

The relationship between gratitude and psychological wellbeing in adult women : The mediating role of meaning of life

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Keyword : Gratitude; meaning of life; psychological well-being.	Abstract Psychological wellbeing is crucial for adults, as it impacts their mental and physical health, social relationships, work, personal growth, resilience, and overall life satisfaction. The objective of this study is to thoroughly examine the correlation between gratitude and its dimensions with the psychological wellbeing of adult women, with meaning of life as a mediator. Participants in this study were 270 middle-aged women aged between 40-60 years, Muslim, and domiciled in Padang Terubuk Village, Senapelan Sub-district, Pekanbaru City, Riau Province using incidental sampling technique. The measurement instruments used were the psychological wellbeing scale, gratitude scale, and meaning of life scale. The data analysis technique used was mediation regression analysis using bootstrapping of the PROCESS macro-Hayes. The research results indicate that gratitude can positively contribute to psychological wellbeing, both directly and when mediated by meaning of life. The contribution of gratitude to psychological wellbeing is greater when mediated by meaning of life compared to when correlated directly. This implies that when individuals express gratitude for their lives, their lives become more meaningful, ultimately resulting in psychological wellbeing.			
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INTRODUCTION

The perspective of positive psychology significantly contributes to the study of wellbeing, which examines the positive aspects of human life (Arnout & Almoied, 2020). The discussion of wellbeing is a subject of debate and is examined from various perspectives (Das et al., 2020). Philosophically, human wellbeing is divided into two categories, namely hedonism and eudaimonia (Kardas et al., 2019; García-Alandete, 2015). The concept of wellbeing with a hedonistic approach was developed by Kahneman, Diener, and Schwarz (1999), and the perspective of eudaimonic wellbeing was developed by Carol Ryff (Ryff & Singer, 2008). The hedonic perspective believes that pleasure plays a significant role in an individual's happiness, and this is further recognized as subjective wellbeing, in which the experience of positive emotions is more dominant than negative emotions, and overall life satisfaction is present (Diener et al., 1999). In contrast, the eudaimonic perspective argues that wellbeing consists of self-determination, goal achievement, meaning in life, personal strengths actualization, and self-realization. Furthermore, this concept is associated with psychological wellbeing (Ryff & Keyes, 1995; Ryff & Singer, 2008).

This research specifically focuses on eudaimonic wellbeing or psychological wellbeing in adult women, which encompasses an individual's ability to make autonomous life decisions, effectively master their environment, engage in positive social interactions with others, possess a sense of purpose and direction in life,

maintain a positive self-acceptance, and realize their full potential (Ryff, 1989). Psychological wellbeing extends beyond mere happiness; it delves deeper into personal growth, self-realization, and a commitment to existential challenges in one's life (Ryff & Keyes, 1995).

From this definition, Ryff (2014) further developed the dimensions of psychological wellbeing into six dimensions: self-acceptance, positive relations, environmental mastery, personal growth, autonomy, and purpose in life. Individuals who possess self-acceptance demonstrate an understanding and acceptance of themselves, acknowledging their strengths and weaknesses. Moreover, individuals with positive relations maintain deep and positive connections with other close individuals, including family and friends, fostering mutually supportive relationships. Environmental mastery is reflected in how well individuals manage and control their lives. Those with personal growth abilities exhibit the extent to which they harness their talents and personal potential. Furthermore, autonomy in individuals demonstrates their capacity to determine their own fate, make independent decisions, and align their lives with their personal beliefs. Lastly, purpose in life is evident in how individuals perceive having a sense of direction, goals, and meaning in their lives. From a human development perspective, adults are expected to have a sense of purpose and to lead a meaningful and fulfilling life, enabling them to contribute to society and educate future generations.

Several individual characteristics are associated with psychological wellbeing, including gratitude (Chopik et al., 2019; Arnout & Almoied, 2020) and the meaning of life (García- Alandete, 2015). Gratitude, according to conventional theory, is conceptualized as a moral influence with three functions: (a) a moral barometer function (i.e., a response to the perception that one has benefited from the moral actions of others); (b) a moral motive function (i.e., motivating grateful individuals to engage in prosocial behaviors towards the giver and others); and (c) a moral reinforcement function (i.e., when expressed, it encourages benefactors to engage in moral behavior in the future) (McCullough et al., 2001).

