

“Who Am I”: The Role of Character Strength in Self-Awareness Emerging Adulthood

Dewi Fatmasari Edy

Department of Psychology, Faculty of Psychology, State University of Malang
Semarang Street No. 5, Malang, East Java, Indonesia 65145
dewi.fatmasariedy.fpsi@um.ac.id

Femmi Nurmalitasari

Department of Psychology, Faculty of Psychology, State University of Malang
Semarang Street No. 5, Malang, East Java, Indonesia 65145
femmi.nurmalitasari.fpsi@um.ac.id

Dwi Nikmah Puspitasari

Department of Psychology, Faculty of Psychology, State University of Malang
Semarang Street No. 5, Malang, East Java, Indonesia 65145
dwi.nikmah.fpsi@um.ac.id

Rayza Ilfie Azkya Ashgarie

Department of Psychology, Faculty of Psychology, State University of Malang
Semarang Street No. 5, Malang, East Java, Indonesia 65145
rayza.ilfie.2008116@students.um.ac.id

Nilai Shofy Nihayah

Department of Psychology, Faculty of Psychology, State University of Malang
Semarang Street No. 5, Malang, East Java, Indonesia 65145
nila.shofy.2208116@students.um.ac.id

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Abstract

Previous research shows that self-awareness is important for emerging adulthood. Individual knowledge of himself is required, specifically the strength of his character, to increase self-awareness. For this reason, this research shows the role of emerging adulthood character strengths on self-awareness. The research was carried out using a non-experimental quantitative approach with a research design in the form of a survey. Sampling was done using simple random sampling. The measuring instruments used are the Indonesian version of character strength developed by the VIA Institute via the viacharacter.org page formulated by Peterson and Seligman (2004) and the Self-Awareness Outcomes Questionnaire (SAOQ) created by Sutton (2016), which researchers adapted. These two measuring instruments have been proven to be valid and reliable in measuring the selected variables. Data collection was carried out using Google Forms, and a total of 142 participants were used for hypothesis testing. Hypothesis testing using a simple linear regression test shows that character strength plays a significant role in predicting emerging adulthood self-awareness with a predictive power of 64 per cent, and the direction of the relationship between the two is in the same direction. This means that the higher the strength of character, the greater the self-awareness. Thus, it is known that the true potential of emerging adulthood can be maximized if individuals are aware of their character strengths. This is because character strength can be an element in self-exploration and self-understanding. Research suggestions are attached.

Kata kunci:
 kekuatan karakter;
 self-awareness;
 emerging adulthood.

Abstrak

Penelitian sebelumnya menunjukkan bahwa *self-awareness* penting bagi *emerging adulthood*. Untuk meningkatkan *self-awareness*, diperlukan pengetahuan individu atas dirinya, secara spesifik yaitu kekuatan karakternya. Untuk itu, penelitian ini mencoba untuk menunjukkan peran dari kekuatan karakter *emerging adulthood* terhadap *self-awareness* yang dimiliki. Penelitian dilakukan dengan pendekatan kuantitatif berjenis non-eksperimental dengan desain penelitian berbentuk *survey*. Pengambilan sampel dengan *simple random sampling*. Adapun alat ukur yang digunakan yaitu kekuatan karakter versi Bahasa Indonesia yang dikembangkan oleh VIA Institute melalui laman *viacharacter.org* yang dirumuskan oleh Peterson dan Seligman (2004) dan Self-Awareness Outcomes Questionnaire (SAOQ) yang dibuat oleh Sutton (2016) yang diadaptasi oleh peneliti. Kedua alat ukur ini telah terbukti valid dan reliabel dalam mengukur variabel yang dipilih. Pengumpulan data dilakukan menggunakan *Google Form* dan memperoleh total 142 partisipan yang digunakan untuk uji hipotesis. Uji hipotesis melalui uji regresi linier sederhana menunjukkan bahwa kekuatan karakter berperan dalam memprediksi *self-awareness emerging adulthood* secara signifikan dengan daya prediksi sebesar 64% dan arah hubungan keduanya searah. Maknanya, semakin tinggi kekuatan karakter, maka semakin meningkat pula *self-awareness*. Sehingga, diketahui bahwa potensi *emerging adulthood* sejatinya dapat termaksimalkan apabila individu menyadari kekuatan karakternya. Hal ini karena kekuatan karakter dapat menjadi unsur dalam mengeksplor diri dan memahami diri. Saran penelitian terlampir.



