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Role of Gratitude in Shaping Personality of School Going Adolescents: A Comprehensive Study

Abstract

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The primary research study sheds light on the significance of Gratitude and the Big 5 Personality traits in the lives of adolescents, as well as explores the relationship between the two broad parameters. The hypothesis utilized in this study was that the Gratitude constructively correlated with the Big 5 personalities amongst the school going adolescent students in India. Besides, this study highlighted the important role and purpose of Gratitude and the Big 5 personality traits in an adolescent's life. The exploration work convincingly showed that all essential components of the Big-5, namely openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism, are profoundly, fundamentally decidedly connected with Gratitude. Acknowledgment of the requirement for training programs for promoting practicing Gratitude amongst school-going adolescents and, thus, their personality enhancement makes the research evaluation an exceptionally significant contribution in the present situation. The centrality of this examination was to assist and give information to educators, parents, schools, and counselors about the potential benefits of practicing Gratitude by school-going adolescents and its significant relationship with the Big Five personalities. Individuals are unique, and a combination of these characteristics contributes to their overall personality and behaviour in school and the life journey ahead.

Keywords: Gratitude, Big-5, Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, Neuroticism, Happiness, Well-Being, Mental Health

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INTRODUCTION:

The quality of being thankful and appreciative is known as gratitude. It entails noticing and acknowledging the good things in life, expressing thanks to others, and cultivating a happy attitude. Gratitude is related to higher well-being, better relationships, and a more optimistic outlook on life. For instance, Froh *et al.* (2009) discovered that school going adolescents who expressed thankful sentiments had higher Subjective well-being.

Purpose of gratitude in an adolescent's life

Gratitude is associated with higher levels of pleasure and life satisfaction. Ado-

lescents who practice gratitude report more positive emotions and lower stress levels (Wood *et al.*, 2008a, 2008b). It enhances social relationships and encourages pro-social action (Bartlett & DeSteno, 2006; Bartlett *et al.*, 2012; Maet *et al.*, 2017). Teens who express gratitude are more likely to form positive relationships with their peers and adults. Gratitude helps teenagers focus on the positive parts of their lives, which contributes to a more cheerful view (Deichert *et al.*, 2019).

Many studies have indicated that frequent feelings of appreciation are beneficial to students' healthy development. Wood *et al.* (2010) discovered, for example, that kids who report higher feelings of gratitude are

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more likely to respect their teachers and peers at school. According to Wen *et al.* (2010), junior high school students who express higher levels of thankfulness also report higher levels of academic accomplishment, and higher academic achievement typically leads to happiness (Ng *et al.*, 2015).

Moreover, previous research has shown that gratitude is one of the most important factors that influence individuals' overall happiness (Froh & Bono, 2008) and is thus an essential basis for experiencing happiness in individuals (Watkins *et al.*, 2003). For example, Watkins *et al.* (2003) found that gratitude may help individuals experience more positive emotions, happiness, and hope in their lives in general.

BIG FIVE PERSONALITY TRAITS

Adolescents, commonly referred to as teenagers, are individuals typically between the ages of 13 and 19 years old. This stage of life is marked by significant physical, emotional, and cognitive development as young people transition from childhood to adulthood. Adolescents undergo various changes, including puberty, increased independence, identity formation, and the establishment of interpersonal relationships.

Personality qualities can have an impact on how adolescents approach their education. Conscientiousness, for example, is frequently associated with effort, organization, and self-discipline, all of which can help to academic achievement. Openness may be related to creativity and a willingness to try new things, which influence performance in particular disciplines.

Extraversion and agreeableness can influence how teenagers engage in social interactions. Extraverted people are more

outgoing and friendly, whereas agreeable people are cooperative and empathetic. These characteristics can have an impact on the quality of friendships, peer interactions, and group dynamics in the school setting. Neuroticism, which is connected with emotional stability, might influence how adolescents cope with stress and emotional issues. Those who have lower degrees of neuroticism may be more resilient and better able to deal with the ups and downs of adolescence. Personality qualities can influence behavior both inside and outside of the classroom. For example, conscientious people are more likely to follow the rules and fulfil obligations, whereas openness to experience leads to a readiness to explore new activities or techniques. The Big Five personality traits have been shown to predict career choices and success. Conscientiousness, for example, is frequently related to work success, although openness may be associated with a propensity for creative or unusual careers.

