

Gratitude and Family Support as Predictors of Meaning in Life Among Students Working on Their Undergraduate Thesis

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Abstract. *This study aimed to examine the relationship between gratitude and family support and the level of meaning in life among students completing their thesis. The population of this study consisted of undergraduate students completing their undergraduate thesis. A proportional random sampling technique was employed, resulting in a total of 137 respondents. The instruments used included a meaning in life scale, a gratitude scale, and a family support scale. Data were analyzed using multiple regression with SPSS 26.0 for Windows. The findings indicated that gratitude and family support simultaneously have a significant and positive relationship with meaning in life. In other words, higher levels of gratitude and family support are associated with higher levels of meaning in life among students completing their thesis. These findings highlight the importance of internal psychological factors and social support in enhancing students' psychological well-being, and provide a basis for developing positive psychology-based interventions and counseling services in higher education settings.*

Keywords: family support, gratitude, meaning of life, university students

Abstrak. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui hubungan antara rasa syukur dan dukungan keluarga dengan tingkat kebermaknaan hidup pada subjek penelitian, yaitu mahasiswa yang sedang menyelesaikan skripsi. Populasi dalam penelitian ini adalah mahasiswa yang sedang menyusun skripsi di Fakultas Ushuluddin dan Studi Agama, Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Intan Lampung. Penelitian ini menggunakan *proportional random sampling* dengan jumlah responden sebanyak 137 orang. Instrumen yang digunakan meliputi skala kebermaknaan hidup, skala rasa syukur, dan skala dukungan keluarga. Data kemudian dianalisis regresi berganda dengan bantuan perangkat lunak SPSS 26.0 for Windows. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa rasa syukur dan dukungan keluarga secara simultan memiliki hubungan yang signifikan dan positif dengan kebermaknaan hidup. Artinya, semakin tinggi rasa syukur dan dukungan keluarga, semakin tinggi pula kebermaknaan hidup mahasiswa yang sedang menyusun skripsi. Temuan ini menegaskan pentingnya faktor psikologis internal dan dukungan sosial dalam meningkatkan kesejahteraan psikologis mahasiswa,

serta menjadi dasar pengembangan intervensi berbasis psikologi positif dan layanan konseling di perguruan tinggi.

Keywords: family support, gratitude, meaningfulness of life, students

A. INTRODUCTION

College students are a social group undergoing higher education and are often positioned as *agents of change* due to their capacity for critical, logical, and scientific thinking (Hidayat, 2019). This role implies not only academic responsibility but also the expectation to contribute meaningfully to society (Cahyani & Akmal, 2017).

Students are then required to complete academic assignments, including a thesis, to complete their undergraduate studies. The hope is that students can apply the knowledge they gain during their studies to research, just as with a thesis (Kinansih, 2011). However, in practice, completing a thesis is not merely an academic task but also a psychological challenge. Many students experience difficulties such as low motivation, stress, and uncertainty about their future, which can hinder their academic progress (Hidayat, 2019).

Research has shown that increased coping skills and positive emotional states are influenced by levels of meaningfulness in life. This finding is based on research by Mohseni, Iranpour, Naghibzadeh-Tahami, Kazazi, and Borhaninejad (2019), which shows that having meaning in life can help individuals face challenges and avoid psychological problems such as stress and even depression. Moreover, a study conducted by Cao et al. (2020) involving 7,143 students found that a significant proportion of them experienced some kind of anxiety which largely triggered by delays in academic activities. These findings indicate that psychological perspective was one of an essential factor of students' ability to complete their studies.

One important psychological construct that helps individuals in such challenges is meaning in life. Meaning in life refers to an individual's understanding and awareness of their existence and purpose, which significantly influences both mental and physical well-being (Steger, Frazier, Oishi, & Kaler, 2006; Gumilar &

Uyun, 2009). Research shows that individuals with a strong sense of meaning in life tend to embed better coping strategies, higher level of resilience, and more positive emotional states (Mohseni et al., 2019). Conversely, a lack of meaning in life is associated with feelings of emptiness, anxiety, poor adjustment, and even more severe psychological issues (O'Connor & Chamberlain, 1996; Kurniawan & Widyana, 2013).

For students working on their thesis—typically in late adolescence or early adulthood—the ability to find meaning in life becomes particularly important (Wardani, 2012). At this developmental stage, individuals are expected to have clearer life goals and personal values. When students are able to internalize meaning in their lives, they are more likely to approach academic challenges with persistence and optimism.

