

EXPLORING THE INTERPLAY OF SELF-ESTEEM, GRATITUDE, AND SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING AMONG MUSLIM UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN STATE ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY OF NORTH SUMATRA INDONESIA

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Abstract: This study examines the relationship between self-esteem, gratitude, and the subjective well-being of students at the Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training (FITK), State Islamic University of North Sumatra. Employing a quantitative research design, the study utilizes both simple and multiple correlation analyses. The results indicate a significant correlation between self-esteem and subjective well-being ($r = 0.878$), as well as between gratitude and subjective well-being ($r = 0.899$), demonstrating strong associations in both cases. Furthermore, the multiple correlation analysis yields a combined correlation coefficient (R) of 0.911, suggesting that self-esteem and gratitude jointly account for 91.1% of the variance in students' subjective well-being. These findings indicate that both factors contribute substantially to enhancing students' overall psychological well-being. Consequently, programs designed to foster self-esteem and gratitude may have a positive impact on students' mental health and emotional resilience.

Keywords: Gratitude, Self-esteem, subjective well being

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Introduction

Final-year students are completing their thesis as a requirement for graduation, so they must complete this academic task to obtain their degree.¹ They are expected to demonstrate maturity in their thinking and actions, as the higher the level of education, the greater the pressure they face in various aspects of life.² Additionally, final-year students are also expected to be able to independently tackle the challenges of completing their thesis and engage in self-directed learning. Therefore, their experiences are not always the same as those of their peers.³

Ideally, final-year students are expected to complete their theses diligently without viewing them as frightening or psychologically stressful. However, in reality, many final-year students view their thesis as a threat and perceive it as an unpleasant event.⁴ With these various pressures and demands, final-year students often feel dissatisfied with their lives and frequently experience negative emotions, indicating that their subjective well-being is low, or in psychological terms, their subjective well-being is low.⁵

The primary purpose of human life is undoubtedly to achieve happiness. However, the methods used to achieve it often make people feel they must resort to any means necessary to attain happiness. Feelings of happiness and sadness are natural parts of human life. However, if one can direct these feelings toward positive outcomes, humans can face all problems with a positive mindset.⁶

Many associate happiness with emotional feelings and how someone views the world and themselves. Some experts suggest that happiness should not be the primary goal in life but rather the result of how someone lives their life. Peterson et al. states that happiness is not something to be sought but rather something that may arise due to someone's full engagement

in their life.⁷ Happiness is not a driving force but rather the result of a person's involvement in their activities. This is the focus of positive psychology, which seeks to highlight the positive aspects of humanity. Seligman, a leading figure in positive psychology, believes that even in difficult situations, humans always have the opportunity to view life in a more positive light.⁸

Humans are seen as beings able to overcome all limitations and optimize their potential. Positive psychology views humans as individuals with the power to determine their perspective on life. Positive psychology focuses on how humans give meaning to their lives and interpret events that occur within themselves, where these interpretations are highly subjective.⁹ Therefore, having a positive understanding of life is crucial so that humans with different backgrounds and levels of subjectivity can achieve happiness or what is known as self-assessed well-being is a broad concept encompassing pleasant emotional experiences, low negative mood, and high levels of life satisfaction.¹⁰

Subjective well-being is a term that refers to how a person cognitively and emotionally evaluates their life. Subjective well-being refers to a person's perception of what is called "positive" internal events, which are defined as patterns of thought (cognition) and feelings (emotions) that are personally or socially desirable. This evaluation includes emotional assessments of events that occur in life, Consistent with how individuals mentally evaluate their overall satisfaction and sense of achievement, a person is considered to possess a high level of self-assessed well-being when they experience satisfied with their life circumstances, frequently experience positive emotions, and rarely experience negative emotions.¹¹ The subjective well-being of students is increasingly becoming a concern, given the rise in mental health issues in higher education.

