

From Thanks to Thriving: Exploring the Role of Gratitude Practice in Enhancing Subjective WellBeing, Positive Affect, and Resilience

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the relationship between Gratitude, Subjective wellbeing, Positive mood, Negative mood and Resilience. Participants completed a set of instruments which included the GQ-6, WHO-5, PANAS, and BRS to measure gratitude, subjective well-being, and dimension (positive and negative) of mood and resilience. The Pearson's correlation analyses revealed that gratitude was positively connected to subjective well-being ($r = .36, p < .001$), positive mood ($r = .40, p < .001$), and resilience ($r = .38, p < .001$) and negatively connected to negative mood ($r = -0.34, p < .001$). The evidence signifying the practice of gratitude helps maintain emotional balance, the healthy coping, and general functioning of adults in this life phase is compelling.

Keywords: Midlife Adults, Positive Psychology, Purposive sampling, Life satisfaction

Introduction

Gratitude, an essential concept in positive psychology, has developed into a constructive emotional and cognitive process leading to the enhancement of individuals' psychological functioning and well-being (Wood et al., 2010). As discussed by McCullough et al. (2002), gratitude is the recognition and appreciation of the positive aspects of life and acts not only as an ephemeral emotional state but also embodies a dispositional trait that affects the way individuals understand and respond to various circumstances in life. In the past decade, there has been increased evidence exploring the link between gratitude practices and indicators of a healthy psychological state such as subjective well-being, positive affect, and resilience (Davis et al., 2016; Cunha et al., 2019).

Subjective well-being (SWB) encompasses cognitive and affective judgments about one's life that is a combination of satisfaction with life and the ratio of positive to negative affect (Diener et al., 2018). Studies have suggested that people who routinely engage in gratitude practices report higher levels of SWB possibly because gratitude encourages a positive reframing of daily experiences and more positively affects satisfaction with life (Watkins et al., 2003; Wood et al., 2010). Gratitude also strengthens positive mood, which is defined as the frequent experience of positive emotions such as happiness, contentment, and excitement by widening individuals' thought-action repertoires and enhancing adaptive coping (Fredrickson, 2001; O'Leary et al., 2015).

Resilience- the ability to bounce back when things go awry- is also closely related with and contributes to one's ability to be grateful (Huston et al., 2024). Gratitude can be fostered by having people partake in interventions where they practice focusing on strengths instead of deficits so they can learn to engage in

emotional regulation and recover more effectively during stress events.(Kerry et al., 2023; Diniz et al., 2023). This supports the broaden-and-build theory that positive emotions (such as gratitude) broaden people's cognitive and behavioral flexibility, building more personal resources over time (Fredrickson, 2001).

Current meta-analyses indicate that gratitude interventions show significant improvements in psychological functioning (e.g. mood, stress, and health behaviors) (Boggiss et al. (2020), Davis et al., 2016). Additionally, gratitude interventions predict lower depressive symptomatology (Cunha, 2019) and higher life satisfaction across several studies, including people from a range of backgrounds. To date, most of the cited research has focused on younger or student populations, and there has been little research conducted to explore gratitude and its effects in adults aged 30-55 who have competing roles (e.g. professional, family, and social roles). Studying this age group can also provide important information about how gratitude may foster emotional regulation and resilience in the context of midlife.

For these reasons, the current investigation will examine whether gratitude practice can increase positive mood, subjective well-being, and resilience in adults aged 30-55. Based on positive psychology research the present work will seek to extend the empirical literature regarding the benefits gratitude can provide to mature adult populations.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Wood et al. (2010) emphasised a comprehensive theoretical and empirical review of the theoretical possible mechanisms of gratitude enhancing well-being from over 60 studies. A review of the literature found supporting evidence for the role of gratitude and well-being through greater positive affect, deeper social connections, and improved coping flexibility. Most of the studies they reviewed were correlational and longitudinal studies of Western adult samples using measures including the Gratitude Questionnaire (GQ-6) and the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) and consistently reported moderate to strong correlations between gratitude and subjective well-being.

Seligman et al.(2005) investigated gratitude journaling and positive psychology interventions in 577 adult participants aged 25–55 in the United States. Using random-group assignment, participants wrote gratitude letters or expressed daily blessings over a six-week period. Repeated measures ANOVA statistical analyses demonstrated significant increases in happiness and decreases in depressive symptoms. This study set the precedence for subsequent gratitude research linked to interventions.

