



# GRATITUDE AMONG SCHOOL TEACHERS AND COLLEGE TEACHERS

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## **Abstract:**

Gratitude in its complete and most powerful sense is an action of some kind that grows out of our feelings of appreciation or thankfulness. It is a quality of being ready to show appreciation for and to return kindness. This empirical research paper focuses on the difference in the level of gratitude between school and college teachers. The between groups research design was chosen and purposive sampling technique was used to select the sample (N=60). 30 school teachers and 30 college teachers between the age group of 30-45 years were chosen as the sample. The Gratitude Questionnaire (McCullough, Emmons, & Tsang, 2002) was used to assess the gratitude of the sample. Independent samples 't' test was used for statistical analysis. The mean values for gratitude indicate that school teachers are below average in gratitude and college teachers are above average in gratitude. The statistical findings revealed that there is a significant difference in gratitude between school and college teachers thereby rejecting the null hypothesis.

**Key Words:** *Gratitude, School teachers, College teachers.*

## **INTRODUCTION:**

Gratitude is the quality of being thankful. It is a quality of being ready to show appreciation for and to return kindness. The word 'gratitude' is derived from the Latin word 'gratus', which means pleasing or thankful. In other words, it means a deep appreciation of people, nature, God, or the cosmos, which evokes a subjective experience that includes a sense of thankfulness, wonder, and appreciation (Emmons, McCullough, & Tsang, 2003). Emmons & Crumpler (2000) define gratitude as "an emotion, a virtue, a moral sentiment, a motive, a coping response, a

skill, and an attitude. It is all of these and more. Minimally, gratitude is an emotional response to a gift. It is the appreciation felt after one has been the beneficiary of an altruistic act.”

The systematic study of gratitude within the field of Psychology began in 1998 when Martin Seligman introduced a new branch of psychology that he termed Positive Psychology. This new branch adds a new focus on the reinforcement of positive traits. The study of gratitude in psychology has included an attempt to understand the short term experience of the gratitude response (state gratitude), individual differences in how frequently gratitude is felt among individuals (trait gratitude), and the relationship between these two.

Positive psychology is a moderately recent branch of general psychology and its focus shifts from what is wrong to what is right. Rapid development in the field of positive psychology and positive education has been recognized and accepted all over the world. Positive psychology is based on humanistic approach, comprising the scientific study of human flourishing in the face of adversity and it is not a study of human weaknesses and limitations (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). The goals of positive psychology are to recognize and develop the human strengths and virtues to formulate a life worth living.

According to Martin Seligman, the founding father of positive psychology, there are three pillars for positive psychology movement – positive emotions, positive characters and positive institutions (Seligman, 2002). Gratitude in its complete and most powerful sense is an action of some kind that grows out of our feelings of appreciation or thankfulness. Gratitude has been defined in a variety of ways in the literature, with most empirical studies in the area of positive psychology giving priority to gratitude as an emotion, the impact of which can be measured quantitatively (Howels, 2014).

Empirical studies have affirmed that there is a correlation between a grateful disposition and pro-social states such as empathy, forgiveness, emotional support, and willingness to help others (McCullough et al., 2002; Tsang, 2006). Earlier investigations of gratitude in the school surroundings especially in adolescents have found that it increases the motivation for pro-social behaviour and consequently directs to stronger relationships and increased engagement within school communities (Weber & Ruch, 2012; Freitas, Pieta, & Tudge, 2011; Froh et al., 2010; Froh, Kashdan, Ozimkowski, & Miller, 2009; Froh, Miller & Snyder, 2007). Research by Howels (2004) confirmed that practices of gratitude enhanced the academic thinking process.

It is also important to distinguish between gratitude and other concepts that are sometimes used synonymously with gratitude, such as positive thinking or optimism. When teachers take up just a few simple gratitude practices that they have not embarked upon before or in areas where they have had little or no gratitude, they report profound results. Gratitude practices that they report to be most effective include greeting students, smiling more often, thanking students and colleagues, and teaching with a sense of appreciation for the subject matter and opportunity to teach. Empirical research in the area of positive psychology shows that those who are in a more grateful state are more optimistic, have greater resilience, tend to get less depressed, and have enhanced wellbeing. However, it may be difficult to practice gratitude when a person is feeling stressed, or hurt, or going through areas of personal hardship.