Adolescents with high openness are likely to be curious, inventive, and receptive to new ideas. They may love researching multiple subjects and engaging in creative activities, making them more adaptive to varied teaching styles and open to unusual learning approaches. Less open adolescents may prefer regularity and familiarity. They may thrive in organized situations and prefer practical, realistic issues over abstract or theoretical ones.

Adolescents with high conscientiousness are likely to be structured, responsible, and goal-oriented. They are more likely to finish assignments on time, pay attention in class, and demonstrate a strong work ethic. This characteristic is frequently related to academic performance. Adolescents with low conscientiousness may struggle with time

management, organization, and procrastination. This might have an impact on academic performance as well as general school obligations.

Extraverted adolescents are likely to be friendly, gregarious, and enthusiastic. They may like group activities, making new friends readily, and participating in classroom debates. They may also engage in extracurricular activities and positions of leadership. Introverted teens might prefer solitary activities or smaller group settings. They may require more alone time to recharge and be more reserved during class discussions. Introversion, on the other hand, does not always correspond with academic ability.

Adolescents with high agreeableness are more likely to be cooperative, empathic, and compassionate. They may succeed at teamwork, maintain positive connections with students and teachers, and contribute to a peaceful classroom atmosphere. Less agreeable adolescents may be more forceful and less concerned about pleasing others. While they may be independent thinkers, they may need to mix aggressiveness with cooperation in order to navigate social circumstances effectively. Adolescents with high neuroticism are more likely to experience worry, stress, and mood swings. They may struggle to deal with academic pressures or social obstacles. It is critical to give stress management support and resources. Low neuroticism is linked to emotional stability. Adolescents with low neuroticism are more resilient in the face of adversity, better able to deal with stress, and may have a more positive outlook.

The primary goal of the present study was to recognise the significance and purpose of Gratitude in school-going adolescents studying in the Delhi NCR region of India. In addition, the study explores the relationship of Gratitude with

the Big Five personalities, namely openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism amongst the studied population. Based on the findings of previous studies, it has been shown that individuals who are more grateful, i.e., with high gratitude, tend to be more open (McCullough *et al.*, 2002; Wood *et al.*, 2009), conscientious (McCullough *et al.*, 2002; Wood *et al.*, 2009), extraverted (Saucier & Goldberg, 1998; McCullough *et al.*, 2002; McCullough *et al.*, 2004; Schueller, 2012), agreeable, (McCullough *et al.*, 2002; Wood *et al.*, 2009; Wood *et al.*, 2010) and less neurotic (McCullough *et al.*, 2002; Wood *et al.*, 2009).

METHODOLOGY:

Objective:

1. To study the relationship between Gratitude and personality among adolescents

Hypotheses :

1. There will be a significant positive relationship between gratitude and openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion and agreeableness
2. There will be a significant relationship between gratitude and neuroticism

Sample Population

For the present study, 300 school-going adolescent students in the age category of 12-16 years were screened from 3 different private schools in Delhi-NCR India. The sampling method utilized was purposive, and the final sample eventually comprised 150 teenage boys and 150 teenage girls. They were assessed Gratitude and Big Five personality parameters. Measuring the assessment was well-timed, given the post-pandemic climate from April to the middle of May 2023. It was a conscious effort to

select a sample population with self-interest and self-inclusion criteria. Adolescents are represented by a variety of geographical, religious, cultural, and environmental differences; in general, individual participation is contingent on availability, secrecy, interest, and proper consent to participate. All participants were fully informed about the study's purpose and were enrolled using self-selection criteria. The school board approved this study of the participating school. The research tools were mainly administered in groups of sizes varying between 10 and 35, under the supervision of the research staff.

