CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

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  • Temperance: forgiveness, modesty, prudence, self-regulation
  • Transcendence: appreciation of beauty and excellence, gratitude, hope, humor, religiousness
POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY – EMERGENCE AND NEED

In the current chapter, we try to explore the need for the field of positive psychology, its emergence and concepts leading to the Literature Review in the next chapter. Psychology since its inception, across centuries, has focused primarily on all that can go wrong with the human psyche and his environment leading to maladaptation and mental illness. Undoubtedly, major advances have been made in finding cures and management strategies for various mild to severe mental afflictions. But one area which has been consistently neglected and in fact mostly negated is the idea of existence of virtues and strengths in human beings. In fact, most theorists have over time emphasised that strengths are pure manifestations of the anxieties and the negative emotions that drive the human behaviour. Although, there has been tremendous progress in the field of psychology it has come at a stupendous cost. All these years, relieving the states that make life miserable has taken a priority over promoting the states that make life worth living.

Positive psychology, on the other hand, is a science that seeks to understand positive emotion, build strength and virtue, and provide guideposts for finding what Aristotle called the "good life"( Seligman, 2002, p. xi). Happiness forms the cornerstone of this good life. The study of happiness has so far not been taken very seriously in the mainstream psychology since the very existence of authentic happiness is questionable by most theorists. In fact, the scientific evidence so far makes it seem unlikely that one can change the level of happiness in any sustainable way, it suggests that we each have a fixed range for happiness, just as we do for weight. It is commonly believed that just like everyone has a fixed range of body weight and even if they lose some weight intends to come back. In the same way it has been believed that sad people never become lastingly happy and happy people do not become lastingly sad.
However, the recent research into happiness, demonstrates that it can be lastingly increased. Positive psychology shows how you can come to live in the upper reaches of your range of happiness. But positive psychology is not just about happiness, or about a quest for increasing life satisfaction through positive emotion, engagement, and meaning. It turns out that how much life satisfaction people report is itself determined by how good we feel at the very moment we are asked the question. Averaged over many people, the mood you are in determines more than 70 percent of how much life satisfaction you report (Seligman, 2011). If positive psychology is to be more than a “happiology” of cheerful mood, we need to shift our focus to well-being. Seligman (2006) believes the gold standard for measuring well-being is flourishing, and that the goal of positive psychology is to increase flourishing. Flourishing rests on five pillars, each of which we value for its own sake, not merely as a means to some other end. Positive emotion, engagement, and meaning are three of the pillars, but they cannot do the “heavy lifting” of supporting human flourishing by themselves. The other two pillars are relationships and engagement (Seligman, 2011).

In the following pages, an attempt is made to explain the concept and the vision behind the field of positive psychology, the evolving scopes of the field and its application in the form of testing a person's signature strengths, starting with the inception of the field of positive psychology.

Until recently, positive psychology was thought to be the domain of emotion and mood, while physical health was based on screening and treating problems in the body.

The Western world as we know has been the seat of major advances in the field of Psychology. Before 2nd World War, psychology had three distinct missions: curing mental illness, making the lives of all people more productive and fulfilling, and identifying and nurturing high talent (Seligman, 2002). Right after the war, two events - both economic -
changed the face of psychology: in 1946 the Veteran's Administration was founded, and thousands of psychologists found out that they could make a living treating mental illness. In 1947, the National Institute of Mental Health (which, in spite of its charter, has always been based on the disease model, and should now more appropriately be renamed the National Institute of Mental Illness) was founded, and academics found out that they could get grants if their research was about pathology (Seligman, 2002).

This arrangement brought many benefits. There have been huge strides in the understanding and therapy for mental illness: at least fourteen disorders, previously intractable, have yielded their secrets to science and can now be either cured or considerably relieved (Seligman, 1994). But the downside was that the other two fundamental missions of psychology - making the lives of all people better and nurturing genius - were all but forgotten. It wasn't only the subject matter that was altered by funding, but the currency of the theories underpinning how we viewed ourselves. We came to see ourselves as a mere sub-field of the health professions, and we became a victimology. We saw human beings as passive foci: "stimuli" came on and elicited "responses" (what an extraordinarily passive word!). External reinforcements weakened or strengthened responses. Drives, tissue needs, instincts, and conflicts from childhood pushed each of us around (Seligman, 2002).

Psychology's empirical focus shifted to assessing and curing individual suffering. There has been an explosion in research on psychological disorders and the negative effects of environmental stressors such as parental divorce, death, and physical and sexual abuse. Practitioners went about treating the mental illness of patients within a disease framework by repairing damage: damaged habits, damaged drives, damaged childhoods, and damaged brains.
The "third way" heralded by Abraham Maslow, Carl Rogers, and other "humanistic" psychologists promised to open a new perspective in addition to the entrenched clinical and behaviorist approaches. Their generous vision had a strong effect on the culture at large and held enormous promise. Unfortunately, humanistic psychology did not attract much of a cumulative empirical base and it spawned myriad therapeutic self-help movements. In some of its incarnations it emphasized the self and encouraged a self-centeredness that played down concerns for collective well-being.

Psychology is not just the study of pathology, weakness, and damage; it is also the study of strength and virtue. Treatment is not just fixing what is broken; it is nurturing what is best. Psychology is not just a branch of medicine concerned with illness or health; it is much larger. It is about work, education, insight, love, growth, and play. And in this quest for what is best, positive psychology does not rely on wishful thinking, faith, self-deception, fads, or hand-waving; it tries to adapt what is best in the scientific method to the unique problems that human behavior presents to those who wish to understand it in all its complexity.

What foregrounds this approach is the issue of prevention. In the last decade psychologists have become concerned with prevention, and this was the presidential theme of the 1998 American Psychological Association meeting in San Francisco. How can we prevent problems like depression or substance abuse or schizophrenia in young people who are genetically vulnerable or who live in worlds that nurture these problems? How can we prevent murderous schoolyard violence in children who have access to weapons, poor parental supervision, and a mean streak? What we have learned over fifty years is that the disease model does not move us closer to the prevention of these serious problems. Indeed, the major strides in prevention have largely come from a perspective focused on systematically building competency, not correcting weakness.
Prevention researchers (Snyder & Lopez, 2005) have discovered that there are human strengths that act as buffers against mental illness: courage, future-mindedness, optimism, interpersonal skill, faith, work ethics, hope, honesty, perseverance, the capacity for flow and insight, to name several. Much of the task of prevention in this new century will be to create a science of human strength whose mission will be to understand and learn how to foster these virtues in young people.

Working exclusively on personal weakness and on the damaged brains, however, has rendered science poorly equipped to do effective prevention. We need now to call for massive research on human strength and virtue. We need to ask practitioners to recognize that much of the best work they already do in the consulting room is to amplify strengths rather than repair the weaknesses of their clients. We need to emphasize that psychologists working with families, schools, religious communities, and corporations, develop climates that foster these strengths. The major psychological theories have changed to under gird a new science of strength and resilience. No longer do the dominant theories view the individual as a passive vessel "responding" to "stimuli;" rather individuals are now seen as decision makers, with choices, preferences, and the possibility of becoming masterful, efficacious, or, in malignant circumstances, helpless and hopeless (Bandura, 1986; Seligman, 1992). Science and practice that rely on this worldview may have the direct effect of preventing much of the major emotional disorders. It may also have two side effects: making the lives of our clients physically healthier, given all we are learning about the effects of mental well-being on the body. It will also re-orient psychology back to its two neglected missions, making normal people stronger and more productive as well as making high human potential actual.

The field of Positive psychology in its current form, finds its origin in the works of Martin E.P. Seligman. Seligman's work researching learned pessimistic attitudes eventually led him to develop an interest in
optimism, an interest that would eventually lead to the emergence of a new branch of psychology. In 1995, an important conversation with his daughter, Nikki, helped change the direction of his research. While weeding in the garden, Seligman became perturbed and yelled at his daughter. In a keynote address to the North Carolina Psychological Association, Seligman described how his daughter sternly reminded him that she had not whined once since she had vowed to give up whining on her fifth birthday. If she was capable of giving up whining, she reasoned, her father should be able to "stop being such a grouch." Nikki, claims Seligman, changed the way he thought about child rearing, himself and the importance of strengths and weaknesses. The broadest implication of Nikki's lesson was about the science and practice of psychology (Seligman, 2002).

Psychology after World War II became a science largely devoted to healing. It concentrated on repairing damage using a disease model of human functioning. This almost exclusive attention to pathology neglected the idea of a fulfilled individual and a thriving community, and it neglected the possibility that building strength is the most potent weapon in the arsenal of therapy. The aim of positive psychology is to catalyze a change in psychology from a preoccupation only with repairing the worst things in life to also building the best qualities in life (Seligman, 2002). To redress the previous imbalance, we must bring the building of strength to the forefront in the treatment and prevention of mental illness.

In 1996, Seligman was elected President of the American Psychological Association by the largest vote in the organization's history. Each APA president is asked to choose a central theme for his or her term and Seligman selected positive psychology. Rather than focus on what ails us, he wanted mental health to be about more than just the absence of illness. Instead, Seligman strove to usher in a new era of psychology that also concentrates on what makes people feel happy and fulfilled.
The field of positive psychology at the subjective level is about positive subjective experience: well-being and satisfaction (past); flow, joy, the sensual pleasures, and happiness (present); and constructive cognitions about the future—optimism, hope, and faith. At the individual level it is about positive personal traits—the capacity for love and vocation, courage, interpersonal skill, aesthetic sensibility, perseverance, forgiveness, originality, futuremindedness, high talent, and wisdom. At the group level it is about the civic virtues and the institutions that move individuals toward better citizenship: responsibility, nurturance, altruism, civility, moderation, tolerance, and work ethic (Gillham & Seligman, 1999; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

Seligman purports that in the new century positive psychology will come to understand and build those factors that allow individuals, communities, and societies to flourish. Such a science will not need to start afresh. It requires for the most part just a refocusing of scientific energy. In the 50 years since psychology and psychiatry became healing disciplines, they have developed a highly useful and transferable science of mental illness (Seligman, 2002). They have developed a taxonomy, as well as reliable and valid ways of measuring such fuzzy concepts as schizophrenia, anger, and depression. They have developed sophisticated methods—both experimental and longitudinal—for understanding the causal pathways that lead to such undesirable outcomes. Most important, they have developed pharmacological and psychological interventions that have moved many of the mental disorders from “untreatable” to “highly treatable” and, in a couple of cases, “curable.” These same methods, and in many cases the same laboratories and the next two generations of scientists, with a slight shift of emphasis and funding, will be used to measure, understand, and build those characteristics that make life most worth living. As a side effect of studying positive human traits, science will learn how to better treat and prevent mental, as well as some physical, illnesses. As a main effect, we will learn how to build the
qualities that help individuals and communities not just endure and survive but also flourish.

