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GRATITUDE PRACTICES AND RESILIENCE BUILDING: A SYSTEMATIC EXPLORATION OF THEIR RELATIONSHIP

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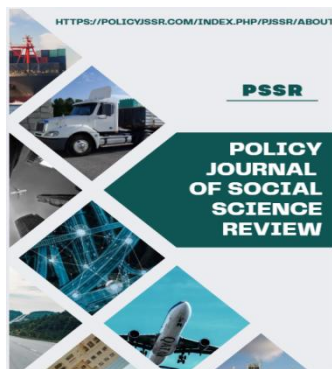
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ABSTRACT

Gratitude is an important life skill that adds value and meaning to people's life. Over the years gratitude interventions have become very common. Gratitude practices are encouraged in schools, colleges, universities and in offices. Literature is full of evidences that how helpful gratitude is in one's own life and for others. Yet, researchers have less focused on how gratitude interventions help individuals during adversity. The study intends to understand the relationship between practicing gratitude on the development of resilience. The current research is a systematic review of six intervention based studies that explains the influence of gratitude interventions on resilience. The data was selected by following PRISMA guidelines and the inclusion criteria of the study. The analysis proved the two of the study hypothesis to be true.

Keywords: Gratitude, Intervention, Resilience, Systematic Analysis.



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Introduction

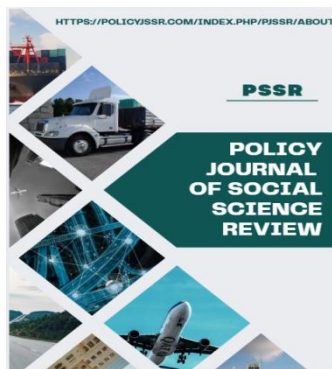
Positive psychology and the use of positive interventions show great benefits in people's life. Researches have consistently shown how positive characteristics like gratitude and its techniques have remarkable influence on people. Gratitude creates a long term impact on a person's wellbeing; it increases life satisfaction and improves self-esteem (Rash et al., 2011), (Chauhan et al., 2024).

Gratitude is the expression of appreciation; it is frequently defined as being thankful. Researchers often describe gratitude as showing thankfulness to something that is significant in a person's life (Sansone & Sansone, 2010). In other words, when people realize the benefit they receive from someone or something and show their appreciation towards the benefactor that is called gratitude.

Zeng (2023) has identified gratitude as a coping mechanism and

moral characteristic. A moral virtue because it creates goodness in the society and as a coping mechanism it helps people to focus on what good is present in the life regardless of all the challenges and hardships. Tan et al. (2021) has shown that when people mindfully practice gratitude journaling it reduces depression, anxiety and overall suffering; reducing psychological distress. This shows how gratitude builds resilience among people by cultivating positivity.

Resilience enables people to effectively overcome the difficulties of life by adapting positive ways mentally, emotionally and behaviorally (APA Dictionary of Psychology, 2018). Herrman et al. (2011) defines resilience as an approach of living where people move towards growth despite of the ongoing difficulties in life. Peoples personality, social systems the biological mechanism all of these factors contribute towards a person's resilience.



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Investigation shows that resilience is something that is beyond overcoming one's hardships through positivity. Resilience is a process that occurs when there is a risk, and with that risk in life the individual grows (Fleming & Ledogar, 2008). Researches indicate that for the risk management of disasters the model and concept of resilience works best for individuals and entire communities (Graveline & Germain, 2022).

Resilience maintains the psychological functioning of an individual under difficult circumstances (Yilmaz, 2017); increases happiness and spiritual wellbeing in people (Karahan et al., 2024). Therefore, it is important to have resilience in one's self.

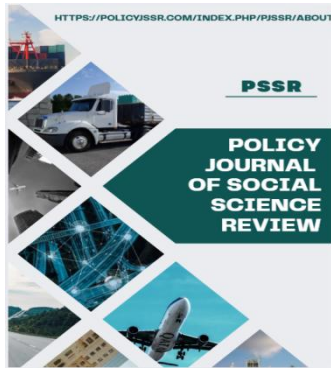
Theoretical Framework

Improvement and development of resilience is crucial for the survival in today's complex world. Being resilient is a known phrase but building and enhancing resilience is something that people do not talk about or are not

taught commonly. However, Increasing and developing resilience is not a very difficult phenomenon. One can easily built and increase the ability to be resilient in one's life through many ways and one of them is by practicing gratitude.

