



Gratitude and Coping Mechanisms: Mediating Role of Happiness Orientation among Emerging Adults

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ABSTRACT

Gratitude, happiness orientation, and coping mechanisms are important constructs within positive psychology that contribute to psychological well-being and adaptive functioning among emerging adults. The present study aimed to examine the relationships among gratitude, happiness orientation, and coping mechanisms, as well as the mediating role of happiness orientation in the relationship between gratitude and coping mechanisms among emerging adults. The study employed a quantitative research design and included a sample of 126 college students (63 males and 63 females) from colleges in Kozhikode district, Kerala. Data were collected using the GRAT 16-Item Scale, the Orientation to Happiness Scale, and the Brief COPE Scale. The findings revealed significant positive relationships between gratitude and happiness orientation, gratitude and coping mechanisms, and happiness orientation and coping mechanisms. Significant gender differences were observed in gratitude and happiness orientation, with female students reporting higher levels than male students. However, no significant gender difference was found in coping mechanisms. Mediation analysis further revealed that happiness orientation significantly mediated the relationship between gratitude and coping mechanisms, indicating that gratitude contributes to better coping through fostering a stronger orientation toward happiness. The findings highlight the importance of gratitude and happiness orientation as positive psychological resources that promote adaptive coping among emerging adults. The study has implications for mental health professionals, educators, and counsellors in developing interventions aimed at enhancing psychological well-being and resilience among young adults.

Key Words – *Gratitude, Happiness Orientation, Coping Mechanisms, Emerging Adults, Mediation, Positive Psychology*

Emerging adulthood is a distinct developmental stage that occurs between

adolescence and adulthood, typically spanning the late teens through the

twenties (Arnett, 2000). This period is particularly relevant among college students, who are engaged in higher education, career planning, relationship formation, and identity development. According to Arnett (2000), emerging adulthood is characterized by increased independence from parents and caregivers without the complete assumption of enduring adult responsibilities. As individuals transition toward adulthood, they gain greater autonomy in making decisions about education, employment, relationships, and lifestyle while continuing to explore various possibilities before making long-term commitments.

Gratitude

McCullough, Emmons, and Tsang (2002) defined gratitude as a generalized tendency to recognize and respond with appreciation to the benevolence of others and the positive aspects of life. Similarly, Emmons and McCullough (2003) described gratitude as the recognition that one has obtained a positive outcome and the acknowledgment that external sources have contributed to that outcome. These definitions emphasize both cognitive and emotional components of gratitude. The cognitive aspect involves recognizing the value of benefits received, whereas the emotional component reflects feelings of appreciation, thankfulness, and acknowledgment.

According to Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000), positive psychology seeks to understand the conditions that allow individuals to flourish and lead meaningful lives. Gratitude aligns closely with this objective because it encourages individuals to focus on positive experiences, recognize sources of support, and cultivate appreciation for

life's benefits. Rather than denying difficulties or hardships, gratitude enables individuals to acknowledge positive aspects of their lives even in the presence of challenges. Research within positive psychology has consistently demonstrated that gratitude contributes to various indicators of well-being. Individuals who frequently experience gratitude tend to report greater life satisfaction, higher levels of positive affect, stronger interpersonal relationships, and increased psychological resilience.

The importance of gratitude within positive psychology extends beyond individual well-being. Gratitude fosters prosocial behaviour, empathy, compassion, and cooperation, thereby contributing to healthier interpersonal relationships and stronger communities. Consequently, gratitude is viewed not only as a personal strength but also as a social resource that promotes collective well-being.

Happiness Orientation

Happiness orientation, as defined by Peterson, Park, and Seligman (2005), is the orientations to happiness as the different routes through which individuals seek fulfilment and well-being. Happiness orientation refers to an individual's preferred way of pursuing and experiencing happiness. It reflects the goals, values, and motivations that guide behaviour toward achieving well-being. While some individuals primarily seek pleasure and enjoyment, others may derive happiness from engagement in meaningful activities, personal growth, or contributions to society. Happiness orientation therefore represents a relatively stable tendency that influences how individuals define, seek, and experience happiness in their daily lives.

Pathways to Happiness

One of the most influential contributions to the study of happiness orientation is the identification of multiple pathways through which happiness can be achieved. Peterson et al. (2005) proposed three primary orientations to happiness: the pleasant life, the engaged life, and the meaningful life.

The Pleasant Life

The pleasant life is rooted in the pursuit of positive emotions, pleasure, enjoyment, and comfort.

The Engaged Life

The engaged life involves achieving happiness through deep involvement in activities that fully capture an individual's attention and abilities.

The Meaningful Life

The meaningful life involves pursuing happiness through purpose, values, and contributions to something larger than oneself. Additionally, happiness orientation influences how individuals interpret life events and manage challenges. Those who view difficulties as opportunities for growth and learning may be better equipped to cope with adversity than those whose happiness depends solely on pleasurable experiences. Consequently, happiness orientation represents an important psychological resource that contributes to both well-being and adaptive functioning.

