Original Article

Character Strengths and Healthiness in Nursing Professionals: A Comparative Study

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Abstract

Character strengths are broadly defined as consistent personality attributes that lead to a happy existence. In India, there are 1.7 nurses for every 1,000 people. Hospital personnel's well-being and health seem to be at threat in the majority of their working environment. So the goal of the present study was to identify character strengths among nurses and their role in the healthiness of nurses and this study also demonstrated the importance of allowing and ensuring the relevancy of character strengths in a hospital work environment, which will lead to greater job engagement and wellbeing. In this way, the present study was an attempt to assess and compare the character strengths and healthiness of nursing professionals. A purposive sample of 60 nurses (30 government and 30 private) was drawn from Jind and Rohtak. For measuring character strengths Kamlesh Singh and Rajneesh Choubisa and Leddy healthiness scale was used. Descriptive statistics and inferential statistics(t-test) were used to assess and compare the character strengths and healthiness among nurses.

Keywords: character strengths, personality, healthiness, nurses.

Introduction

Nursing is a vital part of the medical and healthcare systems, contributing significantly to the nourishment and advancement of human health. Nursing is defined as the provision of vital or useful elements at various levels of readiness for the maintenance, promotion and restoration of health and well-being or the avoidance of disease, for sick and injured infants or for others who, for no matter what reason, are incapable to cater such care for themselves (Curriculum Guide for Nursing School (1937). Enthusiastic nurses frequently enhance the standard of healthcare and foster a positive nurse-patient connection as it is the initial point of contact for patients and medical personnel. Nurses provide care for patients through some of their utmost susceptible and worrisome periods, and it is typically the most dependable and approachable point of contact for patients and their families. Competent nurses are able to fulfill their duties well and demonstrate empathy for each patient look after. Nurses have an important role in promoting wellness, avoiding illnesses, and primary and community care. A nurse's primary responsibility is to advocate for and monitor individuals while they are unwell or injured.

However, in many instances, issues like high workload and an uncertain workplace place a great deal of strain on nurses, increasing their susceptibility to unpleasant emotions like anxiety and despair. For this Character Strengths is an approach that enables people to enhance their lives, careers, and relationships that has been supported by research. Peterson and Seligman (2003) emphasized the need to explore them in order to appear to be intangible for good living and these are the productive and healthy aspects of human functioning. Peterson and Seligman stated that character strengths are the doorways to a "good life" leading to a state of contentment and may act as "lubricants for enabling positive psychological functioning and positive experiences (Park & Peterson, 2003)".

Virtues are comprising of character strengths which are interpreted as "a capacity for feeling, acting in such a way that permits optimal functioning in the quest of involved consequences" (Linely and Harrington, 2006). "The search institute 40 Developmental assets" where twenty external(i.e. "support empowerment boundaries and expectation, optimum utilization of time") and twenty internal assets (viz "commitment to learning, caring, social competencies and positive identity etc) are measured which appear to link with a good life. Later on, in 2004 Peterson and Seligman developed values in Action inventory for measuring "6 virtues and 24 character strengths". One's profile of strengths and its acknowledgment help in one's gratification with life resulting in adjustment in the existing scenario."(Benson, Leffert, Scales and Blyth, 1998)".

1. *Virtues:* There are so many virtues that help in leading a transcendental life. These virtues (Wisdom, Courage, Humanity, Justice, Temperance, Transcendence) consist of 24 character strengths such as Curiosity -It refers to one's aptitude, which shows one's intrinsic desire for experience and knowledge. It has been identified as a driving force for inventing something new.

2. *Creativity* -It is a higher mental process, which has the characteristic features of imagination, originality, completeness and adaptiveness.

3. *Love of learning* -It refers to a passion for endless acquiring of knowledge which is boundless. It leads to deeper or wider knowledge of things.

4. *Judgment* - It is a cognitive strength which develops with age. It refers to the capability of looking at things from wider perspectives.

5. Perspective - It relates to cognitive strength and is considered as the product of knowledge which leads to enhance the capability of giving wise advice to others.

6. *Bravery* - It is an emotional strength which involves the strong willpower to reach the goals despite facing the hurdles successfully.

7. *Honesty* -It is a complex rich human strength. It relates to one's moral values. An honest person is not only true to oneself but also towards others.

8. *Zest* -It refers to enthusiasm, Vigor and vitality.

9. *Capacity to love* -Love is an important interpersonal strength. According to Hendrick & Hendrick (1992) "Romantic love may not be necessary in life, but it may be essential to joy. Kindness-It relates to the virtue of humanity. In Eastern ideology, "Confucianism" considered Jen (humanity) as the most important virtue for having a moral existence, while the Taoist belief system reflects humanity as a naturally occurring behaviour pattern.

