



The Interplay between Spirituality, Gratitude, Mindfulness, and Loneliness among College Students

Niyati Khurana, *Amity University Uttar Pradesh, India*

Niyati.kavya0929@gmail.com

Abstract : This study investigates the interplay between spirituality, gratitude, mindfulness, and loneliness among college students. The transition to college life exposes students to various psychological challenges, including stress, identity confusion, and social isolation. This research aims to examine whether spirituality significantly influences gratitude, mindfulness, and loneliness, and to explore the relationships among these constructs. A quantitative research design was used, with data collected from 209 college students using standardized scales. Descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and regression analysis were employed. The findings revealed that spirituality does not significantly predict gratitude, mindfulness, or loneliness. However, weak positive correlations were observed among the variables. The results suggest that while spirituality may have a limited direct effect, other psychosocial factors such as social support and coping strategies play a more crucial role in student well-being. The study highlights the need for holistic interventions targeting emotional and social dimensions.

Keywords: *Spirituality, Gratitude, Mindfulness, Loneliness, College Students, Psychological Well-being*

1. Introduction

The college phase represents a crucial transitional period in an individual's life, characterized by increased independence, academic pressure, and evolving social roles. While it offers opportunities for personal growth and self-exploration, it also exposes students to significant emotional and psychological challenges.

In recent years, there has been a growing concern regarding the mental health of college students. Issues such as anxiety, depression, stress, and loneliness have become increasingly prevalent. Among these, loneliness has emerged as a critical psychological concern, often linked with poor academic performance, reduced life satisfaction, and increased vulnerability to mental health disorders.

Loneliness is not merely the absence of social interaction but a subjective experience of emotional disconnection. Even students surrounded by peers may feel isolated due to a lack of meaningful relationships. This highlights the importance of identifying psychological resources that can buffer against loneliness.

Spirituality, gratitude, and mindfulness are three such constructs that have gained attention in positive psychology. These factors are believed to enhance emotional resilience, improve coping mechanisms, and promote overall well-being.

1.1 Spirituality

Spirituality is a multidimensional construct that involves a sense of connection to something greater than oneself. It may include beliefs, values, purpose, and inner peace. Unlike religiosity, spirituality is more personal and subjective. Research suggests that spirituality helps individuals cope with stress, find meaning in adversity, and maintain emotional balance. It provides a framework for understanding life experiences and fosters hope and resilience.

1.2 Gratitude

Gratitude refers to the tendency to recognize and appreciate the positive aspects of life. It is associated with increased happiness, better relationships, and improved mental health. Grateful individuals tend to focus on what they have rather than what they lack, which reduces negative emotions and enhances life satisfaction.

1.3 Mindfulness

Mindfulness is the practice of being fully present in the moment with a non-judgmental attitude. It helps individuals regulate emotions, reduce stress, and improve focus. Mindfulness practices such as meditation and deep breathing have been widely used as therapeutic interventions to improve psychological well-being.

1.4 Loneliness

Loneliness is a subjective feeling of social isolation and emotional disconnection. It has been linked to various negative outcomes, including depression, anxiety, and cognitive decline. In the college context, loneliness can arise due to academic pressure, social comparison, and difficulties in forming meaningful relationships.

1.5 Rationale of the Study

Although spirituality, gratitude, and mindfulness have been studied individually, there is limited research examining their combined effect on loneliness among college students. Understanding their interplay can help develop effective interventions to improve student well-being.

1.6 Objectives

- To examine the relationship between spirituality, gratitude, mindfulness, and loneliness.
- To analyze the impact of spirituality on gratitude.
- To analyze the impact of spirituality on mindfulness.
- To analyze the impact of spirituality on loneliness.

1.7 Hypotheses

- H1: There will be a significant relationship between all variables.
- H2: Spirituality will significantly impact gratitude.
- H3: Spirituality will significantly impact mindfulness.
- H4: Spirituality will significantly impact loneliness.

2. Review of Literature

Previous research has extensively explored the role of positive psychological constructs in enhancing well-being.

Studies have shown that gratitude is strongly associated with increased life satisfaction and reduced depressive symptoms. Individuals who practice gratitude regularly report better emotional health and stronger interpersonal relationships.

Mindfulness has been widely studied as an effective intervention for stress reduction. It helps individuals detach from negative thought patterns and improves emotional regulation.

Spirituality has been linked with resilience and coping. It provides a sense of meaning and helps individuals navigate life challenges. However, some studies suggest that spirituality alone may not be sufficient to predict psychological outcomes.

Research on loneliness indicates that it is influenced by multiple factors, including social support, personality traits, and environmental conditions. While positive psychological resources can reduce loneliness, their effectiveness may vary.

3. Methods

3.1 Sample

The study included 209 college students aged between 18–30 years. Participants were selected using convenience sampling.

