

## Gratitude, Social Support and Academic Performance: Exploring the Relationships Between Indicators' High School Students

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**Abstract:** The purpose of study was to determine the relationship between gratitude with social support and academic performance of high school students. A quantitative method was used in this study. The sample population comprised 309 subjects, of which 161 were male and 148 were female. McCullough's gratitude questionnaire, social support scale of Maleki and Elliot and McCoach and Siegle's questionnaire of student's performance were used. Cronbach's alpha coefficient obtained in gratitude is 0.79, social support 0.87 and academic performance 0.81. The results obtained indicated that the better students' academic performance increased student's gratitude. The higher the social support of students will also increase his/her gratitude. There is a positive and significant relationship between gratitude and social support and academic performance in terms of student's gender.

**Key words:** Gratitude, academic performance, social support, high school student, relationship

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### INTRODUCTION

Education of children is an important issue for the family and the school. Various traits for proper upbringing of children should be nurtured from childhood. Some of these traits and characteristics are: gratitude, satisfaction, mental health and academic achievement (Emmons and McCullough, 2003). Mental satisfaction is a state of mental health and gratitude and the feeling that one can cope with society and the personal success and is a pleasure (Niknam and Hejazi, 2006). The term gratitude is derived from the Latin word meaning thankful, gratia and grace, mercy, kindness, graciousness and gratefulness. All derivative of the Latin word are: kindness, generosity and forgiveness granted (gifts) the beauty of giving and receiving or giving something without expecting to receive (Emmons and McCullough, 2003).

Feeling appreciated is acted as a moral barometer. It draws attention to the benefits daily. More attention to help others lead to greater life satisfaction and gratitude makes people to the positive aspects of their social environment and thus take longer for them to bring life satisfaction (Agha, 2010). Gratitude is toward the other person as can be focused on impersonal or inhuman resources (God, animals and universe). Gratitude can be "a sense of gratitude and the joy of receiving a gift (grace) (grace) can be a real gift (tangible and visible) on behalf of another person or from the beauty and natural resources (Emmons and McCullough, 2003).

Although, much time has not passed since the start of the study about gratitude, empirical evidence suggests that gratitude construct is associated with psychological positive outcomes. Studies have shown that high levels of gratitude is associated to spirituality, inner religious orientation, optimism, life satisfaction (Wood *et al.*, 2008). Emotional tribute is realized is an external factor, this excitement comes in the wake of the interest of the rich, valuable and with the altruistic intention is interpreted. From the perspective of evolutionary or cultural life, gratitude helps people to form and maintain relationships (Agha *et al.*, 2010). Appreciate of moral traits, social interactions and behaviors are acceptable and good manners loving others, not only has a very important role in the health and vitality of their mental but also increases gratitude and encouragement, motivation, repetition, frequency and double their good and desirable behavior and social life and human society. In addition, self-love and gratitude for the good of others have significant effect on psycho-educational in character and behavior grateful. The one who always valued the righteous behavior, it recognizes itself ahead of others trying to be righteous. (Afrooz, 1997)

Studies have shown that gratitude is related to social life of children and adults. But a little of studies (Spangler, 2010; Froh *et al.*, 2011) focused solely on the issue of social support. small number of studies addressed directly the relationship between gratitude and social support, especially in adolescents measured and the foundations

of this new and innovative actions in the field of study is considered. Gratitude empowers social protection directly and protects them from stress and depression. Gratitude is associated with positive emotions and increase social motivation (Park and Peterson, 2006; Park, 2009). Practice gratitude leads to the reduction of negative affect and increase positive mood. (Eventually, the personality factors, there is no relationship between neuroticism and gratitude and has the strongest relationship with acceptance (Agha *et al.*, 2011).

Gratitude and satisfaction is influenced by internal factors such as independence, individual psychological, personal development and are influenced by factors such as positive relationships with others between individual and social factors such as a person's location (Khosrotash *et al.*, 2010). Gratitude of social support with social satisfaction, satisfaction and a positive feeling of social life lead to feeling of continuity and increase a person's social activity and social cohesion. The person of greater social satisfaction this sense of satisfaction in other areas of life shows a good impression (Zaki, 2005). He also implies that behavioral scientists pay attention to effect of behavioral patterns and personality on academic success and variables such as perception, intelligence, personality, anxiety, depression, motivation, self-esteem, etc and are associated with academic success. Education experts were interested to the effect of learning environment and educational patterns and management style, behaviors of teachers, organizational climate, organizational culture, methods and practices of teaching and learning of reading and academic success.

