

A Research on the Correlation between Gratitude and Life Satisfaction

A research by

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July, 2022

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1 Introduction

Positive psychology is a scientific approach to studying human thoughts, feelings, and behavior, with a focus on strengths instead of weaknesses, building the good in life instead of repairing the bad, and taking the lives of average people up to “great” instead of focusing solely on moving those who are struggling up to “normal” (Peterson, 2008). Happiness, well-being, quality of life, virtues, strengths, gratitude, etc are some of the concepts in positive psychology. For the purpose of this correlation study, the variables of “gratitude” and “life satisfaction” were selected.

Gratitude

Gratitude is a pleasant feeling that entails being grateful and it has been linked to a variety of mental and physical health advantages. You feel grateful for something or someone in your life and respond with feelings of kindness, warmth, and other forms of charity when you experience appreciation. To better comprehend the spiritual dimensions of the construct, gratitude as an emotion is being measured. Simply saying "thank you" isn't enough to cultivate a state that promotes happiness. It's critical to gain a better knowledge of thankfulness and its role in different cultures. Because appreciation is subjective, it is used differently by different groups of individuals.

According to research, the link between thankfulness and physical well-being is critical. Gratitude has been demonstrated to be beneficial to one's heart in studies. Gratitude promotes sleep, lowers blood pressure, and reduces stress. Other research has found that successful gratitude practices can help to reduce depression and anxiety symptoms. Humans benefit from more thankfulness. Being aware of one's level of thankfulness could be the first step in bettering one's well-being. Grateful people are less likely to feel resentment or envy. The more thankfulness and emotion are experienced, the more likely it is that higher degrees of positive affect is experienced.

Positive emotions increase the scope of possibility and make it easier to build. Gratitude is a character trait that allows others to grow as well. An intentional change toward appreciation improves perspective-taking and concern for others.

Life Satisfaction

Life satisfaction is “an overall assessment of feelings and attitudes about one’s life at a particular point in time ranging from negative to positive” (Diener et al., 1985). It refers to a cognitive, judgmental process. Judgment of one’s satisfaction is made based on a comparison of one’s circumstances to what is the norm. The standard of everyone’s life satisfaction is different; it depends on what one personally gives importance to. For example, although money may be desirable to everyone to lead a satisfying life, every individual will prioritize it differently. The term life satisfaction is sometimes used interchangeably with happiness. However, instead of stating a person’s current level of happiness, it is the evaluation of one’s life as a whole. A healthy life includes moments of happiness but happiness alone seldom makes a satisfying life.

Life satisfaction is more stable and broader than happiness. Research indicates that the main contributing factors toward life satisfaction fall into the categories of life chances, course of events, the flow of experience, and evaluation of life. The life chances category refers to whatever chances a person gets based on their political, social, economical, and cultural position. Individual abilities like physical and mental fitness, intellectual abilities, and social capabilities are also included here. The course of events category includes events that can confront us in our day-to-day life. The flow of experience category refers to the responses that a person has to the things that happen to them. These are determined by our resources, abilities, and course of events. Lastly, evaluation of life involves comparing our life to our ideal of a “good life” and appraising it.

1.1 Aim

The aim of this study was to understand the relationship between the variables gratitude and life satisfaction.

2 Review of Literature

Datu and Mateo (2015) conducted a study with Filipino Adolescents. The main goal of the study was to see how meaning in life affected gratitude's mediating effect on life satisfaction. Additionally, it looked to see if there was a meaningful relationship between gratitude and life happiness. It was conducted on 409 participants of whom the majority were females. The scales used were Gratitude Questionnaire Six-Item Form (GQ-6), Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MLQ), and satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS). The study's findings confirmed the assumptions that the presence of purpose in life has a partial mediating influence on gratitude's relationship to life pleasure. The association between gratitude and life satisfaction was statistically significant, as expected. This suggests that a grateful outlook on life has a beneficial impact on life satisfaction. (This implies that having a grateful life orientation positively affects life satisfaction.)

Robustelli and Whisman (2018) carried out a study in which they predicted that among middle-aged and older adults from the United States and Japan, gratitude would be associated with all three of the life satisfaction domains of health, work, and relationships as well as with overall life satisfaction and that these associations would hold true even after accounting for demographic and personality factors. There were 954 participants in total. The bivariate relationships between gratitude and the four measures of life satisfaction were all statistically significant, such that people who reported higher levels of gratitude also reported higher levels of satisfaction in each domain.

