

Gratitude as a Positive Psychology Intervention to Enhance Adolescents' Resilience to Stress

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Abstract. Mental health issues remain a significant concern in today's society. Adolescence is a period of heightened vulnerability to psychological stress due to academic pressures, social dynamics, and complex developmental changes. Strengthening mental resilience in adolescents is a crucial component of efforts to promote long-term mental well-being. One emerging approach in positive psychology is the practice of gratitude, which has been shown to contribute to emotional regulation, increased positive affect, and the development of more adaptive coping strategies. This article aims to examine the role of gratitude as a positive psychology intervention in enhancing adolescents' resilience to stress. A literature review method was employed by collecting, processing, and analyzing various sources, including scientific journals, e-books, and relevant case studies. The findings indicate that the practice of gratitude contributes to greater positive emotions, cognitive flexibility, and healthier coping strategies. Moreover, gratitude has been shown to significantly reduce symptoms of anxiety and stress, while improving emotional stability, self-awareness, and personal growth.

Key words: Gratitude, Positive Psychology, Adolescent Resilience

INTRODUCTION

Mental health is a pressing global issue, particularly among adolescents. Data from the World Health Organization (WHO, 2021) indicates that one in seven adolescents worldwide experiences mental health disorders. In Indonesia, the Basic Health Research (Riskesdas, 2018) reported that 10.1% of the population aged 15 years and above experience emotional mental disorders. According to Indonesian Minister of Health Regulation Number 25 of 2014, adolescents are between the ages of 10 and 18, while the National Population and Family Planning Agency (BKKBN) defines the age range as 10 and 24 for unmarried individuals. Adolescence is a complex transitional period marked by biological, emotional, and social changes that make individuals vulnerable to academic pressure, peer influence, identity formation, and family expectations. This condition increases the risk of psychological stress, anxiety, depression, and other emotional disorders if not managed adaptively. Stress is a condition where a person experiences excessive emotional demands. This condition can result in a variety of symptoms, such as depression, chronic fatigue, irritability, anxiety, impotence, and poor work quality. Continuous adolescent stress that is not handled properly will have a negative impact on the physical and psychological health of adolescents.

One important skill that adolescents need to develop is resilience, the ability to bounce back from difficult or traumatic experiences. Resilience plays a crucial role in preventing long-term mental disorders and helping individuals adapt to life's stresses. Within the framework of positive psychology, gratitude emerges as an effective intervention that can strengthen resilience. Gratitude is defined as a positive emotion that arises when a person recognizes and appreciates the good things in their life (Emmons & McCullough, 2003). Gratitude can help individuals stay focused on the positive aspects of their lives, even amidst adversity. Within the context of positive psychology, gratitude plays a role not only in increasing individual happiness but also in building psychological resilience. Literature studies on the relationship between gratitude and adolescent mental health provide in-depth insights into the complex dynamics involved. Several studies have shown that adolescents with high levels of gratitude tend to exhibit higher levels of happiness, lower levels of stress, and better emotional management (Rahma & Cahyani, 2023). Exploring the concept of gratitude, Shabira & Uyun (2023) stated that adolescents who are able to express recognition for positive aspects of their lives tend to have higher levels of happiness and lower levels of stress. Research shows that gratitude can enhance psychological well-being, improve emotional regulation, reduce stress levels, and encourage adaptive coping strategies.

Despite the considerable empirical evidence on the benefits of gratitude, studies specifically

exploring its role as a targeted intervention to strengthen adolescent resilience are limited. Previous research indicates that gratitude contributes to increased positive emotions, cognitive flexibility, adaptive coping strategies, and reduced anxiety and stress. Therefore, this study aims to examine the relationship between gratitude practices and adolescent mental resilience through a structured literature review. The results are expected to fill the research gap, enrich the field of positive psychology, and provide practical guidance for educators, counselors, and mental health professionals in designing simple and effective interventions to improve adolescent mental health.

METHODS

This study used a literature review method to examine the role of gratitude as a positive psychology intervention in increasing adolescent resilience to stress. Literature searches were conducted through the online databases Google Scholar, Scopus, Sinta, and ScienceDirect using the keywords gratitude, positive psychology, and adolescent resilience. The review process included the stages of collecting, reading, processing, and critically examining the obtained literature sources, including books, scientific journals, dissertations, e-books, and relevant case studies. The inclusion criteria were determined as follows: (1) publications within the period 2016–2025, (2) discussions covering the topics of gratitude, positive psychology, adolescent resilience, or stress coping strategies, and (3) being officially published scientific articles. Articles that did not meet these criteria were excluded from the analysis process. The selected articles were analyzed thematically and critically to identify patterns of concepts, propositions, and ideas that were relevant and aligned with the research focus.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on literature search and analysis from various sources, a consistent positive relationship was found between gratitude and adolescent resilience to stress. The results of the literature review indicate that gratitude plays a significant role in enhancing adolescent resilience. Gratitude, as defined by Emmons and McCullough (2003), is a positive emotion that arises when individuals recognize and appreciate the good things in their lives. In the context of adolescent development, gratitude acts as a protective factor that encourages cognitive reframing, the ability to view difficulties from a more positive perspective. This process enables adolescents to reduce psychological burdens, strengthen mental resilience, and manage life's stresses adaptively.

