

Virtue of Humanity and Well-Being among Adolescents: The Mediating Role of Social Resilience

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This study investigates the role of the virtue of humanity (love, kindness, and social intelligence) in shaping adolescent well-being, with a focus on the mediating role of social resilience. Drawing on positive psychology frameworks, the study explores how social resilience, which was defined as the ability to adapt to and recover from social challenges, influences the relationship between the virtue of humanity and well-being. A sample of 150 adolescents (82 males, 68 females) aged 15-17 years was surveyed using validated scales to measure the virtue of humanity, social resilience, and well-being. Pearson correlation and regression analyses revealed significant positive relationships between the virtue of humanity, social resilience, and well-being. Mediation analysis using the PROCESS macro for SPSS confirmed that social resilience partially mediates the relationship between the virtue of humanity and well-being, with a significant indirect effect observed. These findings suggest that fostering humanity-related traits in adolescents enhances social resilience, which in turn boosts well-being. The study highlights the theoretical and practical importance of promoting prosocial behaviors and resilience to support adolescent mental health and development.

Keywords: Character Strengths, Virtue of Humanity, Resilience, Social resilience, Well-being, Positive Psychology, Adolescents

Research in positive psychology aims to explore what makes life most fulfilling for individuals. This field investigates the conditions and processes that promote human flourishing and optimal functioning (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Central to positive psychology is the focus on positive subjective experiences, such as joy and well-being; positive individual traits, including character strengths; and positive institutions, such as families and workplaces. A key concept regarding the relationship between these three areas is that positive institutions support the growth and manifestation of positive traits, such as character strengths. In turn, these traits contribute to positive experiences and foster constructive behaviours in individuals (Harzer, 2016; Seligman, 2011). Character strengths are positive traits that consistently show up across various situations and remain stable over

time. They play a crucial role in enhancing individual well-being (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Many studies have helped us learn more about strengths, well-being, and happiness, showing the value of focusing on the positive parts of life. Teaching positive psychology to teenagers gives them skills and knowledge to better handle and manage their lives (Norrish & Vella-Brodrick, 2009).

Researchers stress the importance of looking at the strengths and positive aspects of teenagers' lives instead of only focusing on the negative ones. It is important to explore positive traits like hope, optimism, and personal growth in young people (Kirschman et al., 2009). Strength of love, kindness, and social intelligence which represent the virtue of humanity, have been identified as significant predictors of human growth and positive development. These traits offer

valuable insights into how humanity impacts mental health by fostering connections and nurturing others, especially in personal interactions (Gable & Gosnell, 2011). Social intelligence is represented by emotional, personal, and social skills that are crucial for positive mental health. It is closely linked to life satisfaction and positive affect, and has indirect effects on psychopathological symptoms through these well-being factors. Additionally, social intelligence is positively associated with psychological well-being and helps to reduce psychological distress through positive social relationships (Azañedo et al. 2020).

Kindness is another important character strength of virtue of humanity that benefits the well-being of both adolescents and adults (Hue et al., 2020). Various activities centered around kindness have been shown to enhance the health of individuals and communities by improving well-being and social interactions (Galante et al., 2014). In clinical practice, kindness is valuable not only as an objective but also as an emotional experience that promotes positive change. Moreover, incorporating kindness can be an effective pre-treatment strategy, reducing the negative impact of long waits before psychological care (Kerr et al., 2015).

Well-being is about a person thriving, feeling good, and functioning well (Huppert & So, 2013). It encompasses positive emotions, healthy relationships, a sense of competence, and active involvement in life (Wellbeing, 2020). Adolescents undergo various physical, cognitive, social, and emotional changes, often involving experimentation and risk-taking (Aggarwal, 1998). These changes can create developmental challenges such as issues with self-perception, self-esteem, role confusion, and negative emotions (Lerner & Galambos, 1998). If these emotional challenges are not addressed, they may impact psychological well-being (Aggarwal,

1998; Salami, 2011). In this context, understanding their personality traits and character strengths is crucial. Positive personality traits have been found to be linked with their emotions and overall life satisfaction (DeNeve & Cooper, 1998; Salami, 2011).

