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## An Analysis of Gratitude and Hope In Relation To Happiness

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### ABSTRACT

The present investigation studies the relationship between gratitude and hope and its contribution to happiness. Gratitude is a moral affect that contributes to an individual's positive emotion and well being. Hope is a positive expectation from the future that motivates goal directed behavior. Happiness is a positive trait influenced by one's cognition. The Adult Hope Scale (AHS) designed by C. R. Snyder, Gratitude Questionnaire (GQ-6) by Michael E. McCullough and the Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS) developed by Sonja Lyubomirsky were administered to 80 women students randomly selected. The results indicate that there is a positive correlation between gratitude and hope, gratitude and happiness, hope and happiness.

*Keywords: Hope, Gratitude, Happiness, Positive Psychology*

**H**appiness is the undying quest of life, the unquenchable thirst and the insatiable hunger of all human kind. Happiness is what we all seek for, what we long for. But can such bliss be nothing but an elusive state of mind, which is here one moment and gone the next, or is such a positive outlook attainable for a lifetime.

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## ***Happiness***

Happiness is a positive emotional state that is subjectively defined by each person. The term is rarely used in scientific studies because there is little consensus on its meaning. Aristotle believed that *eudaimonia* (human flourishing associated with living a life of virtue), or happiness based on a lifelong pursuit of meaningful, developmental goals i.e “doing what is worth doing”, was the key to the good life. (Waterman 1993). Seligman divides happiness into three types: the pleasant life, the good life, and the meaningful life.

But the cognitive theorists view happiness as something you experience on the way to a goal, so happiness is goal-driven or goal motivated, while the hedonists see happiness as the end state or the goal itself. The motivation, according to hedonism, is simply the quest for pleasure and to avoid pain (Parducci, 1995).

Studies have shown that high concentrations of the neurotransmitter norepinephrine lead to feelings of elation and euphoria (extreme happiness) (Franken, 1994). Scientists have long known that there is a "pleasure center" or "reward center" in the brain.

## ***Hope***

Hope was considered one of the most fundamental of all the emotions (Averill et al, 1990). However, James Averill, a social constructivist, believes that hope does fit an emotional model. Averill bases his conclusion that hope is an emotion on the findings of a study that compared hope to two other emotions (love and anger). Averill and his colleagues found that subjects rated anger, love, and hope as all having the same five features: 1) all are difficult to control, 2) all affect the way you think or perceive events, 3) all affect the way you behave, 4) all motivate behavior, increase persistence, enable one to go on (even in the face of adversity), and 5) all are common universal experiences. But the conclusions derived from this study can be questioned based on the fact that very few theorists consider love an emotion (at least not a prototypic emotion).

Hope usually involves some uncertainty of an outcome, typically concerns matters of importance, and usually reflects a person's moral values. Hope is frequently considered a temporary condition that

is specific to a given situation and contingent upon one's skills or abilities. James Averill states that "hope is not associated with any specific physiological responses or reflex-like actions" (Averill et al, 1990).

Actually hope appears to be a primarily learned concept. In a series of studies done by Averill, et al (1990), he and his colleagues came to the conclusion that hope includes learned behaviors and thought processes that are acquired through the socialization process. Additionally there is a strong religious component to hope. Many Christian religions are built on hope and models of hope are implicitly taught in religious teachings.

Many studies have shown that cognitive strategies such as positive self-talk, reading uplifting books, envisioning hopeful images, listening to uplifting music, and lightheartedness (humor and laughter) are used by hopeful persons when suffering some "crisis" or adverse life event (Farran, 1995).

Hope also seems to be a powerful motivator (C.R. Snyder, 2010) a University of Kansas psychologist, posed the following hypothetical situation to college students: "Although you set your goal of getting a B in a class, after your first exam, which accounts for 30% of your grade, you find you only scored a D. It is now one week later. What do you do?" Snyder found that hope made all the difference. Students with high levels of hope said they would work harder and thought of a wider range of things they could do to improve their final grade. Students with moderate levels of hope thought of several ways to improve their grade, but had far less determination to pursue them. Students with low levels of hope gave up attempting to improve their grade, completely demoralized (Goleman, 1995).

