

Religiosity and Gratitude among College Going Students

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the relationship between religiosity and gratitude among college-going students (N = 300) and evaluated potential gender disparities. Data were collected using the Religion Scale and the Gratitude Questionnaire. Independent samples t-test analysis revealed a statistically significant gender difference in religiosity ($t = 3.210$, $p = .001$), with male students scoring higher than female students. However, no significant gender difference was found for gratitude levels ($t = 1.264$, $p = .207$). Correlation matrix analysis demonstrated a moderate positive association between students' religiosity and their gratitude scores ($r = .321$, $p < .01$). Furthermore, linear regression analysis confirmed that religiosity is a highly significant predictor of gratitude ($\beta = .322$, $t = 5.851$, $p < .001$), accounting for 10.3% of the total variance. These findings indicate that while gender influences levels of religious commitment, it does not alter gratitude, highlighting religiosity as a meaningful factor in fostering a grateful disposition during the college years.

Keywords: Religiosity, Gratitude, College Students, Gender Disparities, Regression Analysis.

1. INTRODUCTION

College years are a significant developmental shift, characterized by greater academic pressure, identity discovery, and personal liberty. During this developmental stage, psychological resources that promote well-being and emotional resilience are essential. Among these resources, positive psychology has increasingly emphasized gratitude the inclination to perceive and appreciate the kindness of people and life circumstances. Concurrently, religion, defined as an organized system of ideas, practices, and devotion to a higher power, has historically served as a basic pillar for moral and psychological growth. Theologically and psychologically, religion and thankfulness are inextricably linked. Most major global religions place a high value on thankfulness, seeing life and personal attributes as heavenly blessings. This cultural and spiritual training implies that highly religious people may have a more deeply entrenched sense of thankfulness. However, empirical research offers complex perspectives, and determining how much variation in thankfulness may be directly ascribed to an individual's religion remains a critical field of psychological investigation.

1.1 Religiosity

Over the last several decades, there has been a continuous shift from negative attitudes regarding religion in the area of psychology to the discovery of more hopeful links between

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religion and the different characteristics that underpin an individual's mental health. Religion has been a topic of study in several psychological research since its inception. Religion is a powerful institution that has a considerable impact on people's social conduct and 'basic personality structures. Research on the function of religion in developing an individual's personality demonstrates the importance of religion throughout childhood, adolescence, adulthood, and old life. Religiosity refers to an individual's religious faith. As a result, the score on the religiosity test will reflect how religious that individual is. Religion has various characteristics that vary between countries, making it impossible to provide a complete definition of the term. Most major global religions, however, believe in a definite link between the human ego and some non-human entity, the holy, or the Absolute God.

Galloway provides a common and typical expression of religiosity as 'faith in a power beyond herself where he seeks to satisfy his emotional needs and gain a stable way of life, and which he expresses in acts of homage and service'. Being religious is not the same as having a religion; for example, simply belonging to a religious group does not imply that a person is religious. Similarly, it is difficult to determine whether or not a person is religious if he or she only exhibits a certain activity, such as visiting a temple or holy site. Offering pooja at a temple or other religious setting may be considered a religious act, yet one might be religious without doing so. Acts of worship vary per faith, and no single act can indicate a person's religiosity.

In psychology and sociology, religiosity is recognized as a complex, multidimensional construct rather than a single trait. Researchers categorize the types and orientations of religiosity based on an individual's underlying motivations, behaviors, and institutional connections. The primary frameworks used to classify the types of religiosities include Gordon Allport's Religious Orientations, Charles Glock's Multidimensional Model, and Vassilis Saroglou's Big Four Dimensions. Allport and Michael Ross, this framework categorizes individuals based on the reasons behind their religious involvement.

