

Research Paper

The Impact of Gratitude and Hope on the Optimism among College Students- An Analysis using Broaden and Build Theory

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ABSTRACT

Gratitude is defined as being thankful in all sorts of situations, be it tangible benefits like receiving a gift or something intangible. Hope is the belief of aspiring a better future despite the present circumstances and optimism is the quality of inclining towards the positive aspects of life rather than the negative ones. The study aimed to study the relationship between gratitude, hope and optimism and examine how gratitude and hope impact optimism among college students. The hypotheses of the study were that there will be a significant association between gratitude, hope and optimism as well as gratitude and hope will be the significant predictor of optimism. The study consisted of a sample size of 140 college students (70 females & 70 males) within the age group of 18-23 years. For this study, The Gratitude Questionnaire-Six Item Form, The Trait Hope Scale, Optimism/Pessimism Instrument were utilised and the collected data was analysed by correlation and regression. The findings of the research showed that there is a positive relationship between gratitude and hope but not between gratitude and optimism as well as hope and optimism. Furthermore, hope is a significant predictor of optimism, unlike gratitude.

Keywords: *Gratitude, Hope, Optimism, College Students*

Customary methodology for studying emotions have ruled out positive emotions and are deluded with akin affective states. For justice, **Barbara L. Fredrickson in 2004** developed an substitute model for positive emotions, which is known as the broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions. This theory expresses that positive emotions broadens peoples' momentary thought-action repertoires as well as build their long-established personal resources which range from physical and intellectual resources to social and psychological resources. It is the theoretical model to encapsulate the unique effects of positive emotions, which serve as markers of flourishing, or optimal well-being. Positive emotions seem to open up the people to various new thoughts and behaviours, while negative emotions diminish the ideas and actions.

Fredrickson studies ten positive emotions, viz, *amusement, awe, gratitude, inspiration, interest, joy, love, hope, pride & serenity*. In testing her model of positive emotions, Fredrickson explained that the experience of joy enlarges the realm of what a person feels like doing at the particular moment; this is known as the *broadening* of a person's

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The Impact of Gratitude and Hope on the Optimism among College Students- An Analysis using Broaden and Build Theory

momentary thought-action repertoire. In addition, joy also increases the likelihood of behaving positively toward other people, along with the development of more positive relationships. Furthermore, joy persuades playfulness, which is crucial as such behaviours are evolutionarily adaptive in possession of necessary resources.

It is shown that through the effects of broadening procedures, positive emotions also can aid to *build* resources. For instance, subtle increase in positive emotions is a cause of increases in key resources in people's lives. The mental resources, like the ability to be mindful, and be in the moment; the social resources, like the feelings of connection with others and the psychological resources, like the resilience, the mastery of difficult situations improved. Such people describe fewer aches, pains, colds and flues. As a result, their health showed an improvement. Therefore, an increase in positive emotions builds resources. Those increased resources were consequential as well in that when people had an increase in resources, they also reported increased satisfaction with life and reduced depression. So it's that there was a growth in resources, but a growth that was consequential.

College life is an onerous adaptation from school life for a student. During this passage of time, a student encounters numerous complications. Feeling negative emotions becomes common, thus, absolutely eliminating the positive sentiments. College life welcomes not only fun and liberty but also stress and anxiety due to elevating competition in the education sector coupled with other domains of life. This is the one of the predominant cause of suicide among college students. Moreover, examination is the crucial aspect of college or in general academics as a form of assessing a student's knowledge and understanding in a particular course. However, it has been seen that examination is concurrent with stress and anxiety in the lives of the students. This also the root cause of the suicide among college students. As mentioned in the broaden and build theory, positive emotions evoke positive results whereas negative emotions do the opposite. Therefore, this research paper aims to identify the effect of two positive emotions, precisely, *gratitude & hope* in the life of the college student.

