

Gratitude, Grit and Well-being Predicting Life Satisfaction among University Students

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ABSTRACT

The present study aimed to assess the impact of gratitude, grit and well-being on life satisfaction among university students. For this, a cross-sectional survey design was adopted. Overall, 146 university students participated in this study, comprising 74 males and 72 females. Data was collected using “Gratitude Questionnaire-Six Item Form (GQ-6)”, “the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS)”, “the Grit-O Scale”, and “Brief inventory of thriving”. Data was analysed using correlation and multiple regression. The findings revealed that gratitude, grit, well-being and life satisfaction showed positive association among university students. Further, the females showed higher levels of grit and life satisfaction. Well-being was the individual predictor of satisfaction with life in males, females and overall sample. Thus, the study highlights the significance of gratitude, grit and overall well-being in fostering life satisfaction among the students.

Keywords: *Gratitude, Grit, Well-being, Life-satisfaction, University students*

Since the start of the positive psychology movement, gratitude has received a lot of attention from psychologists (Emmons & McCullough, 2003). Gratitude is traditionally defined as the “feeling grateful for a good or kind behavior from anyone” (Froh et al., 2007). In contrast, the emotional state of gratitude is “immediate and often a brief psychological response to an appraisal of a particular circumstance” (Watkins, 2014). Emmons and McCullough (2003) state that gratitude is the feeling of a favourable personal consequence that is not always earned or deserved but rather results from the deeds of another person. Moreover, gratitude is characterized by appreciation for the social and psychological resources that are present in one's life. It is believed that grateful people have better perspectives on their social environment and stronger social connections (Kashdan et al., 2006, Wood et al., 2008). In addition, emphasising the good things in life and developing sentiments of appreciation, practicing thankfulness can build stronger social bonds, increase pleasant emotions, and increase life satisfaction. Thus, such individuals feel more a part of their society.

Duckworth and associates (2007) define *grit* as a measure of a person's capacity for persistent effort in the face of difficulty. It is considered as a crucial quality needed for

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success in academic domain. Grit, characterized by persistent passion and tenacity, may make a person feel a greater sense of control over his life, enhance resilience in dealing with adversity and maintain perseverance to accomplish lasting goals, all of which are key in increasing one's life satisfaction (Duckworth et al., 2007).

Well-being includes feeling well and doing well, taking charge of one's life, having strong connections and a purposeful life, as well as experiencing positive feelings like enjoyment, satisfaction, and potential development (Huppert, 2009). Higher education policy-making now substantially considers a student's whole development rather than only their cognitive growth as indicated by their academic performance (Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation CESE, 2015). Furthermore, it is generally acknowledged that educational institutions have a significant duty to promote and support students' well-being under this integrated perspective.

Life satisfaction is determined by an individual's cognitive and affective evaluations of his life (Diener et al., 1985). Pavot & Diener (1993) consider life satisfaction as one of the cognitive aspects of subjective well-being. As per the studies, individuals reporting close relations with family and friends, sense of purpose and meaning in lives, good physical health, and a stable financial situation tend to experience high life satisfaction. In contrast, people struggling with loneliness, financial hardship, health problems, or dissatisfaction in their careers may experience lower life satisfaction (Helliwell et al., 2021).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Previous studies have assessed the connection between gratitude and life satisfaction, which is seen as a comprehensive assessment of one's life's quality and is recognized as a crucial element of subjective well-being (Diener et al., 2003). For instance, a study assessed the relationship of gratitude with various domains of life satisfaction in US and Japan. All four life satisfaction variables were shown to positively correlate with gratitude; however, the correlation between gratitude and life satisfaction and relationship satisfaction was the strongest. There was no relationship between gratitude and job or health satisfaction. Further, it was also shown that women, extraverted individuals, and those in the US were more grateful, and those having lesser education were less grateful. These results imply that gratitude has specific implications for certain domains of life satisfaction and should be considered in cultural contexts (Robustelli & Whisman, 2018).

