

Gratitude Intervention and Happiness: An Experimental Investigation on IUM Students

Ali Youssef Al-Sheel¹

In spite of extensive evidence indicating that Positive Psychology Interventions (PPI) can increase people's happiness and consequently have beneficial life outcomes, no study so far has investigated what would be the effective way to increase Muslims' happiness. However, this study intended to examine the effect of an Islamic-based expressive gratitude strategy, in comparison to a Western-based expressive gratitude strategy, in enhancing Muslims' level of happiness by emphasizing on the spiritual aspect of human being based on the Islamic understanding of human nature. Moreover, the study intended to contribute to the overall well-being of Muslim individuals and societies as well as guiding Muslim mental health practitioners in providing Islamic-based positive interventions. A 16-days experimental study (N=70) will examine the subjective well-being and gratitude outcomes of regularly practicing two gratitude exercises: Islamic-based and Western-based gratitude. In a control exercise, participants will attend to the details of their daily life. Undergraduates will perform one of three exercises during the 16-days period and will be assessed for pre and post evaluation measures. It is hypothesized that practicing gratitude exercises (Islamic-based and Western-based) will boost participants' happiness level immediately, relative to control group. However, it is hypothesized that practicing the Islamic-based gratitude exercise will result in higher happiness level on participants over time, comparing to the happiness level of participants practicing the Western-based gratitude exercise.

Keywords: happiness, gratitude, subjective-wellbeing, happiness intervention, Islamic-based intervention

For more than a century, psychological sciences and specifically psychotherapies have focused on exploring and recovering what is wrong with people, human deficits, and negatives. Nevertheless, examining and improving human strength, flourishing and positives have largely been overlooked and neglected (Seligman, Rashid & Parks, 2006). Even though many people throughout the world reported positive levels of their well-being (Diener & Diener, 1996), many tend to not be satisfied with their lives, yet they are not clinically diagnosed with any mental illnesses (Fredrickson, 2008). Therefore, attaining greater happiness has been noted to be the ultimate goal for many nations and people around the world (Diener & Diener, 1996).

Over the past decade, research in the field of positive psychology has emerged to answer and guide scientists towards questions of human thriving; especially the personal experiences of Subjective Well-Being (SWB) or happiness (Sin & Lyubomirsky, 2009). Recently, many promising approaches have been formulated to increase happiness, which is generally known as Positive Psychology Interventions (PPI), and is defined as treatments, methods, or intentional activities, that aim to cultivate positive feelings, behaviours, or cognitions (Sin & Lyubomirsky, 2009).

Statement of the Problem

The work on happiness, which is based on the Western perception of human nature in the psychological scientific tradition, is greatly in need of re-evaluation for Muslims in its application. This is in order to resolve the deficient spiritual aspect of man in its theories and practice. More specifically, in spite of the emerging research investigating the link between

¹Department of Psychology, International Islamic University Malaysia – e-mail: aliseheel@gmail.com

gratitude and happiness, the vast majority of the research adapted Western psychological perspective of human nature with less emphasis on human spiritual aspect. Moreover, none of the past research on happiness and gratitude has been done with Muslims subjects, and adopting the Islamic understanding of happiness and investigating an Islamic-based counting and expressing gratitude towards Almighty Allah experimentally. Consequently, the purpose of this study is to experimentally examining the effects of an Islamic-based happiness inducing strategy of expressing and counting gratitude in daily life to promote happiness in Muslims.

Objective of the Study

To examine the effects of an Islamic-based expressive gratitude strategy, in comparison to a Western-based expressive gratitude strategy, in enhancing Muslims' level of happiness.

Justification of the Study

Past research in the field of happiness has shown the importance of studying happiness, mainly because of its beneficial life outcomes. Happy individuals are not just people who have good feelings; research shows that happy people are healthier, productive, successful, socially engaged, and living a happy marital life (Lyubomirsky, King & Diener, 2005a; Pressman & Cohen, 2005). Happiness relieves depression, broadens mind-sets, and facilitates flourishing (Fredrickson, 2009). Therefore, scientists have in many ways considered that increasing individual happiness is the ultimate goal in the field of positive psychology (Seligman, Steen, Park & Peterson, 2005). Therefore, it is vital to understand the aspects of happiness and how to promote human well-being, for the good of individuals and societies in general.