Salvador-Ferrer (2016) piloted a study to see the relationship between gratitude and life satisfaction in Spanish students. There were a total of 309 participants in this study. The scales used were the self-report Gratitude Questionnaire (GQ-6) and the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS). The results indicated that there is a link between the two variables but there is a negative significant relationship. High levels of gratitude are related to lower level of life satisfaction, and vice versa. This is because gratitude receives assistance that is deemed to be desirable, expensive to provide, and selflessly offered. They even saw the relationship between genders which suggests that gratitude and life satisfaction are found in females more than males as males think that expressing gratitude may weaken their social standing and masculinity.

Chen and Chang (2017) carried out a research on mindfulness with gratitude and life satisfaction with athletics participants. The total number of participants was 190 and the

athletes were from Taiwan. The scales used were Dispositional Gratitude, Mindfulness Awareness Attention Scale (MAAS), and Satisfaction with Life Scale. The results were positively significant which stated that gratitude was positively related to the athletes' life satisfaction only among those with high levels of mindfulness.

Yildirim and Alanazi (2018) researched gratitude, life satisfaction, and stress with 141 Arabic-speaking students. The scales used were Gratitude Questionnaire (GQ-6), Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS), and Perceived Stress Scale (PSS). According to the findings, perceived stress was inversely associated with both gratitude and life satisfaction, but gratitude was positively associated with life satisfaction. In other words, those who express thankfulness frequently report feeling less stressed and more content with their lives.

3 Method

3.1 Research Problem

1. How are the variables 'gratitude' and 'life satisfaction' related to each other?
2. Do the variables 'gratitude' and 'life satisfaction' have a positive or negative correlation between them?

3.2 Participants

3.2.1 Description of Sample

For the purpose of this study, the sample was adults between 18 to 25 years of age. The gratitude scale's age range was 17 and above and the life satisfaction scale's range was 10 and above. The sample size of the population was 40 units. The majority of the sample was 21 years of age. There were 75% of women, 20% of men, and 5% of non-binary persons. Most of the participants were students.

3.2.2 Sampling Method

The method of convenient sampling was used to select the sample. This method involves selecting a sample on the basis of the people that are conveniently available to the researchers. The two scales were administered on people that were easily available to the researchers.

3.3 Procedure

A sample of 40 people was selected on the basis of the decided criteria. Both the scales, The Gratitude Questionnaire – Six Item Form (GQ-6) and Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) were administered to the subjects at once. They were administered through Google Forms. The data obtained was scored on the basis of the scoring criteria of each scale. Once these scores were obtained, the correlation between these variables was checked with the help of Microsoft Excel.

3.4 Tools

3.4.1 The Gratitude Questionnaire – Six Item Form (GQ-6)

This scale is a six-item self-report questionnaire designed to assess individual differences in the proneness to experience gratitude in daily life. . GQ-6 is derived from G20 which is a gratitude scale with 20 items and it measures 4 factors which are Interpersonal gratitude (IG), Gratitude in the face of suffering (GS), Recognition of Gifts (RG) and Expression of Gratitude (EG). (Valero et al, 2020.)

To measure the convergent validity, Gratitude Questionnaire—Six Items Form was used. This questionnaire focuses on the emotional component of gratitude based on an understanding of the concept of gratitude as “a generalized tendency to recognize and respond with grateful emotion to the roles of other people’s benevolence in the positive experiences and outcomes that one obtains”

Respondents endorse each item on a 7-point Likert-type scale (where 1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree). Two items are reverse-scored to inhibit response bias i.e. item numbers 3 & 6. The mean of all the ratings given by the participant is considered as the final score. The GQ-6 has good internal reliability, with alphas between .82 and .87, and there is evidence that the GQ-6 is positively related to optimism, life satisfaction, hope, spirituality and religiousness, forgiveness, empathy, and prosocial behavior, and negatively related to depression, anxiety, materialism, and envy. The GQ-6 takes less than 5 minutes to complete, but there is no time limit.

This questionnaire measures intensity, frequency, span, and density of gratitude as an emotion. Within these four facets, a person who experiences these in higher numbers elicits more gratitude as an affective state. This type of disposition presents higher levels of self-reported life satisfaction.

3.4.2 *The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS)*

Although life satisfaction is correlated with variables like health, income, and relationship quality, every individual may weigh these differently. There are quite a few scales that seek to measure life satisfaction. However, Ed Diener’s scale, the Satisfaction with Life Scale is one of the most commonly used ones. The scale originated in 1985. It does not specify domains such as work or health in which respondents should rate their satisfaction, but instead, it asks more general questions to get a subjective evaluation.

The scale contains five items and participants indicate how much they agree or disagree with an item using a 7-point scale ranging from 7 strongly agree to 1 strongly disagree. The participant’s score on the scale is obtained by adding their ratings on every item. According to Diener et al. (1985), the SWLS has been demonstrated to have strong internal consistency and moderate temporal stability with Cronbach’s alpha of 0.87 and 2-month test-retest reliability of 0.82. This test also has no time limit, it takes less than 5 minutes to complete.