Gratitude can be defined as the quality of being thankful along with the alacrity to exhibit kindness and appreciation. It helps build a person's enduring personal resources as well as broaden an individual's thinking. This can be explained as when a person counts everything he has in his life, the notion of “not having” something eradicates with a thought that “I have a lot in my life.” Similarly, when a college student practises gratitude and feels grateful in a day (Tyler L. Renshaw Margaret L.Hindman, 2017) has greater positive effects on optimism and school connectedness, but that it also has small iatrogenic effects on exam anxiety. In consequence, positive emotion, gratitude, broadens students' momentary thought-action repertoires (delving more into the positive aspects of life rather than negative) as well as builds their long-established personal resources that range from physical and intellectual resources (school-connectedness & ability to perform well in exams) to social and psychological resources (better ability to make friends and less chances of facing stress & anxiety).

Hope can be defined as a feeling of presupposition or expectation and a desire for a specific thing to occur. As gratitude, hope also helps build a person's enduring personal resources as well as broaden an individual's thinking. Barbara Fredrickson stated that hope comes into action when the circumstances of an individual are strenuous and uncertain. Generalised hope predicts academic hope, and academic hope in turn directly predicts GPA (David

The Impact of Gratitude and Hope on the Optimism among College Students- An Analysis using Broaden and Build Theory

B.Feldman & Maximilian Kubota, 2015). Hope in the life of the college student can play a major role. For instance, a feeling of hope can aid the student to secure satisfying marks in their exams as this feeling will induce a positive outcome which will result in more hard work by the students. Another example could be the desire for having more friends during college as college students, while they go through the transition from school life to college life, face an abundance of difficulties and stress. Consequently, positive emotion, hope, broadens students' momentary thought–action repertoires (a desire to do anything they want to do with a thought that it is possible) as well as builds their long-established personal resources that range from physical and intellectual resources (less health issues and more ability to be mindful) to social and psychological resources (more feeling of connection with others as well as improved mastery of difficult situations).

The two positive emotions, gratitude and hope work in conjunction with a personality trait, viz, *optimism*. Optimism can be defined as the feeling of confidence about something to happen in the future. Optimism, jointly with, gratitude shows the highest amount of protection from suicide risk (**Nicolás Sánchez-Álvarez, Natalio Extremera, Lourdes Rey, Edward C. Chang, Olivia D. Chang, 2020**). Additionally, optimism is associated with greater academic satisfaction (**Laurence Boileau, Patrick Gaudreau, Alexandre Gareau, Melodie Chamandy, 2020**). Optimism, conjoined with gratitude and hope help individuals see a brighter future under the difficult conditions like prolonged lockdowns during covid (**Rogelio Puente-Díaz, Judith Cavazos-Arroyo, 2022**).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Jesus Alfonso D. Datu, Frank D. Fincham (2022) examines the association of gratitude with stress, anxiety, as well as depression among 643 students pursuing an undergraduate program originally from the United States with the help of a longitudinal design. For this purpose, an online survey was conducted which included a 1-month interval between the first and second waves of data collection. Cross-lagged panel structural equation modelling was utilised. The results exhibited that gratitude positively predicted subsequent relatedness needs satisfaction, however, it negatively predicted later stress, anxiety, and depression. The results suggest the conclusion that gratitude serves as a shielding psychological resource against the destructive mental health impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Rogelio Puente-Díaz, Judith Cavazos-Arroyo (2022) conducted an experiment to test the influence of reminding of a special moment versus an ordinary moment from high school thus to test the relationship between gratitude and optimism. For this, at first, participants were asked about how the pandemic had influenced their lives at the moment, followed by randomly assigning the participants to either recollecting a precious moment from their high school years or recollecting an ordinary incident from a similar life period. Then, participants completed a series of questionnaires assessing gratitude, optimism and some demographics. The results revealed that there is a positive influence of bringing to mind the memory of a noteworthy moment of gratitude, hence, gratitude was then positively related to optimism. Therefore, the positive association between recalling a special incident and optimism was mediated by gratitude. As a result, positive interventions might help the individuals to become optimistic about their future among the dark shades of life.

Abdi Gungor, Mark E. Young, Stephen A. Sivo (2021) aimed to investigate the moderating effects of three positive psychological variables on negative life events viz, optimism, hope, and gratitude. For this, 738 college students in the U.S were chosen as a sample. The results

The Impact of Gratitude and Hope on the Optimism among College Students- An Analysis using Broaden and Build Theory

of this study indicated that the negatively predicted life satisfaction and distress were positively predicted by the negative life events along with that the optimism, hope, and gratitude moderated the effects of negative life incidences.