However, most previous research on happiness has adopted a secular stance that undermines the spiritual aspect of man in promoting happiness. The Islamic understanding of human nature, in contrast, provides a balanced stance in which the material and the spiritual entities of human beings are emphasised in a balanced manner to achieve happiness (Ragab, 1997).

The components of happiness in Islam are represented in the following verse: "Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer - We will surely cause him to live a good life, and We will surely give them their reward [in the Hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do" (Qur'an, al-Mulk: 97). Namely, Allah has predetermined that whoever sincerely becomes faithful (spiritual aspect) and consequently does good in life and obeys His commandments (bodily aspect), will invariably lead to a good life (happiness) in this world and in the hereafter. Thus, the need for both components must be achieved in a balanced manner, otherwise a person will eventually live a life full of worries and frustration, and be vulnerable to mental illnesses (Ragab, 1997). Moreover, happiness in Islam is not defined in terms of worldly achievement alone; it identifies the hereafter as a life that ultimately counts (Al-Attas, 1993).

Hence, this study is intended to adapt the happiness inducing strategy of counting and expressing gratitude in daily life (bodily component), and link it to the blessings of Almighty Allah (spiritual component). This is in order to include the essential components of man, based on the Islamic understanding of genuine happiness and human nature that represented in the previous Qur'anic verse. Such an endeavour to improve Muslim's happiness will contribute greatly to the overall well-being of Muslim individuals and societies. It will also

guide Muslim mental health practitioners in providing Islamic-based positive intervention that can be used to alleviate an individual's sufferings and regain a more balanced and happy life.

Conceptual and Operational Definitions

Two variables will be measured in the present study, as follow:

Happiness

Conceptual Definition

Happiness or subjective well-being (SWB) is defined as the balance between frequent positive effect, infrequent negative effect, and a high level of life satisfaction (Diener, 1984).

Operational Definition

Happiness will be defined as the global score obtained by the participants from the following two scales. The Scale of Positive and Negative Experience (SPANE) (Diener, Wirtz, Tov, Kim-Prieto, Choi, Oishi & Biswas-Diener, 2009), and Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS) (Diener, Emmons, Larsen & Griffin, 1985). The three variables - positive and negative affect/experience obtained from the SPANE, and life satisfaction obtained from the SWLS – form the core of the happiness construct (Diener, 1984).

Gratitude

Conceptual Definition

Gratitude is defined as a sense of appreciation, thankfulness, and a sense of wonder (Emmons & Shelton, 2002).

Operational Definition

Gratitude will be defined as the global score obtained by the participants in the Gratitude Questionnaire -Six Item Form (GQ-6) (McCullough, Emmons, & Tsang, 2001).

Literature Review

The Sustainable Happiness Model (SHM)

Lyubomirsky and her colleagues (2005b) proposed the Sustainable Happiness Model (SHM) as an attempt to increase people's happiness level. This model states that happiness is causally affected by three factors that have been supported by research in the literature on well-being. First, the genetic or heredity factor (Lykken & Tellegen, 1996), which is the original set-point that a person returns to, after the process of hedonic adaptation. It accounts for 50% of the population's variation (i.e., the percentage of the variance that each of the three factors accounts for in cross-sectional well-being). Second, the life circumstances factor (Diener et al., 1999), which is the constant reality for any person, such as the personal history of past trauma or a financial status and it accounts for 10% of the population's variation. This leaves as much as 40% of the variance for the third factor, namely the intentional activities factor (e.g., act of gratitude or kindness), which supports the idea that volitional efforts offer

a promising possible route to longitudinal increases in happiness (Lyubomirsky et al., 2005b; Fordyce, 1977).

