

Gratitude and Subjective Well-Being Among Working University Students

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the relationship between gratitude and subjective well-being among university students who balance academic responsibilities with part-time work. Faced with financial pressures, many students work to meet their education and living expenses, which can impact their psychological well-being. This research investigates whether gratitude, as a positive psychological trait, can contribute to students' subjective well-being in this context. The study involved 80 working students, selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected using the Subjective Well-Being Scale and the Gratitude Scale, with reliability coefficients of $\alpha = 0.923$ and $\alpha = 0.931$, respectively. Using Pearson's product-moment correlation, results indicated a significant positive correlation ($r = 0.484$, $p \leq 0.010$) between gratitude and subjective well-being. This suggests that gratitude may account for 23.4% of the variance in well-being among working students. The findings underscore the role of gratitude as a protective factor that helps students manage stress and maintain resilience in balancing work and academic commitments, pointing to its value in enhancing subjective well-being in educational and work settings.

Keywords: gratitude, subjective well-being, working students, resilience, university

Introduction

Higher education institutions aim to develop students who are proficient not only in theoretical knowledge but also in its practical application, preparing graduates to become reliable and professional members of the workforce (Ririn & Asmidir, 2013). According to Mardelina and Muhson (2017), students have significant duties and responsibilities, both as individuals and as members of society. In light of their need to meet educational and living expenses, students often find solutions by engaging in part-time employment.

The phenomenon of students balancing work alongside their studies is well-documented, particularly among those facing financial constraints. Evidence suggests that living costs frequently surpass the financial support typically provided by parents (Dudija, 2011). Students who work endure substantial responsibilities, as they must manage both academic and employment demands, increasing their overall

workload (Purwandany, 2012). Financial necessity often drives students to seek employment, enabling them to afford tuition, meet daily expenses, and reduce the financial burden on their families (Mardelina & Muhson, 2017). Research has shown that the burdens borne by students can sometimes negatively impact their psychological well-being, resulting in reduced subjective well-being (Qonitatin, as cited in Fitriana, 2018). Conversely, successfully navigating the early stages of college life is often linked to high subjective well-being (Putri & Suprapti, 2014). According to Utami (2009), individuals with high subjective well-being demonstrate resilience against pressure, stress, and depression.

Subjective well-being, as defined by Diener (1984), is an assessment of overall life satisfaction and is based on an individual's perception of their life. Diener (2000) outlines three components of subjective well-being: (1) life satisfaction, which refers to a person's overall evaluation of their life satisfaction; (2) positive affect, which refers to the experience of pleasant moods; and (3) negative affect, which includes the experience of unpleasant emotions.

This study examines the relationship between gratitude and subjective well-being among working students. Gratitude, as defined by McCullough, Kimeldorf, and Cohen (2008), is a positive emotion stemming from the perception of receiving benefits from others' generosity. Higher levels of gratitude are associated with increased subjective well-being, potentially contributing to lower stress levels and reduced risk of depression (Wood et al., as cited in Kurnianita, 2018). Consequently, this research aims to address the question: is there a significant relationship between gratitude and subjective well-being among working students? The purpose of this study is to explore how gratitude relates to subjective well-being among working students who face dual roles and financial pressures. Previous studies highlight that high subjective well-being contributes to resilience and effective stress management, essential for students balancing both work and academic responsibilities. The study aims to address a gap in understanding how gratitude may support students' psychological well-being, serving as a buffer against stress and enhancing their quality of life.

Methods

This study investigates the relationship between subjective well-being as the dependent variable and gratitude as the independent variable. The study utilized a correlational design with 80 university students aged 18-25 who work part-time, chosen through purposive sampling. Data collection utilized two scales: the Subjective Well-Being Scale and the Gratitude Scale. The Subjective Well-Being Scale was developed based on the aspects of subjective well-being, using a Likert

scale format with response options ranging from Strongly Agree (SS) to Strongly Disagree (STS). This scale consists of 32 items, with an alpha reliability coefficient (α) of 0.923. Similarly, the Gratitude Scale was developed with reference to the dimensions of gratitude, formatted as a Likert scale with the same response options and consisting of 32 items, yielding an alpha reliability coefficient (α) of 0.931. The final data were analyzed using Pearson's correlation to assess the relationship between gratitude and subjective well-being.

