

# Periodic Research

## A Study to Improve Adjustment Level of Students Having Disruptive Behaviour Through Gratitude Intervention



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### Abstract

This paper discusses the importance of gratitude in improving the adjustment level of students having disruptive behaviour. The prevalent strategies for improving the disruptive behavior of students in a desirable manner ignore the fact that it could be better to enhance the positive values in them rather to suppress the negative/problematic behavior. It was found on comparing the pre-intervention scores with post-intervention scores that gratitude intervention leads to better level of adjustment which ultimately reduces the problems in their personal and academic life and also for their parents, siblings, and teachers. In this paper effort has been made to explain the process that how to shift the focus of students on positive, appreciable things in their lives instead of negative.

**Keywords:** Adjustment, Gratitude, Gratitude-Intervention, Disruptive Behavior.

### Introduction

Gratitude represents positive psychological responses to benefits that individuals have experienced. Gratitude has been conceptualized as an emotion, an attitude, a moral virtue, a personality trait, or a coping response. Gratitude means to recognize or appreciate the benefit or gain one has received from someone else. The source could be human or non-human. McCullough et al. (2001) proposed that gratitude possesses three psychological features that are relevant to processing and responding to prosocial behavior: It is a (a) benefit detector, (b) reinforcer and (c) motivator of prosocial behavior.

### Gratitude and Psychological & Physical Well-Being

Empirical findings regarding the gratitude and its intervention offer an insight to improve social relations and personal life too. Research has shown that gratitude is a pleasant state and is linked with positive emotions including contentment, happiness, pride, and hope. It is related with positive mood, optimism, satisfaction with life, vitality, religiousness and spirituality, grateful people reported less depression and envy, better physical health, exercised more regularly, report fewer physical symptoms, better sleep duration and quality, helpful, supportive, forgiving and empathic towards others (McCullough et al., 2002), better in achieving academic goals. A related benefit was observed in the realm of personal goal attainment: Participants who kept gratitude lists were more likely to have made progress toward important personal goals (academic, interpersonal and health-based) over a two-month period compared to subjects in the other experimental conditions.

Gratitude is an intrinsically rewarding state that leads to other positive subjective experiences. Gratitude strengthens a sense of spirituality which further increases the well-being. Gratitude also broadens the scope of cognition and facilitates coping with stress and adversity (Aspinwall, 1998).

Fredrickson (1998) proposed in her broaden and build model of positive emotion that positive emotions broaden mindsets and build enduring resources. These resources function as reserves to be drawn on in time of need. She stated that gratitude effectively increases well-being as it builds psychological, social, and spiritual resources. Gratitude encourages people to focus on the benefits they have received from others leads them to feel loved and cared for by others. Below five areas are given with the potential aspects to improve:

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## Personality

1. More optimistic
2. Less materialistic
3. More spiritual
4. Less self-centered
5. More self-esteem

## Health

1. Better Sleep
2. Keeps the Doctor Away
3. Longevity
4. More Energy
5. More Exercise

## Emotional

1. More Resilience
2. More Good Feeling
3. Happier Memories
4. Less Envy
5. More Relaxed

## Social

1. More friendly
2. Better marriage
3. More respect
4. Deeper relationships

## Career

1. Better Management
2. Increased Networking
3. Goal Achievement
4. Improved Decision Making
5. Increased Productivity

## Cultivating Gratitude

Cultivating gratitude through interventions promotes the positive development. Research has shown that inducing or prompting gratitude elicited more gratitude and has a positive effect on subjects which leads to heightened well-being over time. State of gratefulness led to emotional, physical or interpersonal benefits. Emmons & McCullough (2003) conducted a series of gratitude interventions as counting blessing, keeping gratitude journal etc. and found positive results. Miller (1995) describes a simple, four-step, cognitive-behavioral approach for cultivating gratitude. Research on gratitude suggests that people can move their set point for happiness upward to some degree, enough to have a measurable effect on both their outlook and their health. Research revealed that gratitude is a virtue one can learn with efforts and practice.

