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**THE ROLE OF GRATITUDE IN DEVELOPING MENTAL HEALTH  
IN ADOLESCENTS IN SOUTHERN KALIMANTAN**

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***Abstract.** This study aims to explore the role of gratitude in supporting adolescent mental health in South Kalimantan. Using quantitative methods by distributing Likert scale questionnaires to adolescents aged 17-20 years, we analyzed the correlation between gratitude and various psychological aspects such as life satisfaction, optimism towards the future, anxiety, stress, social relationships, and ability to face challenges. The analysis found that gratitude has a significant role in increasing life satisf levels. In addition, gratitude has a positive impact on strengthening adolescents' social relationships and helping them to better cope with life's action and optimism in adolescents, and plays a role in reducing anxiety and stress challenges. This research focuses on the importance of gratitude as a protective factor in adolescent mental health and its implications for psychological interventions among young people.*

***Keywords:** Gratitude, Mental Health, Adolescents, Social Relationships, Psychological Interventions*

***Abstrak.** Penelitian ini memiliki tujuan untuk mencari tahu peran rasa syukur dalam mendukung kesehatan mental remaja di Kalimantan Selatan. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kuantitatif dengan menyebarkan kuesioner Skala Likert kepada remaja berusia 17-20 tahun, dalam penelitian ini kami menganalisis korelasi antara rasa syukur dan berbagai aspek psikologis seperti kepuasan hidup, optimisme*

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*terhadap masa depan, kecemasan, stres, hubungan sosial, dan kemampuan menghadapi tantangan. Hasil analisis mendapati bahwa rasa syukur memiliki peran signifikan terhadap meningkatnya kepuasan hidup dan optimisme pada remaja, serta berperan dalam menurunkan tingkat kecemasan dan stres. Selain itu, rasa syukur memiliki dampak positif dalam memperkuat hubungan sosial remaja dan membantu mereka dalam menghadapi berbagai tantangan hidup dengan lebih baik. Penelitian ini fokus pada pentingnya rasa syukur sebagai faktor pelindung dalam kesehatan mental remaja serta implikasinya untuk intervensi psikologis di kalangan generasi muda.*

**Kata Kunci:** Syukur, Kesehatan Mental, Remaja, Hubungan Sosial, Intervensi Psikologis

## **BACKGROUND**

A major shift has occurred in psychological research in recent years. The previous focus was on mental disorders, and the focus is now on building psychological well-being and overall mental health. Although often overlooked in modern society, mental health is crucial to an individual's well-being. Mental health, according to WHO (2022), is a state of well-being in which a person is able to recognize their potential, cope with daily stresses, engage in productive activities, and contribute to the community and society. In this regard, the concept of “gratitude” is one of growing interest. It is thought to affect one's mental health and quality of life with this positive emotion of gratitude.

Gratitude is not only about being thankful for what we have but, it can also mean appreciating what we have. It can also affect the way we see the world. Studies show that people who practice gratitude regularly are happier, less stressed, and better off overall.

Gratitude also helps improve interpersonal relationships, which is important for mental health. People who are able to express gratitude in their social relationships are more likely to get greater social support, which can help them cope with loneliness, isolation, or stress. Gratitude also encourages people to focus on the positive things in their lives and allows them to develop a more resilient and

optimistic mindset. Mentally healthy people always feel safe and happy in any situation. They also consider all their actions so that they have the ability to regulate and control themselves (Sari & Saleh, 2022). Good mental health can help children live their daily lives (Nugraha et al., 2023).

In this article, we will discuss the benefits of gratitude, how to apply it in daily life, and how it affects mental health. We hope readers can find new ways to improve their own and others' mental health.

## **THEORITICAL STUDIES**

As one of the positive emotions, gratitude has a great impact on psychological well-being. Studies conducted by Emmons and McCullough (2003) show that gratitude can increase a person's positive perspective on life, which in turn can increase their happiness and life satisfaction. Gratitude impacts mental health due to several psychological mechanisms.

1. **Increases Happiness**

Gratitude helps people concentrate on the good things in life, which reduces stress.

2. **Strengthens Social Relationships**

Grateful people tend to appreciate and show gratitude to others more, which in turn increases the social support they receive.

3. **Builds an Optimistic Mindset**

Those who are grateful are more likely to have optimism when facing life's difficulties.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

We used a quantitative approach with a Likert scale (1-5) to determine the role of gratitude in the development of adolescent mental health. This method allows us to measure and identify the conditions and how much gratitude impacts one's

mental health. By asking various questions relating to one's level of gratitude, this study focuses on two research variables, namely “Gratitude and Mental Health”. The results of this study are expected to show that there is a positive correlation between gratitude and one's mental health, or the higher the correlation, the better.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Gratitude Increases Life Satisfaction**

Based on the results from the study, the aspect of life satisfaction, measured through the statement “I feel satisfied with my current life”, received an average score of 3.75 out of a scale of 5, indicating that most of the study participants tended to be satisfied with their current living conditions. This value is supported by the fairly symmetrical data. This suggests that, regardless of the respondent's personal background or condition, gratitude has a consistent and stable impact on different groups of respondents.