The gratitude practices impact on the resilience development is understood by the theory of amplification. Amplification simply means increasing or multiplying; this theory explains that the emotion of gratitude magnifies the positivity within an individual which creates a more fulfilling relationship with one's own self. This increase i.e. the amplification in positive emotions makes a person feel capable enough to survive the hardships that life throws at them (Homan & Hosack, 2019).

Another way to understand the mechanism of how gratitude can contribute towards the resilience development could be achieved through comprehending the broaden and build



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model by Fredrickson (2004). As per this model gratitude instils positive emotions in an individual, this instillation of positive emotions expands the individual's thoughts process in positive direction; which then results in positive reactions, empowering a person with positive characteristics and resources. These personal resources are human beings survival tools that help people in coping well with difficulties. Hence making people resilient.

The above mentioned theoretical models explain how gratitude builds resilience among people.

Research Question:

1. What is the relationship between gratitude practice and resilience building?
2. Does individuals' engaging in regular gratitude practices demonstrate higher resilience as compared to those who do not engage in gratitude practices regularly?
3. Are there any gender differences between gratitude practice and resilience building?

Research Objective:

- . To find out the relationship between gratitude practices and resilience building.
- . To find out if individuals engaging in regular gratitude practices will demonstrate higher resilience as compared to those who do not engage in gratitude practices regularly.
- . To find out the gender differences between gratitude practices and resilience building.

Hypothesis:

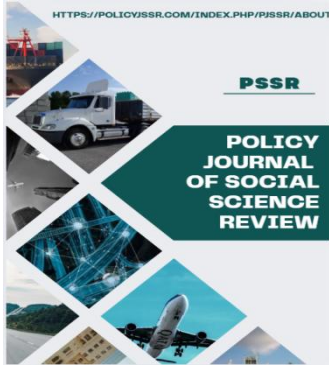
H1: There will be a significant relationship between gratitude practices and resilience building.

H2: Individuals who engage in regular gratitude practices will demonstrate higher resilience as compared to those who do not.

H3: There will be significant gender differences between gratitude practices and resilience building.

Litratue Review

Gratitude and resilience are the known positive characteristics that work towards



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the betterment of people and their lives. Diniz et al. (2023) study shows that gratitude constructs positive emotions which play a significant role in keeping a person mentally healthy.

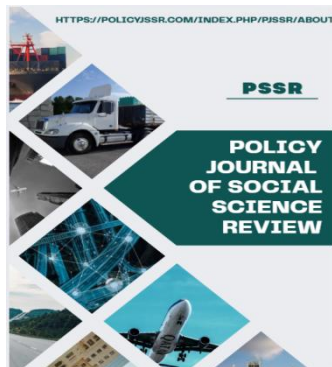
Gratitude is a skill that could be learned and practiced easily; through gratitude journaling or gratitude lists i.e. writing about what one are grateful for, by expressing gratitude to others via writing gratitude letters or sending gratitude messages (Randolph, 2017). Individuals can also develop gratitude skills simply by setting gratitude reminders or enrolling in gratitude intervention programs.

Gratitude skills help people by keeping them mindful of the pleasant things they have in their lives; this increases hopefulness and wellbeing (Ali et al., 2022). During bad times if someone keeps practicing gratitude it will keep the person intact with the goodness in life despite of the hardships; this positivity of gratitude spreads and makes

a person keep going on in life by creating hopefulness in adverse life situations, making a person resilient.

Resilience improves people's life in many ways; it was found that resilience trainings lowered the stress and depression levels among individuals (Kunzler et al., 2020). In working individuals resilience protects people from work related stress and burnout (Shatté et al., 2016). Resilience is found to increase happiness in people (Da Silva Pigati et al., 2022) and improve life satisfaction (Aboalshamat et al., 2018). Resilience keeps an individual's mental wellbeing healthy during stressful situations.

Resilience is an ability that could be learned with the help of several techniques, one of them is through the practice of gratitude. Resilience and gratitude are found to increase wellbeing and happiness in young adults. Gratitude improves resilience which helps students to perform better academically (Yan et al.,



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2024). Study shows that gratitude and resilience increases social behaviours among people (Alamri & Al-Abyadh, 2024).

