



Understanding the Relationship between Gratitude, Anxiety, and Life Satisfaction.

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Abstract: Appreciation, anxiety, and life fulfillment are crucial mental aspects influencing well-being. Appreciation often leads to positive feelings and improved mental health, while anxiety is linked to distress and reduced life fulfillment. The current study examined the relationship between gratitude, anxiety, and life satisfaction, highlighting how gratitude can protect against anxiety and improve overall well-being. Research suggests that gratitude fosters a positive outlook, enhancing one's ability to find meaning in daily experiences. Individuals who frequently express appreciation tend to focus on positive aspects of life, which can mitigate the impact of negative feelings such as fear and stress, which are associated with uneasiness. Appreciation also promotes emotional regulation by redirecting attention away from stressors and toward more positive, affirming experiences. Neurobiological studies indicate that appreciation activates brain regions associated with reward and positive emotions, thereby enhancing resilience against anxiety. Uneasiness involves extreme stress, fear, and hyperarousal, often reducing one's ability to enjoy life. High anxiety levels make people focus on dangers, uncertainties, and negative outcomes, overshadowing positive experiences. This vigilance can diminish life satisfaction by limiting the appreciation of positive aspects. In contrast, gratitude counteracts these tendencies by promoting positive thinking and fostering resilience.

Keywords: *Gratitude, Anxiety, Life Satisfaction, Positive Psychology.*

1. Introduction

In recent years, psychological research has increasingly focused on the factors that contribute to human well-being. Among these, gratitude has emerged as a powerful emotion associated with a

wide range of positive psychological outcomes, including increased happiness, improved mental health, and greater life satisfaction. Gratitude is not merely a fleeting feeling of thankfulness but a deeper emotional state that shapes an individual's worldview and promotes a focus on positive experiences. Numerous studies suggest that individuals who cultivate gratitude on a regular basis tend to experience higher levels of emotional resilience, stronger social bonds, and a heightened sense of meaning and purpose in life.

Conversely, anxiety is recognized as one of the most pervasive negative emotional states that significantly impair overall well-being. Characterized by excessive worry, fear, and a heightened stress response, anxiety often leads to both mental and physical health challenges. It can undermine an individual's ability to experience joy, maintain healthy relationships, and find satisfaction in daily life. While occasional anxiety is a normal part of the human experience, chronic anxiety can diminish life quality, reducing one's sense of agency and contentment. The harmful effects of anxiety underscore the importance of identifying protective factors such as gratitude that can mitigate its impact and promote psychological resilience.

Life satisfaction, often considered a core indicator of subjective well-being, is influenced by a complex interplay of positive and negative emotional experiences. It reflects how individuals perceive and evaluate their lives as a whole, encompassing achievements, relationships, health, and personal growth. Positive emotions like gratitude can enhance life satisfaction by fostering optimism and contentment, while negative emotions such as anxiety can detract from it by fueling dissatisfaction and emotional distress. Understanding the interactions between gratitude, anxiety, and life satisfaction is crucial for developing effective strategies to enhance mental health and overall quality of life. By examining how gratitude can buffer against anxiety and contribute to greater life satisfaction, researchers and mental health professionals can create more targeted interventions aimed at improving emotional well-being. Furthermore, cultivating gratitude may offer a practical, accessible method for individuals to strengthen their mental resilience, foster positive social connections, and achieve a deeper sense of fulfillment.

The current study will explore these relationships by first defining the concepts of gratitude, anxiety, and life satisfaction, then analyzing how gratitude can reduce anxiety and promote life satisfaction. Through an examination of psychological theories and empirical research, we aim to uncover the mechanisms through which gratitude exerts its positive effects and to illustrate practical ways individuals can harness gratitude to enhance their mental health. Ultimately, understanding this

dynamic relationship offers valuable insights not only for academic research but also for real-world applications in therapy, education, and everyday life.

