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Effect of Paying Gratitude to Allah on the Life Satisfaction of Female University Students

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ABSTRACT

The present research employed an intervention plan to investigate the effect of paying gratitude to Allah on the life satisfaction of female university students. Sample of 40 female students with the age range of 19-23 years ($M=20.4$, $SD=.87$) was selected from a public University of Lahore. They were administered a five-item, seven-point rating life satisfaction scale twice: once as a pretest for initial screening and again as a post-test. Those having high score on life satisfaction were excluded. Then participants were randomly assigned to control and experimental groups. All participants were given booklets that include the exercises sheets which they have to complete in three weeks. In experimental condition, participants were asked to acknowledge and record how fortunate Allah made them in many aspects of their lives at present and past. Participants in control group were asked to take notice and record of daily life activities. The result of two way mixed Anova indicated that gratitude intervention has the significant effect in enhancing the life satisfaction of university students. This research has important implications for mental health professionals, teachers and students.

Keywords: Gratitude to Allah, Life Satisfaction, University Students.

Introduction

The current research sought to examine the impact of gratitude intervention in improving overall well-being among university students. Gratitude is commonly understood as the recognition and appreciation of the kindness and benefits received from others, involving an understanding of life's positive elements and the acknowledgment that many blessings come from sources beyond oneself. Gratitude is one of the essential practices and core teachings of all religions. Expressing gratitude towards God for each blessing, he showers on us is common premise in all religions. In Islamic teaching, gratitude is one of the crucial teachings and expressing gratitude towards Allah is important for an individual's well-being. It helps in finding satisfaction, peace and to removing anguish from heart. Like one of Allah's appellations is AL-Shakoor, the Grateful one. Both Allah Almighty and His Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) educated human beings that how to be grateful to Him for His blessing and gifts He gives us. In Holy Quran, Allah has given importance to the need of gratitude towards Him. In 14th part: "If you are grateful, I will give you more (14:7)".

Gratitude has a positive association with prosocial behavior, and life pleasure according to numerous studies. Longitudinal evidence suggests that gratitude and life satisfaction reinforce one another over time, contributing to greater psychological well-being. In addition, Zahand (2022) and Shoshani et al. (2021) reported that individuals with elevated levels of

gratitude are more inclined towards helping others, partly because gratitude promotes a stronger sense of purpose in life. Together, these results show that gratitude enhances both personal well-being and positive social behaviour. Evidence from Pakistan also supports the positive role of gratitude in promoting psychological well-being. A Gratitude Scale for University Students was developed and validated by Shahid and Kazmi (2022), who reported that life satisfaction and affective well-being were positively correlated with gratitude. Likewise, Qadr et al. (2024) found that among undergraduate students residing in Karachi, trait gratitude was a significant indicator of psychological well-being.

Gratitude has the positive effects on mental health. Coles et al. (2026) reported that expressing gratitude through intentional practices positively influences emotions, cognitive outlook, and social relationships, thereby contributing to better emotional wellness. Similarly, Kim et al. (2024) found that both directly expressing gratitude and observing others' expressions of gratitude significantly enhanced individuals' feelings of gratitude, satisfaction with life, and perceived social support. These findings suggest that gratitude, whether practiced directly or experienced indirectly, serve as an effective strategy for promoting psychological well-being.

Systematic reviews and comprehensive systematic research have consistently shown that gratitude interventions enhance subjective wellness (Boggiss et al., 2020; Carr et al., 2020; Cregg & Cheavens, 2020; Meyer & Stutts, 2023). Similarly, recent experimental studies have highlighted that various gratitude practices, such as privately expressing gratitude, sending gratitude messages to benefactors, and sharing gratitude through social media, significantly improve psychological well-being (Russell et al., 2023; Srivastava & Ghosh, 2023; Van Cappellen et al., 2023; Walsh et al., 2022).

Choi et al. (2025) conducted a comprehensive systematic research of 145 studies including 24,804 subjects from 28 countries to evaluate the effectiveness of thankfulness activities among various groups, including students, healthcare professionals, and religious groups. The activities were particularly effective in increasing positive emotions, improving mental health, strengthening interpersonal relationships, and promoting spiritual wellness, while their effects on life satisfaction were relatively limited. The findings suggested that gratitude activities, such as gratitude journaling, writing gratitude letters, and expressing appreciation to others, consistently enhanced psychological wellness. Thus, gratitude practices would be more effective as regular emotional habit rather than a single activity.

