study, and they also tend to obtain higher scores on intellectual strengths, namely, appreciation of beauty, creativity, broad mindedness, love for learning, wisdom, and bravery.

Martínez-Martí and Ruch (2014) evaluated had the same intention as Park *et al.* (2004) and Peterson *et al.* (2007) when they analyzed character strengths and life satisfaction. It is important to highlight that regarding Martí and Ruch (2014) found out that social intelligence strength was related to life satisfaction, unlike what other studies have demonstrated. Thus, it is possible to state that character strengths can be considered as universal characteristics; However, Ovadia and Steger (2012) stated that cultural differences can contribute to certain character strengths as well as to subjective well-being.

### Need for the study

The life satisfaction of an individual is an important factor in determining most of the related issues with individual like health and wellness state. A study conducted by Singh and Choubisa (2010) revealed that in Indian context materialistic gain found to be nullifying factor in determining psychological well-being. But as a resultant of industrialization, westernization people one can see changes pertaining to life style and attitude towards life and life satisfaction, well-being. Recent research studies were reviewed and found that Character Strengths influence various parameters which indicates Psychological well-being of individuals (Goodman, 2017; Yasminand Khan, 2017; Castro and Cosentino, 2016; Maria, Martí and Ruch, 2014; Kaufman, 2015; Toner, 2011; Park, and Peterson, 2009).

Five character strengths show a consistent, robust relationship to life satisfaction: Hope, zest, gratitude, curiosity, and love (Park, Peterson and Seligman, 2004). This has been replicated a number of times; for example, similar results can be found among Swiss, Germans, and Austrians (Ruch *et al.*, 2007), Croatians (Brdarand Kashdan, 2010), and young Japanese adults (Shimais *et al.*, 2006).

The character strengths which are least related to life satisfaction are modesty/humility, creativity, appreciation of beauty and excellence, judgment, and love of learning (Park, Peterson and Seligman 2004). Viewed from another angle, it has been found that the strengths of the “heart” (e.g., love, gratitude) are more strongly associated with well-being than are strengths of the “head” (e.g., creativity, judgment, appreciation of beauty and excellence; Park and Peterson, 2008; Park, Peterson, and Seligman, 2004).

## Need for the study

The above reviews indicates that there is no much research which has focused attention on Wisdom and knowledge, Courage, Humanity, Justice, Temperance and Transcendence's relationship with life satisfaction of an individual. The present youths are suffering from many behavioral issues with the changed life style, its very important to understand the factors associated with the life satisfaction of emerging adults, hence the present study focused to understand the relationship between character strengths (Wisdom and knowledge, Courage, Humanity, Justice, Temperance and Transcendence) and Life satisfaction among emerging adults.

**Aim:** To study the character strengths and life satisfaction among emerging adults

## Objectives

- To study the levels of character strengths and life satisfaction among emerging adults
- To study the relationship between character strengths and life satisfaction among emerging adults.
- To study the relationship between Wisdom and Knowledge and Life satisfaction among emerging adults
- To study the relationship between Courage and Life satisfaction among emerging adults
- To study the relationship between Humanity and Life satisfaction among emerging adults
- To study the relationship between Justice and Life satisfaction among emerging adults
- To study the relationship between Temperance and Life satisfaction among emerging adults
- To study the relationship between Transcendence and Life satisfaction among emerging adults

## Hypotheses

H1. There is a significant positive relationship between character strengths and Life satisfaction among emerging adults

- 1.1 There is a significant positive relationship between Wisdom and Knowledge and Life satisfaction among emerging adults
- 1.2 There will be a significant positive relationship between Courage and Life satisfaction among emerging adults
- 1.3 There will be a significant positive relationship between Humanity and Life satisfaction among emerging adults
- 1.4 There will be a significant positive relationship between Justice and Life satisfaction among emerging adults
- 1.5 There will be a significant positive relationship between Temperance and Life satisfaction among emerging adults
- 1.6 There will be a significant positive relationship between Transcendence and Life satisfaction among emerging adults

## Method

### Participants

The sample for this study consisted of 400 undergraduate Government and Private college students of Rural area (100 males and 100 females) and Urban area (100 males and 100 females) falling in the age group of 18-25 years, that is, the sample comprised of a total of 400 undergraduate college students from Urban area Bengaluru and Rural area from Kolar District, Mysore District, Mandya District from Karnataka. The State Government and private colleges which were affiliated to Bangalore University, Bengaluru North University, University of Mysore had semester system Bachelor degree courses in Science streams, i.e. B.Sc (Bachelor of Science), B.Com (Bachelor of Commerce), BBA (Bachelor of Business Administration) and B.A. (Bachelor of Arts). Data was collected from the renowned undergraduate colleges of Bengaluru city and Mysore and Kolar District.