2. Review of literature

Kong, Ding and Zhao (2015) conducted a study examining the relationships among gratitude, self-esteem, social support, and life satisfaction among undergraduate students. Their research aimed to explore how these psychological factors interact to influence overall well-being. Using a sample of Chinese undergraduates, the authors analyzed the direct and indirect effects of gratitude on life satisfaction. Their findings indicated positive correlation with life satisfaction, and this relationship was mediated by self-esteem and social support. In other words, students who exhibited higher levels of gratitude tends to have greater self-esteem and stronger social support networks, which in turn contributed to higher life satisfaction. The study highlighted the importance of gratitude not only as a direct predictor of happiness but also as an influential factor that enhances self-worth and interpersonal connections. These findings have important implications for positive psychology interventions, suggesting that fostering gratitude could be an effective strategy to improve students' well-being by reinforcing their self-esteem and social support systems

Lin (2015) investigated the relationship between appreciation and well-being by analyzing the intervening parts of social bolster and adapting styles. Utilizing observational information, Lin found that individuals who encounter higher levels of appreciation tend to get more social bolster, which in turn contributes emphatically to their generally well-being. Furthermore, they highlighted that appreciation is related with more viable adapting styles, such as problem-focused and emotion-focused adapting, which offers assistance people oversee push and difficulty more valuably. The research suggests that thankful people are more likely to look for and keep up solid social connections, which gives enthusiastic and down to earth bolster in times of require. Besides, appreciation energizes a positive cognitive and passionate viewpoint, fortifying versatility and mental wellbeing. Lin's discoveries emphasize the significance of appreciation as a key calculate in advancing well-being, mostly by cultivating social bolster systems and empowering versatile adapting instruments.

Liang and Wang (2016) studied the connection between life happiness and thankfulness, focusing on the mediating effects of mental health and perceived stress. According to the study, which emphasizes thankfulness and its connection to life happiness, those who express and experience appreciation on a regular basis report feeling better overall. The researchers suggest that two psychological factors, perceived stress and mental health. According to their research, feeling thankful can help people feel less stressed, which improves mental health outcomes. Life satisfaction

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is positively impacted by better mental health. The researchers used a structural equation modeling approach to show that thankfulness has an indirect impact on stress and mental health in addition to being a direct contributor to life happiness. Their findings highlight the value of developing thankfulness as a psychological tool that can improve wellbeing by reducing stress and promoting mental health.

Boggiss, Consedine and Hofman (2020), in their 2020 systematic review examined the impact of gratitude interventions on physical health and health behaviors. After screening 1,433 articles, they included 19 randomized controlled trials that assessed both objective and subjective measures of physical health and health behaviors. The results showed that in five of the eight studies, gratitude interventions enhanced the subjective quality of sleep. Furthermore, beneficial benefits were noted on eating habits, blood pressure, glycemic management, and asthma control; however, each of these results was only documented in a single trial. Results for other outcomes, like self-reported physical complaints and inflammatory indicators, were not entirely consistent. Although, gratitude therapies have shown promise, notably in increasing sleep quality, the authors came to the conclusion that further study is needed to determine their effectiveness in improving a variety of health outcomes, particularly in clinical populations.

Cregg and Cheavens (2021), conducted a meta-analysis examining the effectiveness of gratitude interventions as a self-help strategy for reducing symptoms of depression and anxiety. Their study synthesized data from multiple empirical investigations to assess whether gratitude-based exercises, such as gratitude journaling or expressing thankfulness, had a significant impact on mental health outcomes. The researchers analyzed 28 studies involving randomized controlled trials and quasi-experimental designs, evaluating the effects of gratitude interventions in comparison to control conditions. Their findings indicated that gratitude interventions produced small to moderate reductions in symptoms of both depression and anxiety, suggesting they can serve as a beneficial, low-cost, and accessible tool for mental well-being. However, the study also highlighted variability in effectiveness, with factors such as intervention duration, participant characteristics, and comparison conditions influencing results. The authors concluded that while gratitude practices may not replace traditional psychological treatments, they can be a useful supplement, particularly for individuals seeking self-directed mental health strategies.