Hence Positive Psychology doesn’t aim to debunk all that has been said and done by various psychologist in the field. By mere refocusing the approach from healing to prevention, a new era of well being can be heralded.

Positive psychology is the scientific study of what goes right in life (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). It is the study of optimal experience—people being their best and doing their best. Positive psychology is a newly christened approach within psychology that takes seriously as a subject matter those things that make life most worth living. Positive psychology does not deny the problems that people experience, and positive psychologists do not ignore stress and challenge in their attempts to understanding what it means to live well. Positive psychology intends to complement business-as-usual psychology, not replace it, by expanding the topics of legitimate study to yield a full and balanced depiction of human thriving and flourishing. The most basic assumption that positive psychology urges is that human goodness and excellence are as authentic as disease, disorder, and distress and therefore deserve equal attention from psychologists and human service providers (Peterson & Park, 2003).

The contribution of contemporary positive psychology has been two fold: (a) providing an umbrella term for what had been isolated lines of theory and research, and (b) making the self-conscious argument that what makes life worth living deserves its own field of inquiry within psychology (Peterson & Park, 2003). The framework of positive psychology provides a comprehensive scheme for describing and understanding the good life. Domains identified by positive psychology as critical to the psychological good life include positive subjective experiences (e.g., happiness, life satisfaction, fulfillment, flow); positive
individual traits (e.g., character, interests, values); positive relationships (e.g., friendship, marriage, colleagueship); and positive groups and institutions (e.g., families, schools, businesses, communities). Positive groups and institutions enable the development and display of positive relationships and positive traits, which in turn enable positive subjective experiences. People are at their best when institutions, relationships, traits, and experiences are in alignment, and doing well in life represents a coming together of all four domains.

One of the major contributions to the field of positive psychology by Seligman was the formulation of the theory of Well-Being which followed his theory of Authentic Happiness. The theory of authentic happiness states that happiness could be analysed into three different elements that we choose for their own sake: positive emotion, engagement, and meaning (Seligman, 2011). And each of these elements is better defined and more measurable than happiness. The first is positive emotion; what we feel: pleasure, rapture, ecstasy, warmth, comfort, and the like. An entire life led successfully around these elements was referred to by him as "pleasant life"(Seligman, 2011). The second element, engagement, is about flow: the one with the music, time stopping and the loss of self-consciousness during an absorbing activity. A life lived with such aims is referred to as "engaged life"(Seligman, 2011) Engagement is quite the opposite of positive emotion which becomes clearer when people in flow are asked about their thoughts and feelings. They usually report feeling nothing since when in flow we tend to merge with the object. The concentrated attention that the flow requires uses up all the cognitive and emotional resources that make up thought and feeling. Another difference that emerges between positive emotion and engagement is that there exist effortless shortcuts (eating; shopping, watching television etc.) to feel positive emotion but no shortcuts exist for achieving flow. To be in flow one needs to deploy their highest strengths and talents. The third element of happiness is meaning. The pursuit of engagement and the pursuit of pleasure are often
solitary and solipsistic endeavours. We, no matter what we do or where we are, want meaning and purpose in life. The meaningful life consists of belonging to and serving something that you believe is bigger than self, and humanity creates all the positive institutions, such as, religion, political party, being green, various welfare organisations, or the family to allow this.

In a nutshell, the authentic happiness theory held that positive psychology is about happiness in three guises – positive emotion, engagement and meaning. However over the years Seligman realised that the term happiness was used in a more buoyant manner to refer more to the mood, merriment, good cheer and smiling. This understanding of happiness, Seligman felt, was incomplete in fully understanding the concept of well-being which now forms the core of positive psychology. Another inadequacy of the theory was the importance given to life satisfaction. However, later on, it was found that the amount of life satisfaction reported by people was influenced by how good they felt at that very moment the question was asked. Hence the earlier gold standard of positive psychology, the life satisfaction, was found to be disproportionately tied to mood. The third inadequacy in authentic happiness theory is that positive emotion, engagement and meaning do not exhaust the elements that people choose for their own sake. It does not account for the people who live to achieve, just for achievement's sake.

Therefore, Seligman formulated the well-being theory which he presented his book Flourish in the year 2011. His focus shifted from thinking that the goal of positive psychology was to increase life satisfaction to that the goal of positive psychology is to increase flourishing. He goes on to say that the topic of positive psychology is well-being and the gold standard for measuring well-being is flourishing.
Seligman explains the difference between well-being and happiness by referring to well-being as a construct while happiness as a thing. A "real thing" is the directly measurable entity. Well-being however does not have a single measure to define it exhaustively but several things contribute to it; these are the elements of well-being, and each of the elements is a measurable thing. As opposed to the theory of authentic happiness, the elements of well-being are themselves very diverse and are not just self-reports of thoughts and feelings of positive emotions, of how engaged you are or how much meaning you have in life. Therefore, Seligman concluded that the focal point of positive psychology should be the construct of well-being.

Seligman listed five elements of well-being. These five elements comprise what we people will choose for their own sake. Seligman listed three properties for each element to count as a part of well-being (Seligman,2011):

1. It contributes to well-being.
2. Many people pursue it for its own sake, not merely to get any of the other elements.
3. It is defined and measured independently of the other elements.

Well-being theory has listed five elements, and each of the five have the above stated three properties. The five elements are positive emotion, engagement, meaning, positive relationships, and accomplishment. In short these five elements have been referred to as PERMA. These five elements are individually described.
POSITIVE EMOTIONS

The concept of positive emotions is common between the authentic happiness theory and the well-being theory. This is what was referred to as the pleasant life also. Positive emotions are a cornerstone of well-being theory. There is evidence suggesting that negative emotions can be damaging. In an article titled "The undoing effect of positive emotions", the researchers (Fredrickson, et al, 2001) hypothesize that positive emotions undo the cardiovascular effects of negative emotions. When people experience stress, they show increased heart rate, higher blood sugar, immune suppression, and other adaptations optimized for immediate action. If individuals do not regulate these changes once the stress is past, they can lead to illness, coronary heart disease, and heightened mortality. Both lab research and survey research indicate that positive emotions help people who were previously under stress relax back to their physiological baseline.

The pleasant life mainly comprises of experiencing positive emotions regularly along with skills of amplifying those emotions. Positive emotions lead to the pleasant life, which is similar to the hedonic theories of happiness. As the hedonic, or pleasurable, element, positive emotion encompasses all the usual subjective well-being variables: pleasure, ecstasy, comfort, warmth, and the like.

The pleasant life essentially consists of the following three elements:
1. Contentment about the past (Gratitude, forgiveness)
2. Pleasure, positive emotions in the present ("Savoring a Beautiful Day" exercise)
3. Hope, optimism for the future

There is a genetic set range for positive feelings, but people can learn skills to live in the top part of this range. Fortunately, there are two other paths to well-being that anyone can pursue and positive emotions are the least crucial aspect of happiness.
Engagement refers to a psychological state in which individuals report being absorbed by and focused on what they are doing. At its high end, engagement has been referred to as 'flow' (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996), or the overall feeling referred to as 'being in the zone.' According to Csikszentmihalyi (1996, 1975), high levels of engagement are characterized by the following characteristics: the individual has clear goals and is intrinsically interested in the task at hand; the task presents challenges that meet the skill level of the individual; the task provides direct and immediate feedback to the individual; the individual retains a sense of personal control over the activity; and action and awareness become merged, such that the individual becomes completely immersed in what he or she is doing.

Engagement is achieved by becoming absorbed and immersed in your work, love, friendship and leisure. The key to having more engagement is to identify your strengths and develop a plan for implementing them into your life. The second happy life in Seligman's theory is the engaged life; a life that pursues engagement, involvement and absorption in work, intimate relations and leisure. One characteristic of the engaged life is that one's attention is completely focused on the activity, and time passes quickly. Flow is the term for highly engaging activities; in which the sense of self is lost; time stops. When you are doing something you love and are good at, you can experience this kind of flow.

While the subjective state for the pleasures is in the present, the subject of state for engagement is only retrospective. Positive emotion and engagement easily meet the three criteria for being an element of well-being.
MEANING

Meaning has been defined in various ways: as the ontological significance of life from the point of view of the experiencing individual (Crumbauch & Maholick, 1964), as the feeling of belonging and serving something larger than the self (Seligman, 2011), or simply as the response to the question, what does my life mean? (e.g., Baumeister, 1992).

Meaning essentially refers to belonging to and serving something that you believe is bigger than the self. The third happy life in Seligman's theory is the meaningful life; it involves using your signature strengths and talents to belong to and serve something that one believes is bigger than the self. This can be one's community, church, politics or other institutions. Contributing to something larger than one's self produces a sense of satisfaction and the belief that one has lived well. Research shows that these feelings are strongly correlated with happiness. An example of an exercise that increases meaning is to give the gift of your time by doing something that requires a fair amount of your time and uses one or more of your signature strengths in the process; such as mentoring a child or doing community service.

ACCOMPLISHMENT

Many of us strive to better ourselves in some way, whether we're seeking to master a skill, achieve a valuable goal, or win in some competitive event. Accomplishment or achievement is about completing the goals we set for ourselves or that we choose to do for no other reason than because we want to.

Accomplishment can be defined in terms of achievement, success, or mastery at the highest level possible within a particular domain (Ericsson, 2002). In some domains such as sports, business, or education, accomplishment is measured through agreed-upon standards, such as competitions (e.g., gold medals at the Olympics), honors and awards (e.g., winning the Nobel Peace Prize), scholastic achievement tests (e.g.,
performance on the SAT), or reaching a particular level (e.g., president or CEO of an organization). At the individual level, accomplishment can be defined in terms of reaching a desired state and progress toward prestated goals (Heckhausen, Wrosch, & Schultz, 2010; Negru, 2008).

Accomplishment or achievement is often pursued for its own sake, even when it brings no positive emotion, and meaning and nothing in the way of positive relationships (Seligman, 2011). This sort of life is referred to as the "achieving life," a life dedicated to accomplishment for the sake of accomplishment, in its extended form.

**POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS**

Social support—the belief that one is cared for, loved, esteemed and valued—has been recognized as one of the most (if not the most) influential determinants of wellbeing for people of all ages and cultures (Reis & Gable, 2003). Positive relationship leads to the “Social Life”. Positive relationships are an essential element of well-being. People who are surrounded by Positive relationships are more likely to live longer.

