

Gratitude Unveiled: Exploring Its Impact on Life Satisfaction

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ABSTRACT

Background of the Study: In the case of the current research, the objective was to assess the relationship between university students' life happiness and thankfulness.

Methods: Out of a student population of a particular university, 100 participants, 50 of them being female and 50 of them being male, aged between nineteen and twenty-four, were selected. The participants completed the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) and the Gratitude Questionnaire (GQ-6). Concerning the relationships between the variables, Pearson's correlation coefficient was employed to draw the relationship between life satisfaction and thankfulness.

Results: The correlation between the levels of thankfulness and the levels of life satisfaction was established to be moderately positive, $r = .416$, $p < 0.05$; thus, the higher the levels of thankfulness, the higher the levels of life satisfaction. How below, the average scores for life satisfaction and thankfulness were 22.25 (SD = 5.39) and 28. Using the Likert scale of the questionnaire, the Phenomenology, Mean = 17 (SD = 5.0)

Conclusion: The results of this particular study make it easy to appreciate the positive relationship between happiness and thankfulness. Thus, gratitude significantly influences the level of happiness in life; there are also other factors, such as personality traits, cultural background, and beliefs. The conclusion drawn from the research findings raises aspiration for gratitude therapies to work positively to improve human well-being and therefore postulate that strengthening thankfulness may help provoke a state of general mental health and satisfaction with life in the peoples of Europe. Future research should examine how the characteristic of thankfulness may influence life satisfaction in degrees by establishing its relationship with other characteristics.

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Introduction

Gratitude is a fundamental emotion characterised by a deep sense of appreciation, thankfulness and other positive feelings like optimism and fulfilment. It involves acknowledging the value of individuals or any benefits received in one's life, provoking the sentiments of warmth, kindness and mindfulness. According to a group of researchers, gratitude is a two-fold process: 1) Acknowledging a positive event and 2) recognising an external source for that event. Gratitude may be the central or affective trait,

indicating a person's natural disposition (Rosenberg, 1998). However, there is no definitive evidence for an association between dispositional gratitude and five significant personality factors: agreeableness, extraversion, conscientiousness, etc.

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it is a mood that may fluctuate from time to time, and lastly, it is an emotion that is experienced briefly after a noteworthy experience. This study aims to gain insight into the effects of gratitude and how it is related to satisfaction in one's life. It is hypothesised that there will be a positive correlation between gratitude and overall life satisfaction.

It was not until the 1950s that researchers were intrigued and began to analyse and conceptualise the influence of gratitude on the physiology as well as the psychology of individuals, as gratitude is a powerful expression that plays a pivotal role in strengthening relationships (Algoe & Haidt, 2009). A study in 2007 found that gratitude reinforces social support and problem-solving while discouraging the attention one pays to negative emotions (Wood, Joseph & Linley, 2007) (Garland et al., 2010). Another significant study proposed the power of gratitude in the appraisal of self-esteem and how it boosts one's self-worth (Lin, 2015).

A large body of previous researchers has shown that gratitude is positively associated with physical health, mental health, and overall life satisfaction (Wood, Froh & Geraghty, 2010) (Froh et al., 2011) (Bryant & Veroff, 2006). Feelings of Gratitude are correlated with hedonic (pleasure feeling), eudaimonic (mindfulness or self-realisation), well-being and overall increased happiness (Nezlek, Newman & Thrash; Morgan et al., 2017). Moreover, gratitude and grid have been shown to reduce suicidal ideations, fostering a meaningful life (Kleiman et al., 2013). Some researchers believe gratitude is an inherited trait, while some believe it is learnt and can be cultivated with specific exercises and techniques. However, nature and nurture play an essential role in developing Gratitude (Emmons, 2008, p.37) (Wood & Froh, 2019, p.123).

Literature Review

In the past few decades, gratitude has been an area of interest for researchers, confirming how it is essential for life quality and satisfaction. Thus, to facilitate the understanding of the relationship between the concepts of life, happiness and appreciation, this review consolidates the material that has been written.

Another definition of gratitude is a user's emotional response characterised by appreciation of the good things in life after being benefited by others (Emmons & McCullough, 2003). There are numerous psychological benefits associated with being thankful and being able to live in that state, for instance, better mood, more social support, and more life satisfaction (Algoe & Haidt, 2009).

Studies on how gratitude affects life satisfaction have received much attention, particularly from theorists looking at the mode through which it occurs. One opinion is that the role of gratitude is to influence a positive perspective in thinking and decrease negative emotions in a person (Fredrickson, 2004). It also brings about human relations and better support systems, essential to human satisfaction (Algoe and Gable, 2013 Fredrickson).

Another aspect is that cultural factors also come into play regarding showing and experiencing gratitude. Discovery was made that gratitude is significantly related to life satisfaction in adult Americans. However, the relationship between gratitude and life satisfaction in Swiss adults is lower, implying that the level of relatedness depends on the culture. This underlines the importance of cultural sensitivity, which should be used while examining the role of gratitude for decent lives.

This shows that life happiness is highly related to thankfulness, but this is so to some extent since the personality factors play a moderating role. According to Wood et al. (2008), introductory principles of positive psychology indicate that individuals with more neuroticism may not benefit similarly from gratitude as those with low neuroticism levels. This means that individuals' dispositional characteristics and personality types could influence the effectiveness of the gratitude programmes.

