The Role of Teachers’ Character Strengths in Classroom Management

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Background: Character strengths represent an important research topic in the area of positive psychology. They are defined as positive individual traits that are morally valued. Research on general population samples has shown numerous beneficial outcomes of individuals’ knowing their character strengths and using them in their everyday lives. As teachers have an important impact on learning and on personal development of their students, teachers’ character strengths were examined in a classroom context.

Aim: The aim of the present study was to investigate the relationship between teachers’ character strengths and effective classroom management. Moreover, we were examining the contribution of teachers’ character strengths to satisfaction of their students. Also, the nature of relationship between teachers’ character strengths, classroom management, and students’ satisfaction was investigated.

Method: The sample consisted of middle school and high school teachers of Slovenian language (\(N = 68\)) and their students (\(N = 1151, M_{age} = 16.2\) years). Teachers filled in the VIA-IS questionnaire on self-reported character strengths. Instruments for students were developed for the purpose of present study: students reported about their perception of their teachers’ character strengths, classroom management and satisfaction with their teachers of Slovenian language. Instruments were administered in a paper-pencil form.

Results: Results have shown that teachers with higher endorsement of self-reported character strengths of zest, love, kindness, gratitude, hope, and humour were perceived as better classroom managers by their students. Students showed higher levels of satisfaction with teachers in which they recognized more of transcendence, humanity and knowledge strengths; students also assessed classroom management of teachers with these strengths as more positive. Hierarchical linear modelling (HLM) was used to examine the relationship between teachers’ character strengths, classroom management, and students’ satisfaction. Both classroom management and teachers’ character strengths, as perceived by students, proved as important predictors of student satisfaction.

Conclusions: Our study confirmed the importance of teachers’ character strengths in the classroom context: they play an important role in effective classroom management, in students’ satisfaction and also contribute to student achievement. Therefore, teachers should be encouraged to recognise and develop their character strengths and use them in interactions with their students.