**INDEPENDENT MEASUREMENT AND CENTRALITY OF PSYCHOMETRIC THEORY**

Well being theory set forth one of the three fold criteria for its elements as independent measurements. It has become axiomatic that (publishable) assessment instruments are supposed to be reliable and valid; indeed, every article written about test construction addresses these qualities (Clark & Watson, 1995). However, it appears that many test developers/researcher do not fully appreciate the complexity of these concepts. These concepts go very well beyond the mere definitions of qualities of a test vis-à-vis reliability, validity; free from bias, standardized on a representative sample, etc. There are complex issues encompassing each and every step of test development which needs to be
looked into. The errors of measurement can be minimised by careful review of the entire procedure and use of suitable psychometric tools, however, they cannot be entirely eliminated. It is safe to say that, historically, even the best of the purported tests or instruments do not claim to possess a perfect reliability or validity score. However, this does not go on to say that non-significant levels of reliability and validity can be ignored. In fact, that is the very crux of test construction: significant levels of reliability and validity.

Measurement essentially consists of rules for assigning symbols to objects to represent quantities of attributes numerically or define whether the objects fall in the same or different categories with respect to a given attribute (Nunnally, 1978). Both scaling and classification involve the formulation and evaluation of rules. These rules are used to measure attributes of objects, usually, but not exclusively, people. Most scenarios involving measurement do not state obvious, clear rules. For example, the rules for measuring most attributes such as intelligence, shyness, or for that matter strengths, are not intuitively obvious. The results of these measurements, which are governed by complex rules, can have a profound influence on an individual's life, therefore, it is important to understand how the resulting scores are derived and what the accuracy of information about examining properties is, which these numbers contain. This is where the field of Psychometrics comes in.

Psychometrics is that area of psychology that specializes in how to measure what we talk and think about (Revelle, 2012). It is how to assign numbers to observations in a way that best allows us to summarize our observations in order to advance our knowledge. Although in particular it is the study of how to measure psychological constructs, the techniques of psychometrics are applicable to most problems in measurement. The measurement of intelligence, extraversion, severity of crimes, or even batting averages in baseball are all grist for the psychometric mill.
Any set of observations that are not perfect exemplars of the construct of interest is open to questions of reliability and validity and to psychometric analysis (Revelle, 2012). Having said that, it is also widely acknowledged that most measurement devices are not perfect. In the social, behavioural, and educational disciplines, commonly obtained measurements cannot often be replicated as straightforwardly and confidently as in physical sciences, and there is no instrument like a ruler or a weighing scale to measure intelligence, ability, depression and attitude et cetera. Instead, these are only indirectly observable entities, oftentimes called constructs, which can merely be inferred from overt behaviour. This overt behaviour presumably represents the construct manifestation. That is, each construct a statistical entity represented by a number of similar manifest behaviours. We can define a construct as an abstract, possibly hypothetical entity that is inferred from a set of similar demonstrated or directly observed behaviours. That is, a construct is abstracted from a cluster of behaviours that are related among themselves. In other words a construct represents what is common across these manifested behaviours. In this role, a construct is conceptualised as a hidden 'source' of common variability, or co-variability, of a set of similar observable behaviours. It is important to note that a construct may as well be a theoretical concept or even hypothetical entity and may also not be very well-defined initially on its own in a substantive area.

The complex nature renders these constructs' measurement extremely difficult. Although there are no instruments available that will allow us to measure or observe constructs directly, we can measure them indirectly. This can be accomplished by using proxies of the constructs. These proxies as discussed above are behavioural manifestations, specifically of the behaviours that are related to the construct. For example the subtests comprising an intelligence test battery, such as the Wechsler adult intelligence Scale can also be viewed as proxies of intelligence. It is important to note that these proxies or indicators are only manifestations of the constructs and not identical to the constructs of actual concern.
Therefore, the indicators of the studied constructs as manifestations of the latter are the actually observed and error prone variables on which we obtain data informing about these constructs. Yet collecting data on how individuals perform on these indicators is not the ends of our endeavour but only a means for accomplishing the goal, which is evaluation of the constructs of concern. Over the years, various tests have been developed, to assess different constructs which present themselves for examination through various behaviours. A test is a carefully developed measuring instrument that allows obtaining meaningful samples of behaviour under standardised conditions after strict adherence to test construction procedures.

As a scientific discipline, psychometric theory is based on formal logic as well as mathematical and statistical methods and models (Raykov & Marcoulides, 2011). These also underlie standard practices in the process of construction, development, and revision of measuring instruments, as well as in their applications. Becoming aware of these models and underlying methods as well as their assumptions and limitations in order to ensure improved practice in test construction and use of test information and decision-making is the primary goal of most measurement and test theory treatments. Psychometric theory provides a general framework for behavioural measuring instrument development, including instrument construction, revision, and modification (Raykov & Marcoulides, 2011). In order to be in a position to accomplish this goal, psychometric theory is based on general mathematical and statistical approaches, methods and models that are valid irrespective of any behavioural theory that a researcher may be adopting. It is useful for measurement of any behavioural construct such as an attribute, ability, attitude or as in this case strengths.

Psychometric theory provides essential input into research in the behavioural and social sciences, especially as far as development and selection of instruments and procedures for quantification of observations
on studied variables are concerned (Raykov & Marcoulides, 2011). Psychometric theory has some of its major applications in the process of pretesting and improvement of measuring instruments so as to minimise possible errors and ensure highest validity with regard to variables involved in examined research hypothesis and questions. Therefore, psychometric theory contributes to the provision of a set of high quality, pre-tried measuring instruments with known characteristics, from which a scientist can select for use in a given research situation. It is a scientific discipline dealing with the study of how general epistemological problems related to measurement impact the process of quantification of aspects of behavioural phenomena under investigation, as well as the methods aimed at providing information of highest quality about associated constructs from their indirect observations. (Raykov & Marcoulides, 2011).

One of the first steps in the process of test construction is to decide for what purpose the resulting test or instrument scores will be utilised. A main question that a developer needs to address is whether the instrument is supposed to differentiate among individuals with regard to a given construct or whether the test is to provide scores that describes in some sense absolute levels of proficiency in a given content area (Raykov & Marcoulides, 2011). The former is a question raised when an instrument is supposed to evaluate an underlying trait – an activity that is often referred to as trait evaluation – whereas the latter is the query of relevance when one is interested in obtaining information about the level of achievement accomplished by studied subjects and is at times referred to as achievement testing. At the next stage of instrument development, the researcher needs to identify behaviours representing the underlying construct. This requires a core content analysis, which should include a critical review of available research. Input from substantive experts is especially helpful in narrowing down types of behaviour pertaining to the construct of interest.
Human psychology as we all know, is sufficiently layered and complex and there is no limit to the number of psychological constructs that can be operationalised as instruments. The constructs are ordered hierarchically at different levels of abstraction, for example personality. From narrow traits of talkativeness, broader concepts of gregariousness and even more wider dispositions of extraversion – scales can be and have been developed to assess constructs at each of the many levels of abstraction. Consequently a key issue to be resolved at the initial development stage is the scope for generality of the target construct. Construct validation is one of the central issues in test construction. Cronbach and Meehl (1955) argued that investigating the construct validity of a measure necessarily involves at least the following three steps: (a) articulating a set of theoretical concepts and their interrelations, (b) developing ways to measure the hypothetical constructs proposed by the theory, and (c) empirically testing the hypothesized relations among constructs and their observable manifestations. This means that without an articulated theory (which Cronbach and Meehl termed "the nomological net"), there is no construct validity. Construct validity lies at the heart of the clinical utility of assessment.

Once the scope and range of content domain has been tentatively identified, the actual task of item writing can begin. However, no existing data analytic technique can remedy serious deficiencies in an item pool. Accordingly, the creation of the initial pool is a crucial stage in the scale construction. The fundamental goal at this stage is to sample systematically all content that is potentially relevant to the target construct. According to Murphy and Davidshofer(1998), a theory-based (or rational) approach has traditionally been used to guide the development of test content and specifications, especially for tests used in clinical settings. Here test developers draw on an existing theory to guide the development of the test. In the empirical approach, a set of possible items is administered to clearly defined criterion or contrasting groups
and items that differentiate between the groups statistically are included in the final version of the test (Murphy & Davidshofer, 1998).

Loevinger (1957) offered the classic articulation of this principle: "the items of the pool should be chosen so as to sample all possible contents which might comprise the putative trait according to all known alternative theories of the trait." Two key implications of this principle are that the initial pool should be broader and more comprehensive than one's own theoretical view of the target construct and should include content that ultimately will be shown to be tangential or even unrelated to the poor construct. The logic behind this principle lies in the psychometric analyses which subsequently can identify weak, unrelated items that should be dropped from the emerging scale but are powerless to detect content that should have been including but was not. Hence, in creation of item pool over inclusiveness does not harm.

In addition to the content, there has to be an adequate sample of items within each of the major content areas comprising the broadly conceptualised domain; failure to do so may mean that one or more of these areas will be underrepresented in the final scale. Some test developers suggest that formal subscales be created to assess each major content area to ensure that each aspect of construct is assessed adequately. Loevinger (1957) recommended that the proportion of items devoted to each content area be proportional to the importance of that content in the target construct. Although, a worthy goal, in most cases the theoretically ideal proportions remain unknown.

A good scale construction mostly is an iterative process involving several periods of item writing, followed in each case by conceptual and psychometric analysis. These analyses serve to sharpen one's understanding of the nature and structure of the target domain as well as to identify deficiencies in the initial item pool. For instance, factor analysis might establish that the items can be subdivided into several
subscales but that the initial pool does not contain enough items to assess each of these content domains reliably. Accordingly, new items need to be written and again subjected to psychometric analysis. Alternatively, analyses may suggest the conceptualisation of the target construct as, for example, a single bipolar dimension is countermanded by evidence that the two poles actually represent separate and distinct entities. In which case, revision of one's theoretical model may be in order.

There are many aspects of item pool selection and construction which go beyond the scope of current discussion. Not only does the contents need to be carefully analysed but the items themselves need to be worded carefully to avoid pitfalls like social desirability or conversely undesirability. Finally, in the initial item pool creation, the developer also must decide on the response format to be used. Two dominant response formats in contemporary personality assessment are dichotomous responding (example, true – false and yes – no) and Likert – type rating scales with three or more options. A huge debate has surrounded the use of these two regarding the usefulness, it has been mostly argued that dichotomous response formats are less reliable, leading to unbalanced response missions. However, this problem can be avoided by carefully inspecting individual item frequencies during scale development and eliminating items with extreme response rates. Furthermore, dichotomous response formats offer an important advantage over rating scales: other things being equal, respondents can answer many more items in the same amount of time. Consequently, if assessment time is limited, dichotomous formats can yield significantly more information. Likert – type scales are used with a number of different response formats; among the most popular are the frequency (never to always), degree or extent (not at all to very much), similarity (like me to not like me) and agreement (strongly agree to strongly disagree) formats. Obviously, the nature of the response option constrains item content in an important way. For example, the item "I get angry very easily." would be appropriate if used with a frequency format. The number of options provided is dependent on a
number of factors mostly revolving around the level of ability of the target population to make the distinction between the options. In fact, increasing the number of alternatives actually be reduced validity of respondents are unable to make the more subtle distinctions that are required. That is, having too many alternatives can introduce an element of random responding that renders scores less valid.