Coping Mechanisms

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) defined coping as constantly changing cognitive and behavioral efforts used to manage specific external and internal demands that are perceived as taxing or exceeding an individual's resources. Similarly, Carver, Scheier, and Weintraub

(1989) described coping as the collection of cognitive and behavioral strategies individuals employ to manage stress and regulate emotional responses. These strategies may be directed toward solving problems, managing emotions, seeking support, or avoiding distressing situations. Coping mechanisms therefore represent an important means through which individuals maintain psychological equilibrium in the face of challenges.

Effective coping enables individuals to maintain emotional balance, solve problems, and continue functioning despite adversity. Coping is influenced by multiple factors, including personality characteristics, cognitive appraisals, emotional resources, social support, cultural norms, and previous experiences.

Types of Coping Mechanisms

Problem-focused coping involves efforts directed toward addressing the source of stress. Individuals using this approach attempt to modify, eliminate, or manage the situation causing distress. Strategies may include gathering information, generating solutions, making plans, seeking practical assistance, or taking direct action. Emotion-focused coping involves efforts aimed at managing emotional reactions to stressful situations rather than changing the stressor itself. These strategies help individuals regulate feelings such as anxiety, sadness, frustration, or anger. Common emotion-focused coping strategies include emotional expression, acceptance, positive reinterpretation, relaxation techniques, mindfulness, seeking emotional support, and cognitive reframing.

Approach coping refers to efforts that involve confronting stressors directly

and actively engaging with challenges. Individuals employing approach coping acknowledge problems, seek information, generate solutions, and address difficulties constructively. Examples include planning, seeking support, cognitive restructuring, problem-solving, and acceptance

Avoidance coping involves efforts to evade, ignore, or withdraw from stressful situations. Individuals may attempt to distract themselves, deny the existence of problems, procrastinate, or disengage from challenging circumstances. Research has linked excessive avoidance coping to psychological distress, anxiety, depression, and reduced well-being.

Adaptive coping refers to strategies that promote adjustment, resilience, and psychological well-being. Examples include problem-solving, positive reframing, acceptance, seeking social support, planning, emotional regulation, and constructive self-reflection.

Maladaptive coping refers to strategies that may provide temporary relief but ultimately interfere with adjustment and functioning. Examples include denial, excessive avoidance, self-blame, behavioural disengagement, rumination, aggression, and substance use.

The developmental tasks of emerging adulthood often require individuals to develop greater autonomy, emotional regulation, and problem-solving abilities. Effective coping mechanisms support successful navigation of these challenges and contribute to psychological adjustment. Conversely, ineffective coping may increase vulnerability to stress, anxiety, and emotional difficulties. Research indicates that emerging adults who employ adaptive coping strategies

generally demonstrate higher levels of resilience, life satisfaction, and psychological well-being. Positive coping behaviours may therefore serve as important protective factors during this developmental period.

Need and Significance

Emerging adulthood is a developmental period marked by academic pressures, career-related uncertainties, changing social relationships, and increasing responsibilities. These challenges can generate significant stress, making it important to identify factors that promote adaptive coping and psychological well-being. The present study addresses this need by examining gratitude, happiness orientation, and coping mechanisms within a positive psychology framework.

The study is significant because it investigates not only the relationships among these variables but also the mediating role of happiness orientation in the relationship between gratitude and coping mechanisms. Examining this mediational pathway contributes to a deeper understanding of the psychological processes through which gratitude may promote adaptive coping. Theoretically, the findings may enhance understanding of how positive psychological resources facilitate adjustment and resilience.

The study also has practical significance. If gratitude and happiness orientation are associated with adaptive coping, they may serve as important targets for interventions aimed at enhancing student well-being. The findings may assist educators, counsellors, and mental health professionals in developing programs that foster gratitude,

promote positive orientations toward happiness, and strengthen coping resources among college students.

Furthermore, the study examines gender differences in gratitude, happiness orientation, and coping mechanisms, contributing to a better understanding of individual variations in psychological functioning. It is also relevant in the Indian context, where research examining these variables together remains limited.

Objectives

1. To examine the relationship between gratitude and happiness orientation among college students.
2. To examine the relationship between gratitude and coping mechanisms among college students.
3. To examine the relationship between happiness orientation and coping mechanisms among college students.
4. To assess gender differences in gratitude among college students.
5. To assess gender differences in happiness orientation among college students.
6. To assess gender differences in coping mechanisms among college students.
7. To assess the mediational role of happiness in the relationship between gratitude and coping mechanisms among college students.

METHOD

Participants

The study included emerging adults aged between 18 and 25 years. Both male and female students were considered for participation in the study. Participants were selected from various colleges within Kozhikode District, Kerala, to obtain a diverse sample of young adults from

different academic disciplines and backgrounds. The total sample consisted of 126 participants, including 63 males and 63 females.

