

Research Paper

## Role of Strength-Based Parenting in Enhancing Psychological Flexibility Among Adolescents

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### ABSTRACT

Early adolescence is a crucial developmental period during which parents significantly influence their children's psychological health (Bruyn et al., 2003; Galambos et al., 2003; Bøe et al., 2014; Steinberg, 2014; Waters, 2019). The present study explored the role of Strength-Based Parenting (SBP)—specifically strength knowledge and strength use—in fostering psychological flexibility among adolescents. The sample consisted of 100 school-going children aged 11–13 years. SBP was assessed using the modified Strength-Based Parenting Scale and the Strengths Use Scale (Govindji & Linley, 2007), while psychological flexibility was measured with the Acceptance and Action Questionnaire-II (AAQ-II). Data were analysed using SPSS 22.0. Results showed a strong positive correlation between strength knowledge and strength use ( $r(97) = .80, p < .001$ ). Both components of SBP were significantly and positively associated with psychological flexibility ( $r(97) = .68$  and  $.65$ , respectively,  $p < .001$ ). Multiple regression analysis indicated that strength knowledge and strength use together predicted psychological flexibility, with the overall model being statistically significant ( $F(2, 96) = 47.11, p < .001, R^2 = .495$ ). This suggests that SBP accounts for nearly half of the variance in psychological flexibility. The findings highlight the value of parents identifying and nurturing children's strengths to promote adaptability, emotional regulation, and resilience during early adolescence.

**Keywords:** *Strength use, strength knowledge, psychological flexibility*

Positive psychology in parenting is enacted through strength-based parenting (SBP), a style that emphasizes identifying, encouraging, and strengthening children's natural abilities.

Positive parenting is a method of childrearing that emphasizes fostering a positive relationship between parents and children while advancing their overall development and emotional wellness. Positive parenting's primary goal is to develop a strong parent-child bond built on empathy, respect, and trust. The goal of positive parenting is to understand

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their children's viewpoints, acknowledge their emotions, and provide them the tools they need to overcome obstacles in life (Jansen, 2023).

Strength-Based Parenting (SBP) is a modern parenting style that emphasizes recognizing, fostering, and using each child's unique strengths to support their resilience, well-being, and best possible growth (Waters, 2015). According to research, adolescents who experience SBP report increased levels of life satisfaction, self-efficacy, pleasant emotions, and psychological flexibility, among other good consequences. It also encourages empathy, candid communication, and mutual development, all of which strengthen parent-child bonds. (Daniel J. Loton, 2017).

SBP has been shown to enhance resilience and psychological adaptability in adolescents, equipping them with skills to handle challenging life circumstances (Belen, 2025). Fredrickson's broaden-and-build theory (2001) provides a useful framework, suggesting that positive emotions broaden cognitive and behavioural responses, building long-term personal resources such as resilience and adaptability. By fostering a supportive family environment, SBP creates an emotional climate conducive to optimism and psychological flexibility.

Govindji and Linley (2007) identified two mechanisms central to SBP: \*strength knowledge\* (awareness of one's strengths) and \*strength use\* (applying strengths in daily life). Both are associated with enhanced psychological functioning.

The outcomes of this research are consistent with previous studies that emphasize the positive role of SBP in promoting resilience and psychological well-being. Waters (2015) found that children of parents who engaged in SBP reported greater levels of life satisfaction, academic engagement, and coping skills.

Psychological flexibility, meanwhile, is the capacity to remain open to experiences, regulate emotions, and act consistently with personal values even in the presence of discomfort. (Akhtar Bibi, 2021). High levels of psychological flexibility are associated with better emotional regulation, mental well-being, and adaptive coping (Juan M. Flujas-Contreras, 2021). Research has linked parental practices with adolescent self-regulation, motivation, and self-esteem. Conversely, low warmth and authoritarian approaches predict psychological inflexibility.

The observed associations also align with acceptance-based frameworks. Psychological flexibility, as measured by the AAQ-II, involves the ability to accept distressing emotions and thoughts while continuing to act in accordance with one's values. Adolescents exposed to SBP may internalize this mindset through parental modelling: when parents highlight their children's unique strengths and encourage their use, adolescents may learn to approach difficulties with openness and persistence rather than avoidance. In this way, SBP functions not only as a protective factor but also as a mechanism for building long-term psychological adaptability (Akhtar Bibi, 2021).