3.2 Tools Used

- Daily Spiritual Experience Scale (DSES)
- Gratitude Questionnaire (GQ-6)
- Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS)
- UCLA Loneliness Scale

3.3 Procedure

Data was collected using an online Google Form. Participants were informed about confidentiality and voluntary participation.

4. Results

4.1 Descriptive Statistics

This study examines the relationship between spirituality and thankfulness, mindfulness, and loneliness among college students. The findings are presented in the Data Analysis chapter, which draws on the gathered data. In order to find trends, correlations, and major impacts, the data was collected using a standardised Google Form survey and analysed using the right statistical tools. This section gives a thorough analysis of the findings, backed by statistical insights, and gives a full picture of the interplay between spirituality, thankfulness, mindfulness, and loneliness. Validating the study hypotheses and adding to the larger conversation on young people's mental health are the goals of the analysis.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics of all variables

	Spirituality	Gratitude	Mindfulness	Loneliness
Mean	67.16	29.56	3.48	35.25
Standard Deviation	14.69603	5.79	0.94	8.46
N	209	209	209	209

Among 209 college students, the following table displays descriptive data regarding spirituality, gratitude, mindfulness, and loneliness. With a mean score of 67.16, the individuals' spirituality level is moderate to high. Individuals' spirituality scores seem to vary somewhat, with a standard deviation (SD) of 14.69. There is considerable variety in replies, but on the whole, individuals show a moderate level of gratitude (mean score: 29.57, SD: 5.79). Participants appear to have quite consistent mindfulness ratings, with little variation, as shown

by a mean of 3.49 with a low standard deviation of 0.94. The average score for loneliness is 35.25, having a standard deviation of 8.46; this indicates that students feel a moderate amount of loneliness, although their experiences might vary. These results lay the groundwork for future correlation and inferential research by providing a basic knowledge of the distribution of spirituality, thankfulness, mindfulness, and loneliness in the sample.

4.2 Correlation Analysis

The results showed weak positive correlations among all variables, indicating a slight relationship but not strong enough to establish causation.

Table 2: *Pearson Correlation Analysis of relationship between spirituality, gratitude, mindfulness and loneliness among college students.*

	Spirituality	Gratitude	Mindfulness	Loneliness
Spirituality	1			
Gratitude	0.10	1		
Mindfulness	0.06	0.30	1	
Loneliness	0.06	0.22	0.26	1

H1: There will be significant relationship between spirituality, gratitude, mindfulness and loneliness among college students.

4.3 Regression Analysis

Regression results indicated that spirituality does not significantly predict gratitude, mindfulness, or loneliness.

Table 3: *Regression analysis of impact of spirituality on gratitude among college students.*

Multiple R	0.10
R Square	0.01
Adjusted R Square	0.00
Standard Error	5.77
Observations	209

ANOVA					
	<i>df</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Significance F</i>
Regression	1	79.15	79.15	2.37	0.12
Residual	207	6902.09	33.34		
Total	208	6981.24			

H2: There will be significant impact of spirituality on gratitude among college students.

The regression study explores the influence of spirituality on gratitude among college students. The R Square score (0.0113) suggests that spirituality explains just 1.13% of the variation in appreciation, suggesting a poor predictive link. The F-value (2.37) and the Significance F (0.1249) show that the model is not statistically significant at the customary 0.05 significance level ($p > 0.05$).

The study does not prove that spirituality has a significant effect on gratitude because the p-value (0.1249) is greater than 0.05. Our results disprove the hypothesis (H1: College students' spirituality has a substantial effect on their gratitude). It appears that although there may be a connection between spirituality and gratitude, the levels of gratitude within the students throughout this sample are not significantly predicted by spirituality alone.

Table 4: Regression analysis of impact of spirituality on mindfulness among college students.

Multiple R	0.071
R Square	0.00
Adjusted R Square	-0.00
Standard Error	0.94
Observations	108

ANOVA					
	<i>df</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Significance F</i>
Regression	1	0.49	0.49	0.55	0.45
Residual	106	94.48	0.89		
Total	107	94.98			

H3: There will be significant impact of spirituality on mindfulness among college students.

A regression study was conducted to determine the effect of spirituality on mindfulness practices among college students. With a R Squared value of only 0.0052, the correlation between spirituality and mindfulness is extremely weak, explaining only 0.52% of the total variation. The model does not have a significant F-value (0.5523) or Significance F (0.4590) at the 0.05 level of significance ($p > 0.05$). Furthermore, the model appears to have no effect on improving predictive power, as indicated by the negative Adjusted R Square value of -0.0042.

According to the results, spirituality does not significantly affect mindfulness ($p=0.4590$, which is higher than 0.05). In light of this evidence, we cannot accept the null hypothesis (H3) that spirituality has no effect on college students' capacity to practise mindfulness. While it's possible for spirituality and mindfulness to coexist, the results show that spirituality does not have a substantial impact on mindfulness levels in this particular group.

