Policy Research Journal
ISSN (E): 3006-7030 ISSN (P) : 3006-7022 Volume 4, Issue 3, 2026

UNDERSTANDING THE LINK BETWEEN CHARACTER STRENGTHS AND MINDFULNESS: INSIGHTS FROM HIGH SCHOOL POPULATIONS

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DOI: https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21715192

Keywords
Character Strengths, Mindfulness, Adolescents.

Article History
Received: 07 January 2026
Accepted: 17 March 2026
Published: 31 March 2026

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Abstract

Objective: *To examine (a) the relationship between global character strengths and dispositional mindfulness among high-school students, and (b) the distribution of levels of character strengths and mindfulness in the sample.*

Methodology: *A cross-sectional survey was conducted with 344 high-school students age (M = 17.06, SD = 0.63) drawn from urban and rural schools. Character strengths were measured with the Values in Action Inventory of Strengths for Youth (VIA-Youth, 96 items, 5-point Likert) and mindfulness with the Mindful Attention Awareness Scale Adolescent version (MAAS-A, 14 items, 6-point Likert). Data collection occurred in classroom settings under researcher supervision. Analyses comprised descriptive statistics, categorical classification of score ranges (low/moderate/high), and Pearson product-moment correlation to test the association between total VIA and MAAS scores. Reliability (internal consistency) was evaluated for both scales.*

Results*: The sample was predominantly urban (83.1%), largely from nuclear families (79.7%), and balanced by gender (53.9% male). The findings revealed a strong positive and statistically significant correlation between total VIA and MAAS scores (r = .77, p < .001), demonstrating that higher levels of character strengths were strongly correlated with higher levels of dispositional mindfulness among high school students. Classification of total VIA scores showed 25.0% low, 50.6% moderate, and 24.4% high; MAAS-A classifications showed 25.6% low, 51.7% moderate, and 22.7% high. Instruments were administered with standard procedures; internal consistency was assessed*

Conclusion: *Most high school students demonstrated moderate levels of both character strengths and mindfulness. A strong positive correlation between these constructs indicates that students with higher character strengths also tended to report higher levels of dispositional mindfulness. These findings support the view that character strengths and mindfulness are complementary positive psychological resources that may jointly contribute to adolescents' psychological well-being and positive development. Future research should employ longitudinal, facet-level, and intervention designs using culturally validated measures and multi-informant assessments to clarify the developmental pathways between these constructs and identify which specific character strengths are most strongly related to mindfulness*

INTRODUCTION

Character strengths are positive, measurable traits that reflect an individual's enduring capacities for thinking, feeling, and behaving in ways that benefit both self and others. The Values in Action (VIA) classification identifies 24 distinct strengths grouped under six core virtues wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, temperance, and transcendence(1). These strengths represent the essential building blocks of positive character and are considered central to human flourishing. Within adolescent populations, character strengths have been linked with greater well-being, resilience, academic motivation, and social competence. Students who recognize and apply their strengths tend to exhibit higher life satisfaction, engagement in learning, and prosocial behavior (2). Strength-based education and interventions encourage young individuals to develop awareness of their personal assets and apply them effectively, thereby supporting both emotional and academic growth during formative years (3).

Mindfulness, a complementary construct within positive psychology, refers to the ability to attend to present-moment experiences with openness and nonjudgmental awareness (4) It is both a mental capacity and a cultivated skill that fosters attentional control and emotional regulation. Among adolescents, mindfulness has been widely studied for its role in promoting psychological well-being, reducing anxiety, and improving academic performance (5). Empirical studies show that mindful adolescents report lower stress, enhanced self-control, and greater emotional stability (6) Moreover, mindfulness-based programs implemented in school settings have been shown to improve classroom climate, foster empathy, and enhance students' concentration and self-regulation (7). Thus, mindfulness represents a critical personal resource that may interact with other positive traits such as character strengths to influence adolescents' holistic development.