Given this background, the current study investigates the relationship between SBP (strength knowledge and strength use) and psychological flexibility among early adolescents aged 11 to 13.

## METHODOLOGY

### *Objectives*

1. To explore how strength-based parenting enhances psychological flexibility in adolescents.

### *Hypotheses*

- **H1:** Strength based parenting is positively associated with psychological flexibility in adolescents.
- **H2:** Strength knowledge and strength use (components of strength-based parenting) predicts psychological flexibility.

### *Sample*

A total of 100 students, aged 11 to 13 years and studying in classes 6 to 8, from an urban background in Alwar city participated in the research. In the course of completing an informed consent form, participants contributed basic demographic information (e.g., age and gender). The IIS University in Jaipur, Rajasthan, India's Institutional Review Board-Ethics Committee granted ethical approval.

### *Procedure*

A systematic questionnaire was utilized to gather data for the study. 100 students from Alwar city's 6-8 class, who were between the ages of 11-13 took part in the study. The students were given a brief explanation of the research's goal in simple language prior to administration in order to ensure understanding and clarity. The school administration granted the required clearances, and involvement was entirely voluntary. The researcher monitored the administration of the questionnaires in a classroom during school hours. Students were assured of the privacy of their answers and were urged to answer truthfully. Each student took 20 to 25 minutes on average to complete the questionnaire.

### *Data analysis*

The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22.0 computer program was used for all statistical calculations

### *Instruments*

Two measures were used in this study,

1. **Strength-based parenting:** Strength-based parenting use and knowledge scores or subscales from Waters (2015) were used for evaluating strength-based parenting. It is a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree, is used.
2. **Acceptance and Action Questionnaire – version 2 (AAQ-2):** The Acceptance and Action Questionnaire – version 2 (AAQ-II), is the most widely used measure of psychological flexibility. It can be used weekly to track how individuals are applying flexibility skills to their daily lives and is often used to measure progress in Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT).

## RESULT

The objective of the study was to explore how strength-based parenting enhances psychological flexibility in adolescents. Strength-based parenting is a successful parenting approach that recognizes and builds on adolescents' strengths and can help them become more psychologically resilient.

**Correlations**

*Table 1 Correlations Between Strength Knowledge, Strength Use, and Psychological Flexibility*

Correlations		SKS	SUS	Psychological Flexibility
SKS	Pearson Correlation	1	.796**	.684**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000
	N	99	99	99
SUS	Pearson Correlation	.796**	1	.645**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000
	N	99	99	99
Psychological Flexibility	Pearson Correlation	.684**	.645**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	
	N	99	99	99

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*Table 2 Regression Coefficients*

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-4.635	2.824		-1.641	.104
	SKS	.336	.087	.463	3.869	.000
	SUS	.317	.137	.277	2.311	.023

a. Dependent Variable: Psychological Flexibility

**DISCUSSION**

Parental psychological flexibility, or the capacity of parents to stay present, accept challenging emotions, and stick to value-oriented parenting practices, may have an impact on the effectiveness of SBP, even if it focuses on what characteristics are reinforced. When parenting gets stressful or adolescents act out, flexible parents can regularly use strength-based techniques, which ensures that SBP performs even under threat. Strength-based parenting (SBP) and adolescents' psychological flexibility were examined in this study, emphasizing how fostering character traits at home could help adolescents in overcoming emotional and situational obstacles.

Adolescents with high psychological flexibility scores show more resilience, adaptability, and general wellbeing. This is because they are willing to face challenging thoughts and feelings while remaining active in a way that is motivated by their values. Adolescents may be more likely to accept discomfort, deal with difficulties in a flexible way, and maintain their sense of morality when strength-based parenting fosters self-awareness.

