



ORIGINAL CONTRIBUTION

## Relationship of Gratitude with Optimistic Life Orientation among University Teachers

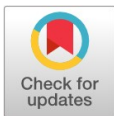
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**Abstract**— The present study sought to investigate the influence of gratitude on optimistic mindsets among university teachers in Lower Dir, Pakistan. The study used a correlational research approach and readily selected a sample of 150 university lecturers. Participants were administered the Gratitude Questionnaire (GQ6) and the Revised Life Orientation Scale (LOT-R). The data analysis was performed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS-22) software. This involved conducting correlation analysis, t-tests, and descriptive statistics to investigate the demographics, means, standard deviations, and correlation of the variables. The findings revealed a strong and statistically significant positive relationship between gratitude and optimism ( $r = .374^{**}$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Gender differences indicated significant mean differences in both study variables. Scores of males and females ( $M = 34.45, 27.44$ ) and standard deviation ( $SD = 4.24, 8.15$ ) on GQ6 with  $t$ -value (6.94), which indicates males show more gratitude than females. Additionally, significant mean differences between males and females ( $M = 27.27, 29.26$ ) and standard deviation ( $SD = 5.67, 6.54$ ) on LOT-R with  $t$ -value (-2.01), which indicates females have a more optimistic orientation of life than males. Marital status revealed no significant score disparities. The results indicate a favorable correlation between gratitude and optimism, unaffected by marital status but major differences in the gender of university teachers.

**Index Terms**— Gratitude, Optimism, Pessimism, Mindset, University teachers

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### Introduction

The concept of gratitude is derived from the Latin word "gratia," which covers various meanings such as grace, graciousness, and gratefulness, depending on the context. Gratitude involves expressing a sincere and appreciative recognition of concrete and abstract elements of existence, motivating individuals to recognize the positive things they receive. By doing this, individuals frequently acknowledge that the origin of this benevolence surpasses their existence, linking them to a greater entity, whether it is other individuals, nature, or a divine force. Gratitude, a fundamental human emotion, has been linked to psychological and physical advantages, such as better well-being, stronger social connections, and reduced stress levels (Boileau, Gaudreau, Gareau, & Chamandy, 2021).

Pessimistic people direct their attention toward unpleasant experiences and consequences, whilst optimistic individuals direct their attention toward the positive. Nevertheless, it is still uncertain whether gratitude affects these mindsets in distinct ways and whether it can transform a pessimistic attitude into optimism. Abundant psychological research has proven the beneficial influence of thankfulness on both optimistic and pessimistic mindsets. Research has shown that engaging in thankfulness exercises results in increased pleasant

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emotions, enhanced interpersonal connections, and an overall enhanced state of well-being (Boggiss, Consedine, Brenton-Peters, Hofman, & Serlachius, 2020). A study found that consistently practicing thankfulness was associated with increased levels of well-being, independent of the participants' baseline well-being status. Carver and Scheier (2024) established a causal relationship between gratitude and optimism.

Moreover, gratitude interventions have shown promising results in improving optimism in both healthy individuals and those undergoing medical treatment. A study conducted by Conversano et al. (2010) demonstrated that a gratitude intervention resulted in significant enhancements in positive feelings and overall well-being. Furthermore, there was a decline in adverse feelings such as despair and worry. Furthermore, it was discovered that those suffering from anxiety and depression saw an increase in optimism after engaging in gratitude-based interventions.

Furthermore, studies have demonstrated that gratitude can mitigate the effects of negativity. Dong and Xu (2022) found that those with high levels of pessimism who took part in gratitude interventions saw a decrease in despair and anxiety compared to a control group. It was also found that there is a negative relationship between appreciation and rumination. Rumination is a cognitive activity often associated with pessimism. In recent years, the importance of gratitude in the treatment of mental health has been recognized both globally and in Turkey. Positive psychology literature defines it in several manifestations, including emotion, attitude, moral virtue, habit, personality trait, and coping response (Goh, Ilies, & Wilson, 2015). Research conducted in various cultural settings consistently shows that gratitude has a substantial impact on improving mental health, enhancing well-being, strengthening social support, boosting self-esteem, fostering resilience, increasing optimism, and acting as a protective factor against stress and depression.

