

The Role of Gratitude on Well-Being Among College Students Who Are Working Undergraduate Thesis

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ABSTRACT

As one of the requirements for obtaining a bachelor's degree, college students are required to make an undergraduate thesis. There are many challenges and obstacles that college students must face that will affect their well-being. However, it does not prevent college students for completing their undergraduate thesis. This is due to the gratitude response in the undergraduate thesis process. Thus, this study aims to investigate the role of gratitude on well-being among college students who are working on their undergraduate thesis. Researchers hypothesize that individuals who have high gratitude will tend to have high well-being as well. This research was conducted on the 388 final-year college students aged 21-25 years who are currently pursuing higher education at universities in Jakarta. This research used a cross-sectional quantitative method with the sampling techniques using purposive sampling and convenience sampling. Data was collected through online self-report-based questionnaires about gratitude and well-being. From the research that has been conducted, it was found that 70.4% were women, 62.4% were 21 years, and 83% were in 7th semester. Through simple linear regression test, it was found that gratitude contributed 38.4% to well-being ($p = 0,00 < 0,05$) and a factor that has a greater role on well-being is the appreciation of constant life experiences. Based on the multiple linear regression test, it was found that the appreciation factor for constant life experiences has a greater role in positive emotions, engagement, positive relationships, meaning, accomplishment, health, and overall well-being. Meanwhile, the appreciation of all aspects and parts of life has a bigger role in negative emotions and loneliness.

Keywords: Gratitude, well-being, college students, final-year, undergraduate thesis

1. INTRODUCTION

Each stage of development always has challenges and changes for each individual [1], including when individuals enter adulthood which is marked by taking education at the higher education level. Individuals who take higher education are called college students. In pursuing education at the tertiary level, there are various challenges and obstacles. One of them is working on a scientific paper based on the results of research called an undergraduate thesis as a requirement for obtaining a bachelor's degree [2]. There are various obstacles experienced by college students in the undergraduate thesis process both internally and externally, such as lack of motivation, difficulties in finding references and even obstacles from mentoring lecturers [3], [4]. When the obstacles and challenges faced by college students do not balanced with the resources they have, there can be an imbalance in well-being [5]. However, the challenges and obstacles in working on the undergraduate thesis do not always prevent college students from completing their undergraduate thesis. Astuti dan Hartati [6] examined how social support affects the undergraduate thesis process of six final year college students. Based on the results of the interview, social support can come from parents, friends, and even supervisors. The social support

received by college students makes them feel more cared for and more enthusiastic in working on their undergraduate thesis. However, social support is not always received positively because the support provided is not in accordance with college student expectations. Individuals who can respond to every kindness given by others and when they get something good in their life with a positive response are said to be grateful individuals [7]. Individuals will tend to see something good compared to seeing something bad in a situation [8]. Individual gratitude has a major influence on optimal psychological functioning [9]. Individuals with optimal psychological functioning can be said to be prosperous individuals [10]. When the individual is grateful, the individual will feel positive emotions [11] so that it will make the individual more prosperous [5]. Kaufman [12] test 24 character strengths in predicting well-being with five elements, that are positive emotions, engagement, positive relationships, meaning, and accomplishment in 517 subjects aged 18-71 years. This study found that the strength of character that has the strongest relationship and most predicts well-being is gratitude. In addition, Butler and Kern [13] also tested the relationship between gratitude and well-being in two different sample groups, those are the Harvard University student group totalling 181 subjects and the positive

intervention research group totalling 1738 subjects with student status in it. The results in the Harvard University student group, that there is a significant relationship between gratitude for the four elements of well-being except for engagement and the three additional elements of well-being. In the Positive Intervention Research group, there was a significant relationship between gratitude and all elements of well-being and additional elements of well-being. However, several studies have found no relationship between gratitude and well-being. One of them is research conducted by Prabowo [14] which found there was no significant relationship between gratitude and well-being. Thus, there are still gaps in the results of research related to gratitude and well-being. In addition, as far as the researchers searched, there was no research on the role of gratitude for well-being with college student who are working on their undergraduate thesis so that researchers will re-examine the role of gratitude on well-being with college student who are working on their undergraduate thesis.