Furthermore, Dang et al. (2025) reported that both intrapersonal gratitude interventions (e.g., gratitude journaling) and interpersonal interventions (e.g., gratitude letters and messages), as well as gratitude directed toward God, effectively increased positive emotions and reduced negative emotions. Similarly, Zhang and Guo (2025) investigated the connection between gratitude and coping strategies among 1,666 Chinese university students. Their findings showed that both directly and indirectly gratitude was a notable positive predictor of problem-focused coping, through perceived social support and self-esteem. Although gratitude did not directly predict emotion-focused coping, it influenced this coping strategy indirectly through the combined mediating effects of social support and self-esteem. These findings suggest that gratitude enhances adaptive coping by strengthening important psychological and social resources.

Similarly, Kirca et al. (2023) conducted a comprehensive systematic research of 25 randomized controlled trials involving 6,745 subjects and reported that thankfulness activities, including gratitude journaling, gratitude letter writing, and gratitude text messaging, significantly improved psychological wellness. The activities were linked with

elevated levels of life satisfaction, positive affect, and joy. Thus interpersonal and intrapersonal both gratitude practices are helpful in improving mental wellness in both male and female students highlighting the value of gratitude interventions in supporting adolescents' emotional well-being.

Studies have further demonstrated the effectiveness of gratitude activities across varied educational backgrounds. Bono et al. (2023) examined the effectiveness of gratitude-based interventions among high school adolescents over a six-week period. Their findings showed that students who participated in gratitude activities, including a gratitude curriculum and digital "counting blessings" exercises, reported higher levels of subjective well-being, satisfaction with life, and trait gratitude, along with lower levels of anxiety in contrast to those in the control group. The authors concluded that incorporating gratitude practices into school-based programs can effectively promote adolescents' mental health and overall wellness.

Tolcher et al. (2024) discovered that university students who took part in gratitude journaling, reflective exercises, or app-supported thankfulness activities reported larger gains in wellness than those in a control group, with gratitude journaling producing the larger gains in happiness, resilience, and satisfaction with life. Similarly, Nawa and Yamagishi (2021) reported that a two-week online gratitude journaling activities increased university students' motivation to learn, and these benefits remained evident three months after the intervention.

Research has also demonstrated the impact of online thankfulness activities. Srivastava and Ghosh (2023) found that Indian youth who completed repeated online gratitude exercises during the COVID-19 lockdown experienced greater improvements in overall well-being than those who completed a single intervention. Similarly, Bohlmeijer et al. (2021) reported that a six-week gratitude intervention significantly enhanced mental well-being among adults with low to moderate well-being and symptoms of anxiety and depression, although its effects on psychological distress were limited.

Bohlmeijer et al. (2021) evaluated the impact of a six-week thankfulness activities among 217 Dutch adults with low to moderate levels of well-being and symptoms of anxiety and depression. Subjects were randomly assigned to one of three conditions: a six-week gratitude intervention, a waitlist control group and a six-week self-kindness intervention (active control group). Measures of well-being, anxiety depression,, and gratitude were administered online at baseline, immediately after the intervention, six weeks later, and again at a six-month follow-up. The findings indicated that the gratitude intervention significantly improved participants' mental wellness, although it did not produce a substantial reduction in psychological distress. This intervention was more effective for highly educated women with low to moderate well-being, suggesting that gender and education also impact the effectiveness of such interventions."

El Keshky and Sarour (2024) investigated the role of gratitude and self-compassion among 368 Saudi nurses. Their findings showed that work–family conflict reduced life satisfaction and happiness, while gratitude buffered these negative effects and self-compassion partially explained the relationship. The study suggests that gratitude functions as key protective factor in maintaining psychological wellness under work-related stress. Collectively, these researches suggest that gratitude is not only linked with well-being but can be cultivated through simple exercises.

Research conducted among Muslim populations further emphasizes the spiritual dimension of gratitude. For example, Daulay et al. (2022) discovered that both gratitude and religiosity

were significant positive predictors of mental well-being among Indonesian university freshmen during the COVID-19 pandemic. Similarly, Newman et al. (2025) examined 202 Muslim American adolescents using ecological momentary assessment and reported that both gratitude toward Allah and gratitude toward others were associated with greater daily happiness and emotional calmness. Interestingly, the connection between gratitude toward others and positive affect was stronger among adolescents who reported lower levels of gratitude toward Allah, supporting a compensation model in which one form of gratitude may offset lower levels of the other. These findings suggest that both spiritual and interpersonal gratitude play complementary roles in promoting psychological well-being. Thus Gratitude has strong potential to predict positive emotions like happiness.

