

Research Paper

Role of Gratitude and Self-Compassion in Predicting Flourishing and Life Satisfaction among University Students

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ABSTRACT

Background: University students undergo many challenges, such as academic, social, and personal challenges, which can influence their psychological well-being and quality of life. Positive psychological constructs, including gratitude, self-compassion, etc., are being increasingly studied as protective factors fostering resilience, flourishing, and life satisfaction. Nevertheless, very few studies have examined the predictive roles of these variables among Indian university students. **Objective:** The present study aimed to examine the role of **gratitude** and **self-compassion** in predicting **flourishing** and **life satisfaction** among university students. **Methods:** A research design of the cross-sectional correlational type was utilized, which is quantitative in nature. The study included a total of 320 university students aged 18-26 years from North and South Delhi, which was done through convenience sampling. The data were gathered using several inventories, which include the Gratitude Questionnaire–Six Item Form (GQ-6), Self-Compassion Scale (SCS), among others. IBM SPSS Statistics was used to obtain descriptive statistics, Pearson's correlation, reliability analysis, and multiple linear regression. **Results:** The results revealed a positive significant association of gratitude and self-compassion with flourishing and life satisfaction ($p < .001$). All the variables of the study had a positive relationship. Results of the multiple regression analysis regarding the prediction of flourishing and life satisfaction by gratitude and self-compassion ($R^2 = .50$; $R^2 = .48$). Flourishing was better predicted by gratitude than by life satisfaction. In contrast, self-compassion was more predictive of life satisfaction. The reliability coefficients of all instruments were in the range of 0.756 to 0.856. **Conclusion:** The results of the research indicated that gratitude and self-compassion make important contributions to flourishing and life satisfaction. Through Counselling Services, mindfulness-based interventions and positive psychology programmes, enhancement of students' psychological well-being, resilience and quality of life may be attained. The results have also expanded the application of Positive Psychology Theory and Self-Compassion Theory in the Indian higher education context.

Keywords: *Gratitude, Self-Compassion, Flourishing, Life Satisfaction, University Students, Positive Psychology, Psychological Well-being*

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Positive Psychology and Student Well-being

Positive psychology aims to promote individual strengths and positive emotions, resilience, and optimal functioning rather than psychopathology. Within higher education, this perspective has gained increasing attention as universities seek to enhance students' psychological well-being and academic success. According to a study by Jafari in 2020, the character strengths of gratitude and hope did not directly contribute to flourishing, but they resulted in self-compassion, which then caused flourishing. In that study, participants were college students. This seems to indicate that the more positive psychological resources you offer students, the better they can cope with challenges and the higher their well-being overall. Later research also emphasized the relevance of positive psychological variables in university populations. According to the study on Malaysian university students, engagement, motivation, self-compassion, and well-being are significant predictors of mental health. In this case, self-compassion is the strongest predictor (Positive Psychology of Malaysian University Students, 2020). The authors stated that positive psychological strengthening could greatly enhance the students' mental health and lessen psychological distress. Kalamatianos et al. (2023) provide additional evidence from an evaluation of a positive psychology intervention based on gratitude exercises with undergraduate engineering students. According to their findings, participation in the intervention was associated with greater gratitude, happiness, and optimism. Thus, positive psychology programmes can cultivate these psychological strengths in university students. Studies that are more recent support these findings. According to a study conducted by Arslan in 2024, among college students, self-compassion and psychological flexibility were significant predictors of subjective well-being, emotional health, and quality of life, and hence they are important targets to promote. Soin and Kirmani (2026) similarly reported that gratitude, self-compassion, and PERMA-based well-being were negatively associated with anxiety among university students, indicating that positive psychology interventions can foster resilience among university students.

Gratitude among University Students

As one of the key positive psychology strengths, gratitude refers to an individual's tendency to appreciate the positive things in life and not take them for granted. Gratitude has been linked to better psychological adjustment, greater resilience, and higher subjective well-being among university students. Jafari (2020) showed that gratitude, love, and hope contributed to flourishing not directly but indirectly through self-compassion among college students. The results of the investigation found that a grateful person is more likely to have positive attitudes towards oneself, which in turn leads to psychological flourishing. Building on this evidence, Armenta and colleagues (2022) evaluated the impact of gratitude meditation on over 1,000 students for four weeks. Students who participated in the gratitude activity were more satisfied with their lives and more motivated to better themselves than people in the control group. The benefits were maintained across the semester, which was partly due to increased connectedness and positive emotion experiences. As can be seen from the above, gratitude intervention can significantly enhance psychological well-being in adolescence and early adulthood. According to a systematic review by Kerry et al. (2023), there was a strong positive correlation between gratitude and life satisfaction in 44 studies with more than 16,000 participants. The authors concluded that gratitude is significantly associated with life satisfaction. Moreover, they discovered the mechanisms linking the two are meaning in life, social support, and self-esteem. Additionally, they stressed more robust intervention research to establish causal relations. In a similar vein, Kalamatianos et al. (2023) reported that a five-week positive psychology programme positively impacted the

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levels of gratitude, happiness, and optimism of engineering undergraduates, showing a powerful benefit of gratitude in the university setting. In a more recent study, Maurya and Pandey (2026) found that gratitude was positively associated with life satisfaction and well-being among university students. This suggests that gratitude can be a valuable psychological resource for enhancing students' mental health and academic adjustment.

