

Research Paper

Exploring the Interplay of Virtues and Psychological Wellbeing: An Empirical Study on Emerging Adults

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ABSTRACT

Since the inception of positive psychology, the exploration of positive individual attributes has remained the central objective. The concept of virtue has recently gained attention as a cornerstone of positive human well-being, particularly in psychological discussions. Being virtuous require considering how a person makes decisions in complex, ambiguous, and uncertain real-world circumstances that involve competing considerations. Globalization, demographic shifts, increasing competition and pressure for excellence in productivity, less predictable career paths, etc. has resulted in decrease in well-being. This study explores the influence of virtues on psychological wellbeing. Data was gathered using Standardized tools were administered on 100 emerging adults between the age of 18-26, the participants were selected using purposive sampling. The results revealed the effect of virtues on psychological well-being. Additionally, the study underscores the importance of virtues as a foundation for managing life's challenges and achieving psychological balance. These insights of the study will be valuable for designing interventions and educational programs aimed at cultivating virtues to improve mental health and well-being.

Keywords: *Virtues, Psychological Wellbeing, Resilience, Personal Growth, Emerging Adults*

Historically one of its key goals of positive psychology has been to investigate positive traits in people. The VIA Classification, has significantly shaped the understanding of these positive traits within the field. Designed as a foundation for the study of positive human functioning, this classification system defines 24 character strengths, each aligned with six overarching virtues. Factor analysis However, quantitative research suggested that this model might not be supported. Factor analysis of the six virtues have revealed that when constrained to three factors (McGrath, 2014), the results align across different measures of VIA (McGrath et al., 2018). One aspect of the VIA Classification that warrants greater attention is its potential utility in facilitating the systematic investigation of virtue. The Virtues, understood as valuable traits for a person and community, traits such as kindness and critical thinking, represent a vital area for scholarly inquiry. A science of virtue seeks to explore the measurement, development, and cultivation of these traits (Fowers et al., 2021; McGrath & Brown, 2020).

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It's worth noting that psychologists have advocated for the systematic scrutiny of virtues as personal attributes (Cokelet & Fowers, 2018; Fowers et al., 2021; McGrath & Brown, 2020). Virtues, which delves in the essence of the moral agent instead of just the moral act, demands consideration of how individuals navigate complex, ambiguous, and conflicting real-world scenarios to make virtuous decisions. This aligns with the goals of scientific psychology, aiming to advance both individual and societal well-being.

It is becoming more widely acknowledged that virtues and psychological well-being (PWB) are related in a variety of circumstances, but especially in adult, adolescent, and organizational settings. Increased PWB is associated with virtues like courage and self-control, indicating that character traits are important for mental health outcomes. Research shows that qualities like bravery have a favorable relationship with teenagers' psychological health, underscoring the significance of moral development during this crucial time (Soler & Álvarez, 2021). Burke et al. (2009) discovered a favorable correlation between work satisfaction and engagement and virtues like optimism and gratitude.

According to Rossi and Tappolet (2016), a tendency to feel appropriate emotions—which are elements of appropriate enjoyment and, eventually, well-being—makes up virtue. In response to criticisms of Peterson and Seligman's taxonomy, Bellehumeur et al. (2017) proposed using Gilbert Durand's Anthropological Structures of the Imaginary theory to improve knowledge of character strengths and virtues in Positive Psychology. Together, these studies show a close relationship between virtues, emotional control, and psychological well-being. They also show how important it is to take a more advanced approach to understanding and applying virtue principles in modern settings.

Virtues and psychological well-being have a big impact on emerging adulthood, a crucial developmental stage. According to research, sustaining virtues is a positive predictor of thriving and general well-being in this population, highlighting the significance of moral frameworks during this time of transition (Istiqomah & Riyono, 2024). The importance for interventions that promote character strengths and well-being in educational settings is highlighted by the fact that these traits are adversely connected with depression and positively connected with emerging adulthood dimensions (Brito & Soares, 2023). By addressing the existential and moral facets of development that are sometimes disregarded by clinical and positive psychology approaches, virtues and character education may operate as protective factors for the mental health of adolescents (McLoughlin & Kristjánsson, 2024).

METHODOLOGY

Hypothesis

- **H1:** Virtues (Caring, Inquisitiveness and Self-control) has a relation with Psychological Well-being in Emerging Adults.
- **H2:** Virtues (Caring, Inquisitiveness and Self-control) will predict Psychological Well-being in Emerging Adults.

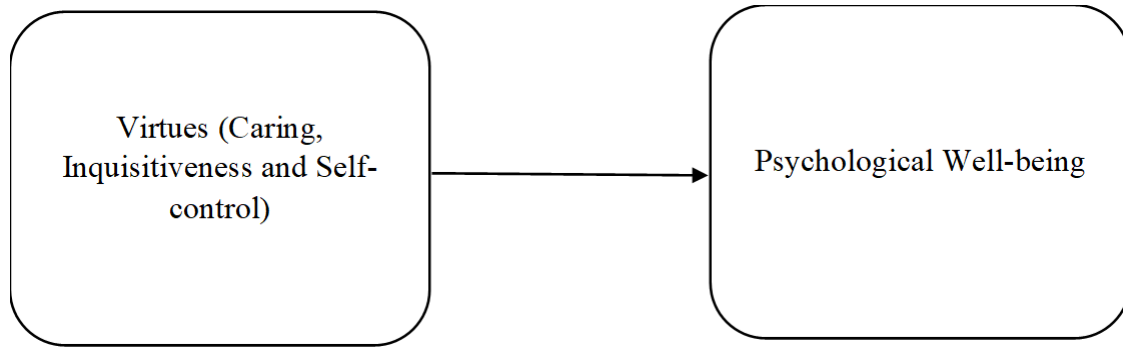
Sample

Using purposive sampling, 120 male and female university students between the ages of 18 and 26 who came from middle-class and upper middle-class backgrounds and lived in urban areas were included in the study's sample. People without a basic comprehension of English, as well as those with a mental illness or physical or psychological condition, were excluded.

