



CHARACTER STRENGTHS AND LIFE SATISFACTION AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS

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Abstract

The aim of the study was to examine the influence of character strengths on life satisfaction. The participants were 400 college students. Character strengths were studied using Value in Action Inventory by McGrawth. To study life satisfaction, Psychological well-being scale developed by Sisodia and Choudary was used. The data was analyzed using ANOVA. Findings reveal that people with high character strengths found to have higher level of life satisfaction. People with average and high character strengths significantly differ on life satisfaction. Girls found to have higher level of life satisfaction compare to boys.

Keywords: Character Strengths, Life Satisfaction, College Students

INTRODUCTION

Life satisfaction is a state of being satisfied, fulfilment of desire, feeling contented with what we have, response of mind resulting from compliance with its desires and demands. It is a general feeling about one's life and being contented with how life is going. According to Ruut Veenhoven (1996) Life satisfaction is the degree to which a person positively evaluates the overall quality of life as a whole. In other words, how much the person likes the life he/she leads.

Life satisfaction of college students was influenced by self -image, family income, sex, physical health, academic performance, familial relationship, relationship with significant others, relationship with friends(Chow, 2005) spiritual intelligence (Kumawat & Puri,2019), personality and orientation to happiness (Park ,Peterson, & Seligman, 2005), gratitude (Ferrer & Carner, 2016).In above research studies there are many psychosocial factors including gratitude, happiness, spiritual intelligence which are character strengths found to be influencing factors on life satisfaction of college students.

Character strengths are positive traits present in an individual in various degrees irrespective of influence of various factors. Peterson and Seligman (2004) classified 24 Character strengths under six broad categories namely cognitive strengths, emotional strength, interpersonal strength, civic strength, strengths that protect against excess and strength that forge connections to the large universe and provide meaning. Park, Peterson & Seligman (2004) and Proctor et. al. (2006) studies showed that Character strengths can be improved by training and in return it leads to enhancement of Well-being. Life satisfactory is one of the major indicators of well-being. So, it can be said that to improve life satisfaction, one can plan character strengths training program based on the requirement.

Gender refers to socially constructed features or qualities that belong to women, men, girls and boys. This includes norms, behaviors and roles associated with each gender. This is subjected to vary based on the societal norms over a period of time. As a result, gender has its own influence on factors that determine individual's well-being.

Therefore, it is planned to study the influence of Character strengths on life satisfaction.

Review of literature

Positive psychology is an upcoming trend in Psychology. Hence it requires a greater number of empirical researches to test its already existing principles or to formulate new principles. Character strengths and well-being were found to be core research topics in Positive Psychology. Life satisfaction is one of the indicators of well-being. Early research studies were reviewed by keeping current research in mind. Following were the few important studies aided the current research.

Studies related to Character Strengths and Life Satisfaction

Proctor et, al. (2011) conducted intervention study titled “Impact of Character strengths on Life satisfaction and well-being of adolescents”. They found significant level of improvement in life satisfaction among participants who participated in character strengths-based exercises in the school curriculum. Belled et, al. (2018) study character strengths and life satisfaction among undergraduate students showed that affective-component traits were more predictive of life satisfaction than cognitive-component traits. Abasimi, Gai & Wang (2017) studied about the relationship between Character Strengths and Life Satisfaction of High School Students and they found significant relationship among both. Blanca et, al. (2017) examined relationship between life satisfaction and character strengths in Spanish early adolescents and found that Women showed a high correlation in most of the character's strength compared to men. Love and hope are the most relevant forces in prediction of life satisfaction. Abasimi & Xiaosong (2016) examined the relationship between Character Strength and Life Satisfaction of Teachers and found Strong positive relationship between overall character strengths and satisfaction with life. Marti and Ruch (2014) in their study on Character strength and well-being showed that hope, zest, love, social intelligence and perseverance yielded the highest positive correlations with life satisfaction. Majority of the studies conducted between character strengths and life satisfaction were intended to find association rather than influence. So, it is needed to study the influence of character strengths on life satisfaction.