Several factors may contribute to the development of meaning in life, including internal and external resources. Firstly, internal factor such as gratitude has been identified as a positive psychological trait that enhances individual's well-being and fosters a sense of purpose. Furthermore, an external factors, such as family support plays a significant role in providing emotional, instrumental, and motivational assistance, especially during stressful academic periods (Cahyani & Akmal, 2017). Students who receive strong family support tend to feel more secure and motivated in completing their academic responsibilities.

Despite the growing body of research on meaning in life, previous studies—such as Hidayat (2019) and Gumilar & Uyun (2009) have generally examined this construct in isolation or in relation to single predictors. There is still limited research that simultaneously investigates the combined role of gratitude and family support in shaping meaning in life, particularly among students who are in the critical phase of thesis completion. This indicates a clear research gap in understanding how internal (gratitude) and external (family support) factors interact in influencing students' psychological well-being. Based on the above background, the objective of this study

is to analyze the relationship between gratitude and family support with meaning in life among students who are currently working on their undergraduate thesis.

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

Meaning in life is a fundamental psychological construct which reflects an individual's understanding of purpose, direction, and significance in their existence (Steger et al., 2006). Based on a view of psychological and spiritual perspective, meaning in life is not formed in isolation but is influenced by both internal and external factors. In the context of this study, gratitude represents an internal factor, while family support represents an external factor that together may shape an individual's sense of meaning in life.

From a spiritual perspective, gratitude is closely related to an individual's awareness of divine blessings and their relationship with God (Putri, 2020). In the spiritual dimension, gratitude is a way for humans to remember their creator, Allah SWT. Grace encompasses all kinds of blessings, a mercy bestowed by Allah SWT upon His people. This gratitude plays a crucial role in helping individuals find their purpose in life, as through gratitude, one can develop a sense of surrender and deepen their adherence to His teachings (Gumilar & Uyun, 2009). This state of gratitude even has the potential to increase the meaning of one's life (Bastaman, 2007; Aturohma, et al., 2025)

Gratitude can be understood as a positive emotional and cognitive response to the recognition of benefits received, which encourages individuals to interpret life events more positively (McCullough, Emmons, & Tsang 2002). Individuals with high levels of gratitude tend to perceive life as meaningful because they are able to appreciate their experiences, including challenges, as part of a greater purpose (Bastaman, 2007; Gumilar & Uyun, 2009). In this sense, gratitude functions as a psychological resource that strengthens positive appraisal, life satisfaction, and overall well-being (Kolts et al., 2003; Wulandari, 2018).

In addition to internal factors, meaning in life is also shaped by social relationships, particularly family support. According to Bastaman (2007), meaningful life is closely associated with deep interpersonal relationships characterized by emotional closeness, acceptance, and mutual support. Family support includes emotional, informational, and instrumental assistance that can enhance an individual's psychological well-being and sense of security.

Family support plays a crucial role in helping individuals cope with stress and life challenges (Husin et al., 2019). For students working on their thesis, family support can reduce psychological pressure, increase motivation, and provide a sense of stability. This supportive environment enables individuals to interpret their experiences more positively and enhances their sense of life meaning. Previous empirical studies also confirm that family support is positively associated with meaning in life (Hidayat, 2019; Edwina & Kokom, 2020). Based on the theoretical synthesis above, the conceptual framework of this study proposes that gratitude (internal factor) and family support (external factor) are positively associated with meaning in life among students who are writing their thesis.

Hypotheses

Based on the conceptual framework, the hypotheses of this study are formulated as follows:

H1: There is a positive and significant relationship between gratitude and meaning in life among students writing their undergraduate thesis.

H2: There is a positive and significant relationship between family support and meaning in life among students writing their undergraduate thesis.

H3: Gratitude and family support simultaneously have a positive and significant relationship with meaning in life among students writing their undergraduate thesis.

C. METHODS

This study uses a quantitative research design. Data collection was conducted in two stages to enhance methodological rigor. The psychological scale is a data collection instrument used to measure psychological attributes, and is typically presented in written format (Azwar, 2019). Data collection was conducted in two stages. First, preliminary interviews were carried out to obtain initial field insights regarding students' psychological conditions during thesis completion. These interviews served as an exploratory step to inform the development and contextual relevance of the research instruments. Second, the main data were collected using structured psychological scales administered to respondents.

In this study, the instruments were administered directly to respondents in a controlled setting after informed consent was obtained. Respondents were instructed to read each statement carefully and select one response that best reflected their condition. The average time required to complete all instruments ranged from 20–30 minutes. Samples were taken using the proportional sampling method which includes each sub-population, where the sample size is adjusted to the members of each group (Sugiyono, 2015).

