

CHARACTER STRENGTH INTERVENTION IN CHILDREN: A SCOPING REVIEW¹

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ABSTRACT: Character strengths can be interpreted as the common language of the best in human. The aim of this article was to investigate the interventions used to promote character strengths in children in their psychosocial context. It is a scoping review based on the JBI Joanna Briggs methodology. The Springer, Cengage Learning, ProQuest, Scopus, Web of Science, Sage Journals and Medline databases were consulted, from 2015 to May 2020. A total of 216 articles were found, six of which were included. Interventions carried out in the classroom were shown to be predominant to improve character strengths in children. Among the highlighted strengths found are forgiveness, hope, social responsibility, love and kindness. The findings indicate the need to improve intervention strategies in character strengths in promoting mental health and well-being from the early years of human development in psychosocial context.

Keywords: Character strengths; intervention; children.

INTERVENÇÕES SOBRE FORÇAS DE CARÁTER EM CRIANÇAS: A SCOPING REVIEW

RESUMO: As forças de caráter podem ser interpretadas como a linguagem comum sobre o que há de melhor nos seres humanos. O objetivo deste artigo foi investigar as intervenções utilizadas para promover forças de caráter em crianças em seu contexto psicossocial. Trata-se de uma *scoping review* baseada na metodologia JBI Joanna Briggs. Foram consultadas as bases de dados Springer, Cengage Learning, ProQuest, Scopus, Web of Science, Sage Journals e Medline, do período de 2015 a maio de 2020. Foram encontrados 216 artigos, sendo incluídos seis artigos. Intervenções realizadas em sala de aula mostraram-se como predominantes para aprimorar forças de caráter em crianças. Entre as forças em destaque encontradas estão o perdão, a esperança, a responsabilidade social, o amor e a gentileza. Os achados indicam a necessidade de aprimorar estratégias de intervenções em forças de caráter na promoção da saúde mental e bem-estar desde os anos iniciais do desenvolvimento humano em contexto psicossocial.

Palavras-chave: Forças de caráter; intervenção; crianças.

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INTERVENCIONES SOBRE LAS FORTALEZAS DEL CARÁCTER EM LOS NIÑOS: A SCOPING REVIEW

RESUMEN: Las fortalezas del carácter pueden interpretarse como el lenguaje común de los mejores seres humanos. El objetivo de este artículo fue investigar las intervenciones utilizadas para promover las fortalezas del carácter en los niños en su contexto psicosocial. Es una revisión de alcance basada en la metodología JBI Joanna Briggs. Se consultaron las bases de datos Springer, Cengage Learning, ProQuest, Scopus, Web of Science, Sage Journals y Medline desde 2015 hasta mayo de 2020. Se encontraron un total de 216 artículos, seis de los cuales fueron incluidos. Se demostró que las intervenciones llevadas a cabo en el aula son predominantes para mejorar las fortalezas de carácter en los niños. Entre las fortalezas destacadas encontradas están: perdón, esperanza, responsabilidad social, amor y bondad. Los hallazgos indican la necesidad de mejorar las estrategias de intervención en las fortalezas del carácter para promover la salud mental y el bienestar desde los primeros años del desarrollo humano en contexto psicosocial.

Palavras-clave: Intervención; fortalezas del carácter; niños.

Introduction

Positive psychology, founded by Seligman and others, has grown and brought new perspectives to human development, focusing on individuals' health, well-being, and quality of life (Schiavon et al., 2020; Reppold et al., 2019a). In the 2000s, the American Psychological Association (APA) emphasized the importance of understanding and alleviating psychological distress by cultivating human potential. Consequently, scientific studies of phenomena contributing to healthy life-cycle development are characterized by evidence-based research and practices (Seligman, 2019).

Based on the study of what leads to human flourishing, Peterson and Seligman (2004) continued and formalized the study of character strengths and virtues present in the human species, and which have been discussed since ancient times. According to the authors, character strengths are positive traits that enrich capabilities. These traits are universal and valued in all cultures. They can be evidenced through thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Character strengths exist at different levels and are the way to achieve virtue.

According to Peterson and Seligman (2004), there are 24 character strengths that fall under six virtues, as listed in Table 1. It is worth noting that character strengths are expressed in degrees defined by the context and situation in which an individual finds themselves. Thus, each person's character is necessarily individualized and idiosyncratic, formed by the combination of character strengths that are not expressed in isolation, since situations normally demand the expression of more than one strength for a given action (Niemic, 2018; Noronha & Reppold, 2020).