Inclusion Criteria

- Emerging adults from college aged 18 to 25 years.
- Students currently enrolled in colleges within Kozhikode District, Kerala.
- Both male and female students were included in the study.
- Participants who were able to read and comprehend the questionnaire items in the language administered.
- Participants who voluntarily agreed to participate and provided informed consent.

Exclusion Criteria

- Individuals below 18 years or above 30 years of age.
- Individuals who were not currently enrolled in a college or higher education institution.
- Participants who failed to complete all the questionnaires or provided incomplete responses.
- Participants who did not provide informed consent for participation.
- Individuals who were unable to understand the questionnaire items adequately, which could affect the accuracy of their responses.

Measures Used

1. Gratitude, Resentment, and Appreciation Test (GRAT)

The Gratitude, Resentment, and Appreciation Test (GRAT) was developed

by Watkins, Woodward, Stone, and Kolts in 2003 as a multidimensional measure of dispositional gratitude, grounded in the conceptualisation of gratitude as a broader life orientation rather than a simple emotional response. The short form consists of 16 items organised across three subscales: resentment, which captures a sense of being deprived or treated unfairly by life; simple appreciation, which reflects the tendency to appreciate small pleasures and everyday experiences; and appreciation for others, which measures gratitude directed toward the people in one's life. Items are rated on a nine-point Likert scale, and the resentment subscale is reverse-scored, reflecting the authors' view that the absence of resentment is a meaningful component of a grateful disposition. The scale was designed to capture gratitude as a stable personality trait with cognitive, emotional, and social dimensions.

Reliability. Watkins et al. (2003) reported high internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients of .83 for the full short-form scale, and satisfactory reliability across individual subscales. Test-retest reliability has also been supported over moderate time intervals, reflecting appropriate temporal stability for a dispositional measure.

Validity. Convergent validity has been established through significant positive correlations with life satisfaction, positive affect, subjective well-being, and other gratitude measures such as the GQ-6, while discriminant validity is evidenced by negative associations with depression, envy, and hostile affect. The inclusion of the resentment subscale is a notable psychometric strength, as it captures a

dimension of ungrateful thinking not assessed by other gratitude instruments.

2. Orientations to Happiness Scale (OTH)

The Orientations to Happiness (OTH) scale was developed by Christopher Peterson, Nansook Park, and Martin Seligman in 2005, grounded in Seligman's authentic happiness theory, which identifies three distinct pathways through which individuals pursue a fulfilling life: pleasure, engagement, and meaning.

The scale consists of 18 items divided equally into three six-item subscales, with each subscale corresponding to one orientation - the hedonic pursuit of positive emotions, the eudaimonic experience of deep absorption and flow in activities, and the pursuit of purpose through connection to something larger than oneself. Items are rated on a five-point Likert scale, and the scale was designed within the positive psychology tradition to move beyond simplistic hedonic definitions of happiness toward a richer, virtue-informed understanding of human flourishing.

Reliability. Peterson et al. (2005) reported Cronbach's alpha coefficients of .82 for the pleasure subscale, .76 for engagement, and .81 for meaning, reflecting adequate to good internal consistency across all three dimensions. The three-factor structure has been replicated across multiple international samples, supporting the cross-cultural robustness of the theoretical model, though moderate intercorrelations between the engagement and meaning subscales have been noted in some studies.

Validity. Criterion validity has been demonstrated through significant positive



associations between all three subscales and life satisfaction, with the meaning orientation consistently emerging as the strongest predictor of subjective well-being across diverse adult populations.

3. Brief COPE

The Brief COPE was developed by Charles S. Carver in 1997 as an abbreviated version of the original COPE inventory, designed to measure the coping strategies individuals employ in response to stress.

The scale consists of 28 items organized into 14 two-item subscales, each capturing a distinct coping response such as active coping, planning, positive reframing, acceptance, self-blame, and behavioral disengagement, among others. Respondents rate each item on a four-point Likert scale based on how frequently they engage in each behavior when facing a difficult situation. Its flexibility allows it to be framed as either a dispositional measure of general coping tendencies or a situational measure targeting responses to a specific stressor, making it one of the most widely used coping inventories in psychological research.

Reliability. Internal consistency coefficients reported by Carver (1997) ranged from .50 to .90 across the 14 subscales, with approach-oriented subscales such as active coping and positive reframing yielding higher alpha values compared to avoidant subscales. While the two-item format of each subscale limits maximum reliability, the scale's factor structure has been consistently supported across diverse samples, broadly resolving into approach and avoidant coping dimensions.

Validity. Convergent validity has been established through meaningful associations with related constructs, including neuroticism, optimism, perceived stress, and psychological well-being across clinical and non-clinical populations.

Procedure For Data Collection

Data collection for the present study was conducted through direct administration of questionnaires among emerging adults aged 18 to 25 years in various colleges located within Kozhikode District, Kerala. Prior to data collection, permission was obtained from the respective college authorities to approach students for participation in the study. Participants were selected using a convenience sampling method based on the inclusion criteria established for the research.

