

## The Relationship between Gratitude and Psychological Distress among Male and Female Young Adults: A Correlational Study

Miss Tripti Chandrakar<sup>1</sup>, Mr. Mrityunjay Bandyopadhyay<sup>2\*</sup>,

Ms. Sushmita Mazumdar<sup>3</sup>

### ABSTRACT

Gratitude is a subjective experience that includes feeling happy and grateful, and it has been linked to a number of physical and mental health improvements. You feel thankful for something or somebody throughout their lives as well as react to thoughts and emotions such as compassion, love, and as many aspects of compassion as when people are experiencing gratitude. Psychological distress refers to the uncomfortable emotions or sensations that you might experience when you are feeling frustrated. Such sensations could indeed affect your everyday life and influence how you interact with others. This correlational study aimed to examine the relationship between gratitude and psychological distress in male and female young adults. This study used 'Gratitude Questionnaire (GQ-6)' and 'Kessler's Psychological Distress Scale' and a socio-demographic sheet. A convenient sampling technique is used with a sample size of 100. For analysis of data, both descriptive statistics (such as Mean and Standard Deviation) and inferential statistics (particularly, the Pearson Correlation method), will be used. The findings showed a correlation between Gratitude and Psychological Distress in overall sample. According to the findings of the study, it can be said that when gratitude increases, psychological distress decreases. Basically, this research tried to assess the relationship between gratitude and psychological distress in male and female young adults. Gratitude has been linked to a variety of psychological well-being outcomes as a pleasant sense of emotion and attitude of thanks. However, there has been little research on how gratitude affects psychological suffering, particularly in young individuals.

**Keywords:** *Gratitude, Psychological Distress, Sensation*

Gratitude has been praised by many intellectuals and scholars from various cultures and ages. It has been identified as a critical component in the development of strong relationships and ties among individuals, acting as the basis for harmonious interactions between family members, acquaintances, and intimate groups. Gratitude has also been regarded as a unifying factor that holds communities with one another, earning it the title of "social glue."

<sup>1</sup>Student at Amity University Chhattisgarh

<sup>2</sup>Student at Amity University Chhattisgarh

<sup>3</sup>Assistant Professor, AIBAS, Amity University Chhattisgarh

\*Corresponding Author

Received: June 21, 2023; Revision Received: September 08, 2023; Accepted: September 12, 2023

## The Relationship between Gratitude and Psychological Distress among Male and Female Young Adults: A Correlational Study

But, specifically, what's the essence of it? How does it originate? Why do particular individuals appear to be more innately appreciative than others? Are there any ways to encourage sentiments and demonstrations of gratefulness?

Researchers have achieved significant strides in learning about the organic roots of gratitude, the multiple benefits linked with it, and techniques to develop sentiments like gratefulness in daily life over the past decade. The phrase is derived from the Latin term "gratia," which means "grace, graciousness, or gratefulness." This fundamental word, gratia, also serves as the foundation for similar phrases such as elegance, a gift, and gratis, every one of which refer to pleasant emotions, behaviors, and notions. This link can be traced back to the roots of Early-Indo-European term "gwere," which means **"to praise, to celebrate; to be in contact with the Divine."** To put it simply, expressing thankfulness is like recognizing the presence of a higher power in our lives. It leads to the state of happiness where we can appreciate the value, goodness, and benefits in everything. That can be seen as a remedy for various types of suffering, making it a form of spirituality in its own right.

### *What is Gratitude?*

Most people intuitively understand what gratitude is, yet it can be difficult to articulate. Is this a feeling? Is this a good quality? Is this a habit? This can mean a variety of things to several individuals in a variety of situations. Scholars, on the other hand, have developed theoretical frameworks of thankfulness in order to scientifically examine it.

Gratitude, according to **Robert Emmons and Michael McCullough**, is a two-step process: firstly "recognising that one has obtained a positive outcome" & secondly "recognising that there may be an external source for this positive outcome."

Although many of these positive outcomes are offered by persons, leading to appreciation being regarded as a "other-oriented" appreciation behaviour, people may also convey appreciation to elements like Lord, destiny, the environment, and similar forces.

Some psychologists further segregate gratitude into 3 types: gratitude as a "affective trait" (one's overall tendency to be grateful), gratitude as a mood (regularly alterations in overall gratitude), and gratitude as an emotion (a less permanent feeling of gratitude that one may experience after receiving a gift or a favour from someone).

All three stages of gratitude might have an effect on one another. Affective traits, according to the psychologist Erika Rosenberg, are **"stable predispositions towards specific types of emotional responding" (Rosenberg, 1998)**. As a result, certain individuals may feel happy. Moods are described by **Rosenberg** as **"waxing and waning, varying throughout or across days."** And emotion tend to be immediate responses to specific situations, like being thankful after receiving a gift.

