



# Character Strengths as Predictors of Life style 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 style etc. The present study examined the nature and strength of the relationship between character strengths and life style and contribution of character strengths to life style among emerging adults. The data was collected from 400 emerging adults and the regression analysis showed that the character strengths i, e., humanity and temperance are the major predictors of the change in life style. Whereas the character strengths i, e., Wisdom and knowledge, Transcendence and justice negatively predicts the life style but as the result reveals that these are negligible predictors of life style. The character strength i. e., Courage doesn't predict the change in life style. 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:

We live in a fast-paced era, where people adopt different lifestyles to adapt to changing environments. Lifestyles have an important effect on every aspect of an individual, mainly physical and mental health. Youngsters need to adapt faster to changing environments, adopting a lifestyle that is challenging. They live in stressful situations leading to various health issues. In order to cope better with the changing times, one needs to adopt a healthy lifestyle. Healthy lifestyles involve the understanding of positive aspects of life. These positive aspects largely lie in the understanding of one's character strengths.

Empirical evidence shows that the endorsement of character strengths is significantly related to a higher degree of well-being. Usually strengths are positively correlated with life satisfaction, especially hope, zest, gratitude, curiosity and love (Toner, Haslam, Robinson, & Williams (2012)). However, some studies have shown slightly different results. For example, in a Swiss sample, Peterson, Ruch, Beermann, Park, & Seligman (2007) found that the strengths most highly correlated positively with life satisfaction were hope, zest, perseverance, and love, with social intelligence, perspective and curiosity occupying the fifth position. Also Peterson et, al (2007) found that hope, zest, love, curiosity, and perseverance were the five strengths with the highest positive correlations with life satisfaction in another Swiss sample. Lowest correlations, usually non-significant, are found for strengths such as modesty, prudence, fairness or religiousness/spirituality. Other studies have shown a positive correlation with positive affect (e.g., Güsewell and Ruch, 2012; Littman-Ovadia and Lavy, 2012; Azañedo et al., 2014) found that the five strengths most highly correlated positively with positive affect were zest, curiosity, love of learning, hope and perspective, while the lowest correlations were observed for religiousness/spirituality (non-significant), forgiveness, modesty, prudence, and appreciation of beauty and excellence. Azañedo et al. (2014) found that zest, hope, curiosity, creativity, and perspective most highly and positively correlated with positive affect, while the lowest correlations were observed for modesty (non-significant), prudence, fairness, religiousness/spirituality, and forgiveness. For negative affect, Littman-Ovadia and Lavy (2012) found that the five strengths with the highest negative correlations were hope, curiosity, zest, love and self-regulation, while the lowest negative correlations were observed for appreciation of beauty and excellence, modesty, creativity, bravery, and prudence (all non-significant). Azañedo et al. (2014) found that the five strengths with the highest negative

correlations with negative affect were hope, zest, self-regulation, persistence, gratitude, and forgiveness, while the lowest negative correlations were observed for creativity (non-significant), appreciation of beauty and excellence (non-significant), religiousness/spirituality (non-significant), modesty, and love of learning and leadership. In general, correlations were larger in size with positive affect than with negative affect in both studies. However, one limitation most studies in character strengths research share is the limited representativeness of their samples. Usually in these studies, participants are students who participate to obtain extra credits in their courses, individuals who are actively seeking how to increase their well-being, or simply convenience samples that normally result in biased samples. Therefore, we believe that studies with more representative samples are necessary in character research.

Additionally, the relationship between character strengths and well-being might be different for individuals at different stages of life, a question that still remains largely unexplored. Based on Erikson's account of stages of psychosocial development, we believe that strengths may help the individuals adapt successfully to the different stages of life, and their relative importance might be reflected in their relationship with well-being. Erikson (1982) described eight stages in psychosocial development, three of which correspond to the adult life: young adulthood, adulthood, and old age. Regarding the age range proper to these stages, according to Erikson, they are delimited by the earliest moment a developmental quality can come to relative dominance and to a meaningful crisis, and the latest at which it must give that dominance to the next quality, although no specific ages are indicated. Young adults experience the psychosocial crisis between intimacy and isolation. Intimacy refers to the capacity to commit oneself to concrete affiliations that may call for sacrifices and compromises, while isolation is the fear of remaining separate. Intimacy must provide ways that cultivate styles of in-group living held together by idiosyncratic ways of behaving and speaking. The next stage, adulthood, is characterized by the psychosocial crisis between generativity and stagnation.

According to Erikson, the spirit of adulthood is the maintenance of the world, i.e., the commitment to take care of the persons, the products, and the ideas one has learned to take care for. Finally, in old age, the psychosocial crisis is characterized by the antithesis between a sense of integrity, i.e., coherence and wholeness, vs. a sense of despair, i.e., a state of being finished, confused and helpless. Integrity seems to convey wisdom, defined by Erikson as a type of informed and detached concern with life itself in the face of

death itself. For Erikson, hope is the “most basic quality of I-ness, without which life could not begin or meaningfully end.” In fact, if hope is for him the first strength emerging in infancy, faith is the mature and last possible form of hope. Also, according to Erikson, all functions specific of a life stage do not disappear in the next stage, but assume new values. In fact, old people need to keep a generativity function. However, in old age, a discontinuity of the family life contributes to the lack of the vital involvement that is necessary for staying really alive. In fact, lack of vital involvement is often the hidden reason that brings old people to psychotherapy (Erikson, Erikson, & Kivnick: 1994). Considering Erikson's theory, strengths that help fulfill the specific functions of each stage of life, should have a larger relationship with well-being in that stage in comparison with other strengths.

