

Relationship between Spirituality, Gratitude and Optimism among Young Adults

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ABSTRACT

In the 21st century, people have started asking “what is right with people?” Positive psychology is a scientific and applied approach to identifying people's strengths and promoting their positive functioning or qualities. The current study investigated the relationship between Spirituality, Gratitude, and Optimism among young adults in Mumbai. To better understand this relationship, a correlational design was used. Using convenience sampling a data of 100 participants was collected across Mumbai from the age range of 18-25 years. In the study, the Daily Spirituality Experience Scale (Lynn Underwood 2006), Gratitude Questionnaire (McCullogh et al., 2002), and Life Orientation Test Revised (Scheier and Carver 1994) were used. The data indicated a significant positive relationship between Spirituality and Optimism and Gratitude and Optimism. Further, regression analysis suggested that Spirituality (8%) and Gratitude (12%) to be significant predictors of Optimism.

Keywords: Spirituality, Gratitude, Optimism, Young adult

The term spirituality originated from the Latin word “Spiritus” which means breath of life. “Spirituality can be seen as the individual's sense of connectedness, meaning, peace, purpose, and service that progresses across the life span” (Derezotes 2006b). Another variable that is explored in the current study is gratitude. Gratitude taps into the tendency to appreciate and cherish everyday events and experiences (Bryant, 1989; Langston, 1994). Another variable is optimism. It is the personal, intellectual, social, emotional as well as physical growth and development of an individual and how all these dimensions relate to each other and express themselves in everyday life. Optimism is defined as an individual difference variable reflecting the extent to which people hold generalized favourable and unfavourable expectancies for their future (Carver, Scheier, & Segerstrom, 2010).

Le, Ba Phong, et, al., investigated the mediating effect of optimism and self-efficacy in the relationship between transformational leadership and knowledge sharing in a Chinese population (2021). Total of 365 participants filled in the survey hired by 80 Chinese firms.

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The findings indicated that self-efficacy and optimism, two dimensions of an individual's psychological capital, mediated the relationship between transformational leadership and knowledge sharing highlighting the importance of practicing transformational leadership to influence employees' positive psychological capital so that they engage in knowledge collecting and knowledge donating.

Gratitude is very well connected to well-being. The main study done by Chin-Chin Lin (2015) was to see the effect of self-esteem in the association between gratitude and wellbeing among undergraduate students. 235 participants filled the measures of dispositional gratitude, self-esteem, and several indices of well-being. Results suggest that higher levels of dispositional gratitude were associated with greater self-esteem and indices of well-being. Further, higher levels of self-esteem were associated with indices of well-being. Path analyses indicated that for the association between gratitude and well-being self-esteem acted as a partial mediator. Overall results of this study provide information regarding a possible process through which dispositional gratitude has beneficial effects.

A study was done by Jessie. Hayman, et, al., (2011) investigated the relationship between spirituality, body image and self-esteem, and stress among 204 college freshmen who were high on spirituality. They found a positive relationship between spirituality and self-esteem. Self-esteem was found to be negatively related to stress; spirituality served as a buffer in that relationship. For men, greater spirituality was related to lower body surveillance, (an aspect of body image), however, it was not related to body image for women. Lastly, women experienced greater body image dissatisfaction than men.

Research Questions

- There will be a significant positive relationship between gratitude and optimism?
- There will be a significant positive relationship between spirituality and optimism?
- Is Spirituality a significant predictor of Optimism?
- Is Gratitude a significant predictor of Optimism?

METHODOLOGY

Sample

The sample population consisted of 100 young adults between the ages of 18 and 25. Males made up 43% of the sample while females made up 57%.

Instruments

Three measures were used in this study,

- 1. Daily Spiritual Experience Scale (DSES):** Daily Spiritual experience scale (DSES) was developed in 2006 by Lynn Underwood. DSES has 16 items in total. 15 items are measured on the 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (many times if a day) to 6 (never) and the last 16th item is scored on a 4-point Likert scale. The test-retest reliability ranged from .64 to .78. further, the internal consistency reliability estimates with Cronbach's alpha were very high, .94 and .95.
- 2. Gratitude Questionnaire (GQ-6):** GQ-6 was developed by McCullough et al., in the year 2002. It consists of 6 items. Item 3 and 6 are reversed scored. Respondents rate each item on a 7-point scale ranging from 1= strongly disagree to 7= strongly agree. The scores can range from 0- 42. The GQ-6 has good internal reliability, with alphas between .82 and .87.

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3. **Life Orientation Test Revised (LOT-R):** Scheier and Carver developed the Life Orientation Test in 1985, to measure optimism, and then it was revised in 1994. The revised version consists of 10 items with 4 fillers, 3 positively framed items, and 3 negatively framed items. The scale is measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). Negatively framed items are reversed coded and then the overall score is calculated by summing up the responses for all six items. Test-retest reliability ranged between 0.56-0.79. Cronbach alpha was 0.78 (Scheier, Carver & Bridges, 1994).