INTRODUCTION

Currently, the topic of mental health is increasingly becoming a topic of discussion, both in cyberspace and in the real world. It cannot be denied that technological advances have also contributed to the dissemination of mental health education. Social media plays a role in mental health issues (Figueroa & Aguilera, 2020). This indicates the importance of individual control in responding to this development.

Various problems related to mental health actually need to receive special attention, including individuals who are experiencing a transition period. Research by Taylor et al. (2014) shows the importance of addressing resources for adolescent mental health during transitions, especially transitions in educational levels. Neglect of mental health can have a long-term impact on an individual's functioning in life.

The transition period or threshold age of adolescence before entering the early adult phase is called emerging adulthood. Arnett (2014) defines emerging adulthood as a stage of life when adolescents reach their final years and transition

into a more stable adult position, typically between the ages of 18 and 25. In general, college students can be grouped into the emerging adulthood group.

Students face obstacles that can endanger the progress of their goals in pursuing higher education and pose challenges to self-regulation. To overcome the various obstacles that students face, students first need to identify these obstacles by getting to know themselves better. Self-awareness plays an important role in identifying barriers (Kreibich et al., 2020).

Low self-awareness contributes to student cheating behaviour (Helawati, 2022). This indicates that maladaptive behaviour can emerge when students lack self-awareness. Students, especially final students, tend to experience anxiety with low self-awareness. This aligns with the findings of (Akhnaf et al., 2022), who found that self-awareness was significantly negatively correlated with a contribution of 10.1% to final-year student anxiety. High self-awareness even

contributes to a lower desire to injure oneself (Shalsabilla et al., 2023).

When students have high self-awareness, students also have the opportunity to develop self-regulation (Masi et al., 2022). Students can organize their activities and actions according to their potential and capacity because students can understand themselves. Students' thoughts, feelings and attitudes will develop in a better direction. This makes students more efficient in carrying out their roles on campus.

According to Linsley et al. (Stuntz, 2019), strengths can predict higher satisfaction of a psychological need and help progress towards goals. Furthermore, Stuntz (2019) explained that consistently using strengths is associated with positive outcomes, psychological satisfaction and well-being. Park and Peterson (2009) explain that character strength is the basis of lifelong development that runs smoothly and optimally. A good character is not singular but plural, which means a collection of positive traits manifested in a person's thoughts, feelings and behaviour (Park & Peterson, 2009).

Previous research demonstrates that character strengths are related to essential aspects of individual and social well-being, although different strengths predict different outcomes (Park & Peterson, 2009). This means that character is essential, so developing character components needs to be an important goal for everyone. Character strength is dimensional and can be expressed in degrees like creativity, honesty, and other characteristics (Niemic & Pearce, 2021).

Based on age, students can be categorized into emerging adulthood, which means they are closely connected to the world of education. In the college or university context, it was found that persistence emerged as a consistent predictor of academic achievement and college satisfaction was found to be highly correlated with the character strengths of hope, self-regulation, passion, and persistence (Karris Bachik et al., 2021).

Based on the background above, the problem formulation found is the role of character strength in self-awareness in emerging adulthood. So, this research aims to find the role of character strengths on self-awareness, especially in emerging adulthood.

Previous studies have discovered the role of character strengths on life satisfaction and self-awareness on various self-regulation impacts. The novelty of this research is identifying the role of character strengths in self-awareness, specifically during the transition from adolescence to adulthood.

The benefit of this research is that it theoretically develops and adds to the study of the theory of character strengths and self-awareness and the developmental stages of emerging adulthood. The practical benefit is that emerging adulthood gains knowledge about the importance of knowing the character strengths that play a role in self-awareness to make individuals more productive and prosperous.

METHODS

This research uses non-experimental quantitative methods. The quantitative method is a research approach where data collection uses research instruments and statistical data analysis with the aim of testing predetermined hypotheses.

The criteria for respondents in this research are Indonesian citizens aged 18–25 years. Sampling uses a simple random sampling technique; namely, sampling from the population is carried out randomly without paying attention to the strata in the population (Sugiyono, 2016).