10. *Social intelligence* -Man is a social animal so he/she must possess an optimum level of social intelligence to succeed in life. It may be considered as "a capability to acknowledge the feelings, thoughts and behaviour of an individual in interpersonal situations and to act rightly in those situations".

11. *Citizenship*-Man is social by nature. We can't live alone. We feel secure while living with others thus the strength of citizenship is prominent among members of a collectivistic society. This strength holds the people together and fosters the feeling of dependence, conformity and the desire to fit.

12. *Fairness*-It refers to treating all people similarly or identically. A society can progress genuinely if the people of that society have nurtured the strength of fairness.

13. *Leadership*-The strength of leadership refers to certain traits such as the ability to lead, motivate followers, social caring, a well-developed positive ego, highly self-efficacious, self-assurance, assertiveness, energetic, confidence, behavior flexibility, good judgment, intelligent, good analytical and verbal ability, good judgment ability, decision maker and psychological mastery to make the people feel his/her presence etc. (Zaccaro,2001)

14. *Forgiveness*-It is a prosocial behaviour, as empathy serves as the route for unleashing forgiveness which reflects less desire to harm or seek revenge toward the transgressing person, rather having favorable attitude towards such a person. According to Thompson and Snyder (2003) forgiveness may be towards oneself, another person or a situation.

15. *Humility*-It refers to the manifestation of one's inner capabilities by themselves. So persons high in modesty do not need any external media to propagate their worth. Their behavior pattern itself reflects their inner self.

16. *Self-control* -It is an ability to regulate emotional patterns, behavior, thoughts as well as desires in the face of external demands in order to function in society. According to Karolyi (1999), "Self-regulation cites to people's capability to commence and guide their actions towards the achievement of a desired future goal". The optimum level of self-control is directly related to a healthy lifestyle, happiness, competence, better adjustment, better social skills, enhanced healthier relationships and less psychopathology.

17. Spirituality-Spirituality has been found to be positively linked to physical as well as mental health. In this way, spirituality serves as a psychosocial resource for transcendent source of personal worth, effectiveness and purpose in life. (Emmons, Cheving and Tehrani, 1998) and particularly when confronting a life-threatening event or illness.

18. *Prudence*- It is a moral strength as it governs and discipline oneself by the use of reason. It relates to one's practical intelligence. It refers to the capability of distinguishing between virtuous and vicious deeds. It also guides people for doing appropriate actions at the appropriate time and place.

19. *Gratitude* - It relates to kindness, generosity and the beauty of giving and receiving. It is recognized "as a prized human propensity" in different religious traditions such as Hindu, Buddhism, Muslim and Christian etc.

20. *Hope* -It is an expectation for good things happen in the future where the person utilizes pathway thinking and agency thinking. Pathway thinking refers to the "way power" which shows us alternative routes to reach the goal. While agency thinking reflects the "willpower" which motivates us to put continuous efforts to reach the goal inspite of facing so many hurdles.

21. *Humor* - It is a powerful magnetic strength which enables the person to attract other people towards his/herself. As one comes closer to the person who keeps one happy. "(Fraley and Aron, 2004)". It may be regarded as a key factor for prosperous long-term relationships (Martin, 2007). It is typically prosocial behavior and serves positive functions (Kelter, Young, Herrey and Oemig, 1998). As it has been empirically proved that humor detoxified conflict and reduced stress in a relationship (Argyle 2001; Lefcourt, 2002 and Martin, 2008).

22. *Healthiness*: One of the basic tenets of the nursing field is health. (Johansson, Weinehall & Emmelin, 2009; Reynolds, 1988). The notion of health is one that is complicated and has many facets (Amzat & Razum, 2014). Rather than focusing solely on the absence of illness and infirmity, the WHO defines health as "a condition of complete physical, mental, and social well-being" (WHO, 1948). In psychology, health is defined as the presence of physical, psychological, cultural, economic, and spiritual well-being rather than the absence of disease. (2011) Marks, Evans, and Estacio.

The current findings strengthened the earlier findings of Singh and Wani (2018) reveals that health appears to be an essential marker in medical (doctor &nurses) personnel which helps them to subsist several considerations, including insufficient work hours, a heavy workload, rotating shifts, and long hours worked, role conflict, and tense relationships with the boss coworkers or subordinates, danger and annoyance in the workplace, etc. Baumann et.al (2020) showed that character strengths contributed to the good health.

