Gratitude, Perceived Social Support, Subjective Happiness, Life Satisfaction and Empathy of College Students: A Comparative Study of Gender Difference and Educational Sectors

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Abstract

The study aimed to determine the gender and educational sector difference on gratitude, perceived social support, subjective happiness, life satisfaction and empathy of college students in Karachi, Pakistan. It was hypothesized that, 1. "There will be gender difference in gratitude, perceived social support, subjective happiness, life satisfaction and empathy of college students", 2. "There will be difference in gratitude, perceived social support, subjective happiness, life satisfaction and empathy between college students of private and public sectors". Participants of the present study consisted of 115 students with mean age =19.20 years and SD=1.244 (Female N=60, M age = 19.18, SD= 1.20 & Male N= 55, M age =19.22, SD=1.30) Data was collected from different private and public sector college students of Karachi, through convenient sampling. After taking consent, students were requested to fill Respondent Profile Form and then, Gratitude questionnaire, Multidimensional scale of perceived social support, Subjective happiness scale, Satisfaction with Life scale and Empathy scale were administered. T-'test indicates female students scored more on the variable of empathy as compared to male students; moreover there is no significant gender difference found on other variables including gratitude, perceived social support, subjective happiness and life satisfaction. Furthermore students of public sectors scored high on the factor of perceived social support; subjective happiness, and life satisfaction, whereas private sector students scored high on empathy. There is no significant difference was observed on the variable of gratitude in both sectors (private and public). This research is significant for understanding the role of gratitude, perceived social support, subjective happiness, life satisfaction, and empathy in the well-being of college students. These findings provide valuable insights for educators and counselors, highlighting their role in fostering positivity and promoting empathy among college students.

Keywords: Gratitude, perceived social support, subjective happiness, life satisfaction and empathy

INTRODUCTION

Empathy is the skill to reflect and capability of oneself into the inner life of another individual. (Kohut, 1959 as cited by Lester, 2003). Gratitude as a consistent indicator for wellbeing and can be observed as indicator in which the receiver gets a signal of a moral purpose which provokes pro-social behavior towards others and increases future chances to occur this moral behavior. (Wood, Joseph & Linley, 2007).

The state of being grateful comes from two reasons. One is that a person gets any positive outcome and another that there is an outside source which provided that consequence. Empathy and gratitude are co-related to each other as it can be viewed in context of child's mind development. When their mind develops at 3 to 4 years, they start understanding that human behavior is intentional so that they feel more empathetic (Leslie, 1987). Perceived Social Support is the experience of being loved, nurtured, cared and that one is a part of a secure comfortable group. Social support can be estimated as one's view that help is accessible in a form of physical, emotional and informational manner. Social support can be obtained from several sources including family, companions, peer group, colleagues, and neighbors which are more expected in collective societies, particularly in Asian cultures. Perceived support refers to beneficiary's subjective judgment that suppliers will offer persuasive help in the middle of crisis, whereas, a person can utilize his social contacts and resources to cope or manage the issues or a problem for he/she is in the middle of. The baseline for such behavior has various causes to occur but somehow there is a significant relationship of different variable which lead to have more strong perceived social support. One of the most correlative significant variables is empathy. A significant negative correlation between perceived organizational social support and work-to-family friction, and a significant negative correlation between perceived social support and family-to-work conflict (Cort, Jesse, Michael, & Tyler, 2014). The research is an adequate outline that endeavors to construct the bridge an extension over the two different but related ideas, social support and empathy (Thomas et al., 2012).

Subjective happiness is the emotional or mental condition of well-being taking place as the result of positive emotions including satisfaction and pleasure. While happiness explored through biological, psychological, philosophical and religious approaches however the subjectivity of its nature presents challenged in the context of scientific realm. In order to apply a scientific method for the purpose of finding what happiness is and how it is achieved, many research groups together with positive psychology made a variety of studies. Happiness is unclear concept which can indicate different meaning to different people. Owing to its multifaceted nature well-being, quality of life, and flourishing. The scientific approach to understand the subjective happiness proved it as positive-negative affective experiences of the individual and its fulfillment in general life (Diener, 1984) and mental state of prosperity, euphoria, and satisfaction (Lyubomirsky, 2001). Therefore, subjective happiness is viewed as the state of the individual's emotional well being

Life satisfaction is in particular evaluation of feelings and attitudes about person's life at a certain time ranging from negative to positive. (Diener, 1984). Empathy plays on the raise of life satisfaction (Caro et al, 2017). Fredrickson's (1998, 2001) broaden and build theory of positive emotions explored this relationship. This theory view that the negative

emotions limit our behavior whereas positive emotions broadens it to beyond the physical action. Thereby, it suggests that positive emotions produce broad thought action repertoires that universally provide physical, social and intellectual resources which in turn leads to lasting personal resources and greater life satisfaction.

