

# The Effect of Dispositional Gratitude On Quality of Life In Fatherless Students

Salman Syafiq<sup>1</sup>, Lila Pratiwi<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup>Universitas Muhammadiyah Prof. Dr. HAMKA, South Jakarta, Indonesia

[salmansyafiq0@gmail.com](mailto:salmansyafiq0@gmail.com)

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## Keywords:

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*dispositional gratitude*  
*quality of life*  
*fatherless students*

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## ABSTRACT

Fatherless college students often experience various psychological and social challenges due to the absence of a father role, both physically and functionally, which can affect their quality of life. Although several studies have shown a positive relationship between dispositional gratitude and quality of life in the general population, very few studies have specifically explored its role in vulnerable groups such as fatherless college students, especially in the Indonesian cultural context. This study aims to fill that gap by evaluating the influence of dispositional gratitude on quality of life in 129 fatherless university students in Jakarta through a quantitative approach and valid and reliable instruments, namely the Gratitude Questionnaire-Six (GQ-6) and the Indonesian Quality of Life Scale. The results of the simple linear regression analysis showed a positive and significant effect of gratitude on quality of life ( $R^2 = 0.096$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ), indicating that gratitude contributed 9.6% to the variation in quality of life. This finding suggests that dispositional gratitude is a psychological resource that has the potential to serve as an adaptive strategy for fatherless students in navigating the developmental pressures of early adulthood. Although its contribution is not dominant, this result opens up opportunities for further exploration of other variables, such as social support, resilience, spirituality, and life expectancy, to develop more targeted, holistic interventions that support the well-being of fatherless college students in Indonesia.

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## Corresponding Author:

Salman Syafiq

Faculty of Psychology, School of Education, Universiti Muhammadiyah Prof. Dr. HAMKA, Jalan Limau 2, Kebayoran Baru, south Jakarta, Indonesia

Email: [salmansyafiq0@gmail.com](mailto:salmansyafiq0@gmail.com)

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

According to JPNN, March 3, 2021, Indonesia ranks third globally as the highest fatherless country in the world [1]. A caring and loving father's role in parenting not only provides a sense of security for children but also helps shape their character, values, and skills in facing life's challenges. The role of fathers in parenting refers to the active involvement of a father in accompanying children during their growth and development process, which includes various aspects such as physical, emotional, social, intellectual, and moral [2]. The father's role includes several important functions, namely endowment (recognizing and appreciating the child as a unique person), protection (providing protection from various threats and participating in decision-making that has an impact on the child's welfare), provision (meeting the material needs of the child), and formation (accompanying the child in the socialization process through the application of discipline, education, and attention). Overall, fathers have a central role as implementers and main supporters in the process of child formation and development. (Berns, 2007)[3]. The father's role is not just to provide a living; he also has a nurturing role to play for his child. If a child does not get a role from his father, or preferably if the father does not fulfill all his roles, then the child can be said to be fatherless.

According to Nurmalasari et al. (2024), fatherlessness refers to the condition of the absence of the father's role in childcare, both physically and emotionally [4]. This can occur due to various factors such as the death of the father, the separation of the parents through divorce, or the father's uninvolved involvement in the child's daily activities and development. It is reinforced that fatherlessness encompasses not only the absence of the father's role but also situations where the father is physically present but does not fulfill an optimal role in the family [5]. In addition, fatherless refers to a condition in which a child loses the role and presence of a father in their life. The absence of the father's important role will have an impact on sadness, loss, shame, loss of self-esteem, fear, anxiety, loneliness, and envy [6]. Low self-confidence and low self-esteem [7]. Children who experience fatherlessness often face more complex psychological and social challenges than those with actively involved fathers.

The fatherless phenomenon has a significant impact on individual development, particularly among college students and those in early adulthood, who are in the phase of searching for identity and independence. College students are at a transitional stage of development between the late adolescent and early adult phases, a period known in developmental psychology as emerging adulthood [8]. The absence of the father's role, both physically and functionally, can impact various aspects of a student's life, including emotional balance, interpersonal relationships, and academic motivation. Santrock (2018) emphasizes the significance of the emerging adulthood period in shaping one's identity and independence [9]. Early adulthood, which spans the ages of 18 to 25, is a challenging transition phase where individuals begin to enter a more independent life, focusing on higher education, careers, and more serious interpersonal relationships, which, of course, cannot be separated from the role of fathers. According to Santrock, this period is characterized by a deeper search for identity, which involves exploring personal values, life goals, and career orientation. Here, individuals attempt to discover and solidify their identity, both in personal, social, and professional contexts.

