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## The growth of social and emotional flourishing in grateful adolescents

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**Introduction:** Recent research has implicated the direct influences of gratitude upon the development of flourishing adolescents. Empirical evidence supports that gratitude promotes resilient and sustainable happiness through its enriching effects on well-being, self-introspection, and social relationships. Findings have also demonstrated that through social exchanges, gratitude facilitates the reinforcement of prosocial behaviors, which encourages the development of more engaging, compassionate, and trusting relationships. This present study investigates the longitudinal effects of adolescent gratitude in relation to reported levels of social integration, vitality, empathy, and forgiveness.

**Methodology:** Adolescents (N=566) completed two different gratitude measures at baseline (T1) and six months later (T2). Gratitude composite was computed by taking the mean of the standardized scale scores from these two scales at both time-points because gratitude development is still solidifying during this age range. All other measures were completed 4 years later at T3. Reliability of the Gratitude Composite, Social-Integration Scale, and Vitality Scale each achieved alphas between 0.70 and 0.88, while empathy and forgiveness were both assessed through single question reports.

**Findings:** Four separate linear regression analyses indicated that gratitude at T1 significantly predicted social-integration ( $r=0.30, p<0.001$ ), vitality ( $r=0.20, p<0.001$ ), empathy ( $r=0.12, p<0.05$ ), and forgiveness ( $r=0.11, p<0.05$ ).

**Conclusion:** Results from this analysis suggest that elevated childhood gratitude may have profound implications for the development of socially integrated, emotionally sensible, and enthusiastic adolescents. This is particularly important for the optimal development of socially flourishing individuals, as the effects of social media platforms and pressures of cultural expectations often leave adolescents with misconceived views of meaningful relationships and purposeful life-pursuits. Gratitude, a virtue considered important for optimism and well-being, may insulate adolescents from such societal pressures, and prove beneficial for developing emotionally-relatable and socially supportive individuals.

### Biography

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