Table 1**Description of strengths and virtues**

Virtues	Character strengths	Description
Wisdom and knowledge: cognitive strengths that involve the acquisition and use of knowledge.	Creativity	Think of new and productive ways of doing things.
	Curiosity	Be interested in the whole experience.
	Critical Thinking	Think about things and examine them from all angles.
	Love of Learning	Master new skills and knowledge.
	Perspective	Be able to offer wise advice to others.
Courage: emotional strengths that involve the exercise of will to achieve goals in the face of external and internal opposition.	Honesty	Tell the truth and present yourself in a genuine way.
	Bravery	Don't back down from threat, challenge, difficulty, or pain.
	Perseverance	Finish what you start.
	Enthusiasm	Approach life with excitement and energy.
Humanity: interpersonal strengths that involve 'helping and reaching out' to others.	Kindness	Do favors and do good deeds for others.
	Love	Value close and intimate relationships.
	Social Intelligence	Be aware of your own and others' motives and feelings.
Justice: civic strengths that underpin healthy community life.	Impartiality	Treat everyone equally, according to notions of equality and fairness.
	Leadership	Organize group activities and make them happen.
	Teamwork	Work well as a member of a group or team.
Temperance: strengths that protect against excess.	Forgiveness	Forgive those who make mistakes.
	Humility	Let your own accomplishments speak for themselves.
	Prudence	Be careful with your own choices; don't say or do things that you might regret later.
	Self-Control	Regulate how you feel and what you do.
Transcendence: strengths that connect with the larger universe and provide meaning.	Appreciation of Beauty	Notice and appreciate beauty, excellence, and/or skillful performance in all areas of life.
	Gratitude	Be mindful and grateful for the things that happen.
	Hope	Expect the best and work to achieve it.
	Humor	Enjoy laughing and joking, making others smile.
	Spirituality	Have coherent beliefs about a higher purpose and meaning in life.

Fonte: Adaptado de Niemiec (2018).

Character strengths are directly related to subjective well-being (SWB), which is defined as an individual's assessment of their situation in the world. SWB consists of two dimensions: a cognitive dimension referring to life satisfaction and an emotional dimension referring to the frequency of pleasant and unpleasant emotions (Reppold et al., 2019b). Since character strengths are related to subjective well-being, individuals with good life satisfaction tend to have healthy social relationships, solve problems more easily, and perform better academically. This makes them more resilient to stress, which consequently leads to better health (Douglass & Duffy, 2014).

According to Oliveira et al. (2016) and Noronha and Reppold (2019), recognizing one's strengths and virtues enables individuals to cultivate positive aspects of their personalities, promoting better psychological, social, and biological well-being. Thus, individuals who flourish in their strengths and virtues do not merely exist; they live vigorously. To achieve greater awareness and, consequently, greater development of these potentials, Niemiec (2018) recommends the use of character strengths interventions.

Character strengths interventions are brief, precise "intentional activities" that involve behavioral, interpersonal, emotional, and/or cognitive aspects. Their main objective is to promote well-being. These interventions address the psychological aspects hindering development. To be effective, they must have a clear purpose and focus, and identify which areas can be positively or negatively influenced. Furthermore, character strengths can be developed through interventions that focus on improving specific characteristics. International studies have recently pursued this approach, targeting diverse audiences and considering different constructs as outcomes (e.g., love, kindness, hope, among others) (Niemiec, 2018).

Despite significant growth in positive psychology research in Brazil, research on character strengths in children is recent and scarce. There is a lack of intervention techniques focused on the topic, as well as descriptions of results regarding efficacy. Studies on published national clinical trials are rare (Reppold et al., 2019c). In this sense, Reppold et al. (2015) highlight these gaps in Brazilian research on character strengths interventions. This study investigated character strengths interventions in children within a psychosocial context.

Method

This scoping review study follows the method proposed by the Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI, 2015). The Population, Concept, and Context (PCC) strategy was used to develop the following research question: What interventions promote character strengths in children within a psychosocial context?