Gratitude and resilience are found to be a protective factor when people are facing difficulty in life. Researches have shown that both gratitude and resilience act as a buffer and protect people from post-traumatic stress. Vieselmeyer et al. (2016) study shows that how after a horrifying life incident people were able to cope effectively due to the presence of resilience in them and being grateful. The results showed that people who suffered from trauma were able to grow because they had resilience and gratitude in them.

Resilience and gratitude are essential qualities that all humans possess. Both gratitude and resilience have a religious significance in people's lives. Evidence shows that gratitude and resilience are religious notions. Many religions promote the practice of

gratitude towards others and god. The religious scholars not only guide the followers to be grateful but also preach to be resilient during hardships and trust god. People who follow religious practices have greater resilience (Pourkord et al., 2020; Religiosity is positively linked with resilience (Schwalm et al., 2021) and gratitude (Watkins et al., 2024).

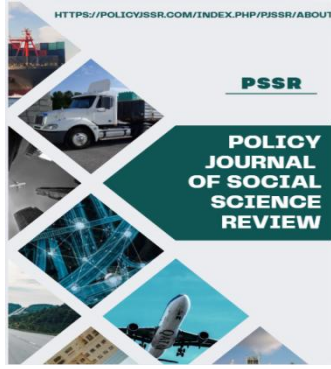
Method

Sample

The data for this systematic analysis was selected from online and print journals. Specific webpages were targeted to collect the data like PubMed, ResearchGate, SpringerLink and PsycInfo. The guidelines of Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analysis (PRISMA) were followed during the data collection procedure.

Inclusion Criteria

Studies that have intervention of gratitude of any kind and assessed its impact on resilience were included in this



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study. All the researches that were conducted within 10 years were made part of this study. Studies that assessed participants before intervention and compared the results after intervention, and compared among groups were included.

Exclusion Criteria

Researches that assessed gratitude and resilience in other ways rather looking the direct gratitude practices impact on resilience were not included. The studies that were conducted more than 10 years ago were not included in this research.

Table 1

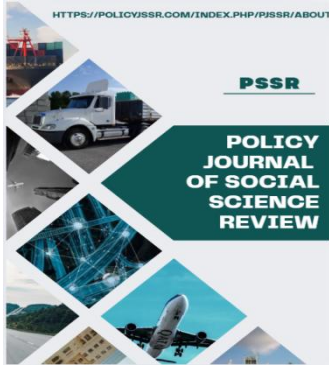
Relevant key terms and words used for searching the data

| Key words | |
|-----------|---|
| 1 | Gratitude, Gratefulness, Grateful, Appreciation, Thankfulness |
| 2 | Resilience |
| 3 | Resilience building, Resilience enhancement, Resilience Development, Resilience Improvement |
| 4 | Impact, Effectiveness, Correlation, Relationship |
| 5 | Practice, treatment, approaches, Intervention |

Procedure

Data Extraction

The key terms used to search the data were 1) Gratitude and its similar terms like gratefulness, thankful, appreciation, 2) Interventions, treatment, practices, 3) resilience, 4) resilience building, resilience development, resilience enhancement, resilience improvement 5) Impact, Effect, Effectiveness. These terms were created by both the authors of the study.



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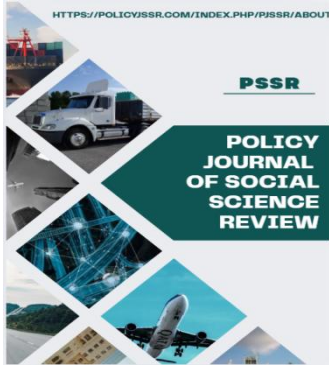
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Table 1 show the significant terms and words used to identify the significant researches for the present study.

Study Selection

After the initial search the data gathered was 1355 studies. Which were compiled in a excel file for further process. After removing the duplicates and investigating the titles 378 researches were left for further screening. The authors then thoroughly filtered out the most relevant studies as per the inclusion criteria by evaluating the abstracts. All those

research articles that included gratitude interventions direct impact on resilience were filtered out for the next step. The next phase was of reading the full text of each included study, both the authors investigated each of the study deeply which resulted in eliminating a few more researches based on several factors and mutual consensus. After this phase N= 6 studies were included.



