

A very warm welcome to everyone. I am Lynette da Silva Fortes from Carmel College of Arts, Science and Commerce. Today I'll be covering module #7 that is values in action project, which is a part of the first unit introduction to positive psychology.

The session outline under values in Action Project: we are going to see the development of the classification of human virtues. Also, the criteria for selecting character strengths. After which you will be able to understand the science which is involved in the values in action project. Also, you will be able to assess the criteria for selecting character strengths.

The first subtopic developing a classification of human virtues. Now for a long time in psychology's history or in the past so many years in the history of psychology we have virtue which was not considered to be a very appropriate construct for scientific investigation. Now the study of virtue was tainted or biased easily by moral beliefs of the researchers and the prevailing cultural mores of the day.

Psychologists also believed that science should provide very objective facts about only how people act. Questions about people's behavior like whether they are good, whether they're bad whether they are engaging in moral or immoral actions. Now this was supposed to be left strictly to the philosophers and also to the theologians to decide.

Now renewed interest in the field of positive psychology emerged as psychologists realized in order to have a complete account of human behavior, we need to include the moral dimensions of people's life. Describing features of a life well lived is considered to be the central theme of positive psychology. Meaning of a good person and a good life are both connected to virtue, plus positive psychology also has given virtue a lot of prominence in its research and the studies which they conduct.

Now we have the values in action project which was started by Peterson and Seligman. Now this collaborative research project was started by both of them because they wanted to develop a classification of character strengths and virtues, to parallel the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders. That is, the DSM which was given by the American Psychiatric Association. The DSM, what it does is it provides classification of mental disorders and it has an extensive language for describing human psychological weaknesses and also the pathologies.

Now the authors of values in Action project hoped to create a comprehensive classification system which was something similar to the DSM. Now how they did this was, they wanted to focus on human strengths. That was one thing. The second thing was the language describing positive human qualities, which was not done before. They also wanted to define what is the meaning of a healthy person.

Now, DSM describes or deals with aspects of life below 0. One goal of the VIA was to describe life above 0 and how they were going to do this. They wanted to identify traits defining emotional health and strength. Now this was supposed to be consistent with positive psychology's emphasis on restoring balance to the field because they felt there was a lot of imbalance. Because only treatment of mental

illnesses was focused on. Now they wanted to also replace psychology's historic focus on problematic human behaviors.

Now the VIA coordinators, namely Christopher Peterson and Martin Seligman, what they did was they brought together a group of researchers. These researchers had to describe strengths of a character which are most prominent across history and also across culture.

These researchers also created or generated a list of possible candidates, as they examined virtues and strengths which were described in a variety of works. Now these works could be philosophic, religious, cultural traditions, works of historical figures, popular culture like the works of Benjamin Franklin, then you have Christianity, Buddhism. You had so many different works of these people which they relied on.

From a long list of candidates we have 24 character strengths which were selected and organized around six virtues. So you have six virtues and you have 24 character strengths which come under or which are organized around these particular 6 virtues. Now the six virtues, which were shortlisted were wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, temperance, and transcendence. The virtues were selected because they have universal appeal across history, societies, religion and ethical philosophies.

Peterson and Seligman regarded these virtues as core, defining features of a good character. Now each virtue is defined by a set of character strengths. These character strengths represent the ingredients, expressions, and potential means of developing the virtue. For example, temperance. Temperance as a virtue, basically refers to people's strength in avoiding excesses like curtailing your expenses, curtailing your behaviors which are in the negative.

These character strengths were selected by applying a set of criteria to the list of strengths identified in the very first phase of the project. Inclusion and the final classification depended on character strength, meeting all or nearly all of these criteria.

Now, half of the strengths which were selected met the entire set of criteria. Other half did not. This classification system, which was done by these researchers is considered to be the first effort at describing universally regarded human strengths and virtues.

Now we will see the criteria which are used for selecting character strengths.

The first one, now this trait, has to be regarded as a valued moral quality in and of itself, whether or not it led to concrete benefits.

Then the trait also has to contribute to personal fulfillment by enhancing personal expressiveness, meaningfulness, satisfaction and happiness, that is, when the person shows or depicts this particular trait, it has to be personally expressive, meaningful and satisfying and bring about happiness.

Now, another criteria for selecting this character strength was, this trait should constitute a stable individual, difference trait. That is, you should have reliable measures which are previously developed in order to measure this particular trait.

Another criteria was the trait has to be distinctive and should not overlap with the other strengths which are present in the other virtues and other character strengths.

Now the next one is, it has to have an opposite that was clearly negative. That is, when you talk about the virtue of courage, it has an opposite, ie., for the virtue of courage it is cowardice and patience is impatience.

The next one, the trait has to enhance rather than diminish other people when expressed. That is when you express this particular trait, it should evoke admiration or respect rather than envy, inferiority or even lowered self evaluation.

Next, the focus of institutional efforts. This is the last criteria that is, this trait should be the focus of institutional efforts. That is your educational institutes, your religious institutions, they all should work towards the promotion and the development of this particular virtue.

With this we come to the end of this particular session. These are the references for the topic.

Thank you very much.