The results of this study states that strength-based parenting focuses on identifying strengths, the effectiveness of strength-based parenting may be influenced by parental psychological flexibility, or the capacity of parents to stay present, accept challenging emotions, and commit to value-oriented methods of parenting. In particular Table 1 shows the relationships between SKS, SUS, and psychological flexibility were assessed using a Pearson product-moment correlation. SKS and SUS showed a strong positive connection ( $r(97) = .80$ ,  $p$

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<.001), meaning that greater SKS scores were linked to higher SUS scores. Additionally, a moderate-to-strong positive association was found between SKS and psychological flexibility ( $r(97) = .68, p < .001$ ), indicating that higher SKS scores were linked to higher psychological flexibility. Lastly, there was a moderate-to-strong positive correlation between SUS and psychological flexibility ( $r(97) = .65, p < .001$ ), suggesting that stronger psychological flexibility was linked to higher SUS scores. Every correlation was two-tailed and statistically significant at the 0.01 level. Table 2 shows determines exactly if SUS and SKS predicted psychological flexibility, a multiple linear regression was performed. Approximately 49.5% of the variance in psychological flexibility was explained by the predictors, according to the results, which showed that the whole model was statistically significant ( $F(2, 96) = 47.11, p < .001$ , and  $R^2 = .495$ ). Both predictors significantly improved the model. In particular, psychological flexibility was significantly predicted positively by SKS ( $B = 0.34, SE = 0.09, \beta = 0.46, t = 3.87, p < .001$ ).

Additionally, SUS was a significant positive predictor ( $B = 0.32, SE = 0.14, \beta = 0.28, t = 2.31, p = .023$ ).

Prior research has noted similar dynamics; for example, Seligman et al. (2005) reported that interventions encouraging youth to identify and apply their strengths led to increases in happiness and decreases in depressive symptoms. Waters (2019) further emphasized that strength knowledge without application has limited impact, whereas the active use of strengths reinforces self-confidence, competence, and resilience. The present findings confirm that the combination of strength awareness and consistent use predicts higher flexibility in adolescents, thereby supporting the broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions (Fredrickson, 2001).

Taken together, these findings have important implications for parenting and adolescent mental health. By cultivating an environment where strengths are noticed, valued, and encouraged, parents can help adolescents develop psychological flexibility—a skill that supports coping with stress, regulating emotions, and maintaining well-being in the face of adversity. In practical terms, interventions that train parents in SBP strategies could complement school-based programs and therapeutic approaches such as Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), which similarly targets psychological flexibility.

Hayley K. Jach (2017) examined whether a growth mindset moderates the relationship between strengths use and strength-based parenting, as well as if strength-based parenting and strengths use together affect a teen's subjective wellbeing. Three hundred and sixty-three teenagers ( $M_{age} = 13.74, 51\%$  female) answered questionnaires about subjective wellbeing (life satisfaction, positive and negative affect), extraversion, neuroticism, two aspects of growth mindset, and strengths-based parenting. According to a mediation analysis, the association between subjective wellbeing and strength-based parenting was partially mediated by strengths utilization. These findings imply that adolescents who see their parents as having strengths report higher subjective wellbeing and better utilization of their strengths, particularly when they have a growth perspective regarding them.

Lea Waters (2017) investigated the effects of a three-week strength-based parenting intervention on positive emotions and parental self-efficacy in the current study ( $N = 137$ ) using a quasi-experimental, prospective comparison group design. Parents learned how to identify and capitalize on both their own and their children's abilities. While compared to parents in the comparison group, parents who took part in the strength-based intervention demonstrated improvements in self-efficacy (i.e., improved confidence and perceived

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capacity to successfully raise their children) and positive sentiments while thinking about their children. These results suggest that strength-based approaches could enhance the wellbeing of parents.

Lea E. Waters (2018) research has shown that SBP predicts a variety of wellbeing indices in teenagers more accurately than other parenting philosophies. The findings thus validated a hypothesis in which teenagers with strength-based parents improved their grades by being more persistent. The findings support the significance of the relationship between parents and students as well as the dispositional traits of perseverance and involvement in predicting academic outcomes like grades. By showing that positive parenting strategies like SBP can predict student wellbeing and academic achievement, this study extends positive education research past the classroom.