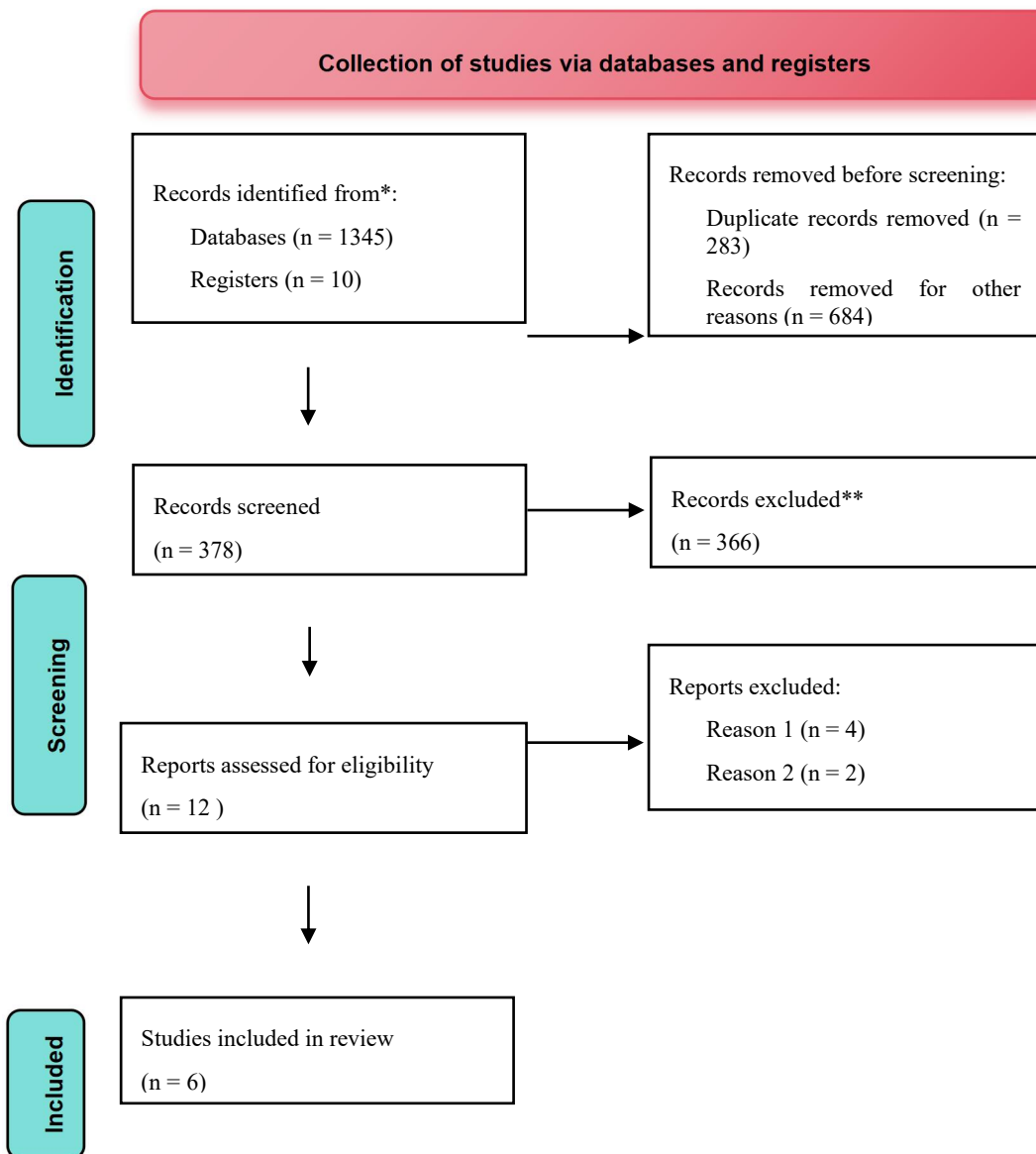
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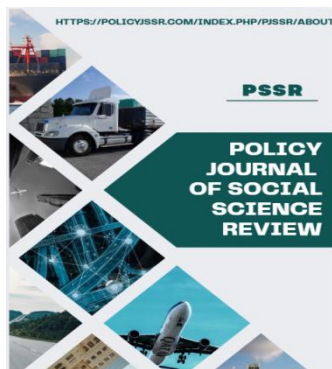
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Figure 1