Subjective well-being is essential for final-year students because students with high subjective well-being tend to achieve good academic performance and potentially become quality leaders in the future.¹² Subjective well-being is important for students because it can influence the learning process and the completion of their academic tasks.¹³ Additionally, according to De Neve et al., students with high subjective well-being can better cope with life challenges and fulfill their responsibilities effectively. They have a greater chance of securing employment, advancing in their careers, earning higher incomes, and reducing the risk of unemployment.¹⁴

Studies indicate that people who report greater personal happiness typically feel more frequent positive emotions, build healthier interpersonal connections, and manage stress and adversity with greater resilience.¹⁵ Conversely, diminished levels of personal well-being are frequently a precursor to significant psychological and behavioral challenges, including depressive symptoms, suicidal tendencies, and academic withdrawal.¹⁶ Accurately identifying high-risk individuals can provide insights for targeted intervention and prevention efforts. Subjective well-being is associated with several factors. Lucas, Diener, and Suh demonstrated that subjective well-being comprises multiple items, including life satisfaction, feelings of happiness, and feelings of unhappiness, as well as other constructs such as self-esteem.¹⁷

Diener et al. demonstrated that both mental and demographic characteristics play a role in shaping an individual's perceived well-being. These mental aspects encompass traits such as confidence in oneself, emotional satisfaction, general disposition, personality traits, and cognitive intelligence. Demographic factors include age, education, gender, religion, status, income, health, and culture.¹⁸

According to Coopersmith, self-esteem is the evaluation a person makes of themselves.¹⁹ This evaluation is typically consistent,

reflecting their approval or disapproval of themselves and indicating to what extent they consider themselves capable, meaningful, successful, and valuable.²⁰

A person's sense of self-worth holds significant importance in shaping their overall life experience. According to Diener, in individualistic societies, people base their lives on assessing life satisfaction at a high level of self-esteem. Therefore, individuals are strongly encouraged to have high self-esteem for personal development and to experience life satisfaction. By experiencing life satisfaction, subjective well-being is created, which leads to high positive affect in the individual and low negative affect, as well as life satisfaction in various domains of life.²¹

Campbell identified self-worth as a key determinant of psychological wellness, emphasizing that it serves as one of the strongest predictors of overall well-being. Elevated levels of self-worth empower individuals to a person to have several advantages, including understanding the meaning and value of life. This serves as a valuable guide in interpersonal relationships and is a natural outcome of healthy personal growth. Studies have shown that individuals with high self-esteem typically engage in more self-improvement processes.²²

In daily life, especially among students, we often encounter individuals who strive to develop themselves through new experiences aimed at self-improvement, enabling them to be more productive and effective in their work. This cannot be achieved if the individual or student has low self-esteem.²³

The researcher's initial findings, based on interviews with several final-year students at FITK UIN North Sumatra, can be concluded: Interviews with final-year students at FITK UIN North Sumatra show that self-esteem plays an important role in their personal development and life satisfaction. Academic and non-academic experiences contribute significantly to their self-

esteem levels. However, challenges such as academic pressure and social comparison still exist, requiring specific strategies to overcome them. High self-esteem helps them achieve better subjective well-being, as supported by existing literature.²⁴

Self-worth is one of the key elements that may impact how students perceive their overall well-being. According to Tan et al., individuals who lack self-confidence tend to report lower levels of subjective well-being.²⁵ This sense of self-value emerges from emotional responses rooted in social interactions, particularly those that highlight the gap between one's actual self and their ideal self. Furthermore, self-esteem can be described as a person's evaluation of how successfully they align with their self-identity, shaped in part by the perceptions and feedback of people around them. Self-esteem can be described as a valuable quality of an individual's cognition and behavior, expressed in their level of personal satisfaction.²⁶

Individuals with low self-esteem tend to lack self-confidence and be more closed off to new ideas and lifestyles, resulting in lower happiness. When an individual feels accepted in a group, they will gain high self-esteem, which leads to a higher sense of security and ultimately results in life satisfaction.²⁷

In addition, earlier investigations have recognized that positive psychological traits have a notable impact on how individuals perceive their well-being. Key contributors to life satisfaction—which in turn influence one's subjective well-being—include traits such as a sense of humor, an optimistic mindset, a clear sense of purpose, and a strong desire to learn. Likewise, factors like finding meaning in life and practicing gratitude have been identified as important predictors in enhancing an individual's overall well-being. Subjective well-being consists of multiple essential elements, such as general contentment with life, fulfillment in particular aspects of living, the presence of

positive emotions and enjoyable emotional states, as well as the minimal experience of negative feelings, moods, and distressing emotions.²⁸

The four core elements—life satisfaction, satisfaction within specific domains, positive emotions, and negative emotions—are moderately interconnected and conceptually linked.²⁹ Nevertheless, each offers distinct insights into how individuals perceive the quality of their lives. Positive and negative emotions represent the emotional or affective dimension, whereas both general life satisfaction and satisfaction in specific life areas fall under the cognitive dimension of subjective well-being.