Researchers use a research design in the form of a survey so that researchers will use a scale in collecting research data. This research uses two scales to measure character strength and self-awareness. Character strength uses the 72-item Indonesian version of the character strength measuring tool developed by the VIA Institute via the viacharacter.org page formulated by Peterson and Seligman (2004) with an internal consistency reliability of 0.75. Mean-

while, the scale for self-awareness uses the Self-Awareness Outcomes Questionnaire (SAOQ) created by Sutton (2016), which has 38 items. Researchers underwent several procedures in adapting the SAOQ measuring instrument to Indonesian adaptation, according to Beaton et al. (2000), namely:

1. Translation from English (native language) to Indonesian (forward translation) was done by two translators who have lived abroad with IELTS scores of 6.5 and 7.0, respectively.
2. Researchers discuss integrating the results of the two translations.
3. The results that have been integrated are then rearranged by the researcher.
4. Back translation from Indonesian to English (back translation) by two translators, one has an IELTS score of 6.5, and the other has a TOEFL IBT score of 80.
5. Researchers discuss integration again.
6. Researchers prepare measuring instruments.
7. Researchers conducted processing time trials.
8. Researchers conducted field trials using a sample of 50 respondents.

The trial results of the character strength measuring instrument and SAOQ showed the validity and reliability of the instrument. The content validity of the strength measuring tool is 0.765, and the validity of the SAOQ measuring tool is 0.775. The character strength measuring tool is 0.944, and the reliability of the SAOQ measuring tool is 0.878. So, the researcher decided to continue with the hypothesis testing procedure. Researchers tested the hypothesis using the regression method to see the role of character strengths on self-awareness. A simple linear regression test is used to test the linear role between a predictor variable (X) and a criterion variable (Y) (Shadiqi, 2023).

RESULTS

Description of Respondent Identity (N = 142)
Age

Table 1.

Descriptive Statistics of Respondents Age

Age	Percentage	
	Frequency	%
18	34	23.9
19	19	13.4
20	35	24.6
21	22	15.5
22	16	11.3
23	7	4.9
24	6	4.2
25	3	2.1
Total	142	100.0

The descriptive statistical data above shows that the highest age frequency of respondents is 18 years old at 23.9%, and the lowest is 25 years old at 2.1%.

Gender

Table 2.

Descriptive Statistics of Respondents Gender

Gender	Percentage	
	Frequency	%
Female	118	83.1
Male	24	16.9
Total	142	100.0

The descriptive statistical data above shows that the majority of respondents were female, namely 83.1%.

Last Education

Table 3.

Descriptive Statistics of Respondents Last Education

Last Education	Percentage	
	Frequency	%
High school	111	78.2
Bachelor's degree	31	21.8
Total	142	100.0

The descriptive statistics above show that most of the respondents had the latest education at the high school level, namely 78.2%.

Hypothesis Test Results

The results of the hypothesis test show $p > 0.000$, which means that character strength plays a significant role in predicting emerging adulthood self-awareness. The predictive power of character strength towards self-awareness is 64. This means that 36% of self-awareness is predicted by factors other than character strength.

DISCUSSION

The results obtained indicate that there is a role of character strength in self-awareness in emerging adulthood. This shows that experiences at each stage of development will vary greatly depending on the individual's background. Arnett (2014) defines emerging adulthood as the stage of life when adolescents reach their final years and enter a more stable adult role with an age range of around 18–25 years. At this stage, there are five main characteristics, namely self-exploration, instability, self-focus, feeling in between two stages—adolescence and adulthood, and optimism (Arnett, 2014).

Self-exploration is a condition when individuals begin to find out about their true identity, including who they are ("who am I?") and what they want. Proper self-exploration can broaden an individual's experience so that they become more resilient as adults. Furthermore, instability is a situation when an individual does not yet have an absolute decision regarding his life's travel plans and is very vulnerable to change according to the conditions he feels. For example, an individual changes his or her job. Next is self-focus, namely, individuals prioritize themselves over other people, but this does not mean being selfish. Self-focus provides an opportunity for individuals to develop a variety of skills and self-understanding and build a foundation for a more mature adult life. Then, the characteristics of feeling between two stages—adolescence and adulthood which can be interpreted as the position of an individual who cannot yet be considered an adult because the characteristics of adults in general, such as self-acceptance, independence, and financial freedom, have not yet

been achieved, but it cannot also be assumed that they are still teenagers who tend to be unstable. The final characteristic is optimism, an individual's positive belief regarding their hopes and expectations in all aspects of life. As a consequence, individuals can develop better and optimally.