Interventions to enhance life pleasure due to gratitude have been done and have indicated some progress. Studies, including one by Seligman, Steen, Park, and Peterson (2005), established that people who engaged in activities that involved expressing thankfulness, for instance, writing thank you notes, had higher levels of life satisfaction. Emmons identified that these interventions are therapeutic contexts because they help individuals effectively cope with stress and enhance their well-being.

Religion has also been characterised by happiness and thankfulness in life. Religious people have higher subjective well-being because they often report higher levels of appreciation, as pointed out by Krause (2009). This means that spirituality and religious activities promote appreciation and improve well-being in the broad sense of the term.

However, some factors call for further discussion in a life of happiness and thankfulness. Many factors, including the traits of a person's personality, cultural environment and personal communities, influence it. As the current study displayed the moderating role of these variables, future studies must continue to investigate these aspects to determine how thankfulness influences the level of life happiness.

Methodology

Sample Size

A sample of 100 participants was recruited within the university population. 50 male and 50 female adolescents within the age range of 19-24 were requested to participate in the research data collection.

Materials

The Gratitude Questionnaire (GQ-6) with Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from .82 to

.87 and Test- Retest reliability ranging from .75 to .80 along with the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) with Cronbach’s alpha coefficients ranging from .86 to .91 and Test-Retest reliability ranging from .80 to .85, was administered on each and every participant.

Design

It was a correlational study between gratitude and life satisfaction.

Procedure

The whole sample of 100 participants from various departments was recruited within the university premises with their consent and were requested to fill the questionnaires. They were informed about the purpose of study and they were guided about the procedure of filling a questionnaire. They were instructed that no answer is right or wrong and that they had to tick the option that appeared to be most relevant to them. Both the questionnaires were then scored according to their scoring criteria and later the appropriate statistics were applied. Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated for gratitude and life satisfaction and then the results were formulated for further interpretations. Moreover, mean and standard deviation was calculated for both the variables.

Results

Variables	M	SD	1
Gratitude	28.17	5.612	-
Life Satisfaction	22.25	5.390	.416

Table 01: Correlation between Gratitude and Life Satisfaction

**Correlation is significant at 0.05 level*

The Pearson product correlation indicated moderately positive correlation between gratitude and life satisfaction that is very well aligned with the hypothesis. It demonstrates that if gratitude is high, so is the life satisfaction and vice versa.

Discussion

The result explicitly supported the hypothesis, i.e. gratitude will be positively correlated with life satisfaction. Expressing gratitude positively impacts life satisfaction, a crucial indicator of well-being. The moderate positive correlation indicates that more appreciated and grateful people are more satisfied and content with their lives and vice versa. These promising results suggest that fostering a grateful disposition can significantly contribute to overall well-being and meaning in life. A longitudinal study suggested that people with higher levels of gratitude at the beginning also reported higher satisfaction at the end, even when factors like age and gender were controlled. It indicated that both the variables are in a positive spiral, influencing each other over time. (Alkozei et al., 2018). Another study found that subjective well-being increased with a highly grateful

attitude, leading to increased happiness. (Morgan et al., 2017).

The correlation found is, however, moderate, implying that gratitude is not the sole factor determining life satisfaction. It points to the fact that this study does not highlight any other influencing factors. Those moderating factors may be personality traits, culture, religion, or gender. For instance, previous research showed that people with higher neuroticism who practised gratitude had improved well-being than those who did not (Wood, Joseph & Linley, 2008). As per the cultural inferences, a study of US and Swiss adults found gratitude, along with other factors, to be the critical predictor of life satisfaction in US adults, but it was lowest on the list for Swiss (Peterson et al., 2007). Many other researchers have explored the interaction of religion with gratitude and life satisfaction. A longitudinal study concluded that depressive symptoms were present in less grateful people, while those with stronger beliefs were resilient in their hardships and showed increased gratitude with time (Krause, 2009). While indicating gender differences in gratitude, studies have found that women are more grateful than men, as some men associate gratitude with weakness (Kashdan et al., 2009).

Nonetheless, gratitude holds immense psychological benefits, and even activities encouraging gratefulness might be equally fruitful. Gratitude journaling of counting blessings intervention found that those who wrote journals about their blessings felt equally optimistic about their lives and future. (Emmons & McCullough, 2003). Apart from journaling, re-framing experiences, such as contrasting current life with past adversities, may bolster gratitude and self-worth. Besides that, mindfulness, such as immersing yourself in sensory experiences and concentrating on what you feel, may enhance and enrich the essence of life.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study illuminates the underlying dynamics between gratitude and life satisfaction. The results confirm the hypothesis that as gratitude increases, overall contentment and satisfaction in life increase. Nonetheless, the moderate correlation strength implies that gratitude does not solely influence one's satisfaction. Instead, other extraneous factors like individual personality traits, culture, religion, and other elements may interact with gratitude and contribute to the complex relationship. Additionally, gratitude interventions are found to be promising as they nurture a sense of fulfilment and promote communal well-being.

Author's Contribution:

Conception or Design: Javeria Aftab

Analysis or Interpretation of Data: Javeria Aftab

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