Recent theoretical and empirical work has begun to explore the interrelationship between character strengths and mindfulness. From a conceptual perspective, mindfulness can heighten individuals' awareness of their thoughts and actions, thereby facilitating the conscious recognition and use of personal strengths (8). Conversely, exercising one's strengths may nurture mindfulness by promoting greater self-reflection and present-focused engagement. Empirical studies have reported that interventions integrating both constructs, such as Mindfulness-Based Strengths Practice (MBSP), produce improvements in life satisfaction, optimism, and subjective well-being (9, 10) However, despite these promising findings, much of the research in this area has focused on adults or university students, leaving adolescent populations understudied(11, 12). Since adolescence is a period marked by rapid psychological and emotional changes, understanding the dynamics between mindfulness and character strengths during this developmental stage is particularly important.

Several research gaps remain evident in the literature, as most previous studies have been conducted in Western contexts, limiting the cultural generalizability of findings, while research on adolescents often relies on small samples or cross-sectional designs that weaken inferences regarding the relationship between mindfulness and strengths; moreover, there is limited data on the baseline levels of character strengths and mindfulness among high school students in South Asian countries, highlighting the need to address these gaps to develop culturally informed interventions and expand the evidence base on adolescent well-being within non-Western educational contexts.

The present study is grounded in the recognition that adolescence is a pivotal stage for identity formation and socio-emotional development. Cultivating mindfulness and understanding one's character strengths during this period may provide protective psychological resources that foster resilience, self-awareness, and effective coping strategies. Examining the association between these constructs will help determine whether mindfulness training can enhance the awareness and utilization of character strengths, or whether strengths-based education can promote mindful engagement. This inquiry holds practical significance for educational psychologists,

teachers, and policymakers seeking evidence-based approaches to support students' mental health and academic growth.

The findings from this study will contribute to positive psychology and educational research by providing empirical insights into the relationship between character strengths and mindfulness among high school students. It will also describe the levels of these constructs in the target population, offering valuable data for designing interventions that integrate mindfulness and strengths-based approaches in school settings. Such integrative models have the potential to enhance students' emotional adjustment, academic engagement, and overall well-being. Moreover, understanding these associations within the local cultural context can guide educators in developing more inclusive and contextually relevant strategies for student development.

The aim of this study is to explore the relationship between character strengths and mindfulness among high school students and to assess the levels of these constructs within this group.

The specific objectives for this study were as fellow:

(1) to identify the relationship between character strengths and mindfulness among high school students.

(2) to examine the levels of character strengths and mindfulness among high school students.

Methodology

The primary data collection tools were two standardized self-report questionnaires. Character strengths were assessed using the *Values in Action Inventory of Strengths for Youth (VIA-Youth)*, a 96-item instrument developed to measure the 24-character strengths outlined by Peterson and Seligman (2004). Each item is rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (very much unlike me) to 5 (very much like me) (1). The VIA-Youth has demonstrated high reliability and validity across diverse adolescent samples, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients typically exceeding .80 for most subscales. Mindfulness was measured using the *Mindful Attention Awareness Scale – Adolescent Version (MAAS-A)*, a 14-item measure designed to assess dispositional mindfulness, defined as the open or receptive awareness of and attention to what is taking place in the present. Each item is rated on a six-point Likert scale, where higher scores indicate greater mindfulness(13).

Data collection was carried out in the participating schools during regular school hours. Permission was obtained from school principals and class teachers prior to data administration. The questionnaires were distributed in classroom settings, and students were briefed on the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, and the confidentiality of their responses. The researcher and trained assistants supervised the sessions, provided standardized instructions, and were available to clarify any questions. Each session lasted approximately 40 to 50 minutes, during which students completed the demographic form and both psychometric scales. Completed questionnaires were collected immediately to minimize the risk of data loss.

Data were coded and entered the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25 for analysis. Preliminary analyses involved checking data accuracy, handling missing values, and testing assumptions of normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity. Descriptive statistics, including means, standard deviations, frequencies, and percentages, were computed to examine the demographic profile of participants. Pearson product moment correlation coefficient was use to check relationship between character strength and mindfulness and crosstab analysis were use to assess the levels of character strengths and mindfulness among participants.