The conditions they experience, namely, fatherlessness, can affect their quality of life. According to Resmiya & Ifa (2019), quality of life refers to a person's personal view of various important factors that affect their current living conditions [10]. In line with the World Health Organization (WHO) (1997), quality of life is a person's subjective assessment of their overall well-being [11]. This statement refers to how a person perceives their existence in life, which is shaped by various aspects, including physical and mental conditions, social relationships, the surrounding environment, and beliefs about the values and goals of life. In other words, quality of life is not only about being free from disease, but also about how satisfied and happy a person is in living their life. In addition, WHO emphasizes that quality of life is a very individual concept and is influenced by the cultural and social context in which a person lives.

Sirgy (2012) emphasized that positive personality plays an important role in improving one's quality of life. Characteristics such as sense of coherence (the ability to understand and face life challenges), optimism (a positive view of the future), self-efficacy (a belief in one's abilities), resilience (the ability to withstand

adversity), and dispositional gratitude (a tendency to be grateful in various situations). Having a strong and positive personality allows one to adjust more easily to change, face challenges constructively, and establish more harmonious social relationships. This ultimately contributes to improving the overall quality of life [12]. According to Hidayat and Gamayanti (2020), there is a significant positive relationship between gratitude and quality of life, where individuals with a high level of gratitude tend to enjoy a better quality of life [13]. Similarly, research by Valikhani et al. (2019) showed that grateful individuals tend to focus more on the positive aspects of life, despite facing difficulties, resulting in an improvement in their quality of life [14].

Dispositional gratitude, as one of the primary characteristics of a positive personality, contributes to the overall quality of life for individuals. According to McCullough et al. (2002), Dispositional gratitude is a general tendency in a person to consistently realize and appreciate the role or contribution of others in the various positive experiences they experience [15]. Then, according to Portocarrero et al. (2020), dispositional gratitude refers to a person's natural tendency to feel grateful [16]. This means that some people feel gratitude more easily and frequently than others. In the Qur'anic perspective, gratitude is not just a verbal utterance, but also a proactive attitude of individuals in appreciating the blessings of Allah SWT, both through the heart, tongue, and actions [17]. This concept aligns with dispositional gratitude in positive psychology, which describes individuals who consistently appreciate the good things in their lives.

A person with high dispositional gratitude is also more sensitive to various situations that evoke gratitude, such as receiving small favors, appreciating the beauty of nature, or simply enjoying simple moments in life. The impact of grateful individuals is that they are better able to deal with stress and life pressures because they tend to interpret events more positively and avoid adverse social comparisons (Emmons & Mishra, 2011) [16]. In addition, positive emotions (including gratitude) trigger broader and more flexible thinking, which in turn strengthens coping skills and, in the long run, builds psychological resilience [18]. Grateful individuals also experience less anger and hostility, depression, and emotional vulnerability, and they feel positive emotions more often

[19]. Gratitude can also strengthen social relationships and spiritual dimensions [20].

This study was conducted in light of the significant psychological and social impacts that the fatherless phenomenon has, especially on university students who are in the critical phase of emerging adulthood development. The absence of fathers, both physically and emotionally, can negatively impact students' emotional well-being, interpersonal relationships, and academic motivation, which in turn affects their overall quality of life. Several previous studies have demonstrated that dispositional gratitude is positively correlated with quality of life in the general population. For example, Portocarrero et al. (2020) found that dispositional gratitude contributes to improving emotion regulation abilities and psychological resilience [16]. Meanwhile, research conducted by Valikhani et al., (2019) explained that dispositional gratitude not only has a direct impact on quality of life, but also has an indirect effect through decreased perceptions of stress and improved mental health [14]. In the context of local culture, Putri & Rachmawati (2022) revealed that gratitude in general allows individuals to shift the focus from deprivation to a sense of appreciation for what is owned, thus becoming an effective adaptive strategy in dealing with life pressures[21].