Gratitude allows a person to concentrate on the good things in their life, rather than lamenting the bad things or problems they face. It allows them to balance their thoughts between the difficulties and the good things they have, which results in a more balanced and optimistic perception of life. In situations like this, gratitude helps shift the individual's attention from negative thoughts or anxiety to gratitude for what they have. For example, people who appreciate their health, their social relationships, or their small achievements in their lives will find it easier to feel content even if they face many challenges.

Gratitude also allows one to accept their current circumstances without comparing themselves too much to others. Therefore, they focus more on their own lives and find meaning in every single thing they experience, living their days happily. Diener's (1984) theory of subjective well-being states that this is an important element of subjective well-being. In this situation, gratitude is not only a

positive emotion, but also a life strategy that helps a person find meaning in daily life, accept circumstances calmly, and live life with a happier and more optimistic attitude.

Gratitude allows people to see the good things in their lives, which increases life satisfaction. A stronger foundation for improved psychological well-being is built when people learn to appreciate what they have.

### **Gratitude Increases Optimism for the Future**

One component of positive mental health is optimism, which allows people to have hope and confidence that their future will go well despite the various difficulties they face. The statement “I feel optimistic about my future” received an average score of 3.95 out of a scale of 5, indicating that respondents in this study have a high level of optimism. The fairly stable data also suggests that gratitude is related to optimism; grateful people are more likely to see the future in a more positive way.

Gratitude makes a person focus on the good things in their life right now, giving them confidence that good things will also happen in the future. Since this positive emotion tends to encourage grateful people to believe that they have the ability to achieve happiness and success in the future, it helps develop an optimistic mindset. In such a situation, gratitude is not only a way to express gratitude, but also a psychological foundation that encourages one to set long-term goals, plan concrete steps to achieve them, and build positive expectations about the future.

Optimism has a significant positive effect on one's mental health. According to Fredrickson's (2001) broaden-and-build theory, positive emotions such as gratitude broaden a person's perspective, allowing them to see new opportunities and act proactively in planning for the future. Because they believe that their efforts will yield positive results, optimists tend to be more motivated and energized in their daily lives. This gratitude-driven optimism makes them more resilient when facing challenges as they have hope and belief that every difficulty can be overcome with effort and perseverance.

In addition, gratitude and optimism can increase an individual's mental resilience. Because they believe that adversity is part of the journey to success, grateful and optimistic people will be better able to get up and try again in difficult situations or failures. Therefore, they do not give up easily; instead, they see challenges as opportunities to learn and grow. As people who have positive expectations of the future tend to have lower levels of stress and anxiety, this perspective is crucial for building stable and resilient mental health.

### **Gratitude Reduces Anxiety and Stress**

If not handled well, stress and anxiety can arise in response to the demands of work, education, social relationships, or even environmental factors. This can be detrimental to mental health. The results of the analysis, however, show that gratitude can be a useful method to reduce anxiety and tension. Those who answered the statement “Gratitude helps me cope with stress and anxiety” received an average score of 3.97 out of a scale of 5, indicating that most of them agreed that gratitude plays an important role in helping them cope with the stress and anxiety they experience every day.

Gratitude helps people shift their attention from stressful things to the good things in their lives. Being grateful makes a person actively appreciate what they have and the positive experiences they have had, regardless of the difficulties faced. This focus on the positive helps them build a more balanced outlook on life, which in turn reduces the level of stress and anxiety they experience. For example, grateful people tend to remember their achievements, the support of those closest to them, or other little things that made them happy when facing a difficult day. This creates a sense of comfort and calm, and helps to dampen the negative emotions that can arise as a result of pressure.

Gratitude also improves one's psychological ability to deal with difficult situations. According to Emmons and McCullough (2003), gratitude allows people to accept situations in a calmer and more open way, which helps them cope with stress. Focusing on things to be grateful for helps people become calmer, which protects

them from the ongoing negative effects of stress and anxiety. For example, remembering achievements made or support from positive coworkers can make someone experiencing work pressure feel calmer. These thoughts help maintain emotional balance and prevent excessive anxiety.

Gratitude can also reduce anxiety by helping people change the way they see problems. Gratitude helps one accept that difficulties are a part of life and often bring valuable lessons. This perception gives people a sense of control over circumstances as they believe that there is much to appreciate despite challenges. Gratitude also reduces the tendency to focus on excessive worry, allowing people to focus their attention on things that cause anxiety as well as on things that put them at ease.

### **Gratitude Plays an Important Role in Improving Social Relationships**

In social life, showing gratitude to others, whether by words or actions, can strengthen emotional connections and build trust. The results show that the statement “Expressing gratitude to others improves my social relationships” received an average score of 4.12 out of a scale of 5. This value indicates that the majority of people who responded believe that expressing gratitude directly improves their relationships with those around them—be it friends, family, coworkers, or partners.

