

A Study of Gratitude and its Effects on Well-being in Adolescence

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the relationship between gratitude and well-being during adolescence, a developmental phase characterized by rapid emotional and social changes. Gratitude, defined as feelings of thankfulness and appreciation, has been associated with positive mental health outcomes, including reduced anxiety, increased happiness, and improved social connections. Using a quantitative, descriptive-correlational research design, data were collected from 107 adolescents aged 11 to 18. The analysis revealed a weak positive correlation between gratitude and well-being, with no significant gender differences. Despite the lack of strong statistical significance, the findings align with existing literature suggesting gratitude's role in fostering resilience, emotional regulation, and social connectedness. The study highlights the need for culturally tailored gratitude interventions and emphasizes the potential of practices such as gratitude journaling and group activities to enhance adolescent mental health and life satisfaction. Future research should address cultural, contextual, and methodological factors to further explore this important relationship.

Keywords: Positive psychology, Stress, Mindfulness, Social support, Self-esteem, Emotional well-being

INTRODUCTION

Gratitude is a positive state of being, as well as a mental state, that is characterized by feelings rather than actions, sentiments like thankfulness and appreciation, and most importantly the acknowledgement of being in a better situation than before, in this case, their life.

Well-being can be defined as a multidimensional ideal that bears meaning in various areas of a person such as physical, mental, emotional, and even social health. This term is defined as satisfaction and living in equilibrium in all phases of a person's life.

Gratitude, simply, the gratitude and appreciation of the positive aspects of life is, indeed, one of the most important motivators that lead to the psychological well-being of a person. Adolescence is a long period of development that is all about the fast-changing of feelings, identities, "and the ability to think about things". It is thus considered to be a redeveloping time for the enhancement of positive mental health habits. Gratitude has, therefore,

been a crucial factor for success in the past and it is expected to also be in the future.

Adolescent well-being is an intricate psychosocial play, and this also was read through the literature as a key ingredient in adolescents' lives - positivity, meaning, and healthy interpersonal connections. While creating these social connections, the habit of gratitude can be life-changing to achieve just that while also eroding the stress-loading optimism. Although there is strong interest in research about gratitude, it will still demand a few specific effects on individual gratitude as presented with the challenges and opportunities in the context of adolescence.

It would be something to be examined here: the relationship between gratitude and the well-being of adolescents. Cultivation of gratitude should increase happiness, reduce anxiety and depressive symptoms, and improve general life satisfaction. In addition, practical interventions in gratitude among adolescents include such simple actions as journaling or writing a letter.

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Literature Review:

Gratitude can be defined as a multi-dimensional construct of feeling thankful and appreciative to others or the circumstances (Emmons and McCullough, 2003). It may be defined as a dispositional character, a general tendency of an individual to experience gratitude, or a state, that may be expressed in terms of the temporary feeling of gratitude. Gratitude has been expressed as a social acknowledgement and moral virtue in adolescents as it depicts their cognitive and emotional changes (Froh *et al.*, 2008).

In such a stage as adolescence, self-identity and development tasks of meaningful relationships seem to have a strong effect. The enhanced capacity of abstract thought and empathy has enabled adolescents to comprehend better and express appreciation (Hussong *et al.*, 2018).

Numerous research studies have shown a close relationship between gratitude and psychological well-being among adolescents. For example, Froh *et al.* (2009) report that gratitude interventions are linked with increased positive affect, life satisfaction, and optimism in adolescents. Gratitude removes negative emotions such as envy and resentment by increasing the focus on positive elements of life and reducing the impact of stressors.

Current research further shows that gratitude is a protective factor against depression and anxiety among adolescents. For example, Wood *et al.* (2010) argued that there is a very negative correlation between gratitude and depressive symptoms. This might be because gratitude makes one stronger and thus allows one to give meaning to one's life. Gratitude has been associated with high self-esteem among adolescents, which usually tends to enhance good mental health (Bono and Froh, 2009).

