

Developing a Character Strengths Profile of Australian Autistic Adolescents

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“Drawing, humour, openness to different ideas and cultures, caring personality.”

Objective

Identify the character strengths of Australian autistic adolescents and create a profile which can be used to inform the development of support programs

Background

- Character strengths are defined as positively valued traits that individuals manifest through thoughts, feelings, and behaviours
- The VIA¹ have classified 24 key character strengths and 6 virtues which they reflect
- There is a positive association between the endorsement of character strengths and an individual's satisfaction with life in neurotypical samples
- Recognition of character strengths could open avenues for autistic adolescents to use their strengths in a meaningful way

Methods

Participants

Caregivers of autistic adolescents (aged 13 - 17 years), n = 46

Measure

The Global Assessment of Character Strengths-24 (GACS-24)²

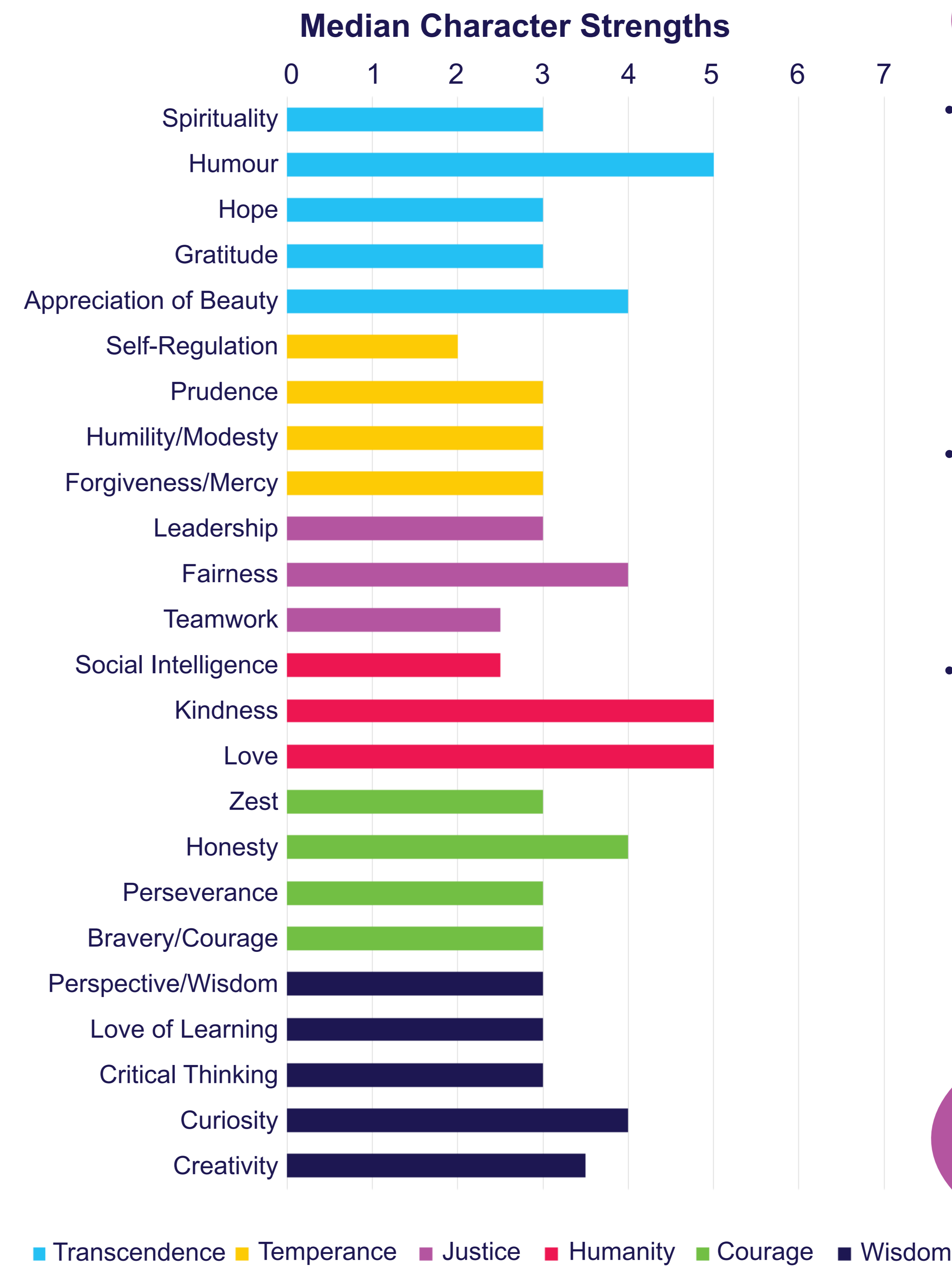
- Key character strengths rated on a 7-point Likert-scale
- From “very strongly disagree” to “very strongly agree”
- Asking how natural and effortless the strength is to express for their autistic adolescent

Data Analysis

Data were analysed using descriptive statistics. Linear mixed modelling was used to analyse for an effect of gender.

Results

Group medians are presented. Two of the strengths demonstrated a significant difference for gender with Curiosity, $F(36) = 5.065$, $p < .05$, and Bravery, $F(36) = 10.839$, $p < .05$. It is noted male participants score higher in both Curiosity and Bravery.



Conclusions

- **Humour, Kindness, and Love** were found to be the most natural and effortless strengths to express
 - supported by the supplementary comments of the caregivers and aligning with existing qualitative research
 - These strengths should be fostered in pre-transition supports
- Caregivers appear to draw a **clearer distinction** around the strengths that are, compared with those that are not, characteristic of their autistic adolescent
 - support for strengths-based programs
- Further research is required to develop independent profiles for male and female autistic adolescents

“Enthusiasm, talented writer singer and actor, smart, caring, thirst for knowledge.”

“ALWAYS tries his best, he gives 110% to everything he does.”

References

- ¹ Peterson, C., & Seligman, M. E. P. (2004). *Character strengths and virtues: A handbook and classification*. New York: Oxford University Press and Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- ² McGrath, R. E. (2019). *Technical report: The VIA Assessment Suite for Adults: Development and initial evaluation*.

For more information

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