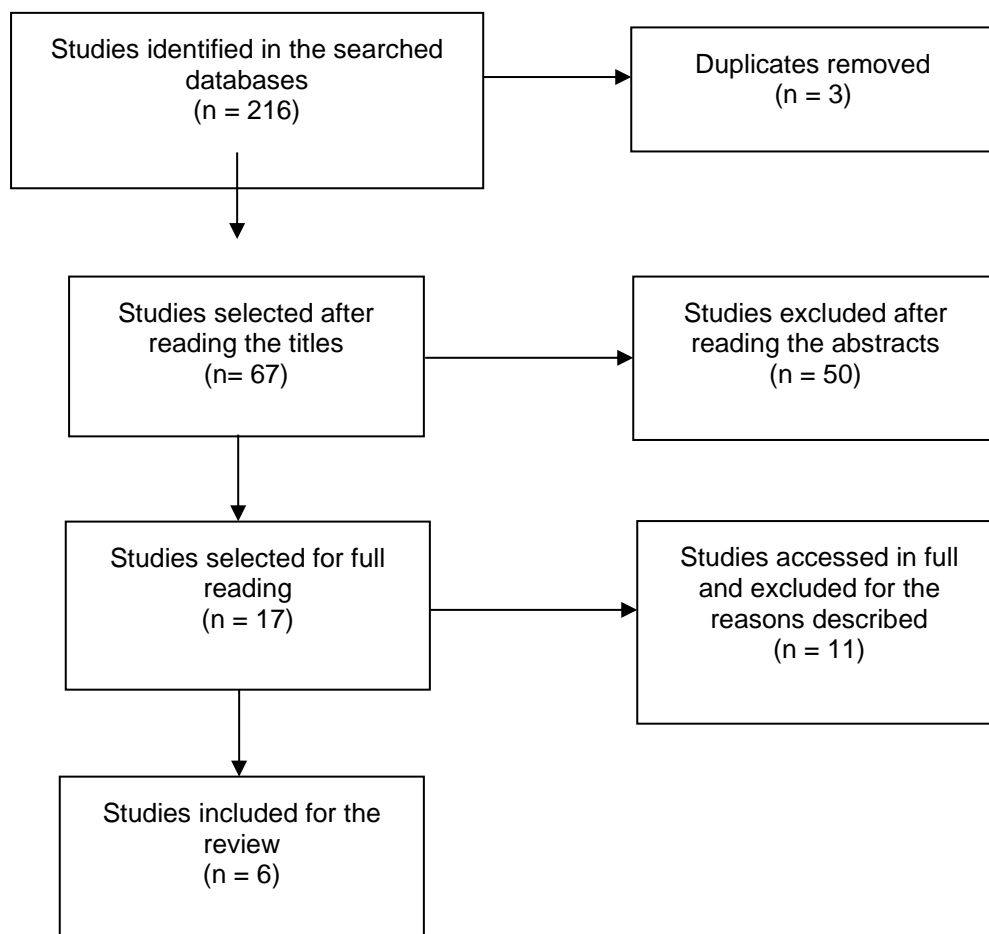
Data were collected in May 2020 from the following databases: Springer, Cengage Learning, ProQuest, Scopus, Web of Science, Sage Journals, and Medline, which were accessed via PubMed. The descriptors used in the search were 'character strength AND intervention AND child'. All studies addressing interventions in the context of character strengths published between 2015 and May 2020 were included. Studies that did not present an intervention or used a sample of children over 14 years of age were excluded. Figure 1 presents the process of searching for and selecting studies in this review, following JBI recommendations, according to a checklist adapted from the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) (JBI, 2015).

The researchers evaluated the titles and abstracts of all articles identified through the search strategy for data analysis. At the full-text stage, two reviewers assessed the articles independently and selected them according to the eligibility criteria. Any disagreements

between the reviewers were resolved by consensus. Articles that were excluded did not present the performed intervention and/or involved samples of university students, adults, specific clinics, or literature reviews. The main data collected concerned interventions and their results regarding character strengths in children within a psychosocial context. The final sample for this review totaled six selected studies.

Figure 1

Scoping review flowchart



Results

The initial search yielded 216 articles from the databases. Of these articles, 17 studies met the inclusion criteria and were considered relevant enough for a more detailed analysis. The results of the six articles are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Studies on character strengths interventions in children (n=6)

Authors	Country	Name of intervention	Duration	Constructs addressed	Participants
Taysi & Vural (2015)	Türkiye	<i>Joyful Forgiveness: A Guided Curriculum for Children Aged 9-11</i>	10 weeks	Forgiveness, hope, and prosocial behavior.	122 students aged 9 to 11.
Hellman, & Gwinn (2016)	United States	<i>Camp Hope Program</i>	6 days	Enthusiasm, perseverance, optimism, self-control, gratitude, curiosity, and social intelligence.	229 children aged 7 to 17.
Carbonero, et al. (2017)	Spain	<i>Playing to Think: Emotional Judgment and Good Decisions</i>	1 year	Character strengths related to the values of justice and humanity.	271 students aged 12 to 14.
Shoshani & Slone (2017)	Israel	<i>The Current Positive Education Intervention – The Maytiv Preschool Program</i>	32 weeks	Positive emotions, engagement, positive relationships, and fulfillment.	315 preschool children, aged 3 to 6.5 years.
Quinlan et al. (2018)	New Zealand	<i>Strengths Intervention are Mediated by Teacher Strengths Spotting</i>	6 weeks	Well-being, positive and negative affect, use of strengths, engagement, friction and class cohesion, psychological need for autonomy, relatedness, and competence.	10 teachers and their students, 193 children aged 8 to 12.
Haslip et al. (2019)	United States	<i>Early Childhood Strength-Spotting</i>	12 weeks	Love, kindness, and forgiveness.	16 early childhood educators and their students.

