

Gratitude Expression, Helping Behaviour and Psychosocial Wellbeing Among Adolescent Students in Kerala

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ABSTRACT

The present study highlighted tenants from positive psychology and proposed the predictive relationship of gratitude and helping behaviour on psychosocial well-being among adolescent students. For this purpose, a sample of (N=60) adolescents, (n=30) boys and (n=30) girls studying in government and private educational institutions of Kerala was selected. The Gratitude Questionnaire (McCullough, 2013), Helping Attitude Scale (Nickell, 1998), and Flourishing Scale (Diener and Biswas-Diener, 2009) were used. Pearson product moment correlational analysis was employed, that revealed a significant positive correlation among the study variables. Regression analysis showed that gratitude predicted psychosocial well-being whereas helping behaviour did not predicted among adolescents. Findings revealed the inevitability for enhancing the psychosocial wellbeing among adolescents. Further comprehensive exploration of psychosocial wellbeing will bring new insights of other predictors which are not studied in the present study.

Keywords: *Positive psychology, Gratitude Expression, Altruism, Psychosocial Well-Being, Adolescent Students*

During adolescence, there are major developments characterized by this period due to the formation of attitudes, personality traits and modes of adjustment hence causing great stress and confusion (Singh & Mishra, 2012). Adolescence is a difficult time when individuals' psychosocial development accelerates and can include maladaptive behaviours but also opportunities for significant growth and positive changes in the self-concept and identity (Erickson, 1963). According to Allen (2019) late adolescents age ranges from 18 to 21 are crucial as if at this period occurs the major transition from adolescence to adulthood. In fact, physical development tends to be matured, but major brain development, identity formation, and decision for independence, education, and career decisions are happening in this late adolescence. In addition, this period is critical for developing social, emotional, and cognitive capacities as well as for steering the challenges of adulthood and laying the groundwork for long-term success and wellbeing. In relation to

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adolescent development, the importance of psychological well-being is vital. Psychosocial well-being refers to positive functioning at inter- or intra-individual levels that may involve one's sense of relatedness with others and self-referent attitudes such as mastery experiences or personal growth (Ryff & Keyes, 1995). Subjective well-being refers to a range of affective evaluations on an individual's overall satisfaction with life. Psycho-social well-being is a cognitive quality possessed by individuals, families or communities that includes emotional, spiritual strengths coupled with healthy social connections (Erickson, 1963).

As individuals advance through the complexities of their social environments the need for fostering positive attitudes and behaviours is inevitable. The main focus is on the issue of expressing gratitude which is a highly emotional process with significant effects on individual and interpersonal behaviour. This study will thus explore how gratitude expression interacts with helping behaviour and psychosocial well-being among adolescents, explaining how these variables affect each other.

Gratitude studies are becoming common in the psychological research as it can have an impact on subjective well-being and interpersonal relationships. Late adolescence is very important because it is during this stage that individuals form social bonds and interact with peers. Furthermore, recent studies have indicated that gratitude serves as positive emotion that not only enhances personal well-being but also boosts prosocial behaviours like helping others or altruism.

Grasping how the expression of gratitude correlates to the helping behaviour among late adolescents may give an opportunity to support and develop a good environment in educational institutions. Adolescence is a critical stage for ethical and social growth where viewpoints as well as conducts towards others are molded and established. This research aims at identifying possible ways by which teaching gratitude could be tied to propensities of adolescents towards help.

Equally, psychosocial wellbeing is one of the fundamental aspects that underpin this study which embraces the wholeness of adolescent development. An aspect of psychosocial wellbeing that includes emotional resilience, connectedness and self-esteem is closely linked with expressions of gratitude and helping attitudes. It is hoped that this study will help redefine what it means to flourish in adolescence through understanding how these constructs are interrelated so as to suggest programs that can enhance positive development among late adolescents.

In light of the aforementioned, this research aims to understand how gratitude expression relate to helping behaviour and psychosocial well-being among adolescent students. By embarking on this exploration, this study hopes to offer deep insights that not only deepen theoretical understanding but also inform practical strategies for fostering positive youth development and promoting thriving adolescent communities.