A teacher, who practices gratitude in his or her life, wears that attitude of gratitude and conveys warmth as he or she relates with his or her students and they in turn are willing to learn more (Emmons, 2004). Teaching involves the experience of love which connects the teacher and the students and inspires the students to think on their own and appreciate everything around them. In so doing, the teacher can create an atmosphere of happiness and fulfillment inside and outside the classroom (Emmons, 2004). Another research claimed that gratitude impacted positively on the teachers, classroom and school environment and enhanced teacher–student relationships (Howells, 2014). Zeng Na (2015) reemphasized the significance of gratitude in the professional and emotional life of a teacher and its overall impact on a teacher’s wellbeing and how the same made positive changes in the students' performance in class.

In the overall assessment of the growth and development of the positive psychology, the attention given to positive education (Seligman, Ernst, Gillham, Reivich, & Linkins, 2009) imparted in schools, in order to promote well-being of the next generation, is noteworthy. Research on positive education and its impact have shown enhancement of resilience, hope, gratitude, mindfulness, character strengths, growth mindsets, optimism and empathy in students (Waters, 2011).

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE:**

Augustine et al., (2017) through their study on relationship between gratitude and teacher effectiveness found that there was positive correlation between gratitude and teacher effectiveness. Moreover, gratitude and factors of teacher effectiveness are also found positive relationship except class management of the teachers.

A study by Khan and Singh on gender differences on gratitude, spirituality and forgiveness among school teachers revealed that significant gender differences were found among male and female teachers with respect to gratitude .

Unanue et al., (2019), in their study on the reciprocal relationship between gratitude and life satisfaction: Evidence from two longitudinal field studies found that gratitude and life satisfaction mutually predicted each other over time. The reciprocal relationships suggest the existence of a virtuous circle of human well-being: higher levels of gratitude increase life satisfaction, which in turn increases gratitude, leading to a positive spiral.

## **METHODOLOGY:**

### **Problem:**

To study the difference in gratitude between school and college teachers.

### **Objective:**

To verify the significance of difference in gratitude between school and college teachers.

**Hypothesis:**

There will be no significant difference in gratitude between school and college teachers.

**Variables:**

- Independent Variable: Teaching- School level and College level.
- Dependent Variable: Gratitude.

**Research Design:**

Between groups design was used for the study.

**Sample:** Purposive sampling technique was used and a total of 60 teachers were selected as the sample. Among them, 30 were school teachers (teaching high school students) and 30 were college teachers (teaching exclusively for degree course) between the age group of 30-45 years.

**Inclusion criteria:**

- Teachers aged between 30-45 years were included.
- Teachers teaching high school students and degree students were included.
- Only full-time teachers were included.

**Exclusion criteria:**

- Teachers teaching Primary school students and PUC students were excluded.
- Part-time teachers were excluded.

**Research Tools:**

- Demographic data sheet.
- The Gratitude Questionnaire (McCullough, Emmons, & Tsang, 2002)

**Procedure:**

The school and college teachers aged between 30-45 years were approached for consent to be participants for the present study. The demographic data sheet was administered to obtain the required demographic details of the sample. Based on the demographic details obtained by the sample, they were categorized into two groups: School teachers and College teachers. The subjects were also screened keeping in view the inclusion and exclusion criteria. Rapport was established with the subjects before the administration of the questionnaire. Subsequently, the Gratitude Questionnaire which consists of 06 items was administered to them with appropriate instructions. After the completion of the task, the questionnaire was collected from the sample and the obtained data was statistically

analyzed considering the objective of the study. To arrive at the key findings of the study, Independent sample 't' test was used.

