

ABSTRACT

Background: Fear avoidance behaviour and pain catastrophizing are poor outcomes predictors in pain management. Positive character traits contribute towards a resilient mind-set for patients facing the adversity of chronic disability or illness.

Objectives: To establish the presence of positive character traits amongst participants experiencing chronic pain, and whether a relationship between positive character traits and fear avoidance behaviour and/or pain catastrophizing exist.

Methods: 31 participants experiencing chronic pain completed self-reporting questionnaires. The Tampa Scale for Kinesiophobia-17 (TSK), Pain Catastrophising Scale (PCS) and Adapted Inventory of Virtues and Strengths (AIVS) was used to determine the presence of fear avoidance behaviour, pain catastrophizing and positive character traits (*emotional transcendence, practical wisdom, integrity, courage and commitment to action*), respectively. Pearson's product-moment correlations were used to explore the relationship between AIVS subscales and the PCS subscales and total score, and the AIVS subscales and the TKS score.

Results: A sample of 31 participants with a mean age of 53 years from a private physiotherapy practice in the Johannesburg area and the Helen Joseph Pain Clinic (HJPC) participated in the study. Pain catastrophizing and fear avoidance had a prevalence of 42 % and 71%, respectively. All participants possessed strong positive character scores across all subgroups. *Commitment to Action* (85%), *Integrity* (85%) and *Emotional Transcendence* (84%) were the strongest traits followed by *Practical Wisdom* (79%) and *Courage* (71%). There were no associations detected between the TKS or PCS and any of the AIVS subscales.

Conclusion: Albeit no established associations, positive character traits can be measured and do exist amongst individuals with chronic pain and should be considered as a tool in self-management rehabilitation programmes to enhance resilience, function, and participation.