## Disruptive Behavior

The problems people experience as adults are often visible much earlier in life. Problems and difficulties experience during childhood or adolescence can play an important role in the emergence of various disorders during adulthood. Psychologists note that many childhood problems can be described in terms of two basic dimensions: Externalizing problems are disruptive behaviors that are often a nuisance to others, such as aggression, hyperactivity, impulsivity and inattention; in contrast internalizing problems are ones in which children show deficits in desired behaviors, such as difficulty in interacting with peers or problems with expressing their wishes and needs to others.

Disruptive behaviors are the most common single reason why children are referred to psychologists for diagnosis and treatment. These disruptive behaviors are quite common: As many as 10 percent of children may show such problems at some time or other.

Disruptive behaviors could be defined as the childhood mental disorders involving poor control of impulses, conflict with other children and adults, and, in some cases more serious form of antisocial behavior. Disruptive behaviors are divided by DSM-IV into two major categories: oppositional defiant disorder and conduct disorder.

Oppositional defiant disorder involves a pattern of behavior in which children have poor control of their emotions or have repeated conflicts with parents, teachers, and other adults. ODD may lead them to more serious difficulties later in life-one of which may be conduct disorder. ODD starts when children are quite young (ages three to seven), but conduct disorder begins somewhat later, often when children enter puberty. CD involves more serious antisocial behaviours that go beyond throwing tantrums or disobeying rules; these are behaviours that are potentially harmful to the child, to others, or to property. Children with conduct disorder are often aggressive and physically cruel to persons or animals, deliberately destroy others property, lie, skip school, or run away from home. Many steal from, threaten, or harm their victims, committing such crimes as shoplifting, forgery, breaking into buildings or cars, mugging and armed robbery.

Conduct disorder usually begins before age 10. About 6 to 16 percent of boys and 2 to 9 percent of girls may display this disorder. Children with a mild conduct disorder may improve overtime, but in severe cases the pattern continues into adulthood, when it may lead to antisocial personality disorder or other psychological problems (Kratzer & Hodgins, 1997). Conduct disorders are often more serious in their consequences than ODD because of the violation of important societal norms and disregard of the rights of others.

## Causes of Disruptive Behavior

Cases of disruptive behavior have been linked to genetic and biological factors, parenting factors, drug abuse, and poverty, psychological factors are also important. Children with disruptive behavior often show insecure attachment to their parents and often live in negative environments that may involve poverty, large family size, and being placed in foster care. Their parents often use coercive childrearing practices, which may actually encourage disruptive behavior. Such children face troubled parent-child relationships, family conflict, and family hostility (Klein et al., 1997; Hoge, Andrews, & Leschied, 1996). They have poor peer relations, lacking social and academic skills.

## Treatment

Prevention programs try to change unfavorable social conditions. Preventive measures involve helping children to develop skills that will give them successful experiences, both as youngsters and as they grow older, for example—training opportunities, recreational facilities, health care, financial help (scholarships etc.), better parenting skills, social skills and discipline techniques etc. (Burnette & Murray, 1996). Prosaically inclined social support appears to be an important factor in treatment programs for such children.

## Objective

To study the effect of gratitude intervention on adjustment level of students having disruptive behavior.

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## Hypothesis

It is hypothesized that there will be no significant effect of gratitude intervention on adjustment level of students having disruptive behavior.

## Variable

1. Independent variable- Gratitude Intervention
2. Dependent variable- Adjustment level of students

## Sample

In the present study purposive sampling was done. The study was conducted on students of first year of graduation studying in Agra College, Agra. To identify the symptoms of disruptive behavior in students, help from their teachers was taken. On the basis of teachers report 34 students were identified as having disruptive behavior. Further, those students were selected for whom reporting done by two or more teachers were same. Finally, the sample comprised of 25 students. The sample consisted of boys (17) as well as girls (8), age ranged 17-19 years. The sample represented average socio-economic status.

