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Article: **Impact of Gratitude on Subjective Well-being among Pakistani Youth: Moderating Role of Materialism**

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Impact of Gratitude on Subjective Well-being among Pakistani Youth: Moderating Role of Materialism

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Abstract

The purpose of the current study was to quantify the impact of gratitude on subjective well-being and the moderating role of materialism among Pakistani youth. For this purpose, a sample of 550 participants (aged 15-29) was selected through multistage random sampling technique from five different metropolitan cities of Pakistan. The measurement tools employed for data collection were subjective to Happiness Scale, Satisfaction with Life Scale, Gratitude Questionnaire GQ-6 and Material Values Scale. Moreover, cross sectional study design was used and data was collected through survey method. The collected data was analyzed through Smart PLS (3.0). The sample size was justified by using A-priori online sample size calculator for structural equation modeling. The results depicted a significant positive relationship between gratitude and subjective well-being and a negative relationship with materialism. Whereas, materialism played a significant moderating role between gratitude and subjective well-being. Significant gender differences were also found in this study. This study can also be helpful for students, parents, educationist, fellow researchers, society, and government agencies.

Keywords: gratitude, materialism, Pakistani youth, subjective well-being

Introduction

Subjective well-being is essential in life because a happy and satisfied person is the richest one. Subjective happiness and satisfaction with life are used for subjective well-being that is integral to well-being (Ngamba, [2016](#)). It is often considered that money is the source of happiness and well-being but researchers oppose this notation and establishes the fact that acquiring

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possessions for the enrichment of the outer self rather than the inner self leads to materialism. A plethora of research emphasizes that materialism harms one's well-being (Richins, [2017](#)). It may be valuable to ascertain the psychological process that protects from materialistic harms. One possible solution is an emotion of gratitude, thankfulness, counting blessings, and appreciating what you have, which improves satisfaction with life and the self-esteem of a person. Gratitude relieves and lessens the level of depression and increases the positivity in people who are in depressive conditions, enhances happiness, and reduces dissatisfaction (Drażkowski et al., [2017](#); Homan et al., [2014](#)). Gratitude facilitates change in cognition, motivation, and the building of strong relationships. The most important contribution is to reduce materialistic behavior and its damaging effects on well-being (Polak & McCullough, [2006](#)). Pakistan is suffering from economic deprivation, unemployment, and terrorism with the beginning of 21 century and our youth which consists of most of the population are our future. Development of the country based on youth well-being. In the present paper, we first examined the relationship between gratitude and subjective well-being and then reviewed the link between materialism, gratitude, and subjective well-being. This study in Pakistan promotes positive emotions under positive psychology as the promotion of positive traits for better well-being is still to be looked at in Pakistani culture (Bano & Ahmad, [2021](#)).

Literature Review

In the previous literature, researchers and philosophers explored that gratitude and subjective well-being were correlated with each other. Gratitude is the main reason to establish subjective well-being in healthy people (Emmons & Mishra, [2011](#)). The studies showed that high gratitude increases satisfaction with life, level of happiness, optimistic behavior, and hope in people's lives (McCullough et al., [2004](#)). A study conducted by Santosa ([2018](#)) on students concluded that a high level of gratitude increases satisfaction with life. The survey held by Alkozel et al. ([2018](#)) examined that gratitude work in a two-way cognitive and psychosocial process. The cognitive pattern changes life events into positive memories, and psychosocial gratitude enhances social support that increases a person's physical health and subjective well-being of a healthy individual. Findings