**McCullough, Tsang, and Emmons (2004)** state that **"grateful moods are created through both top-down effects (i.e., the influence of personality and affective traits), bottom-up effects (i.e., the influences of discrete interpersonal and emotional episodes), and the interaction of these effects."** The study found that individuals who possess a stronger inclination towards thankfulness are less likely to be influenced by external factors that may affect their daily moods or emotions for being grateful.

## The Relationship between Gratitude and Psychological Distress among Male and Female Young Adults: A Correlational Study

### *What is Psychological Distress?*

Mental discomfort, is explained by the **Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5)** as “any range of symptoms and experiences related to a person’s internal life; feelings of being troubled, confused, or out of the ordinary.” While most people suffer a temporary loss in stamina or attention, or might feel unsettled through a period of, psychological anguish can have far-reaching impact on a person. Indeed, mental disease might be accompanied by psychological anguish. It is crucial to remember the fact that encountering psychological pain does not always imply an appearance of a serious mental health disorder.

Dealing with psychological anguish can be difficult, and some people prefer to deal with it discreetly. Those who seek help at times of psychological distress, on the other hand, can learn good coping mechanisms and overcome long-term consequences.

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

**Zhang & Tsai, (2023)** found that higher levels of appreciation expressed at T1 were linked to less depressive symptoms and feelings of isolation at T3. Perceived social support at T2 was associated with these favourable outcomes, but not by help delivered by others. These findings have implications for understanding the protective role of thankfulness in improving mental well-being among college students.

**Junça-Silva et al. (2023)** found that everyday micro-events were strongly related to daily affect, which impacted daily levels of appreciation.

**Chen et al. (2023)** conducted a study to evaluate the impact of leader expressions of thankfulness on followers’ proactive behaviour. Both research findings validated the theory.

**Nabi, U. (2022)** conducted a study to evaluate the relationship between gratitude and emotional well-being, using McCullough’s GQ-6) and Portia and Shermila’s Emotional Well-Being Scale. Results showed that gratitude was positively associated with mental health, emotional resilience, emotional health, and emotional happiness.

**Patel et al., (2022)** A group analysis of 49993 people in 11 longitudinal investigations discovered that mental health declined before to the commencement of the COVID-19 pandemic, and that this impairment was sustained during the first year of the pandemic. Mental health deterioration varied by sociodemographic characteristics, such as age, gender, and education, and did not improve when societal constraints were removed.

**Geier & Morris, (2022)** investigated if an appreciation intervention could improve mental health of students during the COVID-19 epidemic. Results showed a significant increase in well-being in the treatment group, with a large effect size.

**Atad & Russo-Netzer (2021)** studied the impact of two elements (emphasizing positivism versus meaning) on well-being after a thankfulness intervention. The study, involving 448 individuals, found a significant increase in life satisfaction and elucidated the complex relationship between thankfulness and good health.

## The Relationship between Gratitude and Psychological Distress among Male and Female Young Adults: A Correlational Study

**Viertiö et al., (2021)** found that women had higher levels of psychological anguish than men, with being alone, dissatisfaction with the job, and conflict between work and family being key indicators of risk.

**Achdut & Refaeli, (2020)** Researchers investigated the relationship between joblessness, mental assets, associated risks, and feelings of distress among young Israeli people during the coronavirus outbreak using hierarchical linear models.

**Mason, (2019)** The study found a link between gratitude and psychological well-being measures, as well as a link between gratitude and psychological distress.

### *Objectives*

To study the relationship between gratitude and psychological distress in overall sample.

To study the relationship between gratitude and psychological distress in males.

To study the relationship between gratitude and psychological distress in females.

### *Hypothesis*

- **H01 – There is no significant relationship among gratitude and psychological distress in overall sample.**
- **H02 – There is no significant relationship among gratitude and psychological distress in males.**
- **H03 – There is no significant relationship among gratitude and psychological distress in females.**

## **METHODOLOGY**

The current study involves use of a Correlational Research Design, is a research approach in which the researcher investigates relationships between variables without the researcher controlling or manipulating any of them. The current study concentrated on two critical psychological constructs: gratitude and psychological distress. The researcher gathered samples in both online and offline mode.

- **Independent Variable:** Gratitude
- **Dependent Variable:** Level of Psychological Distress

**Sampling Method: Convenience Sampling** was utilised as the sampling technique for this study. A researcher decided to collect samples from 100 male and female young adults who were undergraduates from Amity University Chhattisgarh .