Before participation, each student was provided with a detailed explanation regarding the purpose of the study, the nature of their participation, and their rights as participants. They were informed that participation was entirely voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any stage without any negative consequences. Participants were also assured that the information provided would be kept confidential and used solely for academic and research purposes.

After obtaining informed consent, the questionnaires were administered by the researcher in person. The assessment battery consisted of a demographic information sheet, the Gratitude Resentment and Appreciation Test (GRAT), the Orientation to Happiness Scale (OHS), and the Brief COPE Inventory. Participants were instructed to



read each item carefully and respond honestly based on their experiences and perceptions. Adequate time was provided for completing the questionnaires, and any queries regarding the instructions were clarified by the researcher. Upon completion, the questionnaires were collected, checked for completeness, and prepared for statistical analysis.

Statistical Analyses

Descriptive statistics were used to summarize and interpret the data through measures such as mean and standard deviation. Independent samples t-tests were conducted to examine gender differences in gratitude, happiness orientation, and coping mechanisms by comparing the mean scores of male and female participants. Pearson's product-moment correlation was employed to assess the strength and direction of the relationships among gratitude, happiness orientation, and coping mechanisms.

Statistical analyses, including descriptive statistics, Pearson's correlation, and independent samples t-tests, were conducted using SPSS. In addition, mediation analysis was performed using Jamovi to examine whether happiness orientation mediated the relationship between gratitude and coping mechanisms. The results were interpreted based on the predetermined level of statistical significance.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The analysis focuses on three key areas: (1) gender differences in gratitude and happiness orientation in coping mechanisms of emerging adults, (2) the relationship between gratitude and coping mechanisms of emerging adults, (3) the relationship between happiness orientation and coping mechanisms of emerging adults.

Table 1 Summary of relationship between gratitude and happiness orientation among emerging adults.

		Pleasure	Engagement	Meaningful	Happiness Orientation
	Pearson Correlation	.299**	.322**	.353**	.395**
Grat itude	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.000	.000	.000
	N	126	126	126	126

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

The table shows a correlation coefficient of 0.395 is statistically significant. This means the result is considered meaningful and not likely due to chance. The study found a moderate positive correlation between gratitude and happiness orientation ($r = .395$, $p < .001$)

among emerging adults, indicating that individuals with higher levels of gratitude tend to exhibit a stronger orientation toward happiness. This suggests that gratitude plays a significant role in shaping how individuals pursue and experience happiness. Students who frequently

acknowledge and appreciate positive aspects of their lives may be more inclined toward adaptive happiness orientations, such as seeking meaning, engagement, and positive experiences.

Furthermore, gratitude was found to be significantly and positively correlated with all three subdimensions of happiness orientation. A moderate positive correlation was observed between gratitude and pleasure ($r = .299, p < .001$), indicating that individuals with higher gratitude levels are more likely to seek enjoyment and positive experiences in their daily lives. Gratitude was also moderately correlated with engagement ($r = .322, p < .001$), suggesting that grateful individuals tend to become more deeply involved and absorbed in activities. Additionally, gratitude showed a moderate positive correlation with meaning ($r = .353, p < .001$), implying that grateful individuals are more likely to derive purpose and significance from their experiences and relationships.

The positive relationship between gratitude and happiness orientation observed in the present study suggests that individuals with higher levels of gratitude are more likely to pursue happiness through pleasure, engagement, and meaning. This finding is supported by the Orientation to Happiness theory proposed by Peterson, Park, and Seligman (2005),

which conceptualizes happiness as being achieved through three pathways: the pleasant life, the engaged life, and the meaningful life. The significant positive correlations between gratitude and each of these dimensions indicate that gratitude may facilitate a broader and more adaptive approach to attaining happiness.

The present findings are further supported by Jabeen et al. (2022), who reported significant positive relationships among gratitude, happiness, life satisfaction, and life orientation. Their findings suggest that individuals with higher levels of gratitude tend to experience greater happiness and maintain a more positive orientation toward life, thereby providing empirical support for the positive association between gratitude and happiness orientation observed in the present study. Similarly, Witvliet et al. (2019) found that gratitude was a significant predictor of happiness and hope and that gratitude-focused interventions produced increased happiness. These findings indicate that gratitude contributes to positive psychological functioning and fosters attitudes that support the pursuit of happiness. Collectively, these studies suggest that gratitude is associated not only with greater happiness but also with positive orientations toward life that may encourage individuals to seek pleasure, engagement, and meaning.

Table 2 *Summary of relationship between gratitude and coping mechanism among emerging adults.*

		Problem Focused Coping	Emotion Focused Coping	Avoidant Coping	Coping Mechanisms
Gratitude	Pearson Correlation	.376**	.229**	-.063	.227*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.010	.486	.011
	N	126	126	126	126

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2 tailed).

