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RESEARCH ARTICLE

EFFECT OF GRATITUDE ON EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE, SPIRITUAL WELLBEING AND RUMINATION

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the relationship of gratitude with emotional intelligence, spiritual wellbeing and rumination in a sample of university students. A total of 183 university students completed the emotional intelligence scale, the gratitude questionnaire, the spiritual well-being scale and the rumination measures. Pearson Product Moment Correlation and Independent Sample t-test were employed using SPSS Version 20. There was a positive correlation found between gratitude and emotional intelligence with $r=0.445$ which was significant at 0.05 level. Gratitude and spiritual well-being were positively correlated with $r=0.466$ which was significant at 0.05 level. There was a negative correlation found between gratitude and rumination with $r=-0.252$ which was significant at 0.05 level. Gender difference was seen in rumination, which was found to be significant at 0.05 level whereas no significant gender differences were found in gratitude, emotional intelligence, spiritual well-being.

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INTRODUCTION

Gratitude has been considered as an important concept when understanding human functioning (Emmons & Crumpler, 2000; Harpman, 2004). When it comes to establishing positive relationships with community members, gratitude plays an important role and it thus acts as an important social resource. It is also defined as the appreciation of what is meaningful and valuable to oneself or when one is thankful for a thing or experience (Sansone, R.A. & Sansone, L.A., 2010). Today's society is becoming a complicated structure with everyone leading a busier schedule, managing multiple domains, dual-income households contending for stagnated wages and overall rise in the cost of living (Sengupta, S & Jha, M.K., 2020). A number of studies have also reported the impact of this environment on students who already face greater social and emotional challenges. Not to forget the role of social media and smartphones, people have an abundance of knowledge to navigate through and have to make difficult decisions. A longitudinal study had accessed the effect of gratitude on social media use and before and after Covid lockdown and

found that gratitude did foster meaningful conversations (Chandra, Y., 2020). A number of studies have tried establishing a relationship between gratitude and well-being as a whole (Fredrickson, B.L., Emmons, R.A., & McCullough, M.E., 2004). Gratitude is seen to improve positive social relationships and is also simultaneously by maintaining these close relationships (Wood et al., 2010). In maintaining close relationships, Emotional Intelligence helps us in promoting emotional and intellectual growth (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). In one study on Undergraduate students, it was seen that gratitude can act as a mediator between Emotional Intelligence and Subjective Well-being (Geng, Y., 2018). Emotional Intelligence has also been seen to play an important part in college success (Walsh-Portillo, 2011). It is an ability which allows us to perceive, identify and understand our own emotions as well as others (Mayer & Salovey, 1997; Mayer et al., 2016). Gratitude has also been closely linked with spirituality. Many religions propagate gratitude as a noble virtue and encourage people to develop this for betterment of society (Emmons & Crumpler, 2000). Studies have demonstrated that spiritual people are less susceptible to developing mental disorders (Emmons, R. A., & Kneezel, T.

T., 2005; Krause, N., 2009; Magnano et al., 2019). A study by Krause (2006) studied the effect of gratitude on stress and found out that those older people who were grateful to God experienced less stress. Rumination has been defined as the tendency of the person to persist in goal-directed action until they have attained the goal or given it up (Martin & Tesser, 1996). Nolen-Hoeksema (1987) defined rumination as repetitive and passive focus on one's negative feelings. Rumination among college students and differences among male and females is well researched (Johnson, D. P., & Whisman, M. A., 2013; Nolen-Hoeksema, 1991). The Response styles theory stated that females ruminate more on their depressive symptoms and distress than males (RST; Nolen-Hoeksema, 1987, 1991).

Objectives of the study

- To study relationship between gratitude and Emotional intelligence
- To study relationship between gratitude and Spiritual Well-being
- To study relationship between gratitude and rumination
- To study gender differences on gratitude, emotional intelligence, spiritual well-being and rumination.

Hypothesis

- There will be no significant relationship between gratitude and Emotional Intelligence.
- There will be no significant relationship between gratitude and Spiritual Well-being.
- There will be no significant relationship between gratitude and rumination.
- There are no significant gender differences on gratitude, Emotional-Intelligence, Spiritual Well-being and Rumination.

METHODOLOGY

Tools

- **The Gratitude Questionnaire-6 (GQ-6; McCullough and Emmons, 2002)** was used to measure gratitude. The GQ-6 includes six items assessing facets of gratitude: intensity, span, frequency, and density. The test has a 7-point likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree.
- **Spiritual Well-being Scale (SWBS) (Ellison and Raymond F. Paloutzian; 1982)** was used to measure spiritual well-being. The scale measures wellbeing in two senses, one is religious wellbeing and the other is existential well-being. The scale has 20 items having 6-point likert scale.
- **Emotional Intelligence Self-Assessment Tool (Adapted from Emily A. Sterrett, Ph. D., in The Manager's Pocket Guide to Emotional Intelligence, 2000, HRD Press)** was used to measure emotional intelligence. This scale has 20 items with a 5-point likert scale (1= never to 5=always). This scale assesses self-awareness, self-management, social-awareness and relationship management.
- **Rumination Scale (Treynor, Gonzalez, and Nolen-Hoeksema, 2003)** was used to measure rumination level. This scale has 22 items with 4-point likert scale (1 almost never 2 sometimes 3 often 4 almost always).