Results

Table 1. Categorization of Subjective Wellbeing Scale

Category	Guideline	Score	Total (N)	Percentage
High	$X > (\mu + 1\sigma)$	$X > 98$	15	19,0%
Medium	$\mu - 1\sigma \leq X \leq \mu + 1\sigma$	$82 \leq X \leq 98$	57	71,0%
Low	$X < \mu - 1\sigma$	$X < 82$	8	10,0%
			80	100%

The results of the categorization of the Subjective Well-Being Scale indicate that there are 15 subjects (19.0%) classified in the high category, 57 subjects (71.0%) in the moderate category, and 8 subjects (10.0%) in the low category. Therefore, it can be concluded that the majority of the subjects have a level of subjective well-being classified as moderate.

Table 2. Categorization of Gratitude Scale

Category	Guideline	Score	Total (N)	Percentage
High	$X > (\mu + 1\sigma)$	$X > 120$	17	21,0%
Medium	$\mu - 1\sigma \leq X \leq \mu + 1\sigma$	$94 \leq X \leq 120$	48	60,0%
Low	$X < \mu - 1\sigma$	$X < 94$	15	19,0%
			80	100%

The categorization results of the Gratitude Scale indicate that 17 subjects (21.0%) fall within the high category, 48 subjects (60.0%) within the moderate category, and 15 subjects (19.0%) within the low category. These findings suggest that the majority of subjects exhibit a moderate level of gratitude.

Descriptive analysis showed a mean subjective well-being score of 90.28 (SD = 7.99) and a gratitude score mean of 106.75 (SD = 13.08). Hypothesis testing revealed a positive correlation between gratitude and subjective well-being ($r = 0.484$, $p \leq 0.010$). This indicates that gratitude contributes to subjective well-being among

students, potentially accounting for 23.4% of the variance in well-being scores, while the remaining 76.6% may be attributed to other factors not examined in this study.

Discussions

The results support the hypothesis that gratitude correlates positively with subjective well-being. Gratitude is shown to foster positive affect and satisfaction, helping students cope with stress from dual roles. This aligns with prior research by McCullough et al. (2008) on gratitude's role in mental health and resilience. For working students, gratitude appears to facilitate stress management, creating a positive impact on their well-being.

The findings demonstrate that gratitude significantly contributes to subjective well-being, aligning with previous research by Dewanto and Retnowati (2015) on physically disabled individuals, where gratitude was shown to positively impact well-being despite adversity. Gratitude fosters a sense of peace and happiness (Umi & Mubarak, 2017) and is closely tied to the expression of positive emotions associated with subjective well-being (Hefferon & Boniwell, 2011). In this study, 60.0% of working students reported moderate levels of gratitude, suggesting that most subjects experience a fair degree of gratitude, which may help maintain positive subjective well-being.

Gratitude is associated with various positive psychological outcomes, including resilience to stress and the ability to manage complex responsibilities (Utami, 2009). This pattern is particularly evident in working students who strive to support their families financially, demonstrating gratitude through their efforts, which enhances their subjective well-being (Murisal & Hasanah, 2017). According to Watkins, Woodward, Stone, and Kolts (2003), individuals who express gratitude often exhibit a higher appreciation for positive events, contributing to greater life satisfaction and positive emotional experiences.

Ultimately, the subjective well-being of working students appears to be supported by gratitude, which enables them to manage the demands of work and study. Conversely, those with lower gratitude levels tend to experience higher stress and are more prone to depressive symptoms. As Wood, Joseph, and Linley (2007) observe, gratitude aids in overcoming life challenges and fosters long-term well-being, leading to positive mood, optimism, and life satisfaction among those who regularly practice it.

Conclusion

The findings suggest that gratitude serves as a significant factor in enhancing subjective well-being among working students. It promotes resilience and stress management, contributing positively to their academic and work life. Future research should explore additional factors influencing well-being, including demographic or contextual variables.

Recommendation For Future Researchers

Since gratitude accounts for only 23.4% of the variance in subjective well-being, future research should consider additional factors potentially associated with subjective well-being, such as gender, age, education, and income. Further exploration into these variables may deepen the understanding of factors that contribute to subjective well-being among working students.

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