When Snyder compared the actual academic achievement of freshman students who scored high and low on hope, he found that hope was actually a better predictor of their first semester grades than were their SAT scores (which are highly correlated with IQ and therefore widely accepted as a predictor of how successful students will be in college) (Goleman, 1995).

## ***Gratitude***

There has been a lot of interest and study in the psychology of gratitude. Just think, that adopting the attitude and mindset of a grateful heart can actually add good years of health and prosperity to your life. That operates totally against the main stream of our society today. That is definitely swimming up-stream and against the current of the way most people live.

Gratitude is derived from the Latin concept *gratia*, which entails some variant of grace, gratefulness, and graciousness. Gratitude emerges upon recognizing that one had obtained a positive outcome from another individual who behaved in a way that was a) costly to him or her b) valuable to the recipient c) intentionally rendered. As such, gratitude taps into the propensity to appreciate and savor everyday events and experiences. Gratitude is viewed as a prized human propensity in the Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist, Christian and Jewish traditions. On this point, Philosopher David Hume (1888, p. 466) went so far as to say that ingratitude is “the most horrible and unnatural of all crimes that humans are capable of committing”

Studies have shown,(Emmons & McCullough, 2003), that if you list and journal five things that you are grateful for, every single morning, before any negativism has a chance to creep into you, you will live longer and your life will be more fruitful by a whopping 25%. That’s one-quarter longer to live, just for feeling and expressing gratitude.

## ***Need for the Study***

In today’s world, young people tend to be devoid of expressing their gratitude to their parents, elders, and teachers. They seem to live a life full of negative thoughts and feelings. They search happiness from external sources like social networking and other platforms of people. They easily lose hope in their near and far future because of life’s failures like loss of love, unemployment, lack of tolerance, etc. They fall prey for suicidal thoughts, and fix on their destiny at a very early stage. Hence a small attempt to identify young people’s level of hope and gratitude, in relation to happiness was intrigued at the moment.

**Objective of the study:**

1. The aim of the study was to assess the level of gratitude, hope and happiness of the female college students and
2. To investigate the relation between gratitude, hope and happiness of female college students.

## REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Few previous research studies were discussed which sheds light on the variables relation of hope, gratitude and happiness.

**Peterson (2007)** studied on a sample of US adults ( $N = 12,439$ ) completed online surveys in English measuring character strengths, orientations to happiness (engagement, pleasure, and meaning), and life satisfaction, and a sample of Swiss adults ( $N = 445$ ) completed paper-and-pencil versions of the same surveys in German. In both samples, the character strengths most highly linked to life satisfaction included love, hope, curiosity, and zest. Gratitude was among the most robust predictors of life satisfaction in the US sample, whereas perseverance was among the most robust predictors in the Swiss sample. In both samples, the strengths of character most associated with life satisfaction were associated with orientations to pleasure, to engagement, and to meaning, implying that the most fulfilling character strengths are those that make possible a full life.

**Aga (2006)** looked at the positive emotions of gratitude, pride, and happiness. Sixty-three Vanderbilt University undergraduate participants were randomly assigned to one of three conditions assessing their appraisals, motivations, and behaviors for one of the target emotions. Participants were asked to describe in detail a specific situation in which they experienced one of these emotions and then respond to a series of questions about their experience, as well as about their dispositional tendencies for these emotions. We discovered that gratitude was associated with higher usage of third-person pronouns, higher reports of other-responsibility, and higher associations with negative emotions. Pride was associated with higher reports of self-responsibility and higher levels of competitiveness. Happiness resulted in the highest ratings of positive affect. The results indicate that

although happiness and pride appear to be purely positive emotions, gratitude has several associations with negative emotions, resulting in a new interpretation of its meaning.