Intrinsic Religiosity: This type represents an interiorized, deeply personal commitment. Individuals with high intrinsic religiosity view their religion as an end in itself; they live their lives according to their faith's values, independent of external social rewards. In contrast to extrinsic religiosity, people with intrinsic beliefs about religiosity are fully influenced by religious preaching in their respective religions. Intrinsic religiosity was first described by Gordon Allport and his contemporaries in the 1960s, and it alludes to the importance people place on their religious customs and beliefs, which they try to consistently live by.

Extrinsic Religiosity: This type treats religion as a means to an end. Individuals use religion as a vehicle to gain social status, networking opportunities, comfort, or community protection. It is divided into Extrinsic-Social (attending for social connection) and Extrinsic-Personal (using prayer for personal safety or relief). Extrinsic religiosity encompasses the social side of religiosity, which refers to spending time with others at religious sites such as a church, mosque, or temple, discussing religious beliefs with them, and attending religious services. (Okulicz and Kozaryn, 2009). The extrinsic orientation of faith is employed to establish and sustain social relationships. (Allport and Ross, 1967). In the extrinsic religion of religiosity, an individual believes in God and turns to them in times of need, but his or her personal identity

changes dramatically as a result of religious beliefs that are transformed to match the person's personality.

Quest Religiosity: Added later by Daniel Batson, this type views religiosity as an open-ended, existential journey. Individuals acknowledge doubts, embrace complexity, and actively search for meaning without needing rigid dogmatic answers.

Many studies are interested in the favourable impacts of religion on both social and educational outcomes. Recent research has shown that some characteristics of religiosity are linked to reduced levels of depression (McCullough & Larson, 1999), subjective well-being, positive social views, and a decreased likelihood of marital disillusionment (Swank et al. 2001). Thus, Tsang and McCullough (2003) identified religiosity as a major feature in the field of positive psychology since various aspects of religion were positively connected with mental well-being and pleasant interpersonal interactions.

1.2 Gratitude

Gratitude, like many other phrases in literature, appears to have several meanings depending on the context in which it is employed. For example, it has been seen as an ethical virtue, an attitude, an emotion, a stable personality trait, a habit, and a coping reaction. Gratitude has also been considered as a stable personality characteristic, both at the state and dispositional levels. At the state level, thankfulness has been defined as a pleasant emotional response to any specific event or experience, including receiving and accepting benefits or presents from an external source. At the dispositional trait level, it refers to a person's overall predisposition to see and enjoy the pleasant aspects of life. An optimistic mindset and an overall thankful response to life's circumstances might contribute to increased subjective well-being.

Gratitude may be described "as recognition of what is valuable and significant to an individual and symbolizes a general state of thankfulness and/or appreciation." (Sansone and Sansone, 2010). This aforementioned definition goes beyond the term's relationships. connotations (i.e., the concept of receiving something from someone) and gives it a more inclusive meaning (e.g., being grateful for experiences like being alive and coming into relationship with nature). This notion is also consistent with both state and trait-level contexts.

In positive psychology, gratitude is defined as a two-step cognitive process: recognizing that one has obtained a positive outcome, and realizing that an external source (such as another person, nature, or a higher power) is responsible for this benefit. Researchers categorize and measure gratitude across multiple conceptual layers, moving from immediate emotions to stable personality traits. Robert Emmons and Michael McCullough classify gratitude into three primary levels of psychological experience:

Affective Trait (Dispositional Gratitude): A stable, long-term personality characteristic. Individuals with a strong grateful disposition have a lower threshold for recognizing benevolence and experience gratitude more frequently, intensely, and across a wider range of life events.

Mood: A prolonged emotional state that can fluctuate over days or weeks. A "grateful mood" enhances an individual's daily well-being and makes them more receptive to positive social interactions.

Emotion (State Gratitude): A temporary, acute emotional response to a specific, identifiable event or benefit received from a benefactor.

The widely used Gratitude Questionnaire (GQ-6)—which aligns with your study's methodology—evaluates dispositional gratitude based on four distinct facets (The "SPAN" architecture): Intensity: The depth of emotional appreciation felt per positive event. A highly grateful person feels profound thanks for even minor gestures.