Perceived Social support refers to the experience of being esteemed, regarded, thought about, and respected by other people who are available in one's life (Roohafza et al., 2014). Perceived social support is often linked to the psychological wellness. Park and his colleagues (et al., 2015) found that social support is one of the ways of dealing with stress acting as a buffer agent against stress. This effect is further strengthened with the availability of empathetic understanding. The more empathetic is group, the greater are the chances of coping with stressful situation.

From the theoretical perspective the Empathy is characterized as the affective components rather than being recognizing as purely a cognitive construct. It can be better understood as the general attitude characterized by the feeling of wellness with cognition of goodwill for others. The Rogerian theory viewed empathy as a principal supportive idea, having understand of emotions of client is utmost necessary and experiencing of infinite positive respect toward the client (Bozarth, 1997).

Life satisfaction is generally evaluation of feelings and attitudes of an individual life. Life satisfaction is one of three major indicators of well-being, positive and negative effect. It is characterized, in conformity with the cognitive theory, as person's cognitive verdict about comparisons based on the compatibility of their personal living circumstances with the values (Diener, 1984). As suggested by literature review it is hypothesized that 1. "There will be gender difference in gratitude, perceived social support, subjective happiness, life satisfaction and empathy of college students", 2. "There will be difference in gratitude, perceived social support, subjective happiness, life satisfaction and empathy between college students of private and public sectors".

METHOD

Participants

For the purpose of this study convenient sampling technique was used. This study was conducted on 115 participants. Among them 55 were male Mean age =19.22, SD=1.30and 60 female Mean age = 19.18, SD= 1.20, ranging in age from 19 to 24 years. Demographic Information of the participants can be seen in table no 1. The data was taken from private and public colleges of Karachi, Pakistan.

Table 1

Demographic Information of the Participants

		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Females	60	52.2
	Males	55	47.8
	Total	115	100.0

Family System		
Nuclear	91	79.1
Joint	24	20.9
Total	115	100.0
Birth Order		
First	37	32.2
Intermediate	40	34.8
Last Born	38	33.0
Total	115	100.0
College Sectors		
Public	60	52.2
Private	55	47.8
Total	115	100.0

N=115

Measures

Respondent Profile Form:

Respondent form was consisted on basic information of participants including Security Code, Age, Gender, Mother's Age, Father's Age, Family structure (Nuclear/ Joint set-up), No. of Family members living with, No. of siblings, Birth Order (First/ middle/ last born, Years of education, Name of educational Institute Studying, Name of organization (if employed) , Department Post/ Formal Work Title, Full time /Part time, Position in organization, Years of experience in current organization, Financial position (Monthly Income), Any Physical/Psychological problem: Yes/No. If yes, name of illness, Treatment in process: Yes/No, If yes, name of treatment place and Duration of treatment.

1. Satisfaction with Life Scale (1985)

It is a 5-item scale designed to measure global cognitive judgments of one's life satisfaction (not a measure of either positive or negative affect). Participants indicate how much they agree or disagree with each of the 5 items using a 7-point scale that ranges from 7 strongly agree to 1 strongly disagree. Items are added up in order to yield a total score of life satisfaction. The possible range of scores is between 5 and 35, with greater scores signifying higher satisfaction with life. Though scoring should be kept continuous (sum up scores on each item), here are some cutoffs to be used as benchmarks. 31 - 35 Extremely satisfied, 26 - 30 Satisfied, 21 - 25 Slightly satisfied, 20 Neutral, 15 - 19 Slightly dissatisfied, 10 - 14 Dissatisfied, 5 - 9 Extremely dissatisfied. The scale has adequate criterion validity, good convergent and discriminant validity. A number of studies were found to support the validity of the Satisfaction with Life Scale and reliability has been demonstrated in terms of

high internal consistency with a value of 0.87 and stability overtime with a test-retest coefficient of 0.82.(Diener 1993).

2. Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) (1988)

It's a 12 item scale which measures perceived social support from family and friends. The items tended to divide into factor groups relating to the source of the social support, namely family (Fam), friends (Fri) or significant other (SO) To calculate mean scores: Significant Other Subscale: Sum across items 1, 2, 5, & 10, then divide by 4. Family Subscale: Sum across items 3, 4, 8, & 11, then divide by 4. Friends Subscale: Sum across items 6, 7, 9, & 12, then divide by 4. Each item is scored 1 -7. Total is sum of all 12 items, possible range for total is 7 -84. Total = 69 – 84 High Acuity Total = 49 – 68 Moderate Acuity Total = 12 – 48 Low Acuity. Reliability: The internal consistencies of the entire scale were good, with a Cronbach's α of 0.91 in the student group overall, and with sub-scales of 0.91, 0.83 and 0.86 for FR, FA and SO respectively. Concurrent Validity: It was found that the Thai-MSPSS had a negative correlation with the state trait anxiety inventory (r = 0.20, p = 0.004) and the Thai depression inventory (TDI) but was positively correlated with the Rosenberg self-esteem scale. it was found that the Rosenberg self-esteem scale correlated with all three sub-scales, whereas the anxiety and depression scales correlated more with the FR sub-scale than with the others (Wongpakaran et al, 2011)

3. Subjective Happiness Scale (Also Known as General Happiness Scale) (1999)

A 4-item scale designed to measure subjective happiness. Each of item is completed by choosing one of 7 options that finish a given sentence fragment. The options are different for each of the four questions Sum the scores for each item together. Keep scores continuous. In longitudinal study test re-test reliability of this test showed 0.55 to 0.90(M=0.72) and convergent validity was analyzed by correlating with published measures of happiness and well –being and revealed substantial correlation with ranging from 0.52 to 0.72 (M=0.62). (Lepper ,1997).

4. Toronto Empathy Scale

This questionnaire consists of 16 questions; each rated on a five-point scale from 'never' to 'often'. It was developed by reviewing other available empathy instruments, determining what these instruments had in common, and deriving a single factor that became the basis of the Toronto Empathy Questionnaire (TEQ). The TEQ conceptualizes empathy as a primarily emotional process. The instrument has been shown to be positively correlated with measures of social decoding, other empathy measures, and to be negatively correlated with measures of autism symptomatology. Scoring: Item responses are scored according to the following scale for positively worded Items 1, 3, 5, 6, 8, 9, 13, 16. Never = 0; Rarely = 1; Sometimes = 2; Often = 3; Always = 4. The following negatively worded items are reverse scored: 2, 4, 7, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15. Scores are summed to derive total. It has been shown to have high internal consistency, construct validity, and test–retest reliability study examined the Toronto Empathy Questionnaire's (TEQ) validity and reliability in a sample of 3955 Greek teachers. In order to test the internal consistency reliability, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used and was found satisfactory at 0.72. The analyses confirmed that the Greek version of TEQ could be used for researches in Greek educators as a valid and

reliable measure of teachers' empathy. (Kourmousi et al, 2017) TEQ demonstrated strong convergent validity, correlating positively with behavioral measures of social decoding, self-report measures of empathy, and negatively with a measure of Autism symptomatology. (Spreng, 2009)

5. Gratitude Questionnaire

The GQ-6 is a short self-report test measure of the disposition to experience gratitude. Participants answers 6 items on a 1to 7 scale (1= 'strongly agree" to 7 "strongly disagree") scoring is to Add up your scores for items 1, 2, 4, and 5. 2. Reverse your scores for items 3 and 6 which are to inhibit response bias. That is, if you scored a "7," give yourself a "1," if you scored a "6," give yourself a "2," etc. 3. Add the reversed scores for items 3 and 6 to the total from Step 1. This is total GQ-6 score. This number should be between 6 and 42. Based on a sample of 1,224 adults who took the GQ-6 as part of a feature on the Spirituality and Health Web Site, here are some benchmarks for making sense of score. 25% Percentile: Someone who scored a 35 out of 42 on the GQ-6 scored higher than 25% of the people who took it. If person scored below a 35, then person are in the bottom 1/4th of our sample of Spirituality and Health Visitors in terms of gratitude. 50th Percentile: Someone who scored a 38 out of 42 on the GQ-6 scored higher than 50% of the people who took it. If you scored below a 38, then person are in the bottom one-half of people who took the survey. 75th Percentile: Someone who scored a 41 out of 42 on the GQ-6 scored higher than 75% of the 1, 224 individuals who took the GQ-6 on the Spirituality and Health web site one year ago. If person scored a 42 or higher, then it scored among the top 13% of Spirituality and Health Sample. The reliability and construct validity of the Japanese translation (GQ-6-J) of the Gratitude Questionnaire 6-item form (GQ-6) in a sample of 409 Japanese college students (166 women, 263 men; mean age = 20.6 years, SD = 1.36), who completed the questionnaire on two occasions separated by four weeks. Internal consistency reliability (αs = .92 and .92 for the two administrations, respectively) and test–retest reliability (r = .86) were good. (Sumi , 2017)

