

VIRTUES AND WELL-BEING OF KOREAN SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS

So-Young Kim, MA.
Young-Jin Lim, Ph.D.

Daegu University

Although Much Emphasis Has Been Paid To Stress And Burnout Among Special Education Teachers, Little Attention Has Been Paid To Their Well-Being. This Study Aimed To Examine Relations Between Virtues And Well-Being Among Korean Special Education Teachers. Virtues And Well-Being Of 115 Korean Special Education Teachers Were Assessed Using The Character Strengths Test Short Form And The Mental Health Continuum Short Form. Path Analysis Indicated Theological Virtue Significantly Predicted Hedonic Well-Being, And That Interpersonal Virtue Significantly Predicted Eudaimonic Well-Being. The Implications That The Findings Of The Present Study Have On The Education And Recruitment Of Special Education Teachers Are Discussed.

Many Researchers Have Considered Special Education Teacher's Mental Health Is Important In Two Reasons. First, Special Education Teachers Have To Build Close Relationships With Difficult To Teach Students. Second, Special Education Teachers Have To Spend Much Time And Effort Providing Straightforward, Clear Instructions For Low-Achieving Students. These Two Reasons May Cause Much Job Stress And Increase The Likelihood Of Job Burnout (Platsidou, 2010; Zabel & Zabel, 2002).

As Compared With The Considerable Attention Paid To Job Stress And Burnout Among Special Education Teachers, Little Attention Has Been Paid To Their Well-Being. Because Well-Being Was Revealed To Be Independent To Job Stress Or Job Burnout, Even A Special Education Teachers Without Job Stress Or Job Burnout Needs Optimal Level Of Well-Being. There Are Two Types Of Well-Being: Hedonic Well-Being And Eudaimonic Well-Being. Hedonic Well-Being Means A State Of Positive Emotions (Happy, Satisfied With Life, Interested In Life) While Eudaimonic Well-Being Denotes A State Of Positive Functioning (Deci & Ryan, 2008; Keyes & Annas, 2009). Positive Functioning Consists Of 11 Dimensions: Autonomy, Environmental Mastery, Personal Growth, Positive Relations With Others, Purpose In Life, Self-Acceptance, Social Integration, Social Contribution, Social Coherence, Social Actualization, And Social Acceptance (Keyes, 1998). Previous Studies Have Reported That A Special Education Teacher Without Well-Being Is Likely To Deal With Job Demands As Poorly As One With Job Stress Or Burnout (Rothmann, 2014). Thus, Boosting Well-Being Is As Important As Eradicating Job Stress Or Burnout For Special Education Teachers.

Of The Possible Predictors Of Well-Being, Virtue Is A Promising Candidate According To Recent Studies On Well-Being. Virtue Is A Morally Good Trait That Is Valued Across Cultures And Across Time And A Positive Trait That Enables The Individual And A Society To Live And Flourish (Lim, 2015). Of The Theories Of Virtue, Peterson And Seligman's Theory (2004) Proposed Six Virtues Comprised Of 24 Observable Character Strengths.

For General Teachers, Evidence Of An Association Between Virtue And Well-Being Is Accumulating. In A Sample Of Chinese Teachers (Chan, 2009), All Virtues, But The Virtue Of Restraint, Were Significantly Correlated With Positive Affect (An Element Of Hedonic Well-Being), And All Virtues, Except Intellectual Virtue, Correlated Substantially With Life Satisfaction (An Element Of Hedonic Well-Being) (Chan, 2009). In Another Study Of Chinese Teachers (Chan, 2013), The Character Strengths Of Gratitude And Forgiveness, Which Are Elements Of Theological Virtue, Significantly Correlated With Life Satisfaction And Positive Affect Even After Controlling For Orientation To Happiness. In A Study Of The Slovenian Teachers Similar Findings Were Reported, In Particular,

All Virtues, Except Restraint, Were Found To Be Significantly Correlated With Positive Affect (An Element Of Hedonic Well-Being) (Gradisek, 2012).