Self-Compassion among University Students

Self-compassion is an essential component of positive psychology. It consists of being kind toward oneself, viewing one's suffering as part of the human condition, and being aware of and not over-identifying with negative emotions. Self-compassion is a protective factor for university students against academic stress and psychological distress while enhancing their mental wellbeing. Based on Jafari (2020), self-compassion acted as a mediator between character strengths, including gratitude and hope, and flourishing. Moreover, when students respond to themselves in an understanding rather than a self-critical way, they are more flourishing. Cho et al. (2021) showed that self-compassion was a significant mediator of stress and life satisfaction among Korean university students. This finding suggests self-compassion's important role in dampening the negative effect of stress on the students. According to Mróz (2022), positive self-compassion increased the association between forgiveness and flourishing; moreover, responding warmly to oneself contributes to positive functioning. According to Chan et al. (2022), the other-oriented compassion increased students' self-compassion, which, in turn, increased their resilience and decreased their psychological distress, and enhanced their flourishing and meaning in life. Recent evidence shows consistent support for these. The relationships among self-compassion, compassion to others, and well-being were found to be positive among college students (Tendhar et al., 2024). It was also reported that self-compassion increased psychological well-being and life satisfaction through hope (Tran et al., 2024). In the same fashion, Liu et al. (2024) indicated that self-compassion predicts psychological flourishing and that hope and emotion regulation strengthened this predictor relationship. Recent longitudinal and cross-sectional studies have further cemented that self-compassion is a strong predictor of students' well-being. Abdullah and Saleh (2025) identified that self-compassion significantly predicts flourishing and its dimensions in first-year students. In a different study by Wu et al. (2025), self-compassion was reported to mediate the effect between mindfulness and life satisfaction and reduce depressive symptoms. In addition, Liu et al. (2026) stated that mindfulness positively predicted subjective well-being through self-compassion. Even so, self-judgment and isolation negatively predicted subjective well-being. This shows that self-compassion serves as an important psychological resource beneficial for improving the mental health and overall quality of life of university students.

Flourishing in Positive Psychology

Overall, flourishing essentially means taking positive psychology to the next level. In other words, it is about optimal functioning and wellbeing. Above all, flourishing might include having good relationships, a purposeful life, feeling competent, engaging in interesting activities, and a sense of wellbeing. University students' flourishing involves adapting to everyday challenges and thriving academically, socially and emotionally. In a study by Jafari (2020), it was found that character strengths, especially gratitude and hope, could enhance one's flourishing through self-compassion. In other words, if students develop a positive personal strength as well as respond to themselves with self-compassion, they are more likely to flourish. According to Mróz (2022), compassion and self-forgiveness show a positive relationship with flourishing. In this regard, the self-warmth dimension of self-

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compassion intensified the association. The findings illustrated that compassionate attitudes towards oneself significantly support optimal functioning of human functioning. According to a study by Chan et al. (2022), receiving compassion from others was found to promote self-compassion and resilience, which, in turn, decreased psychological distress and enhanced flourishing in university students. Recent studies show that the results are consistent. According to Akinwale and Ojakorotu (2024), forgiveness and self-compassion predict joint human flourishing among emerging adults, while Liu et al. (2024) found self-compassion positively predicted psychological flourishing through hope, with emotion regulation strengthening this relationship. Similarly, Rudaz et al. (2024) showed that the experience of gratitude promotes flourishing lives, indirectly through meaning in life; meaning is an important psychological mechanism linking positive emotions and flourishing. The research by Abdullah and Saleh (2025) showed that self-compassion was a significant predictor of overall flourishing and each of the PERMA dimensions among first-year university students. Almotrefi (2025) found that flourishing and self-compassion jointly enhanced the experience of positive emotions among female university students. The collective finding confirmed that flourishing is promoted by positive psychological resources, among which gratitude, self-compassion, forgiveness, hope, as well as meaning in life, are vital indicators of the well-being of university students.