Procedure

In this study comparative group research design was used to compare the scores the between gratitude, life satisfaction, and, perceived social support, subjective happiness and empathy. Private and public colleges of Karachi was approached for collecting data. Instructions was given to participants to give their honest and genuine responses on each item in the questionnaire. A written consent was given and participants were ensured about the confidentiality of their provided information. First introduction to participant were filled by each participant then respondent profile form and then scales. After completion of all questionnaires, participants were thanked for their voluntary participation & cooperation in the research and for their precious time. Later on filled questionnaires were scored according to the instructions given in the manual.

Statistical Analysis:

The collected data was scored by standardized procedure and further analyzed by applying t-test was computed to assess differences among variables.

Operational Definition of Variables

Gratitude

It is a feeling thankful for something; it is more like a deeper appreciation for someone or something which produces longer lasting positivity.

Perceived Social Support

Social support is the perception and actuality that one is cared for, has assistance available from other people and that one is part of a supportive social network.

Subjective happiness

It is describe as a range of positive emotions, including joy, pride, contentment, and gratitude.

Life satisfaction

Life satisfaction is an overall assessment of feelings and attitudes about one's life at a particular point in time ranging from negative to positive.

Empathy

The ability to understand and share the feelings of another.

Ethical considerations

The APA ethical guidelines and code of conduct were followed during the whole research procedure till statistical analysis, followed by the fulfillment informed consent. While making sure to follow the core principles with no physical and psychological harm to any of the participant or any human being/animal, in general.

Research Design:

It is a cross sectional comparative research group design where scores of private and public colleges and male and female scores were compared by applying t-test.

RESULTS

Table 2

Cronbach's Alpha of Gratitude questionnaire, Multidimensional scale of perceived social support, Subjective happiness scale, Satisfaction with Life scale and Empathy scale

Scales	Cronbach's Alpha	Items
Gra	.46	6
MPSS	.76	12
SubH	.53	4
LS	.69	5

Scales	Cronbach's Alpha	Items
Emp	.56	16

Notes: N: 115

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics of variables under study

Variables	N	Mean	SD
Gra	115	29.27	5.33
MPSS	115	64.13	11.05
SubH	115	19.54	4.22
LS	115	22.17	6.61
Emp	115	40.49	7.82

Notes: N: 115

Table 4

Gender difference in gratitude, social support, subjective happiness, life satisfaction and empathy of college students analyzed through t'test (N=115)

Variables	Gender	N	Mean	SD	t(113)	Sig. (2-tailed)
Gra	Females	60	29.60	5.73	.69	.49
	Males	55	28.91	4.89		
MPSS	Females	60	65.32	10.27	1.20	.23
	Males	55	62.84	11.79		
SubH	Females	60	19.25	4.68	-.76	.44
	Males	55	19.85	3.68		
LS	Females	60	21.43	6.92	-1.24	.21
	Males	55	22.96	6.21		
Emp	Females	60	43.18	8.30	4.12	.00
	Males	55	37.55	6.09		

Notes: N: 115

It is clear from table 3, that there is insignificant mean gender difference on gratitude differences (t (113).69, p>.05), perceived social support (t (113) 1.20, p>.05), subjective happiness (t (113)-.76, p>.05) and Satisfaction with life (t (113)-1.24, p>.05). Significant gender difference is clear on empathy (t (113) 4.12, p<.01). Female seems to be more empathetic (M=43.18) than male (M=37.55) college students.