1.1. Related Work

According to the generation type of assumptions, we divided the existed work into two categories.

1.1.1. Gratitude

Gratitude is a state of both emotions and attitudes in individuals as a foundation in improving individual well-being and relationships with others [15]. Gratitude comes from Latin, which is *gratia* which means kindness, blessing, generosity, and *gratus* which means pleasure [16]. Gratitude as a psychological state leads to feelings of gratitude and appreciation for the individual's life which is expressed towards other people, nature, and God [17], for something, activity in the past or present, or situation [18]. Gratitude results from two steps of the cognitive process, the first is that the individual realizes that the individual receives a positive result, the second is that the individual realizes that there is an external source of this positive result [9]. Grimaldy and Haryanto [19] describe two factors that describe individual gratitude. The first factor is gratitude as an appreciation of constant or continuous life experiences. This gratitude results from events experienced by individuals every day such as being grateful for waking up in the morning, being grateful for parents, being grateful for friends, and so on [9]. Constant gratitude means that individuals must feel every day so that individuals have a good feeling from positive events and do not feel burdened because of negative events [19]. The second factor is gratitude as an appreciation for all parts and aspects of life. The part of life covers all parts and aspects of life, not only for other individuals, but also for the universe and God.

1.1.2. Well-being

Seligman [20] formulates five elements of well-being called PERMA which consist of positive emotions, engagement, positive relationships, meaning, and achievement. First, positive emotions are also considered a pleasant life. Individual positive emotions are reflected when individuals look at the past, present, and future of the individual and are subjectively measured [21]. Positive emotions built individual resources so that individuals become more creative, healthier, have broad knowledge, more resilience, become part of the environment, and continue to grow towards optimal function so that they can overcome stress and obstacles [22]. Positive emotions bring feelings of pleasure which can motivate individuals to focus more on positive emotions than negative emotions [23]. Second, engagement describes the individual's interest in something and how involved the individual is in doing it. When individuals are involved in working on something, individuals feel personal control [24] so that individuals will spend time to provide optimal performance [23]. Third, positive relationships emphasize good relationships between individuals and others improve well-being. Individuals who have positive relationships with others will be more emotionally involved with others so they will be more able to develop adaptive strategies to see difficult situations than lonely individuals [21]. Fourth, meaning emphasizes a sense of meaning when what individuals do is valuable and has a purpose in life. Fifth, accomplishment is defined not as an achievement that is focused on victory [25]. Individually, achievement focuses on achieving the desired state and progress towards predetermined goals.

1.2. Our Contribution

Theoretically, the results of this study can be a contribution of science in psychology in the form of additional research on the role of gratitude for well-being, especially for college students who are working on their undergraduate thesis. Practically, the results of this study can provide benefits to college students who are working on their undergraduate thesis on the role of gratitude for the well-being that students can feel. Thus, increasing college student awareness of the importance of gratitude so that college student well-being can be at a good stage. In addition, it can contribute to psychology practitioners regarding the role of gratitude for well-being. So, psychology practitioners can provide appropriate interventions for college students.

1.3. Paper Structure

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. Section 2 introduces the methods and measurements that this study use. Section 3 data analysis and findings in Section 4. Section 5 we discussed the result and finding to prior studies and theories. Finally, Section 6 concludes the paper and presents direction for future research.

2. METHOD

2.1. Participants

This study uses an online-based questionnaire with the subject of college students who are working on their undergraduate thesis, taking high education in Jakarta, and aged 21-25 years.

2.2. Measurements

According to the variables type we use two type of measurements.

2.2.1 Adaptation of Gratitude Questionnaire-6 (GQ-6) in Indonesian context

Adaptation of gratitude questionnaire-6 (GQ-6) in Indonesian context by Grimaldy and Haryanto [19] measures two factors consisting of appreciation of constant life experiences and individual appreciation of all parts and aspects of life. This measuring instrument has 11 questions with 7 points Likert scale. This measuring instrument has 1 negative item and after going through the validity test it is found to be invalid. After deleting these items, the item reliability became 0.740 and 0.798.

