

Gratitude And Psychological Well-Being Among Adolescent

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Abstract. This study examined the relationship between gratitude and psychological well-being among middle adolescents in Malang City. A quantitative survey design was used, involving 400 adolescents aged 15–18 years selected through snowball sampling. Data were collected using the Gratitude Scale ($\alpha = .952$) and the Psychological Well-Being Scale ($\alpha = .983$), then analyzed with simple linear regression. The results showed a significant positive relationship between gratitude and psychological well-being ($\beta = .351$; $t = 7.47$; $p < .001$), with gratitude accounting for 12.3% of the variance in psychological well-being ($R^2 = .123$). Adolescents with higher gratitude tended to report better psychological well-being, although most participants scored low on gratitude (73.1%) while nearly half reported high psychological well-being (49.3%). These findings suggest that gratitude is one of several factors linked to adolescents' psychological well-being and may be considered in promotive and preventive efforts, such as counseling services, self-development programs, and family or school support, to strengthen adolescents' psychological well-being.

Keywords: gratitude; psychological well-being; middle adolescents

1. Introduction

Adolescents undergo significant development. Santrock (2018) notes that the period of adolescent growth and development spans the ages of 14 to 18. During this time, adolescents experience various changes, including physical or biological shifts—such as increases in height, the development of the Adam's apple in males, and the onset of puberty in both males and females—as well as psychological changes, such as learning to be more independent and self-confident, making autonomous decisions, adapting to change, and exploring personal identity. Socio-emotional changes involving family, friends, and their environment also occur (UNICEF, 2024).

The World Health Organization (2025) further explains that adolescents experience mental health issues such as depression and anxiety, as well as self-harm and rising rates of suicidal ideation among adolescents in Indonesia (World Health Organization, 2024). The Lancet Psychiatry (2024) emphasizes that prolonged academic pressure on adolescents can diminish psychological well-being while increasing the risk of various mental health problems.

Malang City, as a major educational hub with a substantial adolescent population, is not immune to these issues. Trimariya et al. (2023) found that the psychological well-being of adolescents in the Malang area falls into the moderate category, while Azzahra and Alrefi (2025) demonstrated a link between academic stress and low psychological well-being. Wibowo et al. (2025) also reported that unhealthy social relationships exacerbate adolescents' psychological conditions.

A preliminary study conducted by the researchers in April 2026—involving interviews with teachers and several mid-adolescents in Malang City—reinforces this picture: common complaints included unstable learning motivation, anxiety stemming from social comparisons on social media, and difficulties managing academic pressure, all of which hinder various aspects of psychological well-being, ranging from environmental mastery and self-acceptance to social relationships. Psychological well-being is understood as a state in which an individual is able to accept themselves, maintain positive relationships with others, exercise autonomy in decision-making, master their environment, possess a clear sense of life purpose, and continuously develop their potential (Ryff, 1989, in Purnama et al., 2022). This state is influenced by both internal factors—such as personality and how an individual interprets their life—and external factors, such as social support and the school environment (Trimariya et al., 2023).

One internal factor that has been widely studied in recent years is gratitude. Emmons and McCullough (2003) define gratitude as an individual's tendency to recognize, appreciate, and respond

positively to the kindness they receive. Individuals with high levels of gratitude tend to view their life experiences more positively and are better able to adapt to stress (Watkins, 2014)—a pattern consistently confirmed by recent research (Jans-Beken, 2021; Aldi et al., 2024). Numerous studies support the link between gratitude and improved psychological well-being: Manurung and Aritonang (2023) found a positive relationship between gratitude and psychological well-being in late adolescents, while Aldi et al. (2024) demonstrated that gratitude contributes positively to enhancing the psychological well-being of adolescents. Jans-Beken (2021) further explains that gratitude serves as a coping strategy that helps individuals navigate stressful situations.

Based on this background, gratitude is hypothesized to be a factor associated with the psychological well-being of middle adolescents; however, the relationship between the two within the specific context of middle adolescents in Malang City has not yet been extensively studied empirically. This study aims to examine the relationship between gratitude and psychological well-being among mid-adolescents aged 15–18 in Malang City, based on the hypothesis that higher levels of gratitude are associated with higher levels of psychological well-being.

2. Method

This study employs a quantitative approach using a survey design to examine the relationship between gratitude and psychological well-being among middle adolescents (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The survey design was chosen because it can efficiently reach a large number of respondents while also providing a picture of the research variables within the target population (Sugiyono, 2019).

Gratitude was measured using a scale adapted by Ramadhonis (2022) based on four aspects—intensity, frequency, span, and density—comprising 16 items with a reliability coefficient of 0.82 in the adaptation study. Psychological well-being was measured using a 48-item Indonesian-adapted scale as described by Rahayu (2025), which assesses the six dimensions of psychological well-being proposed by Ryff (1989, cited in Purnama et al., 2022): self-acceptance, positive relations with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth. Both scales utilized a four-point Likert model without a neutral option, with scoring ranging from 1 to 4 depending on the nature of the item (favorable or unfavorable). The instruments were distributed online via Google Forms.

