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Research Paper

Gratitude, Happiness & Their Relation with Triguna Personality

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ABSTRACT

Background: Gratitude, which refers to being thankful and appreciative, is missing now-a-days. People don't express enough gratitude and take others for granted. In positive psychology realm, gratitude is strongly related with greater happiness which refers to positive emotions and life satisfaction degree. But gratitude doesn't come easily to everyone. Some people have more grateful dispositions than others. This depends on one's personality which we can study by an important holistic vedic approach of personality known as triguna. *Objective*: The objective of this study is threefold: (1) to examine correlation between sattva, gratitude and happiness; (2) to examine correlation between rajas, gratitude and happiness; (3) to examine correlation between tamas, gratitude and happiness. *Materials and Method*: I conducted a cross-sectional survey among 103 participants from a population of adults aged between 20 to 65 years, both males and females. To collect the required data, "Gratitude scale (GQ-6) developed by McCullough M., E. (2013)" which consists of 6 items, "Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS) developed by Lyubomirsky & Lepper. (1999)" which consists of 4 items and "Vedic Personality Inventory (VPI) developed by Wolf, D. B. (1999)" which consists of 56 items were administered to all participants. *Result*: The research shows that there is a significant moderate positive correlation of sattva with gratitude ($r = .57$, $p < .01$) and happiness ($r = .52$, $p < .01$), significant moderate negative correlation of rajas with gratitude ($r = -.36$, $p < .01$) and happiness ($r = -.46$, $p < .01$) and significant moderate negative correlation of tamas with gratitude ($r = -.46$, $p < .01$) and happiness ($r = -.46$, $p < .01$). Further, regression analysis shows that both gratitude ($\beta = .39$, $p < .01$) and happiness ($\beta = .28$, $p < .01$) predict a higher sattva. *Conclusion*: The findings show that increase in expessing gratitude and happiness leads to an increase in sattva. This results in a better state of equilibrium with the least agitation of mind amongst all trigunas thereby making one more functional to lead a better life in this world.

Keywords: Gratitude, Happiness, Triguna, Sattva, Rajas, Tamas

Gratitude & Happiness have been major areas of interest in the field of Positive Psychology. Gratitude refers to being thankful and appreciative towards the world or specific people. Happiness refers to experiencing more positive feelings than negative. Triguna, a Vedic personality concept, consists of three modes of material nature (sattva, rajas and tamas) which are characterized by their own properties for holistic development. Depending on the behavioural characteristic, we can determine the guna. Sattva refers to a state of mind with equilibrium and least agitation characterized by

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knowledge, wisdom and illumination. Rajas refers to activity with attachment resulting in excitement and misery characterized by passion, arrogance and jealousy. Tamas refers to the state of maximum inertia characterized by delusion, sleepy and lazy. Each individual has a combination of these three gunas. No guna is absent. Sattva, rajas, tamas by themselves are not good or bad. It is the combination which makes a person functional or dysfunctional. To become functional in this world, we need to increase sattva. The purpose of the current study is to understand the correlation between gratitude, happiness and the 3 different aspects of triguna (sattva, rajas and tamas) and to know the interrelationship between these different constructs. This research is in the realm of positive psychology and cross cultural psychology.

METHODOLOGY

Objective

The objective of this study is threefold: (1) to examine correlation between sattva, gratitude and happiness; (2) to examine correlation between rajas, gratitude and happiness; (3) to examine correlation between tamas, gratitude and happiness.

Hypotheses

1) There will be a positive correlation between sattva, gratitude and happiness (H1).
2) There will be a negative correlation between rajas, gratitude and happiness (H2).
3) There will be a negative correlation between tamas, gratitude and happiness (H3).

Sample

The Sample comprised of a cross-sectional survey of 103 participants from a wide cross-section of population of adults aged between 20 to 65 years, both males and females. Out of 103 participants in the sample, 75 are males and 28 are females. Age and gender are collected during data collection but these variables are not controlled in the study.

Variables

Three variables are taken into consideration – Gratitude, Happiness and triguna (sattva, rajas and tamas). They are continuous and quantitative variables.

Instruments

Three measures were used in this study,

- **Gratitude scale (GQ-6):** Gratitude scale (GQ-6) is a measure of gratitude developed by McCullough M., E. (2013). GQ-6 consists of 6 items. Out of these, four items are phrased in a positive way (item number 1, 2, 4 & 5) (e.g., "I have so much in life to be thankful for") and two are phrased in negative way (item number 3 & 6) (e.g. "When I look at the world, I don't see much to be grateful for"). Respondents were asked to answer each item by indicating the extent of their agreement on a 7 point Likert.
- **Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS):** Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS) is a measure of subjective happiness developed by Lyubomirsky & Lepper. (1999). SHS consists of 4 items. Out of these, three items are phrased in a positive way (item number 1, 2 & 3) (e.g. "Some people are generally very happy. They enjoy life regardless of what's going on") and one is phrased in negative way (item number 4) (e.g. "Some people are generally not very happy although they are not depressed, they never seem as happy as they might be"). Respondents were asked to answer each item by indicating the extent of their agreement on a 7 point Likert.

