

Investigating How Practicing Gratitude Can Strengthen Relationships, Improve Mental Health, and Promote Social Cohesion in Communities

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Abstract

This study examines the role of gratitude in enhancing mental health, interpersonal relationships, and social cohesion among university students in Punjab, Pakistan. Using a quantitative research design, data was collected through surveys from 300 students across seven top universities. The findings indicate that higher levels of gratitude are positively correlated with improved emotional well-being, reduced anxiety and depression, greater relationship satisfaction, trust, and stronger social cohesion within university communities. The study highlights the potential of gratitude-based interventions in promoting positive psychological and social outcomes, suggesting that gratitude can be a valuable tool for enhancing mental health, fostering relationship trust, and strengthening community bonds. Implications for future research and practical applications are discussed, emphasizing the need for further exploration of gratitude's impact across different cultural contexts.

Keywords: Gratitude, Mental health. Emotional well-being, Relationship satisfaction, social cohesion, University students, Interpersonal relationships, Community bonds

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Introduction

Gratitude, or the act of recognizing and appreciating positive experiences and actions, has been an extensively researched topic due to its strong impact on individuals, relationships, and communities. As a psychological trait and a practice, gratitude is the acknowledgment and expression of thankfulness for benefits received from others. This research paper is designed to empirically examine how the practice of gratitude can result in great effects in three main areas: relationships, mental health, and social cohesion within communities. The interlinked variables to be discussed will therefore explain the wide scope of applications of gratitude as an instrument meant to upgrade individual and social welfare. This introduction is going to define gratitude and its impact, leading to in-depth information on each variable.

Gratitude and Mental Health

Research has shown that the practice of gratitude can significantly improve mental health by creating positive emotional states and reducing negative ones. Gratitude, with its focus on appreciating the good in life, helps people shift their attention away from bad experiences, thereby reducing stress, anxiety, and symptoms of depression (Froh et al., 2008). The regular practice of gratitude leads to greater emotional well-being, as it strengthens positive thinking and enhances overall life satisfaction (Wood et al., 2010). Furthermore, gratitude has been linked to improved emotional regulation and increased resilience, allowing individuals to cope better with adversity and life's challenges (Huffman et al., 2014). As a result, gratitude may serve as a protective mechanism against the onset of more serious mental health conditions, such as depression and anxiety disorders (Wood et al., 2010).

While bringing a more positive outlook upon the world, gratitude creates an increased self-esteem by developing emotional balance. Over and above momentary gladness, these benefits endow humans with the emotional tools to master chronic stress (Emmons & McCullough, 2003). Gratitude is, hence, one easily applied, yet effective, practice to promote well-being at an individual and collective level.

Gratitude and Interpersonal Relationships

Gratitude strongly helps in strengthening interpersonal relationships due to the reinforcement of positive interactions with each other. Actually, according to researches, gratitude facilitates the satisfaction of relations through an enhancement of relationships as feelings among people (Joel et al., 2013). When people express gratitude toward others, whether in romantic partnerships, friendships, or family relationships, it signals appreciation and validation, which strengthens the relational bond (Algoe et al., 2008). Additionally, gratitude can promote prosocial behaviors, encouraging individuals to act kindly and considerately toward others, creating a positive feedback loop of mutual care and support (Emmons & McCullough, 2003).

In romantic relationships, gratitude has been associated with higher levels of relationship satisfaction, better communication, and increased commitment. Couples who express gratitude to one another report feeling more valued and supported, leading to a deeper emotional connection and a greater sense of partnership (Gordon et al., 2012). Gratitude can also help increase the emotional intensity between friends and family that reinforces bonds and facilitates stronger networks (Algoe & Haidt, 2009). Gratitude thus builds not only at the individual level but also forms a basic foundation for creating and maintaining positive, positive relationships.

Gratitude and Social Cohesion in Communities

The practice of gratitude may have major implications in building social cohesion within communities. In that case, shared and collective expression of gratitude creates a sense of togetherness and belonging, which then translates into a more harmonious social environment. Gratitude thus nurtures a culture of appreciation that involves feeling valued and cared for by others, decreasing the social tensions and growing feelings of community (Krause, 2006).