**Inclusion Criteria:** Age-18-25

Undergraduate Students

**Exclusion Criteria:** Below the age of 18 and above the age of 25

Teachers of a school or college

### *Tools Used*

**Gratitude Questionnaire Six- Item Form (GQ-6):** The “Gratitude Questionnaire Six-Item Form (GQ-6)” was developed by **McCullough, Emmons & Tsang in 2002**. This questionnaire measures a person’s level of gratitude. The questionnaire comprises of six

## The Relationship between Gratitude and Psychological Distress among Male and Female Young Adults: A Correlational Study

statements on gratitude, and respondents assess their agreement on a Likert scale with each statement. The **GQ-6** possesses good internal reliability, with reliability coefficients ranging from **.82** to **.87**. The questionnaire has high concurrent validity.

**Kessler's Psychological Distress Scale(K-10):** The **Kessler Psychological Distress Scale-10 (K10)** was designed by **Ronald C. Kessler** who was a famous psychologist and professor at Harvard Medical School. It is a commonly used self-report questionnaire that measures an individual's level of psychological distress and mental health. The **K-10** possesses good internal reliability as shown by a **Cronbach's Coefficient** of **0.88**. The concurrent validity of the instrument was found to be **0.722**.

### *Procedure*

The researcher gathered samples in both online and offline mode. Offline data was mostly collected from Amity University Chhattisgarh students from various departments. During campus hours, the researcher visited various courses and gave a brief overview of the research endeavor and its objectives. Sheets were given to interested participants to fill out alone or in groups of three to four students at most. The researcher created a general connection with the participants in order to make them feel at ease. Participant were given the opportunity to review the consent form and provide demographic information before receiving particular instructions for both measures. In offline mode, data collection took about 7-8 days.

Along with offline data, the researcher collected approximately 50 responses online via Google Forms. Because it was impossible to reach students in different parts of India in person, these forms were sent through various social networking sites and applications, such as WhatsApp, LinkedIn, and Instagram. The majority of the answers obtained via Google Forms were from students at unnamed universities across India.

### *Statistical Analysis*

Following the conclusion of data collection, the quantifiable data was statistically analyzed. Statistics are essential for depicting facts in a systematic way. It makes it simple to understand. The study employs two types of statistics: descriptive and inferential. The mean, median, mode & Standard Deviation are the illustrations of descriptive Statistics, whereas correlation was a type of inferential statistics. Pearson Product Moment correlation was determined between the variables given above using both MS-Excel and SPSS because the study was essentially a correlational design.

## **RESULTS & INTERPRETATION**

*Table 1: Descriptive Analysis Of 'Gratitude' of Male Young Adults*

S. No.	Particulars	Values
	<b>N</b>	40
	<b>Mean</b>	28.67
	<b>SD</b>	5.12

According to the observations in Table 1, the descriptive analysis of the participants in terms of gratitude is provided. A total of 40 observations in total, including male young adults.

The mean, which is nothing but the average of the given set of values was found to be 28.67.

## The Relationship between Gratitude and Psychological Distress among Male and Female Young Adults: A Correlational Study

According to the Standard of Variation, which is the standard deviation of the variable gratitude, the value is found to be 5.12, which indicates data values seems to be different from the mean of the set in the Normal Probability Curve.

**Table 2: Correlational Analysis Among Gratitude and Psychological Distress In Overall Sample**

		Gratitude	Psychological distress
Gratitude	Pearson Correlation	1	-.239*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.017
	N	100	100
Psychological distress	Pearson Correlation	-.239*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.017	
	N	100	100

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**Table 2** describes the findings of the Correlation among Gratitude and Psychological Distress in overall sample.

The SPSS was used to measure Pearson Product Correlation and the p-value of the relationship. According to the observations in **Table 5** **Table 2** it was seen that the Pearson Product Correlation Coefficient among the variables gratitude and psychological distress is -0.2 at the significance level of 0.05.

Along with r – value, p – value was found to be 0.017, which indicates that the p – value is smaller than the level of significance of 0.05. This indicates that the null hypothesis is rejected, and there is a significant correlation between Gratitude and Psychological Distress which is significant in nature. The nature of the Correlation is negative **and it's strong**

### DISCUSSION

In his studies, **Mason (2019)** discovered a link between gratefulness and well-being, as well as a link between gratitude and psychological suffering. In a similar way, **Wood et.al (2010)** conducted a study that found that people who practiced thankfulness exercises had lower levels of depression and stress. **Emmons and McCullough (2003)** investigated the effect of gratitude-based interventions on psychological health in a separate study. Individuals who kept a gratitude notebook for a lengthy period of time reported a greater degree of optimism, life satisfaction, and lower symptoms of depression when compared to a control group. These findings lend credence and authenticity to the idea that practicing thankfulness can help alleviate psychological suffering. In his studies, **Wood et. Al (2010)** found that people who practised regular gratitude exercises experienced greater levels of happiness, life satisfaction, and reduced level of depressive symptoms. In another study, **Emmons and McCullough (2003)** discovered that gratitude interventions were beneficial in lowering depression and anxiety symptoms. In his studies, **Wood et al. (2010)** discovered that gratitude was connected with lower levels of depression and anxiety. In another study, **Emmons and McCullough (2003)** reported that people who kept a gratitude journal reported greater levels of optimism and positive affect, and also experiences fewer negative physical symptoms. Finally, the current study demonstrates a strong and unfavourable link between gratitude and psychological distress in females. The research findings align with previous investigation