Taylor et al. (2022) investigated the protective role of dispositional gratitude among single mothers experiencing financial hardship during the COVID-19 pandemic. Their results indicated that gratitude can reduce the adverse impacts of economic stress, as despite facing financial challenges the individual practising gratitude depicts fewer depressive symptoms. Gratitude promotes resilience during periods of adversity. Similarly, Watkins et al. (2024) examined the longitudinal relationship between religious beliefs, gratitude toward God, and psychological well-being. The study suggests that gratitude toward God functions as a key psychological resource that enhances overall well-being by encouraging a broader sense of appreciation for life's blessings. Their longitudinal findings further demonstrated that gratitude toward God promoted greater state and trait gratitude over time, which in turn contributed to improved psychological and spiritual well-being.

Similarly, Tayyab et al. (2025) concluded that a grateful attitude contributes to greater happiness and higher life satisfaction among university students.

Rationale

Numerous studies conducted in Western countries have investigated the relationship between gratitude and psychological outcomes, including subjective well-being (Diniz et al., 2023), life satisfaction (Kerry et al., 2023), and mental health (Sahar et al., 2022). In Pakistan, research has primarily focused on the association between gratitude and satisfaction with life among adults (Hayat et al., 2026). However, experimental studies investigating the effectiveness of gratitude interventions remain limited. Therefore, the present study aims to examine the effect of a gratitude intervention on the life satisfaction of university students.

Hypothesis

The female students who practice gratitude exercises (experimental group) would report higher level of life satisfaction than those who practice life detail exercises (control group).

Method

Research Design

This study employed experimental design. The single blind approach was used in this study where by subjects were randomly assigned to two independent groups: experimental group which received gratitude based exercises and control group which received life detail exercises.

Sample

The sample consisted of 40 undergraduate female students of BSc (Hons.) studying at a public university of Lahore. Their age range was 21 to 24 years ($M = 21$, $SD = 1.5$). Most of them belong to middle class and their grade point average was above average. Those who scored high on life satisfaction scale were excluded from the experiment.

Instrument

Life Satisfaction Scale developed by Diener, Emmons, Larsen and Griffin (1985) was used for assessing the level of life satisfaction of students. It has five items with seven point rating of response options: Strongly Disagree (1)", "Disagree", "Somewhat disagree", "Neutral", "Somewhat Agree", "Agree", "Strongly Agree", It took approximately three minutes to complete the questionnaire. A demographic form having information about age, gender and qualification was also administered.

Procedure

First formal permission was taken from the department of psychology. Then brief introduction of this study was made to the students of BSc (Hons). Subjects were introduced to the Experiment with the statement that we would do an experiment to see how interpersonal relationships can be improved. We would make you to do some short exercise during the time period of 3 weeks. As an incentive they would be given 20 marks in their semester work. All participants were assigned in different conditions received the same instructions. After explaining about the experiment, booklets consisting of two sections of pre-assessment questionnaire and the exercise sheets representing two exercise conditions randomly assigned to the participants. The questionnaire were taken, when the participants have completed the pre-evaluation questionnaire, while leaving the exercise sheets to them so they can practice in upcoming weeks. Then the instructions explained verbally for each exercise group separately written on the exercise sheets.

In experimental exercises condition, Participants were asked to focus and acknowledge in many domains of lives in which Allah has blessed them and recall all happy moments and good things of their present and past. For example any physical, social, faithful, intellectual blessings as well as opportunities and advantages that Allah has rewarded them.

In control group exercise condition, participants were told to focus on ordinary details of their daily life, including their interactions in meetings, classes and with different friends and also told to monitor their thoughts during the day. Through the practice of theses life detail exercises, participants were then asked to write down one event, exercise and interaction that has affected them in the exercise sheet. For two consecutive weeks, they reported things that they are grateful about as daily events. In the third week, they gave presentations referencing their list. Total period of experiment was of 21 days.

RESULTS

Initially, reliability analysis of life satisfaction scale was computed which was moderate ($\alpha=.60$). To see the effect of gratitude intervention towards Allah among university students, 2*2 mixed ANOVA was computed.