In Islam, gratitude is used to express thanks, glorification, praise, or gratitude to Allah (the Creator) or His creations, both through words and actions. In the Quran and the Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), Muslims are instructed to practice two distinct concepts of gratitude, which are patience (*sabar*) and gratitude (*syukur*), and they should be observed at all times (Ali et al., 2019). Individuals who are grateful will show acceptance of life, appreciate, enjoy, and take advantage of everything they have now and the life journey that has been given by God (Haryanto & Kertamuda, 2016).

Gratitude correlates with psychological wellbeing across all age groups (Obeldobel & Kerns, 2021; Kardas et al., 2019; Nourialeagha et al., 2020; Bacıoğlu, 2020). Prabowo (2017) found a correlation between gratitude and psychological wellbeing in adolescents. Similarly, in adults, unpleasant life events can impact psychological wellbeing, but if individuals are capable of practicing gratitude, it can help maintain their psychological wellbeing (Nguyen & Le, 2021). Furthermore, individuals with high levels of gratitude tend to experience better psychological wellbeing, contributing to a reduction in their levels of depression (Lin, 2015); and a tendency to have higher levels of happiness (Singh et al., 2017). When compared to variables like optimism, hope, and life satisfaction, gratitude has a greater contribution to psychological wellbeing than these three variables (Kardas et al., 2019). All dimensions of gratitude are positively related to dimensions of

psychological wellbeing (Măirean et al., 2019).

Furthermore, in the context of wellbeing, previous research has found that the meaning of life can act as a mediator in the correlation between gratitude and subjective wellbeing (Czyżowska & Gurba, 2022). This implies that individuals experience more dominant positive emotions than negative emotions and a sense of life satisfaction (Rahayu & Saleh, 2022). Individuals who feel that their lives have meaning have the desire to live in a manner that is meaningful and worthwhile for themselves, their families, their work environment, society, and their Creator. They have the freedom to develop their potential and exercise their will, and they ascribe importance to life, seeing it as worthy of pursuit, with clear and meaningful objectives (Bastaman, 2007). The meaning of life has a strong correlation with psychological wellbeing, both in a general sense and across various dimensions. Individuals who find meaning in their lives are observed to have a sense of purpose, mastery over their environment, positive social interactions, personal growth, and autonomy (García-Alandete, 2015). Furthermore, as individuals age, they tend to become more adept at finding meaning in their lives, which is subsequently reflected in self-acceptance, positive relationships with others, personal growth, and well-defined life goals (Orang et al., 2018). The meaning of life is a vital element in coping with religious and psychological wellbeing that individuals use as part of their framework for making sense of life while dealing with life's difficulties and challenges (Krok, 2015).

The purpose of this research is to thoroughly examine the relationship between gratitude, mediated by the meaning of life, on psychological wellbeing in adulthood. The hypotheses in this study are as follows: (1) Gratitude can serve as a predictor of meaning of life, (2) Meaning of life can serve as a predictor of psychological wellbeing, (3) Gratitude can serve as a predictor of psychological wellbeing, (4) Meaning of life acts as a mediator between gratitude and psychological wellbeing, and (5) Each indicator of gratitude and meaning of life influences psychological wellbeing.

There are a lot of novelties in this research, among others things, firstly, this research integrates the concept of gratitude from an Islamic perspective, which encompasses the concepts of giving thanks and patience, and compares it to the concept for gratitude in conventional theory. It provides a new perspective in understanding how gratitude affects psychological wellbeing in different cultural and religious contexts. Secondly, on the meaning of life scale, items are organized in accordance with the context of Islamic values, for example, "subjects accept their lives as the destiny of Allah SWT". And thirdly, the study examines the role of gratitude as a predictor and the significance of life as a mediator in relation to psychological wellbeing. It offers a more comprehensive model to understand the dynamics between gratitude, meaning of life, and psychological wellbeing.