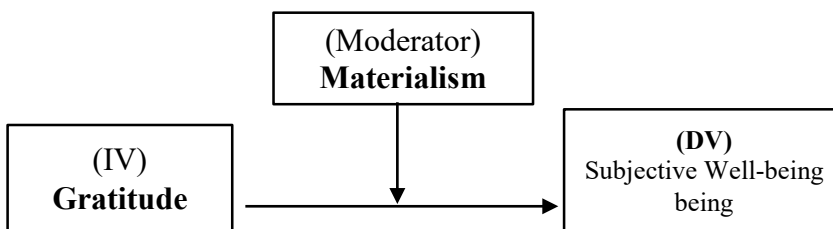
of another research showed that gratitude in a person's life enhances happiness and correlates with subjective well-being (Watkins et al., [2019](#)). The subjective well-being can be enhanced by gratitude intervention whereas gratitude prevents materialism (Adler & Fagley, [2005](#)). Richins and Dawson ([1992](#)) indicated in their study that a materialistic person negatively impacts himself, and these findings are also supported by Ryan and Dziurawiec ([2001](#)). A study by Lerner and Kelter ([2001](#)) indicated that cognition affects gratitude and gratitude reduces materialism. The study conducted by Roberts et al. ([2015](#)) concluded that high appreciation declines the level of materialism and also lowers the negative effect. Those who show a high level of materialism have a low level of satisfaction with life. The studies concluded that an increase in materialism leads to lower well-being. Another study highlighted that materialistic people had excessive negative emotions, could not cope with failed expectations, were also dissatisfied with their lives, and could not deal with their life stressors. People with low materialism cope with all difficulties (Donnelly et al., [2016](#)). In another research, it was observed that materialism deteriorates well-being because it becomes the reason for psychological tension that automatically decreases a person's well-being (Burroughs & Rindfleisch, [2002](#)). Our study connects its theoretical foundations to the broad and built a theory of positive emotions and proved that positive emotions broaden a person's way of thinking. This theory gave a message to people to strengthen positive emotions, which make their life worth living and healthy (Fredrickson, [2004](#)). Positive emotions like gratefulness help people alter their way of thinking, which leads a person to subjective well-being (Liao & Weng., [2018](#)). Adding on, the Escape Theory proposed by Donnelly et al. ([2016](#)) also explains that materialistic people are not satisfied with their living standards and are unable to cope with their life stressors as other people do.

The present study mainly identified the moderating role of materialism on subjective well-being along with gratitude. Success in materialism is considered as getting the highest status, acquisitions, and possessions but the actual meaning of success is moral attributes in human personality. According to Armstrong, there are seven laws of success; goals, education, ingenuity, drive, good health, determination, and the help of God (Rasool et al., [2012](#)) and God helps those who are grateful. Many developed

countries conducted research on these constructs and found gratitude to be a beneficial construct for enhancing subjective well-being and overcoming psychological problems (Wood et al., 2008). The purpose of the current research is to look at the importance of social and psychological needs for subjective well-being and the healthy development of the youth because Pakistan is one of the youngest countries in the world. This youth bulge will critically impact Pakistan if not dealt with appropriately depending on how the country invests in it. The objectified research model is novel in its nature for the indigenous Pakistani samples and this research would provide a significant contribution to the existing body of knowledge for variables understudied.

Figure 1

Hypothesized Conceptual Framework



The objectives of the study were (i) to investigate the relationship between gratitude, subjective well-being, and materialism among Pakistani youth. (ii) to find out the impact of gratitude on subjective well-being among Pakistani youth. (iii) to examine the moderating role of materialism between gratitude and subjective well-being among Pakistani youth. (iv) to compare the gender differences in terms of gratitude, subjective well-being, and materialism among Pakistani youth.

The hypotheses for the research study were:

- H1: There may be a positive relationship between gratitude and subjective well-being among Pakistani youth.
- H2: Materialism is likely to be negatively correlated with the subjective well-being of Pakistani youth.

- H3: Materialism can moderate the relationship between gratitude and subjective well-being among Pakistani youth.
- H4: Pakistani young men may have a high level of materialism and low level of subjective well-being as compared to women.

Methodology

Research Design

In this study, a cross-sectional research design was used to assess the level of gratitude on subjective well-being with the moderating role of materialism among Pakistani youth using a set of questionnaires.

Population and Sample of the Study

Multistage random sampling was used in this research because it is useful when collecting data from a large geographical area and dividing it into smaller groups. The sampling was carried out in several stages and the sample size reduces at each stage.