Moreover, Duckworth and colleagues (2007) consider grit as a personality trait that is essential for success not only in academic domain (Casali et al., 2023) but also in various spheres of life (Khan & Khan, 2017). Research has demonstrated that grit is favourably linked to life satisfaction (Khan & Khan, 2017). However, additional factors may mediate and moderate (Li et al., 2018), or directly affect this association (Singh & Jha, 2008). Furthermore, it has been discovered that people with higher levels of grit experienced greater life satisfaction thus, highlighting the significance of developing grit and self-esteem as factors in enhancing satisfaction with life (Li et al., 2018).

A central theme in positive psychology is to understand how individuals' experience of happiness is closely linked to their overall satisfaction with life. The majority of researches claim that happiness and life satisfaction show a positive relationship (Lin et al., 2010) while considering the nature of happiness as more affective and that of life satisfaction as more cognitive. Although some analysts view happiness and life satisfaction as interchangeable concepts (Diener, 2006). Nevertheless, life satisfaction is considered as more nuanced than

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happiness. Additionally, happiness and well-being are sometimes used interchangeably. Prior studies have also explored the general life satisfaction or satisfaction derived from specific areas of life, such as family life, friend relationships, work and earnings, and schooling and education (Diener, 2000; Ball & Chernova, 2008).

Rationale of the Study

In this modern academic environment, there is a growing need to understand the psychological factor that contribute to students' mental health outcomes which is characterised by rising academic demands, social expectations, and uncertainty connected to careers. Therefore, it became essential to study the predictors of well-being and life satisfaction. Furthermore, there is a significant knowledge gap on how gratitude, grit, well-being and life satisfaction will operate in Indian context as large number of current literatures is based on Western cultural contexts. Cultural factors may influence the expression and impact of gratitude and grit, making it imperative to study these relationships among Indian students.

Previous research has independently investigated the links between gratitude and life satisfaction (Armenta et al., 2022), gratitude and grit (Millonado Valdez et al., 2021), and the combined influence of gratitude, grit, and subjective well-being (Natalia et al., 2022). The individual roles of gratitude, grit, and well-being are well-documented; nevertheless the simultaneous influence of these factors on life satisfaction among university students is underexplored especially in the Indian setting. Thus, this research gap has been addressed in this study which has examined the impact of gratitude, grit, and well-being in Indian university students' life satisfaction.

Hypotheses

1. There will be significant gender difference in gratitude, grit, well-being, and life satisfaction among university students.
2. There will be a relationship between gratitude, grit, well-being, and life satisfaction among university students.
3. Gratitude, grit, and well-being will significantly predict life satisfaction among university students.

METHODOLOGY

Design

The survey design used in this study was cross-sectional. Gratitude, Grit, well-being were the predictors and life satisfaction was the criterion.

Participants

A total of one forty- six (146) students, with the mean age of 21.04 (SD=2.18), participated in this study. Among them, 74 were males and 72 were females. The inclusion criteria for the selection of participants were: age between 18 and 30 years, and participants having no history of psychiatric or neurological disorders. There were 74 male (50.7%) students and 72 female students (49.3%). There were 71 UG students and 75 PG students pursuing courses from Faculty of Social Sciences in Banaras Hindu University.

Measures

- **Gratitude Questionnaire (GQ-6):** It is a self-report tool designed by McCullough et al. (2002) to evaluate variations among individuals in a tendency to experience gratitude in daily life. All the six items of this questionnaire were rated on a 7-point

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Likert scale, where 1 denoted strongly disagree and 7 denoted strongly agree. The scores for items three and six are inverted. With reliability coefficients ranging from 0.76 to 0.87, the scale has shown strong internal consistency (McCullough et al., 2011). With a value of 0.73, the Cronbach's alpha for the present study indicated moderate internal consistency of this questionnaire.