- **Vedic Personality Inventory (VPI):** Vedic Personality Inventory (VPI) is a measure of Triguna Personality developed by Wolf, D. B. (1999). VPI consists of 56 items. Out of these, 15 items are related with sattva guna (item number 1,3,4,5,10,12,13,17,25,28 ,34,37,38,42,56) (e.g. "I am straight forward in my dealings with people"), 19 items are related with rajas guna (item number 9, 11,16, 20, 21, 22, 26, 30, 31,32, 35, 39, 44, 47,48, 49, 50, 51, 55) (e.g. "I greatly admire successful people") and 22 items are related with tamas guna (item number 2,6,7,8,14,15,18,19,23,24,27,29,33,36,40,4 1,43,45,46,52,53,54)(e.g. " I often feel helpless"). Respondents were asked to answer each item by indicating the extent of their agreement on a 7 point Likert.

Procedure

Convenience sampling method was used by circulating google forms. Adult males and females of the city were sent google forms to obtain relevant information using different instruments.

RESULTS

Table No. 1 Correlations between Triguna (sattva, rajas & Tamas) with gratitude & Happiness

	Sattva	Rajas	Tamas	Gratitude	Happiness
Sattva	1				
Rajas	-.39	1			
Tamas	-.53	.77	1		
Gratitude	.57	-.36	-.46	1	
Happiness	.52	-.46	-.46	.64	1

Note. N=103; Correlations of .30 or greater are significant at p ≤ .01

Sattva is significantly and positively correlated with gratitude (r = .57, p < .01) and happiness (r = .52, p < .01). Rajas is significantly and negatively correlated with gratitude (r = -.36, p < .01) and happiness (r = -.46, p < .01). Tamas is also significantly and negatively correlated with gratitude (r = -.46, p < .01) and happiness (r = - .46, p < .01).

Table No. 2 Regression – Summary Output – Gratitude and Sattva

Regression Statistics		
Multiple R	.57	
R Square	.33	
	Coefficients	*P-value*
Intercept	3.22	0.00
Gratitude	.39	0.00

Table No. 3 Regression – Summary Output –Happiness and Sattva

Regression Statistics		
Multiple R	.52	
R Square	.27	
	Coefficients	*P-value*
Intercept	4.03	0.00
Happiness	.28	0.00

Correlational study does not prove causation. It does not show cause and effect. To overcome that, this study includes regression analysis to predict sattva from gratitude and happiness to give a better summary of the relationship between the two variables (gratitude and sattva or Happiness and sattva).

The study further explores whether gratitude and happiness predict sattva using regression analysis. Table No. 2 and Table No. 3 show regression analysis output. Gratitude and happiness are taken as predictors and sattva is taken as the outcome variable. A positive β coefficient indicates that a unit increase in predictor variable (gratitude) leads to an increase in the outcome variable (sattva) by β coefficient. The analysis shows that gratitude (ß = .39, p < .01) reports a higher sattva. Value of R square (.33) indicates that gratitude predicts 33% of sattva. Also, happiness predicts a higher sattva (ß = .28, p < .01). Value of R square (.27) indicates that happiness predicts 27% of sattva.

DISCUSSION

Empirical data of the present study shows that adults who have higher sattva express more gratitude and are happier. Adults who have higher rajas express less gratitude and are less happier. Adults who have higher tamas express lower gratitude and are lower on happiness. Also, those who express more gratitude, their sattva increases by 33% and those who express more happiness, their sattva increases by 27% indicating that both gratitude and happiness predict sattva.

So to be more functional and to lead a better life, one can be aware and express more gratitude and more happiness leading to an increase in their sattva state resulting in a better state of equilibrium of mind with the least agitation amongst all trigunas.

CONCLUSION

This research is valuable as the findings in this study are generalizable; they are administered to representative sample of adult population. It can serve as a starting point for future research. Researchers can conduct experimental research by providing an intervention of gratitude training to increase the sattva state and level of happiness. Also, researchers can conduct various comparative studies on the basis of age group, gender, adolescents, early/mid/late adults. Triguna personality (Sattva, rajas and tamas) has a remarkable potential to help us understand many positive and negative aspects of human behaviours. There hasn't been much research in the areas of inter-relation between western and vedic constructs. So, there is a huge scope for scientific study in this field.

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