However, judging from many previous studies, there are very few studies that specifically examine the influence of dispositional gratitude on fatherless college students, especially in the Indonesian cultural context. Meanwhile, this group faces unique challenges, such as a lack of emotional support and guidance on fatherhood, which is not experienced by the general population. This is supported by Ashari's (2018) statement that research data on fatherlessness in Indonesia is still minimal or limited [22]. In addition, this study emphasizes efforts to fill the existing gaps in the scientific literature and make empirical and practical contributions. Thus, this study aims to fill the gap by exploring the extent to which the tendency to be grateful for the quality of life influences fatherless students. Furthermore, the research hypothesis was tested to determine whether gratitude influences the quality of life in fatherless students.

## 2. METHOD

This study uses a quantitative approach chosen to test the extent to which gratitude affects quality of life. The characteristics of the respondents in this study include active students, early adults (aged 18-25 years), residing in Jakarta, and experiencing fatherlessness. The sampling technique used was incidental sampling, a method that allows researchers to request respondents' participation directly based on ease of access [23].

This study examines students who are in a fatherless situation, namely the absence of a father figure either physically (such as due to death) or functionally (the father is still alive but does not fulfill his role optimally). Based on Berns' theory in Septiani & Nasution (2017), father involvement includes four functions: endowment (recognition of children's self-worth), protection (protection and decision making), provision (meeting material needs), and formation (socialization and education) [3]. The four functions were measured using four statements on a 4-point Likert scale (1 = Always, 4 = Never). Respondents with a total score of 8-16 were categorized as fatherless, indicating a lack of father involvement in their lives.

The research instruments used in this study are the gratitude scale and the quality of life scale, which have been converted into Bahasa Indonesia and with an Indonesian context. The Gratitude Scale, Gratitude Questionnaire-Six (GQ-6), adapted by Grimaldy & Haryanto (2020), consists of four dimensions, namely intensity, frequency, span, and density [24]. This scale consists of 11 statement items, with each item rated on a scale of 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree). Based on the validity test results, it was found that 10 items were valid and 1 item was invalid. With a high reliability of ( $\alpha = 0.939$ ).

Next is the Indonesian Quality of Life Scale from Resmiya and Ifa (2019), which consists of 9 dimensions: religion and spirituality, meaning of life, life achievement, work ethic, education and science, prosocial behavior, social relationships, physical health, and psychological health [10]. This scale consists of 30 statement items, with each item rated on a scale of 1 (Very Unsuitable) to 5 (Very Suitable). Based on the results of the validity test, it was determined that 25 items were deemed valid and five items were deemed invalid. With a high reliability of ( $\alpha = 0.888$ ).

The data analysis technique used in this study is a simple linear regression test. This analysis is used to determine the extent to which the gratitude variable influences the quality of life in students who experience fatherless conditions.

### 3. 5RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

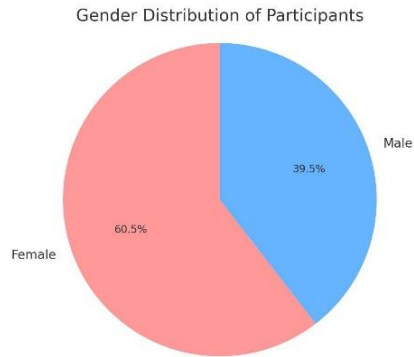


Figure 1. Gender diagram

Based on Figure 1, it is evident that the participants in this study consisted of 129 students, with a proportion of females at 60.5% and males at 39.5%.