Life Satisfaction among University Students

Life satisfaction, which is the subjective assessment that an individual makes of his or her own life, must be carefully scrutinized as it is an important aspect of subjective well-being. The presence of Psychological resources enables university students to deal with their academic, social, and personal problems, which enhance their life satisfaction. As reported by Cho and colleagues (2021), self-compassion and positive affect were found to significantly mediate the association of stress with life satisfaction among Korean university students; that is, students with higher self-compassion seem to experience greater satisfaction with life despite being stressed. According to Armenta et al. (2022), a four-week application of gratitude significantly improved students' life satisfaction and motivation for self-improvement. These benefits lasted for the entire school semester. According to a systematic review of 44 studies, Kerry et al. (2023) established that gratitude was found to have a significantly positive association with life satisfaction. Meaning in life, social support, and self-esteem were important mediators. In a study on Vietnamese undergraduate students, Tran et al. (2024) found that life satisfaction was positively influenced by self-compassion indirectly through hope. It suggests that hope is a mechanism that enhances one's well-being in adverse situations. Findings are also supported by recent evidence. Wu et al. (2025) found that self-compassion mediated the mindfulness-life satisfaction link and reduced depressive symptoms among Chinese uni students. Moreover, life satisfaction showed a positive correlation with gratitude, grit, and overall well-being. Notably, the strongest predictor of life satisfaction was overall well-being among undergraduate university students according to Maurya and Pandey (2026). Having gratitude and self-compassion can enhance life satisfaction among university students, as per the collective findings of the studies discussed thus far.

Relationships among Gratitude, Self-Compassion, Flourishing, and Life Satisfaction

According to positive psychology, gratitude as well as self-compassion are two important psychological strengths that enhance flourishing and life satisfaction in university students. Research shows gratitude helps individuals flourish both directly and indirectly by making other positive psychological resources available. According to Jafari (2020), gratitude, in

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combination with love and hope, promoted flourishing indirectly through the mediating function of self-compassion, which indicates grateful students are more accepting of themselves and flourish optimally. In a similar vein, Rudaz et al. (2024) also found that the other-species gratitude predicted flourishing over time through the presence of meaning in life, making meaning one possible mechanism linking gratitude to students' well-being. Armenta et al. (2022) showed that gratitude interventions improved students' life satisfaction and self-improvement motivation. Kerry et al. (2023) confirmed the important relationship through a systematic review of 44 studies. In line with this, a significant positive association was noted between gratitude and life satisfaction. Furthermore, meaning in life, social support, and self-esteem were significant mediators. Additionally, a study conducted amongst university students of gratitude by Maurya and Pandey (2026) revealed that gratitude was associated with high life satisfaction and psychophysical well-being. Self-compassion contributes to flourishing and life satisfaction, according to parallel evidence. According to Mróz (2022), self-compassion strengthens the relationship between forgiveness and flourishing. Chan et al. (2022) indicated that self-compassion promotes flourishing, enhances resilience, and decreases psychological distress in university students. Research performed by Liu et al. (2024) further revealed that self-compassion positively predicted psychological flourishing through hope and emotion regulation. Similarly, Abdullah and Saleh (2025) demonstrated that self-compassion significantly predicted overall flourishing and each of its dimensions among first-year university students. In terms of life satisfaction, Cho et al. (2021) reported that self-compassion mediated the impact of stress on life satisfaction. Likewise, Tran et al. (2024) found that hope mediated the link between self-compassion and life satisfaction among Vietnamese undergraduates. More recently, Wu et al. (2025) demonstrated that self-compassion mediated the relationship between mindfulness and life satisfaction through less rumination. Liu et al. (2026) showed that self-compassion, with a particular reference to mindfulness, positively predicted subjective well-being over time, and self-judgement and isolation negatively impacted well-being. Taking on board all these findings, it shows that gratitude and self-compassion play a role that is almost similar. They do help in improving one's flourishing or life satisfaction. Also, it proves their place as valuable predictors of the mental well-being of students in university.

Research Gap

Despite previous associations, mostly examined independently and primarily in mediation and intervention studies, gratitude, self-compassion, flourishing, and life satisfaction share a strong positive link born out of functioning together. It appears that there is limited research that has looked at these variables simultaneously, that is, gratitude and self-compassion as predictors of flourishing and life satisfaction in university students. Moreover, a lack of evidence exists in the Indian university context. Thus, extensive empirical research is needed to understand the combined predictive role of these positive psychological strengths on students' well-being.

Significance of the Study

This study adds to the positive psychology literature by analysing the joint predictive role of gratitude and self-compassion in promoting flourishing and life satisfaction of university students. The results will provide empirical support for mental health initiatives and programmes to enhance student well-being. The findings of the current study may also help counsellors, psychologists, and educationists in designing interventions that will enhance gratitude and self-compassion for improving psychological functioning, resilience, and quality of life of students, especially in the Indian higher education system.