PRISMA flow diagram





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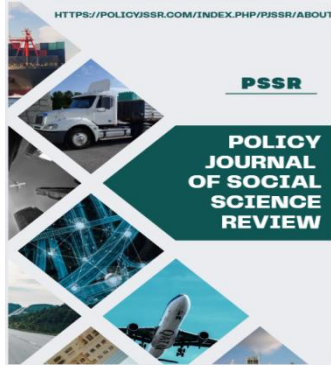
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ANALYSIS

Table 2

Important facts of the researches including authors name, year of publication, number of participant, type of intervention, Time period of intervention and measures

| | Authors and Year | Sample size | Type of Gratitude Intervention | Duration of Intervention | Measures |
|---|-----------------------------|-------------|---|--------------------------|---|
| 1 | Klibert et al. (2019) | 48 | Gratitude worksheets Gratitude lists | 15 mins | PANAS CD-RISC CSES RSPWB-SF |
| 2 | Folkerts (2021) | 32 | Gratitude text messages | 20 days | BRS PSS SWEMWBS |
| 3 | Kalamatianos et al. (2023) | 69 | Classes and lectures Gratitude journal | 5 Weeks | LOT-R SHS GQ6 mDES CD-RISC |
| 4 | Salces-Cubero et al. (2018) | 124 | Good things happened in the last 6 months Optimism-based interventions Savoring activities. | 4 Sessions, 70 mins each | MEC SWLS GADS PANAS SHS RS |



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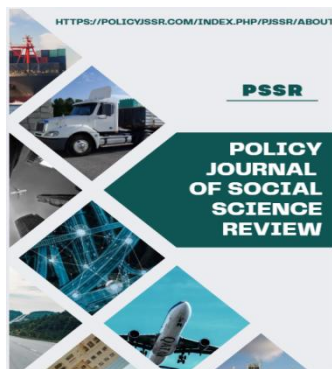
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| | | | | | |
|---|----------------------|-----|--------------------------------|----------|--|
| 5 | Gabana et al. (2020) | 18 | Sports related gratitude tasks | 8 weeks | MHC-SF CD-RISC YSEQ GQ-6 CART-Q |
| 6 | Wilson (2016) | 110 | Gratitude text messages | 3 months | 18-question inventory- Modified GQ6, focus learning+resilience items |

Note. PANAS (The Positive and Negative Affect Scale), RSPWB-SF (Ryff Scales for Psychological Wellbeing-Short Form), CSES (Coping Self-Efficacy Scale), CART-Q (The Coach-Athlete Relationship Questionnaire), YSEQ (The Youth Sport Environment Questionnaire), mDES (the Modified Differential Emotions Scale), SHS (the Subjective Happiness Scale), LOT-R (the Life Orientation Test-Revised), SWLS (Satisfaction With Life Scale), GQ-6 (Gratitude Questionnaire-six item form), OHQ (The Oxford Happiness Questionnaire), The Heatherton & Polivy Self-esteem Scale, BRS (Brief Resilience Scale), SWEMWBS (The Short Warwick-Edinburgh Mental

Wellbeing Scale), PSS (perceived stress scale), CD-RISC (the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale), MHC-SF (The Mental Health Continuum-Short Form), GADS (The Goldberg Anxiety and Depression Scale), MEC (Mini-Examen Cognoscitivo), RS (The Resilience Scale)

Table 2 represents all the significant details of each of the study included in this analysis. The table specifies the year of publication, authors name and the type of gratitude interventions that were used in the study, the time duration of the interventions applied and the scales used to assess the study variables.



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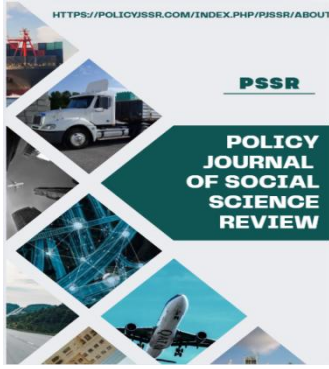
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Wilson (2016) inspected gratitude interventions effect on 110 college students. The results showed that the student who received the treatment and practiced gratitude over a span of 3 months had increased level of gratitude and resilience. Additionally, the gratitude interventions were found to increase the focus of students while studying.

Research has shown numerous benefits of gratitude intervention on all age groups. A study conducted on older adults showed that gratitude interventions and savouring interventions had increased positivity, life satisfaction, resilience and decreased negative impact when compared to the groups that had received optimism related intervention and control group. Moreover, the in-depth results revealed that gratitude and savouring both has no impact on depression, whereas optimism had reduced depression among the participants; 1 month post intervention tests show that resilience scores declined (Salces-Cubero et al., 2018).

