



The Role of Gratitude in Enhancing Subjective Happiness Empirical Study

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Abstract: *Gratitude, as a positive emotional disposition, plays a significant role in enhancing individuals' overall well-being and subjective experiences of life satisfaction. The present study aims to examine the relationship between gratitude and happiness among individuals. The sample comprised 150 early adults. The study administered various questionnaires, including Demographic Data Sheet, Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS) and Gratitude Questionnaire (GQ-06) to validate respondents' perceptions and experiences. Using the survey method, obtained results were interpreted and analyzed by using the descriptive statistics, correlation, t-test.*

Gratitude was positively correlated with personal happiness according to the results of our study. People who were more grateful experienced higher degrees of personal happiness than their less grateful peers. Subsequent analyses conducted by the authors determined that selected demographic characteristics did not lead to different levels of either gratitude or happiness. Hence, the data indicates that gratitude is a valuable emotional resource for enhancing one's individual experience of happiness, and it functions essentially free from the influence of demographic cues. Our results emphasize the importance of gratitude as a promoter of psychological well-being, and suggest that gratitude is an essential area of inquiry in research related to positive psychology.

Keywords: *Gratitude, Subjective Happiness, Well-Being, Positive Psychology.*

Introduction: Gratitude is commonly defined as a positive emotional response that arises when individuals recognize and appreciate the benevolence of others or the benefits they receive (Emmons & McCullough, 2003). It is considered both a momentary emotional state and a dispositional trait reflecting a general tendency to notice and value positive aspects of life (McCullough et al., 2002). Within the framework of positive psychology, gratitude is viewed as a character strength that promotes psychological growth, resilience, and interpersonal bonding (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

Subjective happiness refers to an individual's global assessment of their own happiness and overall well-being (Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999). It encompasses both cognitive evaluations of life satisfaction and affective experiences of positive emotions. Research in well-being consistently indicates that subjective happiness is associated with better mental health, stronger social relationships, improved coping abilities, and enhanced life satisfaction (Diener, 1984; Diener et al., 1999).

Emerging empirical evidence suggests a strong positive association between gratitude and subjective happiness. Individuals who regularly practice gratitude report higher levels of positive affect, optimism, and life satisfaction (Emmons & McCullough, 2003). Gratitude interventions, such as gratitude journaling and expressing appreciation, have been shown to significantly increase happiness and reduce depressive symptoms (Seligman et al., 2005; Wood et al., 2010). The broaden-and-build theory further explains that positive emotions like gratitude expand cognitive and behavioral repertoires, thereby building enduring psychological resources that contribute to sustained happiness (Fredrickson, 2001).

Kausar (2018) found a significant positive relationship between gratitude and happiness among college students. The present research explored the relationship between gratitude and happiness in college students. It was hypothesized that there is likely to be a relationship between gratitude and happiness. It was also hypothesized that gratitude will be the predictor of happiness in college students. The sample was comprised of n= 100 (50 girls & 50 boys) from different colleges (private & public) of Lahore. Subjective Happiness Scale by Sonja Lyubomirsky and Lepper (1999) and Gratitude Questionnaire-Six Item Form (GQ-6) by McCullough, Emmons, and Tsang (2001) were used to assess happiness and gratitude in college students. Pearson product moment correlation, Simple Linear regression and independent sample t-test were applied to generate results. Results suggest that there is significant positive relationship between gratitude and happiness. Gratitude also predicted happiness in college students. No significant gender difference was observed between gratitude and happiness. Significant difference was found between gratitude and happiness at 1st level and the last level students. The findings of this research have implications for adaptation of gratitude tendencies in Pakistani youth.