Studies have shown that adolescents who frequently express gratitude tend to have higher levels of happiness, lower stress, and a more positive attitude toward life and others. Several studies have shown that adolescents with high levels of gratitude tend to exhibit better mental health. Exploring the concept of gratitude, (Shabira & Uyun, 2023) stated that adolescents who are able to express recognition for the positive aspects of their lives tend to have higher levels of happiness and lower levels of stress. People who consistently feel grateful for everything that happens in their lives will consistently experience positive things, which can also affect the soul, mind, heart, and mind, keeping them in good condition. In general, the literature review results indicate that gratitude has a significant effect on reducing stress, increasing positive emotions, and strengthening coping strategies in adolescents. Adolescents who practice gratitude tend to focus more on the positive aspects of life, are better able to regulate their emotions, and are more resilient in the face of academic and social pressures. Therefore, the results of this literature review indicate that gratitude is an important protective factor that enhances psychological

resilience in adolescents by increasing positive emotions and developing adaptive coping strategies.

Positive psychology is a branch of psychology that focuses on individual strengths, happiness, and the potential for optimal development. In recent decades, this approach has gained increasing attention in the realm of psychological interventions and quality-of-life development. Building resilience in adolescents is crucial, as adolescence is a time of identity discovery, full of challenges and vulnerability. Furthermore, resilience increases life satisfaction, reduces anxiety, depression, and negative emotions, and is a predictor of resilience in later developmental stages. These findings align with Fredrickson's (2001) broaden-and-build theory, which states that positive emotions broaden an individual's thinking and build psychological, social, and physical resources. Individuals who

frequently experience positive emotions tend to be more resilient, have a more optimistic outlook, and are better able to cope with life's challenges. In the context of adolescents, this facilitates creativity in problem-solving and deepens social relationships, a key basis for resilience. Gratitude helps regulate emotions by directing an individual's focus on the positive aspects of life. Thus, grateful adolescents are better able to manage feelings of anxiety, frustration, or anger when faced with stress. Gratitude encourages the use of adaptive coping strategies. Grateful individuals are more likely to seek social support, reframe their perspective on problems, and set realistic goals. These strategies have been shown to be more effective in reducing the negative impact of stress than avoidance or denial strategies.

Gratitude increases positive emotions that help teens view difficult situations with a more constructive and meaningful perspective, thereby reducing the negative impact of stress. 1) Emotion Regulation: Gratitude helps redirect teens' focus from sources of stress to the positive aspects of life, thereby reducing anxiety, frustration, and anger. 2) Adaptive Coping Strategies: Grateful teens are more likely to use constructive coping strategies, such as seeking social support, reframing problems, and setting realistic goals, which have been shown to be more effective than avoidance strategies. 3) Strengthening Social Relationships: Gratitude deepens interpersonal relationships, increasing a sense of connectedness and social support, key factors in adolescent resilience. 4) Physiological Effects: The practice of gratitude can reduce stress-related physiological activation, such as a decrease in the hormone cortisol, which supports better mental health. Studies have shown that the practice of gratitude can directly reduce symptoms of stress and anxiety. Practices such as gratitude journaling, daily reflection on positive experiences, or expressing appreciation to others have been shown to strengthen emotional stability and increase psychological resilience in adolescents. The implication of these findings is that gratitude-based interventions can be widely implemented in schools, families, and counseling settings. Simple programs like writing down three things you're grateful for each day, holding group discussions about positive experiences, or sending thank-you notes to significant others in your life can be practical steps to build mental resilience in adolescents on a sustainable basis. Thus, gratitude serves not only as a positive emotion but also as a psychological skill that can be cultivated to strengthen adolescents' resilience in the face of various life stresses.

The practice of gratitude can be a relevant and easily implemented psychological intervention. However, the effectiveness of this intervention must take into account cultural norms, emotional expression, and environmental supports unique to Indonesian society. Therefore, the integration of gratitude practices into character education and school counseling programs needs to be adapted to the local cultural context for optimal and sustainable implementation. This study confirms that gratitude is not merely a positive emotion, but rather a psychological skill that can be trained and implemented as a practical intervention to strengthen adolescent resilience. The novelty of this research lies in the explanation of the psychological and social mechanisms underlying the relationship between gratitude and adolescent resilience, as well as the integration of recent literature tailored to Indonesian cultural conditions. The benefit of this research is that it provides a scientific basis for the development of gratitude-based positive psychology intervention programs in educational settings and adolescent counseling. By strengthening resilience through gratitude, it is hoped that adolescents can more optimally manage stress and life pressures, thereby supporting healthy and sustainable mental development.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results and discussion, it can be concluded that gratitude plays a significant role as a positive psychological intervention in increasing adolescent resilience to stress. The practice of gratitude can strengthen resilience by increasing positive emotions, aiding emotional regulation, and encouraging the use of adaptive coping strategies. Furthermore, gratitude also deepens social relationships and has physiological effects that reduce the activation of stress hormones, thereby significantly reducing symptoms of anxiety and stress in adolescents. These findings indicate that implementing gratitude-based interventions, such as gratitude journaling and daily reflection, can be effective strategies that are easy to implement in schools, families, and counseling settings. Adapting interventions to the local Indonesian cultural context is crucial for optimal and sustainable implementation. Thus, gratitude is not merely a positive emotion, but a psychological skill that can

be trained to support the healthy mental development of adolescents and resilience to various life pressures.

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