The table shows a correlation coefficient of 0.227 is statistically significant. This means the result is considered meaningful and not likely due to chance. The results indicated a statistically significant positive correlation between gratitude and coping mechanisms among emerging adults ($r = .227, p < .05$). Although the strength of the relationship was relatively weak, the finding suggests that individuals with higher levels of gratitude tend to employ more effective coping strategies when dealing with stress and challenges. Gratitude may contribute to a more positive outlook on life, enabling individuals to perceive stressful situations as manageable and to respond in constructive ways. This finding highlights the potential role of gratitude as a psychological resource that supports adaptive coping and resilience in the face of adversity.

Further analysis revealed significant positive correlations between gratitude and specific dimensions of coping. Gratitude demonstrated a moderate positive correlation with problem-focused

coping ($r = .376, p < .001$), indicating that individuals with higher gratitude levels are more likely to adopt active and solution-oriented approaches when confronting difficulties. A significant positive correlation was also observed between gratitude and emotion-focused coping ($r = .229, p < .01$), suggesting that grateful individuals may be more inclined to regulate their emotional responses and seek emotional support during stressful situations. In contrast, gratitude was not significantly related to avoidant coping ($r = -.063, p = .486$), indicating that gratitude does not appear to be associated with strategies characterized by denial, disengagement, or avoidance of stressors. Among the coping dimensions, the strongest relationship was observed between gratitude and problem-focused coping, suggesting that gratitude may be particularly relevant in promoting proactive and adaptive responses to life's challenges.

These findings are consistent with previous research demonstrating a positive association between gratitude and adaptive



coping strategies. The positive correlation between gratitude and coping mechanisms suggests that emerging adults with higher levels of gratitude are more likely to employ constructive strategies when dealing with stress and challenges. Although the relationship between overall gratitude and coping was relatively weak, the significant association indicates that gratitude may serve as an important psychological resource that facilitates effective stress management. The stronger correlation observed between gratitude and problem-focused coping, compared to emotion-focused coping, suggests that grateful individuals may be more inclined to actively address stressors and seek practical solutions rather than avoid or disengage from them.

The findings can also be explained through Fredrickson's Broaden-and-Build Theory (2001), which proposes that positive emotions broaden an individual's range of thoughts and actions and facilitate

the development of enduring psychological resources. As a positive emotional state, gratitude may broaden cognitive perspectives, enabling individuals to view stressful situations more constructively and identify effective solutions to challenges. Over time, this process may contribute to the development of coping resources that promote resilience and psychological well-being. The findings are further consistent with Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) Transactional Model of Stress and Coping, which emphasizes the role of cognitive appraisal in determining coping responses.

Grateful individuals may be more likely to appraise stressful situations as manageable and perceive available resources more positively, thereby increasing the likelihood of engaging in problem-focused and adaptive emotion-focused coping strategies.

Table 3 Summary of relationship between Happiness Orientation and Coping Mechanism among emerging adults.

		Coping Mechanisms
Happiness Orientation	Pearson Correlation	.424**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	126

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2 tailed)

The study found a moderate positive correlation between happiness orientation and coping mechanisms ($r = .424$, $p < .01$) among emerging adults, indicating that individuals with a stronger orientation toward happiness are more likely to utilize effective coping strategies.

This suggests that students who actively seek happiness, through meaningful engagement, positive experiences, or a sense of purpose, are better equipped to handle stress and challenges. Such individuals may be more inclined to adopt adaptive coping strategies, including

problem-solving, positive reframing, and seeking social support, rather than relying on maladaptive responses.

This finding can be understood in relation to the conceptualization of happiness orientation as reflecting different pathways to well-being, such as pleasure, engagement, and meaning (Seligman, 2002). Individuals with a strong orientation toward meaning and engagement are more likely to perceive stressful situations as manageable or

growth-enhancing, which in turn facilitates more adaptive coping. Furthermore, a higher orientation toward happiness may contribute to greater emotional stability and resilience, enabling individuals to regulate their responses to stress more effectively. Therefore, this result highlights the role of happiness orientation as an important psychological factor in promoting healthy coping mechanisms among emerging adults.

Table 4 Summary of Mean, Standard Deviation and *t*-value of Gratitude among emerging adults.

	Mean		Standard Deviation		<i>t</i>	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Male	Female	Male	Female		
Gratitude	92.51	102.65	12.296	13.287	-4.447	.000

This table compares the means, standard deviations and *t*-value of gratitude among emerging adults. It includes the mean scores of gratitude (Male = 92.51, Female = 102.65), the standard deviations (Male = 12.296, Female = 13.287), the *t*-value (-4.447), and the significance level (Sig. 2-tailed = .000).

The results of this study indicate a significant gender difference in gratitude, with female students ($M = 102.65$) scoring higher than male students ($M = 92.51$), and the difference being statistically significant ($t = -4.447$, $p < .001$). This suggests that female emerging adults tend to experience or express higher levels of gratitude compared to their male counterparts.