Gratitude helps people see what others do for their lives, fosters genuine gratitude, and encourages them to act positively by returning the favor. When a person shows gratitude for the help or support given to others, it makes them feel valued and strengthens the existing emotional connection. For example, in a friendship or work relationship, saying thank you for the help or support given increases mutual respect, which results in a more harmonious and cooperative relationship. Appreciating parents or spouses for their support can strengthen family relationships and reinforce feelings of love and closeness.

According to social psychology research, gratitude serves as a “glue” that helps strengthen relationships between individuals. According to Algoe et al. (2010), gratitude has the ability to improve relationship quality by creating a reciprocal cycle

of gratitude. When a person feels appreciated, they tend to act kindly to others, which in turn results in mutually reinforcing relationships. This positive cycle is essential for building supportive social relationships where people feel accepted and supported by others.

One important component of mental health is positive social relationships. The sense of security and strong emotional attachment provided by a good social environment helps a person to be more resilient in the face of stress and emotional challenges. Those with a supportive social network know that there are others who care and are ready to help them, which makes them better able to manage life's stresses. Conversely, a lack of social support is often associated with the risk of mental disorders such as depression and anxiety. So, gratitude not only helps people improve their social relationships, but also provides them with an important support network for their psychological health.

In addition, being grateful in social relationships can help others feel valued, improve daily interactions, and make both parties happy. Showing gratitude to friends or colleagues reduces the likelihood of conflict and misunderstanding. Gratitude plays an important role in building and maintaining healthy and stable relationships, as relationships that are adorned with appreciation and appreciation tend to be stronger and last in the long run.

Gratitude enriches one's social life by creating meaningful, respectful and supportive relationships. By sincerely expressing gratitude, individuals can build strong and supportive social networks that provide them with a sense of bonding, security, and happiness. Individuals have better mental health because of these positive social relationships. They also have the power to help them in various aspects of their lives.

### **Gratitude Plays a Role in Helping Individuals Face Life's Challenges**

The statement “Gratitude helps me maintain a positive outlook in the face of life's challenges” received the highest score of all the indicators in this study, with an

average of 4.32 out of a scale of 5. This indicates that the majority of people who responded agreed that being grateful helps them remain optimistic in difficult and stressful situations. Those who are grateful tend to be better able to see the positive side of every problem, which prevents them from falling or losing hope.

Gratitude allows one to be more relaxed in accepting current circumstances and see difficulties as a part of life that gives us lessons. Those who are grateful are able to shift their attention from the difficulties in a stressful situation or failure towards the positive lessons or experiences that can be drawn from the situation. For example, when someone is unsuccessful in their job or college, grateful people will recover mentally faster by thinking about what they have learned from the situation or reminiscing about the support they received from others. In other words, the ability to “re-frame” or look at circumstances in a more positive way is generated by gratitude.

Gratitude goes a long way in increasing psychological resilience, which is the ability to bounce back from adversity. Those who are grateful have an easier time coping with emotional distress when facing challenges because they see their lives in a more balanced way and do not focus on the negative. According to Fredrickson's (2001) broaden-and-build theory, positive emotions such as gratitude broaden one's perspective and create long-term psychological resources. One can develop stronger mental endurance by being grateful, which helps them deal with problems and learn from experiences.

In addition, grateful people tend to believe more that good things will come, even if their current circumstances feel difficult. They have the strength to remain optimistic, which prevents them from giving up or getting stuck in despair. They are more likely to see challenges as opportunities to learn and grow rather than obstacles that prevent them from moving forward. This shows that gratitude not only makes a person feel better, but also encourages them to keep trying and adapt to change. For example, grateful people tend to remain optimistic and look for ways to adapt or find new opportunities when facing a crisis or major change.

Gratitude builds strong mental resilience, which helps them deal with life's challenges. Those who focus on the positive and are grateful for what they have protect their mental health from the effects of negative stress. They also build a strong emotional foundation to deal with unexpected situations. This gratitude serves as an internal resource that allows one to face challenges with confidence, optimism, and the belief that every difficulty has a positive side that can be harnessed for growth.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

It can be concluded that this research shows that gratitude has a significant impact on various aspects of human life, both psychologically and socially. Gratitude not only makes people feel better about good things, but also improves their perspective on life and gives them greater meaning and acceptance for the situations they face. It also increases optimism about the future and gives you confidence that positive experiences will come constantly, which increases the likelihood of attaining happiness. Gratitude also helps people focus on the positives in their lives and helps them manage stress and anxiety more healthily. Gratitude increases emotional bonds with others, improves the quality of interpersonal relationships, and provides social support, which is crucial for psychological well-being in the context of social relationships.

In addition, gratitude increases individuals' mental resilience and gives them the ability to deal with life's challenges in a more positive way. With gratitude, individuals can see opportunities in adversity and cope more easily with challenges that arise. Overall, the findings of this study suggest that gratitude has a very important role in improving quality of life, shaping better mental well-being, and helping people thrive better in the face of life's challenges.

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