Meanwhile, another study systematically describes the relationship between demographic variations and subjective well-being. Several replication findings resulted in: (a) Characteristics like age, gender, and financial status are linked to an individual's perceived well-being; (b) however, their influence is generally limited in magnitude; and (c) since a large portion of people report being fairly content, these demographic variables typically distinguish between moderate happiness and a higher level of well-being.³⁰

A pathway to attaining subjective well-being involves cultivating six core virtues: intellectual insight, bravery, compassion, fairness, self-control, and spiritual connectedness. These foundational virtues give rise to 24 distinct character strengths that individuals may develop in pursuit of a meaningful and morally rich life—gratitude being one of them.³¹

Several studies have proven that gratitude often emerges as a dominant and prominent character strength compared to other strengths. A Gallup survey on American teenagers and adults showed that over 90% of respondents expressed gratitude, which helped them feel happier.³² In Indonesia, a study by Garnika on the character strengths profile showed similar results. Gratitude became one of the five most prominent strengths

compared to others.³³ According to Emmons, gratitude can be assumed as a virtue that guides individuals in achieving a better life.³⁴

A study by Emmons and McCullough showed that the group given the gratitude treatment had higher subjective well-being scores than other groups. The study also proved that gratitude provides emotional and interpersonal benefits.³⁵ Gratitude is an expression of a person's positive feelings for the actions or circumstances they are experiencing. Psychologists prefer to use meaning as an emotion/affect when discussing gratitude.³⁶

Experts, whether philosophers, religious scholars, sociologists, or psychologists, define gratitude based on their respective backgrounds. Still, gratitude is viewed as an emotion, mood, or affective trait that leads to feelings of happiness and well-being.³⁷ These results offer compelling support for the vital role that personal strengths—such as thankfulness, a sense of purpose, the capacity to forgive, and a positive outlook—play in enhancing an individual's overall sense of well-being.³⁸

Research findings indicate that positive qualities, such as gratitude, can significantly affect the degree to which a person feels content with their life circumstances. In turn, a high degree of life satisfaction contributes toward an enhanced perception of overall well-being.³⁹ Being grateful helps individuals recognize and value the good aspects and experiences in their lives, which increases the likelihood of achieving greater subjective well-being.⁴⁰ In line with this, Watkins et al. state that gratitude in an individual can indicate how happy and prosperous they feel, which can be seen from their satisfaction with life.⁴¹

Furthermore, Wood's research found a relationship between subjective well-being and gratitude.⁴² The dynamic relationship between these two variables can be explained by Cunha et al. Their study stated that gratitude can affect the negative and

positive emotions that are part of subjective well-being.⁴³ When an individual has gratitude, they are more likely to have a positive life.

This research employs a clinical trial methods to thoroughly explore and clarify the relationship linking appreciation and overall psychological wellness. The diverse approaches applied effectively highlight the significant impact gratitude has on overall well-being. Nonetheless, a limitation of the study is the high dropout rate for self performed online intervention and functions of each testing method.⁴⁴ In the study conducted by Wood, a limitation was the insufficient explanation of the association between overall life satisfaction and feelings of thankfulness.⁴⁵

Numerous earlier investigations have explored how gratitude relates to an individual's sense of well-being. Findings consistently show that participants who express greater levels of gratitude tend to report higher levels of subjective well-being. The gratitude was reflected in the parents' enthusiasm in educating their children with disabilities. This enthusiasm is characteristic of someone who experiences positive emotions, which are part of subjective well-being.⁴⁶

Based on existing observations and conclusions drawn from earlier studies, the researcher seeks to examine how A sense of self-worth and appreciation has a meaningful connection to how students in the Department of Education and Teacher Development at North Sumatra's Islamic State University perceive their overall emotional and mental wellness.

Method

This study adopts a quantitative method with a descriptive-correlational design to examine how self-esteem and gratitude relate to subjective well-being among final-year students at the

Faculty of Conducted at the Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training, State Islamic At the State Islamic University of North Sumatra, this research investigates how self-esteem and gratitude—treated as independent factors—are each related to subjective emotional health, which serves as the outcome variable as how these two predictors jointly influence students' overall well-being. Data was collected from 111 students selected through purposive sampling using survey techniques and a questionnaire instrument.