Froh et al. (2008) expressed appreciation in their study of younger populations yet later developed methodological frameworks used in studies for adults. The experimental design (N=221 adolescents) tested journal intervention for gratitude and showed increases in optimism and life satisfaction for the entire sample. Given the different population and context, the noted statistical rigor (MANOVA and post hoc tests) were taken into consideration in relation to later gratitude-well being models from samples of adults.

Davis et al. (2016) carried out a meta-analysis of 38 studies involving more than 4,000 participants to analyze the effectiveness of gratitude interventions on well-being. The researchers calculated a moderate effect size (Hedges' $g = 0.23$) for mood and life satisfaction. The studies did include clinical and non-clinical adult populations from across the globe. Random-effects models indicated that interventions' length and frequency of practices predicted larger outcomes.

Cunha et al. (2019) conducted a randomized controlled trial in Brazil assessing the effects of gratitude interventions on subjective well-being with 120 adults aged 25-55. Participants were placed in either the

gratitude-list group or a control group for four weeks. There was a significant difference for positive affect and life satisfaction in the gratitude-list group compared to the control group, as measured by the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS) and the Satisfaction with Life Scale, as determined by an ANCOVA.

O’Leary et al. (2015) investigated the interaction of gratitude and mindfulness on mood and tension in an experimental sample of 150 adults in the UK. Participants completed a 2-week trial in one of the following conditions: mindfulness only, gratitude only, mindfulness and gratitude combined, or control. Self-report mood inventories and cortisol measures were completed during the study. Results of the repeated-measures ANOVA indicate that both interventions produced significant increases in positive affect and reductions in perceived stress, with the combination condition yielding the greatest magnitude of effects. Boggiss (2020) conducted a systematic exploration into gratitude and health behaviors that synthesized a total of 28 studies published from 2009–2019. Study samples consisted of adults who were sampled from healthy volunteers to chronic illness patients. In both correlational, longitudinal, and experimental studies, including hierarchical regression analysis and SEM analysis, gratitude predicted subjective well-being and physical health indicators, thus supporting the biopsychosocial benefits of gratitude.

Kerry et al. (2023) conducted a systematic examination of 32 peer-reviewed studies on the role of gratitude in mental health outcomes in international adult samples age 18-60. Through the application of meta-analytic structural equation modeling, the authors found evidence that gratitude interventions significantly explained a greater level of resilience, greater emotional regulation, and less anxiety. In addition, the study discussed gratitude serving as a buffer against the psychological distress.

Diniz et al. (2023) performed a large-scale meta-analysis published in Einstein (São Paulo) with 62 trials ($N > 7,500$ participants). Adult populations located in North and South America, Europe, and Asia were included. Using multilevel meta-analytic modeling, results confirmed gratitude interventions significantly enhanced positive affect, subjective well-being, and life satisfaction, with effects remaining significant at follow-up.

Huston et al. (2024) analysed data from 25 gratitude intervention studies ($N = 3,850$) to gain insight into possibilities for optimised effects. The population primarily consisted of adults aged 30–55 from Europe and North America. The researchers performed mixed-model analyses and found personalisation to be superior in respect to respective gains in resilience and wellbeing-e.g., writing to specific people, was undertaken with stronger gains in resilience and wellbeing, than general journaling.

Algoe et al. (2010) examined gratitude in dyadic relationships through a daily diary study of 68 romantic couples ($N = 136$) in the U.S. The daily diary study assessed expressions of gratitude, and perceived partner responsiveness, which was expressed through perceived partner responsiveness. Multilevel modeling of the reported data found that gratitude predicted increases in positive mood and relationship satisfaction from day to day, and suggests that gratitude has both interpersonal and affective benefits.

Boggiss et al. (2021) extended previous findings by testing the physiological pathways of gratitude. In an experimental study ($N = 102$ adults), gratitude journaling was related to better cardiovascular markers and self-reported vitality. For example, repeated-measures MANOVA yielded significant time \times group interactions, suggesting psychosomatic effects of gratitude.

Kashdan et al. (2019) looked at gratitude’s role in fostering emotional resilience among 203 midlife adults in the United States from cross-sectional survey data. Regression analyses showed that trait gratitude predicted lower negative affect and higher adaptive coping, even when controlling for personality traits like extraversion and neuroticism.