Optimism, which is defined as having favorable expectations regarding future outcomes, is strongly associated with overall well-being. It affects the factors of subjective resilience, life satisfaction, depressive symptoms, and resistance to bad experiences. Hope, a notion that is closely connected, refers to the act of strategizing and creating plans to attain certain objectives, even in the face of challenges. It acts as a driving factor for motivation (Lu, 2021). Studies indicate that optimism and hope can be developed by creating objectives, engaging in positive thinking, and keeping a sense of control in achieving those goals.

These elements positively influence individuals' overall well-being. In summary, expressing appreciation and maintaining an optimistic outlook is crucial for enhancing an individual's mental health and overall well-being. They offer strategies to cultivate resilience and attain favorable results in diverse cultural and psychological contexts. The concept of gratitude, rooted in acts of grace and thankfulness, holds considerable importance in psychological study due to its positive impact on mental well-being (Genuba & Abellanosa, 2018; Portocarrero, Gonzalez, & Ekema-Agbaw, 2020). While optimism and pessimism are distinct cognitive orientations toward life, the relationship between gratitude and these attitudes has not been extensively examined. Gratitude therapies have shown the ability to boost optimism and reduce pessimism, leading to improved well-being and decreased feelings of melancholy and anxiety. Gratitude is recognized as a fundamental human emotion that connects humans to a higher power, resulting in enhanced social relationships and reduced stress levels. A recent study has highlighted the significant influence of gratitude on mental well-being in many cultural contexts, emphasizing its role as a protective measure against stress and despair (Greenier, Derakhshan, & Fathi, 2021).

Optimism, characterized by a positive outlook on the future, is closely linked to one's state of well-being. It impacts an individual's subjective resilience in the face of difficulties and overall satisfaction with life. Hope, like its associated concept, involves the development of strategies to overcome obstacles and achieve desired objectives, hence strengthening individuals' psychological resilience. This study aims to investigate the relationship between gratitude and optimistic and pessimistic attitudes among university professors to uncover the mechanisms that elucidate how gratitude influences mental well-being. The project seeks to examine the effects of gratitude interventions on promoting optimism and diminishing pessimism. It attempts to provide valuable insights into effective techniques for improving individuals' psychological resilience and achieving positive life outcomes.

There are important practical ramifications for the larger community from the association between university teacher's gratitude and an optimistic outlook on life. Teachers at universities have a significant impact on the attitudes and thoughts of coming generations. These teachers foster a happy and encouraging learning atmosphere when they live gratefully and have an optimistic outlook. This, in turn, encourages pupils to address obstacles with a constructive perspective and cultivates a culture of positivity and resilience among them. Such attitudes have a positive spillover impact outside of the classroom, fostering a more upbeat and united community. Teachers who possess a strong sense of thankfulness and optimism are also more likely to be in better mental and emotional health, which lowers the risk of burnout and lengthens their careers. The educational experience can be improved by this general improvement in teachers' well-being, which will increase student happiness and achievement. In the end, encouraging thankfulness and optimism among college instructors can have a significant positive impact on education as a whole and aid in the growth of a stronger, more resilient society.

## **Objectives**

- To see the association between gratitude and optimistic and pessimistic mindset among university teachers.
- To study the gender and marital status differences in the study variables.

## Literature Review

Gratitude has emerged as a significant aspect in the field of mental health. A study showed that gratitude is inversely related to rumination, a cognitive activity often linked to pessimism. Gratitude was previously studied and described in different ways, including as an emotion, attitude, moral virtue, habit, and personality characteristic. It is also seen as a coping mechanism in the positive psychology literature (Locklear, Taylor, & Ambrose, 2021). It can be part of a general inclination to acknowledge and value positive aspects of life. Multiple studies conducted in Western countries and Eastern societies have shown that gratitude has a substantial impact on various aspects. These include enhancing individuals' mental health, boosting their overall well-being, reinforcing perceptions of social support and self-esteem, positively influencing resilience levels, promoting optimism, and acting as a protective factor against stress and depression (Boileau et al., 2021).