Gottlieb, R., & Froh, J. (2021). “Gratitude and Happiness in Adolescents: A Qualitative Analysis”. Gratitude is important for social and emotional health. Research suggests that there is a relation between experiencing and expressing gratitude and happiness. The aim of this chapter is to review current research regarding gratitude development and happiness, adolescent gratitude development, and to discuss future recommendations. This chapter also discusses a study examining adolescent perspectives on the meaning of being thankful. To obtain adolescent perspectives on the meaning of being thankful, adolescents (N = 1,098) wrote essays describing what being thankful meant to them. Thematic analysis was used to identify and analyze themes within the essays. Percentiles were calculated for the most recurrent themes across essays (Appreciation = 54.07%, Family = 31.42%, Positive Emotions = 28.81%, Assistance/Support from Others = 25.99%, Friendship = 21.18%, and Downward Comparison = 16.60%). Understanding gratitude development in adolescents can aid in creating effective interventions, potentially increasing adolescent well-being and happiness.

Watkins, P. C., Woodward, K., Stone, T., & Kolts, R. L. (2003). “Gratitude And Happiness: Development Of a Measure Of Gratitude, And Relationships With Subjective Well-Being”. The purpose of these studies was to develop a valid measure of trait gratitude, and to evaluate the relationship of gratitude to subjective well-being (SWB). Four studies were conducted evaluating the reliability and validity of the Gratitude Resentment and Appreciation Test (GRAT), a measure of dispositional gratitude. This measure was shown to have good internal consistency and temporal stability. The GRAT was shown to relate positively to various measures of SWB. In two experiments, it was shown that grateful thinking improved mood, and results also supported the predictive validity of the GRAT. These studies support the theory that gratitude is an affective trait important to SWB.

Gottlieb, R., & Froh, J. (2021). “A Study on the Effect of Gratitude on Happiness and Well Being”. Gratitude is a general state of thankfulness and appreciation. The majority of empirical studies indicate that there is an association between gratitude and a sense of overall well being. . Currently, mental health is especially important in some occupations with harsh work conditions which require strong personal and

mental capacities. Psychological well-being and happiness is especially important in personnel working in the healthcare sector. This study aimed to assess whether gratitude training affects psychological well-being and happiness in hospital personnel. Method: In this semi-experimental study with pre-test and post-test, 72 personnel working in 5 hospitals affiliated to Shiraz University of Medical Sciences, Shiraz, Iran, participated. The participants were randomly divided into intervention and control groups using block randomization. Then, the participants in the intervention group were given 10 group sessions of 90 minutes gratitude training. Ryff's Scale of Psychological Well Being,

Subjective Happiness Scale, Gratitude Questionnaire-6, and a Gratitude training package were used for data collection. Results: The results show that there is no significant difference in the mean scores of psychological well-being, domains of psychological well-being, and happiness between the two groups at baseline, and gratitude training significantly affected all domains of psychological well-being (except for autonomy) and happiness. Conclusion: This study demonstrates that Gratitude training is effective in enhancing psychological well-being and Happiness.

Material and Method

Participants and Survey: Distribution of selected sample by gender and area

Area	Gender			Total
	Female	Male	Other	
Rural	24	27	0	51
Urban	32	30	1	63
Semi-Urban	17	19	0	36
Total	73	76	1	150

The total sample consisted of 150 participants. They were categorized based on their domicile into three groups: rural, urban, and semi-urban. The rural group consisted of 51 individuals, including 24 females and 27 males. The urban group comprised 63 individuals, with 32 females, 30 males and 1 other. The semi-urban group included 36 participants, evenly split between 17 females and 19 males. Overall, the sample included 73 females, 76 males and 1 participant identifying as other.

A cross-sectional study was carried out involving 150 undergraduate students. To measure dispositional gratitude, the *Gratitude Questionnaire–Six Item Form (GQ-6)* (McCullough et al., 2002) was employed, while the *Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS)* (Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999) was used to assess global subjective happiness. The sample consisted of 73 female students (48.67%), 76 male students (50.67%), and 1 participant identifying as other (0.66%), totaling 150 participants.