The population of this study was Pakistani youth. Using multistage random sampling; five provinces (Punjab, Sindh, Baluchistan, Khyber Pashtun Khuwa, and Gilgit-Baltistan) of Pakistan were considered in the first stage, and in the second stage, one metropolitan city from each province was selected such as Lahore from Punjab, Karachi from Sindh, Quetta from Baluchistan, Peshawar from KPK and Gilgit from Gilgit-Baltistan. In the third step, one government sector university was randomly selected from the total number of all universities in every city, University of engineering and technology from Lahore, University of Karachi from Karachi, Baluchistan University from Quetta, University of Peshawar from Peshawar, and Karakorum University from Gilgit-Baltistan. In the last step of sampling, data were collected from 110 students (n=55 men and n=55 women) of each selected university. Using this sampling technique, the selected sample was generalized to the whole population and tried to minimize the biases. The total number of respondents was (N=550). The sample size was justified by using the A-priori online sample size calculator for structural equation modeling (Soper, [2019](#)).

Instrumentation of the Study

Subjective Well-being

In this study subjective well-being was measured with two scales, first one is Satisfaction with the life of five items measures developed by (Diener., et al. [1985](#)) the alpha reliability of the scale ranged from .79 to .89 which indicates high internal consistency. The Urdu version of Satisfaction with Life translated by Saleem ([2016](#)) was used in this study which alpha reliability according to this population was $\alpha=.90$. The other scale Subjective Happiness scale, 4 items measure which was derived from 13 items pool was used and their alpha reliability from 0.79 to 0.94 (Lyubomirsky & Lepper, [1999](#)). The Subjective Happiness Urdu version scale translated by Saleem ([2016](#)) and its alpha reliability according to the Pakistani youth population was $\alpha=0.77$.

Materialism

The nine-item Material Values Scale (MVS) used in this study whose alpha reliability was $\alpha=0.84$, measures how a person values material goods for achieving their goals and how a person perceives their life and environment (Richins & Dawson, [1992](#)). The Urdu version Material Values scale used in this study was translated by (Faiza, [2017](#)). The scale alpha reliability according to the Pakistani population was $\alpha=0.93$.

Gratitude

The Gratitude Questionnaire-6 (GQ-6) by McCullough et al. ([2002](#)) was used in this study which measures gratitude as a positive emotional response and thankfulness of an altruistic gift and it's about the appreciation of what already has. The Cronbach alpha of the scale ranged from $\alpha=0.76$ to 0.84. The Urdu version scale of gratitude translated by Malik ([2019](#)) was used and its alpha reliability according to the Pakistani population was $\alpha=0.71$.

Procedure and Data Collection

The permission for data collection was sought from departmental heads and after that students were personally contacted in their classrooms and were briefed about the purpose of the research. The participants were given a set of questionnaires with general instructions and requested to give their

responses. On average, each participant took 10-15 minutes to fill out the survey.

Ethical Consideration

An ethical guideline has been considered for the present research study. Confidentiality and privacy were ensured for participants. Informed consent for participation in the study was also taken. It was also assured to the respondents that the information provided by them would be used for the study purposes only and anonymity of their identity was assured to them. The scales were used in this study after formal permission from all the authors of the scales and the Urdu version scales were also used after formal permission through emails from translators of the scale.

Results

Tabular representation of the results using Smart PLS (3.0) is attempted in this section. In table 1, the frequency distribution of demographic variables is given. The 2nd table and figure 2 show the moderating effect of materialism on gratitude and life satisfaction. Figure 3 shows a significant t-value in the structural model of materialism showing the moderating effect of materialism on gratitude and life satisfaction through bootstrapping. Figure 4 shows the value of Q² by using blindfolding in a structural model of life satisfaction which shows the moderating effect of materialism. Table 3 and figure 5 show the moderating effect of materialism on gratitude and subjective happiness. Figure 6 shows the t-value using bootstrapping and figure 7 shows the Q² value by using blindfolding in the structural model which shows the moderating effect of materialism on satisfaction with life. Table 4 shows the t-value for the comparison of male and female differences in this study.