Table 1: *Effect of Paying Gratitude towards Allah on Life Satisfaction*

Sources	SS	df	MS	F
		Within-Subjects		
Phases	208.012	1	208.012	12.201**
Phase*condition	201.612	1	201.612	11.825**
Errors	647.875	38	17.049	
		Between-Subjects		
Condition	137.812	1	137.812	2.939*
Error	1027.675	38	27.044	

* $p<.01$; ** $p<.01$

Results of 2*2 Mixed ANOVA indicated that the intervention applied (gratitude towards Allah) has significant effect on life satisfaction of students, $F(1,38) = 12.20$, $p < .01$. Similarly significant interaction effect of phase and condition was also significant, $F(1,38)=11.83$, $p < .01$.

Discussion

The present study was designed to investigate the effect of paying gratitude towards Allah on life satisfaction among university students. Hypothesis of this study was that students who practiced exercises of gratitude (experimental group) would report enhanced level of satisfaction with life than those who practice life detail exercises (control group). This hypothesis was supported by the findings of the study which depicted that showing gratitude towards Allah is effective in elevating life satisfaction of female students. It means level of gratitude and life satisfaction increases in people especially in females who are used to practicing gratitude intervention on daily basis. These results are consistent with the findings of the study conducted by Cunha et al. (2019) who evaluated the impacts of a 14-day gratitude intervention in a randomized clinical trial involving 1,337 adults. Subjects who practiced gratitude experienced greater improvements in positive affect than those in the hassles condition. However, no significant differences were observed between the gratitude and neutral-events groups in terms of life satisfaction, subjective happiness, or depressive symptoms as the participants in the neutral event group frequently recorded positive letter experiences unintentionally engaging in gratitude related reflection may have reduced the differences between the two groups.

Consistent with this study findings, Kim et al. (2024) found that gratitude either practicing it directly or observing others expressions of gratitude are very effective in improving life satisfaction and perceived social support among South Korean adults in contrast to control group. These results suggest that even indirect exposure to gratitude can promote positive psychological outcomes. Emmons and McCullough (2004) also found out the effect of gratitude on well-being thus results are consistent with the study. Their results depicted that exercising gratitude on daily basis leads to a healthy life, higher levels of alertness, well-being and optimism. Hence this study indicated that enhanced feelings of gratitude are associated with significant improvement in life satisfaction.

This research finding also aligned with another study examining the effectiveness of a 4 weeks program that contemplated how gratitude intervention improves the overall wellbeing relative to control condition of memorable events. Results indicated that participants that practiced gratitude condition showed improved self-esteem and life satisfaction. The trait of gratitude moderated the effects of gratitude intervention on life satisfaction. Grateful contemplation enhanced long term wellbeing.

This finding is in line with another study examined the effects the "writing the letter of gratitude" on wellbeing, life satisfaction on 219 men and women. Results showed that happiness and satisfaction of participants with life increased while their depressive symptoms decreased as they were writing gratitude letter. The authors tested how gratitude affects the difference in satisfaction of life (SWL), when both the facets and domains of Big Five were controlled. Sahar et al., (2022) also found that acknowledging blessings, compared with hassles, induces more gratitude, optimism, life satisfaction, and less negative affect. Thus consistent efforts for cultivating gratitude through different practices increased the emotional coping strategies. The most significant finding seems to be the relation between counting blessings and satisfaction with school. Findings indicate that positive affect, happiness, and satisfaction with life, increases when participants focus and notice their

positive experiences. Therefore, it can be concluded that gratitude towards Allah increases the life satisfaction among university students.

Limitations and Future Recommendations

1. Due to time constraints the sample size for the study was small which may be increased in future studies.
2. The sample was limited only to young adults (18-25). This study can be replicated by using middle aged and older adults.
3. The data were collected from only one city of Pakistan and only from a single university; it can be collected from more than one university and cities in future.

Implications

Gratitude is an important area of investigation in positive psychology and this will open new arenas for further research in positive psychology. This study is a significant contribution in our indigenous literature of positive psychology. The outcome of the study may be beneficial in improving our relationship with Allah Almighty and interpersonal relationships as well. Based on findings of present study, we can say that gratitude can be applied as a therapeutic technique in clinical settings to enhance positive emotions of patients. It can also be useful for educational and occupational settings as they may consider gratitude a viable path for promoting positive attitudes among youth.

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