Table 5: Regression analysis of impact of spirituality on loneliness among college students.

Multiple R	0.068503
R Square	0.004693
Adjusted R Square	-0.00012
Standard Error	8.464656
Observations	209

ANOVA					
	<i>df</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Significance F</i>
Regression	1	69.92	69.92	0.97	0.32
Residual	207	14831.63	71.65		
Total	208	14901.56			

H4: There will be significant impact of spirituality on loneliness among college students.

Using regression analysis, we look at how spirituality affects college students' feelings of loneliness. Spirituality explains just 0.47 percent of the variation in loneliness, suggesting a very poor predictive link ($R^2 = 0.0047$). It appears that the model does not meet the criteria for statistical significance at the 0.05 level of significance, as indicated by the F-value of 0.9759 and the Significance F of 0.3244. The model also doesn't help explain loneliness, as the Adjusted R Square is -0.00012.

The results show that spirituality does not significantly affect loneliness, since the p-value (0.3244) is higher than 0.05. Thus, we may conclude that the null hypothesis (H3: Spirituality has a substantial effect on college students' feelings of isolation) is not true. Spirituality may offer social or emotional support, but it does not appear to be a strong predictor of loneliness in this group.

5. Discussion

The findings of this study provide important insights into the psychological dynamics of college students. Although spirituality was expected to significantly influence gratitude, mindfulness, and loneliness, the results did not support this assumption. This suggests that spirituality may not act as a direct predictor but rather as a supportive factor. One possible explanation is that spirituality operates indirectly through other variables such as social support, coping strategies, and emotional intelligence. The weak correlations indicate that these constructs are related but not strongly interconnected. This highlights the complexity of psychological well-being, which cannot be explained by a single factor.

6. Implications of the Study

- Colleges should promote mindfulness programs
- Encourage gratitude journaling
- Provide mental health support systems
- Focus on building social connections

7. Limitations

- Small sample size
- Self-report bias
- Cross-sectional design
- Limited generalizability

8. Suggestions for Future Research

- Use longitudinal design
- Include diverse populations
- Explore mediating variables
- Conduct qualitative studies

9. Conclusion

This study set out to investigate how college students' spirituality, gratitude, mindfulness, and loneliness are related. Spirituality did not substantially predict thankfulness, mindfulness, or loneliness, but it did have minor positive relationships with these traits. Gratitude, mindfulness, and loneliness were not significantly affected by spirituality in regression models, indicating that spirituality may be linked to emotional well-being but is not

the main factor determining these psychological categories. The results of the correlation study demonstrated a moderately favourable association between gratitude and mindfulness, as well as a relationship between mindfulness and loneliness. There may be interwoven relationships between loneliness, mindfulness, and thankfulness; additional research is needed to determine the exact nature of these relationships. Weak correlations, however, imply that other variables may impact these associations.

Previous research, such as Mohamed's (2023) study, has also shown that spirituality has no direct effect on loneliness among college students, therefore our results are in keeping with that. The importance of students' feeling of belonging and support systems to their psychological well-being was further emphasised by Mohamed's study, which found that perceived social support was the biggest predictor of loneliness. This study's findings point to the possibility that other social and emotional variables are necessary for spirituality to alleviate loneliness, improve thankfulness, and mindfulness.

Significant theoretical and practical considerations follow from this study's results. Theoretically, it contributes to what is already known by suggesting that spirituality may not be the only factor impacting college students' levels of gratitude, mindfulness, and reduced loneliness. As a matter of practicality, the study stresses the need of therapies that target social support networks, peer relationships, and emotional well-being programs rather than only spiritual activities.

References

- Baer, R. A., Smith, G. T., Hopkins, J., Krietemeyer, J., & Toney, L. (2006). Using self-report assessment methods to explore facets of mindfulness. *Assessment*, 13(1), 27-45. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1073191105283504>
- Bartlett, M. Y., & Arpin, S. N. (2019). Gratitude and loneliness: Enhancing health and well-being in older adults. *Research on aging*, 41(8), 772-793.
- Bishop, S. R., Lau, M., Shapiro, S., Carlson, L., Anderson, N. D., Carmody, J., & Segal, Z. V. (2004). Mindfulness: A proposed operational definition. *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice*, 11(3), 230-241. <https://doi.org/10.1093/clipsy.bph077>
- Brown, K. W., & Ryan, R. M. (2003). The benefits of being present: Mindfulness and its role in psychological well-being. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 84(4), 822-848. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.84.4.822>