Table 1

Frequency Distribution of Demographic Variables (N=550)

Respondent's Characteristics	f (%)
Gender	
Male	275 (50.0)
Female	275 (50.0)

Respondent's Characteristics	f (%)
Age	
15-22	301 (54.7)
23-25	181 (32.9)
26-29	68 (12.3)

The above table shows the frequency distribution of the demographic variables from the sample of 550 respondents, of which 275 were male respondents and 275 were females with a percentage of 50 % each. In the above table, 301 (54.7) respondents were from the age range 15-22, whereas 181 (32.9%) were from the age range 23-25 and 68 (12.3%) were from 26-29 years of age.

Table 2

Moderating Effect of Materialism on Gratitude and Life Satisfaction (Subjective Well-being) (N=550)

Relationship	Path-coefficient	t-value	R ²	Ad. R ²	f ²	Q ²
Gratitude → Life satisfaction	0.608***	6.026	-	-	0.440	-
Materialism → Life Satisfaction	-0.614***	9.416	-	-	0.705	-
Gratitude*Materialism → Life Satisfaction	-0.215***	3.770	-	-	0.139	-
Life Satisfaction	-	-	0.722	0.721	-	0.529

***Significant at 1 %

The above table shows the significant moderating role of materialism on the gratitude and life satisfaction. Further, the path coefficients also show a significant positive correlation between gratitude and life satisfaction. Moreover, there is a negative correlation between materialism and life satisfaction and gratitude. Also, the values of R² coefficient = 0.722 shows

a large effect size and $Q^2 = 0.529$ shows a significant moderating role of materialism on life satisfaction.

Figure 2

Structural Model for Materialism showing Moderating Effect on Gratitude and Life Satisfaction

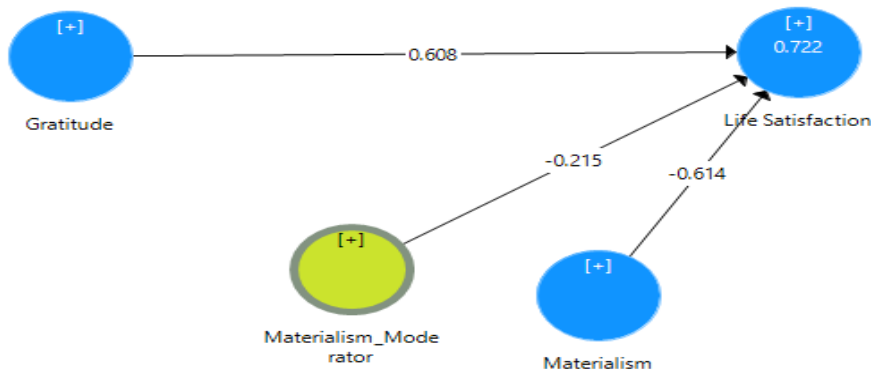


Figure 3

Significance (t-value) in Structural Model of Materialism Showing Moderating Effect on Gratitude and Life Satisfaction through Bootstrapping

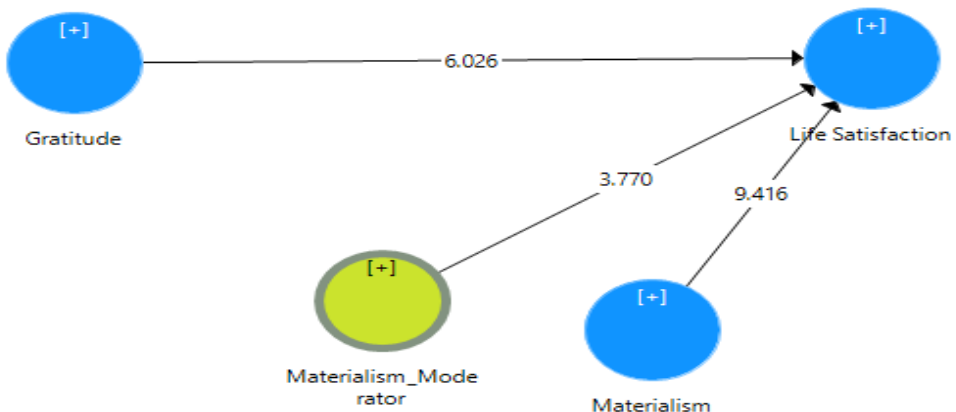


Figure 4

Value for Q² by Blind Folding in Structural Model of Life Satisfaction Showing Significant Moderating Effect of Materialism