Lifestyle reflects an individual's attitudes, values, and world view through cultural symbols which resonate her/his personal identity. Lifestyle is a way of living which not only affects the individual who adopts it but also affects the society. It includes patterns of social relation, consumption, entertainment and dressing style. It also reflects the etiquettes, habits, way of life which has direct influence on the type of service he or she gives or receives from the social environment.

Rohit, K.V. and Makwana, S. (2015) stated that a good lifestyle leads to the accomplishment of happiness and wellness in life. Well-being describes our happiness, confidence, physical condition and general outlook on life. It is about feeling good and taking care of yourself; responsibilities that can often be neglected when juggling the rigorous demands of everyday living in the 21st century.

**Aim:** To study whether character strength predicts the life style among emerging adults

**Objectives:**

- To study the relationship between character strengths and life style among emerging adults
- To study whether Wisdom and Knowledge character strength predicts the Life style among emerging adults
- To study whether the Courage Character strength predicts the Life style among emerging adults
- To study whether the Humanity Character strength predicts the Life style among emerging adults
- To study whether the Justice Character strength predicts the Life style among emerging adults
- To study whether the Temperance Character strength as predicts the Life style among emerging adults

- To study whether the Transcendence Character strength as predicts the Life style among emerging adults

## Hypotheses

- H1. There is a positive relationship between character strengths and life style among emerging adults.
- 1.1: The Wisdom and Knowledge character strength significantly predicts the change in life style among emerging adults
- 1. 2: The Courage character strength significantly predicts the life style among emerging adults
- 1.3:The Humanity character strength significantly predicts the life style among emerging adults
- 1.4: The Justice character strength significantly predicts the life style among emerging adults
- 1.5:The Temperance character strength significantly predicts the life style among emerging adults
- 1.6: The Transcendence character strength significantly predicts the life style among emerging adults

## Method

### Research Design and Participants

This research was a descriptive and correlation cross-sectional study.

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 was considered.

**Exclusion criteria:**

- Those students who were not willing to participate in the study.
- Undergraduate college students who did not fall into the age group of 18-21 years were not included.
- Students from other streams were not included.

**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. Life style scale: by S. K. Bawa and S. Kaur (2012)**

This scale is developed by S. K. Bawa and S. Kaur(2012). This scale consists of 60 items with five point rating scale into 6 Dimension Like i. Health Conscious Life Style, ii. Academic Oriented Life Style, iii. Career Oriented Life Style, iv. Socially Oriented Life Style, v. Trend Seeking Life Style, vi. Family Oriented Life Style.

It is standardized on students of Higher Education (Adult). Reliability co-efficient is found to be 0.96 and reliability index is 0.98 internal consistency in each subscale is found by calculating correlation coefficient that is health conscious lifestyle is 0.76, academic oriented lifestyle is 0.70, career oriented lifestyle is 0.81, socially oriented life style is 0.79, family oriented lifestyle is 0.65, trend seeking lifestyle is 0.74. Higher score indicate that participant has high adaptability for that lifestyle.

### **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, Pearson's product moment correlation and multiple regression analysis.

### **Analysis of Results and Discussion**

Keeping in view the objectives of the study, descriptive statistical procedures, Pearson's product moment correlation and multiple regressions was calculated and the results were analyzed and discussed.

Value in Action Inventory of strengths scale was used to operationalize the character strength and Life style scale was used to measure the level of life style in the sample. In order to understand the relationship between character strengths and life style a Pearson's product moment correlation were used and discussed and to understand the contribution of character strengths on life style a multiple regression analysis was carried out and the results were analyzed and discussed in the following section.

Table:1 *The correlation between Character strengths and Lifestyle*

Variables	N	Lifestyle	Significance
Character strength- Wisdom	400	0.087	.083
Character strength- Courage	400	0.166	.000
Character strength- Humanity	400	0.217	.000
Character strength- Justice	400	0.153	.001
Character strength- Temperance	400	0.202	.000
Character strength- Transcendence	400	0.131	.004

The above table shows the strength, direction and significance level of correlation between different factors of Character strengths, Lifestyle and Life satisfaction. Character strength-Wisdom has a positive correlation with lifestyle, ( $r(398) = 0.087$ ,  $p = 0.083$ ), which is a very low level of correlation and this correlation is not significant hence there is no significant relationship between Character strength-Wisdom and lifestyle among emerging adults. Another factor of character strength, Courage has a positive correlation with lifestyle, ( $r(398) = 0.166$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ) this correlation showed that there is a mild level of positive correlation between humanity and lifestyle among emerging adults and this correlation is significant.