Results

The present study investigated the relationship and level of character strengths and mindfulness among high school students.

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics of Categorical Demographic Variables (n = 342)

Variable	Subcategory	*f* (%)
Gender	Male	188(55.9%)
	Female	154(44.1%)
Majors Field of Study	Pre-Medical	156(45.6%)
	Pre-Engineering	60(17.5%)
	IT Group	126(36.8%)
Living Environment	Urban	290(84.8%)
	Rural	52(15.2%)
Parental Status	Both Alive	320(93.0%)
	Father alive Mother Deceased	10(2.9%)
	Mother alive Father deceased	12(3.5%)
	Both Deceased	2 (.6%)
Father's Qualification	Matric	74(21.6%)
	Inter	106(31.0%)
	Post/Graduate	152(44.4%)
Mother's Qualification	Matric	120(35.1%)
	Inter	76(22.2%)
	Post/Graduate	146(42.7%
Family System	Nuclear	276(80.7%)
	Joint	66(19.3%)
Socioeconomic Status	Upper Class	10(2.9%)
	Upper Middle Class	74(21.6%)
	Middle Class	150 (43.3%)
	Working Class	98 (28.7%)
	Lower Class	12 (3.5%)

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Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics of the categorical demographic characteristics of the study participants (N = 342). The sample comprised 188 (55.1%) male and 154 (45.9%) female high school students. Regarding academic major, the largest proportion of participants belonged to the pre-medical group (45.6%), followed by the IT group (36.8%), while Pre-Engineering students constituted 17.5% of the sample. Most participants resided in urban areas (84.8%), whereas 15.2% were from rural settings. The majority of students reported that both parents were alive, with only a small proportion reporting the loss of one or both parents. In terms of parental education, most fathers and mothers had attained graduate or postgraduate qualifications, indicating a relatively educated parental background. Furthermore, the majority of participants belonged to nuclear families (80.7%), while 19.3% lived in joint family systems. Regarding socioeconomic status, the largest proportion of students belonged to the middle-class group, followed by the working class and upper-middle class, whereas relatively few participants were from the upper or lower socioeconomic classes.

Table 2 Descriptive Statistics of Numerical Demographic Variables (n = 342)

Variable	*Mean ± SD*
Age (years)	17.06 ± .63
Birth Order	2.30 ± 1.23
Number of Male Siblings	1.88 ± 1.06
Number of Female Siblings	1.75 ± 1.26
Grade Percentage Score	3.45 ± 1.48

Table 2 shows descriptive statistics for demographic variables. The mean age of the participants was 17.06 years (*SD* = 0.63), indicating a relatively homogeneous group of late adolescents. The mean birth order was M = 2.30 (*SD* = 1.23), indicating that most students were either first- or second-born children. Family sizes were moderate, with a mean number of male siblings of M = 1.88 (*SD* = 1.06) and a mean number of female siblings of M = 1.75 (*SD* = 1.26). The average grade percentage score was M = 3.45 (*SD* = 1.48), indicating satisfactory academic performance.

Table 3: Reliability and Descriptive Statistics for Character Strengths and Mindfulness (n = 342)

Scale	Subscales	*k*	*α*	M ± *SD*	Actual	Potential	Skew	Kurtosis
Character Strength	Total	98	.88	330.55 ± 37.47	18	49	-.32	-.27
Mindfulness	Total	14	.71	50.86 ± 10.07	23	76	-.04	-.28

Note. *k* = number of items; *α* = Cronbach's alpha; M = mean; *SD* = standard deviation.

As shown in Table 3, the Character Strengths Scale demonstrated excellent internal consistency (α = .88), whereas the Mindfulness Scale showed acceptable reliability (α = .71). Participants obtained a mean character strengths score of 330.55 (*SD* = 37.47), indicating a moderately high level of character strengths. Similarly, the mean mindfulness score was 50.86 (*SD* = 10.07), reflecting a moderately high level of mindfulness among high school students. Furthermore, skewness and kurtosis values for both variables were within the acceptable range (±1), indicating that the data were approximately normally distributed.