## Experimental Design

Design of the study- The present study is an action research. It is a pretest-posttest single group design. In this design the effect of gratitude intervention is judged by making a comparison between pre-intervention and post-intervention scores. The pre-intervention scores indicates the initial state of the selected subject and post-intervention scores indicates the state of the effect of gratitude intervention.

## Tool

AICS (Adjustment Inventory for College Students) constructed by Prof. A.K.P. Sinha & Prof. R.P. Sinha was used for the purpose of measuring adjustment level of students. Inventory has 102 items for measuring adjustment scores in five different areas and as a whole.

## Procedure of the Data Collection

Data collection of the present study was conducted in Agra College, Agra. The permission from the Principal of the college was taken. Students were selected for the gratitude intervention with the help of teachers. Then the adjustment inventory was administered on students prior to gratitude intervention. Following this, the students taken up for this study were told about the objectives of the experiment with a purpose to establish rapport with them; focus was given on the positive consequences of gratitude. With the co-operation of related teachers, time-schedule for providing intervention to the students was determined. Then intervention was given to students in group through daily discussion about gratitude with stories, examples, and its positive effects, they were also encouraged to pay attention and note down incidents in which they felt gratitude, appreciation for others. Students were asked to go deeply through the gratitude intervention-sessions, so that they could understand the importance of gratitude in life. The intervention lasted for about 3 weeks at the rate of 40 minutes per day. At the last day of intervention Adjustment inventory was again given to students for collecting post-intervention scores.

## Analysis of Data

Mean, S.D. and 't'-test was used for studying the effect of gratitude intervention.

## Result

The objective was to study the effect of gratitude intervention on adjustment level of students having disruptive behavior. Data was analyzed by using 't'-test to determine the effect of gratitude intervention. Results are given in table, the difference in pre-intervention and post-intervention scores seems clear with mean and S.D..Result reveals that obtained 't' value is 4.55 with df 24 is significant at .01 level of significance. Which indicates that there is a significant difference in pre and post-intervention adjustment scores of students.

**Table : mean, SD, and 't' values (n=25)**

	N	M	SD	t	P
Pretest	25	45.04	6.86	4.55	.01*
Posttest	25	36.64	5.64		

## Discussion

Objective of the study was to analyze the effect of gratitude intervention on adjustment level of students having disruptive behaviour. For analyzing results gratitude has been taken as an attitude in the present study which people acquire through the process of socialization. There are several factors (affective, behavioral, cognitive) which plays an important role in the formation of attitude and attitude change.

Students having disruptive behavior shows behavior that is problematic for others and themselves, and getting no approval or acceptance by the society and people whether they are parents, friends, siblings or teachers. Thus present study focused on the requirement to change that behavior by changing their attitude towards society, people, themselves and different problems faced by them related to different areas of life. The changed attitude proved helpful in improving the adjustment level of students as a whole. Gratitude provides students an entire new perspective to saw the society and their different problems & complaints. It also provide an inner strength to face them, to cope-up with them. That ultimately improves their adjustment scores. As Maslow said that every human being is positive at its inner core, redirection of students towards gratitude is a search for that positive strength, which they already have. We just need to push them towards it for changing their behavior and attitude.

ABC model of attitude explains that how an information and its repetition takes place in our frame of mind that further effects our feeling regarding it and ultimately some changes could be seen in our behavior. Broaden-and-Build Theory of Positive Emotion by Fredrickson also helps in explaining the results. According to this theory negative emotions narrow the focus and restrict the behavioral range. Positive emotions generate broad thought action repertoires, that ultimately builds durable physical, intellectual and social resources. And such resources of strength can be used at the time of adversity or need. Students having disruptive behavior can use them whenever negative emotions emerge in their mind and could succeed in suppressing and modify that behavior. Gratitude intervention enables the students to view the different aspects of life with changed viewpoint.

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