There is very little research into the relationship between gratitude and academic performance in children and adolescents. Only research of Park and Peterson (2006) and Froh *et al.* (2011) examined the relationship between gratitude and academic achievement and there is high similarity between their findings which shows the trend thanks is a small but reliable predictor of academic success (Hasemeyer, 2013). On the other hand, deficiency of mental and social development stimuli is the important factors of academic failure in children and adolescents. A significant percentage of students who are often forced to seriously fall behind in school are enrolled in special schools and mental retardation (Biaban, 2005).

According to what was said, gratitude has positive effects on the mind of the individual and social performance as well as academic performance, so for the proper functioning of a student must be necessary support to operate. So if the right support and the right training can be expected to function properly. Accordingly, given the importance of academic performance and the role it plays in determining fate and

taking into account the fact that social support also plays a role in adolescent education and gratitude has a direct relationship, therefore, due to the gratitude of the relationship between social support and academic performance of high importance and need for research in this area indicates, therefore, in this study, the relationship between gratitude and mental health, academic performance and social support in high school students are investigated.

**Gratitude in childhood and adolescence:** One of the things that researchers have been interested in the debate is when we can experience the gratitude properly. One of the prerequisites for growth that we experienced gratitude is theory of mind. Theory of mind is to have a basic understanding that people have different views and do certain things according to their faith. In other words, for a person to experience a sense of appreciation in the form of voluntary public should understand that their beliefs and wishes them the incentive to do different things this issue is the theory of mind and is occurred usually between three and four years. However, researchers have concluded that only a small number of children aged seven years after taking gift to show gratitude. This suggests that the ability to appreciate required more than the theory of mind. Piaget (1954) hypothesis that says gratitude in children occur when they find satisfaction and capacity to remember to keep the experience over time.

Baumgarten (1938) in their empirical research to find a way to appreciate the rise in children concluded that children show four ways to appreciate sense. Language gratitude expressed gratitude with the words "thank you". Second type of gratitude is objective appreciated when seen in children who received wants something in return for what they give. Third type gratitude seen in children is link appreciation. This kind of gratitude is the tendency of children to create a spiritual relationship between herself and the donor, where a child is owed to a person who gave gift, so gave an abstract gift to the donor. Eventual gratitude is another way in which the child will eventually to do "reciprocity with this show that will come in handy and help" (Hasemeyer, 2013).

**Psychological and social effects of gratitude and gratitude:** All human beings are instinctively encouragement, love, loving and angry nation. Any verification and encouraging positive characteristics and desired behaviors of others, including children and adolescents, adults and the elderly, in good satisfy the

needs of a range, emotional health and development of their personality. Certainly those blessings, love and the good of their kind behavior, to the right is the gratitude of others as well as those desired behaviors and the good of others to put deserve praise, most gratitude behavior made it their job are not unaware of the bounties unbounded divine moment and always thank god believers to avoid sin and qualification characteristics rather than their pious and sincere.

Therefore, if children learn well that there will always be deep and pleasant speech and behavior and action worthy of the effort, love and grace, gratitude and gratitude to parents and their teachers, the love and respect they always enhances, abundance behaviors it is desirable striking, submission and follow adult patterns of children from their parents and educators and replication is more, finally, psychosocial and cultural and immunities is increasing (Afrooz, 1997).

**Theories related to the gratitude:** Adam Smith's theory as "moral ideas" presented in gratitude, he was deeply influenced by christian writers and the catholic community and Smith believed that human emotions to guiding people to moral judgment and moral behavior of people. Smith, praised as the most basic social emotions and one of the primary motivating behaviors toward the good of the person concerned is not raised (Farah, 2012).

Several theories in the 20th century have extended the basic theory of Smith. Simmle in 1950 and Gouldner in 1960 have been conceptualized both appreciated as an agent to help people maintain their mutual commitments. They suggest that the appreciation as a "moral memory of mankind". Since the official social structures, including law and social contract to regulate and guarantee the protection of all types of interpersonal relationships is inadequate, according to him; people are socialized to appreciate it as a reminder of the obligations in relations experience. They also said that the gratitude is the moral norm that connects people to the community as a whole. To a large extent influenced by Simmle states that the gratitude of the force that causes social relations orientation to maintain social benefits.