Frequency: How often an individual experiences grateful feelings throughout a typical day.

Span: The variety of life circumstances that stimulate thankfulness (e.g., job, health, relationships, nature).

Density: The number of distinct individuals or entities a person feels grateful toward for a single positive outcome.

1.3 Religiosity and Gratitude

Prior to scientific investigation, religious and philosophical traditions recognized thankfulness as an essential component of well-being, religion, and spirituality. Recent research has found that religiosity can motivate people to feel appreciative (Emmons and Cumpler, 2000; Harpman, 2004). As a result, persons who frequently attend religious services and rituals are more likely to experience a deeper feeling of thankfulness throughout their life (Emmons and McCullough, 2003; Emmons 2005; Krause 2006).

Gratitude is also a highly valued human disposition attribute in Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Buddhist, and Hindu philosophy. Cicero (Pro Plancio) believed that "gratitude is not only the greatest of virtues, but the parent of all others." Buddha suggested that thankfulness is a fundamental characteristic of a great person. Christian devotional writers discussed the intrinsic value of appreciation and the depravity of ingratitude.

Gratitude has a negative relationship with the "negative triad" of beliefs linked with clinical depression. The trio includes "automatic, spontaneous, and seemingly uncontrollable negative thoughts" about oneself, the surroundings, and the future. Thus, by adopting a more positive outlook on regular life experiences, one can lessen the likelihood of being clinically depressed.

Gratitude is linked to higher levels of hedonic and eudaimonic well-being, as well as a lower risk of developing depression. Gratitude has been linked to increased levels of optimism, mental well-being, and general life satisfaction, according to several studies. In terms of physical health, satisfied individuals have stronger immunity, a greater predisposition for healthy activities, are more ready to seek medical attention, live a healthier lifestyle, and are physically healthier. Finally, thankfulness effects how people mentally cope with and address everyday life's challenges and difficulties. Grateful persons are more likely to actively deal with and resolve difficulties, as opposed to exhibiting avoidant conduct.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Tsang et al. (2012) did a study to investigate the link between religion and appreciation. The findings revealed that intrinsic religion was positively related with appreciation.

Holmes and Lochman (2012) conducted the following study to investigate the influence of parental and preadolescent religion on aggressiveness levels in a sample of 157 African American preadolescents. The findings revealed that greater levels of parental and intrinsic religiosity predicted less violence among preadolescents.

Kraus et al. (2015) planned the following study to investigate the relationship between religiosity and other aspects of being religious with a general sense of gratitude. The findings revealed that religious efficacy and membership in a religious peer group strongly impacted an individual's inclination to be appreciative.

Schnabel (2015) conducted the following experiment to discover if women are intrinsically more religious than men. The study discovered that Christian women had much higher levels of religiosity than males, but the findings were not applicable to non-Christian women.

Björkqvist (2018) performed the following studies to investigate the role of gender variations in aggressiveness. The results showed that both genders were equally vocally confrontational, with women using more indirect forms of aggression and males displaying physically aggressive conduct.

Jans-Beken, L. (2021) demonstrates mature thankfulness as a means of dealing with the challenges and boundaries of coronavirus sickness 2019. This narrative, non-systematic review will draw on research conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic as well as more general literature on the qualities of mature thankfulness that are associated with excellent mental health. According to the literature, confronting our existential fragility during a pandemic is both a crisis and a chance to see our life in a new light. Mature thankfulness, as advocated in this perspective, can help us cope with the risks and boundaries that have become a part of our life as a result of the COVID-19 epidemic.

Daulay, N., et al., (2022) studied new students in the academic years 2020/2021 and 2021/2022 (N = 2048). Data was gathered using surveys that distributed online questionnaires such as the Appreciation Questionnaire-6, the Short Muslim Belief and Practice Scale, and the WEMWBS Scale. The study has empirical implications in the form of a notion that new students' professional accomplishment and well-being orientation would confront a variety of challenges, but may be aided by adding self-protective variables such as well-being, religion, and thankfulness.