Optimism is another element that is regarded as one of the determinants influencing well-being. Optimism is defined as having a positive outlook on the future (Komase et al., 2021). It is associated with emotions, determination, problem-solving abilities, academic, athletic, military, vocational, and political success, as well as good health. Theoretical frameworks such as personality traits, attribution styles, and the expectation effect play a crucial role in the understanding and definition of well-being. Research indicates that there is a strong correlation between optimism and subjective resilience and the life orientation of educators (Komase, Watanabe, Imamura, & Kawakami, 2019; Robustelli & Whisman, 2018).

This study seeks to investigate a demographic that has received little attention in a distinct socio-cultural environment. University educators have a vital responsibility in molding the intellect of upcoming generations, and their psychological well-being greatly influences their effectiveness and contentment. This study aims to fill a vacuum in the current literature by specifically examining Lower Dir, an area that possesses unique cultural and socio-economic attributes, which are generally neglected in prior research. Examining the relationship between gratitude and optimism among university professors can offer valuable insights into the impact of good psychological characteristics on their professional and personal well-being. This research is especially pertinent in the specific circumstances of Pakistan, where societal pressures and limitations on resources are widespread. Gaining insight into these dynamics can provide valuable information for implementing focused interventions and policies aimed at improving the well-being and performance of educators, ultimately leading to positive outcomes for the overall educational system. The distinctiveness of this study resides in its focus on the specific context and its ability to enhance our comprehension of psychological well-being in various educational environments.

## Hypotheses

The following hypotheses are:

- H1:** The Optimistic Mindset positively correlates with Gratitude.
- H2:** There will be a mean difference in scores of male and female participants on gratitude and optimism.
- H3:** There will be a mean difference in scores of male and female participants on gratitude and optimism.

## Methodology

### Sampling and research design

The researcher used a convenient sampling technique and sampled 150 university teachers for the present study. A correlational research design was employed to study the variables. A sample was collected from Lower Dir, a region located in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan, due to its distinct socio-economic, cultural, and geographic attributes. By concentrating exclusively on Lower Dir, one can gain a profound comprehension of the distinct difficulties and dynamics that are unique to this location. These elements may vary drastically from other areas in Pakistan because of historical, demographic, or environmental influences. This focused strategy guarantees that the results of the research are immediately relevant and advantageous to the residents of Lower Dir, potentially resulting in more significant enhancements in their standard of living.

Conducting research in Lower Dir enables researchers to establish trust and develop a strong connection with the local population more efficiently. Establishing trust is essential to acquire precise information and guarantee that the research adheres to the customs, values, and sensitivities of the local community. It also decreases the danger of exploitation or misunderstanding that might happen in research encompassing varied places with varying circumstances.

### Research instruments

**The Gratitude Questionnaire Six-item Form (G6Q)** is a six-item self-report questionnaire developed by McCullough, Emmons, and Tsang (2002), designed to assess individual differences in the proneness to experience gratitude in daily life.

**Life Orientation Test-Revised (LOT-R)** developed by Scheier and Carver (1987). A 10-item measure of optimism versus pessimism of the 10 items, 3 items measure optimism, 3 items measure pessimism, and 4 items serve as fillers. Respondents rate each item on a 4-point scale: 0=strongly disagree, 1=disagree, 2=neutral, 3=agree, and 4=strongly agree.

**Procedure**

At first, the participant's willingness was ensured by informed consent. The participants were assured that the researcher(s) would uphold the confidentiality of their information and responses. The demographic form was thoroughly completed and subsequently accompanied by instructions on how to complete the questionnaires.

**Ethical Consideration**

The study's aim and objectives were free from any fabrication. The informed consent contained accurate information. Participants were treated with utmost respect, and their privacy was strictly maintained and safeguarded. Participants were fortified from all forms of harm.