Klibert et al. (2019) studied on a randomized controlled trial where participants were either introduced to a 3 time gratitude intervention or were allocated to control group after experiencing a positive situation. People who received gratitude intervention had more coping self-efficacy and resilience when matched to the group that did not receive intervention. Moreover, the results showed that gratitude treatments help people to have a long-term effect of positive emotions.

Another significant research was done on athletes; a population that undergoes extreme stress and physical strain almost every day. The study demonstrates that when gratitude interventions were carried with athletes it showed significantly positive impacts. Gabana et al. (2020) conducted a study where the gratitude practices were performed relevant to the experience of sports. The study assessed participant before intervention, after and 1 month after the intervention as well. Four



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groups were created based on 4 conditions. In pre-test there were no differences among the groups. This intervention was 8 weeks long and included interpersonal gratitude and meditation to cultivate gratitude among the participants. The groups were compared and results were analysed which displayed that the gratitude approaches increased participants resilience, gratitude, mental health and team cohesion across the time and among the groups.

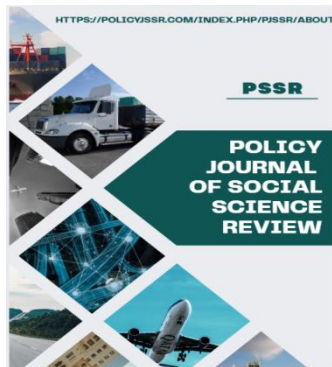
Gratitude interventions are proven to reduce stress and improve mental wellbeing. Keeping this in view Folkerts (2021) investigated and found out that a 20 day gratitude based intervention not only increased resilience and mental wellbeing of the participants but also reduced their stress levels. The intervention was based on sending gratitude messages to the treatment group.

A 5 week gratitude treatment program based on gratitude lectures, classes and journaling showed positive impact on happiness and optimism. However, gratitude practices had no effect on participants resilience, positive & negative emotions (Kalamatianos et al., 2023).

Discussion

This analysis included a total of 6 researches out of 1345 research studies on the gratitude intervention and its impact on resilience. All of the studies were randomized control trials.

Investigations reveal the impact of gratitude practices on resilience development. Study demonstrates that when students practiced gratitude it increased resilience among them (Wilson, 2016); in older adult's resilience was improved due to gratitude interventions (Salces-Cubero et al., 2018). Consistent findings were seen in Klibert et al. (2019)



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study that showed that gratitude techniques increased resilience among university students.

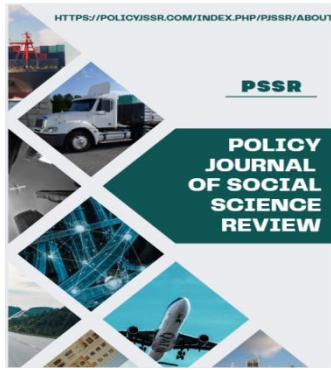
Gratitude applications were found to be fruitful when provided to athletes by increasing their resilience (Gabana et al., 2020). Sending gratitude text messages improved people's resilience (Folkerts, 2021). Conversely, Kalamatianos et al., (2023) findings are contradictory to all the included studies; it shows that gratitude interventions did not produce any effect on participant's resilience.

All this data shows that gratitude interventions have a significant impact on resilience and these interventions are found to build resilience among people except for one research. This proves that the 1st hypothesis of the current systematic analysis is true, which is that there will be a significant relationship between gratitude practices and resilience building.

The data also shows that participants in the intervention group have a generous impact on resilience when matched to the non-intervention group. This proves the 2nd hypothesis of this study as well that is 'Individuals who engage in regular gratitude practices will demonstrate higher resilience as compared to those who do not'.

However, the 3rd hypothesis of the study that is 'There will be significant gender differences between gratitude practices and resilience building' could not be proved right or wrong as all the studies that were included in this systematic analysis did not investigate the gender differences.

The lack of investigation of gender differences in all the researches could be because of the small sample sizes. Additionally, the researchers did not include equal male and female participants as it is evident from the analysis that two studies had a majority of female participants, one research had



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more male participants, 1 research had only female participants and 2 researches did not specify participant's gender.