Table 5

Difference in gratitude, social support, subjective happiness, life satisfaction and empathy between college students of public and private sectors (N=115)

Variables	Sector of Colleges	N	Mean	SD	t' (113)	Sig. (2-tailed)
Gra	Public	60	29.03	5.47	-.494	.62
	Private	55	29.53	5.22		
MPSS	Public	60	67.28	8.12	3.33	.00
	Private	55	60.69	12.74		
SubH	Public	60	20.30	2.97	2.04	.04
	Private	55	18.71	5.16		
LS	Public	60	23.75	5.31	2.76	.00
	Private	55	20.44	7.45		
Emp	Public	60	38.38	7.15	-3.12	.00
	Private	55	42.78	7.94		

Notes: N: 115

It is clear from table 4 that there is insignificant mean difference between public (M= 29.03) and Private (M= 29.53) on gratitude (t (113)-.494, p>.05), however significant difference was noted on perceived social support (t (113) 3.33, p<.01), subjective happiness (t (113) 2.04, p<.05)) and Satisfaction with life (t (113) 2.76, p<.01), and empathy (t (113) -3.12, p<.01) between public and private sector college students.

DISCUSSION

This study investigated the hypotheses that "There will be gender difference in gratitude, perceived social support, subjective happiness, life satisfaction and empathy of college students" and "There will be difference in gratitude, perceived social support, subjective happiness, life satisfaction and empathy between college students of private and public sectors". However, the result revealed that the findings of the current study partially support the hypotheses.

Gratitude is being thankful which produces longer lasting positivity. Perceived social support is the insight that one is cared for and has assistance available from other people. Subjective happiness It is describe as a range of positive emotions, including joy, pride, contentment, and gratitude. Life satisfaction is feelings and attitudes about one's life ranging from negative to positive. Empathy is the he ability to understand and share the feelings of another. Table no 4 indicates that that there is insignificant difference on variables of gratitude, perceived social support, subjective happiness and satisfaction with life among two groups (male and female). This suggests that the present population, may be similarly valued and experienced these aspects of well-being by both male and female students. The dimensions of gender differences diverse with range of general gender discrimination and the cultural approaches related to gender equivalence in various

countries of the world. Gender differences in subjective well-being could be associated to gender precise goal significant means (Clemens et al., 2008). Another study conducted indicated that men were a reduced amount to sense and prompt gratitude than women (Kashdan et al., 2009). Whereas table no 4 indicated that there is significant gender difference is clear on empathy where female seems to be more empathetic (M=43.18) than male (M=37.55) college students. In a study conducted on 127 participants to find gender difference indicated that women are more empathic. (Loren Toussaint & Jon R. Webb, 2005). Another study indicated that there were significant differences between genders female participants had higher scores compare to male participants (Mario et al., 2016). This reflects that the gender difference on the variable of empathy could be attributed to the biological predisposition and socio-cultural expectation as females more encouraged for caregiving and emotional expressivity than male counterparts.

Table no 5 indicates that there is significant difference between public and private sector college students on variables of perceived social support, subjective happiness and satisfaction with life and empathy. This distinct pattern among public and private sectors highlighted that students of public sector institutes scored higher on variables of social support, subjective happiness and life satisfaction which could be attributed to stronger peer networks, collectivistic cultural background, and lower levels of social pressure. Students of private sector institutes scores higher of empathy which could be attributed to having exposure and tolerance to diverse perspectives. There is insignificant difference between public (M= 29.03) and Private (M= 29.53) on the variable gratitude. Hence findings of demonstrated that the collected result from sample was shown significant among public and private sectors on perceived social support, subjective happiness and life satisfaction as variables of positive psychology constructs except on the variable gratitude. However, these findings suggest that more work should be done on it in future to further explore the depth of these phenomena in our culture. Thus this emphasizes that more initiatives should be taken in this particular area for the betterment of our society.

Implication

In the future implications will be viewed as an enabler of positive psychology and personal growth of students of Pakistan. It will benefit students to acquire and flourish in their future respected fields and their wellbeing. Also help educationist, teachers and counsellors to deeply understand current perspective.

Limitation of the research

Limitations of the study should be noted, to provide path for future research. First, these findings could be subject to limited time period. Replication of this study for targeting other student populations should be made in order to generate a more solid significance among variable examined in this study. Small sample size, because of this generalization of the results is somewhat limited. Finally, Future study can investigate with a larger sample size with different age groups from different areas of Pakistan for more diverse sample and generalization.

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