Gratitude inspires people to engage in joint activities, improving social well-being, which builds social trust and community resilience (Emmons & McCullough, 2003)

Such communities are said to have a high social capital because people learn to help others and work cooperatively toward common goals owing to an attitude of gratitude (Huffman et al., 2014). This would mean increased citizen participation, volunteering, and a stronger collective responsibility. Gratitude also decreases social differences in that people will learn to appreciate other peoples' different views and will start valuing the efforts of other community members (Krause, 2009). In this way, gratitude can serve as a powerful social bonding agent, creating a positive, cooperative environment where individuals feel connected and committed to the greater good.

Theoretical Framework and Research Aim

This paper explores the effects of the practice of gratitude on mental health, interpersonal relationships, and social cohesion in communities. This study critically analyses the existing literature and research on psychological, relational, and societal benefits of gratitude to present an integrative review of how gratitude functions as a means to improve well-being on all levels (Wood et al., 2010). Through this exploration, the research will emphasize the broader implications of gratitude for the growth of the individual as well as social harmony. It will provide insight about how cultivating gratitude can be an effective instrument in constructing healthier relationships and more robust communities.

Research objectives

- Study on impact of gratitude on mental health determines how gratitude influences a state of emotional well-being while reducing anxiety and depression.
- To examine how gratitude strengthens inter-personal relationships examination of how gratitude enhances satisfaction and trust in relationships.
- The aim is to observe the use of gratitude in bringing social coherence by researching how gratitude generates community ties and cooperation.

Problem Statement

Despite the growing evidence regarding the positive effects of gratitude on individual well-being, little research has been conducted about how its practice can strengthen interpersonal relationships and promote social cohesion at the community level. Although gratitude has been proven to reduce stress, anxiety, and depression in mental health conditions and increase trust and satisfaction between individuals in interpersonal relationships, it has not been fully studied for its broader impact in fostering unity and cooperation among communities. This lack of investigation further limits our understanding of whether cultivating gratitude individually or collectively contributes to healthier, more connected communities. This study aims to investigate the potential value of gratitude in enhancing mental health, improving relationships, and social cohesion in communities.

Significant of the study

The importance of this study is that it may be able to reveal the transformative power of gratitude in bettering individual well-being, strengthening interpersonal relationships, and fostering social cohesion. Through this study of the multifaceted benefits of gratitude, it could be an important source of information on how this simple yet effective practice can be used to reduce mental health problems such as anxiety and depression and improve relationship dynamics and trust. Further, understanding the role of gratitude in fostering social cohesion could provide practical strategies for building more resilient, cooperative communities. This study has the potential to inform mental health interventions, relationship counseling, and community-building initiatives, emphasizing the importance of gratitude as a tool for promoting collective well-being and social unity.

Literature Review

Gratitude has increasingly become appreciated as an effective psychological tool with significant effects on diverse aspects of human life. Being defined as the awareness and appreciation of positive aspects of life, gratitude has been linked to promoting emotional well-being, enhancing interpersonal relationships, and fostering social cohesion. The literature review draws on extant research in this field to establish what is known and unknown about how gratitude affects mental health, relationships, and community cohesion, based on how it functions.

Gratitude and Mental Health

The relationship between gratitude and mental health has been widely studied. Many studies have shown that the practice of gratitude can significantly improve emotional well-being. One of the founding studies in this area by (Emmons & McCullough, 2003) They found that people who often practice gratitude have higher levels of subjective well-being, better mental health, and reduced symptoms of depression. Their research showed that writing down things they are thankful for in a gratitude journal improved happiness and life satisfaction for participants.

Subsequent studies have built on these findings, further supporting the positive effects of gratitude on mental health. For instance, (Wood et al., 2010) Conducted an extensive literature review on gratitude research and concluded that there is a significant positive correlation of gratitude with positive affect, negative affect reduction, and lower stress levels. It also appears to have a buffering effect on mental health problems, and a number of studies show that it helps reduce anxiety and depression by reframing adverse experiences in a positive way (Starkey, 2019). This ability to shift focus from negative to positive aspects of life can improve emotional regulation and resilience, key factors in maintaining mental health.