Mediating Role of Social Resilience

Social resilience, which refers to the capacity to adapt and bounce back from social stress and challenges, is crucial in influencing well-being. It's important to understand how social resilience interacts with character strengths to affect well-being in order to create effective interventions. Research by Algoe, Haidt, and Gable (2008) shows that supportive relationships promote the use of character strengths such as kindness and gratitude, which subsequently lead to greater well-being. Research by Masten (2001) and Rutter (2006) emphasizes that social resilience boosts well-being by shielding individuals from stress and helping them adapt to challenges. Robust social support networks, effective coping mechanisms, and a strong sense of community play key roles in building social resilience and improving mental health. Similarly, Schutte et al. (2007) discovered that social support influences the connection between emotional intelligence (a character strength) and well-being. Greater social support amplified the beneficial effects of emotional intelligence on psychological outcomes. The aforementioned review of literature suggests that it is crucial to provide empirical evidence on how the virtue of humanity predicts well-being, especially through resilience factors such as social support and social skills. Aiming this the current study aimed to explore the mediating role of social resilience in the relationship between the virtue of humanity and well-being among adolescents. It was hypothesized that the virtue of humanity would positively influence well-being and social resilience.

Similarly social resilience would also be significantly associated with well-being among adolescents. Additionally, it was proposed that social resilience would mediate the relationship between the virtue of humanity and well-being.

Method

Participants

Participants for the study were chosen using a convenience sampling method. Data were collected from senior secondary students in the Varanasi district of Uttar Pradesh, attending CBSE and ICSE board schools. The sample consisted of 150 (82 male and 68 female) students, aged between 15 and 17 years, with an average age of 15.40 years and a standard deviation of 1.038 years.

Measures

In this study, in addition to gathering basic demographic details such as participants' names, ages, genders, and types of schools, several instruments were used for data collection:

Value in Action – Youth-2 (VIA-Y-R2): To assess the virtue of humanity (love, kindness and social intelligence), of adolescents a subscale of VIA-Y-R2 (developed by Columbia University's Spirituality Mind Body Institute in collaboration with the VIA Institute on Character) was used in study. It is a 5-point Likert scale (Jermann & McGrath, 2022). For this subscale (virtue of humanity), the sample showed a Cronbach's Alpha reliability score of .820.

PERMA Profiler (Butler & Kern, 2015): To assess well-being among adolescents, the current study used a 15-item instrument that utilizes 11-point rating scales from 0 to 10. For this sample, the Cronbach's alpha reliability was found to be .815.

Scale for Protective Factors (Garcia et al., 2015): Social resilience was measured using

a subscale from the resilience assessment tool developed by Ponce-Garcia, Madewell, and Kennison (2015). This scale evaluates two dimensions of resilience—social and cognitive. But we are specifically focusing on the social dimension for this study. The social resilience subscale consists of a total of 12 items, each rated on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The scale demonstrates a reliability score of .790, as measured by Cronbach's Alpha.

Procedure

Permissions for data collection were obtained from the administrations of CBSE and ICSE schools. After selecting participants and obtaining their signed consent, rapport was built with the students to ensure a smooth data collection process. The questionnaires were distributed with clear instructions to read the guidelines carefully, and students were given as much time as needed to complete them. Participation was voluntary and no compensation was offered. Scoring followed the procedures outlined in the respective manuals for each instrument. The study used a correlational design, and the data were analysed through following statistical methods.

Results

The result of the descriptive analysis is reported in Table 1. The correlation analysis reveals that virtue of humanity is significantly positively correlated with social resilience ($r = .351, p < .001$) and well-being ($r = .625, p < .001$). Social resilience is also positively significantly correlated with Well-Being ($r = .666, p < .001$).

Before examining the indirect effect of social resilience in the relationship between virtue of humanity and well-being, we initially conducted separate regression analyses to assess the direct effects of virtue of humanity and social resilience on well-being. The

findings revealed that, without controlling for social resilience as a mediator, significant direct effects were observed: virtue of humanity was positively related to well-being ($B = 1.84, t = 9.74, p < .001$), and social resilience ($B = .50, t = 4.56, p < .001$), and social resilience was also positively related to well-being ($B = 1.37, t = 1.87, p < .001$). The mediation analysis used the PROCESS macro for SPSS, which utilizes a bootstrap procedure to create confidence intervals for the indirect effect (Hayes, 2013). This method has been found to be more effective than the Baron and Kenny (1986) approach and Sobel's (1982) test for evaluating indirect effects (Yildirim & Alanazi, 2021). To determine if social resilience mediated the relationship between virtue of humanity and

well-being, we used 5,000 bootstrap samples to estimate a 95% confidence interval (CI) for the mediation analysis. An indirect effect is considered significant if zero is not included within the 95% CI. A significant result indicates that the mediator variable plays a role in the relationship between the predictor variable and the outcome variable.