Procedure

The survey form was administered by means of Google forms. The survey form's instructions were very clear, and it also guaranteed the confidentiality and privacy of respondents' answers. At the conclusion of the survey, participants received a debriefing. Data was collected following appropriate ethical guidelines.

RESULTS

Pearson Product Moment Correlational Coefficient was used for inferential statistics as the data obtained was linear and continuous. Further, Regression was used to identify predictive role of Spirituality and Gratitude

Table No. 1 Correlation between Optimism, Gratitude and Spirituality

Variable	Spirituality	Gratitude	Optimism
Spirituality	-		
Gratitude	0.566***	-	
Optimism	0.288**	0.363***	-

(* significant at 0.01, *** significant at 0.001)

According to the analysis in table 1, Optimism is positively related to Gratitude ($r_{(99)} = 0.363, p < .001$) which is a significant positive relation. Additionally, it showed a positive relationship between Optimism and Spirituality ($r_{(99)} = 0.288, p < .01$). considering the values presented in the table 1 it can be said that the results are in line with first and second research question.

Having found significant correlation, regression analyses were conducted.

Table No. 2 Model summary for Optimism and Gratitude

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	RMSE	R ² change	F change	df1	df2	p
H ₀	0.000	0.000	0.000	3.621	0.000		0	99	
H ₁	0.363	0.132	0.123	3.392	0.132	14.842	1	98	<.001

Note: Dependent Variable: Optimism, Predictor: Gratitude

Table no. 3 ANOVA Table for Gratitude predicting Optimism

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
H ₁	Regression	170.745	1	170.745	14.842	<.001
	Residual	1127.445	98	11.505		
	Total	1298.190	99			

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Table No. 4 Coefficients Table for Gratitude predicting Optimism

Model		Unstandardized	Standard Error	Standardized	t	p
H ₀	(Intercept)	13.910	0.362		38.413	<.001
H ₁	(Intercept)	6.648	1.915		3.471	<.001
	Gratitude	0.225	0.058	0.363	3.852	<.001

The table 2 shows the model summary of Gratitude predicting Optimism levels. Based on the adjusted R value, 0.123, the regression model could explain a significant portion of the variance in the level of optimism ($F = 14.84$; $p = .001$). Accordingly, Gratitude accounts for 12% of variance in Optimism.

The ANOVA analysis for Gratitude predicting the Level of Optimism is shown in table 4.3.2. The obtained df and F values were 98 and 14.842, respectively, and were found to be significant at $p < .001$.

Table 4.3.3 suggests the regression for Gratitude predicting Levels of optimism. The standardized beta coefficient ($\beta = 0.363$) for the predictor variable obtained to be significant with Optimism ($t = 3.852$; $p < .001$). In other words, it can be said that for every 1-unit change in the Gratitude there would be 3.852-unit change in Level of optimism.

Table No. 4 Model summary Table for Spirituality predicting Optimism

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	RMSE	R ² change	F change	df1	df2	p
H ₀	0.000	0.000	0.000	3.621	0.000		0	99	
H ₁	0.288	0.083	0.073	3.486	0.083	8.833	1	98	<.004

Table no. 5 ANOVA Table for Spirituality predicting Optimism

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
H ₁	Regression	107.332	1	107.332	8.833	<.001
	Residual	1190.858	98	12.152		
	Total	1298.190	99			

Table No. 6 Coefficients Table for Spirituality Predicting Optimism

Model		Unstandardized	Standard Error	Standardized	t	p
H ₀	(Intercept)	13.910	0.362		38.413	<.001
H ₁	(Intercept)	7.472	2.294		3.405	<.001
	Gratitude	0.083	0.028	0.288	2.972	<.004

The table 4 indicate the model summary for Spirituality predicting Optimism levels. The adjusted R value obtained was 0.073 which further suggested that the variance in the level of optimism could be explained by the regression model ($F = 8.833$; $p < .004$). In other words, 8% of variance in Optimism is explained by Spirituality.

The table 5 suggests the ANOVA for Spirituality predicting the Level of optimism. The df vale was seen to be 98 and F values was seen to be 8.833 which was found to be significant at $p < .001$.

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The regression for Spirituality predicting Levels of Optimism is shown in table 6. The predictor variable's standardised beta coefficient ($\beta = 0.288$) was found to be significant with Optimism ($t = 2.972$; $p.004$). It is possible to say that for every unit change in Spirituality, there is a 2.972-unit change in Level of optimism.

DISCUSSION

Most studies on Spirituality, Gratitude, and Optimism focus on the western culture and population. Indian context research has been lacking. The current study attempted to understand the relation between Spirituality, Gratitude, and Optimism among young adults residing in Mumbai. A correlation analysis with respect to three variables was conducted. In addition, regression analyses were performed between spirituality and optimism, and gratitude and optimism.