**Results**

Table I  
Frequency and percentage of participants

Demographic Variables	F	%
Gender		
Male	123	82.0
Female	27	18.0
Marital Status		
Married	91	60.7
Unmarried	59	39.3

The gender and marital status of the participants are described in Table 1, along with their frequency and proportion overall. By comparison, the number of male teachers (f=123, 82.3%) was significantly higher than the number of female teachers (f=27, 18.0%). It was found that the number of married teachers (f=91, 60.7%) was higher than the number of unmarried teachers (f=59, 39.3%).

Table II  
Psychometric properties of study variables

Variables	N	M	SD	α	Range		Skewness	Kurtosis
					Potential	Actual		
GQ6	150	1.18	.385	.651	6-42	19-42	1.683	.843
LOTR	150	1.39	.490	.790	0-40	9-40	.441	-1.83

In Table 2, the psychometric features of the variables under investigation are presented. The reliability analysis reveals that the scales are reliable, with GQ6 and LOTR values of .651 and .790, respectively, having a high degree of reliability.

Table III  
Pearson correlation between gratitude and optimism

Variables	1	2
1. Gratitude	-	.374**
2. Life Orientation/Optimism	-	-

There is a significant positive association between being grateful and having an optimistic outlook on life, as demonstrated in Table 3.  $N = (150) = .374^{**}, p < .01$

Table IV

Mean, standard deviation, and t-value based on gender. (N=150)

Variables	Female(n=27)		Male(n=123)		t (148)	P	95%CI		Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD			LL	UL	
GQ6	27.44	8.15	34.45	4.24	6.94	.000	5.01	9.01	1.17
LOTR	29.26	6.54	27.27	5.67	-2.01	.050	-4.12	-.04	0.33

Concerning these specific factors, Table 4 demonstrates that there are considerable mean disparities between the sexes. According to the results of the GQ6 with a *t*-value of 6.94, the scores of males and females ( $M = 34.45, 27.44$ ) and the standard deviation ( $SD = 4.24, 8.15$ ) indicate that males demonstrate a greater degree of appreciation than females. On top of that, there were significant mean differences between males and females on the LOTR ( $M = 27.27, 29.26$ ) and standard deviation ( $SD = 5.67, 6.54$ ) with a *t*-value of -2.01, which shows that females have a more optimistic outlook on life than males do.

Table V

Mean, standard deviation, and t-value based on marital status.

Variables	Married (n=91)		Unmarried(n=59)		t (148)	P	95%CI		Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD			LL	UL	
GQ6	32.48	5.97	31.54	7.79	.840	.402	-1.27	3.15	--
LOTR	28.49	5.79	27.16	6.34	1.31	1.89	-.701	3.36	--

When it comes to the variables under investigation, Tables 5 demonstrate that there are no significant mean differences between married and unmarried university professors.

## Discussion

The study aimed to investigate the Influence of Gratitude on Optimistic Orientation towards life situations among University Teachers based on gender and marital status.

It was hypothesized that optimism significantly correlates with gratitude. The findings of this study are in line with those of previous studies. The findings of earlier studies indicated a significant positive correlation between gratitude and optimism, suggesting that individuals who scored higher on measures of gratitude also tended to exhibit higher levels of optimism in life. This supports the study hypothesis (Wang, Derakhshan, & Zhang, 2021). A study revealed that gratitude was significantly negatively correlated with pessimism, indicating that individuals who scored higher on gratitude measures tended to have lower levels of pessimistic thinking toward life. Scientific research repeatedly demonstrates a strong correlation between appreciation and optimism, with multiple investigations revealing the underlying factors. Gratitude entails acknowledging and valuing the favorable aspects of life, which cultivates a more optimistic perspective on present and future occurrences. This acknowledgment assists individuals in directing their attention toward positive aspects, so augmenting their general state of well-being and optimism (Farooq, Akhtar, Hijazi, & Khan, 2010; Szcześniak & Soares, 2011). Another study revealed that those who consistently engaged in thankfulness exercises showed elevated levels of optimism. Expressing thankfulness redirects focus from unpleasant emotions to positive events, thus strengthening a hopeful and future-oriented outlook (Huang, Yin, & Lv, 2019; Kanval, Ihsan, Irum, & Ambreen, 2024). Moreover, there is a correlation between gratitude and enhanced mental well-being, resulting in increased optimism through the alleviation of depressive and anxious symptoms. The reciprocal nature of this link implies that thankfulness not only improves one's current mood but also fosters a more positive outlook on the future, establishing a reinforcing loop of positive emotions and expectations.