A study on gratitude and altruism as predictors of psychosocial well-being among adolescents was conducted by Khadim and Shahid (2017). The study was highlighted the facts from the predictive relationship of gratitude and altruism on psychosocial well-being among adolescents. They have examined that traits of gratitude and altruism positively and significantly predict psychosocial well-being among adolescents. The study variables were positively related to each other, it was found that gratitude predicts psychosocial well-being

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less significantly than altruism. In addition, it was also proposed that girls tend to be more grateful than boys.

Pareek and Jain (2012) studied on subjective well-being in relation to helping behaviour and forgiveness among adolescents. It has been found that the predictive value of forgiveness does not enhance the prediction of subjective well-being whereas; altruism does enhance the prediction of subjective well-being. Thus, it appears that the relationship between altruism and subjective well-being is remarkable which is noteworthy in females as compared to males and altruism plays a role in enriching subjective well-being, mainly of female adolescents.

A study on gratitude and subjective wellbeing in adolescence; examining gender differences which is conducted by Froh et al, (2008). The present study investigated the interconnection between gratitude, subjective well-being and gender in early adolescence. They were analyzed a positive relation between gratitude and positive affect or wellbeing among the adolescent population. Gratitude demonstrated a strong relation with the following positive affects like proud, hopeful, inspired, forgiving, and excitement which contributes to positive subjective well-being.

METHODOLOGY

Aim

The aim of the current study is to examine the influence of gratitude expression and helping behaviour in predicting psychosocial wellbeing as well as to find out the relationship between gratitude expression, helping behaviour and psychosocial wellbeing among adolescents.

Objectives

- To find out the influence of gratitude expression and helping behaviour in predicting psychosocial wellbeing among adolescents.
- To find out the relationship between gratitude expression, helping behaviour and psychosocial wellbeing among adolescents.

Hypotheses

- There will be no significant influence of gratitude expression and helping behaviour in predicting psychosocial wellbeing among adolescents.
- There will be no significant relationship between gratitude expression, helping behaviour and psychosocial wellbeing among adolescents.

Participants

In the present study, a sample of adolescents (N=60), (n=30 Boys & n=30 Girls) between the ages of 18-21 were drawn out from Government and private educational institutions of Kerala by using simple random sampling method.

Table 1 Break-up of the participants based on gender

Male	Female
30	30

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Tools

- **The Gratitude Questionnaire-GQ-6 (McCullough, 2013)**

GQ-6 was developed by McCullough (2013). The Gratitude Questionnaire-Six-Item Form (GQ-6) is a self-report questionnaire designed to assess individual differences in the proneness to experience gratitude in daily life. Respondents endorse each item on a 7-point Likert-type scale (where 1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree).

Scoring:

Two items are reverse-scored (3, 6) to hinder response bias. The scores for each item are summed up including 3 and 6 to form a total GQ-6 score. This number should be between 6 and 42.

A high score shows grateful nature and low score depicts less grateful nature. The GQ-6 takes less than 5 minutes to complete, but there is no time limit.

Reliability and validity:

Cronbach's alpha estimates for the six-item totals have ranged from .76 to .84. Scores on the GQ-6 correlate substantially with other measures hypothesized to assess the extent to which people experience gratitude in daily life.

- **The Helping Attitude Scale- HAS (Nickell, 1998)**

The Helping Attitude Scale (HAS) was developed by Nickell (1998). It's a 20-item measure of respondents' beliefs, feelings, and behaviors associated with helping. Each item is answered on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Scoring:

Items 1, 5, 8, 11, 18 and 19 are reverse scored. The scores for each item are summed up to form an overall score, ranging from 20 to 100. According to the author, a 60 is a neutral score.

Reliability and validity:

The internal consistency for the 20 items (Cronbach's Alpha) was .869 and the test-retest reliability ($r=.85$). A high score shows a more altruistic nature and low score depicts less altruistic nature.

- **Flourishing Scale- FS (Diener et al., 2009)**

This scale was developed by Diener et al., (2009). It is a brief 8-item summary measure of the respondent's self-perceived success important areas such as relationships, self-esteem, purpose and optimism. The scale provides a single psychological well-being score.

Scoring:

It was a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The scores for each item are summed up to form an overall score, ranging from 8 (lowest possible) to 56 (highest possible in PWB).