In this study, the variables being investigated are self-esteem (X_1), gratitude (X_2), and subjective well-being (Y). Self-esteem is measured through power, significance, virtue, and competence.⁴⁷ Gratitude is measured through abundance, simple pleasures, and appreciation of others.⁴⁸ Subjective well-being, on the other hand, is assessed through three key indicators: Life Satisfaction, Positive Affect, and Negative Affect.⁴⁹ Measurement uses a Likert scale with six response points to obtain more specific and focused data.⁵⁰

The research utilizes correlation analysis to examine the associations among self-esteem, gratitude, and subjective well-being. In addition, instrument validity and reliability tests are conducted to ensure the accuracy and dependability of the collected data. Validity testing uses the product-moment correlation method to determine whether each instrument item can measure the intended variable. The instrument trial was conducted on 32 students not included in the research sample to ensure the quality and understanding of the respondents regarding the instrument used.

The validity test results show that some items in the instrument need to be revised, and some items are invalid and discarded. After validation, the research instrument was administered to the selected sample for data collection. The data were then

analyzed using statistical methods to examine the associations among the variables and to determine the extent to which self-esteem and gratitude impact students' subjective well-being.

Results and Discussion

Relationship Between *Self-esteem* and *Subjective well being*

The Pearson technique, also known as the Pearson Product-Moment method, generates a correlation coefficient (r) that falls within the range of -1 to 1. A value nearing either extreme (1 or -1) reflects a strong connection between the two variables involved. In contrast, values approaching zero suggest that the link between the variables is minimal. A positive coefficient signifies a parallel trend—where an rise in one factor is linked to a rise in the other, indicating a direct relationship—whereas a negative value suggests the opposite trend coefficient indicates an opposite trend, meaning that as one variable rises, the other tends to decline.

Sugiyono outlines specific criteria to help interpret the strength of correlation coefficients, which serve as a reference for understanding the degree of association between variables:⁵¹

0,00	-	0,199	= very low
0,20	-	0,399	= low
0,40	-	0,599	= moderate
0,60	-	0,799	= strong
0,80	-	1,000	= very strong

The results derived from the Pearson correlation analysis using SPSS demonstrate the linkage between X (self-esteem) and Y (individual life satisfaction), as shown in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Summary of Correlation Analysis between X₁ and Y and Its Significance Test Results

Correlations		<i>Self-esteem</i>	<i>Subjective well being</i>
<i>Self-esteem</i>	Pearson Correlation	1	.878
	Sig. (2-tailed)	111	.000
	N		111
<i>Subjective well being</i>	Pearson Correlation	.878	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	111
	N	111	

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

Drawing from the information displayed in the first chart, the outcome of the dual-variable association assessment shows that the numerical index (r) linking X (confidence in oneself) and Y (overall happiness with one’s circumstances) reaches 0.878. This figure indicates a powerful connection between both elements. Since the direction of this metric is upward, it implies that elevated levels of inner confidence typically correspond with enhanced experiences of internal satisfaction and psychological stability.

A significance test was then performed at the 5% level. A p-value less than 0.05 suggests that the link between Self-esteem (X₁) and Subjective Well-being (Y) is statistically meaningful. As shown in Table 1, the significance level is 0.00, which is less than 0.05. Therefore, the hypothesis proposing a positive and meaningful link between Self-esteem and Subjective Well-being is accepted and supported by the data.

To assess the direct relationship between X₁ and Y without interference from other independent variables, a partial correlation analysis was carried out. The findings of this analysis are presented in Table 2 below:

Table 2: Summary of Partial Correlation Analysis between X_1 and Y and Its Significance Test Results

Correlations				
Control Variables			<i>Self-esteem</i>	<i>Subjective well being</i>
<i>Gratitude</i>	<i>Self-esteem</i>	Correlation	1.000	.334
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		Df	0	108
<i>Subjective well being</i>		Correlation	.334	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		Df	108	0

From the results of the partial correlation calculation in Table 2 above, the correlation between Self-esteem and Subjective emotional health, with Gratitude controlled (held constant), is 0.334. This indicates that there is an association between personal self-worth and psychological wellness when appreciation levels are controlled. The positive correlation value suggests that as personal self-worth increases, individuals tend to experience greater psychological wellness.