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Objectives

1. To examine the relationship between gratitude, self-compassion, flourishing, and life satisfaction among university students.
2. To determine the predictive role of gratitude and self-compassion on flourishing among university students.
3. To determine the predictive role of gratitude and self-compassion on life satisfaction among university students.

Hypotheses

- **H₁:** Gratitude and self-compassion will be significantly and positively correlated with flourishing and life satisfaction among university students.
- **H₂:** Gratitude and self-compassion will significantly predict flourishing among university students.
- **H₃:** Gratitude and self-compassion will significantly predict life satisfaction among university students.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Gratitude

Gratitude is a gift-like strength that is positive in nature and displays the tendency of a person to notice and appreciate the gifts of other people. Gratitude encourages optimism, resilience, and positive well-being in psychology. As per Jafari (2020), gratitude as a character strength enhances flourishing indirectly through self-compassion in university students. According to Armenta et al. (2022), gratitude interventions enhanced life satisfaction and motivation to improve oneself. According to Kalamatianos et al. (2023), positive psychology programmes have an impact on undergraduate students' gratitude, happiness, and optimism. According to recent findings, Maurya and Pandey's (2026) gratitude positively predicts life satisfaction and well-being in university students.

Self-Compassion

When faced with failure or self-judgment, rather than being harsh and self-critical, it shows kindness to oneself. Positive psychology states that it consists of self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness, which help people balance their emotions and help maintain good mental health. Jafari (2020) stated that self-compassion mediated the relationship between character strengths and flourishing. According to a study done by Cho and other teammates in 2021, self-compassion reduces stress and increases life satisfaction. According to Chan et al (2022), self-compassion increased resilience, flourishing, and meaning in life. Arslan (2024) also discovered that self-compassion independently predicts enhanced emotional health, subjective well-being and quality of life in college students.

Flourishing

To flourish is to experience the fullest psychological functioning, involving positive relationships, meaning in life, competence, engagement, and growth. It is seen as a holistic measure of mental wellness in positive psychology. Gratitude and hope promote flourishing through self-compassion. (Jafari, 2020) Mróz (2022) found that with self-compassion, the positive link between forgiveness and flourishing is strengthened. According to Chan et al. (2022), larger self-compassion results in better flourishing due to higher resilience and lower psychological distress. Liu et al. (2024) also showed that self-compassion positively predicted flourishing via hope and emotion regulation, which emphasises flourishing as an output of positive psychological resources.

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Life Satisfaction

Life satisfaction is the cognitive judgment that people make about the overall quality of their life according to their own standards and expectations. The positive adjustment of university students is a core aspect linked to subjective well-being. According to a recent study by Cho et al. (2021), self-compassion and positive affect were mediators of the connection between attention to stress and life satisfaction. Students' life satisfaction levels were shown to increase with gratitude exercises (Armenta et al., 2022). Kerry et al. (2023) provide clear evidence of the relationship between gratitude and life satisfaction. Maurya and Pandey (2026) further reconfirmed that gratitude and well-being were significant predictors of life satisfaction amongst university students.

Empirical Studies on Gratitude

Research shows that gratitude is a strong predictor of psychological well-being among students. According to a study by Jafari in the year 2020, gratitude boosts flourishing with the help of indirect facilitation with self-compassion as a mediator. Armenta et al. (2022) announced that gratitude activities increase life satisfaction and self-improvement motivation in adolescents. Kerry et al. (2023), in a systematic review of 44 studies, found gratitude to have a moderately strong positive relationship with life satisfaction. Intervention effects did vary across situations. Rudaz et al. (2024) showed that gratitude enhances flourishing through meaning in life, while Maurya and Pandey (2026) confirmed that gratitude positively predicts life satisfaction and overall well-being among university students.

Empirical Studies on Self-Compassion

Studies repeatedly pinpoint self-compassion as a notable asset that promotes student welfare and adjustment. In the study of Cho et al. (2021), self-compassion was a mediator of the relationship between stress and life satisfaction among university students. Research by Mróz (2022) shows that self-compassion strengthens the association between forgiveness and flourishing, while Chan et al (2022) found that self-compassion boosts resilience, flourishing, and meaning-making. According to a study conducted by Liu et al. (2024), self-compassion positively predicted flourishing. As noted by Abdullah & Saleh (2025) in regard to first-year university students, further confirmation of change due to self-compassion influencing flourishing was made. Liu et al. (2026) discovered self-compassion significantly predicted well-being over time for university students.

Studies Combining Gratitude and Self-Compassion

More recent research has focused on gratitude and self-compassion as mental strengths that help university students stay mentally well. Jafari (2020) found that gratitude could increase flourishing in a person indirectly due to the mediating role of self-compassion. Li et al. (2025) suggested that gratitude and self-compassion significantly correlate. In addition, it was noted that both have a stable bidirectional relationship. According to the research by Cho et al. (2026), the mental well-being of nursing students is affected by their life stress, which in turn is affected by gratitude and self-compassion that act as mediators. Soin and Kirmani (2026) also noted that gratitude and self-compassion were positively linked with PERMA-based well-being and negatively related to anxiety. This was seen as fostering resilience and psychological health among college students.