Participants and Procedure: The present study included 183 participants from Pune of range 18 to 25 years of age. Data was collected through google forms. Informed consent was taken from the participants. Demographic details and responses were collected and analyzed.

Research design and Statistics: Correlational research design was used. SPSS version 20 was used for statistical analysis. Pearson product Moment was employed to find out the correlation between the variables. Descriptive statistics was used to compute Mean and standard deviation. Independent sample t test was used to find out gender differences.

RESULTS

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of gratitude, emotional intelligence, spiritual well-being and rumination

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Gratitude	26.9836	9.97275	183
EI	58.5738	18.46243	183
Spiritual WB	64.3989	22.57586	183
Rumination	46.2404	17.43613	183

Descriptive statistics was employed to compute Mean and Standard deviation. There were 183 students in the study. The mean score of gratitude was found to be 26.98, emotional intelligence was 58.57, Spiritual Well-being was 64.40 and Rumination was 46.24.

Table 2. Correlation of gratitude with emotional intelligence, spiritual well-being and rumination

Variables	1	2	3	4
Gratitude (1)	1			
EI (2)	.445**	1		
Spiritual WB (3)	.466**	.571**	1	
Rumination (4)	-.252**	-.125	-.029	1

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 3. Descriptive statistics and t values for male and female on gratitude, emotional intelligence, spiritual well-being and rumination

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t value	Sig
Gratitude	M	98	26.58	10.04	-.584	NS
	F	85	27.44	9.93		
EI	M	98	58.76	18.49	.142	NS
	F	85	58.36	18.54		
Spiritual WB	M	98	65.04	23.14	.412	NS
	F	85	63.66	22.02		
Rumination	M	98	43.87	16.81	-1.993	0.05
	F	85	48.98	17.84		

The Product Moment correlation was performed to examine the relationship of Gratitude with Emotional Intelligence, Spiritual Well-being and Rumination. It was seen that gratitude is positively correlated with Emotional Intelligence ($r = .445$, $p < .01$) and Spiritual Correlation ($r = .466$, $p < .01$). It was seen that the factor Rumination was negatively correlated ($r = -.255$, $p < .01$). Table () presents detailed analysis. Descriptive statistics was employed to compute mean and SD. Independent sample t test was used to find mean differences in the scores of males and females. There were no significant differences found in the scores of males and females on Gratitude, Emotional intelligence and spiritual wellbeing. Gender difference was found on Rumination with t value of -1.993 which was significant at 0.05 level ($p < 0.05$).

Females were high on Rumination with a mean score of 48.98 as compared to males with a mean score of 43.87.

DISCUSSION

The present study aimed to find the correlation of gratitude with emotional intelligence, spiritual well-being and rumination. This study was conducted on 183 students out of which 98 were males and 85 were females. The age of the participants ranged from 18 to 25 years. The Gratitude questionnaire, Emotional Intelligence self-assessment tool, Spiritual well-being scale and Rumination scale were used to measure gratitude, emotional intelligence, spiritual well-being and rumination respectively. There was a positive correlation found between gratitude and emotional intelligence. This indicates that practicing gratitude can enhance emotional intelligence. This can also be supported with a study by Geng (2018) in which it was concluded that gratitude is positively associated with emotional intelligence. This can further also be supported by a study conducted by Salve, Lavlekar (2017) on late adolescents, in which a positive correlation was found between gratitude and emotional intelligence in adolescent girls and boys. A positive correlation was found between gratitude and spiritual well-being. This indicates that cultivating gratitude can increase spirituality. This can be supported with a study conducted by Elosua (2015) in which it was found that gratitude is positively correlated with spiritual well-being.

This can also be supported with the help of a study conducted by Loi & Ng (2021) which suggested that Gratitude was significantly positively associated with happiness, life satisfaction, spirituality, flourishing, positive affect, and experiencing meaningful work. There was a negative correlation found between gratitude and rumination. This shows that cultivating gratitude can reduce repetitive and passive focus on one's negative thinking. This can further be supported with the help of a study by Liang, Chan, Li *et al.*, (2018) which suggested that gratitude not only has a negative influence on depression but also counteract the symptoms of depression by enhancing peace of mind and reducing ruminative thinking. Rumination can cause a negative mood by blocking a person from entertaining actions. Hence, rumination can be a potential threat to mental health and quality of life. Participants with higher levels of gratitude reported higher levels of forgiveness, which in turn showed lower levels of rumination (Colak & Gungor, 2021). There was no significant gender difference found on gratitude, emotional intelligence and spiritual well-being. Females were found to be higher on rumination as compared to males. This can be supported with the help of a meta-analysis by Johnson and Whisman (2013) concluded that women are more likely to ruminate than men. This is also consistent with the Response styles theory stating that females ruminate more on their depressive symptoms and distress than males (RST; Nolen-Hoeksema, 1987, 1991).

Conclusion

Gratitude is positively correlated with emotional intelligence and spiritual well-being and negatively correlated with rumination. There was no significant gender difference seen on gratitude, emotional intelligence and spiritual well-being whereas significant gender difference was found on rumination with females being higher as compared to males.

Future suggestions: From the above study, there are some further implications which can be done in future studies. A bigger sample size can be used for a better generalization of the findings. Another implication can be to study the gratitude as a mediator between emotional intelligence, spiritual wellbeing and rumination using structural equation models. Lastly certain interventions can be formulated based on the current study.

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