The present study found a significant gender difference in gratitude, with female emerging adults reporting higher levels of gratitude than males. This finding is consistent with previous research suggesting that women tend to experience and express gratitude more frequently than men. For instance, Kashdan, Mishra, Breen, and Froh (2009) found that females generally report greater gratitude and appreciation in interpersonal relationships compared to males. Similarly, Froh, Yurkewicz, and Kashdan (2009) reported higher levels of gratitude among female adolescents and young adults, indicating that gender differences in gratitude may emerge early and persist into adulthood.



The findings may be explained through socialization perspectives, which suggest that females are often encouraged to be more emotionally expressive, relationship-oriented, and appreciative of social support, whereas males may be socialized toward greater independence and emotional restraint. As gratitude is closely linked to recognizing and valuing

benefits received from others, females may be more likely to acknowledge and express grateful feelings. Additionally, gratitude is considered a prosocial emotion that strengthens interpersonal bonds, and women generally place greater emphasis on relational connectedness and social support, which may contribute to higher gratitude levels.

Table 5 Summary of Mean, Standard Deviation and t-value of happiness orientation among emerging adults.

	Mean		Standard Deviation		t	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Male	Female	Male	Female		
Happiness Orientation	10.643	11.625	1.400	1.4080	-3.926	.000

This table compares the means, standard deviations and t-value of happiness orientation among emerging adults. It includes the mean scores of happiness orientation (Male = 10.643, Female = 11.625), the standard deviations (Male = 1.400, Female = 1.4080), the t-value (-3.926), and the significance level (Sig. 2-tailed = .000).

The findings of the study reveal a significant gender difference in happiness orientation, with female students ($M = 11.625$) scoring higher than male students ($M = 10.643$), and the difference being statistically significant ($t = -3.926$, $p < .001$). This indicates that female students tend to have a stronger orientation toward happiness compared to males.

The present study revealed a significant gender difference in happiness orientation, with female emerging adults reporting higher levels of happiness

orientation than their male counterparts. This finding is consistent with the positive psychology literature, which suggests that women often place greater emphasis on emotional experiences, interpersonal relationships, and the pursuit of meaningful and fulfilling life experiences, all of which contribute to happiness orientation.

The findings indicate that female emerging adults may be more likely to seek happiness through pleasure, engagement, and meaning compared to males.

The results can be understood in light of the Orientation to Happiness framework proposed by Peterson, Park, and Seligman (2005), which conceptualizes happiness as being attained through the pursuit of pleasure, engagement, and meaning. Higher happiness orientation among females may



reflect a greater tendency to invest in social relationships, emotional connectedness, and personally meaningful activities, factors that are closely associated with these pathways to happiness.

Research has also shown that women generally report greater emotional awareness and expressiveness, which may facilitate engagement with experiences that enhance subjective well-being and life satisfaction.

Table 6 Summary of Mean, Standard Deviation and t-value of coping mechanisms among emerging adults.

	Mean		Standard Deviation		t	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Male	Female	Male	Female		
Coping Mechanisms	72.57	74.73	12.996	9.632	-1.059	.292

This table compares the means, standard deviations and t-value of coping mechanisms among emerging adults. It includes the mean scores of coping mechanisms (Male = 72.57, Female = 74.73), the standard deviations (Male = 12.996, Female = 9.632), the t-value (-1.059), and the significance level (Sig. 2-tailed = .292). The results of the study indicate no significant gender difference in coping mechanisms between male (M = 72.57) and female students (M = 74.73), as the obtained value was not statistically significant ($p > .05$).

This suggests that both male and female emerging adults employ coping strategies at relatively similar levels.

The present study found no significant gender difference in coping mechanisms among emerging adults, indicating that male and female participants employed coping strategies at relatively similar levels.

The gender difference was not statistically significant. This finding suggests that gender may not be a determining factor in the overall use of coping mechanisms among emerging adults. Instead, coping responses may be influenced more by individual differences, situational factors, personality characteristics, and available social resources than by gender alone.

Table 7 Mediation Analysis with Happiness in Relationship Between Gratitude and Coping Mechanisms Among Emerging adults

Type	Effect	Estimate	SE	95% C.I. (a)		β	z	p
				Lower	Upper			
Indirect	gratitude $\Rightarrow$ happiness	0.1303	0.03951	0.0529	0.2078	0.1563	3.299	<.001
	happiness $\Rightarrow$ coping							
	gratitude $\Rightarrow$ coping							
Component	gratitude $\Rightarrow$ happiness	0.0426	0.00884	0.0253	0.0600	0.3947	4.823	<.001
	happiness $\Rightarrow$ coping							
	gratitude $\Rightarrow$ coping	3.0567	0.67598	1.7318	4.3816	0.3961	4.522	<.001
Direct	gratitude $\Rightarrow$ coping	0.0589	0.07301	-0.0842	0.2020	0.0706	0.806	0.420
Total	gratitude $\Rightarrow$ coping	0.1892	0.07261	0.0469	0.3315	0.2270	2.606	0.009