Through mental toughness, Ali Serdar Sağkal and Yalçın Özdemir (2019) investigated the direct and indirect effects of strength-based parenting on teens' psychological discomfort and subjective happiness. 370 adolescents from Turkish public high schools participated in the study ( $M = 15.86$  years,  $SD = 0.50$ , range = 14–18 years, 51.6% female). Specifically, the results showed a negative and direct association with psychological distress and a positive and direct correlation between strength-based parenting and subjective contentment. Additionally, in strength-based parenting, mental toughness has been shown to be an indirect correlation with psychological suffering and subjective contentment. The results show that strength-based parenting and mental toughness have a major effect on the psychological outcomes of teenagers.

According to research by Daniel J. Loton and Lea E. Waters (2017), children and teens who receive strength-based parenting (SBP), a parenting strategy that aims to help children develop and use their strengths, experience less stress and have higher levels of life satisfaction, subjective wellness, and pleasant emotions. It has been discovered that two proximal mediators mediating these effects are teens' personal use of strengths and strength-based coping, as well as a little moderating influence of growth mindsets associated to strengths. The relationship between SBP and adolescent mental health (wellbeing and distress) is investigated in this study, with an emphasis on the possible mediating function of self-efficacy, or a sense of agency in life. This study used an adequate number of teenagers from 28 Australian schools to confirm the adaptive effects of SBP. Using structural equation modeling, SBP directly and substantially predicted reduced despair and increased contentment. Additionally, self-efficacy was a major partial mediator, accounting for 40.0% of the overall effect on happiness and 52.7% of the overall influence on distress. Additionally, self-efficacy fully moderated anxiety and had a substantial indirect effect. The results show that strengthening teens' strengths can also increase their self-efficacy, which makes SBP a potentially helpful technique for promoting teen wellbeing given the significant impact size.

Gökmen Arslan (2021), looked at how school belonging mediated and moderated the relationship between strength-based parenting and young people's social-emotional wellness. 343 Turkish children in grades 6–8 were polled for this study. School belonging mediated the effect of strength-based parenting on social-emotional health, and mediation analyses revealed that school belonging predicted school belonging, thankfulness, zest, optimism, and persistence. Strength-based parenting had a predicted effect on students' social-emotional health, but only for those with low to moderate levels of belonging, according to moderation analysis.

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Overall, these findings show how crucial school belonging is for young people's social-emotional wellbeing when considering their parents' experiences.

Kelly-Ann Allen (2022) investigated the psychosocial elements that affect teenagers' ability to adapt to the stress of the COVID-19 epidemic. The sample comprised 404 secondary school students from an independent high school in Australia, ages 11 to 18 ( $M = 14.75$ ,  $SD = 1.59$ ; 50.2% female, 46.8% male, and 3% non-/other gendered or declined to answer). (SBP) was substantially correlated with stress-related growth (SRG), according to structural equation modeling. Additionally, positive reappraisal and emotional processing mediated the impact of SBP on SRG and were favourably and significantly correlated with SRG. Additionally, school belonging mediated the relationship between SBP and positive reappraisal, emotional processing, and SRG in adolescents during the pandemic and was positively associated with positive coping, emotional processing, and SRG.

Hui Tang (2022), examined the indirect role of emotion regulation (i.e., cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression) and the relationship between strength-based parenting and depression. Total 750 Chinese middle school students from two different middle schools. The findings demonstrated that while strength-based parenting positively predicted depression, it negatively predicted both depression and cognitive reappraisal. Through expression suppression and cognitive reappraisal, strength-based parenting indirectly predicted depression.

In conclusion, the study reinforces the value of SBP as a positive parenting approach that contributes meaningfully to adolescent development. Adolescents who exhibit high levels of psychological flexibility (PF) and strength-based parenting (SBP) are better able to manage their emotions and tolerate discomfort. In order to further stabilize emotional resilience, these adolescents with high SBP receive parental reinforcement that emphasizes effort and personal development. Adolescents cultivate a healthy sense of self by recognizing their accomplishments and challenges without becoming overly fixated on their bad experiences. High SBP fosters a stronger sense of purpose and increased intrinsic motivation by assisting parents in identifying and utilizing strengths that are consistent with those beliefs. Instead of being controlling, adolescents view parental advice as fostering autonomy, which results in a secure bond and less conflict.

### CONCLUSION

This study demonstrated that strength-based parenting, through both strength knowledge and strength use, significantly predicts psychological flexibility in adolescents.

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### **Conflict of Interest**

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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