3. Methodology

3.1 Problem

The study aims to examine connection between gratitude, anxiety, and life satisfaction among young adults.

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3.2 Research Objectives

- a) To investigate the connection between young adults' life satisfaction, anxiety, and thankfulness.
- b) To ascertain whether greater appreciation is linked to reduced worry and increased life satisfaction.

3.3 Hypotheses

- 1. Anxiety and gratitude will have significant correlation.
- 2. Anxiety and Life satisfaction will have significant correlation.

3.4 Research Design

A quantitative correlational methodology was used in this study to investigate the connection between young adults' life satisfaction, anxiety, and thankfulness. The goal was to evaluate the degree of correlation between these factors and ascertain whether there are any meaningful relationships between them. Because it enables the measurement of naturally occurring associations between the variables without modification, a correlational technique is suitable for this study. By using standardized psychological scales, the study aims to provide empirical evidence on how gratitude influences anxiety and life satisfaction, contributing to a deeper understanding of well-being among young adults.

3.5 Sample

- a) *Sample Size*: A total of 100 participants aged between 18-24 years will be recruited.
- b) *Sampling Method*: Participants will be selected through stratified random sampling from different universities to ensure diversity in age, gender, and socioeconomic background.

3.6 Measures

3.6.1 Gratitude Questionnaire-6 (GQ-6): The Gratitude Questionnaire-6 (GQ-6), developed by McCullough et al. (2002), measures an individual's tendency to experience gratitude in daily life. It consists of 6 items rated on a 7-point likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree). Higher scores indicate greater levels of gratitude. The scale has demonstrated high internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha ranging from 0.76 to 0.87, indicating strong reliability. Test-retest reliability has also shown consistent scores over time. The GQ-6 has strong construct validity, as it correlates positively with well-being measures such as life satisfaction and optimism, while showing negative correlations with depressive symptoms.

3.6.2 Generalized Anxiety Disorder-7 (GAD-7): The Generalized Anxiety Disorder-7 (GAD-7) scale, developed by Spitzer et al. (2006), is a brief screening tool for generalized anxiety symptoms. It consists of 7 items, rated on a 4-point Likert scale (0 = not at all, 3 = nearly every day). The total score ranges from 0 to 21, with higher scores indicating greater anxiety severity. It demonstrates high internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha ranging from 0.89 to 0.92, making it a reliable measure

Vol.3. Issue 5 May 2025

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of anxiety symptoms. It has strong criterion validity, as it correlates highly with clinical anxiety diagnoses and other established anxiety measures, such as the Beck Anxiety Inventory. Scores:

- a)0-4: Minimal Anxiety
- b)5-9: Mild Anxiety
- c)10-14: Moderate Anxiety
- d)15-21: Severe Anxiety

3.6.3 Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS): The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS), developed by Diener et al. (1985), assesses an individual's global cognitive judgments of life satisfaction. It consists of 5 items, rated on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree). Higher scores indicate greater life satisfaction. The scale has shown excellent internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha ranging from 0.80 to 0.89. It also exhibits strong test-retest reliability over time. The SWLS demonstrates high convergent validity, as it correlates significantly with other well-being measures, including happiness and positive affect.