The Sustainable Happiness Model (SHM) argues that increasing one's set-point and changing one's life circumstances are unfruitful, since they are typically stable. However, most people trying to attain happiness tend to focus on changing their circumstances, which is either considerably uncontrollable at one end, or leads to a minor improvement (10% only) in their happiness level at the other end (Sheldon & Lyubomirsky, 2006a). In contrast, the model argues that intentional activities are the most promising means, not only to attain happiness, but a sustainable degree of happiness (i.e., by overcoming the hedonic adaptation phenomenon). This is because intentional daily activities account for a considerable percentage (40%) of individual differences. Moreover, their scope and application are very broad, which makes them less vulnerable to the adaptation treadmill (Sheldon & Lyubomirsky, 2006a). The model proposed that intentional activities can be cognitive (such as holding a grateful outlook to one's life), behavioural (such as writing a letter of gratitude to a loved one), or motivational (such as pursuing a goal) (Sheldon & Lyubomirsky, 2004). These activities allow people to act on their circumstances (i.e., make it better), rather than simply reacting to them, when they are often uncontrollable. Hence, this present study will adopt the Sustainable Happiness Model as its theoretical framework (Figure 1).

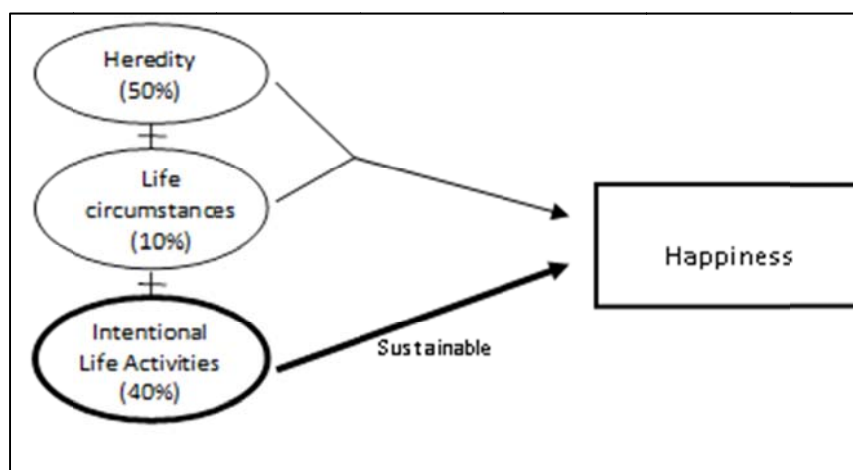


Figure 1. The Theoretical Framework

Gratitude in Islam

In Islam, gratitude is at the heart of Islamic teaching and forms one of the most fundamental aspects of the religion. A true Muslim is not merely aware of the fact that the creator of the universe is responsible for everything he has in this life (i.e., his consciousness, his health, his family, his sanity and his wealth), but also realizes that it is his obligation to express gratitude to his lord. Thus, praising and thanking Allah for His blessings are highly valued in Islam. A well-known scholar of Islam Ibn Qayyim Al-Jawziyah (2004), discussed the importance of gratitude in Islam in his famous work: *Patience and gratitude: Uddat as-sabirin wa dhakhirat ash-shakirin*. He highlighted several Qur'anic verses emphasizing the status of gratitude in Islam, as follows. The Qur'an teaches that human beings were created by Allah for the purpose of being grateful to Him: "It is he who brought you forth from the wombs of your mothers when you knew nothing, and he gave you hearing and sight and intelligence and affection so that you may give thanks (to Allah)" (Qur'an, *an-Nahl*: 78). Allah has told us that only those who are grateful to Him truly worship Him: "... and be

grateful to Allah, if it is Him you worship" (Qur'an, *al-Baqarah*: 172). Allah also shows the importance of gratitude by describing it as intimately related to one's faith and Iman (believing in Allah): "We showed him (i.e., man) the way: whether he be grateful or ungrateful (rests on his will)" (Qur'an, *al-Insan*: 3). Gratitude is also a means to gain Allah's blessings and to avoid His punishment: "What can Allah gain by your punishment, if you are grateful and you believe?..." (Qur'an, *an-Nisa*: 147), "And remember! your Lord caused to be declared (publicly): 'If you are grateful, I will add more (favours) unto you; but if you show ingratitude, truly My punishment is terrible indeed'" (Qur'an, *ibrahim*: 7). In addition, Allah shows in the Qur'an that gratitude is a route for pleasing Him: "If you reject (Allah), truly Allah has no need of you; but He likes not ingratitude from His servants: if you are grateful, He is pleased with you..." (Qur'an, *az-Zumar*: 7).