Reliability and validity:

In the reliability study scale, the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was calculated as .80. Test-retest scores showed that there was a high level of positive and meaningful relation between

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the first and second applications of the scale ($r=0.86$, $p<.001$). A high score represents a person with many psychological resources and strengths.

Inclusion Criteria

- The age range of the participants between 18 and 21 years were included.

Exclusion Criteria

- The participants belonging to other states except Kerala state was excluded.

Statistical Analysis

Based on the objectives and hypothesis stated, the statistical techniques used to interpret the data is Karl Pearson's coefficient of correlation, Multiple Regression analysis.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The study aims to examine the influence of gratitude expression and helping behaviour in predicting psychosocial wellbeing and to find out whether there is any relationship between gratitude expression, helping behaviour and psychosocial wellbeing among adolescents.

H₀1. There will be no significant influence of gratitude expression and helping behaviour in predicting psychosocial wellbeing among adolescents.

Table 2 Influence of gratitude expression and helping behaviour on psychosocial wellbeing

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	't'	R Square	F
		B	S.E.	Beta			
Psychosocial Wellbeing	Gratitude	0.47	0.19	0.32	2.46	0.17	6.12*
	Helping behaviour	0.12	0.10	0.15	1.18		

*Significant at 0.05 level

The table 2 showed the results of regression analysis showing the influence of gratitude expression and helping behaviour in predicting psychosocial wellbeing among adolescents. Both gratitude expression and helping behaviour are independent variables and dependent variables is psychosocial wellbeing. The regression analysis showed that gratitude is a predictor of psychosocial wellbeing whereas helping behaviour is not a predictor of psychosocial wellbeing. Findings revealed that gratitude expression significantly predicted psychosocial wellbeing ($\beta = 0.32$, $p < 0.05$). While the standardized coefficient (beta) is 0.32, indicating a moderately positive relationship between gratitude and psychosocial wellbeing, the unstandardized coefficient (B) demonstrating the relationship between gratitude and psychosocial wellbeing is 0.47, meaning that for every one unit increase in gratitude, psychosocial wellbeing increases by 0.47 units. The statistical significance of the connection at $p < 0.05$ is indicated by the 't' value of 2.46. Furthermore, gratitude can account for 17% of the variance in psychological health, according to the R Square value of 0.17. As gratitude expression increases recurrently adolescents tend to show higher levels of psychosocial wellbeing. Findings aligns with previous researches on the influence of gratitude expression on mental health. Gratitude expression fosters positive emotions as well as wellbeing among individuals across all age groups. A similar study by Umarrah and Aqsa (2017) supported the findings of the present study. They have examined that gratitude is a

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positive predictor of psychosocial well-being among a sample of adolescents. Gratitude can lead to increased levels of well-being (Emmons & Crumpler, 2000). In a study by Emmons and McCullough (2003) found that people who had focused on gratitude in their lives showed significantly more optimism in many areas of their lives, including health and exercise. Gratitude improves the overall wellbeing of individuals. Educational institutions who are practicing gratitude shows lessened stress, depression and anxiety. Decreased mental health problems directs to positive wellbeing among people (Krause,2006). Gratitude acts as a potent predictor of psychosocial wellbeing thereby promoting resilience, positive emotions and social relationships.

However, helping behavior does not predict the psychosocial wellbeing among adolescents' as per the findings. As the relationship between helping behavior and psychosocial wellbeing is not statistically significant ($\beta = 0.15$, $p > 0.05$) and 't' value is not significant. Findings of the present study does not align to the previous researches as practicing helping behaviour is commonly assumed to be advantageous for psychosocial wellbeing. The relationship between helping behavior and psychosocial wellbeing is more composite and complicated. But in this context, there can be many reasons attributed to the present findings in this study. One of the reasons can be attributed is the role of various potential factors that can mediate or moderate the relationship between helping behaviour and psychosocial wellbeing. Other reasons include the nature, quality and frequency of helping behaviour among adolescents may also influences the psychosocial wellbeing. Hence, the hypothesis H₁ is partially accepted.

In this study further in-depth exploration is required in understanding the complex interplay of helping behaviour and psychosocial wellbeing as present study could not fully capture the nuanced effects of helping behaviour on psychosocial wellbeing. Additional research on various populations and contexts may show variations in the effects of helpful behaviour on psychological well-being.