Research Tools

Personality was assessed using the Neuroticism Extraversion Openness-Five Factor Inventory-3 (NEO-FFI-3). The NEO-FFI-3 (McCrae and Costa, 2007), a revised NEO-FFI aiming at better readability, is a settled 60-item questionnaire based on the Five-Factor Model (FFM) of personality that provides a substantial structure to the interdisciplinary approach to dealing with personality research. The items are rated on a five-point scale, with "strongly disagree = 0" to "strongly agree = 4" being the highest. Response reliability coefficients on the five

scales ranged from alpha .86 to .95. The NEO-FFI-3 assesses the Big Five personality traits: agreeableness, conscientiousness, extraversion, neuroticism, and openness. There are 60 items in all, 12 items for each dimension of the five-factor model, and adolescents were asked to rate them.

The GQ-6 is a brief self-report measure of one's disposition to express gratitude by McCullough, M. E., Emmons, R. A., & Tsang, J.-A. (2002). Participants rate six items on a scale of 1 to 7, with one being "strongly disagree" and seven being "strongly agree." In order to reduce the response bias, two items are reverse-scored. There is evidence that the GQ-6 is positively related to optimism, life satisfaction, hope, spirituality and religiousness, forgiveness, empathy, and prosocial behavior and is negatively related to depression, anxiety, materialism, and envy. The GQ-6 can be completed in less than 5 minutes, although there is no time limit.

RESULTS:

The current study throws light on the importance of the Gratitude trait and the Big 5 personalities among Indian school-aged adolescents. The results of the correlational examination are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 : Correlation examination of Gratitude with underlying Big-5 personalities for the assessed sample of the studied adolescent population (n = 300)

		Pearson's Correlation Examination				
		Openness to Experience	Conscientiousness	Extraversion	Agreeableness	Neuroticism
GRATITUDE	R	.785**	.601**	.511**	.477**	-.427**
	p-value	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	300	300	300	300	300

** Correlations are significant at p < .01 level

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The relationship established between gratitude and Big-5 personalities ensures **predictive validity**. For instance, the Pearson correlation between Gratitude and Openness to Experience was found to be positive with r coefficient = .785** highly significant as p -value $<.01$. Likewise, the Pearson correlation r coefficients were found to be positive, can be noted as Conscientiousness = .601**, Extraversion = .511**, Agreeableness = .477** all highly significant as p -value $<.01$. On the contrary, as expected the Pearson correlation between Gratitude and Neuroticism was found to be **negative** with r coefficient = -.427** highly significant as p -value $<.01$

DISCUSSION:

Gratitude has many positive effects on an adolescent's functioning. Likewise, the Big Five persona plays a significant role, and both of these psychological traits benefit adolescents emotionally, physically, and socially. The shift from childhood to adolescence to adulthood is recognised as a significant process in forming their character attributes. Understanding these characteristics can assist educators, parents, and counselors in tailoring their approaches to meet the different needs and preferences of school-age adolescents. **Individuals are unique, and a combination of these characteristics contributes to their overall personality and behavior in school and the life journey ahead.** Given that adolescence is a period of considerable change in the intellectual, physical, hormonal, and social arenas as they transit to adulthood (Arain et al., 2013). Previous studies have shown that gratitude predicts higher GPAs, life satisfaction, social integration, and absorption in adolescence (Froh et al., 2011). Gratitude was also found to be associated with lower levels of envy and despair (Froh et al., 2011) and is also connected to pro-social conduct (Froh

et al., 2009). Another study found that in early adolescence, gratitude is associated with feelings of pride, hope, inspiration, forgiveness, and enthusiasm (Froh et al., 2009). As a result, gratitude appears to be essential for adolescents to thrive. 042

The underlying principle is that practicing gratitude influences positive cognitive and mental states. Along similar lines, when the Big Five personality is enhanced. The approach often complements, with gratitude fostering a positive mindset and the development of certain personality traits promoting overall psychological well-being. To support this, increasing positive cognitive states is one way gratitude improves well-being (Alkozei et al., 2018). Regular appreciation practice, such as daily gratitude journaling, may allow for a shift toward an upbeat cognitive style. Furthermore, individuals with the positive cognitive type may interpret, attend to, and remember situations more positively (Alkozei et al., 2018). Indeed, thankfulness has been associated with a reduction in negative cognitive processes such as **intrusive rumination** (Kim & Bae, 2019; Colak & Gungör, 2021) and anxiety (Geraghty et al., 2010). Gratitude also boosts positive mental states, including optimism and motivation (Emmons & McCullough, 2003; Rey & Extremera, 2014; Huffman et al., 2016).