Andrea R. Kaniuka et al (2020) made four potential hypotheses claiming to elaborate the beneficial outcomes of gratitude (schematic, positive affect, broaden-and-build, and coping), assuming that hopelessness (schematic), social support (broaden-and-build) depression (positive affect), and substance use (coping) would moderate the gratitude-suicide linkage. For this 913 undergraduate students were taken as samples. The participants had to complete various online self-report questionnaires including Gratitude Questionnaire, Beck Depression Inventory, Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test, Drug Abuse Screening Test, the Suicidal Behaviors Questionnaire-Revised, Beck Hopelessness Scale and Duke Social Support Index. The results indicated that gratitude was linked to less suicide risk via beneficial associations with depression, substance misuse, social support and hopelessness.

Ashley Keener (2020). Academic entitlement is a concern among college educators as millennials and non-millennials enter college. It is not clear whether academic entitlement (AE) is prevalent or not, despite theoretical explanations. Thus, the present study aims to examine the relationship between narcissism, self-esteem, gratitude, and AE between millennial and non millennial college students. The results revealed that narcissism, self-esteem, and gratitude were found to be significant predictors of AE among millennial college students. On the contrary, self-esteem was only a significant predictor among non millennial college students.

Heakyung Moon PhD, RN, Miran Jung PhD, RN (2020) presents a study which assesses the disposition of gratitude, clinical practice stress and satisfaction in order to determine the relationship between them. A descriptive research was administered on 171 nursing students from 3 different universities in South Korea. In this study, a structured questionnaire was utilised. The results showed that those who had a more powerful disposition of gratitude, reported lower clinical practice stress and more satisfaction with clinical practice.

Naizhu Huang, Shaoping Qiu, Amin Alizadeh and Hongchao Wu (2020) investigated the association between incivility, academic stress, and psychological health, as well as investigating the moderating role of gratitude. The sample size consisted of 895 Chinese college students. For the conduction of statistical analysis, the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22 was used. The results revealed that academic stress and incivility are positively linked with psychological distress, and gratitude moderates the relationship between incivility and psychological distress. Nonetheless, no significant moderating effect of gratitude was found in the association between academic stress and psychological distress.

Nicolás Sánchez-Álvarez, Natalio Extremera, Lourdes Rey, Edward C. Chang, Olivia D. Chang (2020) studied the role of optimism and gratitude as predictors of suicide risk, viz depressive symptoms and suicide ideation. It was hypothesized that optimism and gratitude interact together to predict both suicide risk outcomes. The participants included 1,013 Spanish adults (521 females). The results showed that the interaction between optimism and gratitude enlarge the prediction of both depressive symptoms and suicide ideation. Pessimists reported a higher risk of suicide, but the effect was weaker among those

The Impact of Gratitude and Hope on the Optimism among College Students- An Analysis using Broaden and Build Theory

individuals with higher levels of gratitude. On the contrary, optimists with high gratitude showed less suicidal risk.

Peizhen Sun, Yudi Sun, Hongyan Jiang, Ru Jia, Zhiyuan Li (2020) had an objective to investigate the relationships among gratitude, anxiety, and depression in Chinese adolescents, with a focus on coping flexibility as an individual factor mediating their associations. For this, 492 middle-school students in China were surveyed. Afterwards, a mediation model grounded on the broaden-and-build theory and transactional theory of coping were tested. The results exhibited that the effects of gratitude on both anxiety and depression were significant. Furthermore, coping flexibility significantly mediated the influence of gratitude on both anxiety and depression. Hence, it was concluded that improving gratitude and strengthening coping flexibility may safeguard Chinese adolescents from anxiety and depression.

Wang, Yanhua (2020) enumerated on how trait gratitude has an effect on subjective well-being and whether their relationship is mediated by the fulfilment of basic psychological needs. The study included 481 Chinese undergraduate students. The participants had to complete the measures of basic psychological needs fulfilment. The results indicated that there was a significant correlation between trait gratitude, fulfilment of basic psychological needs, and SWB and that trait gratitude was a significant predictor of SWB, which was partially mediated by the fulfilment of basic psychological needs.