Research Gap Summary

As per the literature summary, gratitude and self-compassion contribute independently to flourishing, life satisfaction, and psychological well-being among university students. However, most research has focused either on gratitude or self-compassion, either separately or on their mediating roles in particular psychological outcomes. While some studies looked into gratitude and self-compassion, not many studies examined their combined predictive power on flourishing and life satisfaction in university students, especially in the context of higher education in India. Accordingly, the current study aims to fill this gap by looking at the joint predictive role of gratitude and self-compassion in flourishing and life satisfaction among university students.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Self-Compassion Theory (Neff, 2003)

Self-Compassion Theory, developed by **Kristin Neff (2003)**, proposes that individuals can achieve greater psychological well-being by treating themselves with kindness, recognizing that personal difficulties are part of the shared human experience, and maintaining balanced awareness of emotions through mindfulness. The theory comprises three positive components, “**self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness**,” and their negative counterparts, “**self-judgment, isolation, and over-identification**”. Individuals with higher self-compassion are better able to regulate negative emotions, cope with stress, and maintain resilience during adversity. In the context of university students, self-compassion has been associated with greater flourishing, improved life satisfaction, enhanced emotional well-being, and reduced psychological distress. Empirical evidence supports this theoretical perspective, demonstrating that self-compassion positively predicts flourishing (Jafari, 2020; Liu et al., 2024; Abdullah & Saleh, 2025) and contributes to higher life satisfaction by buffering the effects of stress (Cho et al., 2021; Tran et al., 2024). Therefore, Neff's Self-Compassion Theory provides a strong conceptual foundation for examining self-compassion as a key predictor of flourishing and life satisfaction among university students.

Positive Psychology Theory (Seligman, 2011)

Positive Psychology Theory, proposed by **Martin E. P. Seligman (2011)**, emphasizes the scientific study of human strengths and optimal functioning rather than focusing solely on mental illness. The theory suggests that psychological strengths such as gratitude, optimism, resilience, and self-compassion foster flourishing and life satisfaction. Seligman's **PERMA model** identifies five core elements of well-being: **Positive Emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment**, which together contribute to flourishing. Gratitude is regarded as a central positive emotion that strengthens social relationships, promotes optimism, and enhances subjective well-being, while self-compassion facilitates adaptive coping and emotional resilience. The empirical studies reviewed support this theoretical perspective, showing that gratitude promotes flourishing and life satisfaction (Jafari, 2020; Kalamatianos et al., 2023; Rudaz et al., 2024; Maurya & Pandey, 2026) and that self-compassion contributes significantly to psychological well-being, flourishing, and quality of life (Chan et al., 2022; Arslan, 2024; Soin & Kirmani, 2026). Consequently, Positive Psychology Theory provides the overarching framework for understanding how gratitude and self-compassion function as positive psychological resources that enhance flourishing and life satisfaction among university students.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