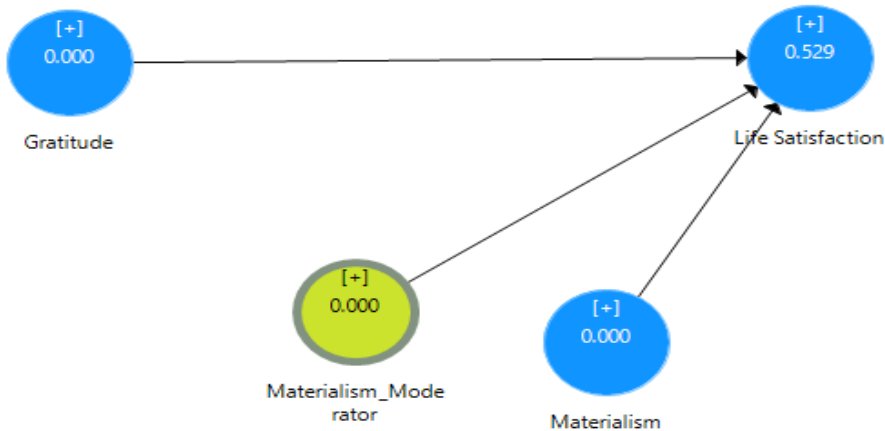


Table 3

Moderating Effect of Materialism on Gratitude and Subjective Happiness (Subjective Well-being) (N=550)

Relationship	Path coefficient	t-value	p value	R ²	Ad. R ²	f ²	Q ²
Gratitude>Subjective Happiness	0.587	9.321***	0.000	-	-	0.821	-
Materialism>Subjective Happiness	-0.687	9.744***	0.000	-	-	1.180	-
Gratitude*Materialism >Subjective Happiness	-0.214	3.858***	0.000	-	-	0.228	-
Subjective Happiness	-	-	-	0.841	0.840	-	0.365

***Significant at 1 %

The above table shows the significant moderating role of materialism on the gratitude and subjective happiness. Further, the path coefficients also show a significant positive correlation between gratitude and subjective happiness. Moreover, there is a negative correlation between materialism and subjective happiness. Also, the values of R² coefficient = 0.841 shows

a large effect size and $Q^2 = 0.365$ shows a significant moderating role of materialism on subjective happiness.

Figure 5

Structural Model for Materialism Showing Moderating Effect on Gratitude and Subjective Happiness

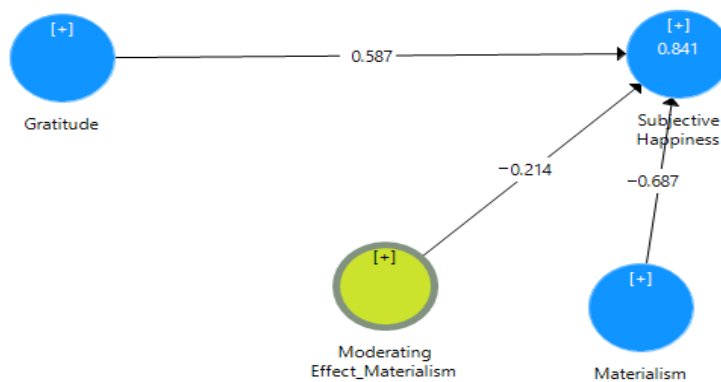


Figure 6

Significance (t-value) in Structural Model of Materialism Showing Moderating Effect on Gratitude and Subjective Happiness through Bootstrapping