Also, Several Studies Have Reported The Association Between Virtues And Eudaimonic Well-Being For General Teachers. In A Study Of The Australian Teachers, The Character Strength Of Gratitude, Which Is An Element Of Theological Virtue, Enhanced Teacher–Student Relationships (An Element Of Eudaimonic Well-Being) (Howells, 2014). In A Sample Of The Taiwanese Teachers, The Character Strengths Of Gratitude Contributed Teacher Loyalty Of Elementary Schools (An Element Of Eudaimonic Well-Being) (Ting & Yeh, 2014).

However, Few Studies Have Been Undertaken On Relationships Between Virtues And Well-Being Among Special Education Teachers. In Fact, Relationships Between Virtues And Eudaimonic Well-Being Have Received Scant Attention By Teaching Researchers. Given This Background, Efforts Are Needed To Examine Relations Between Virtues And Well-Being, That Is Hedonic And Eudaimonic Well-Being, Among Special Education Teachers.

In The Present Study, We Examined Relationships Between Virtues And Well-Being Among Special Education Teachers, Because Due To The Lack Of Studies On The Topic In This Population, It Is Difficult To Hypothesize On Relationships Between Virtues And Well-Being. However, According To Significant Associations Established Between Interpersonal/Restraint Virtues And Personal Teaching Efficacy Among Special Education Teachers (Lim & Kim, 2014), It Would Appear That Interpersonal And Restraint Virtues Play Significant Roles In Predicting The Well-Being Of Special Education Teachers, Because Personal Self-Efficacy Seems To Be An Important Source Of Well-Being.

Research Method

Participants

One Hundred And Fifteen Special Education Teachers Were Surveyed In Three Schools In Gyeongbuk, South Korea. The Three Schools Were Randomly Selected From The Total Of 7 Schools In Gyeongbuk. Mean Subject Age Was 38.68 Years (SD 9.70; Range From 22 To 56). Of The Study Subjects, 47.0% Were Male. The Average Number Of Working Years Was 13.2 Years (Range From 1 To 32).

Measures

The Short Form Of The Character Strengths Test (CST-SF; Lim & Kim, 2014) Was Developed From The Full Length Scale Devised By Kwon, Yu, Lim, And Kim (2010). The CST-SF Addresses 24 Character Strengths Using 72 Items, To Which Participants Respond Using A 4-Point Likert Scale (0~3). Reported Correlations Between The CST-SF And The Full Scale Range From .80 To .92, And Its Internal Consistency Reliabilities Has Been Reported To Range From .72 To .84. Lim And Kim (2014) Found By Factor Analysis That The Scale Has A Four Factor Structure: Interpersonal Virtue (Social Intelligence, Kindness, Humor, Love, Leadership, Vitality); Restraint Virtue (Prudence, Self- Regulation, Openness, Modesty, Perseverance, Fairness, Social Responsibility, Honesty); Intellectual Virtue (Creativity, Love Of Learning, Love Of Appreciation, Curiosity, Wisdom, Courage); And Theological Virtue (Spirituality, Gratitude, Forgiveness).

The Korean Version Of The Mental Health Continuum Short Form (K-MHC-SF) (Lim, Go, Shin, & Cho, 2013) Was Used To Assess Well-Being. The Original Version Of The Mental Health Continuum Short Form Was Developed By Keyes, Et Al. (2008). The K-MHC-SF Consists Of 14 Items Measuring Two Well-Being Dimensions (Items 1~3: Hedonic Well-Being And Item 4~14: Eudaimonic Well-Being). Each Item Of Hedonic Well-Being Reflects Positive Emotions (Happy, Interested In Life, Satisfied With Life). Each Item Of Eudaimonic Well-Being Reflects Both Positive Functioning In Personal Life (Ryff, 1989) (Autonomy, Environmental Mastery, Personal Growth, Positive Relations With Others, Purpose In Life, And Self-Acceptance) And Positive Functioning In Social Life (Keyes, 1998) (Social Integration, Social Contribution, Social Coherence, Social Actualization, And Social Acceptance). Participants Responded Using A 7-Point Likert Scale (0~ 6). The Cronbach's Coefficient Of The K-MHC-SF Has Been Reported To Be .93 (Lim Et Al., 2013).