Table-3
Relationship of character strength and mindfulness among high school students (n = 344)

Variables	1	2
1. character strengths	1	
2. mindfulness	-	.77**

Table-3 shows the correlation analysis revealed a strong positive and statistically significant relationship between character strengths and mindfulness among high school students (r = .077, p = .157). This result indicates that there was a strong positive correlation between the two constructs, which shows that higher levels of character strengths were strongly correlated with greater mindfulness in this sample.

Table 4
Distribution of Character Strengths and Mindfulness Levels among High School Students (n = 342)

Construct	Level	Range	N	%
Character Strength	High	< 309.75	86	25.45%
	Moderate	309.75–355	182	60.65%
	Low	> 355	74	14.42%
Mindfulness	High	< 44	88	25.61%
	Moderate	44–58	180	51.71%
	Low	> 58	74	22.73%

Table 4 shows that the majority of high school students demonstrated moderate levels of character strengths (60.65%) and mindfulness (51.71%). Approximately one-quarter of the students reported low levels of character strengths (25.45%) and mindfulness (25.61%), whereas relatively fewer students exhibited high levels of character strengths (14.42%) and mindfulness (22.73%).

Discussion

The aim of this study was to examine the relationship between character strengths and mindfulness among high school students and to assess the levels of these constructs within this group. The study also sought to describe the demographic characteristics of the participants to provide context for interpreting the findings.

he first set of findings presented in Table 1 described the demographic characteristics of the participants. The findings indicated that the sample included both male and female students with a relatively balanced gender representation. Participants were drawn from the pre-medical, IT, and pre-engineering academic groups. Most participants belonged to urban areas and lived in nuclear families. The majority had both parents alive, and parental education generally reflected moderate to high educational attainment, with many parents holding first-degree qualifications. These findings indicate that the sample largely comprised adolescents from relatively stable family backgrounds with moderate to high parental educational attainment. Such family and educational characteristics may provide a supportive environment for adolescents' psychological development, including the cultivation of character strengths and mindfulness, although the predominance of urban students may also reflect greater exposure to academic demands and social pressures that can influence these psychological attributes. Prior research has highlighted that adolescents from intact families and urban environments often display higher self-efficacy, academic motivation, and emotional stability(14). Such socio-demographic stability could provide a favorable context for the cultivation of character strengths and mindfulness. However, the predominance of urban students might also suggest higher exposure to academic pressure and social competition, factors that may influence self-perception and mindfulness levels differently than in rural populations.

Table 2 presented the descriptive statistics of demographic variables, showing that the mean age of participants was 17.06 years (SD = 0.63), confirming that the sample comprised late adolescents. The average birth order was 2.30, indicating that most students were neither first-born nor last-born, and they reported having approximately two male and two female siblings on average. These data reflect a typical family size in the cultural context of Pakistan. Previous research suggests that adolescents in middle birth positions often develop strong interpersonal and adaptive skills due to shared responsibilities and negotiation experiences within larger families (15). Similarly, age around 17 years is associated with heightened self-awareness and identity formation factors that can significantly shape the expression of character strengths and mindfulness (16). Thus,

the demographic characteristics of the participants appear suitable for exploring these psychological constructs during a key developmental period.