Research studies related to Gender and Life satisfaction

Cui et, al. (2021) conducted a study on moral identity and subjective well-being and found that though there was a difference in the scores of males and females on life satisfaction it was not significant. Rogowska (2021) conducted cross country study on university student's level of life satisfaction. He found cross national differences among students on life satisfaction. He also found poor self-rated physical health as a predictor of low life satisfaction independent of the country. Joshanloo and Jovanvic (2019) studies relationship between gender and life satisfaction. They found that women were more satisfied in their life than men. But men who are above sixty-three years residing in Sahara Africa found to score higher than women on life satisfaction. Ahmad and Silfiasari (2018) examined life satisfaction based on gender in Indonesia with findings showed no significant gender difference on life satisfaction. Zhang et, al. (2014) in their study found that the college students' life satisfaction was positively related to female gender, self-esteem, social support, and the liberal attitudes on female gender roles, but negatively correlated with depression and suicidal ideation. Attiyah and Nasser (2013) conducted research on gender and age difference in life satisfaction on youths based from Qatar. In their study they found that females had significantly higher life satisfaction than males.

The above research studies showed that positive relationship between character strengths and life satisfaction. But very limited number of studies were conducted to determine the influence of character strengths as a whole on life satisfaction among college students. Even though various studies have been conducted on gender difference in life satisfaction. The results have been showing inconsistent findings. By keeping above points in mind, the present study was planned.

Method

Statement of the problem

To study the influence of Character strengths and gender on Life satisfaction.

Objectives

1. To study the influence of various degrees of Character strengths on Life satisfaction.
2. To study gender difference in Life satisfaction.
3. To study the interaction effect of character strengths and gender on Life satisfaction.

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference between high and low level of Character strengths in life satisfaction.
2. Boys and girls do not differ significantly on life satisfaction.
3. There is no significant interaction effect of gender and character strength on life satisfaction.

Participants

For the study 400 college students (200 girls and 200 boys) aged between 19 to 22 years studying in both private and government colleges located in Bengaluru city were selected using simple random sampling method.

Measurements

1. Socio-democratic data sheet: intended to collect basic socio-democratic information like age, gender, education qualification.

2. Psychological well-being scale by Sisodia and Choudary (2012): To study life satisfaction, psychological well-being scale developed by Devendra Singh Sisodia and Pooja Choudhary in 2012 was used. It consisted of 50 items, measures five areas of well-being i.e., Life satisfaction, Efficiency, Sociability, Mental health, and Interpersonal relations. Each area has 10 items with the five-point response category for each item ranging from Strongly agree (5) to Disagree (1). High score indicates high

psychological well-being. Test-retest reliability coefficient for the scale is 0.87 with internal consistency of α 0.90. This test has content validity of 0.94.

3. Character strengths Value in Action Inventory- 72 by McGrath (2014): To study character strengths Value in Action Inventory (VIA)-72 developed by Robert McGrath in 2014 was used. This test was developed from the original VIA-IS by taking the 3 items for each scale with the highest corrected item-total correlations. This is a 7-point rating scale from very strongly disagree to very strongly agree. High score indicates possession of higher level of character strengths. Reliability coefficient for different areas exceeded 0.80 and for appreciation of beauty and spirituality/meaningfulness is above 0.90. Validity coefficient range from 0.36 to 0.48.

Procedure of data collection and scoring

Initially permission was sought by the principals of the colleges by explaining the purpose study. Participants were selected using simple random sampling method. Tests were administered in a classroom setting with their consent. The participants took one hour on an average to complete both tests. Scoring was done manually. Character strengths norms were developed by calculating mean and standard deviation. Scores were classified into high, average and low scores.

Procedure of data analysis

The obtained data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and two -way ANOVA.

Results and Discussion

Table 1

Showing Mean, and standard deviation on Life satisfaction score

Gender	Character strengths	Life satisfaction		
		N	Mean	SD
Boys	Low	11	31.91	8.117
	Average	173	31.27	5.053
	High	16	33.13	6.908
	Total	200	31.45	5.408
Girls	Low	30	35.20	8.002
	Average	144	34.51	6.858
	High	26	38.81	7.088
	Total	200	35.18	7.175
Total	Low	41	34.32	8.067
	Average	317	32.74	6.149
	High	42	36.64	7.476
	Total	400	33.31	6.614

Table 2

Showing summary of two- way ANOVA: df, F and p values for Character strengths and gender

Source	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	p
Character strength	336.034	2	168.017	4.242	.015
Gender	627.782	1	627.782	15.850	.001
Gender*character strength	52.530	2	26.265	.663	.516
Total	461341.000	400			

Two -way Analysis of variance was done to analyze the influence of character strengths and gender on life satisfaction.