H₂: There will be no significant relationship between gratitude expression and altruism among adolescents

Table 3 Correlation between gratitude expression, helping and psychosocial wellbeing

	Gratitude Expression	Helping behaviour	Psychosocial Wellbeing
Gratitude Expression	()		
Helping behaviour	0.42*	()	
Psychosocial Wellbeing	0.39*	0.29*	()

**Significant at the 0.05 level*

Table 3 showed the correlation between gratitude expression, helping behaviour and psychosocial wellbeing among adolescents. The null hypothesis H₂ stating “there will be no significant relationship between gratitude expression, helping behaviour and psychosocial wellbeing among adolescents” is not accepted. Hence the alternative hypothesis is accepted. It is concluded that there is a positive correlation exist between gratitude expression, helping behaviour and psycho social wellbeing among adolescents.

Firstly, findings revealed a moderate positive correlation between gratitude expression and helping behaviour ($r = 0.42^*$). Therefore, individuals who tend to express gratitude more

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frequently are also more likely to exhibit a helping attitude towards others. This finding aligns with previous research indicating that gratitude is related with helping behaviour. A study which was conducted by McCullough et al. (2002) supported the findings of the present study. The traits of gratitude and helping behaviour were positively related to each other. People tend to appreciate a more helping and altruistic person and in addition, people who are more prone to be grateful are more expected to share their belongings/possessions with others. Helping behaviour and gratitude expression are related through a complex interplay of different factors such as psychological, social, and personal factors. Individuals who tend to show frequent gratitude expression are more inclined to help others. The moderate correlation between gratitude expression and helping behaviour result from shared values of kindness and empathy, societal norms promoting reciprocity, and the psychological benefits associated with both behaviors. While expressing gratitude might operate as positive reinforcement for helping behaviour, performing acts of kindness can inspire sentiments of thankfulness, strengthening the inclination to help others. Furthermore, people may be motivated by intrinsic helping motives to show gratitude and assist others, which can reinforce a positive feedback loop of fulfilling personal relationships and social interactions. Thus, gratitude expression and helping behaviour are both associated each influencing and reinforcing the other in promoting prosocial behavior and enhancing individual wellbeing.

The correlation value between gratitude expression and psychosocial wellbeing among adolescents is significant ($r=0.39^*$) and there exists a significant relationship between gratitude expression and psychosocial wellbeing among adolescents. Earlier studies on gratitude (Froh et al., 2010) supports the findings of this study. It is concluded that gratitude is longitudinally associated with an important indicator of psychological and social well-being, social integration and gratitude helps to initiate upward connection toward greater emotional and social well-being.

The correlation value is significant for helping behaviour and psychosocial wellbeing among adolescents ($r= 0.29^*$). There is a significant positive correlation between helping behaviour and psychosocial wellbeing among adolescents. A study by Schwartz et al., (2009) supported the findings of this study. They have examined that adolescents who engage in altruistic social interest behaviors experience better mental and social health and have lower mortality rates than non-altruistic adults. There was no association between providing emotional support and psychosocial health, but there were many associations were shown between altruism and wellbeing like positive social relations, purpose in life, and self-acceptance.

Conclusively, the present study aims to examine the influence of gratitude expression and helping behaviour on psychosocial wellbeing among adolescents. The results showed that there existed a significant positive relation between the study variables and that gratitude expression significantly predicted psychosocial well-being among adolescents whereas helping behaviour did not predicted. Findings revealed the necessity for enhancing the psychosocial wellbeing among adolescents. Further comprehensive exploration of psychosocial wellbeing will help in the discovery of other predictors which are not studied in the present study. Gratitude development practices such as gratitude journaling, gratitude letters, or gratitude exercises, within curricula and therapeutic settings will have drastic change in the wellbeing promotion. Teachers and student counselors will benefit by the tailored intervention packages. Further research is necessary in exploring the nuanced

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relationship between helping behavior and psychosocial wellbeing among individuals. In conclusion, gratitude expression emerges as a significant predictor of psychosocial wellbeing among adolescents whereas the role of helping behavior lacks clarity.

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Conflict of Interest

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