- **Grit-O scale:** Developed by Duckworth et al. (2007), the Grit-O Scale comprises of twelve items, which are scored on a 5-point Likert scale. Reverse scoring is used for items 2, 3, 5, 7, 8, and 11 that are part of the interest subscale. The total of all item responses is divided by 12 to determine the overall grit score. Scores vary from 1 (“not at all gritty”) to 5 (“extremely gritty”). The overall scale in the current study showed a Cronbach's alpha of 0.72, indicating acceptable internal consistency, whereas the Cronbach's alpha for both subscales in the original study was 0.84 (Duckworth et al., 2007).
- **Brief Inventory of Thriving (BIT):** It is a concise instrument designed to evaluate general well-being which goes beyond the conventional division between hedonic and eudaimonic viewpoints. It highlights a comprehensive approach to optimal functioning and human flourishing (Duan et al., 2016). This scale comprised of 10 items, and each one represents a different aspect of wellbeing. It is a quick diagnostic tool for mental health and a valuable indicator of psychological well-being because participants answer on a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 stands for strongly disagree and 5 stands for strongly agree.
- **Satisfaction with life Scale (SWLS):** A brief 5-item measure based of 7- point Likert scale also called life satisfaction was developed by Diener et al. (1985). It is employed to measure a person's general cognitive satisfaction with their life. Participants have to respond to each of the statements rated from 1= strongly disagree to 7= strongly agree. The range of the total score lies between 5 to 35, where greater levels of life satisfaction is indicated by higher scores. The current study produced a reliability coefficient of 0.73, whereas the original scale showed strong internal consistency with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.887 (Diener et al., 1985).

Demographic form

The demographic form included participant's personal details such as gender, age, and course.

Procedure

Students of the Banaras Hindu University's social science faculty in Varanasi participated in the study. Informed consent from each participant was obtained in the study. A written document describing the study's objectives and procedures was provided to all participants. Additionally, participants in the study were informed about their right to withdraw at any stage of the study. They were also assured that their responses will remain confidential and anonymous. A brief inventory of thriving, the SWLS, the 12-item Grit Scale, the 6-item Gratitude Questionnaire, and demographic data were completed by the participants in a single session that lasted roughly 15 to 20 minutes; participants finished all of the scales. Further, the data were analyzed using SPSS version 20 software.

RESULT

Participants' Demographic Characteristics

The mean age of the current study's participants was found to be 21.04 years. There were 49.3% females and 50.7% males in the sample. In terms of their educational qualifications,

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51.4% of participants were pursuing postgraduate degrees, whereas 48.6% were undergraduate students.

Gender Difference in variables

Independent *t* test was performed to examine the gender difference. Male and female students differed significantly on grit $t(144) = -2.03, p < .05$ and life satisfaction levels $t(144) = -1.99, p < .05$. Female students were found to have higher grit ($M = 3.46, SD = .50$) and life satisfaction ($M = 23.21, SD = 5.34$) compared with male students ($M = 3.28, SD = .56$), ($M = 21.39, SD = 5.68$). Gratitude ($t(144) = -.79$) and well-being ($t(144) = 1.16$) did not show significant gender differences.

The data were analysed in terms of Pearson's correlation (Pearson's *r*), and multiple regression analysis was performed using enter method in SPSS version 20. In the analysis, the predictors were gratitude, grit, and well-being and life satisfaction was the criterion. Table 1 displays the correlation results, and the results of multiple regression are displayed in Table 2.

Table 1.0 Summary of Correlation between Predictors and Criterion of male, female and overall Participants.

	Life-Satisfaction (Male)	Life-Satisfaction (Female)	Life-Satisfaction (Overall)
Gratitude	.15	.35**	.26**
Grit	.23*	.11	.20*
Well-being	.56**	.67**	.59**

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$.

A significant and positive correlation of grit ($r = .23, p < .05$) and well-being ($r = .56, p < .01$) with life satisfaction was obtained among male students. Furthermore, a positive correlation of both well-being ($r = .67, p < .01$) and gratitude ($r = .35, p < .01$) with life satisfaction was found to be significant among female students. When considering the overall sample, life satisfaction was significantly positively correlated with gratitude ($r = .26, p < .01$), well-being ($r = .59, p < .01$), and grit ($r = .20, p < .05$).