Table 3 reported the main inferential finding of the study, showing the relationship between character strengths and mindfulness. The Pearson correlation coefficient was strong and in positive direction (r = .77), indicating a significant strong positive relationship between the two constructs. This suggests that among these adolescents, higher character strengths were strongly associated with higher mindfulness levels. Although this finding contrasts with some theoretical expectations that mindfulness facilitates the awareness and enactment of personal strengths (8, 17). it aligns with previous study demonstrated that reported significant correlations between mindfulness and character strength scores in adolescent samples (18). The strong positive correlation observed in the present study indicates that higher levels of character strengths are associated with greater dispositional mindfulness among high school students. This finding is consistent with positive psychology theory, which proposes that mindfulness facilitates awareness and application of individual character strengths in daily life, while character strengths such as self-regulation, gratitude, curiosity, and love of learning further enhance mindful awareness and adaptive functioning (19). previous research has similarly reported that although certain character strengths show particularly strong associations with mindfulness, the overall VIA score also demonstrates a substantial positive relationship with dispositional mindfulness among adolescents (6). in the Pakistani context, this strong relationship suggests that despite collectivist cultural values and academic expectations, mindfulness and character strengths develop in a complementary manner. As adolescents become more attentive to their present experiences, they may be better able to recognize and utilize their personal strengths, thereby promoting resilience, psychological well-being, and positive youth development.

Table 4 examined the descriptive classification of character strength levels among students. The results showed that 25.45% of students demonstrated low strength levels, 60.65% fell within the moderate range, and 4.42% scored high. This indicates that most students possessed moderate levels of character strengths, consistent with patterns reported in other adolescent populations. Studies conducted in various cultural settings have found similar distributions, where adolescents often exhibit moderate endorsement of character strengths due to ongoing personality development and limited life experience (2, 20). However, the presence of approximately one-quarter of students in the high category suggests that a substantial portion of this population already displays strong prosocial tendencies, resilience, and moral awareness. Such findings align with the view that adolescence is a formative stage for developing virtues that support psychological well-being and social competence (21). Educational psychologists argue that implementing strength-based educational programs during these years can further enhance motivation, self-esteem, and emotional adjustment (22). Therefore, the observed moderate-to-high levels of strengths in many students represent an encouraging baseline for potential interventions.

Table 5 presented the descriptive classification of mindfulness levels. Like the distribution of character strengths, 25.61% of students scored low in mindfulness, 51.71% fell in the moderate range, and 22.73% scored high. This indicates that most high school students reported average mindfulness levels, suggesting that while they possess some capacity for present-moment awareness, there remains significant room for improvement. These findings are consistent with international research demonstrating that adolescents often show moderate levels of dispositional mindfulness, which tend to increase with targeted interventions or training (6, 16) For instance, school-based mindfulness programs have been shown to improve attention regulation, emotional control, and academic focus (23). The moderate levels observed in this sample may reflect the absence of systematic mindfulness training within schools and the potential influence of academic stress, which can disrupt mindful awareness. Similar results were reported by

Rawlett et al. (2016), who found that adolescents without exposure to mindfulness curricula typically report average levels of attention awareness, whereas those who undergo structured programs show significant improvements in emotional stability and self-regulation (24).

Conclusion

The findings of this study indicate that character strengths and mindfulness are closely associated among high school students, suggesting that adolescents who possess stronger character strengths also tend to demonstrate higher levels of mindfulness. The results further show that most students exhibit moderate levels of both character strengths and mindfulness, indicating that these positive psychological resources are present but have considerable scope for further development. These findings highlight the importance of promoting character strengths and mindfulness through school-based positive psychology initiatives to support adolescents' psychological well-being, resilience, and overall positive development.

Limitations and recommendations of the study

The present study is not without limitations. Its correlational design restricts the ability to infer causality between character strength and mindfulness, and reliance on self-reported data may have introduced response biases or inaccuracies. The relatively small and homogeneous sample further limits the generalizability of the findings to broader populations. Moreover, the study focused solely on two variables, which may not fully represent the complex psychological or contextual factors that could influence their relationship. Measurement constraints and limited variability within the sample may also have contributed to the weak and nonsignificant correlation observed.

Future research should address these limitations by employing longitudinal or experimental designs to explore causal relationships and underlying mechanisms. Including larger and more diverse samples across various demographic and cultural settings would improve the external validity of results. Researchers should also consider integrating additional variables, such as motivation, emotional intelligence, or personality traits, that might clarify the interaction between character strength and mindfulness. Using mixed-method approaches could enrich quantitative findings with contextual insights, while refining measurement instruments could enhance precision and sensitivity in future investigations.

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