Heider in 1958 has connected the cognitive processes interact with social behavior, in line with this general theory stated that people feeling appreciated when they receive the benefit of the person who is going to benefit. Other theories of cognitive-emotional as Weiner's theory in 1985 suggest that emotions usually are of two types: Dependent on the outcome, Dependent to

Attribution. Emotions such as anger and happiness are almost exclusively derived from the potential consequences of their experience. When people experience positive outcomes, they feel happy in time to experience adverse consequences feeling. On the other hand, emotions dependent to the documents, especially the assignment of result patterns that causes people favorable and unfavorable conditions that allow them to face. Weiner believes that gratitude is an emotion dependent Attribution of the person or of the favorable conditions. To actions (actions) or attempts by anyone other than a person's temperament (McCullough *et al.*, 2001).

Numerous sense of gratitude, mentioned above, can be in the form of a unified theory of "gratitude as a moral emotion". Referring to appreciate as a moral emotion this does not mean that emotions and protests to their own moral gratitude but the gratitude is generally risen and encouraging ethical behavior and ethical behavior behavior that is motivated by internal regardless of other criteria (Farah, 2012). According to new research in the study of gratitude there are two theories. First theory introduced appreciates as a moral excitement with three vital functions (McCullough *et al.*, 2001). Gratitude as an ethical index, to beneficiary signs that he has given a good person. Gratitude as a moral motivation creates willingness and desire to do the beneficiary of social benefits, in the righteous and the right people. Finally, appreciated is a moral booster that increases the likelihood that in the future no one open on the right of the beneficiary to show socially beneficial behavior. According to this conceptualization, to experience gratitude, to perform a beneficial social behavior and also to continue with such ethical behavior (continuing treatment) is encouraged and the interpersonal destructive behaviors and avoids harming others (Farah, 2012).

The second theory of Fredrickson is the theory and creation of positive emotions. Negative emotions lead to limiting the range of positive behavioral cause short-sightedness, although positive emotions lead to desires, behavior, particularly beyond the physical behavior. Fredrickson theory suggests that positive emotions they created an extensive collection of thought-action that eventually causes of lasting physical, intellectual and social being. Several researchers and theorists like Lazarus and Lazarus (1994) that recognition is typically benefit from a positive emotional capacity and a relatively favorable excitement and fun and is activating. Walker and Pitts research has shown that appreciates is

related to a good emotional state and positive emotions such as satisfaction for joy, pride and hope (McCullough *et al.*, 2002).

#### Research questions:

- Is there any correlation between gratitude and academic performance of high school students?
- Is there any correlation between gratitude and social support of high school students?
- Is there any correlation between academic performance and social support at high school students by gender?

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

A quantitative method was used in this study. Target population consisted of all high school students in Zahedan in 2014-2015 which is 46003 students which uses a sampling table Krejcie and Morgan against 309 persons were selected for the sample. Also in this study, the multi-stage stratified random sampling method is simple. Details of the sample are shown in Table 1.

The following questionnaire was used for data collection: Gratitude questionnaire of McCullough *et al.* (2002): questionnaire has 5 items based on the five point Likert each from very low = 1 to very high = 5. Social support scale of Maleki and Elliot. This questionnaire has 36 items and has three sub components of parents, teachers and classmates. Each subcomponent has 12 questions. The questionnaire is based on five point Likert scale from very low = 1 to very high = 5. Assessment questionnaire student performance of McCoach and Siegle: the questionnaire has 18 items (low = 1) to very high = 5 and measures the student's academic status. Cronbach's alpha test was used to

Table 1: Features of the sample society (N = 309)

Variable	Frequency	Percent
<b>Gender</b>		
Boy	148	47.9
Girl	161	52.1
<b>Age</b>		
12-13	122	39.5
14-15	121	39.2
16-17	66	21.4
<b>Grade</b>		
7	84	27.2
8	64	20.7
9	67	21.7
10	41	13.3
11	53	17.2

Table 2: Reliability of the questionnaires

Questionnaires	Number of items	$\alpha$
Gratitude	5	0.79
Social support	36	0.87
Academic performance	18	0.81

items based on the five point Likert each from very low = 1 to very high = 5. Table 2 shows the reliability coefficient alpha questionnaire

Table 2 shows the gratitude and protection of life. In this study, to analyze the data, descriptive and inferential statistical methods used in descriptive statistics measures of dispersion such as variance and standard deviation and in correlation coefficient and independent t-test statistics were used.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Is there any correlation between gratitude and academic performance of high school students? Findings of this study based on Table 3 shows positive relationship between academic performance and gratitude at confidence level of 0.99. Is there any correlation between gratitude and social support at high school students?