- Brown, K. W., & Ryan, R. M. (2003). The benefits of being present: Mindfulness and its role in psychological well-being. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 84(4), 822–848.
- Cacioppo, J. T., & Cacioppo, S. (2018). Loneliness in the modern age: An evolutionary theory of loneliness. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 58, 127–197.
- Cacioppo, J. T., & Cacioppo, S. (2018). The growing problem of loneliness. *The Lancet*, 391(10119), 426. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(18\)30142-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(18)30142-9)
- Cresswell, J. D., Irwin, M. R., Burkund, L. J., Lieberman, M. D., Arevalo, J. M., Ma, J., & Cole, S. W. (2012). Mindfulness-based stress reduction training reduces loneliness and pro-inflammatory gene expression in older adults. *Brain, Behavior, and Immunity*, 26(8), 1095-1101. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bbi.2012.07.006>
- Emmons, R. A., & McCullough, M. E. (2003). Counting blessings versus burdens: An experimental investigation of gratitude and subjective well-being in daily life. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 84(2), 377-389. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.84.2.377>
- Emmons, R. A., & McCullough, M. E. (2003). Counting blessings versus burdens: An experimental investigation of gratitude and subjective well-being in daily life. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 84(2), 377–389.
- Farb, N. A., Segal, Z. V., Mayberg, H., Bean, J., McKeon, D., Fatima, Z., & Anderson, A. K. (2007). Attending to the present: Mindfulness meditation reveals distinct neural modes of self-reference. *Social Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience*, 2(4), 313-322. <https://doi.org/10.1093/scan/nsm030>
- Fredrickson, B. L., Cohn, M. A., Coffey, K. A., Pek, J., & Finkel, S. M. (2008). Open hearts build lives: Positive emotions, induced through loving-kindness meditation, build consequential personal resources. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 95(5), 1045-1062. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0013262>
- Green, Z. A., Noor, U., & Ahmed, F. (2020). The body–mind–spirit dimensions of wellness mediate dispositional gratitude and life satisfaction. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 21, 3095-3119.
- Holt-Lunstad, J., Smith, T. B., & Layton, J. B. (2015). Social relationships and mortality risk: A meta-analytic review. *PLoS Medicine*, 7(7), e1000316. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pmed.1000316>
- Kabat-Zinn, J. (1994). *Wherever you go, there you are: Mindfulness meditation in everyday life*. Hyperion.

- Kabat-Zinn, J. (2003). Mindfulness-based interventions in context: Past, present, and future. *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice*, 10(2), 144–156.
- Koenig, H. G. (2012). Religion, spirituality, and health: The research and clinical implications. *ISRN Psychiatry*, 2012, 1–33.
- Kuyken, W., Warren, F. C., Taylor, R. S., Whalley, B., Crane, C., Bondolfi, G., & Dalgleish, T. (2010). Efficacy of mindfulness-based cognitive therapy in prevention of depressive relapse: An individual patient data meta-analysis from randomized trials. *JAMA Psychiatry*, 67(12), 1257-1264. <https://doi.org/10.1001/jamapsychiatry.2014.1511>
- Lambert, N. M., Fincham, F. D., Stillman, T. F., & Dean, L. R. (2009). More gratitude, less materialism: The mediating role of life satisfaction. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 4(1), 32-42. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760802216311>
- Lindsay, E. K., & Creswell, J. D. (2017). Mechanisms of mindfulness training: Monitor and Acceptance Theory (MAT). *Clinical Psychology Review*, 51, 48-59. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cpr.2016.10.011>
- Mohamed, N. N. I., Ma'rof, A. A., & Hadi, A. The Relationship between the Use of Social Networking Sites, Perceived Social Support and Spirituality on Loneliness among University Students in Klang Valley, Malaysia.
- Neff, K. D. (2003). Self-compassion: An alternative conceptualization of a healthy attitude toward oneself. *Self and Identity*, 2(2), 85-101. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15298860309032>
- Neff, K. D., & Pommier, E. (2013). The relationship between self-compassion and other-focused concern among college undergraduates, community adults, and practicing meditators. *Self and Identity*, 12(2), 160-176. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15298868.2011.649546>
- O'Connell, B. H., O'Shea, D., & Gallagher, S. (2016). Mediating effects of loneliness on the gratitude-health link. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 98, 179-183.
- Pargament, K. I. (1997). *The psychology of religion and coping: Theory, research, practice*. Guilford Press.
- Perlman, D., & Peplau, L. A. (1981). Toward a social psychology of loneliness. In R. Gilmour & S. Duck (Eds.), *Personal relationships in disorder* (pp. 31–56). Academic Press.
- Regehr, C., Glancy, D., & Pitts, A. (2013). Interventions to reduce stress in university students: A review and meta-analysis. *Journal of Affective Disorders*, 148(1), 1-11. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jad.2012.11.026>

Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2001). On happiness and human potentials: A review of research on hedonic and eudaimonic well-being. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 52(1), 141-166.
<https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.52.1.141>