Chui, R. C. F. (2023) studies the mediating function of thankfulness and hope in the effects of religion on well-being. A cross-sectional survey was conducted to 191 Chinese college students aged 18–30 in Hong Kong. The study indicated that religion was directly connected to psychological well-being and indirectly correlated with it through appreciation and hope. The results of this study suggested that growing religiosity might promote appreciation and optimism and is helpful to Chinese youth's psychological well-being. Social Service providers

should explore adding thankfulness, hope and religion into programs to increase youth well-being.

Fuertes, A. (2024) shows how thankfulness, which is also conceived and voiced by college students as spirituality, promotes their well-being. Their paper indicates that there is a dynamic relationship between thankfulness and spirituality in terms of student well-being. The essay suggests that educational institutions and teachers of higher education give students with classroom and public venues to include talks about thankfulness, belief, and well-being into their academic studies, since this enriches students' overall learning experience.

Shaukat, M., et al. (2025) investigates the role of religiosity and gratitude in charitable conduct among young adults. Results demonstrated a strong positive link between religiosity and both thankfulness and altruism, although no significant relationship was detected between gratitude and altruism. Regression study found that religion strongly predicted altruistic conduct, although appreciation did not. Gender differences were identified solely in thankfulness, with females scoring higher than males. These findings reinforce the relevance of religion in fostering altruism among young adults, while stressing thankfulness as a unique psychological category.

Pohan, R. A., et al., (2025) investigate the dynamics of emotional expression among freshman students at a public university in Indonesia, focusing on the function of thankfulness in assisting them to overcome obstacles and sustain academic vigor. This study, which used qualitative approaches such as open-ended questionnaires and in-depth interviews, included 20 freshmen from one public institution. The findings revealed that the majority of students expressed thanks to God as their primary expression, with a minority also valuing the importance of social support and personal success. The study also found that, despite doubts, concerns, and disappointments, thankfulness remains a fundamental and concluding feeling. Gratitude not only helps pupils overcome obstacles, but it also strengthens their resilience and motivation.

Marshall, D. J., et al., (2026) investigate how college students in the United States convey their faith and identities through content, physical, and physical practice; how they access current religious and sacred areas on campus; and what other kinds of sacred spaces students discover or create for themselves. Their findings point to a shift toward personalized spiritual discovery, contradicting traditional concepts of holy space. Most importantly, these findings highlight students' creative agency in creating spiritual landscapes that represent their flexible and diverse spiritual identities.

Hwang, Y., et al. (2026) studied the efficacy of a program designed to promote pleasant connections across diverse religious groups as well as a thorough grasp of culturally sensitive teaching. Student reviews, two polls before and after the program, and in-depth interviews all proved that the American students profited from their experiences. They learnt about different cultural practices and the religion of Islam, identified parallels between the US and Turkish civilizations, appreciated both, and became friends. Additionally, they demonstrated a genuine grasp of culturally responsive learning and teaching. According to the study, the training increased teacher candidates' cultural sensitivity, including religious diversity, as well as their respect for culturally responsive learning and teaching.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Objective of the study

The main aim of the study is to assess the amount of religiosity, propensity to be grateful among male and female college going students.

3.2 Hypothesis

H1: Male and female college going students will exhibit significantly different levels of religion and gratitude.

H2: There will be a strong correlation between religion and gratitude among male and female college going students.

H3: Religion will have a major influence on gratitude among both male and female college going students.

3.3 Methodology

A sample of 300 respondents was chosen for the current study, and they were separated into two groups of 150, one with female college going students and the other with male college going students. The data was gathered from college going students in UP NCR. The subjects were made comfortable, and rapport was established with them. The goal and objective of the investigation were discussed. The data was acquired using three questionnaires: the Religiosity scale and the GQ-6 Scale. Before completing out the questionnaire, the individuals received all of the necessary instructions. All doubts and questions were answered upfront. With the use of informed consent, the subject's assent to participate in the study was obtained while maintaining confidentiality. The findings were generated and examined manually. The data was analyzed using IBM SPSS 29.1v (statistical software for social sciences) to determine significant and efficient correlations between the three variables. The statistical methods utilized were independent samples t-test, correlation, and linear regression.