Additionally, the analysis also shows that gratitude interventions not only build resilience but also promotes other positive characteristics like happiness and optimism (Kalamatianos et al., 2023), mental wellbeing (Folkerts, 2021), (Gabana et al., 2020), life satisfaction, self-efficacy (Klibert et al., 2019).

Along with the enhancement of resilience, the gratitude approaches increase students focus on the studies (Wilson, 2016) and among athletes gratitude practices were found to makes team connection strong (Gabana et al., 2020). Furthermore, gratitude interventions were found to reduce negative emotion (Salces-Cubero et al., 2018) and stress (Folkerts, 2021).

All the 6 studies included in this systematic analysis showed numerous advantages of practicing gratitude in

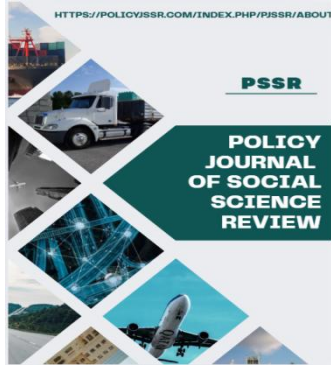
people; which includes the improvement in the resilience. Resilience is found to be a significant factor that contributes towards better wellbeing and coping.

Conclusion

Gratitude practices have several benefits for people of all ages, from various backgrounds and professions. Most importantly the use of gratitude approaches build resilience in people which helps people overcoming their life stressors.

This systematic analysis included 6 researches out of which five researchers showed that gratitude practices develop resilience among people. However, one study revealed that the use of gratitude skills have no impact on resilience. The studies also reveal the significance of gratitude approaches in building other positive characteristics and reducing the negative emotions and stressors of life.

This analysis also brings a significant fact in consideration that is the lack of identification of the impact of



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gratitude intervention on specific gender, and the impact of resilience building on the different genders. Understanding the gender differences is essential in all researches and surprisingly all the studies present in this systematic analysis did not investigate the gender differences.

Limitation

The present studies limitations include manual search of researches due to which some studies might have been missed out, all the studies included were from a specific time period which again excludes a lot of literature that might hold relevant important information. Another limitation is that the study includes all the researches that were published in English language only; leaving behind the contributions in other languages.

Recommendation

The recommendation for future research is that it should increase the data size by adding researches from various languages, researches that have measured the variables both qualitatively and

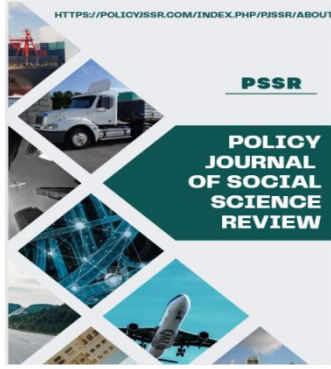
quantitatively, and increase the time period in order to get more insight into gratitude interventions and its impact of resilience.

Future Direction

The future researchers could do more in-depth work by analyzing the cultural factors, socioeconomic impact, gender differences and other significant areas of people lives.

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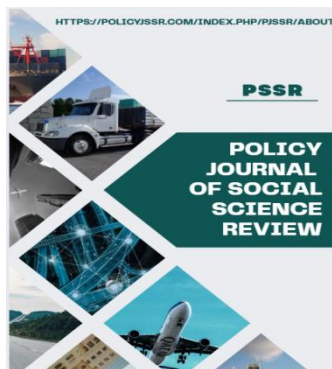


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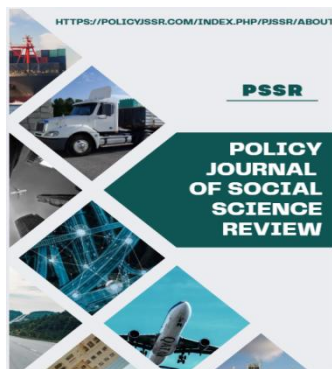


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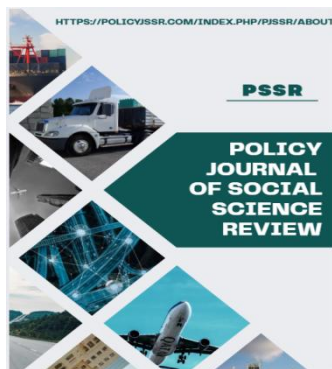
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