The Humanity factor of character strength also has a positive correlation with lifestyle ( $r(398) = 0.21$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), this correlation reveals that there is a mild level of positive relationship between humanity and lifestyle and this correlation is significant. The character strength - Justice has a positive correlation with



lifestyle ( $r(398) = 0.153, p = 0.002$ ), this correlation is negligible and this correlation is significant, hence there is a significant relationship between character strength Courage and lifestyle among emerging adults.

The fifth factor of character strength Temperance has a positive correlation with lifestyle, ( $r(398) = 0.20, p < 0.001$ ) this correlation shows that there is a mild level of a positive relationship between temperance and lifestyle among emerging adults and this correlation is significant, hence there is a significant relationship between character strength Temperance and lifestyle among emerging adults.

The last factor of character strength Transcendence has a positive correlation with lifestyle, ( $r(398) = 0.131, p = 0.009$ ) this correlation is negligible and significant; hence there is a significant relationship between character strength Transcendence and lifestyle among emerging adults.

*Table; 2 Regression analysis summary for character strengths predicting life style*

**Table 2 (a) Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.254 <sup>a</sup>	.065	.050	20.759	.065	4.530	6	393	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), TRANSCENDENCE, HUMANITY , WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE , TEMPERANCE, JUSTICE, COURAGE

Table 2 (b)

ANOVA<sup>a</sup>

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	11713.565	6	1952.261	4.530	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	169358.025	393	430.936		
	Total	181071.590	399			

a. Dependent Variable: LIFESTYLE SCORE

b. Predictors: (Constant), TRANSCENDENCE, HUMANITY , WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE , TEMPERANCE, JUSTICE, COURAGE

Table 2 (c) Regression coefficients for predicting life style

Variable	Predictors	b	95% CI β	t	p	
<b>Character strength</b>	Wisdom and Knowledge	-.408	.306	-.097	-1.331	.184
	Courage	.157	.357	.039	.439	.661
	Humanity	.804	.293	.204	2.746	.006
	Justice	-.190	.314	-.047	-.604	.546
	Temperance	.682	.301	.182	2.266	.024
	Transcendence	-.230	.339	-.054	-.679	.498

This study was conducted to determine if various forms of character strengths can influence life style. It was hypothesized that character strengths i e wisdom and knowledge, Courage, Humanity, Justice, Temperance and transcendence positively predict the life style. Results show that 5.0 % of the variance in life style can be accounted for by the six predictors, i. e., wisdom and knowledge, Courage, Humanity, Justice, Temperance and transcendence, Collectively  $F(6, 393)=4.53$ ,  $p<.001$ . Looking at

the unique individual contributions of the predictors the result shows that Humanity ( $\beta=.204$ ,  $t= 2.74$ ,  $p=.006$ ) and temperance ( $\beta=.182$ ,  $t= 2.266$ ,  $p=.024$ ) positively predict life style. Furthermore the results also reveal that Wisdom and Knowledge ( $\beta=-.097$ ,  $t= -1.331$ ,  $p=.184$ ), Courage ( $\beta=.039$ ,  $t= .439$ ,  $p=.661$ ), Justice ( $\beta=-.047$ ,  $t= -.604$ ,  $p=.546$ ), Transcendence ( $\beta=.054$ ,  $t= -.679$ ,  $p=.498$ ) doesn't significantly predict the life style. The results are supported to hypotheses that the Humanity and temperance character strengths significantly predicts the life style among emerging adults and the results are not supported to hypotheses that Wisdom and Knowledge, Courage, Justice and Transcendence character strengths significantly predicts the change in life style among emerging adults.

The above analysis suggests that the character strengths i, e., humanity and temperance positively predicts the change in life style. Whereas the character strengths i, e., Wisdom and knowledge, Transcendence and justice negatively predicts the life style but as the result reveals that these are not significant predictors of life style. The character strength i. e., Courage doesn't significantly predict the change in life style.

The above analysis indicates that the Courage, Humanity, Justice, Temperance, and Transcendence are positively correlated with the life style of emerging adults where as the Wisdom is not significantly correlated with life style of the emerging adults. The findings are supported by the previous researches e g a study conducted by Leontopoulou, & Triliva (2012) revealed that the youths were found to have a positive outlook on life. Wisdom, courage and transcendence appeared to be the most salient among their character strengths, since character strengths were each highly and positively correlated with the wellbeing subscales of environmental mastery, purpose in life and self-acceptance. Good physical and mental health were positively related to, and reliably predicted different aspects of, both wellbeing and character strengths; nevertheless, mental health appeared to affect and predict more aspects of wellbeing and character strengths than physical health.

**Conclusions:**

- There is a positive relationship between character strengths: Courage, Humanity, Justice, Temperance, and Transcendence and life style among emerging adults.
- There is a negligible positive relationship between character strengths: wisdom and knowledge and life style among emerging adults.
- Humanity and temperance character strengths are the major predictors of change in life style among emerging adults
- Wisdom and knowledge, Transcendence and justice character strengths are negative predictors of the life style among emerging adults but as the result reveals that these are negligible predictors of life style.
- The character strength is not the predictor of change in life style among emerging adults.

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