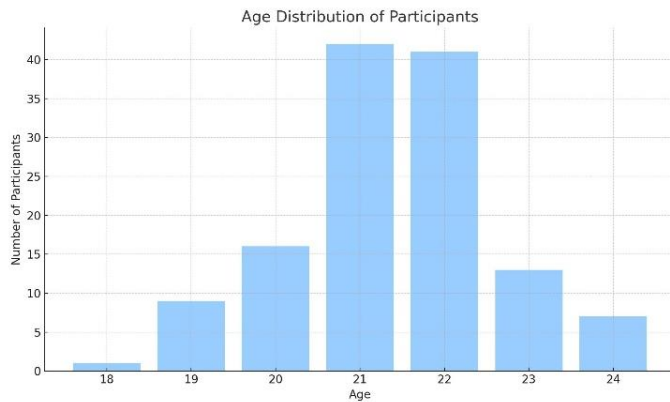


Figure 2. Age diagram

Figure 2 shows that the majority of respondents are 21 years old, with 42 respondents (32.56%), followed by 22 years old, with 41 respondents (31.78%).

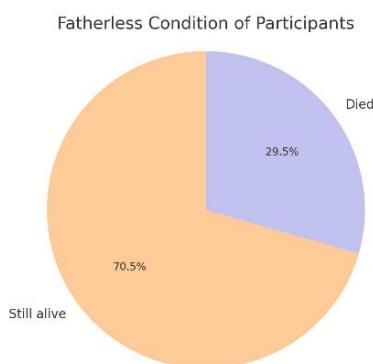


Figure 3. Fatherless condition diagram

In addition, it can be seen from Figure 3 that most participants still have a living father (70.5%), while the rest are students with a deceased father (29.5%). This composition shows the diversity of participant characteristics in the context of fatherless experiences.

Before conducting the regression analysis, a normality test was performed using the One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, as the data comprised more than 50 respondents. The results of Table 1 show a significance value of 0.200, as indicated by Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed). Because the p-value is greater than or equal to 0.05, it can be concluded that the data are normally distributed. Thus, the normality assumption is met, and the simple linear regression model can be used validly.

**Tabel 1. One-Sample Kolmogorov-smirnov test**

		GQ-6 KHI
N		129
Normal parameters	Mean	.0000000
	Std. Devition	12.12090499
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute	.070
	Positive	.070
	Negative	-.046
Test Statistic		.070
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		.200

Table 2. The model summary shows a correlation coefficient (R) value of 0.310, which indicates a positive relationship between the gratitude variable and quality of life. The R-squared value of 0.096 indicates that the gratitude variable can explain 9.6% of the variation in quality of life, while other factors outside the model influence the remaining 90.4%. This suggests that although the



contribution of gratitude is significant, other external factors also play a crucial role in determining the quality of life for fatherless college students.

**Table 2. Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	adjusted R Square	Std. Error Of the Estimate
1	.310	.096	.089	12.16853

The ANOVA test results (Table 3) show that the regression model is statistically significant in predicting quality of life ( $p = 0.000$ ). The  $p$ -value  $< 0.05$  confirmed that the gratitude variable made a significant contribution to the model.

**Table 3. ANOVA**

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	mean square	F	sig.
1	Regression	2003.934	1	2003.934	13.533	.000
	Residual	18805.291	127	148.073		
	Total	20809.225	128			

In Table 4, the coefficients show that the value of the unstandardized regression coefficient (B) for the gratitude variable is 392, with a significance value of 0.000. This indicates a positive and significant relationship between gratitude and the quality of life of fatherless students. In other words, the higher the gratitude that fatherless students have, the higher the quality of life they feel. This finding supports the dispositional gratitude theory, which posits that grateful individuals tend to have a more positive outlook on life and a higher quality of life.

**Table 4. Coefficients**

Model		unstandardized Coefficient		standardized coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	sig
1	(constant)	60.519	6.225		9,722	.000
	Syukur	.392	.106	.310	3,679	.000

Several things about the research process will be discussed below. First, this research addresses a relevant and contextual topic regarding fatherless students, which is relatively under-researched in Indonesia. The presence of fathers in the development of children and adolescents has a significant impact on emotional, social, and cognitive aspects. However, in the Indonesian cultural context, fatherlessness is often not only caused by death, but also divorce, family conflict, or functional absence of father involvement, posing

unique challenges that have not been widely explored empirically. Second, the use of highly reliable instruments, such as the Gratitude Questionnaire-Six (GQ-6) with a coefficient of  $\alpha = 0.939$  and the Indonesian Quality of Life Scale with a reliability of  $\alpha = 0.888$ , increases confidence in the results. The use of local scales ensures cultural and contextual validity in the measurement of dispositional gratitude and quality of life variables, which is crucial to maintain the appropriateness of meaning and interpretation in the Indonesian population. Third, the results provide a theoretical contribution in supporting the role of dispositional gratitude as a protective factor that positively influences quality of life. These results align with Fredrickson's (2001) Broaden-and-Build theory, which posits that experiencing positive emotions, such as gratitude, fosters a broader range of thinking and acting, thereby enhancing psychological resilience and improving quality of life despite limitations [25].