Gratitude and Interpersonal Relationships

Besides its benefits to mental health, gratitude is crucial in the consolidation of interpersonal relationships. Gratitude has been known to boost relationship satisfaction and deepen emotional relationships between partners, friends, and family members. According to (Joel et al., 2013), expressing gratitude in close relationships increases feelings of appreciation and trust, which in turn strengthens the bond between individuals. Their study found that when individuals express gratitude, they signal their value and appreciation for the other person, which fosters feelings of emotional closeness and improves relationship satisfaction.

A similar study by (Algoe & Haidt, 2009) emphasized the role of gratitude in maintaining healthy and positive relationships. They found that respondents expressing gratitude toward their mates exhibited higher levels of relational satisfaction and were more prone to behaviors that fostered stable relationship outcomes, such as high communication and emotional intimacy. Gratitude also shares significant positive relationship outcomes that correlate with increased commitment and lesser relational conflict, hence acting as a vital component in supporting successful long-term relationships.

Furthermore, gratitude has been proven to be linked with prosocial behaviors such as helping other people and acting kindly. For instance, when people use gratitude, they are going to act prosaically towards others not only in strengthening their bonds but also creating a positive spiral of kindness and support (Emmons & McCullough, 2003). This prosocial behavior is particularly important in close relationships, as it nurtures feelings of mutual care and cooperation.

Gratitude and Social Cohesion in Communities

Beyond the individual and relational levels, gratitude may be able to cultivate social cohesion and harmony within communities. While much of the research on gratitude has focused on the individual and relational benefits of the construct, there is growing work exploring how collective gratitude can strengthen communities (Krause, 2009). For example, gratitude-related studies conducted among late-life populations revealed that people who expressed gratitude towards other members of their community likely to experience growth of social trust, as well as growth in social support and a sense of belonging.

Group-based practices of gratitude can be promoted by encouraging group reflections and group activities of gratitude. Shared appreciation becomes stronger by the community that brings about social harmony. When members are grateful towards each other, it is a platform of mutual respect and cooperation. Studies conducted by (Lyubomirsky & Layous, 2013) Gratitude can be an effective social glue that ties people together and dissolves social isolation. Even within a community of diversity, gratitude can help bridge differences as appreciation and understanding are cultivated across the different groups leading to better social integration.

Another argument for the necessity of gratitude to social cohesion comes from related civic engagement and volunteerism literature. Grateful people are also likely to participate in

prosocial behaviors that include volunteering or helping members of their community (Wood et al., 2010). Active participation in community life does strengthen social networks, enhance collective well-being, and enhance social capital, which is always essential for sustaining robust and resilient communities. In this particular context, gratitude transcends only being an individual practice as it functions as a tool capable of improving the overall functioning and harmony of entire communities.

Gaps in Literature and Future Directions

While there is substantial evidence supporting the benefits of gratitude in mental health, relationships, and social cohesion, there are still several gaps in the literature. Much of the existing research has focused on individual or small-group interventions, leaving questions about how gratitude functions in larger, more diverse community settings (Kansky, 2017). Further researches have to be conducted on the issues that whether community-wide gratitude practices would be conducted and sustained otherwise differently under the shades of the diverse cultural background. In conclusion, as there are evidences proving positive results on mental health because of gratitude researches; longitudinal impact of routine gratitude practice has not yet been concluded on which one would be in addition with traditional treatments available for psychological conditions.

Another domain is the interaction of gratitude with other psychological constructs, such as empathy, forgiveness, and social support. Understanding how gratitude operates in conjunction with these factors may well lead to even greater understanding of its contributions to welfare and social coherence (Singha & Singha, 2024). Finally, exploring the role of gratitude in diverse populations, including those from different socioeconomic, cultural, and age groups, will help to determine its universal applicability and effectiveness.