**Guse (2012)** proposed that the gratitude is a psychological strength associated with enhanced positive psychological functioning. The relationship between gratitude and subjective well-being (SWB) has been confirmed in adults, but studies among adolescents and specifically South African adolescents, is scarce. The aim of this study was to investigate the prevalence of gratitude, and the relationship between gratitude and SWB among a group of adolescents from Gauteng (N=821) from four population groups (black, coloured, Indian and white). Participants completed measures assessing state gratitude (the Gratitude Adjective Checklist), trait gratitude (the Gratitude Questionnaire Six-item Form) and SWB (the Satisfaction with Life Scale, Multidimensional Student's Life Satisfaction scale, Affect meter Adolescents in this study experienced relatively high levels of gratitude. Female participants reported a higher prevalence of both state gratitude and trait gratitude than male participants while Indian adolescents reported higher scores on state gratitude than white adolescents. Both trait and state gratitude were related to SWB, although the relationship between trait gratitude and SWB was stronger than the relationship between state gratitude and SWB. The findings support existing research on the relationship between gratitude and SWB.

**Bono (2012)** in a report on Science Daily, article titled "Growing Up Grateful Gives Teens Multiple Mental Health Benefits", that increase in gratitude over a four-year period were significantly related to improvements in life satisfaction, happiness, positive attitudes and hope."For the study, 700 students aged 10 to 14 answered questionnaires, then 4 years later, were surveyed again. Those categorized as "most grateful" were judged by the researchers as having 13 to 17% more purpose in life, more satisfaction with "life overall," more happiness and hopefulness, less delinquency, and fewer negative attitudes. This New York based sample contained a mix of ethnic backgrounds, with 54% girls and (presumably) the rest boys. The lead researcher, made sweeping conclusions: "These findings suggest

that gratitude may be strongly linked with life-skills such as cooperation, purpose, creativity and persistence and, as such, gratitude is vital resource that parents, teachers and others who work with young people should help youth build up as they grow up,”

**Snyder et.al (1991)** reports that higher Hope scale scores were directly related to various indices of elevated happiness, satisfaction, positive emotions, getting along with others etc.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The design for the present study was an ex-post facto method. A convenient sample of 80 women students of age ranging from 18 to 23 were selected from one of the Chennai City Colleges. They were administered the scales for measuring gratitude, hope and happiness. The results were tabulated and interpreted by mean and correlational method.

### *Description of the Tools:*

#### **1. Gratitude Questionnaire - 6 (GQ-6) by Michael E. McCullough, Ph.D., Robert A. Emmons**

The GQ-6 is a short, self-report measure of the disposition to experience gratitude. Participants answer 6 items on a 1 to 7 scale (1 = "strongly disagree", 7 = "strongly agree"). Two items are reverse-scored to inhibit response bias. The GQ-6 has good internal reliability, with alphas between .82 and .87.

#### **2. Adult Hope Scale (AHS) by C. R. Snyder, University of Kansas**

The adult hope scale (AHS) measures Snyder's cognitive model of hope which defines hope as "a positive motivational state that is based on an interactively derived sense of successful (a) agency (goal-directed energy), and (b) pathways (planning to meet goals)" (Snyder, Irving, & Anderson, 1991, p. 287). The adult hope scale contains 12 items. Four items measure pathways thinking, four items measure agency thinking, and four items are fillers. Participants respond to each item using a 8-point scale ranging from definitely false to definitely true and the scale takes only a few minutes to complete. The internal consistency (alpha

level) typically has been in the .80 range, and test and retest reliabilities have been .80 or above over time periods of 8 to 10 weeks.