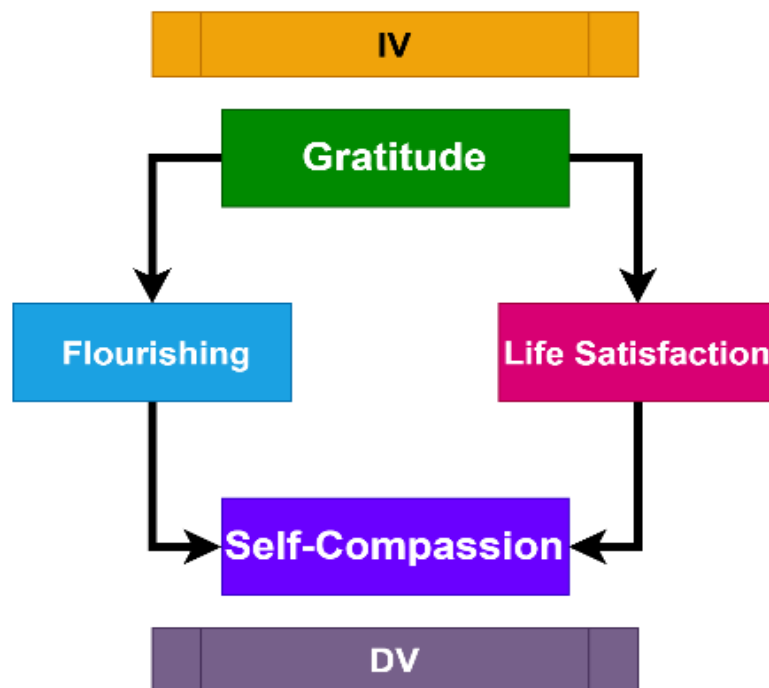


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the Study

The conceptual framework (Figure 1) of the present study is grounded in **Positive Psychology Theory** (Seligman, 2011) and **Self-Compassion Theory** (Neff, 2003). It proposes that **gratitude** and **self-compassion** are positive psychological resources that enhance students' well-being. In this study, gratitude and self-compassion serve as the **independent variables**, while **flourishing** and **life satisfaction** are the **dependent variables**. The framework assumes that higher levels of gratitude and self-compassion positively influence flourishing and life satisfaction among university students. These proposed relationships will be examined using **Pearson's correlation** and **multiple linear regression** to determine the predictive role of gratitude and self-compassion in promoting positive psychological outcomes.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The present study employed a **quantitative, cross-sectional, correlational research design** to examine the predictive role of gratitude and self-compassion on flourishing and life satisfaction among university students.

Participants

The study comprised **320 university students** enrolled in higher education institutions located in **North Delhi and South Delhi, India**. Participants were selected from diverse academic disciplines to ensure adequate representation.

Sampling Technique

A **convenience sampling technique** was adopted to recruit participants who met the inclusion criteria and voluntarily agreed to participate in the study.

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Inclusion Criteria

- University students enrolled in undergraduate or postgraduate programmes.
- Students aged **18–30 years**.
- Students studying in universities located in **North and South Delhi**.
- Students who provided informed consent.

Exclusion Criteria

- Individuals who were not enrolled as university students.
- Participants with incomplete questionnaire responses.
- Students who did not provide informed consent.

Instruments

The study employed four standardized psychological instruments to measure the study variables:

- a) Gratitude Questionnaire (GQ-6):** Developed by **McCullough, Emmons, and Tsang (2002)**, the GQ-6 is a **6-item** self-report scale designed to assess an individual's dispositional gratitude. Higher scores indicated greater levels of gratitude.
- b) Self-Compassion Scale (SCS):** Developed by **Neff (2003)**, the Self-Compassion Scale consists of **26 items** that measure six components of self-compassion, including self-kindness, self-judgment, common humanity, isolation, mindfulness, and over-identification. Higher scores reflected greater self-compassion.
- c) Flourishing Scale (FS):** Developed by **Diener et al. (2010)**, the Flourishing Scale is an **8-item** instrument that assesses psychological flourishing, including purpose in life, positive relationships, competence, optimism, and self-esteem. Higher scores indicated greater flourishing.
- d) Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS):** Developed by **Diener, Emmons, Larsen, and Griffin (1985)**, the SWLS is a **5-item** scale that measures individuals' global cognitive judgments of their life satisfaction. Higher scores represented greater life satisfaction.

Reliability and Validity

All instruments used in the study are standardized and possess established psychometric properties. The reliability (Cronbach's alpha) of the scales in the present study ranged from **0.756 to 0.856**, indicating satisfactory to good internal consistency.

Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected between **February and April 2026** from university students in **North and South Delhi** using standardized self-report questionnaires. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, voluntary participation, confidentiality, and anonymity before completing the survey.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical principles were strictly followed throughout the study. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before data collection. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were assured of confidentiality, anonymity, and the right to withdraw from the study at any stage without any consequences.

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Statistical Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using **SPSS-27** with below statistical techniques: **Descriptive Statistics** (Mean, Standard Deviation, Frequency, and Percentage) to summarize participant characteristics and study variables. **Pearson's Correlation Analysis** to examine the relationships among gratitude, self-compassion, flourishing, and life satisfaction. **Multiple Linear Regression Analysis** to determine the predictive effects of gratitude and self-compassion on flourishing and life satisfaction.

RESULTS

Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of the Participants (N = 320)

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	148	46.3
	Female	172	53.7
Age	18–20 Years	124	38.8
	21–23 Years	136	42.5
	24–26 Years	60	18.7
Level of Study	Undergraduate	210	65.6
	Postgraduate	110	34.4
University Location	North Delhi	162	50.6
	South Delhi	158	49.4

Descriptive Statistics

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Gratitude	320	12	42	31.84	4.68
Self-Compassion	320	55	126	89.56	11.43
Flourishing	320	18	56	43.72	5.96
Life Satisfaction	320	10	35	25.81	4.82

Correlation Analysis

Table 3. Pearson Correlation Matrix

Variables	1	2	3	4
1. Gratitude	1			
2. Self-Compassion	0.51**	1		
3. Flourishing	0.63**	0.58**	1	
4. Life Satisfaction	0.56**	0.61**	0.68**	1