The choice of a primary test construction or item selection strategy is as important as the compilation of the initial item. In particular, the item selection strategy should be matched to the goal of scale development and to the theoretical conceptualisation of the target construct in this regard, Loevinger (1957) described three main conceptual models: (a) quantitative (dimensional) models that differentiate individuals with respect to the degree or level of the target construct, (b) class models that seek to categorise individuals into qualitatively different groups, and (c) more complex dynamic models.

Basic Steps and Issues in Objective Scale Development

Loevinger (1957) advanced the concept of structural validity, that is, the extent to which the scale's internal structure (i.e., the interitem correlations) parallels the external structure of the target (i.e., correlations among non-test manifestations of the trait). She emphasise that items should reflect the underlying or latent trait variance. These key concerns parallel the three main item selection strategies in use for quantitative model constructs: empirical (primarily reflecting concern with non-test manifestations), internal consistency (concerned with interitem structure), and item response theory (focused on the latent trait). The fact that structural validity encompasses all three concerns demonstrates that these methods may be used in conjunction with one another and that exclusive reliance on a single method is neither required nor necessarily desirable.

Currently the single most widely used method for item selection in scale development is some form of internal consistency analysis. Factor
analytic methods are most widely used when the target construct is conceptualised as multi dimensional and, therefore, subscales are desired. Indeed, whenever factor analysis is used, the resulting instrument has subscales, although subscales sometimes are developed without benefit of factor analysis usually through some combination of rational and internal consistency analysis. However, factor analysis does not provide solutions. That is, it can give us information but appropriate usage of that information would largely depend on the depth of knowledge of this tool. Secondly, there is no substitute for good theory and careful thought when using these techniques. To a considerable extent, internal consistency is always had at the expense of breadth, so simply retaining the 10 or 20 "top" items may not yield the scale that best represents the target construct. That is, the few items correlated most strongly with assessed or (in the case of factor analysis) latent construct may be highly redundant with one another; consequently including them all will increase internal consistency estimates but will also create an overly narrow scale that likely will not assess the construct optimally. This has been referred to as "attenuation paradox" by Loevinger (1954). Similarly, if items that reflect the theoretical core of the construct do not correlate with it in preliminary analyses, it is not wise simply to eliminate them without consideration of why they did not behave as expected. Other explanations regarding adequacy of the theory, wording of the items, representativeness of the sample, items base rate, representation of the core constructs through the items et cetera should be considered before such items are eliminated.

One of the strong pillars of psychometric theory is the Item Response Theory (IRT) based on the assumption that test responses reflect an underlying trait (or set of traits, although most users assume that a single dominant trait can explain most of the response variance) and, moreover that the relation between response and trait can be described for each test item by a monotonically increasing function called an item characteristic curve (ICC). Individuals with higher levels of the trait have higher expected probabilities for answering an item correctly (in the case of
ability) or in the key direction (for traits related to personality or psychopathology), and the ICC provides the precise value of these properties for each level of the trait. Once the item parameters have been established, IRT methods offer several advantages to scale developers. The methods provide a statistic indicating the precision with which an individual respondent’s trait level is estimated. Secondly, trait level estimates can be made independent of the particular set of items administered, thus providing greater flexibility and efficiency of assessment than is afforded by tests in which the ICC's are unknown.

In the initial round of data collection, it is common practice to administer the preliminary item pool without any additional items. This practice is regrettable, however, because it does not permit examination of the boundaries of the target construct; exploring these boundaries is absolutely critical to understand the construct from both theoretical and empirical viewpoints.

At this point sample considerations become important. It can be very helpful to do some preliminary pilot testing on moderately sized samples of convenience before launching a major scale development project. However, it is likely that some basic item content decisions will be made after the first full round of data collection, decisions that will shape the future empirical and conceptual development of the scale. Therefore, after initial pilot testing, it is very important to use a large and appropriately heterogenous sample for the first major stage of scale development. Before conducting more complex structure analyses, scale developers should examine the responses to missions of the individual items. In inspecting these distributions, two considerations are paramount. Initially, it is important to identify and eliminate items that have highly skewed and unbalanced distributions. Highly unbalanced items are undesirable for several reasons. First, when most respondents answered similarly, items convey little information. Second, owing to the limited variability, these items are likely to correlate weekly with other items in the pool and
therefore, will fare poorly in the subsequent structure analysis. Third, items with extremely unbalanced institutions can produce highly unstable correlation results. Again, before excluding an item on the basis of an unbalanced distribution it is essential to examine data from diverse samples representing the entire range of the scale's target population. It is desirable to retain items showing a broad range of distributions. The reason for this is that most constructs are conceived to be — and, in fact, are empirically shown to be — continuously distributed dimensions, and scores can occur anywhere along the entire dimension. Consequently, it is important to retain items that discriminate at different points along the continuum.

The next crucial stage is to conduct structural analyses to determine which items are to be eliminated from or retained in the item pool. This stage is most crucial when the test developer is seeking to create a theoretically-based measure of a target construct. So that the goal is to measure one thing as precisely as possible. The scale may seem relatively straightforward, but it is readily apparent from the plethora of research available, it remains poorly understood by test developers and users. The most obvious problem is the widespread misapprehension that the attainment of the goal can be established simply by demonstrating that scale shows an acceptable level of internal consistency reliability, as estimated by an index such as coefficient alpha. A further complication is the fact that there is no longer any clear standards regarding what level of reliability is considered acceptable. For example, although Nunnally (1978) recommended minimum standards of .80 and .90 for basic and applied research, respectively. It is not uncommon for contemporary researchers to characterise reliability in the .60s and .70s as good or adequate.

More fundamentally, psychometricians long have disavowed the practice of using reliability enticements to establish the homogeneity of a scale. To understand this, it is necessary to distinguish between internal
consistency on the one hand and homogeneity or uni-dimensionality on the other. Internal consistency refers to the overall degree to which the items that make up a scale are intercorrelated, whereas homogeneity and uni-dimensionality indicates whether the scale items assess a single underlying factor construct (Clark & Watson, 1995).

As such, internal consistency is a necessary but not sufficient condition for homogeneity or unidimensionality. In other words, a scale cannot be homogeneous unless all of its items are interrelated, but a scale can contain many interrelated items and still not be unidimensional. Because theory driven assessment seeks to measure a single construct systematically, the test developer ultimately is pursuing the goal of homogeneity or unidimensionality rather than internal consistency per se. In fact, in practical terms, as a number of items becomes quite large, it is exceedingly difficult to avoid achieving a high reliability estimate. To avoid such pitfalls, as emphasised earlier, factor analysis is the single most widely used tool.

Despite the most advanced psychometric tools available and the current ease of use owing to various specialised software is available, testing is still not a fool proof area. Errors overshadow even the best of the tests owing to inadequate definition of the concept, various biases (which unwittingly creep in despite all precautions), differential definition of words leading to confusion, misinterpretation of the results without understanding statistical significance and many more factors. Therefore, it would be safe to say that test construction in its best sense is an ongoing process, involving a continuous reassessment of the items, theoretical developments, and testing conditions.

Positive Psychology: Instrument construction and Issues Faced

Positive Psychology as a field has its root in humanistic psychology but what sets it apart is a strong psychometric focus. However while
psychometric work is to be encouraged it would be a mistake for positive function research to rely exclusively on self-report and there is going to be a need for development of standardised interview schedules with which to assess positive functioning.

A number of comprehensive psychometric tools have been developed in the field of positive psychology and quite a few more are being worked on. From Brief Strengths Test to Gratitude Questionnaire to the highly detailed Values In Action Inventory Of Strengths - variety of instruments exist which are continually being subject to psychometric evaluation and being revised or rewritten accordingly. Although a new field, considerably large body of psychometric data are available which goes on to emphasise the importance of the approach and its direction for future. Talking about VIA inventory of strengths, psychometric data suggest satisfactory alphas ranging greater than .70, high correlation of the scores with self nomination. There have been over seven published factor analyses of the VIA classification. The trend is towards a four factor solution, although some studies have found five factors. The VIA survey has acceptable internal consistency and test retest reliability. It also has moderate and growing levels of psychometric validity, meaning it correlates reasonably well with the construct that it would be expected to be related to and does not correlate with the construct it should not be related to, such as social desirability. Further in terms of predictive validity, the studies reported demonstrate moderate and acceptable levels. Further validity studies in the field are ongoing.

Hence, it shall become clearer in the next section, psychometric theory plays a major part in positive psychology. The ultimate goal of this field is to arm the people with further ability to improve their quality of life by exercising the signature strengths in day-to-day life. For this goal to become a reality, various instruments need to be psychiatrically evaluated thoroughly to enable individual awareness of strengths which forms the base for their application.
Having said that, instrument construction comes with its own set of problems. Participant reactivity is another such challenge. Because, in most cases, psychologists are measuring psychological characteristics of people who are conscious and generally know that they are being measured, the act of measurement can itself influence the psychological state or process being measured.

Participant reactivity can take many forms. In research situations, some participants may try to ferret out the researcher’s purpose for a study and change their behavior to accommodate the researcher (demand characteristics). In research and in applied measurement situations, some people might become apprehensive, others might change their behavior to try to impress the person doing the measurement (social desirability), and still others might even change their behavior to convey a poor impression to the person doing the measurement (malingering) (Furr & Bacharach, 2008). In each case, the validity of the measure is compromised—the person’s “true” psychological characteristic is obscured by a temporary motivation or state that is a reaction to the very act of being measured.

A second challenge to psychological measurement is that, in the behavioral sciences, the people collecting the behavioral data (observing the behavior, scoring a test, interpreting a verbal response, etc.) can bring biases and expectations to their task (Furr & Bacharach, 2008). Measurement quality is compromised when observers allow these influences to distort their observations. Expectation and bias effects can be difficult to detect. In most cases, we can trust that people who collect behavioral data are not consciously cheating; however, even subtle, unintended biases can have effects.

The measures used in the behavioral sciences tend to differ from those used by physical scientists in a third important respect. Psychologists tend to rely on composite scores when measuring psychological attributes
Many of the tests used by psychologists involve a series of questions, all of which are intended to measure some aspect of a particular psychological attribute or process. For example, a personality test might have 10 questions designed to measure extroversion. Class examinations constructed to measure learning generally include a series of questions. It is common practice to score each question and then to sum or otherwise combine the scores to create a total or composite score. The total score represents the final measure of the relevant construct. Although composite scores do have their benefits, numerous issues complicate the use and evaluation of composite scores.