**3. Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS) by Sonja Lyubomirsky, Ph.D.**

The SHS is a 4-item scale of global subjective happiness. Two items ask respondents to characterize themselves using both absolute ratings and ratings relative to peers, whereas the other two items offer brief descriptions of happy and unhappy individuals and ask respondents the extent to which each characterization describes them. The SHS has been validated in 14 studies with a total of 2,732 participants. Test-retest and self-peer correlations have suggested good to excellent reliability, and construct validation studies of convergent and discriminate validity have confirmed the use of this scale to measure the construct of subjective happiness.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:**

*Table 1 shows the mean values of the sample for Gratitude, Hope and Happiness*

Data Analysis Method	Gratitude	Agency Hope	Pathways Hope	Hope Total	Happiness
Mean	32.34	24.41	25.28	49.71	20.24
Interpretation	<b>High</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>High</b>

From the above table it is seen that the mean of gratitude scores of the sample is 32.34, which is interpreted as high. The sample also shows a high level of gratitude which actually reflects their level of happiness. It is also clear from the table that the mean value of the sample for hope is high. The components of hope, which is the agency hope score and the pathways score for hope are high and the total score for hope is also high. It is found that people who are scored high in their hope level also scored high in the level of happiness. The mean value of the sample for happiness also found to be high, which clearly depicts the direct link between gratitude and hope towards happiness.



**Correlation Coefficient of Gratitude, Hope and Happiness:**

*Table 2 Indicates the Correlation coefficient values between Happiness and Gratitude*

Variable (X)	r value	Correlation
Gratitude	r=0.1307	Positive

Happiness was correlated with Gratitude, Agency Hope and Pathways Hope and the Total Hope scores of the sample were found to be statistically significant and have a positive correlation with each other. The higher the level of gratitude, the greater is the happiness level. That is if a person has scored high in the level of gratitude, then the person is also scored a high level in the happiness scale. Hence there is a positive relationship between happiness and gratitude. Though the correlation is very low, it shows a positive relation between the gratitude, hope and happiness.

*Table 3 indicates the correlation coefficient values between and Hope and Happiness*

Variable	r value	Correlation
Agency hope	r= 0.3021	Positive
Pathways Hope Score	r= 0.1537	Positive
Hope Total	r=0.271	Positive

The table indicates the correlation coefficient values of happiness and hope and its sub components agency hope and pathways hope. Agency Hope is high, Happiness is high. Similarly, pathway hope is high; happiness is higher in their value. The overall score of hope of the selected sample is high and has a positive correlation with happiness.

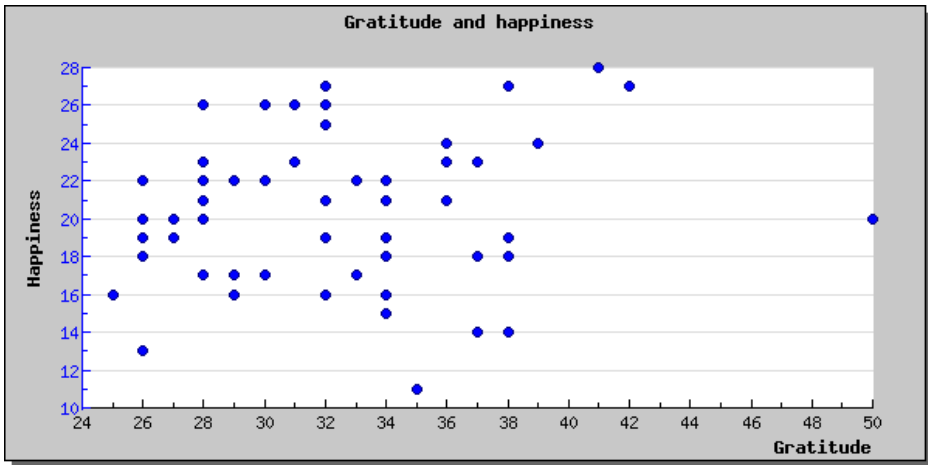
*Table 4 indicates the correlation coefficient values between and Hope and Happiness*

Hope (x)	r value	Correlation
Gratitude(y)	r=0.0943	Positive

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### Chart I:

The scatter gram is plotted below which shows the positive correlation between gratitude and happiness.