Findings above table shows that the gratitude and all sorts of styles, social support and there is a positive correlation. This significant support for teachers is equal to  $r = 0.172$ . Also this component for protection of classmates is  $r = 0.183$ . The correlation value between gratitude and protection to the parents was  $r = 0.375$  and in general, a good correlation was observed between the gratitude and social support for students ( $R = 346$ ).

Is there any correlation between academic performance and social support and gratitude at high school students by gender?

$$df = 9 \quad df = 6 \quad df = 9.6$$

- The 6 cells (50.0%) have expected count <5. The minimum expected count is .45.5 cells (41.7%) have expected count <5. The minimum expected count is 0.65
- The 8 cells (50.0%) have expected count <5. The minimum expected count is .08. 5 cells (41.7%) have expected count >5. The minimum expected count is 0.75

The findings of the study, according to Table 5 shows relationship between gratitude and social support at ( $p < 0.05$ ) in boy and relationship between academic performance and 3 gratitude is at the level of ( $p < 0.01$ ) in girls.

Table 3: Correlation between gratitude and academic performance of high school students (N = 309)

Variable	Academic performance	
	Sig.	r
Gratitude	0.210	0.001

Table 4: Correlation between social support and social support styles of high school students (N = 309)

Variable	Parents protection	Teachers protection	Peers protection	Total protection
<b>Gratitude</b>				
r	0.375	0.172	0.183	0.346
Sig.	0.001	0.002	0.001	0.001

Table 5: Relationship between academic performance and gratitude and social support in terms of gender (N = 309)

Variable	G.	N	r	Social suport	Academic performance
Gratitude	Boy	148	$p\chi^2$	17.168	10.981
			Sig.	0.009	0.277
	Girl	161	$p\chi^2$	22.847	14.825
			Sig.	0.001	0.022

## CONCLUSION

In relation to the first question of "whether the gratitude and academic performance of high school students is correlated?" The results show direct and low relationship between these two variables. Better academic performance increases gratitude. The results of the study results and Park and Patterson (2006) in a sample of 250 people from the fifth and eighth grade showed that successful gratitude predicts scores the end of the year student. Emmons and Forou research showed that in a sample of 1035 people divided students by age, sex, racial, financial condition and education, gratitude can predict GPA's report.

In relation to the second question, "Is there any correlation between gratitude and social support at high school students?" The results show direct and modest relationship between these two variables. High social support increases gratitude in students. The results of this research study to examine the relationship gratitude with Kadkhoda Zadeh as spiritual health, social support, public health and stress in adolescent girls Shahin Shahr, that showed gratitude for the spiritual health, including health, religious and existential dimensions of social support, including protection from family, friends and others, public health, including physical functioning, anxiety, social dysfunction and depression are positive and significant relationship with compliance.

Also results of this research study Wood *et al.* (2007) showed that gratitude is correlated by searching for emotional and instrumental social support, positive interpretation, active coping and planning and negative relationship with self-blame, drug use, denial and fault behavior. Spangler (2010) found a strong correlation between social supports and appreciate.

In relation to the third research question, "Is there any relationship between gratitude and academic performance and social support high school students by gender?" The results showed positive significant relationship between social support and gratitude and academic performance according to (control) the gender variable.

The results of this research with the research results Hasemeyer (2013) that gratitude with respect to age, gender, SES, race predicts education of the individual and materialism and showed gratitude towards materialism better predict the psycho-social health, it is in one direction. Also Farah (2012) also evaluated and compared the relationship between appreciate and communitarian behaviors and personality traits in male and female students. He showed that among male and female students were different in the gratitude and respect to personality traits.

In summary, the results of the study on the population currently stated as follows: The better students' academic performance increased students' gratitude. The higher the social support of students will also increase his/her gratitude. There is a positive and significant relationship between gratitude and social support and academic performance in terms of students' gender.

According to the results of the first research question between gratitude and academic performance of high school students there is recommended:

- Dear teachers with their behavior have appreciated their students for their educational model
- Principals at the school the morning of laborers thank schools

According to the results of the second question that the social appreciate and support high school students there is recommended:

- For better education of children and students, families need to teach appropriate social behavior and dealing with others to teach their children
- In the event of inappropriate behavior of children, families and seek counseling

According to the results of the third research question that the gratitude of the academic performance and social support high school students by gender is recommended:

- Families aware of the child's gender and educational practices.
- Provide honorable different schools according to students mental provide appropriate advice

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