Subsequently, a hypothesis test was carried out using a 5% significance threshold. When the p-value falls below 0.05, This indicates a significant connection in terms of statistical relevance between X (personal confidence) and Y (emotional quality of life). Based on the figures shown in Chart 2, the resulting significance level was 0.00, clearly below the threshold of 0.05. Therefore, it may be concluded that the relationship between internal confidence and psychological satisfaction persists as meaningful, even when the influence of appreciation is controlled.

The Relationship between Gratitude and Subjective Well-being

From the calculation of the product moment correlation with SPSS, the correlation result between Gratitude (X_2) and Subjective well-being (Y) is shown in the Table 3 below:

Table 3: Summary of Correlation Analysis between X₂ and Y and Its Significance Test Results

Correlations		<i>Gratitude</i>	<i>Subjective well being</i>
<i>Gratitude</i>	Correlation	1	.899
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.111	.000
	N		111
<i>Subjective well being</i>	Correlation	.899	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.111
	N	111	

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

Looking at the figures in Table 3, the outcome of the simple correlation test reveals that the correlation coefficient (r) between Gratitude (X₂) and Subjective emotional health (Y) is 0.899. This indicates a very strong link between these two factors. Since the coefficient is positive, it implies that higher levels of gratitude are generally associated with greater levels of subjective well-being.

Subsequently, a significance test was carried out at a 5% significance level. When the resulting significance score is below 0.05, it reflects a notable statistical link between X (sense of appreciation) and Y (mental life satisfaction). As illustrated in Table 3, the recorded value is 0.00, which lies beneath the established criterion. Consequently, the assumption suggesting a constructive and relevant association between feelings of gratitude and emotional health is affirmed through the available evidence.

To evaluate the unique association between X and Y while excluding the influence of additional predictors, a partial correlation test was conducted. Table 4 presents the findings derived from this analysis:

Table 4: Summary of Partial Correlation Analysis between X_2 and Y and Its Significance Test Results

Correlations				
Control Variables			<i>Gratitude</i>	<i>Subjective well being</i>
<i>Self-esteem</i>	<i>Gratitude</i>	Correlation	1.000	.507
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		Df	0	108
	<i>Subjective well being</i>	Correlation	.507	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		Df	108	0

Table 4 displays the findings of the partial correlation analysis, Demonstrating that the association between appreciation and psychological life quality, after isolating the influence of personal confidence, produces a value of 0.507. This outcome reinforces the notion that gratitude still maintains a significant link with emotional fulfillment, even when the variable of self-worth is held constant. The positive value of the coefficient signifies that as Gratitude increases, levels of Subjective Well-being also tend to rise.

Next, a significance test was conducted at the 5% level. When the significance level falls below 0.05, the connection between Appreciation (X_2) and Psychological Wellness (Y) is considered statistically significant. As shown in Table 4, the p-value stands at 0.00, which falls below the 0.05 significance level. This suggests that Appreciation continues to have a meaningful link with Psychological Wellness, even when the influence of Personal Self-Worth is held constant.

The Relationship between Self-esteem (X_1), Gratitude (X_2), and Subjective Well-being (Y)

From the multiple correlation calculation between the variables

Self-esteem and Gratitude with Subjective well-being, the correlation coefficient obtained using SPSS is shown in Table 5 below:

Table 5: Summary of Multiple Correlation Analysis between Self-esteem, Gratitude, and Subjective Well-being

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.911	.830	.827	4.803

As shown in Table 5 and supported by the SPSS output, the multiple correlation coefficient (R) is 0.911, Indicating a highly robust connection between the predictor variables and the outcome variable. Additionally, the determination coefficient reveals that 91.1% of the variation in the dependent variable is collectively accounted for by the predictors. The remaining 8.9% is attributed to external influences beyond the scope of this research. Thus, the hypothesis asserting a positive and significant association between Self-esteem and Gratitude with Subjective Well-being is supported by the data and can be regarded as confirmed.

