

Background

The ongoing research into the development of the positive psychology movement over the last twenty years has seen researchers and psychologists alike identify the need to simultaneously reduce suffering in mental health and increase positive wellbeing (Dubreuil et al., 2016; Kong & Ho, 2016). The key point of difference between positive psychology and standard psychological practices is positive psychology moves the focus away from psychological illness and instead focuses on psychological strengths. (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

Positive psychology has highlighted the need to understand virtues and character as a key contributor of psychological well-being (Ryff, Singer & Love, 2004). At the forefront of this development and increase of interest in positive psychology is the increase awareness of the development, understanding and use of individual virtues and characters strengths (Kong & Ho, 2016; Peterson & Seligman, 2004). The purpose of the current study was to develop a tactile interactive tool that could measure key character strengths in the form of a Q-methodology card sort activity (Q-Sort) as an alternative to the current online measure available in the form of the well-established measure of character strengths, VIA-120.

Card sorting Q-sort activities allows participants to arrange the strengths in a subjective way that makes sense to them allowing participants to have a more involved and greater sense of control over their selection of their key strengths (Chaparro, Hinkle, & Riley, 2008). The Q-sort will enable participants to identify with the strengths that they relate to at that point in their lives and work with those strengths, and the physical cards allow participants to have a hands-on experience in workshops and training (Brown, 1996; Cross, 2004). Whilst the cards themselves are being designed to be used in work places and schools on activities that will build on a person's strengths, going beyond the identification of key strengths process (Clatsworthy, 2011).

Current Research

This research set out to determine if the newly designed Q-sort activity would yield the same results as the results of the online survey the VIA-120. Sixty-four participants took part in the Q-sort card sorting activity (17 participants were excluded from the research as they did not complete the second part of the study). After the participants had completed the Q-sort card sorting exercise, the instructions provided them with a link to complete a survey online. One week after completion of the card sorting exercise participants were sent an email thanking them for their participation and along with a link to the VIA-120 survey for them to complete online. Participants results were then obtained via email, matched to their card sort results and de-identified and prepared for analysing.

Results

This research set about to ask six hypotheses. The first two hypotheses looked at the most commonly reported strengths in literature and proposed the results of this current research would match that. The results did not match the hypothesis with only 3 out of 5 hypothesised strengths matching participants Q-sort results, and only 1 out of 5 strengths matching participants VIA-120.

The third hypothesis proposed that the strengths within each virtue would correlate with each other, again this hypothesis was not met. This hypothesis was not supported by the data collected with none of the virtues having all of the strengths statistically significantly correlated with each other. Four out of six virtues had some strengths correlated with each and two had none that were statistically significantly

correlated. It was also noted that there were strong correlations outside of the virtues amongst the strength that would warrant further research investigation.

Hypothesis four and five explored the top strength and virtue that each participant scored in the Q-sort activity and compared that to the result of their VIA-120. These hypotheses were not met and it is proposed a number of reasons could have contributed to this including factors such as the self-determination theory. Further research is recommended as to why individuals who are asked to select their strength would select a differing strength as to when they are asked to rate behavioural statements outlining each strength. The last hypothesis looked at the exact rankings of each strength which showed that out of 235 possible matches, 11 were ranked exactly the same on both measures. There were 21 out of the 24 strengths were statically significantly relationships with each other, indicating the Q-sort method and VIA-120 would yield varying results in the same participants.

Practical Implications

Modern workplaces managers are coming to the agreement that employees are the crucial key when it comes to the critical difference on innovation, performance, and business success (Bakker & Schaufeli, 2008). With employees that are happy, more satisfied, and engaged more likely to be the driving employees behind the performance and improvements of an organisation (Bakker & Schaufeli, 2008; Ulrich, 1997). Bakker & Schaufeli state that in order to produce happy, content workers performance management needs to take the shift away from addressing the four D's of damage, disease, disorder and dysfunction and focus of positive organisational behaviour and the individual strengths that each person contains beyond the standard set of skills.

Traditionally interventions that have targeted personal growth, performance, and development in workplaces, school, and general life have targeted an individual's weaker ability's and characteristics addressing areas to improve (Swanson & Holton, 2001). Positive interventions do not deny negative experiences rather its encourages the use of existing strengths to grow and thrive (Rana, 2015). The self-determination theory (SDT), as used in a number of workshop interventions, propose that the use of CS can encourage and increase performance, increase teamwork. With interventions of positive psychology in the work place being found to have a positive and meaningful impact on employee satisfaction, work-life home balance (Lawman & Wilson, 2013).

Conclusion

This study set out to validate a set tactile Q-sort card sorting activity that could be used in workshops, activities and for personal use in schools and workplaces against the established character strength measure the VIA-120. Although the hypotheses for this study were not all met there were significant findings to warrant further research, in particular the correlations between the ranked strengths in the Q-sort and the VIA-120. However, as research has found that character strengths has an increase in well-being and increase of life satisfaction research would be better directed on the use of the cards themselves and the impact this can have in daily life measuring participant's well-being, and testing the use of character strengths in building resilience (Crossnan et al., 2012).