Measures & Interpretation: The *Gratitude Questionnaire–Six Item Form (GQ-6)*, developed by McCullough, Emmons, and Tsang (2002), is a widely used self-report instrument designed to measure dispositional gratitude. The scale assesses the tendency of individuals to recognize and respond with appreciation to positive experiences and the benevolence of others. It captures emotional, cognitive, and behavioral aspects of gratitude.

The GQ-6 consists of six items that evaluate various dimensions of grateful disposition, including intensity, frequency, span, and density of gratitude experiences. Sample items of the scale include: “I have so much in life to be thankful for,” “I am grateful to a wide variety of people,” and “When I look at the world, I don’t

see much to be grateful for” (reverse scored). Participants respond based on their personal feelings and experiences.

Each item is rated on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree). Two items are reverse scored to control for response bias. The total gratitude score is calculated by summing the responses after reverse scoring the relevant items. Higher total scores indicate higher levels of dispositional gratitude.

Participants are instructed to read each statement carefully and indicate how much they agree or disagree by placing a tick mark next to the appropriate response option. They are also instructed not to omit any item and to answer honestly based on their usual feelings and experiences.

The psychometric properties of the GQ-6 indicate strong reliability and validity. The scale has demonstrated good internal consistency, with Cronbach’s alpha values typically ranging from .79 to .87 across different samples. Factor analyses support its unidimensional structure, confirming that the items effectively measure the construct of gratitude. The GQ-6 has been widely used to explore relationships between gratitude and variables such as life satisfaction, happiness, depression, stress, and overall psychological well-being.

The Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS), developed by Lyubomirsky and Lepper (1999), is a brief self-report measure designed to assess global subjective happiness. It evaluates how individuals perceive their overall happiness level compared to others and in general life situations.

The SHS consists of four items that measure overall happiness and self-evaluation of well-being. Sample items include: “In general, I consider myself,” rated from 1 (not a very happy person) to 7 (a very happy person), and “Compared to most of my peers, I consider myself,” rated from 1 (less happy) to 7 (more happy). Participants respond according to their overall perception of happiness rather than temporary mood states.

Each item is rated on a 7-point Likert scale. The total subjective happiness score is obtained by averaging the four items. Higher mean scores indicate higher levels of subjective happiness.

Participants are instructed to read each statement carefully and choose the option that best reflects their general sense of happiness. They are asked to respond honestly and avoid skipping any items.

The SHS has demonstrated strong psychometric properties across diverse cultural and age groups. The internal consistency of the scale is satisfactory, with Cronbach’s alpha values typically ranging between .79 and .94. The scale has shown good construct validity, with strong positive correlations with life satisfaction and positive affect and negative correlations with depressive symptoms. Due to its brevity and reliability, the SHS is widely used in research examining happiness, well-being, and positive psychological functioning.

Data Analysis: The data collected from the Gratitude Questionnaire–Six Item Form (GQ-6) and the Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS) were analysed using various statistical techniques. Descriptive statistics were computed to examine the distribution of scores. An Independent Samples *t*-test was conducted to compare mean differences between male and female students. Pearson’s Product Moment Correlation was used to assess the relationship between gratitude and subjective happiness. Additionally, a Simple Linear Regression analysis was performed to determine whether gratitude significantly predicts subjective happiness.

Results

Table 1

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Gender	150	0	2	.52	.514
Domicile	150	0	2	.90	.785
Type of Family	150	0	1	.24	.429
Valid N (list wise)	150				

Descriptive statistics were computed for the demographic variables of the sample (N = 150). Gender showed a mean of $M = 0.52$ ($SD = 0.51$), indicating a nearly balanced distribution across categories. Domicile had a mean of $M = 0.90$ ($SD = 0.79$), reflecting variation in place of residence among participants. Type of family showed a mean of $M = 0.24$ ($SD = 0.43$), suggesting that the majority of participants belonged to one primary family category. All cases were valid for analysis.