A good form of self-exploration needs to be realized through self-awareness. Oden et al. (2009) define self-awareness as an individual's process of integrating feelings, thoughts and behaviour into awareness. Khairunnisa (2017) defines self-awareness as an attitude of examining oneself, including strengths and weaknesses, so that it can make individuals more adaptive to change. Therefore, someone who has self-awareness will be able to regulate their emotions and control their behaviour. Wilkins (2015) also believes that if individuals have self-awareness, then they can understand thoughts and behaviours that suit themselves. Self-awareness can also help individuals understand other people's perspectives (Silvia & O'Brien, 2004).

Self-awareness consists of several aspects behind the formation of awareness, namely reflection on self-development, acceptance, proactiveness in work, and emotionality (Sutton, 2016). This aspect shows full awareness of one's condition. This research shows that character strengths play a role in self-awareness and positive relationships. So, by knowing the strength of character they have, individuals will have more self-awareness.

Previous research discovered that the caring, curiosity, and self-control factors inherent in adults are consistent with philosophical conceptions of virtue (McGrath, 2015). These strengths represent interpersonal, intellectual, and intrapersonal functions (Lavy, 2020), while virtues relate to character strengths.

Character strength is defined by Peterson and Seligman (2004) as the psychological elements that form virtues that classify each character strength. In simple terms, virtues contain types of human virtues, and character strengths

are characteristics that support these virtues. Both character strengths and virtues are universal. There are six virtues, namely wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, temperance, and transcendence.

Wisdom, or what can also be called the cognitive aspect, is related to the individual's process of receiving, processing and using the information they have. Character strengths in these virtues include purity of ideas and adaptive behavior (creativity), intrinsic motivation to be involved in the experiences they are facing (curiosity), openness to various possibilities (open-mindedness), likes to learn new things that can increase their knowledge (love of learning), and the individual's ability to assess life broadly and rationally (perspective).

Courage is courage and determination to achieve goals. There are four character strengths in it, namely courage to do various things without feeling afraid (bravery), consistency to complete tasks that are started regardless of the challenges faced (persistence), an authentic and sincere attitude (integrity), and an attitude full of enthusiasm and cheerful (vitality).

Humanity is a virtue that is used to interpret human interpersonal relationships that care about each other. The three character strengths that form these virtues are loving others by providing help, comfort and acceptance (love), being kind to everyone (kindness), and being able to process information about motives, feelings and psychological conditions of oneself or others (social intelligence).

Justice relates to interactions between individuals and groups or communities. The character strengths that underlie this virtue are the willingness to identify oneself as part of a group with all obligations (citizenship), fairness in behaving towards everyone (fairness), and the spirit of leading and directing a leadership group (leadership), namely the ability to lead and direct and inspire a group and community.

Temperance correlates with an individual's attitude to refrain from anything that is excessive

and has the potential to cause undesirable consequences. The four character strengths of this virtue are the ability to forgive sincerely (forgiveness), the ability to realize that oneself is not perfect and not require others to consider it perfect as the centre of the world even when gaining something (humility), careful in making decisions to avoid consequences that hinder long-term goals (prudence), and the ability to control oneself and respond wisely (self-regulation).

Transcendence can be described as a connection between an individual and the universe, creating meaning in life. Virtue is composed of five character strengths, namely a sense of admiration and appreciation for beauty and perfection (appreciation of beauty and excellence), gratitude and gratitude for gifts (gratitude), looking at the future positively (hope), being able to make other people laugh and cheer up (humour), and believes that there is a higher universe (which can be interpreted as God) so that he behaves based on that.

All character strengths are interconnected and provide benefits to the individual. Various studies (Gander et al., 2022) describe the benefits, including life satisfaction, good job performance, healthy relationships, and adaptive behaviour. Apart from that, character strength can also strengthen resilience (Sari & Wulanyani, 2020).

Previous research indicates that character strengths are related to important aspects of individual and social well-being, although different strengths predict different outcomes (Park & Peterson, 2009). This means that character is important, so developing character components needs to be an important goal for everyone. Character strength is dimensional and can be expressed in degrees, such as the degree of creativity, honesty, and various other characteristics (Niemic & Pearce, 2021).

CONCLUSION

Character strengths play a role in self-awareness in emerging adulthood. The direction of the relationship between the two is unidirectional

(positive), which means that the higher the strength of character, the more self-awareness will increase. Therefore, strength of character is an element in exploring oneself and understanding oneself. Theoretically, future researchers can use the results of this research to add to studies related to character strength and self-awareness, especially in emerging adulthood. Apart from that, researchers also suggest exploring character strengths more qualitatively in emerging adulthood. The limitation of this research is that the number of respondents could be bigger and narrower.

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