### Results and Discussion:

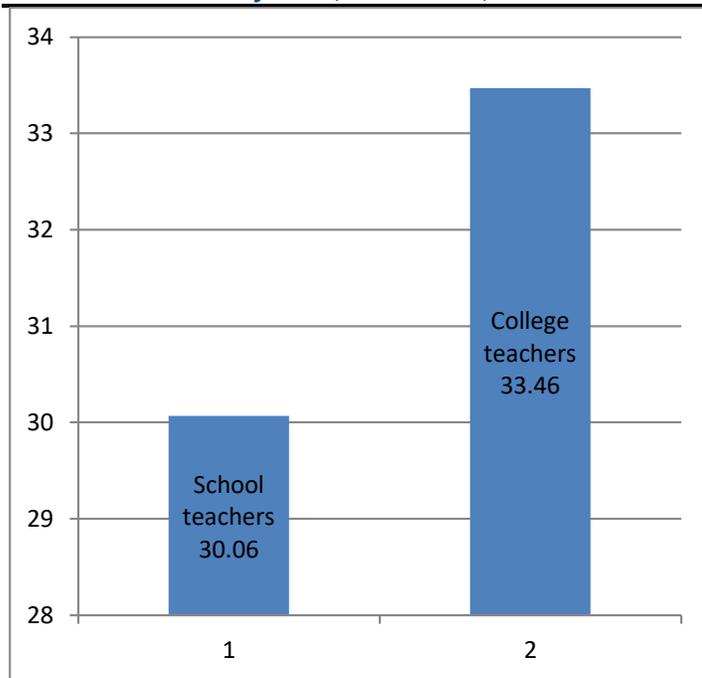
Gratitude is one among the highest virtues of human nature. Sansone & Sansone(2010) has defined "gratitude as the appreciation of what is valuable and meaningful to oneself and represents a general state of thankfulness and/or appreciation." Dr. Robert Emmons (2003) suggests that feeling of gratitude involves two stages namely, firstly, the acknowledgment of goodness in one's life and secondly, recognizing that some of the sources of goodness lie outside the self. Recent research on gratitude has focused on the nature of individual differences in gratitude and the consequences of being a more or less grateful person. According to Cicero, "gratitude is not only the greatest of the virtues but the parent of all others." Studies have shown the correlation between gratitude and increased well being for individuals and for all the people who are involved in an act. Gratitude is an unconditional act to show people that they are appreciated. People who possess an attitude of gratitude experiences lower stress levels too. In the present study it was examined whether teaching school students or college students would make a difference in the gratitude that the teachers possess. Statistical analysis of the study has been presented below.

Table showing scores for Gratitude of school and college teachers.

Variable	Sample	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	't' value
Gratitude	School teachers	30	30.06	5.33	2.05*
	College teachers	30	33.46	7.32	

- Significant at 0.05 level

The above table shows the difference in gratitude between school and college teachers. As per the table, the mean is 30.06 and 33.46 with the standard deviation being 5.33 and 7.32 in gratitude for school and college teachers respectively. The obtained 't' value is 2.05 indicating significant difference at 0.05 level in gratitude between school and college teachers. The result indicates that there is a significant difference in gratitude between school and college teachers. Hence, the study rejects the null hypothesis which states "There will be no significant difference in gratitude between school and college teachers."



The graphical representation of mean values for gratitude indicate that, school teachers are below average in gratitude and college teachers are above average in gratitude. Research shows a positive relationship between gratitude and life satisfaction (Froh et al., 2009; Wood et al., 2010; Alkozei et al., 2018). Research also has found that higher the gratitude better the life, high self esteem, positive emotions, optimism, freedom, good relationships, personal growth, meaningful life and self-acceptance (Davis et al., 2016 and Wood et al., 2010). A teacher, who practices gratitude in his or her life, wears that attitude of gratitude and conveys warmth as he or she relates with his or her students and they in turn are willing to learn more (Emmons, 2004). Teaching involves the experience of love which connects the teacher and the students and inspires the students to think on their own and appreciate everything around them. In doing so, the teacher can create an atmosphere of happiness and fulfillment inside and outside the classroom (Emmons, 2004). These research findings support the result of the present study.

### Conclusions:

The result of the present study shows that there is a significant difference in gratitude between school and college teachers. The study proposes to work on the several other factors that influence the gratitude of school and college teachers in future.

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