Intervention

The following are the summaries of character strengths interventions in children within a psychosocial context (n=6).

1. *Joyful Forgiveness: A Guided Curriculum For Children Aged 9-11* (Taysi & Vural, 2015).

Modality: This is a forgiveness education program implemented in schools with the goal of improving students' mental health. Six fourth-grade classes from five schools of different socioeconomic levels in Isparta were selected to participate in the intervention based on an assessment of students' levels of anger and depression. Both the experimental and control groups completed a pre-test questionnaire. Approximately 11 weeks later, at the end of the program, they completed a post-test questionnaire. Finally, they completed a follow-up questionnaire six months after the intervention. The experimental group consisted of 74 students, 29 girls and 45 boys ($M = 10.01$ years, $SS = 0.26$), and the control group consisted of 48 students, 18 girls and 30 boys ($M = 10.00$ years, $SS = 0.21$). Social psychologists developed a forgiveness education workshop for teachers in the experimental group, consisting of two 2-hour sessions, so that they could learn the program's curriculum concepts.

Description: The ten-week intervention consisted of one 45-minute class per week based on the moral virtues intrinsic to forgiveness: inherent worth, moral love, kindness, respect, and generosity. Through stories, discussions, and classroom activities, the children were introduced to the concepts of moral virtues and forgiveness.

Results: In the experimental group, ANOVA evidenced no significant differences between pre- and post-test in depression (measured by the CDI, The Children's Depression Inventory) [$F(2, 112)=.78$, $p=.46$, $Beta2=.01$] or social behavior (measured by the SBQ, The Social Behavior Questionnaire), represented by the prosocial behavior subscale [$F(1.97, 138.31)=1.92$, $p=.15$, $Beta2=.03$], antisocial behavior subscale [$F(1.94, 135.87)=2.45$, $p=.09$, $Beta2=.03$] and physically antisocial subscale [$F(2, 140)=.99$, $p=.36$, $Beta2=.01$]. Regarding forgiveness (measured by the EFI-C, The Enright Forgiveness Inventory for Children), the ANOVA analysis indicated no significant difference among the three scores [$F(2, 134)=2.66$, $p=.07$, $Beta2=.04$], but the post-test score ($M=76.34$, $SD=16.64$) was higher than the pre-test score ($M=70.47$, $SD=16.02$). The scores on the hope test (measured by the CHS, The Children's Hope Scale) were different [$F(1.95, 136.56)=5.87$, $p<.01$, $Beta2=.08$], with the post-test score ($M=27.75$, $SD=5.52$) being higher than the pre-test ($M=26.19$, $SD=6.09$), but in the segment analysis ($M=25.58$, $SD=4.95$) it was lower than the post-test, with no difference between the pre-test and the follow-up test; thus, the positive effect of the intervention observed on hope was not lasting.

2. *Camp Hope Program* (Hellman & Gwinn, 2016)

Modality: The study used a six-day camp intervention for children who have experienced domestic violence. The study aimed to investigate whether their hope levels differed pre- and post-camp and how hope relates to character strengths in this post-intervention sample. The participants were 229 children ($M = 10.8$ years, $SD = 2.57$), who completed a pre-test assessment 30 days before the camp, and the post-camp assessment was collected on the final morning of the program by the camp counselors for each participating child.

Description: The program's activities are based on three pillars: 1. 'Challenges by

Choice': Children are encouraged to participate in challenging activities such as horseback riding, canoeing, and slacklining to stimulate creative thinking, decision-making, problem-solving, teamwork, reasoning, self-esteem, group confidence, organization, and goal setting. 2. Affirmations and Praise for the Development and Observation of Character Traits: This pillar focuses on the interaction between children and camp counselors. Counselors provide affirmations to encourage children to internalize their skills, progress, and capacity for perseverance. Children also learn to recognize the needs of others and develop future perspectives. 3. Small group discussions and activities helped children set goals and develop strategies to achieve them.