Recent research evidence in psychology highlights the importance and relevance of character strengths in the healthiness of nurses. Xie, Liu, Zhong and Zhang(2020)explored the direct positive effects of character strengths on nurses' mental health. Further research has shown that nurses' creativity in healthcare organizations can give rise to large-scale changes in nursing practice, improvement of care and organizational performance. (Isfahani, Hosseini, Khoshknab (2015). (Duffy et.al 2016) also show that there is a positive relationship of character strengths with healthiness. Singh & Poonam (2018) also revealed that positive relationship of spirituality with nurses performance which impact on their health.

Hypothesis

• On the ground of the above objective the following hypothesis was constructed

• There would be a significant difference in the character strengths and healthiness among government and private nurses.

Methods

Participants

A purposive sample of 50 female nurses, aged 26-38 and was drawn from Jind and Rohtak, at least having an experience of 5 years from both government and private hospitals.

Inclusion criteria

• Age range i.e.22-38

• Only female nurses

• Emergency ward nurses.

Exclusion criteria

• male staff

• cardiac nurses

• Those are not to be taken.

Measurement of Character Strengths

Value in action questionnaire (Kamlesh Singh and Rajneesh Choubisa Hindi adaptation 2009) This self-report inventory measure "6 virtues such as Wisdom and Knowledge, Courage, Humanity, Justice, Temperance, Transcendence" and "24 character strengths such as Curiosity, creativity, love of learning, judgement perspective, bravery, perseverance, honesty, zest, capacity to love, kindness, social, intelligence, citizenship, fairness, leadership, forgiveness, humility, self-control, caution". It consists of 240(10 items for each strength) items to be responded on 5 point likert scale. Its overall internal consistency was high, $\alpha=0.83$. Test-retest reliability over four months is also fair, $r>0.70$. The top five character strengths (ranked on the basis of their mean scores) is to be scrutinized and labelled as "signature strengths".

Measurement of Healthiness

Leddy Healthiness scale (Leddy (1996). The Leddy Healthiness Scale has 6- point likert type scale with 26-item. Items measure capability, connections, choice, meaningfulness, ends, control, challenge, capacity and confidence. The items score is modulated for a healthiness score. The LHS has demonstrated internal consistency reliability ranged from 0.89 to 0.93 and construct validity. The LHS might be useful in studies of specific pattern expression of health.

Procedure

For the execution of the current work on nurses initially they were contacted. After their volunteer participation and fulfilling the criteria to be included in the work, rapport was established with each participant and assured them about the confidentiality of their responses. They were instructed to fill each inventory/ scale/ questionnaire as per their instruction. After fulfilling each proforma, the researcher scored their responses as per the norms of each scale/ questionnaire/ inventory. Further raw scores were subjected to statistical analysis by using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences).

Result and Discussion

The major intent of the research was to highlight the contribution of the profile of character strengths and their difference in government and private nurses and also determine nurses healthiness. For pursuing this aim, standardized tools were used to assess "character strengths and healthiness. The obtained scores on all these variables were statistically analyzed by using descriptive statistics and inferential statistics (t-test). In order to attain the objective the mean and standard deviation of scores obtained on various virtue-wise character strengths were computed and have been depicted in Table 1

Table 1 The mean difference between government and private nurses in character strengths

Character strengths	Mean		SD		df	t
	Private	Govt.	Private	Govt.		
Wisdom	30.100	35.900	6.127	5.390	58	-3.892
Citizenship	30.700	35.866	5.966	5.217	58	-3.570
Judgment	34.366	29.966	7.117	6.910	58	2.4293
SI	34.766	29.566	6.876	6.876	58	2.9286
Bravery	35.100	30.933	5.903	5.817	58	2.7532
Honesty	34.400	31.133	5.968	6.533	58	2.018
Kindness	35.233	31.433	4.861	7.059	58	2.428
CL	35.100	30.933	5.903	5.818	58	2.753
SC	33.800	25.600	7.805	5.096	58	4.818
Hope	35.266	28.800	5.638	6.424	58	4.143
Forgiveness	34.766	28.233	6.257	4.840	58	4.523

SI = Social Intelligence, CL = Capacity to Love, SC = Self-Control

While observing Table 1.1, it is clearly evident that government nurses exhibited almost similar magnitude in all the twenty-four character strengths. Further, the values of standard deviation related to various character strengths also appeared to be somewhat similar compared to other character strengths where the values of standard deviation are approximately six or seven.

While evincing that all character strengths have significant differences in private and government nurses. The nurses' character strengths are most strongly exhibited in temperance, which rises stronger than courage (Talla et.al 2018).