Note. $p < .01$

Regression Analysis

Table 4. Multiple Regression Predicting Flourishing

Dependent Variable: Flourishing					
Predictor	B	SE	β	t	p
Constant	12.81	2.34	-	5.47	<.001
Gratitude	0.48	0.06	0.46	7.98	<.001
Self-Compassion	0.19	0.04	0.33	5.84	<.001
Model Summary					
R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	F	p	
0.71	0.50	0.49	158.64	<.001	

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Table 5. Multiple Regression Predicting Life Satisfaction

Dependent Variable: Life Satisfaction					
Predictor	B	SE	β	t	p
Constant	6.72	2.18	-	3.08	.002
Gratitude	0.29	0.05	0.31	5.87	<.001
Self-Compassion	0.24	0.03	0.42	7.21	<.001
Model Summary					
R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	F	p	
0.69	0.48	0.47	146.91	<.001	

DISCUSSION

Interpretation of Findings

The study investigated how gratitude and self-compassion help in predicting flourishing and life satisfaction among university students in North and South Delhi. The study's results demonstrate that gratitude and self-compassion are positively correlated with flourishing and life satisfaction, lending support to all hypotheses proposed. It means that students who have a greater appreciation of positive experiences and are kinder and more accepting of themselves tend to have a greater psychological well-being and life satisfaction. The results align with principles guiding Positive Psychology Theory (Seligman, 2011) and Self-Compassion Theory (Neff, 2003). They stress the importance of positive psychological strengths for optimal human functioning. Based on the findings of descriptive statistics, the participants indicated moderate to high levels of gratitude, self-compassion, flourishing, and life satisfaction among university students. All four instruments have reliability coefficients ranging from 0.756 to 0.856, showing satisfactory internal consistency confirming the appropriateness of the measurement instruments for the study variables. The correlation analysis revealed a significantly positive relationship among all variables. Gratitude has a strong positive relationship with flourishing and life satisfaction. In other words, those who routinely express appreciation for positive aspects of their lives are likely to feel a greater sense of meaning, purpose, positive emotions, and satisfaction. Likewise, self-compassion was positively related to flourishing and life satisfaction. This finding suggests that students who treat themselves with kindness and understanding during difficult times have better emotional stability and psychological adjustment. According to the results, gratitude and self-compassion are considered complementary psychological resources, which promote students' well-being. The analyses using multiple regression showed that gratitude and self-compassion significantly predict flourishing and life satisfaction. In students' flourishing ($R^2 = .50$) and life satisfaction ($R^2 = .48$), there was a strong combined predictive effect of these different possible measures explaining the variance. Flourishing was predicted better by gratitude, while self-compassion was a better predictor of life satisfaction. The findings suggest that while gratitude mainly enhances positivity through appreciation, optimism, and meaningful relationships, self-compassion promotes life satisfaction through emotional regulation, self-acceptance, and adaptive coping with academic and personal stress. In essence, it seems that gratitude and self-compassion can help university students flourish and improve their life satisfaction. These psychological strengths can help students deal with their academic demands, human relationships, and life experiences more successfully. They further strengthen resilience, optimism, and mental health. As such, the findings underline the significance of introducing gratitude-based activities and self-compassion interventions in university counselling services and student welfare programmes to achieve holistic psychological development and enhance the quality of life of students.

Comparison with Previous Studies

The outcomes of the current study were found to be in line with earlier studies that have already established gratitude and self-compassion as important positive psychological resources that allow university students to flourish and live a satisfied life. The present study's finding of a positive relation between gratitude and flourishing is in line with the finding of Jafari (2020), who noted that gratitude through self-compassion has a positive influence on flourishing. In a similar vein, Rudaz et al. (2024) demonstrated that gratitude predicted flourishing both directly and indirectly, as mediated by meaning in life. This underscores gratitude as an important predictor of students' psychological well-being. Recent findings are also consistent with studies that reflect the positive contribution of gratitude to life satisfaction. Armenta et al. 2022 found that life satisfaction improved following gratitude interventions in students who self-improve. Similarly, in their systematic review, Kerry et al. (2023) found a positive effect of gratitude on life satisfaction across various populations and research designs. Recently, Maurya and Pandey (2026) showed that gratitude positively predicted life satisfaction in university students conflicting the present finding that grateful people are more satisfied with their lives. The current investigation aligns with earlier studies in establishing a positive correlation between self-compassion and flourishing. Mróz (2022) showed that self-compassion fully mediated and strengthened the relationship between forgiveness and flourishing. Likewise, Chan et al. (2022) indicated that self-compassion improved resilience while reducing psychological distress and helping university students flourish and achieve meaning in life. Research conducted by Liu et al. (2024) further showed that a positive prediction of self-compassion on psychological flourishing also occurred. Hope was a partial mediator. Similarly, self-compassion is a positive predictor of flourishing (Abdullah & Saleh, 2025). Earlier literature also supports the results achieved regarding self-compassion and life satisfaction. According to the findings of Cho et al, self-compassion partially mediates between stress and life satisfaction among Korean university students. This means the students with high self-compassion experience more life satisfaction despite academic stress. Likewise, Tran et al. (2024) observed that self-compassion helps to enhance psychological well-being and life satisfaction through hope. Recently, Liu et al. (2026) reported that mindfulness, a major component of self-compassion, positively predicted subjective well-being over time. Thus, self-compassion contributes to a student's well-being. In addition, the current research revealed findings that suggest self-compassion and gratitude predict flourishing and life satisfaction. The findings are aligned with the study of Arslan 2024, which reported that self-compassion predicts subjective well-being and quality of life, in which other psycholog. variables were controlled for in the study. According to Soin and Kirmani (2026), both gratitude and self-compassion are positively linked with PERMA-based well-being. They also found that these traits were protective psychological resources for college students. Moreover, in 2026, Cho et al. proved that gratitude and self-compassion together mediated the effect of life stress on mental well-being. In sum, the current findings strongly support existing evidence regarding the value of gratitude and self-compassion as positive psychology strengths that allow university students to flourish and be satisfied with their lives. The present study, through a sample of North and South Delhi students, adds to the empirical evidence in positive psychology and suggests the utility of gratitude and self-compassion-based interventions for the benefit of higher education students.