Research Gap

Although past research has clearly demonstrated the many positive impacts of gratitude on mental health, interpersonal relationships, and social cohesion, there remains a need to understand how gratitude can be successfully implemented in diverse community settings to promote greater social harmony. Most of the studies have focused on individual or small-group interventions with very little investigation into large-scale or community-wide gratitude practices and their long-term effects. In addition, while gratitude has been related to many desirable outcomes, the interrelationship between gratitude and other psychosocial factors, including empathy and social support, has not been studied in as much detail. Further work is needed to understand how the practice of gratitude can be integrated into community-based interventions, the effectiveness of interventions across diverse cultural contexts, and its role in the development of collective well-being and resilience among different population groups.

Hypothesis

- **H1:** There is a significant positive relationship between gratitude and mental health outcomes, such that higher levels of gratitude are associated with better emotional well-being and lower levels of anxiety and depression.
- **H2:** There is a significant positive relationship between gratitude and relationship satisfaction and trust, such that individuals with higher levels of gratitude report greater satisfaction and trust in their interpersonal relationships.
- **H3:** There are significant differences in social cohesion (e.g., community bonds and cooperation) across groups with varying levels of gratitude, such that higher levels of gratitude in individuals lead to stronger social cohesion within a community.

Methodology

Research Design

The research is designed as a quantitative investigation of studying the effects of gratitude on mental health, interpersonal relationships, and community social cohesion. It was considered to use quantitative methodologies because these will help in the attainment of numerical data wherein statistical analysis could determine relationships between variables and test hypotheses advanced. Structured surveys and appropriate statistical analyses were used toward providing objective information regarding intercorrelations, predictions, and group differences for gratitude and its outcomes.

Population

The population for the study was comprised of university students from Punjab, Pakistan. These students were chosen because they are at a developmental stage where both mental health and social relationships are particularly important. The study focused on students from seven top universities in Punjab, including:

1. University of the Punjab (Lahore)
2. Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS)
3. COMSATS Institute of Information Technology (Lahore Campus)
4. Government College University (GCU), Lahore
5. University of Engineering and Technology (UET), Lahore
6. National University of Computer and Emerging Sciences (FAST-NUCES), Lahore
7. University of Management and Technology (UMT), Lahore

These institutions represented a diverse sample of academic disciplines and student populations, ensuring a broad view of the impact of gratitude on various dimensions of university life.

Sample Size

A sample of 300 students was chosen for the purpose of this study. The size of this sample was adequate enough to ensure statistical power for the analyses and to give reliable estimates of the relationships between gratitude and mental health, relationship satisfaction, and social cohesion. The sample was structured to be representative of the student population at these prominent universities.

Sampling Technique

The study used a snowball sampling technique, which was appropriate for reaching participants in a population where access to specific groups was difficult. Snowball sampling involved identifying initial participants who met the study's criteria, and then asking these participants to refer others who also met the criteria. This method helped in gathering a diverse sample of students from different universities, particularly for studies involving subjective or sensitive topics like mental health and social relationships.

Data Collection

Data was collected through a self-administered survey questionnaire. The survey included standardized, validated measures of gratitude, mental health (emotional well-being, anxiety, and depression), interpersonal relationships (satisfaction and trust), and social cohesion (community bonds and cooperation). The questionnaire was distributed electronically or in paper format, depending on accessibility and preference of the respondents. The data collection process ensured anonymity and confidentiality to encourage honest responses.

Data Analysis

Data was analyzed using correlation, regression, and ANOVA techniques to test the research hypotheses.

- **Correlation Analysis (H1):** Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to examine the relationship between gratitude and mental health outcomes (emotional well-being, anxiety, and depression). This analysis determined if higher levels of gratitude were associated with better mental health.
- **Regression Analysis (H2):** A multiple linear regression analysis was performed to assess how gratitude **predicted** relationship satisfaction and trust. Gratitude was the independent variable, while relationship satisfaction and trust were the dependent variables. This analysis determined whether gratitude significantly contributed to the variance in relationship outcomes.
- **ANOVA (H3):** An Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted to examine differences in social cohesion across groups with different levels of gratitude (low, medium, high). This analysis tested whether gratitude significantly influenced social cohesion in university communities.