2.2.2 The PERMA-profiler

The PERMA-Profiler by Butler and Kern [13] measures five main elements that are positive emotion, engagement, positive relationship, meaning, accomplishment, and three additional elements that are negative emotion, health, and happiness. This measuring instrument has 23 questions with 11 points Likert scale. This measuring instrument has not a negative item. Item 17 is deleted so that the measuring instrument is reliable with a reliability value of 0.603-0.921.

3. DATA ANALYSIS

Based on the data obtained, the data normality test was carried out using residual data. The data normality test used the One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test. From the results of the tests performed, it was found that the significance value of the Unstandardized Residual, $p = 0.470 > 0.05$. Then the distribution of data for the gratitude factors and the elements of well-being is spread normally. Based on the data obtained, the correlation test was carried out on the factors of gratitude and the elements of well-being. From the results of the linearity test, it was found that the significance value for Linearity, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$ and the significance value for Deviation from Linearity, $p = 0.794 > 0.05$. Thus, the two variables have a significant linear relationship.

4. FINDINGS

Data obtained and processed using SPSS. Based on data processing using descriptive statistics, it was found out of 388 subjects, 29.6% were male and 70.4% female, most were 21 years old (62.4%), and most were in 7th semester (83%). We also find an average value of gratitude of 6.0191 and well-being of 7.0101. The regression test was conducted to see the role of gratitude for well-being. It was found that gratitude has a positive and significant role of $R = 0.619$ and $p = 0.000 < 0.05$.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.691 ^a	.384	.382	.85230

- a. Predictors: (Constant), GQ
- b. Dependent Variable: PERMA

The gratitude factor that has the greatest influence is the appreciation of constant life experiences (Beta = 0,437, $t = 8,560$, $p = 0,000 < 0,05$).

Based on additional data analysis, appreciation of constant life experiences has a greater role positively on positive emotions (Beta = 0,387, $t = 7,322$, $p = 0,000 < 0,05$), engagement (Beta = 0,288, $t = 5,017$, $p = 0,000 < 0,05$), positive relationships (Beta = 0,389, $t = 7,074$, $p = 0,000 < 0,05$), meaning (Beta = 0,438, $t = 8,531$, $p = 0,000 < 0,05$), accomplishment (Beta = 0,365, $t = 6,527$, $p = 0,000 < 0,05$), health (Beta = 0,237, $t = 4,002$, $p = 0,000 < 0,05$), and overall well-being (Beta = 0,448, $t = 9,130$, $p = 0,000 < 0,05$). Whereas appreciation of all aspects and parts of life has a greater role on negative emotions (Beta = -0,139, $t = -2,181$, $p = 0,030 < 0,05$) and loneliness (Beta = -0,168, $t = -2,616$, $p = 0,009 < 0,05$).

Furthermore, a different test was carried out in terms of gender and age and there was no difference in terms of gender and age.

5. DISCUSSION

Based on the results of data analysis through simple linear regression, it was found that there was a role of gratitude for the well-being of college students who were working on their undergraduate thesis positively and significantly at 38.4%. The results of this study are in accordance with the theory presented by McCullough et. al [7] that grateful individuals will experience well-being. Gratitude plays a role in encouraging individuals to use social support when individuals need it, encouraging individuals to interpret life events more positively so that they can find the potential to develop and avoid risky behavior [26]. Gratitude is also effective in increasing well-being because it expands ways of thinking to build individual resources [27]. This study is also in accordance with previous research that gratitude has a relationship with well-being [12], [13]. Individuals who have high gratitude are not only grateful when they are in good conditions, but even when they are not good [28] so

that they will see more of their life experiences as positive rather than seeing something negative [8].

Researchers also performed additional analyzes on each factor of gratitude for well-being. Based on the results of data processing using multiple linear regression tests, the factor of gratitude that plays the most significant role in well-being in this study is the appreciation factor for constant life experiences. This is consistent with the statement of McCullough et al. [7] that individuals who experience more gratitude makes gratitude a daily affective state. So that gratitude can be used as an adaptive psychological strategy in interpreting daily events more positively, dealing with and overcoming negative experiences and negative emotions so that individuals will be more prosperous [29]. In this study, a constant life experience is in the form of experience while working on an undergraduate thesis. So, it can be concluded that, grateful college students will interpret the daily undergraduate thesis process more positively even though it is full of challenges and obstacles so that they can overcome the negative emotions that arise and focus more on positive emotions so that college students will be more prosperous.