The first research question proposed that there will be a significant positive correlation between Gratitude and Optimism. The results were in line with the research question. Gratitude is a feeling of thankful appreciation regardless of whether it is tangible or intangible. Gratitude empowers people to acknowledge the goodness in their lives. While being grateful, people generally identify that the source of that goodness is at least moderately external. This understanding helps them connect to something larger than themselves as an individual. It can be connecting to people, higher power, or even nature. Gratitude helps people feel more positive emotions, relish good experiences, deal with adversities of life, build stronger relationships and improve their overall health. (Sanchez-Alvarez et al., 2020) Furthermore, people who have positive emotions, stronger social support, and overall good health have a positive outlook on life. Moreover, people who express gratitude have higher self-esteem, which gives them the confidence to overcome the challenges in their lives. This boosts their optimism about the future. Thus, it can be stated that gratitude, which allows people to appreciate and be happy about the good things in their lives, is linked to optimism, or a positive outlook on the future.

The regression model of Gratitude predicting Optimism was found to be an appropriate fit in the current study. According to a recent study with 4,825 participants from all over the world, gratitude highlighted the positive aspects of people's lives, whereas optimism minimized the negative aspects of people's lives and encouraged a more positive outlook on the future (D.B., et al., 2021). As is well known, expressing gratitude entails appreciating what one has, regardless of whether it is large or small, tangible, or intangible. Gratitude assists people in focusing their efforts on what they have and being satisfied with it or accepting it in a cheerful manner. Furthermore, this positivity helps people have a positive outlook on the events that will occur in the future. As a result, it is possible to say that

Gratitude boosts Optimism. To put it another way, Optimism is followed by Gratitude. The second research question proposed that there will be a significant positive correlation between Spirituality and Optimism. The results were in line with the research question.

The fact that spirituality can instil hope and optimism in an individual explains the strong positive relationship between Spirituality and Optimism. Spirituality can provide an individual with internal resources to strive for wholeness, empowerment, and identity, as well as a sense of purpose and meaning in life. Furthermore, spirituality can instil a sense of belonging, attachment to others, a sense of relationship to all of life, and a sense of harmony with others and with oneself. It also creates a sense of oneness with the higher authority/universe. Spirituality also stimulates the ability to go beyond one's own limits, the

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willingness or experience of rising above or overcoming adverse conditions/situations, and the capacity and belief in achieving wellness and healing (Howden,1992). All these factors contribute to an individual's optimism and a positive outlook on the future. All the factors instilled by Spirituality, such as hope, a sense of belonging, attachment, and harmony with oneself and others, give rise to Optimism.

The regression model of Spirituality predicting Optimism was found to be an appropriate fit in the current study. A recent study with 70 participants found that Spirituality has a strong correlation with Optimism (M.S., et al., 2017). Spirituality can provide a person with the feeling that they are connected to, supported by, or cared for by a higher power or universe. This feeling can make a person feel hopeful and guided in their life. It can also heighten the sense of not being alone. As a result, an individual believes that nothing can go wrong, and that even if something does go wrong, someone will have his/her back or be with him/her during that difficult time; as a result, an individual looks more confidently toward his/her future. In other words, someone who is high on Spirituality is also high on Optimism, or Optimism comes before Spirituality.

The current study contributes to the body of research on the relationship between optimism, spirituality, and gratitude. It also expands knowledge in the field of positive psychology. The findings of this study will also be useful in developing intervention programmes for young adults who are depressed. These ideas can also be instilled in support groups. Families can adapt practising Gratitude and Spirituality so that it becomes a habit for children as they grow up, guiding them through difficult times.

Limitations and Future Recommendations

A limitation of the study was that the scales used in the study were self-report measures, the participants may have provided socially desirable answers. Additionally, because the study was conducted online using Google forms, test-taking behaviours and the environment were not controlled, leaving little room for understanding nonverbal cues and clarification. Finally, only participants who could understand and had a basic understanding of the English language were permitted to take part in the study.

Future studies could include a more diverse population. Populations from various socioeconomic strata, from various cities in India, clinical populations, or caregivers of people diagnosed with any mental or physical disorder could all be considered populations. Finally, in the future, these variables can be investigated in the context of major life events such as the death of a close relative, the loss of a job, or some life-altering accidents.

CONCLUSION

The study's goal was to investigate and comprehend the relationship between optimism, gratitude, and spirituality among young adults in Mumbai. The finding of the current study indicates that there was a significant positive relationship between Gratitude and Optimism and between Spirituality and Optimism in young adults in Mumbai. Moreover, Gratitude and Spirituality are significant predictors of Optimism.

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Acknowledgement

The author appreciates all those who participated in the study and helped to facilitate the research process. The authors would also like to express thanks to the faculty of Department of Psychology, Maniben Nanvati Women's College, Mumbai, India, for their assistance in helping towards successful completion of this paper. The authors would like to thank all others who helped in successfully completing the paper whose names however could not be mentioned.

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Conflict of Interest

The author declared no conflict of interest.

How to cite this article: Satia, R. & Kulkarni, D. (2022). Relationship between Spirituality, Gratitude and Optimism among Young Adults. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 10(4), 1959-1966. DIP:18.01.187.20221004, DOI:10.25215/1004.187