Gratitude also influences the social relationships of adolescents as well as their general quality of life. The practice of gratitude has been known to hold the potential to boost peer and family relations, which is mainly attributed to communications and conflicts that help adolescents resolve them (Gordon *et al.*, 2012). Often, grateful adolescents are the ones who keep themselves occupied in sympathetic and other prosocial activities like altruism that build up their support systems and social relations (Layous *et al.*, 2014).

In addition, gratitude builds up adolescents' social connection and sense of belonging, which reduces loneliness (Froh *et al.*, 2008). This is crucial because, during adolescence, the most critical aspects of

development and well-being are social relationships.

There are many mechanisms by which gratitude is said to affect well-being, among them. First, this is because gratitude promotes the positive reappraisal of cognition, through which one starts to perceive challenges from a new perspective and highlights good outcomes (Wood *et al.*, 2010). The second is the fact that gratitude promotes the regulation of emotion, reduces the intensity and duration of negative emotions, and raises positive emotions. The third is that gratitude enhances coping mechanisms, such as seeking social support, which works as a buffer against stress (Emmons and McCullough, 2003).

Gratitude fosters mindfulness or being present in the moment of experience and reduces ruminations leading to better mental health status overall (Kerr *et al.*, 2015). All these mechanisms make gratitude an integral part of resilience: the attribute that should feature in adolescents if they must pass through this stage unscathed.

Fostering gratitude interventions has been highly effective among youths. For example, recording regularly what people are thankful for through gratitude journaling has been associated with long-term increases in happiness and life satisfaction (Froh *et al.*, 2014). Other group-based gratitude interventions, such as sharing gratitude in classrooms or families, have also been promising to improve relational and emotional well-being.

However, such interventions would require considering other cultural and contextual factors. The literature review has shown that what is given as thanks varies by norms and values of cultures which, in turn, shapes the perceptions and responses of adolescents (Layous *et al.*, 2014).

Hypothesis:

- H0:** There would be no significant relationship between gratitude and adolescent well-being.
- H1:** A significant relationship between gratitude and adolescents' well-being would exist.
- H2:** There would be a significant difference in gratitude and well-being among males and females.

METHODOLOGY

The paper used a quantitative descriptive-correlational research design because it confirmed the relationship between gratitude and adolescent well-being. Adoption of it would be useful in quantifying the levels of

appreciation and markers of well-being and their relationship. It is a cross-sectional study of 107 adolescents, between the ages of 11 and 18. Purposive sampling was used to select respondents by age and gender for suitable representation. Sample formation included 55 male and 52 female students. Gratitude Scale It was a 6-item Likert scale, validated based on GQ-6 scales. It measures the level of gratitude. For the items, it scores from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (7).

Adolescent Well-being Scale:

This is an 18-item scale, this measure is derived from the depression self-rating scale for children and assesses both depressive symptoms and well-being in children and adolescents. The 3-point rating scale yields higher values, higher levels of unhappiness, or low self-esteem.

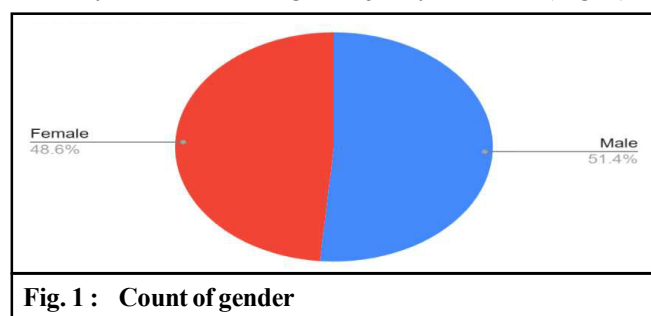
Demographic Questionnaire:

A general questionnaire to elicit information regarding age, and gender in school was administered for the present study. Data was collected in September 2024. The questionnaires were administered after students, and their caregivers had signed an informed consent. The questionnaires were done using a scheduled session and were held in an auditorium within a school set by the researchers. The session took approximately 45 minutes to be completed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