Table 7 presents the mediation analysis examining the mediating role of happiness orientation in the relationship between gratitude and coping mechanisms among emerging adults. The results indicate a statistically significant indirect effect of gratitude on coping mechanisms through happiness orientation, with an estimate of 0.130, standard error = 0.039, $\beta = 0.156$, $z = 3.299$, $p < .001$, and a 95% confidence interval ranging from 0.052 to 0.208. This finding suggests that gratitude

influences coping mechanisms indirectly through happiness orientation. Therefore, happiness orientation serves as a significant mediator in the relationship between gratitude and coping mechanisms.

The individual paths of the mediation model were also examined. Gratitude significantly predicted happiness orientation, with an estimate of 0.042, standard error = 0.009, $\beta = 0.395$, $z = 4.823$, $p < .001$, indicating that higher

gratitude is associated with higher levels of happiness orientation. Similarly, happiness orientation significantly predicted coping mechanisms, with an estimate of 3.057, standard error = 0.676, $\beta = 0.396$, $z = 4.522$, $p < .001$. This finding indicates that individuals with stronger happiness orientation tend to employ more effective coping mechanisms.

The direct effect of gratitude on coping mechanisms, after controlling for happiness orientation, was not statistically significant, with an estimate of 0.059, standard error = 0.073, $\beta = 0.071$, $z = 0.806$, $p = .420$. This suggests that gratitude does not exert a significant direct influence on coping mechanisms when the effect of happiness orientation is taken into account.

However, the total effect of gratitude on coping mechanisms was found to be statistically significant, with an estimate of 0.189, standard error = 0.073, $\beta = 0.227$, $z = 2.606$, $p = .009$. This indicates that gratitude has a significant overall effect on coping mechanisms. Overall, the significant indirect effect and non-significant direct effect suggest that happiness orientation fully mediates the relationship between gratitude and coping mechanisms.

These findings found that happiness orientation significantly mediated the relationship between gratitude and coping mechanisms among emerging adults. The significant indirect effect indicates that gratitude contributes to the development of effective coping mechanisms through its influence on happiness orientation. Specifically, individuals with higher levels of gratitude were more likely to exhibit a stronger

orientation toward happiness, which in turn was associated with better coping mechanisms. Furthermore, the direct effect of gratitude on coping mechanisms became non-significant after the inclusion of happiness orientation in the model, suggesting that happiness orientation fully mediates this relationship. These findings imply that gratitude may not directly influence coping behaviours; rather, it enhances coping by fostering a greater tendency to pursue happiness through pleasure, engagement, and meaning.

The findings are consistent with the Orientation to Happiness framework proposed by Peterson, Park, and Seligman (2005), which suggests that individuals achieve well-being through three pathways: pleasure, engagement, and meaning. Individuals with a stronger orientation toward happiness are more likely to engage in positive experiences, become actively involved in meaningful activities, and develop a purposeful approach to life. Such characteristics may enable them to cope more effectively with stressors and challenges. The present findings suggest that gratitude may facilitate the adoption of these positive orientations, which subsequently enhance coping abilities.

The mediation effect can also be understood through Fredrickson's Broaden-and-Build Theory (2001). According to this theory, positive emotions broaden individuals' thought-action repertoires and contribute to the development of enduring personal resources. Gratitude, as a positive emotional state, may broaden cognitive and behavioural responses by encouraging individuals to focus on positive aspects of life and appreciate available resources.

This broadened perspective may foster greater happiness orientation, characterized by the pursuit of pleasure, engagement, and meaning, which in turn promotes more adaptive coping strategies. Therefore, happiness orientation may function as an important psychological mechanism through which gratitude contributes to effective coping.

The findings are further supported by Seligman et al. (2005), who demonstrated that gratitude interventions significantly increased happiness and well-being. Their findings suggest that gratitude enhances positive psychological functioning, which aligns with the present result showing that gratitude promotes coping through increased happiness orientation. Similarly, Peterson, Park, and Seligman (2005) found that individuals who pursued happiness through pleasure, engagement, and meaning reported greater life satisfaction and psychological well-being. The present study extends these findings by demonstrating that happiness orientation not only contributes to well-being but also serves as a pathway through which gratitude influences coping mechanisms. Thus, happiness orientation appears to be an important psychological process linking gratitude to adaptive functioning.

During this developmental stage, individuals encounter numerous developmental challenges that require effective coping skills. The results suggest that grateful emerging adults may be better equipped to cope with these challenges because gratitude fosters a stronger orientation toward happiness, enabling them to approach life experiences with greater positivity, engagement, and purpose. The partial mediation observed in

the present study highlights the importance of happiness orientation as a psychological resource that translates grateful attitudes into adaptive coping behaviours.