Rubina Kausar (2018) examined the link between gratitude and happiness among college students. The hypothesis of the study was that gratitude is a predictor of happiness in college students. For the study 100 college students (50 girls & 50 boys) were taken from various colleges. Gratitude Questionnaire-Six Item Form (GQ-6), Subjective Happiness Scale developed by Sonja Lyubomirsky and Lepper (1999) were used to measure the variables of interest. The results were produced as a result of Pearson product moment correlation, Simple Linear regression and independent sample t-test, which showed a significant positive relationship between gratitude and happiness. This means that hypothesis was proven correct (declining any gender differences).

Şerife Işık & Bengü Ergüner-Tekinalp (2017) investigated the effects of gratitude journaling on adjustment, life satisfaction, and positive affect of first year college students. The participants included those students who scored less in Perceived stress scale and University life scale, so in total 24 students participated in the study. Two groups were made-experimental and control group. Students in the experimental group had to keep a gratitude journal for a period of 3 weeks, whereas those in the control group were not engaged in any gratitude-related activity. The results demonstrated that students who were a part of the experimental group had higher post-test scores on gratitude, adjustment to university life, life satisfaction, as well as positive affect.

Tyler L. Renshaw Margaret L. Hindman (2017) utilised a randomised controlled research design in order to test an adaptation of the gratitude letter-writing-and-visit intervention, using notes instead of letters and using instant communication technology instead of personal visits, with the aim of improving college students mental health. For this, 115 college students were taken as a sample. The intervention based on gratitude was examined and compared to two active control conditions, where one includes operating instant communication technology to send notes to others regarding something they learned in a

The Impact of Gratitude and Hope on the Optimism among College Students- An Analysis using Broaden and Build Theory

recent time span and another which is privately journaled about something they learned recently. The participants had to undertake the exercises mentioned three times a day for a total of 2 weeks duration. The results demonstrated that, in comparison to the active control conditions, the gratitude-based intervention showed to have greater positive effects on optimism and school connectedness, but that it also had small clinical effects on depression and gratitude.

Mehar Hema Kumari and Madnawat (2016) examined the effect of gratitude and forgiveness on well-being among 60 female college students of age 18-21 years old. The variables under study were gratitude, forgiveness and well-being which were measured by Gratitude Questionnaire (GQ-6; McCullough, 2002), Heartland Forgiveness Scale Thompson (2005) and Well-being Scale (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985), respectively. The results showed that there are significant effects of gratitude and forgiveness on well-being.

Chih-Che Lin (2015) examined that association among gratitude, self-esteem, depression, and suicidal ideation. 814 undergraduate participants (259 males and 555 females with mean age of 20.13 years) were chosen for this, who completed 4 inventories measuring the variables of interest. Structural equation modelling was utilised. Results revealed that gratitude had direct effects on individuals' self-esteem, depression, and suicidal ideation and indirect effects on individuals' suicidal ideation via self-esteem and depression, whereas self-esteem had direct effects on individuals' depression.

Ni, Shiguang; Yang, Ruidong; Zhang, Yufeng; Dong, Rui (2015) studied the mediating role of social support in the relationship between gratitude and loneliness. For this, 728 Chinese students from different colleges were selected, who had to complete 3 psychometric scales: the Social Support Rating Scale, the Gratitude Questionnaire-6, and the UCLA Loneliness Scale (version 3). Gratitude and social support together exerted protective effects against loneliness, and social support partially mediated the relationship between gratitude and loneliness. Consequently, gratitude promotes social support and, thus, can protect individuals against loneliness.

Laurence Boileau, Patrick Gaudreau, Alexandre Gareau, Melodie Chamandy (2020) aimed to investigate that academic satisfaction fluctuates across the day in the lives of the students and does not stay in transient state. The authors explored how optimism and pessimism are related to inter-individual differences in academic satisfaction as well as the relation between coping and academic satisfaction at both the between- and within-person levels. For this purpose, 235 undergraduate students were chosen as subjects who were asked to finish daily-diary measures of academic coping strategies along with academic satisfaction for the period of six consecutive days. The results revealed that at the *between-person* level, optimism was associated with greater academic satisfaction and that task-oriented coping was a significant mediator of this association, whereas, at the *within-person* level, it was observed that the daily satisfaction of students varies according to the coping strategies used on those specific days.