The correlation analysis also revealed that there were some predictor variables that did not significantly correlate with life satisfaction in either gender. Among male students, the correlation of life satisfaction with gratitude was not significant ($r = .15, p > .05$). Similarly, among female students, the correlation of grit with life satisfaction was insignificant ($r = .11, p > .05$).

Table 2.0 Multiple Regression of male participants (n=74).

Predictors	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>
Grit	-.06	-.58	1.14
Well-being	.61	.73	.14

Note: *B* = Unstandardized coefficient, *SE* = Standardized error, β = Standardized coefficient
* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$.

Multiple regression was performed to investigate whether grit and well-being could predict the levels of life satisfaction among male students. The overall model was statistically significant, $F(3, 70) = 10.88, p < .01$, and accounted for 32% of the variance in life

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satisfaction ($R^2 = .32$), indicating a moderate level of explained variance. Moreover, well-being emerged as a significant and strong predictor ($\beta = .61$, $p < 0.01$), suggesting the strong link of higher well-being with increased life satisfaction in male participants.

Table 2.1 Multiple Regression of female participants ($n=72$).

Predictors	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>
Gratitude	.03	.03	.10
Well-being	.71	.72	.11

Note: *B* = Unstandardized coefficient, *SE* = Standardized error, β = Standardized coefficient
* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$.

Similarly, using the enter method of multiple regression analyses, the effect of predictors (gratitude and well-being) on life satisfaction among female students was investigated. These results are displayed in table 2.1. The overall model was statistically significant, $F(3, 68) = 20.48$, $p < .01$, and accounted for 47% of the variance in life satisfaction ($R^2 = .47$), indicating a substantial level of explained variance. Further, the higher well-being is closely linked with greater life satisfaction in female participants, well-being was discovered to be a strong and significant predictor of life satisfaction ($\beta = .71$, $p < 0.01$).

Table 2.2 Multiple Regression of overall sample ($N=146$).

Predictors	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>
Gratitude	.01	.01	.08
Grit	-.04	-.47	.77
Well-being	.60	.66	.09

Note: *B* = Unstandardized coefficient, *SE* = Standardized error, β = Standardized coefficient
* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$.

Multiple regression analyses were done again to determine the effect of predictors (gratitude, grit and well-being) on the overall students' life satisfaction, and the results are given in table 2.2. The overall model was statistically significant, $F(3, 142) = 25.04$, $p < .01$, and accounted for 35% of the variance in life satisfaction ($R^2 = .35$), indicating a moderate effect size. Among the predictors, well-being emerged as a strong and significant predictor of life satisfaction ($\beta = .60$, $p < 0.01$), suggesting that higher well-being is linked with greater life satisfaction.

The regression analyses found that well-being is the only significant predictor of life satisfaction, and this finding was consistent for both male and female participants, as well as for the entire sample. Notably, the greatest variance in life satisfaction was explained by the model among female participants ($R^2 = .47$), followed by the broader sample ($R^2 = .35$) and male participants ($R^2 = .32$). This suggests that well-being has a significant impact on life satisfaction among female participants.

DISCUSSION

The present study assessed the association between university students' life satisfaction, well-being, grit, and gratitude. Based on the results obtained from the correlation analysis, the first hypothesis was accepted, which claimed that among university students, there would be an association between life satisfaction, well-being, grit, and gratitude. Further, the findings showed that the level of grit and life satisfaction among male and female students differed significantly, suggesting that gender may have an impact on students' determination

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to achieve their goals and their general assessment of life. However, there were no noticeable gender differences in well-being and gratitude, indicating that both genders experience these positive psychological constructs in a similar way. Thus, our results partially support the second hypothesis. Moreover, the results of regression analysis confirmed that gratitude, grit, well-being will predict the level of life satisfaction among university students. Hence, the third hypothesis was also accepted. The results indicate that having a sense of purpose, being optimistic, feeling fulfilled, achieving goals, feeling like you belong in a community, and having people who value you are all related to increased life satisfaction levels.