### Inclusion criteria:

- Youth in the age group of 18-25 years were selected.
- Both male and female students were included.
- All three-year undergraduate college students.
- Students from Arts, Commerce, Administration and Science, streams.
- Government colleges affiliated to Bangalore University and Bengaluru North University; University of Mysore were considered.

### Measures:

1. **Semi-structured Interview schedule:** The Semi-structured Interview schedule was designed by the researcher to elicit the biographical and other relevant details of the participants
2. **Value in Action Inventory of strengths- VIA-IS 240** by Peterson and Seligman (2004) This test is developed by Peterson and Seligman (2004). VIA-IS is a 240-item self-report questionnaire with 24 subscales of 10 items each, assessing the 24 character strengths. Peterson and Seligman (2004) reported internal consistency alpha coefficient  $> 0.70$  for all scales test retest correlations  $> 0.70$ . Higher score indicate that participant has higher strength in that virtue.

3. **Satisfaction with life scale:**

The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) Pavot and Diener, developed in 2008, is a 5-item measure that is widely used in research for the assessment of life satisfaction (as a global cognitive judgment of one's own life). The scale showed good psychometric properties across several studies (e.g., Diener et al., 2000). It uses a 7-point answer format (ranging from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*). The SWLS had a high internal consistency of ( $\alpha = 0.87$ ). Higher score indicate that participant has high life satisfaction.

## Procedure of data collection

The data was collected in a classroom setting. Initially rapport was established and consent was taken from participants. Then the measures were administered according to standardized procedure specified in the manual. The tests were administered for a group of 4-5 participants at a time in a classroom setting for the study.

## Procedure of data analysis

Obtained data was analyzed by using appropriate descriptive statistics and Pearson's product moment Correlation.

## Analysis of Results and Discussion

Keeping in view the objectives of the study, descriptive statistical procedures and Correlation was calculated and the results were analyzed and discussed.

Value in Action Inventory of strengths scale was used to operationalize the character strength and Satisfaction with life scale was used to measure the level of life satisfaction in the sample. In order to understand the level of character strengths and life satisfaction a descriptive statistics i. e Mean, Standard deviation and Graphical representations were used and discussed and to understand the correlation between all variables a Pearson product moment co-efficient of correlation method was used and the analyzed the results in the following section.

Keeping in view the first objective of the present study, the level of character strengths and life satisfaction among emerging adults are measured and descriptive statistical procedures Mean, Standard Deviation and Graphical representations are used and the analysis is as follows

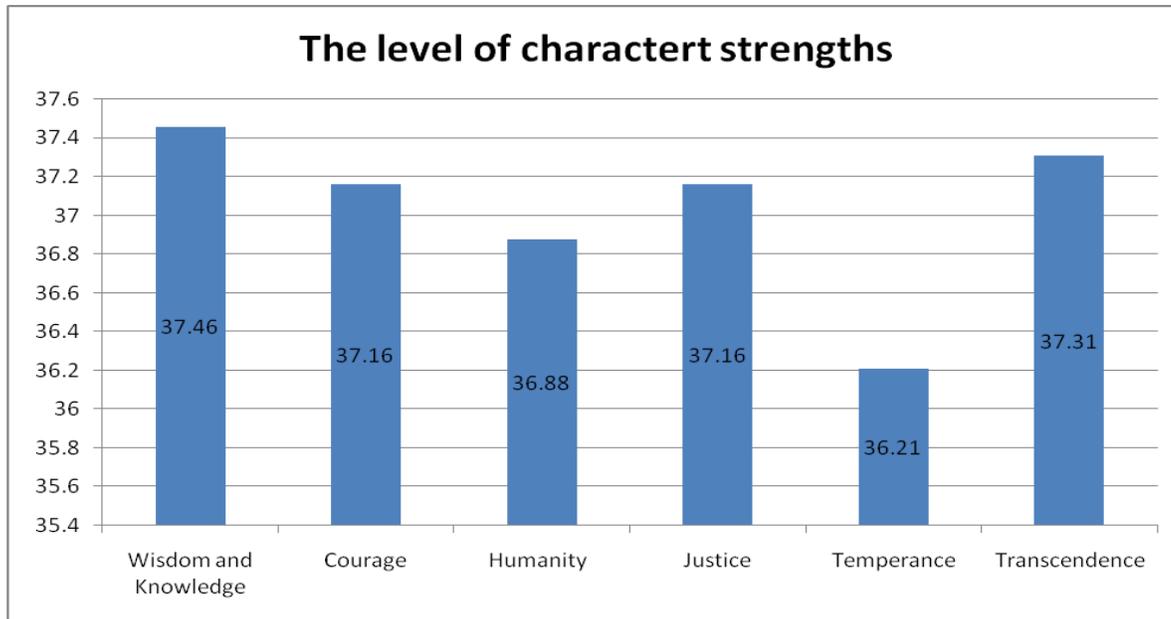
Table 1

*Shows the N, Mean and Standard Deviation on Character Strengths and Life satisfaction among emerging adults*