Data Analysis

This study analyzed data regarding the correlation between gratitude and significant psychological and social outcomes involving mental health, social relationships, as well as social cohesion. Correlation analysis was applied to explore these relations by being in a position to determine the strength and direction of this association between gratitude and mental health results-emotional wellbeing, anxiety, and depression. The methods used included regression analysis to determine the magnitude at which gratitude predicts relationship satisfaction and trust. Lastly, ANOVA was performed to see if indeed there exists a difference in social cohesion between low, moderate, and high groups of gratitude. This kind of statistical analysis would give profound insight into how gratitude works to create a positive psychological and social effect among students.

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	150	50%
	Female	140	46.7%
	Non-binary/Other	10	3.3%
Age Group	18-22 years	180	60%
	23-25 years	90	30%
	26+ years	30	10%
Academic Year	First Year	90	30%
	Second Year	75	25%
	Third Year	70	23.3%
	Final Year	65	21.7%
University	University of the Punjab	60	20%
	LUMS	50	16.7%
	COMSATS	45	15%
	GCU Lahore	40	13.3%
	UET Lahore	35	11.7%
	FAST-NUCES	40	13.3%

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Field of Study	UMT Lahore	30	10%
	Engineering	70	23.3%
	Business	80	26.7%
	Social Sciences	50	16.7%
	Arts and Humanities	50	16.7%
	Sciences	50	16.7%

Interpretation

The interpretation of the statistical results in this study, based on correlation, regression, and ANOVA, provides insights into the relationships between gratitude and various psychological and social outcomes. Correlation analysis revealed a significant positive relationship between gratitude and mental health outcomes, indicating that higher levels of gratitude were associated with better emotional well-being and lower levels of anxiety and depression. Regression analysis showed that gratitude significantly predicted relationship satisfaction and trust, suggesting that individuals with higher gratitude levels tended to report stronger relationships. Lastly, ANOVA analysis indicated significant differences in social cohesion across groups with varying levels of gratitude, with higher gratitude levels correlating with stronger community bonds and greater cooperation. Overall, the statistical findings support the hypotheses that gratitude positively influences mental health, enhances interpersonal relationships, and fosters social cohesion.

Correlation analysis

Variable	Gratitude (M1)	Emotional Well-being (M2)	Anxiety (M3)	Depression (M4)
Gratitude (M1)	1.00	0.45**	-0.40**	-0.35**
Emotional Well-being (M2)	0.45**	1.00	-0.30**	-0.32**
Anxiety (M3)	-0.40**	-0.30**	1.00	0.60**
Depression (M4)	-0.35**	-0.32**	0.60**	1.00

- The correlation between Gratitude (M1) and Emotional Well-being (M2) is positive and significant ($r = 0.45$), suggesting that higher levels of gratitude are associated with better emotional well-being.

- The correlation between Gratitude (M1) and Anxiety (M3) is negative and significant ($r = -0.40$), indicating that higher gratitude levels are associated with lower anxiety levels.
- The correlation between Gratitude (M1) and Depression (M4) is also negative and significant ($r = -0.35$), implying that gratitude is inversely related to depression levels.

Regression Analysis for Hypothesis 2

Variable	B(Unstandardized Coefficient)	SE (Standard Error)	Beta (Standardized Coefficient)	t-value	p-value
Dependent Variable: Relationship Satisfaction					
Gratitude (Independent Variable)	0.45	0.12	0.38	3.75	0.001
Dependent Variable: Trust					
Gratitude (Independent Variable)	0.40	0.10	0.42	4.00	0.001

Interpretation

- The regression analysis for relationship satisfaction reveals that gratitude significantly predicts relationship satisfaction ($B = 0.45$, $p < 0.001$). The positive unstandardized coefficient (B) indicates that for each one-unit increase in gratitude, relationship satisfaction increases by 0.45 units. The standardized coefficient (Beta) of 0.38 suggests a moderate positive relationship between gratitude and relationship satisfaction.
- The regression analysis for trust also indicates that gratitude significantly predicts trust ($B = 0.40$, $p < 0.001$). The unstandardized coefficient (B) shows that for each one-unit increase in gratitude, trust increases by 0.40 units. The standardized coefficient (Beta) of 0.42 shows a moderate to strong positive relationship between gratitude and trust.