Statistical Analysis

Firstly, Exploratory Factor Analysis Was Conducted In Order To Confirm The Factor Structure Of The MHC-SF For Korean Special Education Teachers. Since There Have Been Few Studies About The Factor Structures Of The MHC-SF For Korean Special Education Teachers, Exploratory Factor Analysis Was Used. Secondly, Pearson Correlation Coefficients Were Computed Between Each Pair Of Variables (Well-Beings And Virtues). Thirdly, Path

Analysis Was Used To Evaluate Whether Virtues Predicted The Two Dimensions Of Well-Being. Lastly, Multiple Regression Analysis Was Conducted To Examine Relations Between Character Strengths And The Two Dimensions Of Well-Being. Character Strengths Were Used As Predictive Variables And Two Dimensions Of Well-Being Were Utilized As Criterion Variables.

Results

Prior To Conducted The Main Analysis, Exploratory Factor Analysis Was Used To Confirm The Factor Structure Of The MHC-SF For Korean Special Education Teachers, Because Inconsistencies In Factor Structure Of The MHC-SF Have Been Reported (Jovanović, 2015). The Results Obtained Showed That Two-Factor Structure Was More Suitable Than Three-Factor Structure For Korean Special Education Teachers. Factors Were Labeled As Hedonic Well-Being And Eudaimonic Well-Being.

As Shown In Table 1, The Four Virtues Were Significantly Correlated With The Two Dimensions Of Well-Being. Associations Between Virtues And Eudaimonic Well-Being ($R = .484\text{~}.686$) Were Generally Stronger Than Those Between Virtues And Hedonic Well-Being ($R = .318\text{~}.410$).

Table 1. Correlation Coefficients Between Virtues And Two Dimensions Of Well-Being

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Hedonic Well-Being	-					
2. Eudaimonic Well-Being	.672	-				
3. Interpersonal Virtue	.379	.686	-			
4. Restraint Virtue	.325	.641	.762	-		
5. Intellectual Virtue	.318	.618	.761	.708	-	
6. Theological Virtue	.410	.484	.549	.574	.499	-

Note. All Correlation Coefficients Are Significant At The .001 Level

Table 2 Summarizes The Results Of Path Analysis. In This Analysis, The Two Dimensions Of Well-Being Were Defined As Criterion Variables And The Four Virtues As Predictive Variables. It Was Found Theological Virtue Significantly Predicted Hedonic Well-Being After Controlling For Other Virtues ($B = .294, P < .01$), And That Interpersonal Virtue Significantly Predicted Eudaimonic Well-Being ($B = .367, P < .01$).

Table 2. Path Analysis On The Relations Between Virtues And Well-Being

Dimensions (% Variance Explained)	Predictors	<i>B</i>	S.E.	<i>P</i>
Hedonic Well-Being (20.3%)	Interpersonal Virtue	.223	.043	.1330
	Restraint Virtue	-.031	.035	.8243
	Intellectual Virtue	.023	.039	.8626
	Theological Virtue	.294	.052	.0048
Eudaimonic Well-Being (51.8%)	Interpersonal Virtue	.367	.135	.0014
	Restraint Virtue	.205	.109	.0594
	Intellectual Virtue	.148	.123	.1579
	Theological Virtue	.090	.162	.2639

S.E. = Standard Error

To Examining How Character Strengths Predict Well-Being, Two Multiple Regression Analyses Were Conducted Using The Stepwise Procedure. The Findings Obtained Showed Optimism, Love, And Social Responsibility Significantly And Positively Predicted Hedonic Well-Being ($B = .388, P < .001$; $B = .282, P < .01$; $B = .232, P < .05$), And That Vitality, Social Intelligence, Optimism, And Courage Significantly Predicted Eudaimonic Well-Being ($B = .304, P < .001$; $B = .266, P < .01$; $B = .205, P < .01$; $B = .167, P < .05$).