Implications

The findings of the present study contribute to the understanding of positive psychological functioning among emerging adults. The significant positive relationships among gratitude, happiness orientation, and coping mechanisms suggest that positive psychological strengths help young adults manage developmental challenges and stressful life situations. The results indicate that fostering gratitude and positive orientations toward happiness may enhance coping abilities and psychological well-being.

Gratitude emerged as an important psychological resource associated with both happiness orientation and adaptive coping mechanisms. This suggests that cultivating gratitude may promote resilience, emotional well-being, and effective adjustment among college students. Similarly, the identification of happiness orientation as a significant mediator provides insight into the process through which gratitude influences coping. The findings suggest that gratitude enhances coping partly by fostering positive pathways to happiness, including pleasure, engagement, and meaning.

The findings have important implications for mental health professionals, counsellors, and educational institutions. Positive psychology interventions that strengthen gratitude, promote well-being, and develop adaptive coping skills may help students manage stress more effectively and improve



overall psychological adjustment. Educational institutions may also support student well-being through programs that encourage gratitude practices and healthy coping strategies.

Additionally, the study contributes to the growing positive psychology literature by providing evidence for the interconnected nature of gratitude, happiness orientation, and coping mechanisms.

Limitations of the Study

The study was conducted on a relatively small sample of 126 college students, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to the broader population of emerging adults.

The sample consisted exclusively of college students, restricting the applicability of the findings to non-student populations and emerging adults from different educational or occupational backgrounds.

The study included an equal number of male and female participants; however, other demographic factors such as socioeconomic status, academic discipline, family background, and place of residence were not considered.

The study relied entirely on self-report measures, namely the GRAT Scale, Orientation to Happiness Scale, and Brief COPE Scale. Responses may therefore have been influenced by social desirability, response bias, or subjective interpretation.

The study employed a cross-sectional research design, which limits the ability to establish causal relationships among gratitude, happiness orientation, and coping mechanisms.

Although happiness orientation was found to mediate the relationship between gratitude and coping mechanisms, the study cannot determine the directionality of these relationships due to its correlational nature.

The study focused only on gratitude, happiness orientation, and coping mechanisms. Other psychological variables that may influence coping, such as resilience, optimism, hope, emotional intelligence, self-esteem, and social support, were not examined.

The Brief COPE Scale was analysed primarily using overall coping scores for the mediation analysis. Therefore, the specific pathways through which gratitude and happiness orientation influence different coping styles were not explored in detail.

Cultural, social, and environmental factors that may shape gratitude, happiness orientation, and coping behaviours were not specifically investigated.

The findings are limited to the specific geographical and institutional settings from which the participants were recruited and may not fully represent emerging adults from diverse cultural and regional backgrounds.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The findings of the present study revealed significant positive relationships among gratitude, happiness orientation, and coping mechanisms among emerging adults. Individuals with higher levels of gratitude were more likely to report greater happiness orientation and more effective coping abilities, indicating that gratitude functions as an important psychological

resource in managing stress and life challenges. Similarly, higher happiness orientation was associated with better coping mechanisms, suggesting that pursuing happiness through meaningful engagement and positive experiences contributes to adaptive coping. Gratitude was positively related to problem-focused and emotion-focused coping, while no significant relationship was found with avoidant coping, highlighting its association with adaptive coping strategies. Gender differences indicated that female participants scored significantly higher than males on gratitude and happiness orientation, whereas no significant difference was observed in overall coping mechanisms. Furthermore, the mediation analysis demonstrated that happiness orientation significantly mediated the relationship between gratitude and coping mechanisms, with findings suggesting a full mediation effect. This indicates that gratitude contributes to better coping primarily through enhancing individuals' orientation toward happiness and meaningful life experiences.

Suggestions For Further Research

- Future studies may include larger and more diverse samples of emerging adults to enhance the generalizability and reliability of the findings.
- Researchers may examine these variables among emerging adults from different educational backgrounds, occupational groups, and cultural settings to gain a broader understanding of the relationships among gratitude, happiness orientation, and coping mechanisms.
- Longitudinal studies may be conducted to examine how gratitude, happiness orientation, and coping mechanisms develop and influence one another over time.
- Future research may employ experimental or intervention-based designs to determine whether gratitude-enhancement programs can improve happiness orientation and coping abilities among emerging adults.
- Comparative studies may be conducted between college students and non-student populations to explore whether educational experiences influence gratitude, happiness orientation, and coping mechanisms.
- Researchers may investigate additional psychological variables such as resilience, optimism, hope, emotional intelligence, self-esteem, life satisfaction, and social support to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of factors influencing coping mechanisms.
- Future studies may explore the individual dimensions of happiness orientation, including pleasure, engagement, and meaning, to determine their specific contributions to coping mechanisms.
- Researchers may examine the different subdimensions of coping separately, such as problem-focused coping, emotion-focused coping, and avoidant coping, to better understand the pathways through which gratitude and happiness orientation influence coping behaviour.



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