ANOVA Analysis for Hypothesis 3

The ANOVA tests for Hypothesis 3 showed that there was a significant difference in scores for social cohesion across levels of gratitude. The means for the three groups making up low, medium, and high gratitude levels were different. An F-value of 15.35 and a p-value < 0.001 provides evidence that the differences are indeed statistically significant. The high gratitude group, with a mean of 4.30, portrayed the highest degrees of community cohesion. In contrast, the medium gratitude group had a mean score of 3.85. However, the low gratitude group scored

the lowest mean at 3.20. Therefore, high degrees of gratitude are highly related to the betterment of social relationships and bonding. The statistical significance of these differences supports Hypothesis 3, thereby asserting that people with greater degrees of gratitude tend to report stronger social cohesion in their respective communities. This therefore postulates that gratitude, as a personal trait, will not only improve an individual's well-being and their relationships but also serve towards the betterment of cohesive unity and cooperation within social groups.

ANOVA Analysis

Gratitude Group	N (Sample Size)	Mean Social Cohesion Score	Standard Deviation (SD)	F-Statistic	p-value
Low Gratitude	100	3.20	0.50	F = 15.35	< 0.001
Medium Gratitude	100	3.85	0.45		
High Gratitude	100	4.30	0.40		

Discussion

This study aimed to investigate the role of gratitude in enhancing the mental health, interpersonal relationship, and social cohesion of university students. The findings generated from the analysis of the data are supportive of the research hypotheses; hence, it is proved that gratitude significantly contributes to the increase in emotional well-being, satisfaction of relationships, trust, and social cohesion. This study is in line with previous research, which has reported a rich psychological and social benefit of gratitude.

Gratitude and Mental Health

The initial hypothesis, which assumed a positive correlation between gratitude and mental health outcomes—namely emotional well-being, anxiety, and depression—was supported by the correlation analysis. Specifically, the study found that higher levels of gratitude were associated with better emotional well-being and lower levels of anxiety and depression. These findings are in line with earlier research that has highlighted the importance of gratitude in fostering positive emotions and reducing negative emotional states. For example, (Emmons & McCullough, 2003) found that practicing gratitude led to increased life satisfaction and well-being, as well as decreased levels of depression and anxiety. Similarly, studies by (Wood et al., 2010) indicated that individuals who express gratitude regularly tend to experience lower levels of depression and anxiety, supporting the idea that gratitude is a powerful psychological tool for promoting emotional health.

Gratitude and Interpersonal Relationships

The second hypothesis assessed the role of gratitude on relationship satisfaction and trust. The regression analysis showed that gratitude was a significant predictor of both relationship satisfaction and trust, thus confirming that the higher levels of gratitude displayed were more robust interpersonal relationships. Such findings are in accordance with prior research that has established a clear association between gratitude and relationship outcomes. (Jagosh et al., 2012) found that expressing gratitude in relationships fosters greater closeness, trust, and satisfaction between individuals. Gratitude, as a positive relational trait, strengthens emotional bonds, facilitating open communication and deeper trust. Furthermore, research by (Lambert et al., 2010) demonstrated that gratitude is associated with more positive relationship outcomes, including higher levels of satisfaction and trust, which was similarly evident in the present study.

Gratitude and Social Cohesion

The third hypothesis examined whether gratitude influences social cohesion within university communities. The ANOVA results indicated significant differences in social cohesion across groups with varying levels of gratitude, with higher gratitude levels being linked to stronger social cohesion. This supports the hypothesis that individuals with greater gratitude experience stronger community bonds and greater cooperation. Previous studies have suggested that gratitude promotes prosocial behavior and fosters a sense of connectedness in groups. For instance, (Norcross & Lambert, 2011) found that gratitude enhances prosocial behavior, leading individuals to contribute positively to the social fabric of their communities. Moreover, research by (Watkins et al., 2003) demonstrated that individuals who practice gratitude are more likely to engage in behaviors that strengthen social ties, such as helping others and fostering group cooperation, which also aligns with the findings of this study.

The findings of this study also contribute to the growing body of literature on the social benefits of gratitude. While most prior research has focused on the individual and relational benefits of gratitude, this study extends the understanding by highlighting its role in promoting community-level outcomes, such as social cohesion (Gabana, 2019). By encouraging positive social interactions and fostering a sense of belonging, gratitude helps build stronger and more cooperative communities, which is particularly important in university settings where social integration and cooperation are essential for academic and personal success.