Obtained F value for character strengths is 4.242 with a p value of 0.015 which is less than 0 .05 level hence the null hypothesis is rejected. The mean life satisfaction score is significantly higher among people with high character strengths (\bar{x} =36.64, SD=8.067). These results are in accordance with the earlier studies conducted by Abasimi, Gai, & wang (2017) and Abasimi and Xiaosong (2016) in their study found significant positive relationship between character strengths and life satisfaction. Marti and Ruch (2014) found higher level of association between love, hope, zest, social intelligence, perseverance and life satisfaction. On contrary to the current research findings, Park, et al. (2004) found significantly weaker association between modesty and strengths of mind or intellectual strengths like appreciation of beauty, creativity, judgement and love of learning. A study conducted by Marti & Ruch (2017) found that character strengths are predictors of social support, optimism, self-esteem and self-efficacy. Character strengths are more or less like positive aspects of human beings and they are found to be one of the major determining factors of life satisfaction. Based on review of previous research, it can be said that people who are aware of their character strengths and are making use of them might feel competent, self-reliant, are with higher level of self -esteem, are able to think in more realistic way and they might be able to cope up adequately with stressful situation. All these are the factors contribute for the improvement of

life satisfaction. Character strengths not just helps in enhancing life satisfaction instead it also positively effects determining factors of life satisfaction.

Proctor et, al. (2011) conducted intervention study titled “Impact of Character strengths on Life satisfaction and well-being of adolescents”. They found significant level of improvement in life satisfaction among participants who participated in character strengths-based exercises in the school curriculum. So, it is very important train students to learn and practice character strengths. But the current education system is giving more importance to academics. Instead, they should also emphasize on overall development of students. Ultimately it may lead to most healthy society.

Obtained F value for gender is 15.850 with a p value of 0.01 which is less than 0.05 level, hence the null hypothesis is rejected. Girls (\bar{x} =SD=35.18, SD=7.175) found to have significantly higher level of life satisfaction compare to boys (\bar{x} =31.45, SD=5.408). Joshanloo and Jovanvic (2019); Zhang et, al. (2014) and Attiyah and Nasser (2013) in their study found same result that is women have significantly higher level of life satisfaction than men. On Contrary to the above findings Cui, et al. (2021); Ahmad and Silfiasari (2018) found that though there is a difference among men and women on life satisfaction, it is not at significant level. Joshanloo and Jovanvic (2019) reveal men who are above sixty-three years residing in Sahara -Africa found to score higher than women on life satisfaction. Roemer et, al. (2008) studied show that gender specific access to goal relevant resources determines subjective well-being. They also found that variation in the size of gender differences is based on factors like extent of gender inequality in society, cultural attitude towards gender inequality, income and education level. By being a developing country, India has come up with many policies and schemes for the holistic development of women. As a result, improvement is seen in female literacy rate, health conditions, participation in leadership roles and politics, employment opportunities, economic status, self -concept etc. All these factors might have contributed for improvement in life satisfaction in women. Though Indian society is male dominated, it doesn't mean men do not have any issues related their well-being. They too have issues. So, it is the sole responsibility of the government to formulate policies and schemes to enhance well-being of all irrespective of any socio-democratic variables.

F ratio for interaction is 52.530 with the p value of 0.516 which is more than 0.05 hence the null hypothesis is accepted.

Life satisfaction is a more complex phenomenon. It involves evaluation of one's life as whole than the existing state of mind. Ruut Veenhoven (1996) has identified four contributing factors for life satisfaction namely Life chances, Course of events, Flow of experience, evaluation of life. Hence other than Character strengths and gender there are many more contributing factors for life satisfaction. It is important to identify factors which plays crucial role like character strengths in enhancing life satisfaction and give training to inculcate those factors in college curriculum. Government should take initiation by including such training programme while planning strategies to improve well-being of students. It is the sole responsibility of the parents and the society to encourage to build and practice character strengths.

To conclude character strengths contributes for the enhancement of life satisfaction. People with higher level of character strengths have higher level of life satisfaction. Girls have higher level of life satisfaction than boys. Character strengths and gender do not combinedly effect life satisfaction.

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