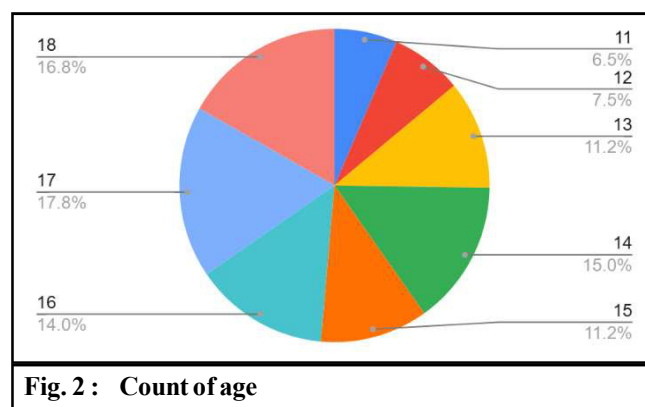
Graphic Representation:

This pie chart represents the gender distribution in the dataset. Male: 51.4%, Female: 48.6% The distribution is nearly even, with a slight majority of males (Fig. 1)



This pie chart displays the distribution of ages in the dataset. Each slice corresponds to an age, such as 11, 12, 13, etc., and the percentage in the population. Age 17

has the largest proportion at 17.8%, and age 18 has the second largest at 16.8%. Other ages, such as 11, 12, and 13, have much smaller contributions between 6.5% and 15% (Fig. 2).



Pearson correlation coefficient with 0.237. Thus, both gratitude and well-being are not strongly correlated with each other as the p-value is more than 0.05. Statistical analysis does not reveal a strong correlation between gratitude and overall well-being (Table 1).

Table 1 : Correlation coefficients between gratitude and well-being		
Variables	Correlation (r)	Significance (p-value)
Gratitude and Wellbeing	0.237	P > 0.05

Scores of Male (M) and Female (F) Participants. The mean (M), standard deviations (SD), t-test values, and significance levels or p-values for the comparison between the gratitude and well-being scores are as follows (Table 2):

Table 2 : Summary Table of Statistical Analysis of the Gratitude and Well-being Scores of Male (M) and Female				
Variables	Mean	SD	t-test	Significance (p-value)
M\F Gratitude	28.62	5.51	0.50	P > 0.05
M\F Well-being	22.72	4.53	0.45	

M/F Gratitude:

Mean and Standard Deviation: A mean score of 28.62 with a standard deviation of 5.51 means that the participants were at a moderate level of gratitude of is somewhat variable.

t-test and p-value: The t-test value of the difference in gratitude by gender is 0.50, and the p-value is greater

than 0.05 ($p > 0.05$). This means that when adolescents are about the same age, the two genders have no significant statistical difference in gratitude. Both males and females are at about the same level of gratitude.

M/F Well-being:

Mean and Standard Deviation: The average score for well-being is 22.72 with a standard deviation of 4.53, which means well-being levels are merely average and have less variation in comparison to gratefulness. t-test and p-value: t-test value for the difference in wellbeing for gender is 0.45; the p-value associated with it is > 0.05 ($p > 0.05$). It would appear not significant compared to the thanks that seem to have no importance above the scale of gender differences in well-being for the respondents.

The research sought to find the relationship between gratitude and adolescents' well-being and assess if there are differences in gender. Results indicated that the relationship was weak, positive, and non-significant to statistics. Secondly, the levels of gratitude as well as their well-being among adolescents were reported not to show any significant difference along gender lines.

Conclusion:

The findings of this study underpin the potential role of gratitude in fostering well-being among adolescents. Although statistical analysis did not reveal a strong correlation between gratitude and overall well-being, theoretical and empirical literature suggests that gratitude can play a vital role in enhancing positive emotions, reducing stress, and improving social relationships in adolescence. This study may not have had significant results because of sample size, cultural context, or individual variability in expressing gratitude. However, the study fits well with previous research that situates gratitude as a salient factor in enhancing psychological resilience and emotional health in adolescence. Future research directions may specifically consider the effects of tailored gratitude interventions and differences in culture and development to shed light on this complex relationship between gratitude and adolescents' well-being. Gratitude journaling or group-based gratitude activities may become useful in enhancing mental health and life satisfaction in such an important period in life.

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