Table 3. Multiple Regression Analyses On The Relations Between Character Strengths And Well-Being

Criterion Measures (% Variance Explained)	Predictors	<i>B</i>	S.E.	<i>P</i>
Hedonic Well-Being (36.7%)	Optimism	.388	.118	.000
	Love	.282	.139	.005
	Self Regulation	-.316	.137	.002
	Social Responsibility	.232	.160	.017
Eudaimonic Well-Being (51.8%)	Vitality	.304	.193	.000
	Social Intelligence	.266	.219	.001
	Optimism	.205	.221	.008
	Courage	.167	.193	.041

S.E. = Standard Error

Discussion

This Is The First Study To Examine Relations Between Virtues And Well-Being In Korean Special Education Teachers. Our Findings Show That The Four Virtues Were Moderately Correlated With The Two Dimensions Of Well-Being. However, According To Path Analysis, Specific Virtues Were Related To Specific Dimensions Of Well-Being. Interpersonal Virtue Was Related To Eudaimonic Well-Being, Suggesting That It Contributes To Functioning Rather Than To Positive Emotion. On The Other Hand, Theological Virtue Was Related To Hedonic Well-Being, That Is, It Concerns Emotion Rather Than Function.

In Addition, It Was Found Associations Between Virtues And Eudaimonic Well-Being Were Generally Stronger Than Those Between Virtues And Hedonic Well-Being. These Results Imply High Levels Of Virtues Influence Function Rather Than Emotion For Special Education Teachers, And That The Contributions Of Virtues To Well-Being Depend On The Notion Of Well-Being.

The Findings Of The Current Study And Those Of A Study Conducted On Korean College Students Show Differences And Similarities (Lim, 2015). The Specific Relationship Between Theological Virtue And Hedonic Well-Being And The Specific Relationship Between Interpersonal Virtue And Eudemonic Well-Being Were Found In Two Studies, But As Compared With College Students, In Whom Intellectual Virtue Predicted All Dimensions Of Well-Being, Intellectual Virtue Was Not Found To Contribute To Well-Being In The Present Study. This Discrepancy Might Be Attributable To Sample Characteristics, As Intellectual Virtue Is More Valued In The College Environment Than In Schools At Which Special Education Teachers Are Employed.

It Is Necessary To Examine If The Findings Of The Present Study Will Be Replicated In Other Cultures Because The Structures Of Virtues And The Relationship Between Virtues And Well-Being Could Be Different Across Cultures (Lim, 2015). In Addition, The Relation Between Virtues And Well-Being Varies In Different Cultures Because Culture-Specific Value Might Influence Well-Being And Virtues.

Some Limitations Of The Present Study Should Be Considered. First, Only Self-Reported Data Was Collected, And Relationships Between Variables Could Have Been Overestimated Due To The Method Factor. Thus, We Suggest A Multi-Trait, Multi-Method Assessment Procedure Be Used In Future Study. Second, The Study Was Conducted In One Geographic Region, And Thus, Additional Study Is Needed In A Much Wider Region In Order To Address Generalization Issues.

This Study Represents A First Step Toward Determining The Natures Of Relationships Between Virtues And Well-Being In Special Education Teachers. We Hope That This Study Stimulates Others To Address The Topic Of Virtue Among Special Education Teachers. Furthermore, The Results Of This Study Suggest A Specific Strategy For The Development Of An Education Program And Provide Guidance For The Recruitment Of The Special Education Teachers.

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