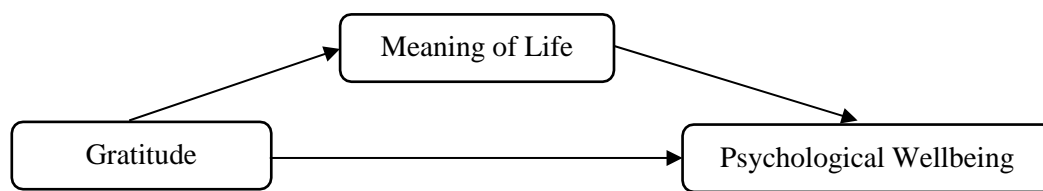


Figure 1. The Hypothesized Mediation Model

METHOD

This research was carried out using the quantitative research model. The aim of this research is to examine the correlation between gratitude and its dimensions with the psychological well-being of adult women, and meaning of life as a mediator. Participants in this study were 270 middle-aged women aged between 40-60 years, Muslim, and domiciled in Padang Terubuk Village, Senapelan Pekanbaru, Riau using incidental sampling technique.

In this study, three scales were employed: the Psychological Wellbeing Scales (Ryff & Keyes, 1995), the Gratitude Scale, developed based on the gratitude theory by Al-Ghazali (Ali et al., 2019), and the Meaning of Life Scale, derived from the meaning of life theory by Bastaman (2007).

Psychological Wellbeing Scales

The Psychological Wellbeing Scales (Ryff & Keyes, 1995) used in this study consist of 42 items designed to measure six dimensions, with each dimension comprising seven items prior to the tryout. Examples of items for the autonomy dimension include, "I am not afraid to voice my opinion, even if it is contrary to popular belief," and "My decisions are usually not influenced by the opinions or input of others." For the dimension of environmental mastery, sample items are, "In general, I feel responsible for the situations in my home environment," and "The demands of daily life often get me down." Items related to personal growth, for instance, include, "I am not interested in activities that can expand my horizons," and "I believe it is important to have new experiences that challenge how I think about myself and the world." In the positive relations dimension, sample items are, "Most people consider me as a caring and compassionate person," and "Maintaining close relationships is difficult and frustrating for me." The purpose in life dimension includes items like, "I live life day by day and do not think much about the future," and "I have a direction and purpose in life." For the self-acceptance dimension, sample items are, "When I look at the story of my life, I am pleased with what has happened," and "In general, I feel confident and think positively about myself." Each item is rated on a scale from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 6 ("strongly agree"), and this scale has been widely used in previous research. Content validity was assessed using professional judgment, item discrimination and reliability were evaluated using SPSS for Windows version 25, resulting in the removal of eight items. The Cronbach's Alpha value was found to be 0.945, indicating that the scale is highly reliable for measuring psychological wellbeing in adults. The item differential coefficients are in the range 0.351-0.821.

Gratitude Scale

The Gratitude Scale, based on Al-Ghazali's theory of gratitude (Ali et al., 2019), comprises three dimensions: a belief that Allah provides sustenance and blessings (6 items); gratitude expressed through attitude and feelings (10 items); gratitude in actions and deeds (14 items). Examples of items in the dimension of belief that Allah provides sustenance and blessings include, "Everything I receive is a blessing given by Allah," and "I believe all the pleasures I experience come from Allah." For the dimension of gratitude expressed through attitude and feelings, sample items include, "I feel content with everything I have," and "I envy the achievements of others" (unfavorable item). Examples of items in the dimension of gratitude in actions and deeds include, "I say 'Alhamdulillah' when I receive blessings," and "When I receive blessings, I do not forget to share with others." Each item is rated on a scale from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 4 ("strongly agree"), and this scale has been widely used in previous research. Content validity was assessed using professional judgment, and item discrimination as well as reliability were evaluated using SPSS for Windows version 25, resulting in the removal of three items. The Cronbach's Alpha value was found to be 0.927, indicating that the scale is highly reliable for measuring gratitude in adults. Corrected item-total correlation values range between 0.426–0.682.