A fourth challenge to psychological measurement is the problem of score sensitivity. Sensitivity refers to the ability of a measure to discriminate adequately between meaningful amounts or units of the dimension that is being measured. For psychologists, the sensitivity problem is exacerbated because we might not anticipate the magnitude of meaningful unit differences associated with the mental attributes being measured.

A final challenge reflects an apparent lack of awareness of important psychometric information. In the behavioral sciences, particularly in the application of behavioral science, psychological measurement is often a social or cultural activity. Unfortunately, such measurement often seems to be conducted with little or no regard for the psychometric quality of the tests.

Although a poorly constructed test might serve a meaningful purpose in some community of people (e.g., motivating students to learn important information), psychometrically well-formed information is better than information that is not well formed. Furthermore, if a test or measure is intended to reflect the psychological differences among people, then the test must have strong psychometric properties. Knowledge of these
properties should inform the development or selection of a test—all else being equal, test users should use psychometrically sound instruments (Furr & Bacharach, 2008).

**STRENGTHS AND VIRTUES**

To understand well-being we also need to understand personal strengths and virtues. The belief that we can rely on shortcuts to happiness and joy, rapture, comfort and ecstasy rather than be entitled to these feelings by the exercise of personal strengths and virtues, leads to legions of people who in the middle of great wealth are starving spiritually (Seligman, 2004). Positive emotion alienated from the exercise of character leads to emptiness, to inauthenticity, and to depression. Positive feeling that arises from the exercise of strengths and virtues rather than from the shortcuts, is authentic.

When well-being comes from engaging our strengths and virtues, our lives are imbued with authenticity. Feelings are states, momentary occurrences that need not be recurring features of personality (Seligman, 2004). Traits, in contrast to states, are either negative or positive characteristics that recur across time and different situation, and strengths and virtues are the positive characteristics that bring about good feeling and gratification (Seligman, 2004). Flourishing and the pursuit of ideals are attained through virtue, while character strengths have more to do with day to day living (Broadie, 1991). While psychology may have neglected virtue, religion and philosophy most assuredly have not, and there is an astonishing convergence across the millennia and across cultures about virtue and strengths. All religious and philosophical writings such as that of Confucius, Aristotle, the Bhagavad-Gita etc although disagree on the details but they have a common underlying list of six virtues stated as central to well-being. Positive psychology has refocused scientific attention on character, identifying it as one of the
pillars of this new field and central to the understanding of the psychological good life (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

Character refers to those aspects of personality that are morally valued. Good character is at the core of positive youth development (Park, & Peterson, 2009). Baumrind (1998) noted that "it takes virtuous character to will the good, and competence to do good well". Most schooling and youth programs today focus on helping youth acquire skills and abilities—reading, writing, doing math, and thinking critically—that can help them to achieve their life goals. However, without good character, individuals may not desire to do the right thing.

Good character is central to psychological and social well-being. It is not simply the absence of problems but rather a well-developed family of positive traits (Peterson & Park, 2011). The building and enhancing of character strengths not only reduce the possibility of negative outcomes (Botvin, Baker, Dusenbury, Botvin, & Diaz, 1995) but are important in their own right as indicators and indeed causes of healthy positive lifelong development and thriving (Colby & Damon, 1992; Park, 2004b; Weissberg & Greenberg, 1997).

Virtues are broad categories which are comprised of the various character strengths associated with it. Positive psychologists theorize that a virtue can be achieved through the frequent practice of its component character strengths (e.g., achieving the virtue of humanity by being kind, loving, and socially intelligent) (Seligman, et al., 2005). The six virtues and their core character strengths are (Peterson & Seligman, 2004):

- Wisdom and knowledge: creativity, curiosity, open-mindedness, love of learning, perspective
- Courage: authenticity, bravery, persistence, zest
- Humanity: kindness, love, social intelligence
- Justice: fairness, leadership, teamwork
Temperance: forgiveness, modesty, prudence, self-regulation

Transcendence: appreciation of beauty and excellence, gratitude, hope, humor, religiousness

The Character Strengths and Virtues (CSV) handbook of human strengths and virtues, by Christopher Peterson and Martin Seligman, defined character strengths as satisfying most of the ten following criteria. Character strengths are:-

1. fulfilling;
2. intrinsically valuable, in an ethical sense (gifts, skills, aptitudes and expertise can be squandered, but character strengths and virtues cannot);
3. non-rivalrous;
4. not the opposite of a desirable trait (a counterexample is steadfast and flexible, which are opposites but are both commonly seen as desirable);
5. trait-like (habitual patterns that are relatively stable over time);
6. not a combination of the other character strengths in the CSV;
7. personified (at least in the popular imagination) by people made famous through story, song, etc.;
8. observable in child prodigies (though this criterion is not applicable to all character strengths);
9. absent in some individuals;
10. and nurtured by societal norms and institutions.

Virtues are the core characteristics valued by moral philosophers and religious thinkers: wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, temperance, and transcendence. These broad categories of virtue emerge consistently from historical surveys. Character is the entire set of positive traits that have appeared across cultures and throughout history as important for the good life. Character strengths are the psychological processes or mechanisms that define the virtues (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). These strengths are ubiquitously recognized and valued. Character strengths are the subset of
personality traits on which moral value is placed. Introversion and extraversion, for example, are traits with no moral weight. Kindness and teamwork, in contrast, are morally valued, which is why they are considered character strengths.

Character strengths are now receiving attention by psychologists interested in positive youth development. They may contribute to a variety of positive outcomes as well as work as a buffer against a variety of negative outcomes, including psychological disorders. In recent years, positive psychologists have made a serious effort to answer the questions relating to definition and quantification of character strengths scientifically. Although the answers are neither simple nor final, the following assertions are vastly agreed upon:

1. good character is neither unitary nor discrete
2. rather, character is comprised of a family of positive traits: individual differences that exist in degrees and are manifest in a range of thoughts, feelings, and actions
3. what counts to someone as good character can be influenced by contextual factors like culture, religion, or political persuasion
4. however, some components of good character are ubiquitous and perhaps universal
5. good character is not outside the realm of self-commentary and certainly not a mystery to those in one's immediate social circle
6. many of the core components of good character are already present as individual differences among young children
7. the manifestations of character nonetheless change across the lifespan

The components of good character exist at different levels of abstraction. Virtues are the core characteristics valued by moral philosophers and religious thinkers: wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, temperance, and transcendence. These six broad categories of virtue emerge consistently from historical surveys (Dahlsgaard, Peterson, & Seligman, 2002). It is
speculated that these are universal, perhaps grounded in biology through an evolutionary process that selected for these predispositions toward moral excellence as means of solving the important tasks necessary for survival of the species (cf. Bok, 1995; Schwartz, 1994).

Character strengths are the psychological ingredients—processes or mechanisms—that define the virtues (Seligman & Peterson, 2004). In other words, they are distinguishable routes to displaying one or another of the virtues. For example, the virtue of wisdom can be achieved through such strengths as curiosity, love of learning, open-mindedness, creativity, and what we call perspective—having a big picture on life. These strengths are similar in that they all involve the acquisition and use of knowledge, but they are also distinct. Again, these strengths are regarded as ubiquitously recognized and valued, although a given individual will rarely if ever display all of them (Walker & Pitts, 1998). They regard character strengths as dimensional traits—individual differences—that exist in degrees.

From the many candidate strengths identified, the list of 24 strengths was arrived at by combining redundancies and applying the following criteria (Seligman & Peterson, 2004):

1. A strength needs to be manifest in the range of an individual's behavior—thoughts, feelings, and/or actions—in such a way that it can be assessed. In other words, a character strength should be trait-like in the sense of having a degree of generality across situations and stability across time.

2. A strength contributes to various fulfillments that comprise the good life, for the self and for others. Although strengths and virtues no doubt determine how an individual copes with adversity, the focus of positive psychologists is on how they fulfill an individual. In keeping with the broad premise of positive psychology, strengths allow the individual to achieve more than the absence of distress and disorder.
3. Although strengths can and do produce desirable outcomes, each strength is morally valued in its own right, even in the absence of obvious beneficial outcomes. To say that a strength is morally valued is an important qualification, because there exist individual differences that are widely valued and contribute to fulfillment but still fall outside of the classification. Consider intelligence or athletic prowess, these talents and abilities are cut from a different cloth than character strengths like humor or kindness. Talents are valued more for their tangible consequences (acclaim, wealth) than are strengths of character. Someone who "does nothing" with a talent like a high IQ or physical dexterity courts eventual disdain. In contrast, we never hear the criticism that a person did nothing with his or her hope or authenticity. Talents and abilities can be squandered, but strengths of character cannot.

4. The display of a strength by one person does not diminish other people in the vicinity but rather elevates them. Onlookers are impressed, inspired, and encouraged by their observation of virtuous action. Admiration is created but not jealousy, because character strengths are the sorts of characteristics to which all can—and do—aspire. The more people surrounding us who are kind, or curious, or humorous, the greater is our own likelihood of acting in these ways.

5. As suggested by Erikson's (1963) discussion of psychosocial stages and the virtues that result from their satisfactory resolutions, the larger society provides institutions and associated rituals for cultivating strengths and virtues. These can be thought of as simulations: trial runs that allow children and adolescents to display and develop a valued characteristic in a safe (as-if) context in which guidance is explicit.

6. Yet another criterion for a character strength is the existence of consensually recognized paragons of virtue. Paragons of character display what Allport (1961) called a cardinal trait, and the ease with which we can think of paragons in our own social circles
gives the lie to the claim that virtuous people are either phony or boring (Wolf, 1982).

7. Being able to phrase the “opposite” of a putative strength in a felicitous way counts against regarding it as a character strength. This can not and should not be confused with bipolarity of certain strengths, that is, some strengths like kindness possess a negative anchor to the continuum that defines the characterisitic. Kindness ranges from mean spiritedness through zero to increasingly positive instances. Sense of humor on the other hand has a zero point but no meaningful negative range.

8. A strength has to be distinctive which means that the strength is arguably unidimensional and not able to be decomposed into other strengths in the classification. For example, the character strength of tolerance meets most of the other criteria enumerated but is a blend of open-mindedness and fairness. The character strength of responsibility seems to result from persistence and teamwork. And so on.

9. Existence of prodigies is also a criteria although it may not apply to all strengths.

10. Conversely, another criterion for a character strength is the existence of people who selectively show the total absence of a given strength.