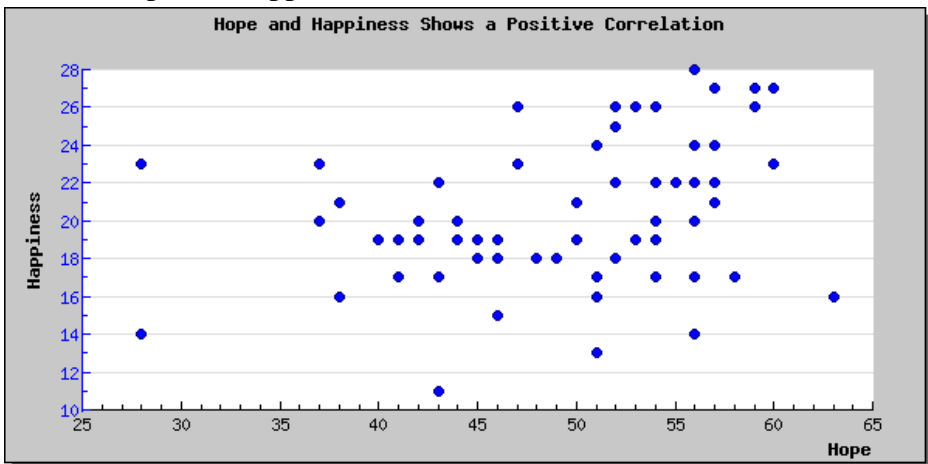


### Interpretation:

The level of gratitude was high and the level of happiness is also found to be high for the sample.

### Chart II:

The scatter gram is plotted below which shows the positive correlation between hope and happiness.

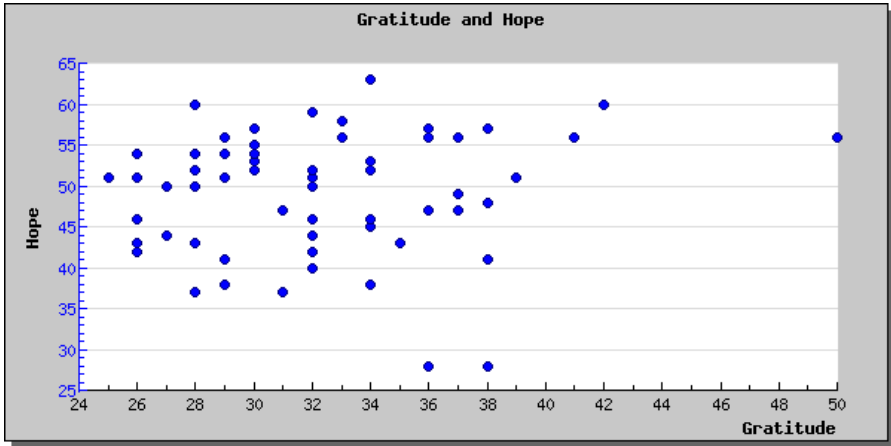


### Interpretation:

The level of hope was high and the level of happiness was also found to be high for the sample.

**Chart III:**

The scatter gram is plotted below which shows the positive correlation between gratitude and hope.



**Interpretation:**

The hope level and gratitude also shows a positive correlation with each other.

Hence practicing gratitude is a good sense of understanding because eventually it increases the level of happiness. The study also evidences of gratitude and hope directly related to happiness.

There is proven scientific evidence now, that verifies this, and we would definitely encourage instituting this into our everyday life. It's good for us and we will live longer. People who were in the gratitude condition felt fully 25% happier - they were more optimistic about the future, they felt better about their lives and they even did almost 1.5 hours more exercise a week than those in the hassles or events condition.

**CONCLUSION**

1. The study investigated the level of gratitude, hope and happiness and found that to be high for the sample of college students.
2. There exists a significant positive relation existing between gratitude and happiness, hope and happiness and hope and gratitude.

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