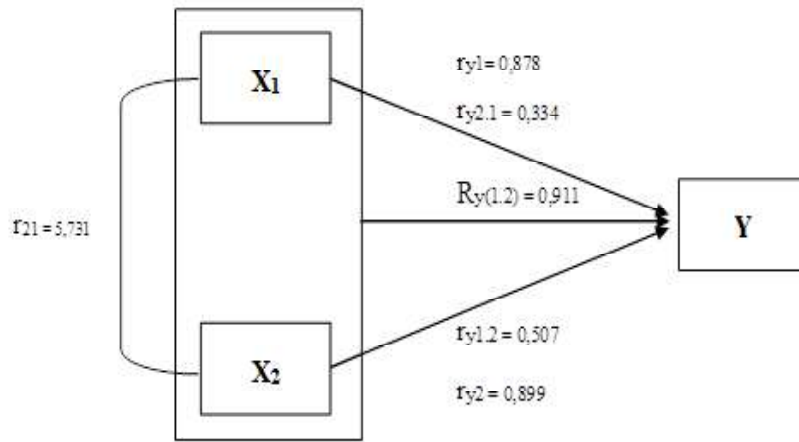


Figure 1: Overview of the Research Results on the Relationship between Variables

Explanation:

r_{y_1} = Represents the Pearson correlation coefficient that reflects the direct relationship between variable X (self-esteem) and variable Y (subjective well-being).

$r_{y_{2.1}}$ = Denotes the partial correlation between X (self-esteem) and Y (subjective well-being) while statistically controlling for the influence of X (gratitude).

$r_{y_{(1.2)}}$ = Indicates the multiple correlation coefficient that measures the joint predictive power of both X (self-esteem) and X (gratitude) on Y (subjective well-being), capturing their combined effect on the dependent variable.

r_{y_2} = Refers to the Pearson correlation coefficient that demonstrates the direct association between X (gratitude) and Y (subjective well-being).

$r_{y_{1.2}}$ = Stands for the partial correlation value reflecting the unique relationship between X (gratitude) and Y (subjective well-being) when the effect of X (self-esteem) is held constant.

$r_{x_{21}}$ = The correlation coefficient between X_1 (Self-esteem) and X_2 (Gratitude), indicating the relationship between the two independent variables.

The Relationship between Self-esteem and Subjective Well-being in Students

Self-esteem plays a crucial factor in influencing how the students perceive their general well-being. When students possess strong self-regard, they are more likely to approach both academic and personal challenges with a positive outlook, which in turn enhances their satisfaction with life. Those with elevated self-esteem tend to feel more capable in managing school-related responsibilities, contributing to greater feelings of happiness

and fulfillment. This sense of self-assurance is also linked to improved academic performance and stronger psychological health.

Moreover, high self-esteem contributes to the quality of students' social relationships. Students with strong self-esteem are more capable of building healthy interpersonal relationships. This self-confidence helps them manage social pressure and interact more effectively, which, in turn, improves their well-being. In this context, self-esteem enhances academic performance and fosters more positive and emotionally fulfilling relationships.

Self-esteem also impacts emotional regulation and reduces academic anxiety. Arshad et al. found that students with high self-esteem are more motivated and tend to be more optimistic when facing academic obstacles.⁵² They can also better manage stress and anxiety, which helps them remain focused on their academic goals, further boosting their subjective well-being. This aligns with Maslow's theory, which considers self-esteem a fundamental need for self-actualization and well-being.⁵³

Self-satisfaction, or the satisfaction one feels with oneself, is another key component of self-esteem that influences students' subjective well-being. Students who are content with themselves are better equipped to handle stress and strike a balance between academic and personal life. Research by Vilca-Pareja suggests that students with high self-satisfaction experience greater happiness, are more content with their lives, and are better prepared to face challenges. Satisfaction with academic and social achievements contributes significantly to their happiness.⁵⁴

Self-control is also closely related to self-esteem and subjective well-being. A study revealed that students with good self-control better manage their emotions, time, and academic tasks. This self-control helps them stay focused and achieve their goals, which enhances their life satisfaction and well-being.⁵⁵ Therefore,

good self-control is key to fostering positive subjective well-being among students.

The Relationship between Gratitude and Subjective Well-being

Gratitude plays a vital role in improving subjective well-being, particularly in fostering a sense of life satisfaction among students. Life satisfaction encompasses how students assess their academic journey, social interactions, and personal life balance. Research conducted locally indicates that students who regularly express gratitude are more likely to feel content with their lives, as they concentrate on positive experiences and are less affected by perceived deficiencies.⁵⁶ Gratitude helps students view life from a more optimistic perspective, reduce stress, and improve the quality of their social relationships.