Cheng et al. (2015) investigated how gratitude and psychological adjustment were relevant to 200 adults recovering from illness in China. Study participants were recruited through convenience sampling, and the analysis used structural equation modeling. The study found that gratitude has a direct impact on improving resilience and an indirect impact on enhancing subjective well-being through social support.

Lin (2017) conducted research employing a quasi-experimental design with 180 employed adults in Taiwan to examine the effects of gratitude journaling on job satisfaction and positive affect. Gratitude tasks were carried out for three weeks. A repeated-measures ANOVA indicated significant increases in positive mood, and significant decreases in burnout, in the gratitude journaling group compared to controls.

Lau & Cheng (2019) examined the influence of gratitude on emotional well-being in Singaporean healthcare workers (N = 250). Using standardized instruments: The Gratitude Questionnaire-6 (GQ-6) and the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC), hierarchical regression demonstrated that gratitude still predicted resilience after controlling for perceived stress and emotional exhaustion.

Cregg & Cheavens (2021) conducted a longitudinal study (N = 178 adults) to test gratitude's role in emotional flexibility and resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic. Using multilevel modeling, gratitude predicted increased daily positive affect and faster emotional recovery after stress. This study highlighted gratitude as a dynamic, emotion-regulating resource during adversity.

Klein (2022) examined gratitude's long-term psychological effects through a randomized trial with 240 middle-aged adults in Canada. Participants who practiced daily gratitude for 21 days showed significantly higher subjective well-being and resilience after 3 months, analyzed using ANCOVA and mediation modeling.

Huston et al. (2024) synthesized 25 years of gratitude intervention research, noting that structured gratitude practices yield consistent improvements in mood, coping, and life satisfaction across adult populations. Using Bayesian meta-analysis, they identified resilience as one of the most robust mediators linking gratitude to overall well-being.

NEED FOR THE STUDY

Adults in the midlife years (ages 30-55) often encounter high levels of stress and emotional distress due to their multiple personal and professional responsibilities. Although productive, this period can result in decreased well-being and resilience (Lachman, 2015). Gratitude is an important term in positive psychology, and gratitude has been shown to increase positivity, positive mood, emotional regulation, and its ability to cope in stressful situations (Davis et al., 2016; Cunha et al., 2019). However, most gratitude research focuses on younger or older populations, meaning the topic is understudied in terms of its impact on midlife adults (Boggiss, 2020). Understanding gratitude in relation to well-being, positive affect, and resilience would also help researchers understand this population's mental flexibility and emotional stability. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to better understand how gratitude practice can facilitate psychological flourishing within adults in the midlife years.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

AIM- To examine the role of gratitude practice in enhancing subjective wellbeing, positive mood, negative mood and resilience among people aged 30-55 years.

Research Objectives

1. To determine the relationship between gratitude practice and subjective well-being among adults aged

30–55 years.

2. To study the association between gratitude practice and positive mood.
3. To examine the relationship between gratitude practice and resilience.
4. To analyse the relationship between gratitude practice and negative mood.
5. To explore whether gratitude practice significantly predicts overall psychological well-being.

Hypothesis

H₁: There would be a significant positive correlation between gratitude practice and subjective well-being.

H₂: There would be a significant positive correlation between gratitude practice and positive mood.

H₄: There would be a negative correlation between gratitude practice and negative mood.

H₃: There would be a significant positive correlation between gratitude practice and resilience.

Research Design

The present study follows a quantitative, correlational research design to investigate the relationships between gratitude practice and subjective well-being, positive mood, negative mood and resilience. The study is cross-sectional in nature and utilizes a survey-based approach using standardized psychological scales.

Sample Size

The research involves adults ranging between 30-55 years of age in Delhi-NCR. The sample size consists of a strength of N=100 participants.

Sampling Technique

The study employed a **purposive sampling technique** to include participants who regularly engage in personal reflection or gratitude-related practices and fall within the specified age range.

Inclusion Criteria

- Adults aged between 30 and 55 years.
- Residing within Delhi NCR
- Individuals willing to participate and provide informed consent.

Exclusion Criteria

- Individuals below 30 or above 55 years.
- Not residing within Delhi NCR
- Those unwilling to participate in the study.

Tools Used

- Gratitude Questionnaire–6 (GQ-6) by McCullough et al. (2002).
- WHO-5 Well-being Index
- Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS) by Watson et al. (1988).
- Brief Resilience Scale (BRS) by Smith et al. (2008).