Life satisfaction as assessed by the SWLS shows a degree of temporal stability (e.g. 54 for 4 years), yet the SWLS can detect a change in life satisfaction during clinical intervention. The scale shows discriminant validity from emotional well-being measures. It is recommended as a complement to scales that focus on psychopathology or emotional well-being because it assesses an individuals' conscious evaluative judgment of his or her life by using the person's own criteria.

3.5 Research Design

The design is a correlational design research study in which the scores of the subjects were computed to understand the correlation between two variables.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

The purpose of the study was clearly defined to everyone who participated in the study. They were assured that the information provided by them will be strictly used for research purposes. The participants were also informed of the option of withdrawing from the study whenever they wished to.

3.7 Data Analysis

The responses of the participants on both the scales were converted into scores on the basis of the scoring criteria given for each scale. Then, the correlation between them was obtained.

4 Results and Discussion

The value 0.64 shows a positive moderate correlation between the variables of gratitude and life satisfaction. This means that if one variable increases, the other variable will also increase. Conversely, if one variable decreases, the other will also decrease. It is a substantial but small relationship.

As the gratitude people feel in their lives increases, their life satisfaction also increases. Conversely, lower level of life satisfaction can be related to lower levels of gratitude.

	Gratitude (X)	Life Satisfaction (Y)
Gratitude (X)	1	
Life Satisfaction (Y)	0.636965975	1

Figure 1 - Correlation coefficient between the two variables.

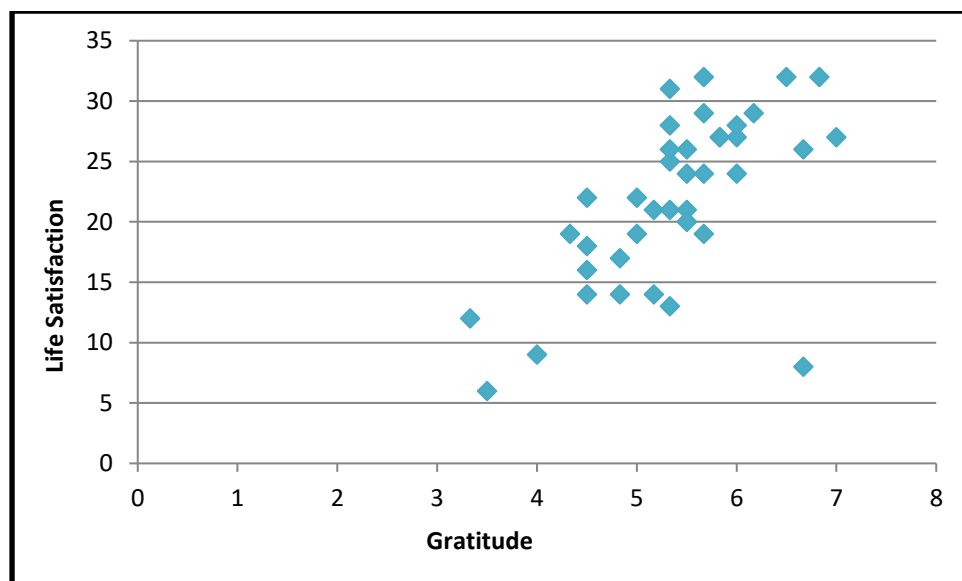


Figure 2 – Scatter plot of the relation between the two variables

The results of the study are in line with the results of the previous studies in the literature review mentioned above. Datu and Mateo (2015) conducted a study with the Filipino adolescents and they found a positive correlation between gratitude and life satisfaction. Chen and Chang (2017) carried out a study with athletes and they found a positive correlation with gratitude and life satisfaction with mindfulness. Yildirim and

Alanazi (2018) piloted a study which is in line with the above study mentioned and carried out with the researchers. It shows that gratitude and life satisfaction have a positive correlation with the adults as they have achieved their goal in life and are satisfied with all the success they have achieved and are ready to deal with all the other factors affecting them.

5 Conclusion

There are a few limitations to this research. Since the participants have solved the scale on their own without any supervision, there is no way to check how reliable and truthful their responses are. Other variables, internal and external, that might affect a participant's responses have not been controlled. Moreover, the sample chosen is very small to draw a conclusion about the relationship between these variables.

Since both gratitude and life satisfaction are concepts in positive psychology, the positive correlation between them makes sense. However, it still cannot be understood whether being satisfied in life causes one to be more grateful or the other way around.

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