David B. Feldman, Maximilian Kubota (2015) conducted a cross-sectional study that showed the GPA of college students is predicted by Snyder's goal-directed hope construct. A sample of 89 college students administered Academic Self-Efficacy Scale, Hope Scale, Domain Specific Hope Scale (academic subscale), Life Orientation Test-Revised (optimism) and General Self-Efficacy Scale. The authors took a path-analytic model where academic-

The Impact of Gratitude and Hope on the Optimism among College Students- An Analysis using Broaden and Build Theory

specific expectancies such as academic hope, academic self-efficacy have direct paths to GPA, while generalised expectancies, such as general hope, general self-efficacy have paths to these academic-specific variables. The results for Generalised hope predicted that academic-specific hope and academic self-efficacy, both predicted GPA. On the contrary, optimism along with the general self-efficacy did not have any effect on neither the academic-specific expectancy variables nor the GPA of the college students.

METHODOLOGY

Research Problem

The study aims to investigate the correlation between gratitude, hope and optimism among college students as well as how gratitude and hope impacts optimism among college students.

Objective

- To examine the influence of gratitude and hope on optimism among college students.
- To examine the relationship among gratitude, hope and optimism.

Hypotheses

- There will be a significant association between gratitude, hope and optimism.
- Gratitude and hope will be the significant predictor of optimism.

Research design

- Correlational research design is used for this study.

Sample

Random sampling method was used in this study. The sample consisted of 140 participants (70- males & 70- females) who are the students of Amity University, Noida belonging to the age group of 18-23 years.

Research tools

- **The Gratitude Questionnaire: Six Item Form (GQ-6):** The scale was developed by McCullough, M. E., Emmons, R. A., & Tsang, J. (2002). The scale has an internal reliability with alphas between .82 and .87. It contains 6 items which have to be responded to by the participants on a scale of “1” to “7”, where 1 refers to “strongly disagree” and 7 refers to “strongly agree”. Two items 3 & 6 are reversely scored. This scale demonstrates how grateful an individual is with life and the life situations.
- **The Trait Hope Scale:** The scale was developed by Rick Snyder, (1991). This scale is 34% reliable and has 91% of structural validity. It has 12 items which are scored on a scale of 1 to 8, where 1 refers to “definitely false” and “8” refers to “definitely true”. This scale measures the extent of hope an individual has with the life circumstances. It has two dimensions which are agency (one’s belief of instigating change) and pathway (searching for alternative ways to achieve the goals).
- **Optimism/Pessimism Instrument (OPI):** This scale was developed by Dember, W.N., Martin, S.H., Hummer, M.K., Howe, S.R. & Melton, R.S. (1989) with test-retest reliability coefficient of 0.82. The scale consists of 56 items which are scored on a likert scale of 1 to 4, where 1 is “strongly agree” and 4 is “strongly disagree”. This scale tells about the level of optimism an individual has and how optimistic an individual is.

The Impact of Gratitude and Hope on the Optimism among College Students- An Analysis using Broaden and Build Theory

Procedure

The respondents were asked for consent before they were presented with the research form. Then, instructions were given to the participants to answer the questionnaire.

The confidentiality was ensured to the participants. The questionnaire had some demographic details in the beginning followed by three different parts for the three scales. After the data collection, scoring was done.

Data Analysis

A questionnaire was prepared with the help of all the three scales (The Gratitude Questionnaire-Six Item Form, The Trait Hope Scale, Optimism/Pessimism Instrument) which was shared with the participants. As the data was collected, it was arranged into an excel sheet in a desired manner which was followed by entering the data in the statistical software for further analysis. Correlational analysis and regression were the statistical techniques employed in the investigation. Specifically, correlational analysis was utilised to determine the association between the variables, gratitude, hope and optimism and regression was utilised to examine the relation of optimism to gratitude and hope.

RESULT

The study aims to investigate the correlation between gratitude, hope and optimism among college students as well as how gratitude and hope impacts optimism among college students. The results are as follows-

Table 1: Correlation between gratitude, hope and optimism.