Variables		N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Character strength	Wisdom and Knowledge	400	37.46	5.07
	Courage	400	37.16	5.34
	Humanity	400	36.88	5.39
	Justice	400	37.16	5.32
	Temperance	400	36.21	5.68
	Transcendence	400	37.31	5.00
Life satisfaction		400	131.74	18.96

Graph 1:

Shows the N, Mean and Standard Deviation on Character Strengths among emerging adults



The above table 1 shows the level of character strengths and life satisfaction among emerging adults. The data was obtained from 400 emerging adults as per the design of the present study and the data was tabulated and shown in the table. The results in the table indicate that the sample obtained a mean of 37.46 with its Standard Deviation of 5.07 on Wisdom and knowledge character strength, the sample has got a mean of 37.16 with the SD of 5.34 on Courage character strength and they have got a total mean of 36.99 with its SD of 5.39 on Humanity character strength, same way they have got a total mean of 37.16 with its SD of 5.32 on justice character strength and they have got a total mean of 36.21 and 37.31 with the SD of 5.68 and 5.00 respectively in temperance and transcendence character strengths. The sample has got a total of 131.74 with its SD of 18.16 on life satisfaction.

The above analysis reveals that the sample group's dominant character strength is wisdom and knowledge. It is clearly visible that there is no much difference in the areas of character strengths among emerging adults. The results are also shown in graph 1. So it is convenient to study its relationship to the life satisfaction among the emerging adults.

**Table -2***Correlation between Character strengths and Life satisfaction*

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Life Satisfaction</i>
Character strength-Wisdom	0.08
Character strength-Courage	0.17**
Character strength-Humanity	0.21**
Character strength- Justice	0.17**
Character strength-Temperance	0.14**
Character strength-Transcendence	0.13**

\*( $p < 0.05$ )\*\*( $p < 0.01$ )

The above table shows the strength, direction and significance level of correlation between different factors of Character strengths and Life satisfaction. As it shown that Character strength-Wisdom has a positive correlation (0.08) with life satisfaction, which is very low level of correlation and this correlation is also not significant hence there is no significant relationship between Character strength-Wisdom and life satisfaction among emerging adults. The results were supported by the study conducted by Monika Ardel (1997) found that wisdom is a contributory factor to enhance the life satisfaction in elderly people

An Another factor of character strength, Courage has a positive correlation (0.17) with life satisfaction, this correlation showed that there is a mild level of positive correlation between humanity and life satisfaction among emerging adults and this correlation is significant, hence there is a significant relationship between character strength Courage and life satisfaction among emerging adults. The Humanity factor of character strength also has a positive correlation (0.21) with life satisfaction, this correlation reveals that there is a mild level of positive relationship between humanity and life satisfaction and this correlation is significant, hence there is a significant relationship between character strength Humanity and life satisfaction among emerging adults.

The Justice factor of character strength also has a positive correlation (0.17) with life satisfaction, this correlation is also negligible and significant, and hence there is a significant relationship between character strength Justice and life satisfaction among emerging adults.

The Temperance factor of character strength also has a positive correlation (0.14) with life satisfaction, this correlation is negligible and significant, hence there is a significant relationship between character strength Temperance and life satisfaction among emerging adults.

The Transcendence factor of character strength also has a positive correlation (0.13) with life satisfaction, this correlation is negligible and significant, hence there is a significant relationship between character strength Transcendence and life satisfaction among emerging adults.

From the above analysis it can infer that there is no significant relationship between wisdom and knowledge and life satisfaction where as there is a positive correlation of Character strength, Courage, Humanity, Justice, Temperance and Transcendence with life satisfaction among emerging adults. The study offers novel evidence of the relationship between character strengths and subjective well-being in a representative sample of emerging adults. The Courage, Humanity, Justice, Temperance and Transcendence these first five character strengths are highly correlated, positively and significantly, with life satisfaction in the sample used in this study, this is highly consistent with previous findings e. g. In the studies conducted by Peterson, Ruch, Beermann, Park, Seligman (2007) and Ruch et al., (2007).

### Conclusions:

- ❖ The dominant character strength is wisdom and knowledge among emerging adults.
- ❖ There is no much difference in the areas of character strengths among emerging adults.
- ❖ There is a significant positive relationship in character strengths and life satisfaction among emerging adults
- ❖ The Courage, Humanity, Justice, Temperance and Transcendence character strengths are positively correlated with life satisfaction among emerging adults.
- ❖ The Wisdom and knowledge character strength is not correlated with life satisfaction among emerging adults.

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