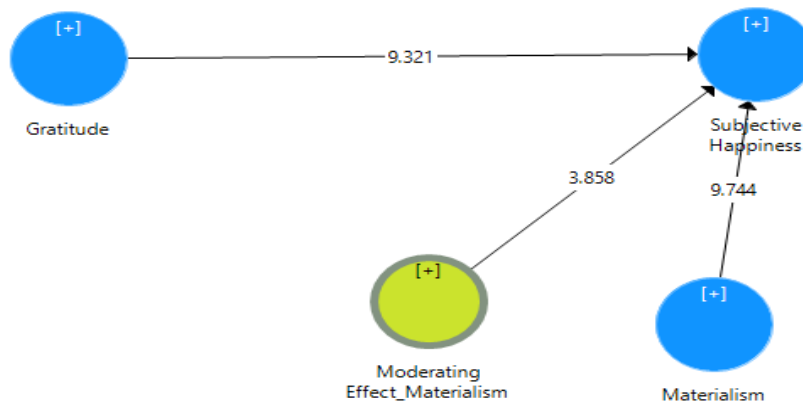


Figure 7

Value for Q² by Blind Folding in Structural Model of Subjective Happiness Showing Significant Moderating Effect of Materialism

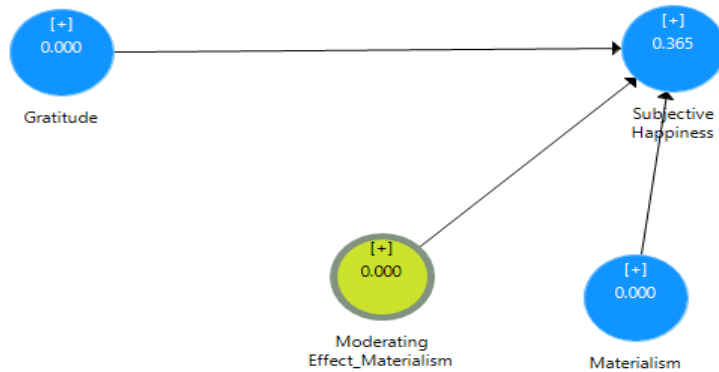


Table 4

Independent Sample t-test Used for Comparison between Male and Female Sample for Gratitude, Subjective Well-Being (Life Satisfaction and Happiness) and Materialism (N=550)

Variable	Gender				t	p	Cohen's d
	Men (n=275)		Women (n=275)				
	M	SD	M	SD			
Gratitude	34.58	3.53	35.80	3.11	4.74	.00	-1.74
Life Satisfaction	32.65	5.21	33.60	5.46	7.09	.00	0.87
Happiness	13.25	3.00	14.34	3.15	5.24	.00	0.82
Materialism	22.72	8.30	21.52	8.27	-6.52	.00	0.71

*Note: CI = Confidence Interval, *p < .05*

The above table shows the independent sample t-test for gender differences in which women have significantly higher scores in gratitude,

life satisfaction, and happiness (subjective well-being) whereas men showed significantly higher scores on materialism.