Theoretical Implications

This study informs the Positive Psychology research by showing that gratitude and self-compassion predict flourishing, as well as life satisfaction amongst university students.

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Working with the International Institute of Organized Research. The results were in line with the Positive Psychology Theory (Seligman, 2011) that recognizes the important role of positive psychological strengths and an individual's well-being, and the Self-Compassion Theory (Neff, 2003), which supports self-kindness as a protective factor against psychological harm. This study tries to test the above theories concerning Indian university students. Thus, it widens the spheres of these theories. Also, it deepens our understanding of positive mental health among students in higher education sectors.

Practical Implications

The findings could be useful for universities, counsellors, psychologists, and policymakers. Higher education institutions need to introduce gratitude exercises, mindfulness, and self-compassion in student counselling services and well-being programmes, as gratitude and self-compassion are significant predictors of flourishing and life satisfaction. Psycho-educational activities which include workshops and positive psychology interventions help students develop emotional resilience, reduce stress and improve health. Students may better adjust academically, socially, and emotionally through these interventions. Likewise, the findings provide evidence for designing preventive mental health programmes to enhance the positive psychological strengths of university students.

CONCLUSION

The current research explores the effect of gratitude and self-compassion on flourishing and life satisfaction among university students. In their findings, the researchers discovered that both gratitude and self-compassion possess a significant positive relationship with flourishing and life satisfaction, respectively. The correlation analyses among all the study variables were found to be meaningful and significantly positive. The multiple regression analyses demonstrated that gratitude and self-compassion predicted significant psychological well-being in students. The results strengthen the purported hypotheses and emphasise the need for positive psychological strengths for students' well-being. Also do the study proves that the theory of Positive Psychology and Self-Compassion theory have theoretical foundations. Therefore, gratitude and self-kindness will help you cultivate resilience, positive emotions, and satisfaction with your life. The study adds to the evidence supporting positive mental health among university students and rates gratitude and self-compassion as likely interventions for promoting flourishing, raising life satisfaction, and strengthening psychological well-being among those engaged in higher education.

Limitations

There are certain limitations to the present study. To begin with, the research used a cross-sectional correlational design, which limits determining the causal relationship of variables. In addition, the sample was limited to 320 university students in North and South Delhi. Therefore, the findings may not be generalizable. The third limitation pertains to the use of self-reporting questionnaires, which can be influenced by social desirability. Finally, various psychological and environmental factors that would influence flourishing and life satisfaction were not assessed.

Future Research Directions

Future research that utilizes longitudinal or experimental designs should help in establishing causality between gratitude, self-compassion, flourishing, and life satisfaction. Participants may come from various geographical locations, universities, and cultures, according to researchers, to improve generalisability. Future studies should also consider other variables,

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including resilience, optimism, emotional intelligence, mindfulness, social support, and psychological flexibility, as possible mediation or moderation variables. When more comparative studies between different age groups and different settings are written, a richer literature will emerge.

Practical Implications

Based on the findings, universities must encourage gratitude and self-compassion in their mental health and well-being programs. Educators and counsellors can include mindful breathing, gratitude journaling, compassion training, and positive psychology in student support programs. Interventions may help students improve emotional resilience, increase flourishing and life satisfaction, and reduce psychological distress. As a result, the findings can provide useful information for university administrators and policymakers in designing evidence-based, holistic student development mental health programmes and promoting psychological well-being.

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Conflict of Interest

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