In addition, Al-Jawziyah (2004) mentioned that Allah's rewards and divine favours are provisional upon His will, for example, Divine mercy: "Again will Allah, after this, turn (in mercy) to whom He will..." (Qur'an, *at-Tawba*: 27), or His forgiveness: "... He forgives whom He wills, and He punishes whom He wills..." (Qur'an, *al-Fath*: 14). However, Allah has made the reward for gratitude specifically unlimited and free from any conditions, as in: "...If you are grateful, I will add more (favours) unto you..." (Qur'an, *ibrahim*: 7), and: "But Allah will swiftly reward those who (serve Him) with gratitude" (Qur'an, *al-i-Imran*: 144). The Qur'an also elucidates that one of Satan's main tactics is to keep people from being grateful. This is represented after Allah sent Adam out of the garden for his disobedience, Satan declared in response: "I will lie in wait for them (human beings) on your straight way. Then I will assault them from in front of them and behind them, from their right and their left. Nor will you find, in most of them, gratitude (for your mercies)" (Qur'an, *al-A'raf*: 16-17). Additionally, Allah has described the people of gratitude as being very few and special: "... But few of My servants are grateful!" (Qur'an, *saba*: 13). Hence, Allah has encouraged His beloved prophet Mohammed (Peace be upon him) to be grateful for Allah blessings: "Allah had helped you at Badr, when you were a contemptible little force; then fear Allah; thus may you show your gratitude." (Qur'an, *al-i-Imran*: 123), and Allah has made gratitude the purpose of sending the Prophet (Peace be upon him): "Then remember Me; I will remember you. Be grateful to Me, and do not reject Me." (Qur'an, *al-Baqarah*: 152). Therefore, at the essence of Islam is the teaching that who seeks happiness in the Here and the Hereafter has to be grateful for Allah and praise Him in all situations.

Past Studies on Gratitude

The potential of happiness-enhancing interventions or PPI is reflected in emerging research in the positive psychology field, demonstrating that practicing certain strategies, such as gratitude, can bring about an enhanced well-being and happiness as will be next presented.

Emmons and McCullough (2003) examined the effect of a grateful outlook on psychological and physical well-being. In Study 1 (201 undergraduate students, 174 females, 54 males) and in Study 2 (166 undergraduate students, 125 females, 41 males), participants were randomly assigned to one of three experimental conditions, in which they were instructed to list hassles or irritant events, grateful events, and either neutral life events (neutral events that they went through), or social comparison (events where participants compare themselves to others). They then kept weekly (Study 1, for 10 weeks) or daily (Study 2, for 2 or 3 weeks) records of their moods, coping behaviours (e.g., talking to someone about their feelings), health behaviours (e.g., exercising or alcohol consumption),

physical symptoms (e.g., headaches), and overall life appraisals. In the third study, 65 participants (44 female and 21 male) with neuromuscular disease, were randomly assigned either to the daily gratitude listing condition or to a control condition (to extend the generalisability of the study). The ANOVA analysis showed that the gratitude-outlook groups exhibited heightened well-being across several of the outcome measures and across the three studies relative to the comparison groups. Results suggest that a conscious focus on gratitude events and blessings may have emotional and interpersonal benefits.

Sheldon and Lyubomirsky (2006b) conducted a four weeks experimental study, on 67 introductory psychology students (17 males and 50 females), to examine the motivational predictors and positive emotion outcomes of regularly practicing two happiness strategies: expressing gratitude (e.g., writing about grateful things) and visualizing best possible self (e.g., writing an optimistic view on one's future). In the control placebo group, participants attended to the details of their day. The Positive Affect Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS) was administered four times throughout the study, in order to measure the positive affects outcomes. Multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) showed that all three exercises produced immediate reductions in negative effects. However, the two happiness strategies produced an increase in positive effects, but more towards the visualizing best possible self.

More recently, Toepfer and Walker (2009) carried out an experimental study exploring the influence of gratitude driven writing, on the author's well-being. Eighty-five students were drawn from 6 university classes (72 females and 13 males). Three of these classes made up the experimental groups, which engaged in the letter campaign (expressing gratitude with a non-trivial content for 8-weeks), and three randomly selected classes participated as the controls who were not engaged in writing. Writers were examined on their happiness (using the Subjective Happiness Scale – SHS), life-satisfaction (using the Satisfaction with Life Scale – SLS), and gratitude (using the Gratitude Questionnaire – GQ6). The changes were assessed four times over the period, and the results revealed that expressing one's feelings and thoughts of gratitude positively impacted the subjects' sense of happiness and gratitude. Additionally, these results suggest that a trait-based quality, such as gratitude (Park, Peterson & Seligman, 2004), can be improved through practice.