Discussion

The results showed positive impact of gratitude on satisfaction with life and subjective happiness in Tables 2 and 3. The previous study also supported our findings. Research by Mutmainah and Fauziah (2022), stated that gratitude and subjective well-being have a positive relationship which means the higher person's gratitude the higher their subjective well-being, in contrast, the lower person's gratitude leads to low level of subjective well-being. In another article, researchers state that the practice of gratitude such as counting blessings and visualizing the best possible situation increases short-term and long-term subjective well-being (Iqbal & Dar, 2022). Past research explained that gratitude intervention increases subjective well-being (McCullough et al., 2004). Another study by Bartlett and DeSteno (2006) demonstrate that a high positive mood state like gratitude increases positive emotions like happiness and enhances well-being (Emmons & McCullough, 2003). Additionally, Seligman et al. (2005) concluded that gratitude enhances well-being that lasts for a month. The research builds on previous literature by suggesting that gratitude has considerable validity in predicting happiness and satisfaction with life (subjective well-being) and the results support the hypothesis. According to the second hypothesis, materialism is negatively correlated with the subjective well-being of Pakistani youth. Tables 2 and 3 show the negative relationship of materialism with satisfaction with life and subjective happiness, which identifies the negative relationship of materialism with subjective well-being. The research concluded that materialism is negatively correlated with subjective well-being (Rütelionè et al., 2022). The research conducted by Burroughs and Rindfleisch (2002) indicated that people with high materialism are unsatisfied and unhappy. The study shows that people with high materialism have low subjective well-being. Previous findings and study results accept the hypothesis. The table 2 and 3 show the moderating role of materialism between gratitude and satisfaction with life and subjective happiness (subjective well-being). The path coefficient also indicates a positive relationship between gratitude, satisfaction with life, and subjective happiness. Further, there is a negative relationship between

materialism with gratitude and subjective happiness and satisfaction with life (Subjective well-being). The value of R^2 shows a large effect size, and Q^2 shows a significant moderating role of materialism on subjective happiness and satisfaction with life (Subjective well-being).

Past research studies also support the findings. Tsang et al. (2014) concluded in their research that materialism is negatively correlated with life satisfaction. In other research, materialism shows a lower level of happiness, dissatisfaction, lower level of gratitude, depression, and less satisfaction with their living standards, family, and enjoyment in life (Belk, 1985; Kasser, 2018; Kasser & Ryan, 1993; McCullough et al., 2002; Richins & Dawson, 1992). Hence, the above-cited literature and results of the study show the same findings, so the study's third hypothesis is also accepted. The fourth hypotheses were that the Pakistani young men have a high level of materialism and a low level of subjective well-being (subjective happiness, satisfaction with life) compared to the women. The findings of this research show in table 3 women have significantly higher scores in gratitude, life satisfaction, and happiness (subjective well-being), whereas men showed significantly higher scores on materialism. The findings are also supported by previous literature. It has been shown that there are gender differences in expressing gratitude. Larsen et al. (1999) demonstrated that biological factors like gender might become a reason to be materialistic. Studies concluded that men think that expression of gratitude can lower their social status and masculinity that why they are less grateful than women. (Froh et al., 2009; Kashdan et al., 2009). As for life satisfaction in general, the common materialistic people were more satisfied with life overall. The high group of materialistic people was determined to be less satisfied and unhappy with these aspects of life: friends, jobs, material comfort, and money. The current study is a novel attempt at investigating youth gender differences in materialism, gratitude, and subjective well-being. According to the literature, hypothesis four is also accepted.

Conclusion

This study was conducted on the youth population of Pakistan to examine the moderating effect of materialism on gratitude and subjective well-being. The study results concluded that gratitude is positively correlated with subjective well-being. Moreover, materialism moderate

gratitude and subjective well-being. Additionally, gender differences are also found in this study, which shows that male Pakistani youth have a high level of materialism. On the other hand, women have a high level of subjective well-being.

Limitations, Suggestions, and Implications

The current study contained population-based on only five main universities in five provinces of Pakistan. Additionally, the sample of the present study was only university students, so it is suggested that upcoming studies, should be conducted on college populations or make the comparison between college and university population. There is a need to analyze other factors that leads to materialism. Overall results are suggestive that; this study provides meaningful information to the researchers, psychologists, and government of Pakistan because Pakistan is a developing country, and the high level of materialism causes a lower level of subjective well-being in our youth. It may lead to other psychological problems. After all, youth is our power. Our population's major part consists of our youth so, this research helps the government of Pakistan to design intervention programs to reduce materialism and improve subjective well-being by enhancing the gratitude approach in youth. This study is an important tool for local leaders, teachers, and thinkers of the community, parents, community institutions, government, and non-government organizations to develop positive solutions. Furthermore, and most importantly, this study may attract the government and other welfare institutions' attention to put in place positive strategies for the youth of Pakistan.

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