The Meaning of Life Scale

The Meaning of Life Scale, constructed based on Bastaman's dimensions of life's meaning (Bastaman, 2007), consists of three dimensions: the freedom of will (9 items), the will to meaning (12 items), and the meaning of life (9 items). Examples of items in the dimension of the freedom of will include, "I never force myself to engage in activities I do not desire," and "I always strive to do better than before." For the dimension of the will to meaning, sample items are, "When my family asks for help, I immediately assist," and "I want to be a person who is useful to everyone." Examples of items in the dimension of the meaning of life include, "I have experienced many lessons and life experiences," and "I feel that God is unfair in giving problems to fellow human beings" (for unfavorable items). Each item is rated on a scale from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 4 ("strongly agree"), and this scale has been widely used in previous research. Content validity was assessed using professional judgment, item discrimination, and reliability were evaluated using SPSS for Windows version 25, resulting in the removal of three items. The Cronbach's Alpha value was found to be 0.919, indicating that the scale is highly reliable for measuring meaning in life in adults, with corrected item-total correlation values ranging from 0.374 to 0.716.

Data Analysis

Data analysis used in this research used PROCESS 4.2, developed by Andrew F. Hayes, in IBM SPSS (Hayes, 2018), to test the correlation between gratitude and psychological well-being in adult women which is mediated by meaning of life.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

*Correlational Analysis of Gratitude with Psychological Wellbeing
 with Mediation of Meaning in Life*

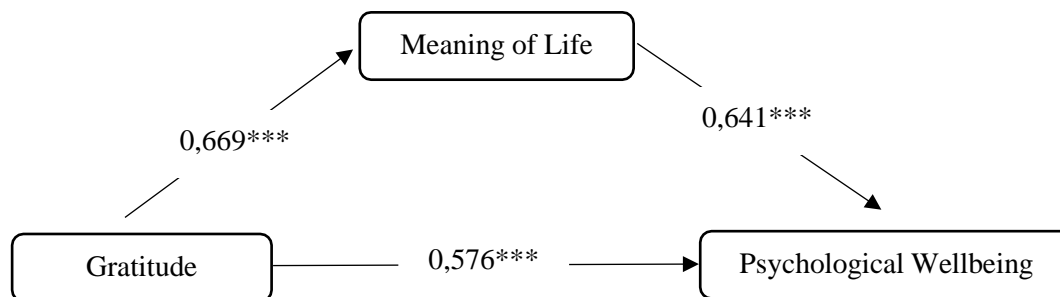


Figure 2. Meaning of Life as a Mediator in the Relationship between Gratitude and Psychological Wellbeing

To test the hypothesized mediation model, the authors used PROCESS 4.2, developed by Andrew F. Hayes, in IBM SPSS (Hayes, 2018). The study included a total of 270 adult participants between the ages of 40 and 60. The data used to test this mediation model consisted of total scores from the Gratitude Scale, Meaning of Life Scale, and Psychological Wellbeing Scale.

Table 1. Results of Direct Correlation Test between Gratitude, and Meaning of Life and Psychological Wellbeing

Models	Pat Coeffisien	Se	t-value	p-value	Decision
Gratitude-Meaning of Life	0,699	0,0393	17,798	0,001	Accepted
Gratitude-Psychological Wellbeing	0,641	0,130	4,939	0,001	Accepted
Meaning of Life-Psychological Wellbeing	0,579	0,136	4,242	0,001	Accepted

Table 1 above explains that there is a significant correlation between gratitude and meaning of life, with a coefficient value of 0,699 and $p < 0,001$ (Hypothesis 1); significant correlation between gratitude and psychological well-being, with a coefficient value of 0,641 and $p < 0,001$ (Hypothesis 2); and the correlation between meaning of life and psychological well-being, with a coefficient value of 0,579 and $p < 0,001$ (Hypothesis 3).

Table 2. Effects from the Hayes Process Macro model 4 on the mediating effect of meaning of life in the relationship between gratitude and psychological well-being.