Constructive correlations emerge from shared characteristics that combine gratitude - the grateful disposition with individual personality qualities. Increased awareness and mindfulness may lead to a greater openness to new experiences; grateful individuals may be more receptive to experiencing and appreciating unusual events, people, or ideas, resulting in a favorable link (McCullough et al., 2002; Wood 043 ., 2009). Flexibility is the common key in terms of positive outlook and adapt-

ness. Conscientiousness entails, among other things, the proclivity to follow socially approved rules (Roberts *et al.*, 2009) and to continuously fulfill duties toward others (Eisenberg *et al.*, 2014). According to this viewpoint, we predicted conscientiousness to be positively linked with the grateful disposition since Gratitude emerges from an understanding of prosocial principles (Bartlett & DeSteno, 2006). Extraverts tend to be more sociable and enjoy interacting with others. Watkins *et al.*, 2003 discovered that those with high extraversion were warm and sensitive to reward and, hence, were more likely to respond with appreciation, i.e., a grateful disposition. Interpersonal trust, harmony-seeking, and pro-sociality are all examples of agreeableness (Brislin & Lo, 2006; Widiger, 2011). As a result, because highly agreeable people are more likely to engage in social interaction and to be more empathic and liked by others, they may also express greater thankfulness and perceive the goodness in others around them. The research work showed and predicted that neuroticism would be inversely associated with Gratitude. Some previous research work supports this assertion (McCullough *et al.*, 2004; Wood *et al.*, 2009; Roberts *et al.*, 2009). Individuals with high neuroticism frequently feel individually inadequate and insecure. Thus, they may express uncertainties when obtaining nice things and appreciation from others and, as a result, exhibit less Gratitude toward them. Gratitude has been associated with improved emotion regulation. Adolescents or adults who are more grateful may be better equipped to manage and regulate their emotions, which could contribute to lower levels of neuroticism. Individuals who regularly experience and express gratitude may have a more positive outlook on life, reducing the likelihood of neurotic tendencies. Gratitude may serve as a coping mechanism that mitigates the im-

pact of neuroticism. Individuals who are more grateful may engage in positive coping strategies, which could buffer against the negative effects associated with neurotic traits. Studies have shown that gratitude is associated with lower levels of anxiety and depression, both of which are components of neuroticism. It's important to note that the relationship between gratitude and personality traits, including neuroticism, is complex and can be influenced by various factors such as individual differences, cultural context, and life experiences. In summary, existing research suggests that gratitude is generally associated with lower levels of neuroticism, indicating a potential protective role of gratitude in promoting emotional well-being and resilience.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, cultivating a sense of gratitude can have a variety of psychological and even physical benefits. Improved mental health, higher life satisfaction, lower stress, and improved general well-being are some of the potential benefits (Emmons, 2010). Individuals (in our case, targeted adolescents) **who practice gratitude on a regular basis may be more resilient** in the face of adversity (Puspita & Ayriza, 2022) and may enjoy beneficial benefits in their relationships.

Future Implications

Interventions that foster Gratitude in school settings may help adolescents develop good personalities and improve their overall well-being. Understanding this association between Gratitude and the Big 5 may help educators, parents, counsellors, and researchers better support healthy personality development and well-being throughout the critical adolescent years.

Limitation of the Study

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It's crucial to remember that personality is complicated and that many things influence an individual's growth and conduct. The Big Five provides a framework for understanding broad personality aspects, **but it does not represent an individual's full depth and individuality, i.e., uniqueness.** Furthermore, personality **can change over time as a result of experiences, environment, and personal development.**

Ethical Clearance and Confidentiality Arrangement

All the participants were thoroughly informed about the purpose of the study and were enrolled utilizing self-deciding criteria. The participants and the counselor initiated informed consent and went over the detailed confidentiality arrangement.

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