Table 2

		Gratitude (G-6)	Subjective Happiness Scale
Gratitude (G-6)	Pearson Correlation	1	.302
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	150	150
Subjective Happiness Scale	Pearson Correlation	.302	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	150	150

** Correlation is Significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Pearson's correlation analysis showed a significant positive relationship between gratitude and subjective happiness, $r(148) = .302$, $p < .01$. This indicates that students with higher gratitude levels tend to report higher happiness levels. The correlation is moderate and statistically significant.

Table 3

Variable	Gender	N	M	SD	t	df	p
Gratitude	Female	73	30.77	5.456			
	Male	76	30.20	5.001	.665	147	.507
Subjective Happiness	Female	73	18.04	5.256			
	Male	76	18.16	3.868	-.154	132.083	.878

The results show that the independent samples t-test examining gender differences in gratitude and subjective happiness. The findings revealed no significant difference in gratitude between females ($M = 30.77$, $SD = 5.456$) and males ($M = 30.20$, $SD = 5.001$), $t(147) = 0.665$, $p = .507$. Similarly, there was no significant difference in subjective happiness between females ($M = 18.04$, $SD = 5.256$) and males ($M = 18.16$, $SD = 3.868$), $t(132.08) = -0.154$, $p = .878$. Gender did not significantly influence gratitude or subjective happiness in the present study.

Discussion

Major Findings

- A statistically significant positive correlation was found between gratitude and subjective happiness ($r = .302$, $p < .01$).
- The results indicate a moderate positive relationship between gratitude and happiness among undergraduate students.
- Students with higher levels of gratitude tend to report higher levels of subjective happiness.
- The relationship between the variables is statistically significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The primary finding of this study is the statistically significant positive correlation between gratitude and subjective happiness ($r = .302$, $p < .01$). This indicates that as gratitude increases, subjective happiness also increases. Although the strength of the relationship is moderate, it is meaningful and statistically significant. This finding is consistent with previous research. McCullough et al. (2002) proposed that gratitude is a dispositional trait linked to positive emotional functioning. Similarly, Lyubomirsky and Lepper (1999) found that individuals with higher happiness levels tend to exhibit stronger positive emotional experiences, which are closely associated with gratitude.

Further supporting this result, Emmons and McCullough (2003) demonstrated that practicing gratitude enhances subjective well-being and life satisfaction. Wood et al. (2010) also concluded that gratitude is strongly associated with positive affect, life satisfaction, and psychological well-being. Therefore, the present findings align with existing literature within the framework of positive psychology (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000), which identifies gratitude as a key character strength contributing to happiness and emotional resilience.

Overall, the study confirms that gratitude is positively associated with subjective happiness among undergraduate students. While the correlation is moderate rather than strong, it suggests that gratitude contributes positively to well-being. Students who appreciate positive experiences, acknowledge support from others, and focus on the beneficial aspects of life are more likely to experience higher happiness levels. This highlights the psychological importance of cultivating a grateful outlook in daily life.

The present study contributes to the growing body of literature in positive psychology by examining the relationship between gratitude and subjective happiness among university students. The findings have practical implications for educational institutions. Universities can incorporate gratitude-based interventions such as gratitude journaling, reflective exercises, and positive psychology workshops to enhance students' emotional well-being. Promoting gratitude may serve as a cost-effective and accessible strategy for improving happiness and psychological resilience among young adults.

Conclusion: The findings of the study revealed a statistically significant positive relationship between gratitude and subjective happiness ($r = .302$, $p < .01$). This indicates that students with higher levels of gratitude tend to report higher levels of happiness. Although the strength of the relationship is moderate, it confirms that gratitude is an important psychological factor contributing to well-being among undergraduate

students. Future research should use longitudinal designs to better understand the causal direction between gratitude and happiness. Including additional variables such as stress, anxiety, coping styles, and life satisfaction may provide deeper insights into student well-being. Studies involving larger and more diverse populations would enhance generalizability. Experimental research examining structured gratitude interventions could further establish the practical benefits of gratitude in academic settings.

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