The population of this study consisted of 682 students at the Faculty of Ushuluddin, UIN Raden Intan Lampung, who were currently writing their undergraduate thesis. The sample was selected using proportional random sampling to ensure representation from each study program. Based on Arikunto's guideline (2002) which states that when the population exceeds 100 people, sampling of 20%-25% or more can be done. As a result, the number of samples obtained consisted of 137 students who were working on their theses. The respondents consisted of both male and female students aged between 20 and 25 years. They were students from various study programs within the Faculty of Ushuluddin and Religious Studies. This diversity reflects variations in academic backgrounds and supports the representativeness of the sample. Because the population in this study is not

homogeneous and is divided into several groups, this proportional sampling method was chosen to produce a sampling technique called proportional random sampling technique (Sugiyono, 2015).

The psychological scale used in this study is the Likert scale, which are commonly used to measure attitudes, opinions, and perceptions toward a particular phenomenon (Sudaryono, 2017). Each scale consisted of four response options: strongly disagree (STS), disagree (TS), agree (S), and strongly agree (SS). Positive items were scored from 4 (SS) to 1 (STS), while negative items were reverse-scored from 1 (SS) to 4 (STS).

Three main variables were measured in this study:

1. Meaningfulness of life, measured using a scale developed by the researcher based on the theory of Crumbaugh and Maholick (in Yulianti & Cahyani, 2019). The scale consists of 30 items covering dimensions such as purpose in life, life satisfaction, and personal meaning. Example item: "I feel that my life has a clear purpose." The scale demonstrated high internal consistency with a reliability coefficient of 0.903.
2. Gratitude, measured using a modified version of the scale developed by Wulandari (2018). This scale consists of 28 items representing dimensions such as appreciation, positive feelings, and recognition of benefits received. Example item: "I feel thankful for the support I receive from others." The reliability coefficient for this scale is 0.907.
3. Family support, measured using a modified scale adapted from Wicaksono (2019). The scale consists of 27 items encompassing emotional support, informational support, and instrumental support. Example item: "My family provides encouragement when I face difficulties." The reliability coefficient is 0.889.

D. RESULTS

The data collected during the data collection phase were analyzed to test the hypotheses in this study. This study has three hypotheses tested. Hypothesis testing was conducted to determine whether there is a relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable based on the research hypotheses. Multiple regression analysis was used in the hypothesis testing in this study, and this analysis was conducted using the SPSS 26.0 for Windows application. Hypothesis testing of the first was conducted to assess whether there is a correlation between gratitude, support received from family, and the level of meaning in life of students completing their thesis. The results of the first hypothesis test are as follows:

Table 1
Results of Hypothesis One Testing

Model	R	R Square	F	Sig. F
1	,786	,618	108,553	,000**

The regression analysis indicates that the model is statistically significant ($F = 108.553$, $p < .01$), suggesting that gratitude and family support jointly predict students' meaningfulness of life. The R value of .786 shows a strong relationship between the predictors and the dependent variable. The R Square value of .618 indicates that 61.8% of the variance in meaningfulness of life can be explained by gratitude and family support, while the remaining 38.2% is influenced by other factors not examined in this study.

Table 2
Results of Hypothesis Testing Two and Three

Variables	R	Sig.	Note:
Gratitude with the Meaningfulness of Life	0.718	0,000	Positive-Significant
Family Support with Meaningful Life	0.679	0,000	Positive-Significant

Individually, both predictors show positive and significant contributions. Gratitude demonstrates a strong positive relationship with meaningfulness of life ($\beta = .718$, $p < .01$), indicating that higher levels of gratitude are associated with greater perceived life meaning. Similarly, family support also shows a significant positive relationship ($\beta = .679$, $p < .01$), suggesting that increased support from family contributes to higher levels of life meaningfulness. Overall, these findings highlight that both internal factors (gratitude) and external factors (family support) play substantial roles in enhancing students' sense of meaning in life during the thesis completion process.

E. DISCUSSION

This study explores three hypotheses and applies data analysis using SPSS 26.0 for Windows. The findings from testing the first hypothesis indicate a correlation between the level of gratitude and support from family with the level of meaning in the lives of students who are completing their thesis research. The correlation coefficient (R) is 0.786 and the F value is 108.533, with a significance level of 0.00 ($p < 0.01$). The independent variables consisting of gratitude and support received by family contribute 61.8% to the dependent variable, namely meaning in life. However, beyond confirming statistical relationships, the findings provide important insights into the psychological dynamics of late adolescence and emerging adulthood.