Conceptual Framework

Even though the Sustainable Happiness Model (SHM) provides a promising perspective to increase and sustain an individual's happiness over time, the model essentially neglects the spiritual aspect of human happiness. Although actions are acknowledged in Islam to bring about change and happiness, yet human actions have to be ultimately submitted to Allah and aim to obey His commandments and ask for His blessings, which complements any action: " Say: "Truly, my prayer and my service of sacrifice, my life and my death, are (all) for Allah, the Cherisher of the Worlds" (Qur'an, *al-An'am*: 162).

Therefore, the present study intends to adopt a holistic approach, whereby the spiritual and material aspects of human beings are taken in consideration. This is in contrast to previous studies on gratitude done in the West that undermine the spiritual aspect in expressing gratitude. Thus, the present study will employ an Islamic-based gratitude, whereby expression of gratitude and counting one's blessings (bodily component) are connected to Allah (spiritual component) to increase individual's happiness. More specifically, the gratitude acts have to acknowledge submission to Allah and aim towards pleasing Allah (to be discussed in detail later, in the method section).

Hence, the conceptual framework of this present study is as follows (Figure2):

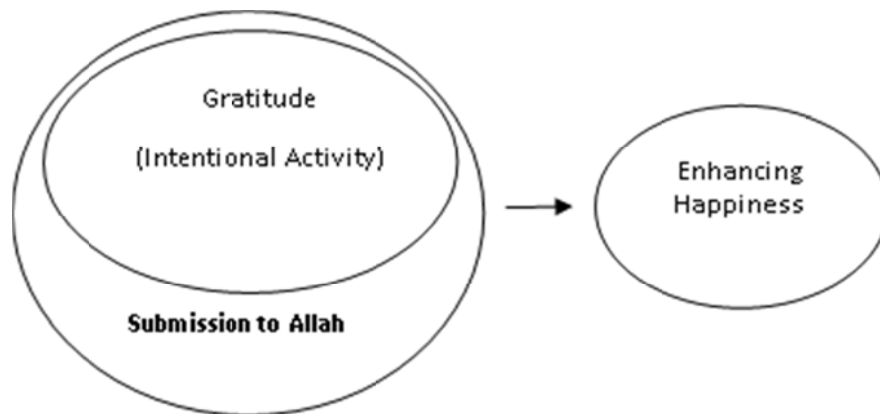


Figure 2. Conceptual Framework

Hypotheses

Following previous frameworks and review, three hypotheses will guide the present study, as follow:

1. H_1 : Students who practice gratitude exercises (Islamic-based – experimental group 1, and Western-based – experimental group 2) would report higher happiness levels than students who practice life details exercise (control group).
2. H_2 : Students who practice Islamic-based gratitude exercise would report higher happiness levels than students who practice Western-based gratitude exercise and life details exercise.
3. H_3 : Students who practice gratitude exercises (Islamic-based and Western-based) would report higher happiness levels over time compared to those who practice life details exercise.
4. H_4 : Students who practice Islamic-based gratitude exercise would report higher happiness levels over time compared to those who practice Western-based gratitude exercise and life details exercise.

Methodology

This study will employ experimental random groups design (Shaughnessy, Zechmeister & Zechmeister, 2009), whereby subjects are randomly assigned into three independent groups (i.e., Islamic-based and Western-based gratitude experimental groups, as well as control-placebo group). Gratitude intervention as the independent variable is the agent for potential changes in outcome happiness (i.e., dependent variable).

Participants

The sample will consist of approximately 80 Muslims undergraduate students at the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), 10 male students and 70 female students, who enrolled in two sections of a social psychology class. Most of the participants are Malaysian, yet few Muslims international students enrolled in the class will be included as well. Most participants are at their second academic year, with the age range of 21-24 years old. All participants will be randomly assigned to the three study's conditions to have an

equal number of participants in each group (i.e., approximately 26 participants in each group).