The data were analyzed using SPSS version 26. Before hypothesis testing, a normality test was conducted using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov method and a linearity test to ensure that the regression model met the basic assumptions. Hypothesis testing was performed using simple linear regression analysis to determine the relationship between gratitude and psychological well-being (Sugiyono, 2013). This study was conducted in three stages. During the preparation stage, the researcher developed the instruments based on the theory and the variables under study, and prepared the informed consent form and the means for distributing the questionnaire. Respondents were selected by first identifying several initial respondents who met the criteria; these respondents then forwarded the questionnaire link to other adolescents who also met the criteria until the required sample size was reached. During the implementation stage, respondents willing to participate first signed the informed consent form as a form of voluntary agreement, then provided demographic data (age, gender, and place of residence) before completing the gratitude and psychological well-being scales. During the analysis stage, the collected data was downloaded and coded using Microsoft Excel before being further processed using SPSS version 26, as described in the Data Analysis section.

3. Results and Discussion

This study involved 400 middle school students in Malang City who met the study criteria. The characteristics of the respondents were examined based on gender and age. Most respondents were female (65.50%), with the largest age group being 17 years old (36.75%). Descriptively, the majority of respondents had a high level of psychological well-being (49.3%), while the level of gratitude among most respondents was in the low category (73.1%). This pattern indicates that although the respondents do not yet feel a deep sense of gratitude, most adolescents are still able to maintain a relatively good psychological state. Prior to hypothesis testing, the data were first tested using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality test and a linearity test. The results of the normality test indicated that the regression model residuals were normally distributed ($p > 0.05$), while the results of the linearity test indicated that the relationship between gratitude and psychological well-being was linear ($F = 1.047$; $p = 0.397$). These two results indicate that the data meet the requirements for analysis using simple linear regression.

A beta coefficient of 0.351 with $t = 7.470$ and $p < 0.001$ indicates that gratitude is positively and significantly associated with psychological well-being, thus supporting the research hypothesis. The higher the level of gratitude among adolescents, the higher their psychological well-being, and vice versa. The R^2 value of 0.123 indicates that gratitude accounts for 12.3% of the variation in psychological well-being, while the remaining 87.7% is explained by other factors outside the scope of this study. These findings are consistent with the study by Manalo et al. (2024), which identified gratitude as a significant predictor of

psychological well-being among high school students, as well as the studies by Aldi et al. (2024) and Manurung and Aritonang (2023), which also found a positive relationship between the two variables among adolescents. Adolescents with high levels of gratitude tend to be better able to appreciate the positive aspects of their lives, accept support from their social environment, and view various challenges in a more adaptive manner (Watkins, 2014), which ultimately supports their ability to accept themselves, form positive relationships, and better cope with developmental demands. Interestingly, although the majority of respondents fell into the low gratitude category, nearly half of them still reported high psychological well-being. This finding underscores that gratitude is not the sole factor determining adolescents' psychological well-being. A number of other factors, such as social support, self-compassion, religiosity, and family circumstances, also play a role in shaping adolescents' psychological well-being (Rahama & Izzati, 2021; Fauziah & Rofiqoh, 2023; Prihartini et al., 2023). In practical terms, these findings suggest that fostering gratitude can serve as a promotive and preventive measure to support adolescents' mental health—for example, through self-reflection programs or gratitude journals—although this should be balanced with efforts to strengthen other factors that contribute to psychological well-being. This study employed a cross-sectional survey design using self-report instruments; therefore, it cannot definitively establish causal relationships among the variables. Future research is recommended to use a mixed-methods approach, include additional relevant variables, and involve a more balanced proportion of male and female respondents so that the findings can be generalized more broadly.

4. Conclusion

The results of this study indicate that there is a significant positive relationship between gratitude and psychological well-being among adolescents aged 15–18 in Malang City. The higher the level of gratitude adolescents have, the higher their psychological well-being, and vice versa. Gratitude was found to account for 12.3% of the variation in psychological well-being, making it one of the factors—though not the only one—that contributes to adolescents' psychological well-being. These findings underscore the importance of efforts to foster a sense of gratitude in adolescents—whether through the family, school, or guidance and counseling services—as a promotive and preventive strategy to support the psychological well-being of middle adolescents, without neglecting other contributing factors.

5. Authorship Contribution Statement

Muhammad Rifky Alfarez: designed the study, conducted the research activities, and performed data analysis; Lutfi Hidayati Fauziah: conceptualization, research design, and finalization.

6. Funding

This research received no funding.

7. Conflict of Interest Declaration

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest—whether financial or personal—that could influence the results, process, or interpretation of this research. All stages of the research were conducted independently and objectively, without external intervention or interests that could compromise the scientific integrity of this work.

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