The results of this study indicate that the tendency of gratitude has a significant positive influence on the quality of life in fatherless students. Individuals who have a high tendency of gratitude are more able to appreciate the positive aspects of their lives, despite the limited support from their father's role. This makes it easier for them to develop a healthy mental attitude and improve their overall quality of life. In the context of fatherless students, gratitude serves as a psychological protective factor that helps them cope with the sense of loss, identity uncertainty, and emotional emptiness that is often experienced. This is in line with the findings of Valikhani et al. (2019), who stated that gratitude has both direct and indirect effects on quality of life through reducing perceived stress and improving mental health [14].

This research also highlights the importance of positive psychology-based psychological interventions, which in this case is demonstrated through the role of gratitude [26]. This approach not only focuses on overcoming individual weaknesses or shortcomings but also emphasizes the development of an individual's potential and internal strengths that can support their quality of life. In fatherless conditions, students may experience emotional emptiness, identity uncertainty, or a deep sense of loss. However, by cultivating gratitude, individuals can shift their focus from shortcomings to appreciation for what they still have, such as supportive social relationships, educational opportunities, or life

experiences that shape their resilience. In line with the results of Hasanah's (2024) research, which states that by consistently directing focus on the aspects of life that are worth being grateful for, individuals can experience various psychological benefits, including improved emotional mood, reduction of stress symptoms, and improved sleep quality [26]. Furthermore, the habit of gratitude also plays a role in improving the quality of interpersonal relationships, strengthening social ties, and optimizing an individual's social support system.

However, this study has some limitations. Namely, the use of incidental sampling techniques limits the generalization of the results because the sample only comes from the Jakarta area. In addition, the contribution of the gratitude variable to quality of life was 9.6% ( $R^2 = 0.096$ ), indicating that there are still many other factors that influence quality of life in fatherless students. These weaknesses underscore the need for further research using a more nationally representative sample, as well as a more comprehensive approach, such as incorporating moderating or mediating variables (e.g., social support, self-efficacy, spirituality), and employing qualitative research to gain a deeper understanding.

Although the R-squared value indicates that the contribution of gratitude is only 9.6%, it still suggests that gratitude is one of the important elements that college students need to develop, especially those who face challenging life experiences. This percentage also opens up opportunities for future researchers to explore other factors that influence quality of life, such as self-confidence, hope for the future, spiritual engagement, and the quality of interpersonal relationships. By digging deeper into these variables, the understanding of the dynamics of the quality of life of fatherless students can become more comprehensive and applicable in real interventions.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

Based on the results of simple linear regression analysis, it is concluded that gratitude has a positive and significant influence on the quality of life of students who experience fatherless conditions. This means that the higher the level of gratitude students possess, the better they feel about their quality of life. Although the contribution is not statistically significant, this result confirms that gratitude plays an important role in improving the quality of life for

students who experience fatherlessness. Furthermore, for researchers, it is recommended to include other variables, such as social support, optimism, self-efficacy, or spiritual factors, to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the quality of life of fatherless students. Additionally, it can employ qualitative research methods or mixed-methods designs to obtain more in-depth research results.

Fatherless students are encouraged to develop gratitude as a strategy to enhance their psychological well-being through self-reflection exercises, gratitude journals, or participation in meaningful social activities. In addition, higher education institutions and campus counseling services are advised to provide training or mentoring programs that focus on developing positive aspects of self, including gratitude, to create a campus environment that supports students' overall mental and emotional growth. By understanding gratitude as one of the adaptive strategies for dealing with the loss of a father figure, it is hoped that psychosocial interventions focusing more on the internal strengths of individuals can be developed within the Indonesian cultural context.

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