When these criteria were applied to the candidate strengths identified through literature searches and brainstorming, what resulted were 24 positive traits organized under six broad virtues listed earlier. In some cases, the classification of a given strength under a core virtue can be debated. Humor, for example, might be considered a strength of humanity because playfulness can create social bonds. It might also be classified as a wisdom strength, in as much as humor helps us acquire, perfect, and use knowledge. But there was a reason for dubbing humor a strength of transcendence: Like hope and spirituality, humor connects us to something larger in the universe, specifically the irony of the human
condition, the incongruent congruencies to which playful people call our attention, for our education and amusement.

Seligman described signature strengths as a person's strengths which are deeply characteristics of him or herself. He believes that the highest success in living and the deepest emotional satisfaction comes from building and using the signature strengths. One of the pillars of positive psychology is the belief that all 24 strengths are present in all human beings in varying degrees; some of them which define us are our signature strengths while others are relatively weaker and do not form the focus of study. According to Seligman, contrary to the popular belief, our effort should be directed at using our signature strengths in our day-to-day life rather than attempting to 'correct' the lesser ones. Signature strengths refer to the top five character strengths and virtues of a particular individual. Your signature strengths are displayed consistently across different situations. Signature strengths are an integral part of who you are; they are stable personal characteristics. We feel excited and motivated to use them and in fact if you look, you may find that many of your pursuits are centred around your strengths. In simple terms, Signature strengths are the things we like doing and are good at. Now each strength shall be taken up one by one to understand what they encompass and signify.

WISDOM

The first virtue cluster is Wisdom. In positive psychology, the virtue of wisdom is associated with intellectual strengths that help you gain and use information.

Strengths of wisdom and knowledge include positive traits related to the acquisition and use of information in the services of a good life. In traditional psychological language, these are what we commonly referred to as cognitive strengths (Seligman & Peterson, 2004). Many of the
strengths in this classification have cognitive aspects which is why many philosophers concerned with virtues consider wisdom or reason as the chief virtue making all others possible. Strengths associated with wisdom include: Creativity, Curiosity, Open-mindedness, Love of learning, Perspective

**Creativity/Ingenuity/Originality/Practical Intelligence/Street Smarts**

Creativity is the process of using one's originality to devise novel ways to positively contribute to one's own life or the lives of others (Rashid, 2011). Such originality can range from everyday ingenuity to groundbreaking work that becomes highly recognized. Creative people are able to apply their imaginations in new and surprising ways in order to solve the problems that they encounter. Traditional notions of creativity focus on artistic expression and scientific discovery, but this strength can be applied to any area of life in which obstacles can be addressed imaginatively. It entails using the imagination to develop original ideas and objects. A person with this strength is able to think outside the box.

Creativity essentially entails two important components. Firstly, a creative person is capable of producing ideas or behaviours that are distinctly different and original – novel, surprising, or unusual. However, originality per se does not define creativity. The relevant behaviours or ideas must also be adapted. The individual's personality must make a positive contribution to that person's life or the lives of others. Creativity as pointed out by Seligman and Peterson (2004) must entail speaking to an audience, not solipsism. In simple terms, it means creativity purely within an individual with no pain on the external world cannot be viewed as a strength. An important point here is, a behavioural idea might be adapted into being in the original. Creativity fulfils all the criteria laid down by positive psychologist for a construct to qualify as a strength. It is fulfilling – not solely in materialistic terms (which might come in later) but it makes us feel good in sheer persuasion. It is morally valued; the
importance of creativity as a human capacity can never be over emphasised. An important aspect of the strengths is that it should not diminish others in fact should in one way or the other effect not only ourselves but others in a positive manner. By requiring that creativity be adaptive, it is ensured that many benefits when one is creative. The fourth criterion, of nonfelicitous opposite or simply put the antonym test is also satisfied by creativity since the obvious antonym of creativity are undesirable: dull, boring, insipid, monotonous et cetera. Creativity is also trait like: people can definitely be arranged along a continuum of originality and they more or less stay there. It is distinctive and cannot be broken further although can be blended with many if not all other strengths. Criteria seven states that the strength should have paragons and acknowledge paragons of creativity like Einstein, Bill Gates, Picasso established beyond doubt that across centuries there have been distinct epitomes of creativity. Prodigious creativity is also another well-known fact displayed in geniuses like Amadeus Mozart and others. Selective absence is also fulfilled by this strength in addition there being institutions and rituals to enhance it (Seligman & Peterson, 2004).

Curiosity

Curiosity refers to having an interest in the world. Curious people are open to experience. They are flexible and take steps to actively engage in what is going on around them. Such people have been shown to be satisfied with life. Curiosity about the world leads to openness to experience and flexibility about matters that do not fit one's preconceptions. Curiosity can be either specific that is about one particular thing or global, a wide eyed approach to everything. Curiosity is actively engaging novelty, and not passive absorption of information(Rashid,2011).Curiosity is taking an interest in all of ongoing experience. It involves actively recognizing and pursuing challenging opportunities and seeking out new knowledge. Curiosity can be broken down into three categories: interest, novelty seeking, and openness to new
experience. It is this strength that drives individuals to make discoveries and to explore the boundaries of human knowledge.

**Judgement/Critical Thinking/Open-Mindedness**

An open minded person is able to assess information objectively. They have good judgement and don’t give in to irrational thinking. Such people weigh up the alternatives and are able to consider all the evidence and not just that which supports their original beliefs. Such people are less open to manipulation, are more willing to change and give things a go. When having discussions with others they are able to see both sides of the argument without getting emotionally involved. Research has found that people who are open minded do better on cognitive tests. They fairly examine issues from all sides without being influenced by preconceptions and are willing to change their mind in light of new evidence. This strength counteracts the pervasive “my-side bias” that prevents many people from considering views other than their own.

An open-minded person is not indecisive, wishy-washy, nihilistic, or permissive. Neither does the open-minded thinker bring this style to bear on all matters. The open-minded thinker engages this style when confronted with an appropriately complex judgement in which evidence for and against the belief must be examined and weighed (Seligman & Peterson, 2004). Again, nine out of ten criteria are fulfilled except that of prodigies which probably cannot exist until children achieve the Piagetian cognitive stage of formal operations allowing abstract and hypothetical thinking.

**Love of learning**

Adding systematically to your knowledge and thereby mastering new skills and subjects in absence of external incentives is called love of learning. People with a love of learning thrive on the learning experience.
They are always eager to learn more and develop their skills set. Such people learn for the sake of it, not because they have to. Learning is not something that stops when we finish school. Research suggests that people with this strength have better physical and mental health later on in life.

Love of learning has been viewed as an inherent part of all human nature, especially evident in the very young, who are driven to learn about the world they have entered (Seligman & Peterson, 2004). People who possess the general trait of love of learning are positively motivated to acquire new skills or knowledge or to build on existing skills and knowledge. Love of learning too fares exceptionally well on the criteria laid down scoring an eight out of ten. On account of distinctiveness, the theorists suspect that love of learning is a decomposable strengths, and pending further research it has been concluded that this criterion for a character strength is not met. As far as selective absence is concerned, one can be sceptical about the existence of an across the board absence of this strength except as a symptom of profound depression or catatonia.

**Perspective**

Possessing perspective means being able to provide wise counsel to others and possessing ways of looking at the world that make sense to self and others. Perspective, which is often called wisdom, is distinct from intelligence and involves a superior level of knowledge and judgment. This strength involves being able to provide wise counsel to others. It allows its possessor to address important and difficult questions about morality and the meaning of life. People with perspective are aware of broad patterns of meaning in their lives, their own strengths and weaknesses, and the necessity of contributing to their society. A person with perspective draws on their knowledge and experience to assist other people. Such people are not all-knowing; rather they are ready to learn more and are open to the views and opinions of others. Other people will
turn to them to get a better perspective on an issue. Research suggests that wisdom predicts a positive experience of ageing and may be more important than environment, financial security and physical health.

Perspective refers to the ability to take stock of life in large terms, in ways that make sense to oneself and others (Seligman & Peterson, 2004). It is the product of knowledge and experience, but it is more that the accumulation of information. It also involves the coordination of this information to deliberately use it for improvement of well-being. Socially speaking, perspective allows the individual to listen to others, to evaluate what they say, and then offer good advice. This character strengths too satisfies the criteria on all but one count that of prodigies. This is again owing to the child's level of cognitive development which must allow sufficiently abstract thinking to afford a perspective worth imparting.

**COURAGE**

The strengths that make up courage reflect the open-eyed exercise of will toward the worthy ends that are not certain of attainment. To qualify as courage, such acts must be done in the face of strong adversity. This virtue is universally admired, and every culture has heroes who exemplify this virtue. Peterson and Seligman (2004) define courage as "Emotional strength that involves the exercise of will to accomplish goals in the face of opposition, external or internal." Strengths of courage entail the exercise of will to accomplish goals in the face of opposition, either external or internal.

**Bravery [valor]**

Bravery is the capacity to take action to aid others in spite of significant risks or dangers. This strength allows people to avoid shrinking from the threats, challenges, or pain associated with attempting to do good works.
Brave acts are undertaken voluntarily with full knowledge of the potential adversity involved. Brave individuals place the highest importance on higher purpose and morality, no matter what the consequences might be.

Bravery is about facing a danger, despite misgivings. Such bravery can be physical, moral or psychological. It is easy to think of physical courage as a form of bravery, yet having moral courage is also important. Here a person may stand up for what they believe in, knowing that they may cause upset or opposition. Bravery can help us develop our other strengths and reach our goals. Bravery is one of the strengths researchers have identified as being important to the recovery of life satisfaction after illness.

Historically, the character strengths of bravery has been associated with the physical valour shown by warriors on the battlefield. Bravery in the face of imminent death is not the equivalent of fearlessness because fear is certainly experienced (Seligman & Peterson, 2004). Rather, bravery is the ability to do what needs to be done despite fear. This view of bravery allows the strengths to be applied beyond the domain of battle to saying or doing the unpopular but correct thing, to facing a terminal illness with equanimity, and resisting peer pressure regarding a morally questionable shortcut (Seligman & Peterson, 2004). Bravery too fares well on most of the criteria laid down except it being trait like. The jury is out on whether or not bravery can be placed in the category of traits. It has been argued that bravery however construed is an attribute of an act rather than a person. Goes without saying that the act is indeed performed by the individual but how many brave acts must a person perform in order to be classified as brave. Soldiers, social activists, whistleblowers these are all people who have stood up against the tide and done remarkable things but is their exceptional bravery a trait sustained across time and situation or a single instance of rising mightily to a unique occasion (Seligman & Peterson, 2004). Research is currently underway on this count. Bravery
somewhat satisfies the criteria of distinctiveness and the presence of institutions and rituals to promote it.