4. DATA ANALYSIS

Table 1: ANOVA Results

Variable	Gender	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	t-value	p-value	Significance
Religiosity	Males	150	123.95	18.094	3.210	0.001	Significant ($p < 0.01$)
	Females	150	117.45	16.965			
Gratitude	Males	150	30.95	5.985	1.264	0.207	Not Significant ($p > 0.05$)
	Females	150	30.17	4.615			

Religiosity Gender Difference: The ANOVA results show that "there is a highly statistically significant difference ($p = 0.001$).\" Male college students scored significantly higher in religiosity than female college students in this specific sample.

Gratitude Gender Difference: The t-value of 1.264 yields a p-value of 0.207, which confirms

there is no significant difference in gratitude levels between male and female college students.

Schnabel (2015) conducted a theoretical review on the relationship between gender disparities and religion. The study found that Christian women had much greater levels of religiosity than men, but the findings did not hold true for non-Christian women. The above-mentioned research demonstrates gender differences in religiosity levels by highlighting that, while women tend to be more religious than men due to certain innate biological factors, women from other cultures, such as Christianity, do not always achieve the highest scores on all measures of religiosity, supporting the study's findings.

Table 2: Correlation matrix

Variables	1. Religiosity	2. Gratitude
1. Religiosity	—	
2. Gratitude	0.322**	—

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

The correlation matrix analysis reveals a positive and statistically significant relationship between religiosity and gratitude among college-going students ($r = 0.322$, $p < .01$). According to standard psychological research guidelines, this represents a moderate positive correlation. This indicates that as a student's level of religiosity increases, their dispositional gratitude levels tend to rise significantly as well.

Table 3: linear regression analysis

Predictor	B	Std. Error	beta	t	p-value	Significance
Religiosity	0.095	0.016	0.322	5.851**	< .001	Highly Significant

* *. Significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Note: Model $(R^2 = .103)$ (Religiosity explains 10.3% of the variance in Gratitude).

A simple linear regression analysis was conducted to determine if religiosity significantly predicts gratitude levels among college students. The results indicated that religiosity is a highly significant predictor of gratitude ($\beta = .321$, $t = 5.851$, $p < .001$). The overall model explained 10.3% of the total variance in gratitude scores ($R^2 = .103$), which directly confirms that higher religiosity significantly accounts for enhanced gratitude levels in this cohort.

CONCLUSION

The empirical findings of this study offer meaningful insights into the psychological dynamics of religiosity and gratitude among college-going students ($N = 300$). By synthesizing the t-test, correlation, and regression analyses, the following conclusions are drawn:

- **Gender Disparities in Religiosity:** A statistically significant difference exists between male and female college students regarding religiosity ($t = 3.210$, $p = .001$). In this specific cohort, male students exhibit higher levels of religiosity than their female counterparts.

- Gender Equality in Gratitude: No significant gender disparities exist regarding dispositional gratitude ($t = 1.264$, $p = .207$). Male and female college students demonstrate statistically equivalent levels of thankful orientations.
- Positive Interconnection: A moderate, statistically significant positive correlation ($r = .321$, $p < .01$) exists between religiosity and gratitude. This indicates that a stronger religious commitment is consistently paired with a higher disposition for gratitude.
- Predictive Capability: Religiosity serves as a highly robust predictor of gratitude levels among college-going individuals ($t = 5.851$, $\beta = .321$, $p < .001$). The construct accountably explains 10.3% of the overall variance in students' gratitude scores.

In summary, while gender plays a role in determining levels of religious commitment within this sample, it does not influence gratitude. Ultimately, religiosity stands as a vital socio-spiritual asset that meaningfully fosters and predicts a grateful disposition during the formative college years.

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