Models	Effect/Coeffisien	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
Gratitude-Meaning of Life-Psychological Wellbeing	0,405	0,172	0,103	0,744

In table 2, the indirect coefficient value is 0,405; confidence interval with a value not 0 (BootLLCI 0,103 and BootULCI 0,744). It shows that gratitude affects psychological well-being by 0,405 units through the

meaning of life. In other words, a one-unit increase in gratitude leads to a 0,405-unit increase in psychological wellbeing due to the resulting change in life's meaning. So it can be concluded that the meaning of life variable plays a mediating role in the relationship between gratitude and psychological well-being.

The findings of this study reinforce previous research findings that in adult women, gratitude correlates with meaning in life. This means that adult women who express gratitude for all the blessings and sustenance provided by Allah, feel content with what they have, do not envy others, and engage in acts of kindness with the blessings they receive, experience a more meaningful life. Gratitude is highly significant throughout the human lifespan, as it assists individuals in finding purpose and coherence in their lives, allowing them to enhance and develop themselves (Bono & Sender, 2018). Gratitude and grit can enhance an individual's resilience against suicidal thoughts by boosting their sense of meaning in life (Kleiman et al., 2013).

People who are grateful for their lives will find it easier to find the meaning of their life. This is because people who are grateful will see the life they have lived and are living as a positive experience and with positive emotions so that they feel their life is meaningful (P. Zhang et al., 2021). In adulthood, aged 40-65 years, according to Erikson, is the developmental stage of generativity versus stagnation. At this stage, adult individuals are expected to be able to do something to contribute to the family, society, or at work (Santrock, 2019). Gratitude is a personal resource built by individuals from a broader way of thinking (S. Zhang et al., 2022); so that they view their lives as full of positive experiences and are enthusiastic about doing something useful for others, and this will increase their sense of meaning in their lives (P. Zhang et al., 2021; Li et al., 2021). Gratitude to Allah SWT and gratitude to others makes adult women accept their lives with a sense of luck (Triwahyuningsih, 2021).

Furthermore, this sense of meaning in life can influence the psychological wellbeing of adult women. Individuals who have the freedom to determine their life goals, make choices that align with their values, possess a desire to do good and make a meaningful impact on others, and can find wisdom in the journey of life tend to exhibit independence in their attitudes and behaviors. They can control their environmental conditions, engage in self-improvement activities, maintain positive social interactions, and have clear life goals they aim to achieve. The results of this study confirm earlier research findings, including a study conducted by Zika & Chamberlain (1992), which discovered a strong correlation between meaning of life and psychological wellbeing, especially in positive indicators compared to the negative ones. This is because individuals with a high sense of meaning in life have a profound impact on their self-actualization and their initiative to develop themselves and their lives (Ivtzan et al., 2013). The existential aspect of personal meaning and individual spirituality contributes to various forms of wellbeing more significantly than demographic variables such as social resources, physical health, or negative life events (Fry, 2000).

The direct correlation analysis between gratitude and psychological wellbeing also revealed a highly significant correlation, both in general and in each of its dimensions. This implies that adult women who express gratitude to Allah for His blessings and show appreciation to those who have been kind to them contribute to their psychological wellbeing. The findings of this study support previous research, which has discovered a highly significant correlation between gratitude and psychological wellbeing, with gratitude being

a crucial factor in determining the level of psychological wellbeing (Bacioğlu, 2020). Moreover, gratitude needs to be cultivated because as it increases, individuals tend to experience psychological calm, happiness, and well-being (Wood et al., 2010; Kirca et al., 2023).

Gratitude is a strong predictor of psychological well-being compared to hope, optimism, and life satisfaction; So it is believed that gratitude is one of the interventions for mental health (Kardas et al., 2019). Gratitude, especially in the dimension of gratitude towards other people, also strengthens positive aspects in social interactions, where social support given by other people becomes more meaningful when the individual who receives it is grateful, so that gratitude is found to be a mediator of the relationship between social support and psychological well-being (Deichert et al., 2019); and in challenging and stressful situations, feeling grateful for what has been achieved and experienced will maintain the individual's psychological well-being and creativity to remain stable (Arnout & Almoied, 2020; Arslan & Allen, 2021).