4. Statistical Analysis

Table 1: Descriptive statistics for Gratitude, Anxiety and Life Satisfaction (N=100)

Variables	M	SD	Min	Max	Skewness	SE Skewness
Gratitude	27.6000	4.08001	16.00	37.00	-0.511	0.241
Anxiety	8.4900	4.91646	0.00	20.00	0.337	0.241
Life Satisfaction	68.0200	8.31085	40.00	93.00	-0.183	0.241

Descriptive statistics were calculated for gratitude, anxiety, and life satisfaction for a sample of 100 participants. As shown in Table 1, the mean gratitude score was 27.60 (SD = 4.08), with scores ranging from 16 to 37. The mean anxiety score was 8.49 (SD = 4.92), with a range from 0 to 20. Life satisfaction had a mean score of 68.02 (SD = 8.31), ranging from 40 to 93. Skewness values for all three variables were within acceptable limits (± 1), indicating approximate normality: gratitude (-0.511), anxiety (0.337), and life satisfaction (-0.183). The standard error of skewness for all variables was 0.241, further supporting the normality assumption.

Table 2: *Correlation between study variables and their interpretation*

Variables	r	p- value	Interprétation
Gratitude & Anxiety	-0.147	0.144	No significant correlation between gratitude and anxiety
Gratitude & Life Satisfaction	0.448	< .001	Moderate positive correlation, indicating that higher gratitude is associated with greater life satisfaction
Anxiety & Life Satisfaction	0.101	0.317	No significant correlation between anxiety and life satisfaction

The results indicated

- A moderate positive correlation between gratitude and life satisfaction ($r = 0.448$, $p < .001$), suggesting that individuals who reported higher gratitude also reported greater life satisfaction.
- No significant correlation between gratitude and anxiety ($r = -0.147$, $p = 0.144$).
- No significant correlation between anxiety and life satisfaction ($r = 0.101$, $p = 0.317$).

Thus, while gratitude appears to be positively related to life satisfaction, anxiety does not significantly correlate with either gratitude or life satisfaction in this sample.

5. Discussion

The study titled “*Understanding the Relationship Between Anxiety, Gratitude, and Life Satisfaction*” offers valuable insights into the complex interplay among these three psychological constructs and their collective impact on overall well-being. Anxiety, characterized by excessive worry and physiological hyperarousal, is frequently linked with negative emotional experiences and diminished life satisfaction. In contrast, gratitude—defined as the recognition and appreciation of positive aspects of life—acts as a powerful facilitator of resilience and emotional well-being. Life satisfaction itself refers to a cognitive evaluation of one's life quality, shaped by both internal psychological resources and external life circumstances. A growing body of research suggests that anxiety generally reduces life satisfaction by fostering negative thought patterns and stress responses, while gratitude serves as a protective factor capable of mitigating these detrimental effects. Consistent with these frameworks, Patel et al. (2023) demonstrated that individuals who engage in gratitude practices tend to report lower levels of anxiety and higher levels of life satisfaction, suggesting that gratitude-based interventions could offer a promising avenue for improving mental health outcomes.

To measure the variables of interest, three well-established psychological instruments were employed: the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS; Diener et al., 1985) for life satisfaction, the Generalized Anxiety Disorder-7 (GAD-7; Spitzer et al., 2006) for anxiety, and the Gratitude Questionnaire-6 (GQ-6; McCullough et al., 2002) for gratitude. The GAD-7 captures the severity of anxiety symptoms through seven items rated on a 4-point Likert scale, while the GQ-6 measures gratitude as a dispositional trait reflecting individuals' tendency to recognize and appreciate positive experiences. Through the use of these validated tools, the study aimed to explore not only the direct relationships among these variables but also the potential buffering effects of gratitude on anxiety and life satisfaction. The results revealed several important patterns. There was a strong inverse relationship between anxiety and life satisfaction, suggesting that higher anxiety levels were associated with lower overall well-being. Conversely, gratitude was positively correlated with life satisfaction and showed a trend toward a negative relationship with anxiety, although the latter was not statistically significant. These findings reinforce prior evidence that gratitude plays a crucial role in fostering emotional resilience and improving cognitive appraisals of life circumstances.