In addition, gratitude can strengthen positive emotions such as happiness and optimism. Students who frequently express gratitude report more positive emotional experiences, such as feeling calm and happy, contributing to their well-being. Some studies also show that gratitude helps students shift negative perceptions into more positive ones, such as when facing academic failure or social pressure, thus reducing negative emotions like anxiety or stress.⁵⁷

Gratitude also functions as a mechanism for reducing negative emotions, including stress and anxiety, which students often face in their academic lives. Research shows that students who practice gratitude can better cope with stress and academic failure. This aligns with the theory of hedonic adaptation, which states that grateful individuals are better able to adapt to difficult situations and are less affected by adverse events.⁵⁸

Gratitude also contributes to fostering positive and healthy social relationships. Learners who regularly demonstrate thankfulness often enjoy stronger connections with peers and family members

and are better at managing and preventing interpersonal disputes.⁵⁹ This sense of gratitude helps reinforce social ties, which positively contributes to their overall mental wellness. Research has shown that students who are grateful are generally more receptive to emotional assistance and feel more connected to those around them, which in turn improves the quality of their relationships.

In conclusion, gratitude serves a vital function in strengthening students' psychological resilience. Those who consistently express thankfulness tend to handle academic and social pressures more effectively and bounce back from stress more rapidly. According to positive psychology, gratitude not only boosts emotional health but also enhances a person's capacity to adjust to change and confront challenges with a more hopeful perspective, ultimately leading to higher levels of subjective well-being.⁶⁰

The Relationship between Self-esteem, Gratitude, and Subjective Well-being

A strong sense of self-worth combined with a grateful mindset contribute significantly to improving learners' overall emotional and psychological wellness, particularly in the area of positive emotions. Students with high gratitude tend to experience greater happiness and more positive experiences, such as satisfaction in social interactions and academic achievements.⁶¹ Likewise, high self-esteem is related to students' capacity to see the positive side of situations, even when facing challenges. When these two factors interact, they reinforce positive emotions and improve overall well-being.

In addition, gratitude has been shown to reduce negative emotions, such as anxiety and depression, which students often face. Research shows that students who regularly practice gratitude can better cope with stress and have higher emotional resilience.⁶²

This aligns with stress management and resilience theories, emphasizing that positive thinking through gratitude can help individuals cope with negative feelings. Thus, gratitude serves as an emotional shield that enhances mental well-being.

Self-esteem also significantly contributes to minimizing negative emotions. Students with high self-esteem are more able to face challenges with a positive attitude, which contributes to reducing anxiety and depression. Studies show confident students can better maintain emotional balance and persevere in difficult situations.⁶³ When combined with gratitude, the impact of reducing negative emotions becomes stronger, creating a positive cycle that enhances psychological well-being.

The quality of social relationships is also strongly influenced by self-esteem and gratitude. Students who actively express gratitude are better able to build healthy and supportive relationships, which in turn enhances their well-being. High self-esteem also contributes to forming positive social connections, as individuals who value themselves are more open to interacting with others.⁶⁴ Healthy social interactions promote positive emotional experiences and strengthen subjective well-being.

Gratitude and self-esteem also play a role in finding meaning in life and enhancing students' mental resilience. The practice of gratitude helps students see a greater purpose in life and motivates them to achieve their aspirations.⁶⁵ Additionally, high self-esteem boosts mental resilience, allowing students to be more resilient in facing academic and social challenges. Combining both strengthens emotional well-being and mental resilience, which is essential for achieving a more fulfilling life.

Conclusion

From the outcomes of the data examination, the subsequent findings may be inferred:

1. Self-esteem is significantly related to students' subjective well-being at FITK UIN North Sumatra, with a correlation of 0.878. This indicates that strong self-esteem, social support, and self-control contribute to the improvement of students' subjective well-being.
2. Expressions of gratitude are closely tied to students' subjective well-being at FITK UIN North Sumatra, with a correlation of 0.899. Gratitude plays a role in enhancing subjective well-being, such as positive emotions, the reduction of negative emotions, and improved social relationships.
3. Self-esteem and gratitude have a strong relationship with subjective well-being, with a simultaneous correlation coefficient of 0.911, explaining 91.1% of the contribution to students' subjective well-being. This shows that both factors mutually reinforce each other and significantly shape students' psychological well-being.

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