Table 1. Means, SDs and Pearson correlations among the variables (N = 150)

	Mean	SD	1	2	3
1. Virtue of humanity	34.86	4.42	-	.351**	.625**
2. Social resilience	51.60	6.32		-	.666**
3. Well-being	125.94	13.02			-

**p < 0.01.

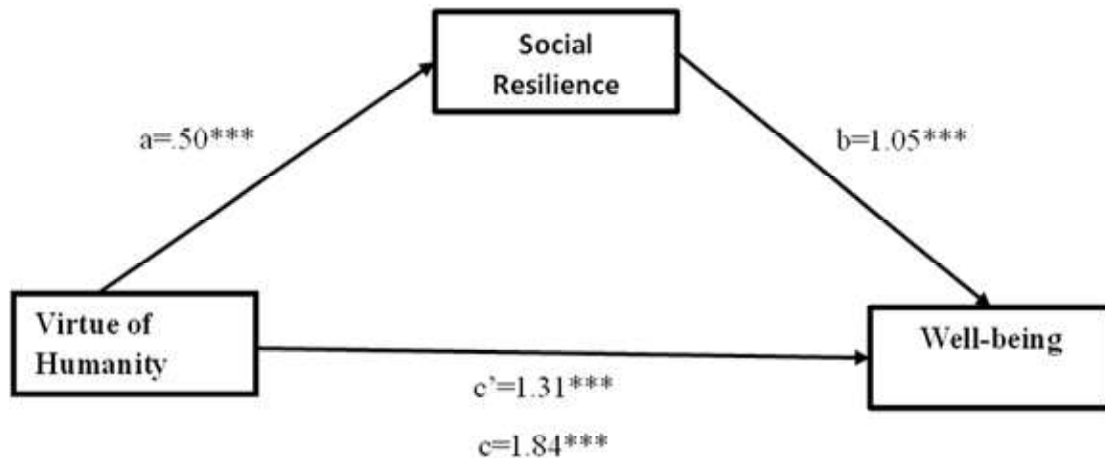


Figure 1. The model examines the mediating role of social resilience in the association between the virtue of humanity and well-being.

Note- An unstandardised regression coefficient has been reported in the model

Table 2. Regression Coefficients for Direct and indirect paths among virtue of humanity, social resilience, and well-being.

	B	SE	β	t	p
Virtue of humanity>—Well-being	1.84	.62	.62	9.74	<.001
Virtue of humanity>—Social resilience	.50	.11	.351	4.56	<.001
Social Resilience>—Well-being	1.37	.12	.66	10.87	<.001
Virtue of Humanity—Social Resilience—Well-being	1.31	.16	.44	8.20	<.001

The mediation analysis results showed that when social resilience was controlled, the direct effect of virtue of humanity on well-being was found to be significant ($B = 1.31$, $t = 8.20$, $p = .001$). Additionally, there was also a significant indirect effect of social resilience in the relationship between virtue of humanity and well-being ($B = .527$, 95% CI = .27 - .80). Since the bootstrap confidence intervals for the indirect effect did not include zero, this suggests that social resilience acts as a mediator in the relationship between virtue of humanity and well-being. Furthermore, because the direct effect of virtue of humanity on well-being remained significant after accounting for social resilience, we can conclude that social resilience partially mediates this relationship.

Discussion

This study is a foremost empirical investigation into the mechanisms linking the virtue of humanity, well-being, and social resilience in the Varanasi district of Uttar Pradesh. Specifically, it focused on examining how social resilience enables the relationship between the virtue of humanity and well-being. The findings revealed that all the relationships in the table are statistically significant, highlighting the meaningful interconnections among the virtues of humanity, social resilience, and well-being. The regression analysis results show that higher levels of virtue of humanity are associated with greater well-being, both directly and indirectly through increased social resilience. The strong significance of these relationships ($p < .001$) highlights the importance of virtue of humanity and resilience in enhancing overall well-being. This is consistent with previous research demonstrating that individuals who exhibit high levels of virtue of humanity—characterized by kindness, empathy, and altruism—tend to experience better psychological well-being and life satisfaction

(Fehr et al., 2009; Peterson & Seligman, 2004).