One of the key findings is that gratitude shows a stronger contribution compared to family support. This can be explained from a developmental perspective. Students who are completing their undergraduate thesis are generally in the stage of late adolescence or emerging adulthood, a period characterized by identity exploration and increasing autonomy. The gratitude variable significantly contributed 35% to the meaning in life variable ($\beta=0.488$; $p<0.01$), and a correlation coefficient (r_{xy}) of 0.718 was obtained. These results indicate that increasing the level of gratitude has the potential to increase the level of meaning in life in students

completing their theses. This concept is in line with Krause's view (2006), which states that gratitude can stimulate the formation of positive meaning in an individual's life. This finding also supports the research of Gillett, Joseph, Linley, Maltby, and Wood (2008), which shows a positive correlation between gratitude and happiness, good social relationships, individual development, and increased meaning in life.

In contrast, family support functions as an important external factor that complements this internal process. Although its contribution is lower than gratitude, it remains statistically significant. The variable of support received from family contributed significantly by 26.8% to the variable of meaning in life ($\beta=0.395$; $p<0.01$), and a correlation coefficient (r_{xy}) of 0.679 was obtained. These results indicate that increasing the level of support received from family has the potential to increase the level of meaning in life for students completing their theses. This statement is consistent with Bastaman's findings (2007), which states that support received from family has an impact on increasing an individual's psychological well-being and is also related to increased meaning in life. This finding also supports the view put forward by Hidayat (2019) where the role of the family can stimulate an increase in meaning in life for final semester students.

Through testing the three hypotheses above, it appears that in this study, the gratitude variable has a greater influence on the level of meaningfulness of life in students completing their theses compared to the family support variable. This highlights the importance of integrating both personal and social dimensions in understanding students' psychological well-being (Islamia, 2019). This finding is in line with previous studies conducted by Miftahurrahman (2018) which found that there is a correlation between gratitude and meaning in teachers' lives, as seen from the value (r_{xy}) of 0.310 and $p = 0.01$ ($p < 0.05$). Another study conducted by Uyun and Gumilar (2009) also produced findings that were in line, namely a significant correlation between gratitude and meaning in students' lives based on a correlation coefficient of 0.490 and $p = 0.00$ ($p < 0.05$).

Hidayat (2019) also conducted a study on a similar topic, resulting in findings that the factors influencing meaning in life for final-year students are love, new experiences, including gratitude, and social support. In the context of students writing their theses, gratitude was also found to be an important factor contributing to achieving significant meaning in life. These findings align with Krause's statement (2006), which states that increased gratitude has the potential to inspire an increased sense of meaning in life. Furthermore, it is also worth noting that another independent variable of meaning in life, namely family support, has a significant impact on the level of meaning in life for students working on their final assignments or thesis.

In this context, it appears that family support has a significant and positive relationship with students' sense of meaning in life. This finding is similar to the research by Edwina and Kokom (2020), which found that significant correlation was obtained regarding family support for the meaning of life in the elderly in Kemandungan Village, marked by a coefficient value (r_{xy}) of 0.397 and $p = 0.01$ ($p < 0.05$). A study with a similar topic was carried out by Manihuruk and Zuraida (2020) also found a correlation between support received from the family and the meaning of life, indicated by a correlation coefficient of 0.088 and $p=0.00$ ($p<0.01$).

Overall, this study contributes to the field of psychology and counseling by emphasizing that students' meaningfulness of life is not solely determined by academic factors, but also by the interaction between internal strengths and external support systems. Integrating these aspects into counseling practice may lead to more holistic and effective interventions.

F. CONCLUSION

This study found that gratitude and family support play a significant role in enhancing the sense of meaning in life for students completing their theses. However, there are 38.2% other factors not examined in this study that may also influence the level of meaning in life. The results of this study imply that interventions focused on

increasing gratitude and strengthening family support can be effective strategies for enhancing the sense of meaning in life for students struggling to complete their theses. Further research is needed to explore other factors such as self-efficacy and peer support.

From a practical perspective, these findings have important implications for campus counseling services, particularly in the field of guidance and counseling. First, interventions should not only focus on reducing academic stress but also on strengthening students' internal resources, especially gratitude. Second, counseling services should also consider involving family as part of the support system. Finally, this study contributes to the field of psychology and counseling by emphasizing that students' well-being during thesis completion is not solely determined by academic factors, but also by psychological strengths and social support systems. Integrating these aspects into counseling practices can lead to more holistic and effective interventions.

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