Furthermore, the appreciation factor for constant life experiences predicts positive emotions, engagement, positive relationships, meaning, achievement, health, and overall well-being. According to the broaden-and-build theory, positive emotions will expand ways of thinking and build resilience and psychological, social, and spiritual resources in facing the challenges experienced [22]. Grateful college students will tend to have positive emotions in carrying out their days working on their undergraduate thesis. Their gratitude will make individuals focus more on positive things [23] so that when obstacles and challenges come, individuals will be fully involved and overcome them with their skills [30]. Thus, gratitude will motivate college students to work on their undergraduate thesis. Also, grateful individuals will respond more to the kindness and support provided by others with grateful behavior [7] so that this can strengthen social relationships [31]. When college students respond with gratitude to every help and support given from their parents, friends, romantic partner, and supervisors, positive social relationships will be established so that college student well-being will increase. Kindness given to individuals is then responded to with gratitude, this can motivate individuals to do good for others too [31]. When individuals do good for others, the individual will feel that what he is doing is meaningful and valuable [20]. In this case, it can be in the form of assistance and support to friends who are working on the undergraduate thesis as well. So, individuals will feel that they are meaningful because they can be useful for others. Furthermore, when the achievements obtained by individuals are responded positively, it can encourage individuals to dedicate their lives to further achievements [20]. In this case, college students who are grateful will have gratitude for any simple achievements received such as success in solving background problems, and so on. This can encourage college students to continue the process of working on their undergraduate thesis completion. Hill et

al. [32] explained that grateful individuals will tend to report good physical health.

Meanwhile, the appreciation factor for all parts and aspects of life has a role in negative emotions and loneliness. This is because when an individual is grateful, the individual will see his life as a gift that God has given so that the individual feels more positive emotions than negative emotions [20]. As previously explained, grateful individuals tend to have positive relationships. This positive relationship will make individuals develop adaptive strategies in seeing obstacles compared to lonely individuals [21]. Thus, individuals who are not grateful will tend to feel lonely.

There are several limitations to this research. Researchers only examine the status of college students who are working on their undergraduate thesis without control for some of the factors that might affect well-being such as economic status in the form of income, marital status, religiosity, parenting style, and so on. In addition, this study uses an adaptation of gratitude and well-being measurement which may not describe the situation and the condition of the college students who are working on their undergraduate thesis. Besides that, this study has not provided result related to difference in college students who are grateful and less grateful for their well-being. Remembering the entire undergraduate thesis guidance process done online due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it is suspected that this could be influenced the level of college students' gratitude and well-being. However, the results of this research can illustrate how gratitude plays a role on well-being of students who are working on their undergraduate thesis.

6. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION

Based on the data analysis that has been done, there is a significant role of gratitude for the well-being of college students who are working on their undergraduate thesis. The data analysis shows that there is a positive role of gratitude on well-being, so high gratitude predicting high well-being. Through a simple linear regression test, gratitude contributes 38.4% to individual well-being, while the remaining 61.6% of well-being is determined by other factors. Researchers also tested through multiple linear regression tests and found that the factor of gratitude that has a bigger role to well-being is the appreciation of constant life experiences. In addition, researchers did not find any differences in the scores of the two variables based on gender and age.

Based on the results obtained, the researcher provides several suggestions:

- a. Taking samples from different areas considering that this study only included college students who took higher education in Jakarta. Thus, it can represent the population in other areas and the results are more diverse.
- b. There is further research related to differences in college students who are working on undergraduate thesis who are grateful and less grateful for well-being.
- c. Researchers suggest that college students can apply gratitude in their daily lives by writing gratitude

journals, saying thank you, writing words of gratitude around where college students are working on their undergraduate thesis to motivate college students to provide optimal performance.

- d. Researchers suggest that supervisors, family, friends, and partners so that they can also apply gratitude in everyday life.

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