Procedure (intervention)

At the beginning, the experiment will be introduced to the participants with the statement: "In this study we are studying happiness, and how to increase it. We will assess your moods two times during the experiment, to see how they changed throughout the intervention. We will ask you to do some short exercises during this time that might affect your mood. These exercises have already been shown to have significant positive effects on peoples' happiness level, and we want to further examine its potential." We believe these instructions, of informing all participants of the purpose of the experiment, are necessary to motivate the participants to perform the exercises and be more committed. Because all participants, whom will be assigned in different conditions, will be receiving the same message, this factor cannot confound the results (Sheldon & Lyubomirsky, 2006).

After introducing the experiment, all participants will be given booklets that include two sections of the pre-evaluation questionnaires and the exercises sheets. The booklets were organized and coded into three different clusters, representing three experimental exercise conditions, and will be randomly assigned to the participants. After the participants have completed the pre-evaluation questionnaires, the questionnaires will be collected, leaving the exercises sheets with the participants for their practice in the following weeks. Then the written instructions (on the exercises sheets) will be introduced verbally and separately for each exercise group. The three experimental exercises conditions are as follow. First, the Western-based gratitude exercise (based on the work of Sheldon and Lyubomirsky, 2006), in which the participants will be asked to identify previously unappreciated aspects of their life, for which they are thankful (e.g., supportive relationships, contributions that others have made for them, advantages, and opportunities that they gained). Second, the Islamic-based gratitude exercise, in which the participants will be asked to notice how fortunate Allah makes them at present in all aspects of their lives, and recalling all good things in their lives at the present and the past that Allah blesses them with, for which they are grateful. For example, any physical, social, faithful, intellectual blessings, as well as opportunities and advantages that Allah rewards them with. Third, the life details exercise (placebo control condition, and based on Sheldon and Lyubomirsky, 2006), in which the participants will be asked to take notice of the ordinary details of their daily life, such as attending particular classes, meetings, typical interactions with friends, and their typical thoughts during a day. All participants will then be asked to keep thinking this way for the following two weeks, and then writing down one grateful or thankful thing (Western-based gratitude and Islamic-based gratitude exercises), or writing down one thing, event, or circumstance that had affected them (life details exercise), on a daily basis on the weekly tables provided in the exercises sheet. They are required to report their grateful things or daily events for the following two weeks.

In the third week, all gratitude exercises participants will be instructed to go through their two weeks list, and then start writing a letter of gratitude (Toepfer & Walker, 2009). The gratitude letter aims to express their gratitude to someone or precious persons who contributed greatly for their grateful situations (Western-based gratitude exercise), or to express their gratitude to the Merciful Allah who grants them with all blessings and merely responsible for their grateful situations (Islamic-based gratitude exercise). Furthermore, the participants in the life details exercise will be required to write a description of their typical

day, including all important events that usually occur, after going through their two weeks list.

All participants will be asked to focus on meaningful content in their writing, and will be instructed to be reflective, write expressively, and compose a letter from a positive orientation. All writings will be required to be done within the first two days of the third week. Thus, the total experimental period is 16 days (i.e., two weeks for counting gratitude or daily events, and two days composing a gratitude letter or a day description). At the 17th day, the participants will be required to submit their exercise sheets for compliance assessment, and then will be given post-evaluation questionnaires to be completed, which are coded by their assigned group.

The questionnaires will take approximately fifteen minutes to complete and include a demographic form, the Scale of Positive and Negative Experience (Diener, Wirtz, Tov, Kim-Prieto, Choi, Oishi & Biswas-Diener, 2009), the Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener, Emmons, Larsen & Griffin, 1985), and Gratitude Questionnaire (McCullough, Emmons, & Tsang, 2002).

Measures

1. *Subjective Well-Being (SWB) or Happiness construct will be assessed by:*

The Scale of Positive and Negative Experience (SPANE): All 12-items of the SPANE will be employed (Diener, Wirtz, Tov, Kim-Prieto, Choi, Oishi & Biswas-Diener, 2009). The questionnaire includes six items to assess positive effects and six items to assess negative effects. For both the positive and negative items, three of the items are general (e.g., positive, negative) and three per subscale are more specific (e.g., joyful, sad). Alpha coefficient for negative affect subscale is 0.87, and alpha coefficient for positive affect subscale is 0.81 (Diener, Wirtz, Tov, Kim-Prieto, Choi, Oishi & Biswas-Diener, 2009).

Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS): The 5-items of SWLS will be administered (Diener, Emmons, Larsen & Griffin, 1985) to assess the cognitive aspect of subjective well-being (e.g., “the conditions of my life are excellent”) Alphas range between 0.81 and 0.86 (Diener, Emmons, Larsen & Griffin, 1985).

To provide the most reliable measure of subjective well-being, we will create an aggregate SWB measures at each time period, by summing positive affect and life satisfaction scores and subtracting negative affect score. This procedure has been used successfully in many past studies (e.g., Diener, 1994; Sheldon & Elliot, 1999).

2. *Gratitude construct will be assessed by:*

The Gratitude Questionnaire - Six Item Form (GQ-6): is a brief self-report measure of the disposition toward experiencing gratitude. Participants answer 6 items on a 1 to 7 scale (1 = "strongly disagree", 7 = "strongly agree"). The GQ-6 has good internal reliability, with alphas between .82 and .87, and there is evidence that the GQ-6 is positively related to optimism, life satisfaction, hope, spirituality and religiousness, forgiveness, empathy and pro-social behavior, and negatively related to depression, anxiety, materialism and envy (McCullough, Emmons, & Tsang, 2002).

Data Analysis

A two-way mixed design analysis of variance (ANOVA) will be performed for each scale (i.e., SPANE and life-satisfaction). This is in order to compare the means of each group on the three scales, in each of the two measurement times. The between-subjects factor for each analysis will be groups (i.e., Islamic-based, Western-based, and life details), and the within-subjects factor will be time (i.e., baseline and post-exercise). Overall, our analysis design is as follows: 3 (Groups: Islamic-based gratitude, Western-based gratitude, control-placebo) × 2 (Time: baseline, post-exercise). The analysis will be aiming to determine if the interaction between group and time is significant for any of the scales. Specifically, to indicate if the Islamic-based gratitude group will demonstrate a differential growth over time on a specific scale than did the other groups.

References

- Al-Attas, S. M. (1993). *The meaning and experience of happiness in Islam*. Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC.
- Ali, A. H. (1995). The nature of human disposition: Al-Ghaz'ali's contribution to an Islamic concept of personality. *Intellectual Discourse* 3, 51-64.
- Al-Jawziyah, Ibn Qayyim (2004), *Patience and gratitude: 'Uddat as-sabirin wa dhakhirat ash-shakirin*. (Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr, Trans.) New Delhi : Adam Publishers.
- Brunstein, J. (1993). Personal goal and subjective well-being: A longitudinal study. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 65, 1061-1070.
- Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2000). The “what” and “why” of goal pursuits: Human needs and the self-determination of behavior. *Psychological Inquiry*, 4, 227–268.
- DeNeve, K. M., & Cooper, H. (1998). The happy personality: A meta-analysis of 137 personality traits and subjective well-being. *Psychological Bulletin*, 124, 197–229.
- Diener, E. (1984). Subjective well-being. *Psychological Bulletin*, 95, 542–575.
- Diener, E. (1994). Assessing subjective well-being: Progress and opportunities. *Social Indicators Research*, 31, 103-157.
- Diener, E. (2000). Subjective well-being: The science of happiness and a proposal of a national index. *American Psychologist*, 55, 34-43.
- Diener, E., & Diener, C. (1996). Most people are happy. *Psychological Science*, 7, 181–185.
- Diener, E., Emmons, R. A., Larsen, R. J., & Griffin, S. (1985). The satisfaction with life scale. *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 49, 71-75.
- Diener, E., Suh, E. M., Lucas, R. E., & Smith, H. L. (1999). Subjective well-being: Three decades of progress. *Psychological Bulletin*, 125, 276–302.
- Diener, E., Wirtz, D., Tov, W., Kim-Prieto, C., Choi, D., Oishi, S., & Biswas-Diener, R. (2009). New measures of well-being: Flourishing and positive and negative feelings. *Social Indicators Research*, 39, 247-266.
- Emmons, R. A., & King, L. A. (1988). Conflict among personal strivings: Immediate and long-term implications for psychological and physical well-being. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 54, 1040–1048.
- Emmons, R. A., & Shelton, C. M. (2002). Gratitude and the science of positive psychology. In C. R. Snyder & S. J. Lopez (Eds.), *Handbook of positive psychology* (pp. 459–471). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Emmons, R.A., & McCullough, M.E. (2003). Counting blessings versus burdens: An experimental investigation of gratitude and subjective well-being in daily life. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 84, 377–389.