Gratitude significantly contributes to psychological wellbeing when mediated by the meaning of life, and this contribution is greater than when correlated directly. When individuals feel grateful for everything they receive and experience in life, they perceive their lives as more meaningful and purposeful, consequently enhancing their psychological wellbeing. Not only when conditions are fine, when experiencing problems or during sickness, gratitude gives individuals the strength to interpret their lives positively. Gratitude, which is a form of religious behavior, makes individuals closer to God, so that life's stresses feel lighter (Sacco et al., 2014).

Using an Islamic perspective, we can explain the results of this research on the variable of gratitude and life's meaning as follows: individuals who hold the belief that all life's pleasures stem from Allah SWT's love, exhibit attitudes and feelings of gratitude towards Allah SWT and their fellow humans, and perform good deeds as a form of thanksitude, will experience a life filled with meaning, a sense of fullness, and a sense of well-being. Individuals who experience a life full of meaning will accept themselves as they are, have good relationships with the people around them, be able to adapt and control their social environment, have personal growth, have a purpose in life, and be psychologically independent, with self-acceptance, positive relationships, environmental mastery, personal development, autonomy, and a goal in life.

As explained in the Al-Quran, Surah Ibrahim Verse 7, which means:

"And (Remember) when your Lord proclaimed, "Indeed, if you are grateful, I will surely increase (favours) to you, but if you deny (My favours), surely My punishment is severe." (Qs.Al-Baqarah: 7)

Although these findings support the hypothesis, there are several limitations to this research, namely that researchers did not conduct research on demographic factors that have the potential to influence feelings of gratitude, meaning in life and psychological well-being, for example education level, marital status and socio-economic status. Previous research found that socio-economic status can influence gratitude and psychological well-being (Hemarajarajeswari & Gupta, P, 2021). And improving mental health for individuals in low socio-economic status is very necessary (Weiss et al., 2020). On the other hand, people who are more economically well off are also found to donate more to people in need when they know the benefits of donating,

but people with lower socioeconomic status donate out of gratitude (Liu & Hao, 2017).

The level of education also influences a person's gratitude, where individuals with a higher level of education are more grateful than those with a lower level of education (Jans-Beken et al., 2018). Furthermore, adult women who have a family, have a professional job, and are masculine are found to have higher psychological well-being than women who don't have a family, don't have a stable job, and are feminine (Matud et al., 2019). Marital status and the presence of children in the family can improve psychological well-being because good relationships in marriage and good parent-child interactions can increase happiness and reduce psychological disorders. Likewise with employment status, where job stability and security can improve wellbeing and mental health (Oskrochi et al., 2018).

Apart from that, the researchers also experienced several obstacles in collecting research data, including difficulties in meeting research subjects because the subjects were spread across the sub-district area, so researchers had to attend several activities of adult women in the sub-district to be able to meet a large number of subjects at once (for example social gatherings, majlis taklim, and gymnastics activities); and the subject lacks motivation to fill out the questionnaire due to the high amount of number of items. This is a challenge for future researches to use effective and efficient methods in the data collection process.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the analysis and discussion above, it can be concluded that gratitude in adult women has a significant correlation with psychological well-being. Apart from that, this research also discovered that meaning of life mediates the relationship between gratitude and psychological well-being. The influence of gratitude on psychological well-being is greater when mediated by meaning of life.

The results of this research provide the meaning that individuals who are grateful for their lives, which is manifested by the belief that God provides sustenance and blessings, are grateful through attitudes and feelings, and are grateful through deeds, will experience a meaningful life. Furthermore, the meaningfulness of life will influence psychological well-being which can be seen from individuals being autonomous, capable of environmental mastery, having personal growth, positive relations with other people, purpose in life, and self-acceptance.

However, this research still has weaknesses that can be refined by future researchers, including that this research does not discuss demographic factors that might influence gratitude, meaning in life, and psychological well-being in adult women. In fact, analysis of demographic factors can deepen the explanation of the psychological dynamics of the formation of these three variables.

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