Results: Children's self-report (measured by the Children's Hope Scale): ANOVA revealed an increase in hope scores from pre-test ($M=25.40$; $SD=5.38$) to post-test ($M=26.75$; $SD=6.19$), with a significant difference [$F(1228) = 15.15$; $p < .001$; $\eta^2 = .06$], though the rate of change was estimated to be small. Counselor assessment (measured by the Children's Hope Scale, with items modified to reflect an observational assessment; and the KIPP Character Counts Growth Card): ANOVA indicated an increase in hope scores from pre-test ($M=23.23$; $SD=5.92$), to post-test ($M=25.13$; $SD=5.64$), with a significant result [$F(1219) = 30.95$; $p < .001$; $\eta^2 = .12$], indicating moderate impact. The increase in character strengths was also statistically significant. Specifically, post-test analyses showed moderate and significant increases in enthusiasm [$F(1229) = 46.63$; $p < .001$; $\eta^2 = .17$], perseverance [$F(1228) = 30.86$; $p < .001$; $\eta^2 = .12$], gratitude [$F(1229) = 44.36$; $p < .001$; $\eta^2 = .16$], and curiosity [$F(1229) = 46.51$; $p < .001$; $\eta^2 = .17$]. Small increases were observed in self-control [$F(1229) = 9.50$; $p < .001$; $\eta^2 = .04$], optimism [$F(1229) = 20.16$; $p < .001$; $\eta^2 = .08$] and social intelligence [$F(1229) = 18.13$; $p < .001$; $\eta^2 = .07$]. Higher hope scores were related to higher levels of energy (enthusiasm), perseverance in achieving goals (perseverance), ability to regulate thoughts, feelings, and behavior (self-control), expectation of a positive future (optimism), appreciation for others (gratitude), desire to learn new things (curiosity), and awareness of the feelings and motivations of others (social intelligence).

3. *Playing to Think: Emotional Judgment and Good Decisions* (Carbonero et al., 2017).

Modality: The technique developed in this study involved systematic training in social responsibility, conducted through short stories, involving students, teachers, and parents. The study included 271 students (144 boys and 127 girls), aged 12 to 14, from three different schools. The experimental group consisted of 132 students ($M=12.67$ years; $SD=0.78$), and the control group consisted of 139 students ($M=13.11$ years; $SD=0.90$). One school was in the experimental group and two were in the control group.

Description: The program consisted of 14 lessons, each focusing on a story that explored social responsibility and connected the reader with the main character. Furthermore, through a 'moral laboratory,' the children had the opportunity to test their decisions and understand the relationship between responsibility and potential by applying the story's plot and conflicts to real-life situations. A self-assessment covering self-reflection and self-recognition in the story was conducted at the end of each lesson with questions about the participants' cognitive, emotional, and social aspects.

Results: The intervention had a positive effect on students who participated in the activities. Scores for all social responsibility factors (respect, self-discipline, friendship, acceptance of mistakes, good manners, commitment, obedience, self-control, family as a model of social responsibility, and perseverance), measured by the Assessment Scale of Social Responsibility Attitudes in Secondary Education, were higher for the experimental

group than for the control group. For example, the self-discipline score was significantly higher for the experimental group ($M=-0.06$, $SD=2.90$) than for the control group ($M=-2.29$, $SD=6.83$), $t(269)=3.46$, $p=0.001$, with a small effect size $d=0.42$; as well as commitment scores, which were higher for the experimental group ($M=0.17$, $SD=2.28$) than for the control group ($M=-0.66$, $SD=4.04$), $t(269)=2.07$, $p=0.039$, also with a small effect size $d=0.25$. Students' communication with their parents was evaluated using the Parent-Adolescent Communication Scale (PACS), which measures open, offensive, and avoidant communication. It was observed that open communication parenting styles were positively correlated with personal and social responsibility factors.

4. *The Current Positive Education Intervention – The Maytiv Preschool Program* (Shoshani & Slone, 2017).

Modality: Psychologists designed the intervention according to the four 'PERMA' elements: positive emotions, engagement, positive relationships, and achievement. The Maytiv Preschool Program aimed to promote mental health, subjective well-being, and functional adaptation among preschoolers. To this end, 315 children (153 girls and 162 boys), aged three to 6.5 years ($M=4.53$, $SD=0.93$), participated in the study. The experimental group consisted of 160 children, and the control group consisted of 155 children. All of the children completed pre- and post-intervention tests at the beginning and end of the school year, respectively. The groups were equally divided by gender (48.5% boys and 51.5% girls), and 189 parents participated by completing questionnaires about their children.

Description: The curriculum consisted of four modules, each with two topics: positive emotions (expressing and managing emotions and gratitude), engagement (love of learning and character strengths), achievement (focus and persistence), and positive relationships (positive relationships and empathy). The modules combined regular kindergarten practices with session-specific activities, such as discussions, stories, songs, and games. Each module consisted of 20 sessions, each lasting one month, with five activities per week.

The module addressing positive emotions focused on expressing emotions, empathy, positive thinking, and differentiating between positive and negative thoughts to express them independently. Activities included identifying personal sources of happiness, exercises in expressing gratitude, freely expressing feelings, and using art, facial expressions, and speech to describe memories of happy experiences. The engagement module cultivated interest and pleasure in activities that provide experiences of personal fulfillment. These activities included using personally meaningful toys brought from home, choosing a personally enjoyable topic or activity for the group meeting, and identifying and utilizing personal character strengths in the different roles adopted during daily kindergarten activities.

The module for facilitating positive social relationships focused on positive communication skills with peers and adults, supporting prosocial behavior and cooperation, and encouraging kindness and empathy. It included games requiring peer cooperation, playful exercises with friends in different situations, simulated conflict resolution, and consideration of peers' feelings. The achievement module focused on identifying and pursuing goals and included activities such as games that required perseverance in challenging situations, games that fostered a sense of efficacy and encouraged persistence in the face of failure. It also included work on personal projects, such as creating a drawing book.

Results: the ANOVA analysis revealed significant progress regarding children's

positive emotions $F(1,313)=10.93$, $p=0.001$, $\eta^2=0.04$ (measured by the Shortened Positive and Negative Affect Scale for Children, PANAS-C), life satisfaction $F(1,313)=9.68$, $p=0.002$, $\eta^2=0.03$ (measured by the Brief Multidimensional Students' Life Satisfaction Scale, BMSLSS) and empathy $F(1,313)=8.65$, $p=0.004$, $\eta^2=0.03$ (measured by the Affective Situations Test for Empathy, FASTE), between the pre- and post-tests. However, the expected result for negative emotions was not achieved $F(1,313)=1.83$, $p=0.18$, $\eta^2=0.007$ (PANAS-C). Regarding self-regulation (measured by the Head-to-Toes Task, HTKS), there was a positive effect $F(1,313)=9.82$, $p=0.002$, $\eta^2=0.03$. However, there was no significant interaction of time on the intervention $F(1,313)=0.21$, $p=0.65$, $\eta^2=0.001$.

Based on parental reports, the analysis also showed that children's positive emotions (measured by the Parent Version of the 10-Item Positive and Negative Affect Schedule for Children, PANAS-C-P) considerably affected the intervention and time $F(1,171)=9.11$, $p=0.004$, $\eta^2=0.02$. There were significant increases in the experimental group ($M=2.72$, $p<0.001$, Cohen's $d=0.81$), but no significant effects in the control group. For prosocial behavior (measured by the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire, SDQ), an increase was detected in the experimental group $F(1,171)=7.29$, $p=0.004$, $\eta^2=0.03$, ($M=1.15$, $p<0.001$, Cohen's $d=0.66$). There were no significant changes in the control group. In measures related to mental health difficulties (SDQ) $F(1,171)=1.63$, $p=0.18$, $\eta^2=0.04$, and negative emotions (PANAS-C-P) $F(1,171)=1.78$, $p=0.19$, $\eta^2=0.05$, there were also no significant changes between the control and intervention groups.

Regarding learning (measured by the Approaches to Learning Scale), which includes attention, engagement in learning, persistence in tasks, independence, organization, flexibility, and the ability to follow classroom rules, the intervention had a positive effect, as indicated by the teachers [$F(1,171)=10.15$, $p=0.003$, $\eta^2=0.2$]. There was a significant increase in positive learning behaviors and engagement in the experimental group over the year ($M=0.31$, $p<0.001$, Cohen's $d=0.62$), but not in the control group.

5. *Strengths Interventions are Mediated by Teacher Strengths Spotting* (Quinlan et al., 2018)

Modality: The intervention was based on the Strengths Spotting strategy, which focuses on observing and identifying character strengths in a collective setting. It was designed to improve relationships in the classroom, between students, and between teachers and students. Teachers' emotions are considered to have a significant impact on student learning. Ten teachers, trained in positive psychology, participated in the study and completed the Inventory of Strengths (VIA, Values in Action Inventory of Strengths). The teachers and their 193 students, aged eight to 12, belonged to nine low- to middle-income classrooms. Seven teachers participated in the intervention group, and three others participated in the control group. Pre-intervention tests were conducted with teachers and students one week before the program began. Post-intervention tests were conducted the week after the program ended. A follow-up assessment was conducted three months after the post-test. The study aimed to determine whether teacher variables influenced intervention outcomes for students.

Description: The intervention schedule ran for six weeks with one 90-minute session per week. The program sessions were divided into the following: 1. Learning to recognize one's strengths (with activities such as creating a collage titled "Me at My Best," noting instances of using one's strengths, and observing others' use of strengths); 2. Learning about one's strengths activities (with tasks such as identifying which daily activities utilize strengths); 3. How character strengths support strengths activities (using the relationship

between one's own character strengths and the activities that utilize them as an action plan); 4. Learning about one's own character strengths (discussing one's own strengths with a peer and creating a superhero based on character strengths); 5. How to use these strengths to make a difference (activities such as setting goals and selecting strengths that help achieve them); and 6. Using strengths in relationships (discussing the importance of friendship and identifying essential characteristics for building friendships).

Results: with the purpose of identifying the influence of teachers on student outcomes, a mediation analysis of children's levels was carried out based on the observation of teachers' strengths. At the end of the intervention, several positive aspects were observed in the experimental group, especially in relation to autonomy [$t(193)=0.66$, $p=0.039$], competence [$t(193)=0.50$, $p=0.039$], and relationships [$t(193)=0.78$, $p=0.007$] (measured by the Children's Intrinsic Needs Satisfaction Scale, CINSS), classroom involvement [$t(193)=2.98$, $p=0.050$] (measured by Behavioral and emotional engagement), positive affect [$t(193)=1.52$, $p=0.006$] and negative affect [$t(193)=0.80$, $p=0.030$] (measured by PANAS) and the use of strengths [$t(193)=6.59$, $p=0.001$] (measured by the Strengths Use Scale). The intervention had no evident impact on the constructs of class cohesion and friction (measured by the Cohesion and Friction subscales of the My Class Inventory (MCI)) or life satisfaction (measured by the Students' Life Satisfaction Scale). Segment analysis showed that observation of strengths practiced by teachers contributed to increased positive affect, engagement, and need satisfaction among their students. Furthermore, student outcomes were correlated with teachers' positive affect, classroom engagement, and need satisfaction (autonomy, competence, and relatedness). This demonstrates that contextual variables, such as teacher behavior and attitudes toward students' strengths, influenced the intervention.

6. *Early Childhood Strength-Spotting Intervention* (Haslip et al., 2019)

Modality: The intervention was based on the strengths observation practice of 16 early childhood educators and their students. The premise was that if adults were aware of their feelings and behaviors, they could encourage children to develop empathy. The intervention aimed to understand how educators practiced the character strengths of love, kindness, and forgiveness, as well as how they observed these traits in themselves and their students.

Description: Teachers completed a 12-week course on social-emotional learning and positive guidance. They also received weekly monitoring of their relationships with the children. To learn about their character strengths, the educators completed the VIA (Values in Action Inventory of Strengths). Then, they discussed the 24 strengths and their applications, which helped them select the character strengths most closely linked to child development: love, gratitude, and forgiveness. The educators observed these strengths as they and their students practiced them and produced a report, called 'Character Example in Practice,' in which they described their own and their students' behaviors for each of the three selected character strengths.

Results: This research examined how children expressed the character strengths of love, forgiveness, and kindness. Regarding love, educators identified four related concepts in the children's behavior: 1. Empathy (showing concern and comforting a classmate who is hurt or sad), which was the most frequently observed concept; 2. Assistance (helping another with a need or challenge); 3. Friendship (showing genuine affection toward classmates); and 4. Love for teachers. Regarding forgiveness, two categories were observed: self-initiated forgiveness, meaning the children engaged in forgiveness spontaneously, and forgiveness

through teacher mediation. Regarding kindness, acts were grouped into six categories: 1. Showing empathy; 2. Sharing and being generous; 3. Helping someone with a task; 4. Exercising courtesy and consideration; 5. Being friendly, and 6. Cleaning and organizing the environment.

Discussion

Our findings reveal a scarcity of international studies and a lack of national studies focusing on character strength interventions for children within psychosocial contexts. It is noteworthy that more than one relevant study was identified only in 2017.

Of the six articles included based on the eligibility criteria, all used large samples, ranging from 122 to 315 children. Only one used a sample of older children, aged 12 to 14, three used samples primarily composed of children aged seven to 11, and two used samples of preschool children. The study by Haslip et al. (2019) does not mention the number or age of the children; however, the participants were early childhood teachers. It is important to note that the study by Hellman and Gwinn (2016) used a sample of children aged seven to 17, but the average age of the children was ten, which is why it was included.

Five of the studies analyzed involved interventions conducted in educational institutions with students, demonstrating that the school environment is a fertile environment for this type of approach. According to Yin and Majid (2018), education should be anchored not only in intellectual development but also in emotional, spiritual, and physical domains to promote harmonious human development. Therefore, character strength interventions with children in these settings promote the development of these values, as demonstrated by the studies included in this research.

Hellman and Gwinn (2016) developed an intervention based on activities carried out with children at a six-day camp. The activities positively encouraged children to participate in challenges, fostering awareness of their strengths through creative thinking, observation, and recognition. The results included increased hope, enthusiasm, perseverance, gratitude, and curiosity. However, this study did not include a control group or follow-up assessment to determine whether the results of the intervention were maintained over time, despite conducting pre- and post-intervention tests.

The study by Haslip et al. (2019) did not present the specific topics covered in the pre-intervention. However, it is interesting that the study was conducted with younger children. According to Niemiec (2018), they are capable of understanding the concepts of character strengths, and there is an instant resonance between these ideals and childhood.

The studies by Taysi and Vural (2015), Carbonero et al. (2017), Shoshani and Slone (2017), and Quinlan et al. (2018) conducted their interventions in a classroom setting and addressed character strength-related concepts through various formats, such as discussions, stories, and activities that guided children toward greater awareness of their own strengths. Thus, it can be seen that these interventions achieved good results regarding the constructs/outcomes they set out to investigate.

However, the study by Taysi and Vural (2015) showed that scores decreased to pre-test levels in the segment analysis. The studies by Carbonero et al. (2017) and Shoshani and Slone (2017) did not include follow-up evaluations of the interventions. Therefore, it is impossible to determine which intervention would yield better long-term results, or if any of the interventions would maintain their positive results.

The study by Quinlan et al. (2018) demonstrates strong methodological quality and shows that the results were sustained over time, as indicated by the follow-up analysis. This intervention employed a strengths spotting strategy, wherein teachers observed and

identified the strengths of their students. It included a prior strengths awareness training for teachers, alongside classroom activities for children that incorporated concepts and dynamics related to character strengths.

Interventions based on the practice of strengths observation, defined as identifying character strengths in oneself or others, can be effective when applied to children. This recognition allows children to become aware of their traits and, thus, develop them more easily. According to Niemiec (2018), character strengths must be recognized, explained, and appreciated in order to flourish.

Furthermore, the articles included in this literature review demonstrate the participation of parents and teachers in interventions with children due to their significant influence on child development. According to Niemiec (2018) and de Oliveira et al. (2016), character strengths are social and manifest differently in different contexts. Waters's (2015) study shows that children are more likely to effectively use their character strengths if their parents do so.

The included articles that employed Strengths Spotting interventions used the VIA (the Values in Action Inventory of Strengths) to help participants understand their character strengths and carry out the proposed activities. Developed by Peterson and Seligman (2004) as a comprehensive assessment tool for character strengths, the VIA consists of 240 items, ten for each of the 24 strengths, which are completed using a Likert scale. As noted in the studies, the VIA was administered to teachers, not children.

The VIA-Youth instrument (Values in Action Inventory of Strengths for Youth) is specifically designed for children aged ten to seventeen and includes age-appropriate items (Ruch et al., 2014). A validated strengths inventory for children presents a valuable opportunity for future interventions to help children and adolescents identify their character strengths, particularly their signature strengths.

Signature strengths are defined as the individual strengths that a person expresses most frequently and authentically. Recognizing and utilizing these signature strengths is associated with higher levels of well-being and flourishing, as their application contributes to a greater sense of need satisfaction. In this context, Noronha and Reppold (2020) highlight the importance of developing new instruments for identifying character strengths with evidence of local validity and robust psychometric properties, facilitating their effective implementation.

Furthermore, as a contribution to the study of strengths, we propose using the term 'personal strengths,' which more easily denotes the characteristics of a person's personality than 'character strengths' do (Noronha & Barbosa, 2016). Parallels can be drawn between the lifestyles of Brazilian indigenous peoples and their personal strengths, such as humanity and environmental stewardship (Kothari et al., 2021). In times of global need for care, through the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), cultivating personal strengths from the beginning of human development is essential for present and future sustainability at the local and global levels.

Final considerations

Research on character strengths interventions for children is still in its early stages, and more longitudinal studies are needed to determine their long-term effectiveness. Furthermore, improving the methodological quality of these studies is essential. Notably, this is a promising field of research and practice for promoting local and global sustainable development for present and future generations, thereby fostering transgenerational cultivation of human potential.

Improving these interventions is highly relevant to positive psychology because strengths can be deliberately developed to promote personal and social well-being. In this regard, we encourage new research proposing improvements to intervention techniques for personal and/or character strengths.

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Data Availability Statement: The dataset supporting the results of this study is available within the article.

Received: Aug. 14, 2021

Approved: Feb. 07, 2023