Our results are in line with the previous studies that have explored the relationship between life satisfaction, well-being, grit, and gratitude. For instance, Liu et al. (2022) conducted a study on Chinese university students and observed that gratitude and grit were positively associated. Expressing gratitude can improve a person's ability to bounce back from stressful events, lower negative emotions, shield them from mental illness, and motivate them to work hard to achieve their goals (Fredrickson 2004; Emmons & Mishra 2012). Moreover, gratitude seems to expand people's immediate and momentary thoughts to help strengthen or build personal resources (e.g., psychological or cognitive resources) and increase well-being, as pointed out by Fredrickson's (2001) broaden-and-build theory (Czyżowska & Gurba 2022; Jiang et al. 2022). Thus, level of life satisfaction, life meaning, psychological freedom, and sense of control rise with the increases in the amount of expressed gratitude (Lee et al. 2015; Smith & Snell 2009).

Research has also shown a positive connection between gratitude and life satisfaction (Alkozei et al., 2018). It indicates that being thankful and grateful in life and being able to appreciate people, events and situations with age are related to increased levels of life satisfaction. Previously, Diener et al. (2012) had indicated that a person's level of life satisfaction is significantly impacted by their purpose in life. Moreover, grit is an essential component in the pursuit of meaningful goals, which determine life's purpose (Vainio et al., 2016). This indicates that increase in life satisfaction is related to being hardworking, not discouraged by setbacks, perseverant, diligent etc. The current study also demonstrates positive relationship of well-being relationship with life satisfaction among female university students. Similar results were reported in women entrepreneurs residing in Hyderabad, India. However, the scale used to capture well-being in the study was developed by Ryff (Samyukta & Swathi, 2023).

Additionally, female participants reported higher grit and satisfaction with life as compared to male participants. In the majority of the tested groups, research showed that women were more satisfied with their lives than men, even in the face of less favourable external circumstances (Joshi & Jovanović, 2020). However, contradictory results have also been obtained in a study which discovered no difference in the grit scores of men and women. Females were only marginal higher than males (Sigmundsson et al., 2021).

Thus, the study emphasizes on the influence of grit, gratitude and well-being in predicting life satisfaction. The study's limitations include self-report measures, smaller sample size, non-inclusion of qualitative approach to explore gratitude, life satisfaction and well-being.

Implications

University life is a crucial time in the lives of young adults, where they experience significant changes and transitions. During this time, university students face different

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challenges, including academic stress, social isolation, financial difficulties, and uncertainty about their future careers. These challenges can considerably impact their life satisfaction. Therefore, it is essential for students' academic success and general well-being to comprehend the elements that contribute to their life satisfaction. Gratitude, grit, well-being and life satisfaction are essential psychological aspects which are linked to positive mental health outcomes in various contexts. Understanding relationships among these variables may provide valuable insights for promoting and strengthening positive mental health outcomes and enhancing the overall well-being of Indian university students. This study is important as it provides insight into how well-being, grit, and gratitude relate to university students' life satisfaction. Therefore, the research findings will help university administrators and policymakers to design interventions that promote the well-being and academic success of university students.

CONCLUSION

The findings of the current study provide evidence for the positive relationship of life satisfaction, well-being, grit, and gratitude among the students attending a university. However, compared to men, women displayed greater levels of grit and life satisfaction. Additionally, multiple regression analysis was performed independently for males and females and also for the overall sample, wherein it was discovered that life satisfaction was individually predicted by well-being. Hence, the study underscores the crucial impact of grit, gratitude, and well-being in shaping life satisfaction among university students as well as the necessity of fostering these attributes in learning and growth environments.

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Conflict of Interest

The author declared no conflict of interests.

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