Procedure

Participants were approached both offline and online. They were briefed about the purpose of the study and assured of confidentiality. After obtaining informed consent, standardized questionnaires were distributed. Completed responses were collected and prepared for statistical analysis.

Statistical Analysis

Data was analyzed using Jamovi software. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize demographic data, and Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to determine the relationship between gratitude, subjective well-being, positive affect, negative affect and resilience.

RESULT

The purpose of this study was to explore the role of gratitude practice in enhancing subjective well being, positive mood, and resilience among adults aged 30-55 years.

Variable	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Gratitude	Wellbeing	Positive mood	Negative mood	Resilience
Gratitude	32.8	5.07	17	42	1	0.355**	0.400**	-0.336**	0.376**
Wellbeing	18.1	4.53	4	25	0.355**	1			
Positive mood	34.6	7.87	13	50	0.400**		1		
Negative mood	20.3	8.07	10	50	-0.336**			1	
Resilience	19.9	4.10	12	30	0.376**				1

Table 1: Shows the mean, SD and values of all variables.

Table 1 showcases the present study examining the relationships between gratitude practice and various indicators of psychological well-being, including subjective well-being, positive and negative mood, and resilience. Consistent with H₁, gratitude was found to be significantly positively correlated with subjective well-being ($r = .355, p < .001$), suggesting that individuals who engage in gratitude practices tend to report higher overall well-being. Supporting H₂, gratitude was also positively associated with positive mood ($r = .400, p < .001$), indicating that gratitude may enhance experiences of positive affect. In line with H₄, gratitude showed a significant negative correlation with negative mood ($r = -.336, p < .001$), demonstrating that greater gratitude is linked to lower levels of negative emotions. Finally, consistent with H₃, gratitude was positively correlated with resilience ($r = .376, p < .001$), suggesting that practicing gratitude may strengthen individuals’ ability to cope with stress and recover from adverse events. These findings collectively highlight the beneficial role of gratitude in promoting emotional well-being and resilience, supporting the notion that cultivating gratitude can serve as a valuable strategy for enhancing mental health.

DISCUSSION

The research paper titled “From Thanks to Thriving: Exploring the Role of Gratitude Practice in Enhancing Subjective WellBeing, Positive Affect, and Resilience” explores the relationship between gratitude, subjective wellbeing, positive affect and resilience among adults aged 30-55 years residing in Delhi NCR. The present study explored the role of gratitude in enhancing psychological functioning among midlife adults using a sample of 100 participants selected through purposive sampling. Participants completed standardized instruments: GQ-6 for gratitude, WHO-5 for subjective well-being, PANAS for

positive and negative mood, and BRS for resilience. Consistent with previous research (Wood et al., 2010; Davis et al., 2016; Cunha et al., 2019), gratitude was positively associated with subjective well-being, positive mood, and resilience, and negatively associated with negative mood. These findings support the broaden-and-build theory (Fredrickson, 2001), suggesting that gratitude broadens cognitive and emotional resources, facilitating adaptive coping and emotional regulation. The correlations indicate that gratitude is an important, though not exclusive, contributor to well-being in midlife adults managing multiple personal and professional responsibilities.

LIMITATIONS

While the present study determined meaningful information, it also has a number of limitations. First, the cross-sectional design of this study limits any conclusions about causality between gratitude and psychological outcomes. Second, the adoption of a purposive sample may limit the degree to which results can be generalized to the greater population of midlife adults. Third, since data were collected entirely via self-report measures, they may all reflect social desirability or some other form of response bias. Fourth, while a sample size of 100 was adequate for correlational analysis, it may not fully reflect the variability in the population. Lastly, to the extent that participants were drawn totally from the Delhi-NCR location, the findings' generalizability to other cultural and contextual locations may be limited.

CONCLUSION

The present study demonstrates that gratitude is significantly associated with enhanced psychological functioning in adults aged 30–55 years. In a study using a purposive sample comprising 100 participants and standardized measures, GQ-6, WHO-5, PANAS and BRS, results showed that higher gratitude was associated with higher subjective well-being, higher positive affect, resilience, and lower negative affect. These results indicate that gratitude may be a feasible and practical way to enhance emotional regulation, coping capacity, and well-being for midlife adults, who often have a number of personal and occupational obligations and demands. The study contributes to the positive psychology literature by highlighting the benefits of gratitude in a relatively understudied age group.

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