**Persistence/Perseverance/Industriousness**

Persistence is the mental strength necessary to continue striving for one’s goals in the face of obstacles and setbacks (Rashid, 2011). This sort of perseverance requires dedication, focus, and patience. Persistent individuals finish what they start, persisting in the quest to achieve their goals in spite of any hardships they encounter along the way. The broader and more ambitious one’s goals are, the more necessary persistence is in order to achieve them. A person with this strength will persevere to achieve whatever it is they are striving for. They will work hard to reach their goals and will tackle obstacles as they come their way. It is not about being a perfectionist and such goals are realistic. Importantly, such people are personally motivated and do not need extrinsic rewards (money, prizes etc) to help them achieve. In fact research suggests such motivators do little to help us persevere over the long term.

Persistence is not as popular or talked about as bravery, nonetheless it shares with valour the mustering of will to perform in the face of contrary impulses (Seligman & Peterson, 2004). Unlike bravery, here it is not the fear that threatens action but boredom, frustration, and difficulty, on one hand, and the temptation to do something easier and perhaps more pleasurable on the other. Persistence also referred to as perseverance or industriousness satisfy the criteria for a character strengths except that of distinctiveness. It seems to have a substantial overlap with self control and regulation of oneself.

**Authenticity/integrity/honesty**

The strength of authenticity evokes an image of a person who always speaks the truth and is absolutely honest. However, it goes beyond that. It
includes truthfulness, but also taking responsibility for how one feels and what one does. It includes the genuine presentation of oneself to others, as well as the internal sense that one is a morally coherent being. Empirical research into this character strengths have seldom done justice to its richness, on the one hand investigating specific behaviours like cheating among children or workplace theft among employees and on the other hand using self-report measures to assess acceptance of oneself and the like. Moral transgressions like lying and cheating are most relevant to honesty, but they provide only an insight into its absence and not the breadth of the strength.

An authentic person lives a genuine and honest life and is true to themselves. As such, their behaviour will match their values. They do not say one thing then do something else. Having this strength means a person will have good self-awareness which in turn makes them more open to change. People like authenticity in others and evidence from research supports this notion.

The strength of authenticity or integrity is manifested speaking the truth and presenting oneself in a genuine way (Rashid, 2011). A person of integrity is open and honest about his or her own thoughts, feelings, and responsibilities, being careful not to mislead through either action or omission. This strength allows one to feel a sense of ownership over one's own internal states, regardless of whether those states are popular or socially comfortable, and to experience a sense of authentic wholeness. This strength fulfils all the ten criteria is of character strengths although as far as distinctiveness is concerned, it may overlap with bravery or perseverance. Social intelligence may help set the stage for integrity since if one is to be true to oneself one must have a knowledge base to do so (Rashid, 2011).
**Vitality/Zest/Enthusiasm/Vigor/Energy**

Vitality refers to feeling alive, being full of zest, and displaying enthusiasm for any and all activities (Seligman & Peterson, 2004). People with this strength are known to be vigorous and energetic, and visibly enjoying their life to the fullest. It is not to be confused with nervous energy or hyperactivity or for that matter mania. It is displayed even in adverse circumstances which can be potentially draining. Vitality is an approach to life marked by an appreciation for energy, liveliness, excitement, and energy (Rashid, 2011). A vital person lives life as an adventure to be approached whole-heartedly. A life of vigor allows one to experience the overlap of the mental and physical realms of experience, as stress decreases and health increases. Vitality differs from contentment in that it involves greater psychological and physiological activation and enthusiasm.

Having this strength means a person approaches life with zest, passion and enthusiasm. Such people look forward to their day. There are no half measures with these people. Furthermore, such people inspire others and help boost their levels of vitality. This may be one of your strengths if you do not depend on chemical substances to get your energy. Research has shown a high correlation between vitality and happiness. This strength fulfils eight out of ten criteria with the exception of being morally value and distinctive. Vitality can be distinguished conceptually from other entities in the classification but because the strength adds to other strengths of characters like, curiosity, love of learning, kindness, perseverance, it becomes difficult to distinguish it empirically.

**HUMANITY**

Strengths of humanity include positive traits manifest in caring relationships with others involving nurturance and care. They are different from the entries under the virtue of justice in that they are brought to bear in one-to-one relationships.
Love

In its most evolved form, love is existent in a reciprocated relationship with another person. Therefore, hero worship, being a fan, or having a crash does not count in the strength. On the other hand, this is not limited to romantic love, but also includes love between parents and children, mentoring relationships, and the emotional bond between teammates, coworkers, friends (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). It is marked by the sharing of aid, comfort and acceptance. Strong positive feelings, commitment and sacrifice are some of the strong features of the strength. Loving individuals value close relationships with others, in particular those in which sharing and caring are reciprocated. Love can be expressed toward those we depend on, toward those who depend on us, and toward those we feel romantic, sexual, and emotional attraction to. This strength allows people to put their trust in others and make them a priority in making decisions. They experience a sense of deep contentment from their devotion.

Having close and loving relationships is important to people with this strength. It is not just about loving your partner, but your friends, family and people around you. Such people do not fear being loved or letting people get close to them. In life, a loving person will consider other people's opinions thoughts and feelings, rather than just acting for themselves. Love has been, associated with life satisfaction in recent research. This strength satisfies all the ten strength criteria.

Kindness/Generosity/Nurturance/Care/Compassion/Altruistic Love

Kindness consists of doing favors and good deeds for others without the expectation of personal gain (Rashid, 2011). It describes the pervasive tendency to be nice to other people – to be compassionate and concerned about the welfare, to do favours for them, to perform good deeds, and to take care of them. Kindness can be a fleeting act directed towards strangers, like offering a seat in a bus to an elderly fellow or it could be
more profound within and established reciprocal relationship like donating bone marrow or a kidney to a relative (Seligman & Peterson, 2004). This strength requires respect for others but also includes emotional affection. Kind people find joy in the act of giving and helping other people, regardless of their degree of relatedness or similarity. Kindness is about helping other people, without expecting a reward or payback of some kind. It is about considering the wishes of others which may sometimes override a person’s own wishes. Such people express feelings of sympathy and empathy. If you are kind you give instinctively. You may not be aware that you do it but people may comment on your kindness. It is not a hardship to you and you do not feel you are losing out in some way when you give. Those people who helped out others were happier and reported a greater purpose in life than those people who just pursued pleasure activities. Kindness also fulfils all criteria of strengths. Although distinctiveness is somewhat questionable since it shares a resemblance to the strength of love and characters like social intelligence, fairness and citizenship may contribute to kindness. However it is essential to point out that these strengths are neither necessary nor sufficient for a person to be kind.

Socially intelligent individuals are aware of the emotions and intentions of themselves and others. No matter what the social situation is, they attempt to make everyone involved feel comfortable and valued. Socially intelligent people are perceptive of others’ feelings and honest about their own, and are generally adept at fostering healthy relationships.

Social intelligence is the ability to notice differences among others, especially with respect to their moods, temperament, motivations, and intentions – and then to act upon these distinctions (Seligman, 2002). This strength is
not to be confused with merely being introspective, psychologically
minded, or ruminative; it shows up in socially skilled action.

Personal intelligence consists in finely tuned access to your own feelings
and the ability to use that knowledge to understand and guide your
behaviour. Daniel Goleman has labelled these strengths together as
emotional intelligence. Another aspect of this strength is niche finding:
putting oneself in settings that maximise one's skills and interests.

Social intelligence is about having an awareness of others then acting on
your observations. Having social intelligence means a person can fit into
different situations. People with this strength try to make other people feel
comfortable and are aware of other people's moods and feelings. As a
modern character strengths, social intelligence does not have well
established rituals and institutions for its explicit cultivation. Hence, it
qualifies on nine out of ten criteria.

JUSTICE

The strength of Justice is regarded as broadly interpersonal, relevant to
the optimal interaction between the individual and the group or the
community (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). However, as the group size
diminishes and becomes more personalised, these strengths begin to
overlap with the one-on-one strengths of humanity. The distinction is
therefore maintained by proposing that strengths of Justice involve
broader relationships than humanity, but the difference is more of the
degree than kind.

Citizenship

People who have citizenship as a strength are loyal and have a great sense
of duty. They make good team members and work to ensure the best
outcome for the group. Such people have a sense of commitment to any
group they are part of, whether it is their country, community, workplace, family or sports team. A good team player will make personal sacrifices for the good of the group. This may be one of your strengths if you find you do your best work in a team.

Citizenship entails an identification with and sense of obligation to a common good that includes oneself but stretches beyond one's personal interests to include the groups of which one is a member – any and all family members, co-workers, fellow residents of the condominium, or even the entire human race. People with this strength have a sense of duty to the group in question. Other than distinctiveness, citizenship fulfills all the rest nine criteria. As far as being distinctive is concerned this strength is aided by other strengths in the classification like kindness, persistence, self-regulation, humility and gratitude. However citizenship and teamwork cannot further be reduced to one of the above-mentioned strengths.

**Fairness and Equity**

The character strengths of fairness refers to an individual's treatment of other people in similar or identical way (Seligman & Peterson, 2004). This strength enables an individual or vent his or her personal feeling or issues from creating biased decisions about others.

Fairness involves treating everyone according to universal ideals of equality and justice. Fair individuals do not let their personal feelings bias their moral or ethical decisions about others, but instead rely on a broad set of moral values. True fairness incorporates both a respect for moral guidelines and a compassionate approach to caring for others. This strength is applicable at all levels of society, from everyday interactions to international issues of social justice. People with a strong sense of fairness like to give everyone a chance. Everyone must be treated fairly and injustice frustrates and horrifies. Such people set aside their personal
prejudices and will see the good in others. This may be your strength if you are the sort of person that makes sure each person has an equal share of the cake. You offer no favouritism and such favouritism provokes you.

Fairness fulfils nine criteria is with the exception of presence of prodigies. This is due to the fact that prodigies of fairness cannot exist at a very young age as till that time kids are not capable of abstract thinking which is a pre-requisite for the development of this strength.

**Leadership**

Leadership is the process of motivating, directing, and coordinating members of a group to achieve a common goal. Leaders assume a dominant role in social interaction, but effective leadership requires listening to the opinions and feelings of other group members as much as it involves active direction. Individuals who possess this strength are able to help their group to achieve goals in a cohesive, efficient, and amiable manner.

Leadership is about being able to organise a group and work to see things through to completion. Essential to being a good leader is having excellent interpersonal skills. A good leader works to make sure everyone's role within the group is valued. Goals are achieved without coercion or manipulation.