- Fava, G.A., Rafanelli, C., Cazzaro, M., Conti, S., & Grandi, S. (1998). Well-being therapy: A novel psychotherapeutic model for residual symptoms of affective disorders. *Psychological Medicine*, 28, 475–480.
- Fellows, E. W. (1966). Happiness: A survey of research. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, 6, 17-30.
- Fordyce, M.W. (1977). Development of a program to increase personal happiness. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 24, 511–521.
- Fordyce, M.W. (1983). A program to increase happiness: Further studies. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 30, 483–498.
- Fredrickson, B.L. (2008). Promoting positive affect. In M. Eid & R.J. Larsen (Eds.), *The science of subjective well-being* (pp. 449–468). New York: Guilford Press.
- Fredrickson, B.L. (2009). *Positivity: Groundbreaking research reveals how to embrace the hidden strength of positive emotions, overcome negativity, and thrive*. New York: Crown Publishing.
- Lichter, S., Hayes, K., & Kammann, R. (1980). Increasing happiness through cognitive retraining. *New Zealand Psychologist*, 9, 57-64.
- Linley, P. A. & Joseph, S. (2004) Positive Therapy: a positive psychological theory of therapeutic practice. In Linley, P. A. & Joseph, S. (Eds.), *positive psychology in practice* (pp. 254-355). New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Lykken, D., & Tellegen, A. (1996). Happiness is a stochastic phenomenon. *Psychological Science*, 7, 186–189.
- Lyubomirsky, S., & Dickerhoof, R. (2010). A construal approach to increasing happiness. In J. Tangney & J. E. Maddux (Eds.), *Social psychological foundations of clinical psychology*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Lyubomirsky, S., King, L.A., & Diener, E. (2005a). The benefits of frequent positive affect: Does happiness lead to success? *Psychological Bulletin*, 131, 803–855.
- Lyubomirsky, S., Sheldon, K. M., & Schkade, D. (2005b). Pursuing happiness: The architecture of sustainable change. *Review of General Psychology*, 9, 111–131.
- McCullough, M. E., Emmons, R. A., & Tsang, J. (2002). The grateful disposition: A conceptual and empirical topography. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 82, 112–127.
- McCullough, M. E., Tsang, J., & Emmons, R. A. (2004). Gratitude in intermediate affective terrain: Links of grateful moods to individual differences and daily emotional experience. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 86, 295-309.
- Park, N., Peterson, C., Martin E., & Seligman, P. (2004). Strengths of character and well-being. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 23, 603-19.
- Pressman, S.D., & Cohen, S. (2005). Does positive affect influence health? *Psychological Bulletin*, 131, 925–971.
- Ragab, I. A. (1997, August). Understanding psychosocial problems : An Islamic perspective. Paper submitted to the International Seminar on Counselling and Psychotherapy in an Islamic Perspective organized by Kulliyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge & Human Sciences (IIUM), Kuala Lumpur.
- Resnick, S. Warmoth, A. Selin, I. A. (2001). The humanistic psychology and positive psychology connection: Implications for psychotherapy. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*. 41,73–101.
- Rogers, C. R. (1959). A theory of therapy, personality and interpersonal relationships, as developed in the client-centered framework. In S. Koch (Ed.), *Psychology: A study of a science: Vol. 3. Formulations of the person and the social context* (pp. 196). New York: McGraw-Hill.

- Ruini, C., Belaise, C., Brombin, C., Caffo, E., & Fava, G.A. (2006). Well-being therapy in school settings: A pilot study. *Psychotherapy and Psychosomatics*, 75, 331–336.
- Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2001). On happiness and human potentials: A review of research on hedonic and eudaimonic well-being. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 52, 141–166.
- Scheier, M. F., & Carver, C. S. (1985). Optimism, coping, and health: Assessment and implications of generalized outcome expectancies. *Health Psychology*, 4, 219–247.
- Seligman, M.E.P., Rashid, T., & