

Character Strengths and Military Leadership

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Abstract : The importance of both character and resilience for military members has been emphasized at the highest levels of military leadership. Initial research suggests that the presence of character strengths might be relevant in predicting success and well-being for some military populations (e.g., recruits). In this presentation, we will first review our research investigating the perceived importance of character strengths for Canadian military cadet (N = 134) success, the top strengths endorsed by cadets, and, in a subset of cadets (n = 94), the relationships among core strengths and resilience. Participants first completed a survey comprised of a resilience measure and demographic items, then one month later completed a Values in Action (VIA) character strengths profile, questions related to character strengths (their personal top-five character strengths, and strengths they believed were important for military-related stressors and leadership, academic success, resilience, and completion of the military challenge). Findings indicated that military cadets consider (among others), perseverance, judgment, and teamwork to be most critical for bouncing back from stressors. However, the most frequently endorsed strengths that characterized cadets were bravery, honesty, and perseverance. Finally, perseverance, bravery, and humor were positively correlated with cadet resilience, while endorsement of love was negatively correlated with resilience.

Keywords : character strengths, leadership, positive psychology, resilience

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