		Score GRATITUDE	Score- HOPE	Score- OPTIMISM
Score GRATITUDE	Pearson Correlation	1	.562**	-.286**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<.001	<.001
	N	140	140	140
Score-HOPE	Pearson Correlation	.562**	1	-.507**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001		<.001
	N	140	140	140
Score-OPTIMISM	Pearson Correlation	-.286**	-.507**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001	
	N	140	140	140

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

Table 1 predicts that there is a significant relationship between gratitude, hope and optimism since $p(0.001) < 0.05$ and that there is a negative relationship between gratitude and optimism as well as hope and optimism but a positive relationship between gratitude and hope.

The Impact of Gratitude and Hope on the Optimism among College Students- An Analysis using Broaden and Build Theory

Table 2 shows that regression model is significant as $p(0.001) < 0.05$
Regression

		ANOVA				
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	5767.509	2	2883.754	23.675	<.001 ^b
	Residual	16687.713	137	121.808		
	Total	22455.221	139			

- a. Dependent Variable: Score-OPTIMISM
 b. Predictors: (Constant), Score-HOPE, Score GRATITUDE

Table 3 states that gratitude does not significantly predicts optimism as $p(0.977) > 0.05$ and hope significantly predicts optimism as $p(0.001) < 0.05$

		Coefficients				
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	140.110	5.900		23.747	<.001
	Score GRATITUDE	-.005	.165	-.003	-.028	.977
	Score-HOPE	-.611	.108	-.505	-5.677	<.001

- a. Dependent Variable: Score-OPTIMISM

DISCUSSION

The present study, *Gratitude, hope and optimism and how gratitude and hope impacts optimism among college students*, examined the relationship between gratitude, hope and optimism among college students. The objectives of the study included examining the influence of gratitude and hope on optimism among college students as well examining the relationship among gratitude, hope and optimism. For this research, the sample size was 140 (70 males & 70 females) in the age group of 18-23 years. A questionnaire was created which included the Gratitude Questionnaire-Six Item Form, The Trait Hope Scale, Optimism/Pessimism Instrument and was distributed among the participants after the consent of the participant. The analysis of collected data was done by using statistical tools like correlation & regression. The first hypothesis of the study is that there will be a significant association between gratitude, hope and optimism. The result showed in table 1 that there is a significant relationship between gratitude, hope and optimism as $p(0.001) < 0.05$. Hence, the hypothesis is proved right. Moreover, it can be noticed that all the variables share a negative relationship among each other which means as one variable increases, the other variable decreases. That is as gratitude increases optimism decreases and as hope increases optimism decreases and vice-versa. But, gratitude and hope share a positive relationship which means that as gratitude increases hope also increases and vice-versa. Hence, the hypothesis is partially right.

Rickson John Banares; John Mark Distor; Ian I. Llenares (2019) conducted a research on college students assessing the hope, gratitude and optimism on the students' flourishing

The Impact of Gratitude and Hope on the Optimism among College Students- An Analysis using Broaden and Build Theory

during COVID-19. The participants finished self-report measures of the scales like for the Adult Hope Scale, Gratitude Questionnaire, Life Orientation Test-Revised, and Flourishing Scale. To analyse the result, hierarchical regression was utilised. The results of study showed that all the variables are significantly related to each other and hope, gratitude and optimism significantly predicts flourishing among college students.

CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that there is a significant relationship between gratitude, hope and optimism among college students. Furthermore, gratitude and hope are positively associated with each other but, there is a negative association between hope and optimism as well as gratitude and optimism. This means that optimism decreases as hope and gratitude increases and vice-versa. On the other hand, as gratitude elevates, hope also elevates among college students. Moreover, as the study used Broaden and Build theory which states that positive emotions broaden the people's thought-action repertoires and build personal resources, this can be concluded that positive emotions like optimism, hope and gratitude can help a college student deal with adversities of life and the challenges life throws at them. They can cope up with hope and have an optimistic outlook towards life.

Limitations and further suggestions

This study was conducted online which could have played a role in predicting the results. Apart from this, more sample size could have been taken to have more reliable results.

Hence, for further research, it is suggested to conduct the research in an offline setting and consider a slight larger number of participants.

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The Impact of Gratitude and Hope on the Optimism among College Students- An Analysis using Broaden and Build Theory

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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