## The Relationship between Gratitude and Psychological Distress among Male and Female Young Adults: A Correlational Study

demonstrating the mental health advantages of fostering gratitude. Given the therapeutic potential, including gratitude-based interventions into psychiatric interventions and cultivating gratitude in daily life may be effective for lowering psychological distress and enhancing well-being in females.

### CONCLUSION

The results of the study shows that there exists a significant relationship between gratitude and psychological distress among overall sample. Also, it is found that when gratitude increases, psychological distress tends to decrease. This research tries to assess the relationship among gratitude and psychological distress between male and female young adults. Basically, this study was a correlational research design, it's a research method in which the researcher tries to investigate the relationships between variables without controlling or manipulating any of them.

### REFERENCES

- Achdut, N., & Refaeli, T. (2020, September 30). Unemployment and Psychological Distress among Young People during the COVID-19 Pandemic: Psychological Resources and Risk Factors. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 17(19), 7163. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17197163>
- Atad, O. I., & Russo-Netzer, P. (2021, September 14). The Effect of Gratitude on Well-being: Should We Prioritize Positivity or Meaning? *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 23(3), 1245–1265. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-021-00448-4>
- Chen, S., Zhu, Y., Guo, L., & Liu, W. (2023, January 19). The Impact of Leader Gratitude Expressions on Followers' Behaviours: Increasing Gratitude and Increases Proactivity. *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies*, 30(2), 187–204. <https://doi.org/10.1177/15480518231151575>
- Emmons, R. A., & McCullough, M. E. (2003, February). Counting blessings versus burdens: An experimental investigation of gratitude and subjective well-being in daily life. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 84(2), 377–389. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.84.2.377>
- Geier, M. T., & Morris, J. (2022, April 5). The impact of a gratitude intervention on mental well-being during COVID-19: A quasi-experimental study of university students. *Applied Psychology: Health and Well-Being*, 14(3), 937–948. <https://doi.org/10.1111/aphw.12359>
- Junça-Silva, A., Mosteo, L., & Lopes, R. R. (2023, January). The role of mindfulness on the relationship between daily micro-events and daily gratitude: A within-person analysis. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 200, 111891. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2022.111891>
- Mason, H. D. (2019, July 4). Gratitude, well-being and psychological distress among South African university students. *Journal of Psychology in Africa*, 29(4), 354–360. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14330237.2019.1647492>
- Nabi, U. (2022). Gratitude and emotional well-being among research students of Kashmir during COVID-19. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 10(1), 156-163. <https://doi.org/10.25215/1001.015>
- Patel, K., Robertson, E., Kwong, A. S. F., Griffith, G. J., Willan, K., Green, M. J., Di Gessa, G., Huggins, C. F., McElroy, E., Thompson, E. J., Maddock, J., Niedzwiedz, C. L.,

## The Relationship between Gratitude and Psychological Distress among Male and Female Young Adults: A Correlational Study

- Henderson, M., Richards, M., Steptoe, A., Ploubidis, G. B., Moltrecht, B., Booth, C., Fitzsimons, E., . . . Katikireddi, S. V. (2022, April 22). Psychological Distress Before and During the COVID-19 Pandemic Among Adults in the United Kingdom Based on Coordinated Analyses of 11 Longitudinal Studies. *JAMA Network Open*, 5(4), e227629. <https://doi.org/10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2022.7629>
- Viertiö, S., Kiviruuu, O., Piirtola, M., Kaprio, J., Korhonen, T., Marttunen, M., & Suvisaari, J. (2021, March 29). Factors contributing to psychological distress in the working population, with a special reference to gender difference. *BMC Public Health*, 21(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-021-10560-y>
- Zhang, Q., & Tsai, W. (2023, March 30). Gratitude and psychological distress among first-year college students: The mediating roles of perceived social support and support provision. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*. <https://doi.org/10.1037/cou0000665>

### **Acknowledgment**

The author(s) appreciates all those who participated in the study and helped to facilitate the research process.

### **Conflict of Interest**

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

**How to cite this article:** Chandrakar, T., Bandyopadhyay, M. & Mazumdar, S. (2023). The Relationship between Gratitude and Psychological Distress among Male and Female Young Adults: A Correlational Study. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 11(3), 3280-3287. DIP:18.01.307.20231103, DOI:10.25215/1103.307