A cognitive strength that is creativity related to "wisdom and knowledge" virtue has been found significant differences in both government and private nurses. It indicates that frequent cognitive engagement and the potential of novel exploration at this stage of life serve as a medium of nurses gratification with life. As it has been rightly stated that a healthy mind has a healthy body which is indeed the indices of gratification.

Love of learning another character strength also appears to lead a satisfied life and found a difference between nursing professionals. It always refreshes one's mind, leading to intrinsic satisfaction. The passion for learning also serves as a never-ending authentic happiness(i.e. eudaimonia).

Humour also helps in bringing contentment with life among private nurses. As a sense of humour serves as a protective factor against the stressors of life. It has a magical healing power to balm the wounds of life, hence resulting in a stress-free life. As biologically it has been proved that a state of humour releases endorphins in our brain which facilitates a state of happiness. It serves love as an antidote to depression which is a major hurdle to lead a contented life it has been empirically proved that laughter therapy buffers against the stressors of life and is important for a healthy person.

Citizenship, Kindness is thereby indicating that the strength of heart i.e. kindness (i.e. generosity, feeling of compassion towards others, prosociality, altruism)and civic strength (i.e. fairness) pushed the nurses towards a healthy life. According to research,

people who use their character strengths have better mental health (Seligman 2005)and are also able to cope with the negative impact of stress and feel even better (Wood et al 2011)and healthier because they intentionally associate their strengths with their healthy behaviour.

Spirituality is another character strength which has indeed a significant positive relationship with healthiness among nurses. There is empirical evidence to support the notion that spirituality enhances one's. Singh&Poonam (2018) also reported similar findings that positive relationship of spirituality with nurses performance which impact on their healthiness. Peterson and Seligman (2004) also considered it as a universal strength of transcendence (refers to an ultimate transcendent, sacred and divine force). There are numerous research studies that have reported enhanced life after the search for sacred (Peterson and Seligman, 2004). As it has been also proved empirically that spirituality is found to be positively related with mental health. Spirituality is positively linked to physical as well as mental health. In this way spirituality serves as a psychosocial resource for a transcendent source of personal worth, efficacy and purpose in life. (Emmons, Cheving and Tehrani, 1998) and particularly when facing a life-threatening event or illness. (Isfahani, Hosseini, Khoshknab(2015). The working atmosphere is another distinction between government and private nurses. Government institutions might not have enough staff or resources, which could result in a heavy patient load and lengthy workdays. On the other side, private nurses frequently operate in hospitals with adequate funding, which means they have more staff members and resources.

Additionally, private nurses might be able to choose their hours and have exposure to more modern medical machinery and technology.

All these signature strengths may help them in healing their wounds of life as exhibited by their sense of responsibility, altruism, a big heart, full of enthusiasm, their sense of amusement and being humble. On the basis of the above findings, it may be inferred that the virtue of "Transcendence" is enjoyed by very few.

Table 2 The mean difference between government and private nurses in Healthiness

Healthiness	Mean	SD	(df)	t
Private	130.033	15.875	58	3.076
Govt.	117.466	15.762		

In psychology, health is defined as the presence of physical, psychological, cultural, economic, and spiritual well-being rather than the absence of disease. This study revealed that significant difference between government and private nurses in healthiness. Private nurses have better mental health and are also able to cope with the negative impact of stress and feel even better (Wood et al 2011)and healthier because they intentionally associate their strengths with their healthy behaviour.

Duffy et.al 2016) also show that there is a positive relationship between character strengths with healthiness. Singh&Poonam (2018)also revealed that positive relationship of spirituality with nurses' performance which impact on their healthiness.

While evincing it is apparent that some character strengths have insignificant differences in government nurses.

According to our research findings, the private nurse can strengthen her character strengths more because she knows that the more she works, the more her incentive will be, due to which there is more curiosity from her side to improve herself. The scalloping effect works in government hospital's nurses because there is a fixed time on which they get their salaries due to which nurses working in government hospitals are not able to enhance their character strengths so much. Singh&Poonam(2016) also showed that private hospital nurses excelled over government hospital nurses in terms of self-efficacy and performance as well as psychosocial competencies, such as effective communication, decision-making, empathy, and critical thinking which have

an impact on their healthiness. In samples of medical students and resident physicians, a recent study found significant correlations between the relevance of character strengths and happiness/health (Hausler et al. 2017)

The present study is done to identify the differences in character strengths among nurses and their roles in nurses healthiness and this study also demonstrated the importance of allowing and ensuring the relevancy of character strengths in a hospital work environment, which will lead to greater job engagement and their well-being.

In a nutshell, it may be stated that a strength-based approach, which highlights nurses' strengths, potential and also provide an insightful view of a happy and healthy life of nursing professionals.

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