

Confidence in the strengths perspective psychology essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

I have much confidence in the strengths perspective. My confidence in the strengths perspective is based on both knowledge and belief. Throughout my college career, I was taught by experts that the strengths perspective was a highly efficient model to use in social work practice. Because they were experts in social work, this leads me to believe that the strengths perspective was effective. I never doubted that these experts were wrong or concluded to the matter to test the efficiency of this practice.

Another aspect that leads me to believe that this model was effective was common sense. It was my belief that positive aspects yield positive results, and it makes sense to me that building upon a client's strengths and empowering them to do better would be an effective model. The strengths perspective is an optimistic model which means to me that only positive things can be drawn from it.

My experience of using the strengths perspective also led me to believe that it was an effective model to use in the social work field. I learned the strength perspective from observing and listening to others that have used it and from reading about it. I have also used the strengths perspective in a group setting. I recall on several occasions when I facilitated group, I used a strengths based model as an intervention. The intervention that I used involved the client listing five strengths about themselves. After the client listed these strengths, I asked them to share this strength with the rest of the group. When the client was finished, I asked the other group members to identify some more strength about the client. Although I did not use a pre-test or post-test method to test the effectiveness of my intervention, the effectiveness was observable by the behavior of my clients. After the clients

finished discussing their strengths, I noticed great big smiles on their faces and also that the clients' mood had increased. From these aspects, I drew the conclusion that my intervention was effective.

Although it is essential to social work to research the effectiveness of our own practice, I myself have never researched the effectiveness of this technique. My own knowledge, the knowledge of others or my own personal beliefs has led me to believe that this technique was effective. Acknowledging these factors has sparked an interest in researching the effectiveness of this technique.

The effectiveness of the strength perspective can be drawn from research and numerous studies. After forty years, research shows that no single treatment approach is superior to another, but those who participate in therapy have better outcomes (Laursen, 2003). In the past, practices have focused on deficits that can interfere with achievement and excellence, but in recent years a new perspective was developed (Laursen). Professionals have utilized the strengths perspective because it focuses on the client's positive aspects instead of their deficits (Laursen). Unfortunately, research on the strengths based approach is limited because it lacks technique. There is no specific technique to the strength perspective and it is very difficult to discern the methods that are unique to its practice. Some research that was conducted shows that the strengths perspective can be effective, but other research shows its limitations. An analysis of the research on the strengths perspective will show its effectiveness, limitations and criticisms.

Some research on the strengths perspective shows its effectiveness. Laursen (2003) claims that the four factors that contribute to change in therapy are found in the strengths perspective. Laursen (2003) states that positive change occurs in four aspects of therapy which include: extra-therapeutic, relationships, placebo, and techniques. What a client brings to treatment accounts for forty percent of the treatment outcome which is the majority of where the change takes place (Laursen, 2003). The strengths perspective focuses on empowering the client to make necessary changes and steps that the client wants (Laursen). Empowering a client to make their own decisions may affect what the client brings to treatment (Laursen). The therapeutic relationship between the client and the therapist accounts for thirty percent of the treatment outcome (Laursen). What the client thinks about his or her therapist affects the treatment outcome and is a very important factor in the change process (Laursen). Depending on the relationship between the client and the therapist, positive or negative outcomes could arise out of this therapeutic process (Laursen). The next factor that affects the change process is the placebo which accounts for fifteen percent of the treatment outcome (Laursen). Research suggests that it is just like taking a pill (Laursen). Clients believe they are better because they are receiving treatment (Laursen). Surprisingly, specific treatment techniques only account for fifteen percent of the outcome (Laursen). It does not matter what technique the therapist uses (Laursen). Receiving any kind of treatment rather than receiving none yields a better change outcome (Laursen).

A study that showed the effectiveness of the strengths perspective was sponsored by The National Committee on Domestic Violence and Sexual

Assault in Taiwan (Song & Shih, 2009). The participants included seven two women in the service system that had the willingness to work with a case manager and one source of social support (Song & Shih). Over a period of two years, the participants received treatment that was based on the strengths perspective model (Song & Shih). The method of this study involved using a quasi-experimental design that used both quantitative and qualitative approaches (Song & Shih). The procedure consisted of observing and capturing profound changes in women who experienced domestic violence (Song & Shih). The researchers measured the participants' level of depression, coping methods, empowerment, and life satisfaction (Song & Shih). In the results of this study, positive effects on factors such as depression, self-efficacy, and social support for the subjects were revealed (Song & Shih). Song and Shih (2009) claim that this model is effective simply because people's actions are motivated by self-interest and what is meaningful to them.

A case study that showed the effectiveness of the strengths perspective was conducted in group work. An outpatient counseling agency recruited two social workers to work with a single-parent support group. First the group focused on problems, but after awhile the social workers decided to focus on successes and solutions. The social workers then discussed whether or not the group should have a curriculum. Steinburg (2004) as cited in suggests that all participants should be given an opportunity to contribute to the group's purpose. Groups also can be problematic if they fail to include the group members (Rubin, 2002 as cited in). Based on these concerns, the social workers decided to eliminate the curriculum and ask the group to work

to together to establish its purpose. After this, the social workers asked the group members to share what was working. The group members began to give positive feedback to each other. Because control of the group was given to the group members instead of the social workers, the group members began to assign each group member to one group session during the eight-week series. The social workers noticed two aspects from this study. The first was that the group members took the roles quite seriously. Second was that the group commitment seemed to increase as the members supported each other. The social workers concluded from this study that empowering the group members by identifying and building strengths served to increase members' sense of ownership and commitment to the group. The social workers also concluded on an individual level that self-esteem was enhanced and being a part of a group increased connection and reduced isolation.

Other research on the strengths perspective shows its limitations. Saint-Jacques, Turcotte, & Pouliot claim in order to better understand the strengths perspective specific techniques need to be developed. Developing a specific technique will help researchers clarify whether the approach has positive outcomes.

There are also many criticisms that have been developed in the strengths perspective. One of these criticisms is called reframing the misery. Some critics suggest that the strengths perspective simply reframes the deficit and misery. This implies that the clients are not expected to do the work. Another criticism of the strength perspective is called Pollyannaism. This implies that the strength perspective ignores how manipulative and dangerous certain clients may be. Some critics argue that some people are just beyond

<https://assignbuster.com/confidence-in-the-strengths-perspective-psychology-essay/>

redemption and capacity to change. Many say that the strengths perspective ignores reality or down plays the client's problem. Since the strengths perspective focuses on the clients' strengths and not on the problem, critics suggest that the approach actually ignores the client's problem all together.