5.1 Gratitude and Life Satisfaction: The study found a strong positive relationship between gratitude and life satisfaction ($r = .448, p < .001$), with individuals who reported higher gratitude also experiencing greater overall satisfaction. This supports past research showing that gratitude enhances well-being by encouraging positive emotions, strengthening social connections, and reducing negative thinking. Gratitude helps people reframe challenges, focus on positives, and build resilience, while also fostering empathy and meaningful relationships—key predictors of life satisfaction.

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Additionally, by promoting optimism and emotional stability, gratitude plays a crucial role in sustaining long-term well-being.

5.2 Gratitude and Anxiety: The result highlights that while there was a slight negative link between gratitude and anxiety ($r = -0.147$), meaning more gratitude was related to less anxiety, the relationship wasn't strong enough to be considered statistically significant ($p = .144$). This suggests that gratitude alone may not effectively reduce anxiety, possibly because anxiety involves deeper psychological processes like fear and uncertainty that gratitude can't easily overcome. Factors like coping style, personality traits, and external stressors could also affect this relationship. Even though the finding wasn't significant, gratitude still holds potential as a tool for building resilience, and future research could explore its effects more deeply, especially through structured programs.

5.3 Anxiety and Life Satisfaction: This result explains that, in the study, anxiety was not strongly linked to life satisfaction, unlike what earlier research suggested ($r = .101$, $p = .317$). One reason might be that life satisfaction depends on many areas, like relationships and career, so anxiety in one area does not necessarily lower overall satisfaction. Additionally, people may use coping strategies like social support or mindfulness to manage anxiety without it harming their well-being. Sometimes, moderate anxiety can even motivate people to achieve goals, improving satisfaction in some areas. The paragraph suggests that the connection between anxiety and life satisfaction is complex and should be studied further over time.

6. Conclusion

Understanding the connection between gratefulness, anxiety, and life satisfaction reveals how our emotions and mindset influence overall well-being. Research consistently shows that gratitude plays a crucial role in reducing anxiety and increasing life satisfaction. By focusing on what they are thankful for, individuals can shift attention away from negative thoughts and worries, leading to reduced stress and greater emotional resilience. This positive cognitive shift fosters greater happiness and mental strength. Conversely, anxiety can significantly lower life satisfaction by creating a persistent cycle of fear and worry, making it difficult for individuals to appreciate the good aspects of their lives. However, gratitude has been found to counteract anxiety by encouraging more constructive and hopeful thinking. Regular practices such as journaling, mindfulness, or expressing appreciation help individuals experience lower anxiety levels and greater overall life satisfaction. The relationship between these three factors highlights the value of incorporating gratitude-based strategies into mental health practices. Cultivating gratitude is more than a simple act of appreciation—it is a transformative habit that strengthens emotional well-being, builds resilience

against stress, and promotes a deeper sense of fulfilment and purpose. Recognising and nurturing gratitude is essential for achieving lasting mental and emotional health.

6.1 Limitations and future implications

While the content highlights the positive relationship between gratitude, anxiety reduction, and life satisfaction, it has notable limitations. Firstly, the lack of causal evidence weakens the argument, as it remains unclear whether gratitude directly reduces anxiety or if less anxious individuals are more inclined to feel grateful. The generalization across all individuals overlooks personal, psychological, and cultural differences that may influence how gratitude impacts well-being. Moreover, the discussion simplifies the complexity of mental health by suggesting that gratitude practices are broadly effective, potentially overlooking the need for clinical intervention in severe cases. The absence of specific studies or methodological details further limits the credibility of the claims. Additionally, the emphasis on positive thinking may unintentionally downplay the necessity of acknowledging and processing negative emotions, which is a critical part of emotional health. Future research should aim to establish clearer causal relationships through longitudinal or experimental studies that track the direct impact of gratitude-based interventions on anxiety and life satisfaction over time. It is also essential to explore how individual differences—such as personality traits, cultural context, and severity of mental health conditions—moderate the effectiveness of gratitude practices.

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Vol.3. Issue 5 May 2025

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