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Research Design

Figure No. 1 Causal Research Design



Instruments

- VIA Inventory of Strengths- Virtues 3 (VIA-IS-V3) (McGrath, 2017)
- Ryff’s Psychological WellBeing Scale (Ryff et al., 2007)
- Kuppuswamy Socioeconomic Scale (Dalvi & kalghatgi, 2023)

Statistical Analysis

The following statistical analysis was used to obtain the results:

1. Descriptive
2. Correlation
3. Regression

RESULTS

Table No. 1 Correlational Analyses showing Correlation between Independent Variable Virtues (Care, Inquisitiveness, and Self-Control) with dependent variable Psychological Wellbeing

Variables	Care	Inquisitiveness	Self-Control	Psychological Wellbeing
Care	1.00	0.42**	0.38**	0.65**
Inquisitiveness		1.00	0.44**	0.72**
Self-Control			1.00	0.68**
Psychological Wellbeing				1.00

** $p < 0.01$ indicates significance at the 1% level

Table No. 2 Regression Analysis for Psychological Well-being

Model	Coefficient (β)	Std. Error	t-value	p-value
(Constant)	5.12	2.35	2.18	0.031*
Care	0.29	0.08	3.62	0.000**
Inquisitiveness	0.34	0.07	4.86	0.000**
Self-Control	0.27	0.06	4.50	0.000**

a. Dependent Variable: Psychological Well-being

(Note: $R^2 = 0.68$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.67$, $F = 81.35$, $p < 0.001$)

DISCUSSION

The concept of virtues dates back to Aristotle and Plato, but it has recently entered the field of psychology not long ago. Thus, this makes it important to study virtues in relation to the psychological concepts to gain a better understanding how do the virtues influence an individual's behaviour, thought and actions. With changing times, it has become increasingly difficult especially for the emerging adults to adjust to the fast paced world which has in turn affected their mental health. Therefore, keeping this in mind the objective of the study was to assess the interplay between Virtues (Care, Inquisitiveness, and Self-Control) and Psychological Well-being to gain better insight to the variables.

The findings of the study suggest that individuals with higher level of virtues viz. Care, Inquisitiveness, and Self-Control have greater psychological well-being. The result of table 1 shows that there is a positive correlation between the Independent Variable viz. Virtues (Care, Inquisitiveness, and Self-Control) with dependent variable Psychological Wellbeing. Table 2 shows the predicting variables viz. Virtues (Care, Inquisitiveness, and Self-Control) predict 67% variance in Psychological Well-being which is found to be significant at 0.01. Thus it can be said that the individuals who foster Care, Inquisitiveness, and Self-Control will have better well-being. The individuals who have the virtue of caring, Inquisitiveness and self-control will have better autonomy, environmental mastery, self-acceptance, personal growth, positive relations with others, and purpose in life. As per Deci & Ryan's (2000) Self-Determination Theory (SDT) psychological needs and intrinsic motivation promote psychological well-being. According to the theory, when humans' basic psychological needs are met, they result in increased wellbeing, and personal development. In order to meet these demands and improve psychological wellbeing, virtues like self-control, curiosity, and care are essential. According to Barbara Fredrickson's (1998) Broaden-and-Build Theory of positive Emotions, positive emotions help people develop long-lasting psychological resources ("build") and increase their cognitive and behavioral capacities ("broaden"). Positive emotions are said to be inculcated because of virtues like self-control, curiosity, and care. These feelings in turn promote resilience, social connections, and cognitive flexibility, all of which improve psychological wellness.

The idea that virtues are the foundation of flourishing individuals and communities is reinforced by the recognition of self-regulation and a sense of purpose as essential character traits that support life satisfaction and overall mental health (Ananua et al., 2020). According to McLoughlin and Kristjánsson (2024) and Coventry (2023), incorporating virtue education into mental health interventions may improve psychological resilience and well-being. According to Cauble, et.al. (2022) and Plantade-gipch et al. (2023), integrating virtues is crucial for fostering resilience and mental health in emerging individuals, requiring focused assistance from educational institutions.

Implications and Suggestion for Further Studies

As said in Bhagavad Gita that for an individual to attain the goal, the individual should be virtuous and this will enhance the well-being of the individual. Thus, too inculcate virtues an intervention can be developed. The current study is done on Indian population, which is a collectivistic society and the development of virtues might differ from that of an individualistic society thus a comparative study can be done to gain better understanding.

The study pointed out that Virtues predict psychological well-being. This provides a ground to study the variables in depth and can be studied in different settings also as Virtues can be

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enhanced thus a longitudinal study will give better insight in development of virtues in individuals. further studies linking virtues wellbeing can be explored in context of Indian Knowledge System.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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