Secondly, it was hypothesized that there would be a significant difference in the scores of male and female participants on the gratitude scale. Research on gender differences in gratitude has yielded mixed results. One study investigated gender differences in gratitude and found that females scored higher on gratitude measures compared to males (Hessel, Talbot, Gruber, & Mercer, 2020). However, a study found significant gender differences in gratitude levels. Well, Pakistani men exhibit higher levels of gratitude compared to women due to a range of social variables. Men frequently enjoy greater autonomy and opportunity, both in terms of schooling and career, resulting in a heightened sense of satisfaction and gratitude. In Pakistan, women are frequently assigned more constrictive and demanding tasks according to traditional gender norms. This limits their independence and personal development, which in turn might affect their capacity to experience and convey gratitude. Moreover, women may face cultural pressures that compel them to prioritize family and domestic duties at the expense of their accomplishments, thereby potentially diminishing their sense of personal satisfaction (Locklear et al., 2021). The discrepancy in appreciation can, therefore, be regarded as a manifestation of the wider disparities and gender dynamics prevalent in society. Concerning university instructors, the act of appreciation can be especially significant. Teachers are in a special position where they give information and shape their understudies' mentalities and ways of behaving. At the point when instructors develop gratitude,

they might encounter a more hopeful outlook, which can convert into a surer-showing climate and further develop understudy outcomes (Jans-Beken et al., 2020).

Research has shown that people who routinely practice gratitude will quite often have a more inspirational perspective on life and are better prepared to deal with adversity. This hopeful mentality is described by an overall assumption that beneficial things will occur and faith in one's capacity to add to making positive results. Some investigations propose that men might unexpectedly encounter gratitude, possibly feeling less commitment and weight while offering thanks, and may get various advantages from the experience. The work by Song (2022) highlighted the fundamental findings that have been certified by ensuing exploration. College instructors found that the individuals who rehearsed appreciation mediations revealed more significant levels of prosperity and optimism. Gratitude is decidedly related to future direction, will/fortitude, and adaptability, which are parts of a hopeful mindset. For educators, developing gratitude could prompt a more hopeful way to deal with instructing and cooperating with understudies. This positive outlook could upgrade their showing viability and understudy engagement (Southwell & Gould, 2017).

### **Limitations of the study**

This study has a few limitations. The study is based on a correlation research design, so respondents were local teachers at the University of Malakand and nearby areas. Therefore, generalizability may be limited. Future studies can replicate this study with other populations and a larger number of samples to generate more convincing results.

### **Future recommendations**

A Cross-cultural study may be conducted to examine whether the impact of gratitude on mindset differs across various cultural contexts. Investigate whether cultural values and norms influence the relationship between gratitude and mindset among individuals.

Lower Dir can be considered a good case study for future comparative analysis research. After gaining a thorough grasp of Lower Dir, further research can investigate the similarities and contrasts it shares with other places in Pakistan or worldwide. This can enhance academic discussions and contribute to the advancement of knowledge on a broader scale.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the complex connection between university professors' positive life orientation and thankfulness highlights the transforming potential of positive psychology in learning environments. According to this study, creating an environment of thankfulness in educational settings can greatly improve instructors' perspectives on life and help them develop a more resilient and upbeat mindset. The well-being of educators becomes critical as they tackle the difficulties of molding young minds in the face of changing academic demands. In addition to improving their personal life, encouraging thankfulness has a knock-on impact that improves the classroom atmosphere for pupils. Universities may foster a vibrant and supportive academic environment and ultimately aid in the holistic development of both teachers and students by emphasizing gratitude and optimism. The study's conclusions demonstrate the possibility of effective but modest modifications that can bring about long-lasting improvement in educational environments.

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