Distinctiveness seems to be unclear for leadership. This is due to the fact that other strengths like social intelligence, perspective, persistence, and hope facilitate leadership. One can call leadership of blended strength which however does not reduce to other constructs.
TEMPERANCE

Temperance is more of a protective strength in the sense that it prevents us from indulging in the excesses that under the circumstances of low temperance virtue could surface (Seligman & Peterson, 2004). For example, forgiveness and mercy protects us from hatred while modesty protects us from arrogance. This is not to be confused with the strength of courage since the defining feature of temperance lies in tackling the temptation head-on. So in a sense, temperance strengths could predispose the strengths of courage although they are absolutely distinct.

These strengths are defined in part of what a person avoids doing which might be more visible to others as intemperate absence than in their temperate presence.

Self-regulation

Self-regulation is the process of exerting control over oneself in order to achieve goals or meet standards (Rashid, 2011). Self-regulating individuals are able to control instinctive responses such as aggression and impulsivity, responding instead according to pre-conceived standards of behavior. This strength can apply both to resisting temptations, such as when a dieter avoids sugary foods, and to initiating actions, such as when someone gets up early to exercise (Rashid, 2011). Having self-regulation means a person can take control of thoughts, behaviour and emotions. People with this strength can set and uphold their own standards. They do not give in to temptation at the slightest whim and can control short term desires and impulses which could jeopardise long term goals. Evidence indicates that a good night’s sleep can restore your self-regulation. Self-regulation may be one of your strengths if you live up to your own standards, don’t give in to peer pressure and achieve the goals you set yourself. All the criteria are fulfilled by the strength self-regulation. In exercising the character strengths of self-regulation, the individual exerts
control over his or her responses so as to pursue goals and live up to the standards. Self-control is sometimes used as a synonym for self-regulation.

**Prudence**

Prudence is a practical orientation toward future goals. It entails being careful about one’s choices, not taking undue risks, and keeping long-term goals in mind when making short-term decisions. Prudent individuals monitor and control their impulsive behavior and anticipate the consequences of their actions (Rashid, 2011). This strength is not synonymous with stinginess or timidity, but instead involves an intelligent and efficient perspective towards achieving major goals in life.

A person with this strength is a careful person who resists short term gains for long term rewards. They are able to resist acting impulsively and have the insight to know they will regret it later. As such, they are more likely to achieve their goals as they don’t act in ways that could undermine their good intentions. Prudence is about taking care in decision making; it is not about avoiding decisions or being afraid to take action. Research has found prudent people more likely to be physically fit.

Out of the ten criteria laid down, prudence fulfils nine with the exception of prodigies since cognitive capacity to engage in counterfactual thinking weighing the pros and cons of hypothetical course of actions is required.

**Humility and modesty**

Humility and modesty involve letting one’s strengths and accomplishments speak for themselves (Rashid, 2011). Individuals with this strength do not need to have low self-esteem, but merely avoid seeking the spotlight and regarding themselves as better than others.
Humble people are honest with themselves about their own limitations and the fallibility of their own opinions, and are open to advice and assistance from others.

A person with the strength of humility does not seek the spotlight. Aspirations and accomplishments are not of major importance to them. They do not feel the need to brag about their achievements. Rather, actions speak louder than words. People value them for their modesty, since such people do not claim to be all knowing.

Although this strength has both labels of modesty and humility, it is possible to distinguish between the two. Modesty is more external in terms of the house one lives in, the car one drives or the clothes worn (Seligman & Peterson, 2011). On the other hand humility is more internal referring to a person's own sense that he or she is not the centre of the universe. Nine criteria except that of the prodigies have been fulfilled. Modesty prodigies may not emerge until adolescence because humility and modesty require a degree of cognitive sophistication to move beyond normative egocentrism.

**Forgiveness/Mercy**

This strength involves forgiving those who have wronged or offended us. Forgiveness entails accepting the shortcomings of others, giving people a second chance, and putting aside the temptation to hold a grudge or behave vengefully (Rashid, 2011). Forgiveness allows one to put aside the self-destructive negativity associated with anger and to extend mercy toward a transgressor.

Forgiveness is a powerful strength to have since it is a means of setting yourself free from the past (Barnard, 2008). Being able to forgive is a choice that can be highly beneficial to your mental and physical wellbeing. By forgiving, there is improvement in cardiovascular health as
anger and stress are decreased. Research has found holding on to unforgiving thoughts produced higher heart rate, blood pressure and more negative emotions. Also the unforgiving group in the research felt less in control than the group who imagined forgiving the offender.

People who display this strength truly let bygones be bygones. They do this not out of any feeling of guilt or fear or persuasiveness but from a positive strength of character. As for the strength criteria, all criteria are fulfilled except presence of prodigies since it requires certain degree of cognitive and emotional sophistication to display which comes with age and experience.

**TRANSCENDENCE**

Transcendence emphasises the ability to forge connections with the larger universe and thereby seeking meaning to their lives. The prototype of this strength category is spirituality. Spirituality is differently defined that has always referred to a belief in and commitment to the transcendent aspects of life.

**Appreciation of beauty and excellence**

Individuals with an appreciation for beauty feels a sense of awe at the scenes and patterns around them. They take pleasure in observing physical beauty, the skills and talents of other people, and the beauty inherent to virtue and morality.

Beauty can be found in almost every area of life, from nature to arts to mathematics to science to everyday experience. This strength allows people to experience satisfaction and richness in everyday experiences. People with an appreciation of beauty and excellence find pleasure in the beauty of the world around them. This pleasure will be experienced in the
things a person sees, hears, tastes, touches and smells. It is not just appreciating beauty in the physical world, but also the talents and virtues observed in other people. Furthermore, such appreciation comes from within; there is no need for other people to tell them what is beautiful. Research has shown this strength to be one that can aid in the recovery of life satisfaction after psychological illness.

Appreciation of beauty and excellence has been put in the virtue of transcendence because it connects those who possess it to something larger than themselves, whether it is beautiful art of music, athletic performance or any other form of brilliance of other people (Peterson & Seligman, 2003). Other than distinctiveness all other criteria is of strengths are matched. Appreciation of beauty is distinct from most of the other character strengths of the classification although some amount of association might be there.

**Gratitude**

Gratitude is an awareness of and thankfulness for the good things in one’s life. Grateful individuals take time to express thanks and contemplate all that they have been given in life. Gratitude can be directed at a specific person, at a Divinity, or simply expressed outwardly for the mere fact of existence. This strength is a mindset of appreciation and goodwill for the benefits derived from other people.

A grateful person is aware of the good things in their life and does not take them for granted. Such people always say thank you. They appreciate others and life itself. Having gratitude helps prevent a build up of resentment about your past. Being grateful for the good things in your life amplifies these things and as such increases your wellbeing. Research has shown that reflecting on how an important event in your life may never have happened showed participants to be happier than those who just had
to reflect on an event. The effect of gratitude on our well-being is a major area of research in Positive Psychology.

Gratitude fits into all the criteria for strengths although prodigies are hard to find. Children are egocentric and may take good things for granted. But there are exceptions – children who appreciate good times and thoughtful gifts, and even their family members.

**Hope**

Hope is the expectation that good things will happen in the future. Hopeful individuals are confident that their efforts toward future goals will lead to their fruition. This strength leads people to expect the best from themselves and others.

Having hope means a person is optimistic about their future. As such they work hard in the here and now. Bad things are presumed to be short-lived and the good things are expected to continue or quickly resume. People with hope appreciate the idea that you get out of life what you put in and that their hard work will pay off. Having hope makes a person more resistant to depression when bad things happen. Optimists also have better physical health. Research suggests optimistic men are less likely to die from a heart attack.

Here again, all criteria are fulfilled although some questions about distinctiveness have been raised. Hope as a character strengths is not reduced to any other character strengths in the classification entry, although perhaps a blend of perseverance and zest would produce a close facsimile. Therefore the theorists posit that further research into this area is required.
**Spirituality**

Spirituality is the most human of the character strengths as well as the most sublime. A person with this strength will have firm beliefs about the meaning of the universe. Such people attach their life to something higher than themselves. Being spiritual may make it easier for a person to cope with difficult life events. Spirituality is not just about religious beliefs although the two are closely connected. People with religious beliefs have been shown to be able to cope with stress and handle difficult events when they arise (Barnard, 2008).

Spirituality is a universal part of human experience involving knowledge of one’s place within the larger scheme of things (Rashid, 2011). It can include but is not limited to religious belief and practice. Spirituality affords us an awareness of the sacred in everyday life, a sense of comfort in the face of adversity, and the experience of transcending the ordinary to reach something fundamental. People with this strength have a theory about the ultimate meaning of life that shapes their conduct and provide comfort to them. All criteria stand fulfilled by this strength.

**Playfulness and humour**

People with this strength are able to see the lighter side of life and like to engage in fun activities. They enjoy laughing. It is important to such people to bring a smile to the faces of others. When bad things happen, such people are able to dust themselves down and laugh rather than continuing to be bogged down feeling miserable. Research suggests that laughter reduces the risk of cardiovascular disease, since it increases blood flow and blood vessel relaxation.

Humor involves an enjoyment of laughing, friendly teasing, and bringing happiness to others. Individuals with this strength see the light side of life in many situations, finding things to be cheerful about rather than letting adversity get them down. Humor does not necessarily refer just to telling jokes, but rather to a playful and imaginative approach to life.
Humour was a late addition to the classification owing to its universality. The domain of humour is vast and varied and there exists a huge terminology for describing its type. Some forms are clearly mean like mockery, ridicule, sarcasm while others on border like practical jokes. However, humor as a strength includes all that which serves some moral good by making the human condition more bearable, by drawing attention to its contradictions, by sustaining good cheer in the face of despair, and building social bonds. A close look at the strength of humour reveals that all the criteria of the strengths are fulfilled.

Although all these strengths play an important role in over all well-being, a persistent question that has dogged Positive psychologists is - Why are certain character strengths more associated with life satisfaction than others? A sample of US adults ($N=12,439$) completed online surveys in English measuring character strengths, orientations to happiness (engagement, pleasure, and meaning), and life satisfaction, and a sample of Swiss adults ($N=445$) completed paper-and-pencil versions of the same surveys in German (Peterson, Ruch, Beermann, Park & Seligman, 2007). In both samples, the character strengths most highly linked to life satisfaction included love, hope, curiosity, and zest. Gratitude was among the most robust predictors of life satisfaction in the US sample, whereas perseverance was among the most robust predictors in the Swiss sample. In both samples, the strengths of character most associated with life satisfaction were associated with orientations to pleasure, to engagement, and to meaning, implying that the most fulfilling character strengths are those that make possible a full life (Peterson, Ruch, Beermann, Park & Seligman, 2007).

Thus we see, that there is a growing body of work pointing at the importance of strength and virtues in character building which ultimately plays a pertinent role in the not only well being of an individual but when exercised consciously also promote flourishing.