The present study's findings align with positive psychology frameworks, which suggest that strengths of character, such as virtue of humanity, can act as buffers against psychological stress and contribute to resilience in challenging situations (Tugade & Fredrickson, 2004). Resilience, in turn, strengthens overall well-being, reflecting the patterns observed in this study. Similarly, empirical research by Proyer et al. (2011) demonstrated that strengths associated with interpersonal connections, such as kindness and love (core components of virtue of humanity), are robustly linked to greater subjective well-being. Their study provides further support for the argument that virtue of humanity positively influences well-being, as evidenced by the findings of this research. Social resilience encompasses the capacity of individuals, communities, and societies to endure and recover from adversities, and it appears to be a mechanism through which virtue of humanity enhances well-being. Martínez-Martí and Ruch (2017) conducted a similar empirical analysis, finding that individuals who score high on humanity-related character strengths demonstrate greater resilience in the face of adversity. Wilks, Croom, & Garner (2015) explained that adolescents with higher levels of empathy, a core component of humanity, are more likely to engage in prosocial behaviours like helping others, which leads to better emotional and social adjustment. Empathy fosters deeper social connections and creates environments that allow individuals to rely on each other in times of stress, which strengthens their social resilience. Similarly, Kinnunen et al. (2012) found that socially intelligent adolescents, who can read and respond effectively to the emotional states of others, are better able to navigate social stressors. This ability fosters positive peer

relationships, which serve as crucial support systems, enhancing social resilience during adolescence.

Social Resilience as a Mediator

The mediation analysis in this study revealed that social resilience partially explains the link between virtue of humanity and well-being. The concept of social resilience, as defined in this study, refers to the ability to recover from adversity at the individual, community, or societal level (Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000). Windle's (2011) empirical findings on social resilience support the idea that it acts as a buffer against psychological distress, which in turn leads to improved well-being. This reinforces the mediation analysis, which found that social resilience strengthens the virtue of humanity-well-being link. In developmental contexts such as adolescence, this connection is particularly valuable. Adolescents who exhibit virtue of humanity may be better equipped to foster resilience, which can have long-term positive effects on their ability to cope with challenges and enhance their well-being (Fleming et al., 2019). Furthermore, Masten (2001) highlights the protective function of resilience against mental health issues and its role in promoting positive psychological outcomes, reinforcing the findings that virtue of humanity fosters resilience, which enhances well-being. The present study's theoretical implications are grounded in the understanding that character strengths, such as virtue of humanity, help to build resilience, which is essential for psychological well-being, especially during critical developmental stages like adolescence.

Implications, Limitations and Direction for Future Research

From a practical perspective, the finding that virtue of humanity fosters social resilience, which in turn enhances well-being, suggests that interventions aimed at

promoting prosocial behaviours, particularly in adolescents, could yield significant benefits. Such interventions could help strengthen resilience and, as a result, improve well-being in both the short and long term. The work of Otake et al. (2006) supports this notion, showing that individuals who engage in more acts of kindness (a component of virtue of humanity) report higher levels of psychological well-being and stronger resilience in stressful situations. A key limitation of this study is the use of convenience sampling, which may limit the generalizability of the findings, as participants were drawn from specific schools in Varanasi and may not represent adolescents from different regions or socio-economic backgrounds. Additionally, the cross-sectional design captures only a single point in time, making it difficult to establish causal relationships between virtue of humanity, social resilience, and well-being; future longitudinal studies would offer more robust insights by tracking changes over time. While the focus was on virtue of humanity as a predictor of well-being, other character strengths, such as courage and temperance, may also play significant roles, and future research should explore their influence on well-being and resilience. Lastly, the study did not account for cultural factors, which could affect how virtue of humanity-related traits like kindness and empathy influence well-being through social resilience, warranting cross-cultural research to assess the broader applicability of these findings.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the study's findings are consistent with existing literature and emphasize the importance of fostering the virtue of humanity and social resilience to enhance well-being. These results have theoretical and practical implications for interventions that promote prosocial behaviors and resilience, especially among adolescents. Promoting the virtue of

humanity-related traits can foster resilience, which serves as a key mechanism linking the virtue of humanity to enhanced well-being, offering significant potential for improving individual and community well-being.

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