

Developing since the year 2000 new branch of psychology – positive psychology – focuses on what leads people to achieve well-being, what favors their development and help them to grow and flourish. One of the concepts corresponding to the above questions is the concept of character strengths formulated by Peterson and Seligman (2004). The authors have developed a catalog of 24 positive human characteristics which are desirable in many (maybe even all of them?) cultures, and which implementation leads to achieving well-being.

The concept itself is relatively new. In the country where it was developed (USA) it gets much research attention. They conduct many studies on how character strengths relate to other variables (like well-being, life/job satisfaction). However, comparatively little is known about the structure of these strengths (i.e., what strengths coexist with each other and form more general factors) especially during childhood and adolescence. This study aims to fill this gap – we want to focus on structural thread in the group of children and adolescents (10-18 years old) using two approaches – variable-centered approach and person-centered approach. Then we would like to compare the structure with such well described characteristics as personality traits and values.

Variable-centered approach is most often used in psychology. It operates on means and assumes that studied group is homogeneous – composed of the similar people (which is a very risky assumption). Such approach allows us to explore trends – see how a particular variable at a very general, average level relates to other variables. For example, it may turn out that in the group of adolescents character strengths form four factors and factor 1 correlates with extraversion. Person-centered approach is a lot more complicated on the statistical and methodological level. It complements the variable-centered approach. In this paradigm certain profiles are distinguished – subgroups which are characterized by the same set of variables (in this case – character strengths). Then researchers can check the structures of character strengths (they can be different in every subgroup) and relations with other variables within every subgroup. It may turn out that in the group of adolescents we can distinguish two profiles of character strengths – one connected with sociability and the other with creativity and self-development. What's more – each of these profiles can (and probably will!) be associated with different personality traits and values.

Analysis that deep has not been conducted yet. It is a novelty in the research on character strengths and the implementation of a new methodological approach. It is also an important step to understand the meaning of the strengths themselves and finding them a suitable place in the description of a person. It is also the realization of a methodological postulate about studying constructs from the perspective of two complementary paradigms (variable- and person-centered approach). This seems especially important in the context of the importance of the character strengths in describing a person. The possibility of a more detailed look at the features implementing which (e.g., through choosing one's career) leads us to a sense of well-being, seems to be particularly important in a period of such dynamic development as the age of 10–18 (late childhood, early and late adolescence). Those studies significantly extend and deepen the existing knowledge of the character strengths and create a solid foundation for further research and practical application (e.g., constructing new methods of professional counseling or helping in choosing the learning path).