Implications for Practice

The findings of this study have significant practical implications for enhancing mental health and social cohesion in university settings. Given the strong relationship between gratitude and mental health outcomes, university programs or interventions aimed at increasing students' gratitude may help reduce anxiety and depression, while simultaneously promoting emotional well-being. Gratitude-focused activities, such as gratitude journaling or group gratitude exercises, could be implemented in university wellness programs to enhance students' psychological health (Palmatier et al., 2009).

Furthermore, the positive link between gratitude and relationship satisfaction and trust suggests that interventions designed to cultivate gratitude could improve interpersonal dynamics, both in academic and social contexts. Gratitude exercises could be integrated into group projects, student organizations, and peer mentoring programs to strengthen social ties and improve cooperation. These interventions could promote a more supportive and collaborative campus environment, enhancing students' overall college experience.

Lastly, the role of gratitude in fostering social cohesion suggests that university communities could benefit from promoting gratitude as a core value (Bil Haq et al., 2024). By cultivating a culture of gratitude, universities can create environments that support positive social interactions, mutual respect, and cooperation among students, ultimately fostering a stronger sense of community.

Limitations and Future Research

While the findings of this study provide valuable insights into the role of gratitude in enhancing mental health, relationships, and social cohesion, there are some limitations that must be acknowledged. First, the cross-sectional design of the study limits the ability to draw causal conclusions. Future research could use longitudinal designs to better understand the directionality of the relationships between gratitude and various psychological and social outcomes (Bernhard, 2022). Additionally, while the study focused on university students in Punjab, the results may not be generalizable to other populations or cultural contexts. Future studies could explore the role of gratitude in diverse cultural settings to determine whether the observed relationships hold across different cultural norms and values.

Another limitation is the reliance on self-reported data, which may be subject to biases such as social desirability or recall bias. Future research could incorporate more objective measures, such as behavioral observations or reports from peers, to complement self-reported data and provide a more comprehensive understanding of the role of gratitude (Croom, 2015).

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study provides some robust evidence about the beneficial effects of gratitude on mental health, interpersonal relationships, and social cohesion. The results further underscore the importance of gratitude as a psychological and social resource for enhancing well-being and strengthening community ties. Here, the results shed light into the vast literature regarding thankfulness and input considerably into the development of interventions for improving students' emotional well-being and for promoting a sense of unity and collaboration within university communities.

Recommendations

1. Integrating gratitude practices entails incorporating gratitude exercises within university curricula and workshops to improve mental health and foster social cohesion.

2. Psychological Well-being Initiations Carry out gratitude-based interventions in psychological well-being support and address fear and depression.
3. Encourage Gratitude Interventions. Develop activities like gratitude challenges or mindfulness programs for students in order to enhance relationships.
4. Encouraging peer support encompasses establishing peer support groups, emphasizing gratitude, which would strengthen the bonds within the community.
5. Faculty and Staff Training Facilitate training of faculty and staff on how to foster a culture of gratitude in the higher institution setting.
6. A longitudinal follow-up study of the sustained impact of gratitude on well-being, interpersonal relationships, and social cohesion.
7. Cultural Differences: Determine how cultural differences influence the effectiveness of gratitude practices.
8. Expand Research to Other Populations: It is essential to examine the impact of gratitude within diverse populations, including professionals and community groups.

Future Implications

The findings from this study have significant future implications for both academic research and practical interventions. As gratitude continues to be recognized as a powerful tool for improving mental health, enhancing interpersonal relationships, and fostering social cohesion, there is ample opportunity for developing targeted interventions in various settings, especially in academic environments. Future research could expand on these findings by investigating the mechanisms behind gratitude's impact on mental health and relationships, exploring how different interventions might optimize its effectiveness, and studying the long-term effects of gratitude practices on well-being. Moreover, understanding the cultural and contextual factors that influence gratitude could lead to more personalized and globally applicable interventions, making gratitude a universally effective tool for fostering positive psychological and social outcomes across diverse populations.

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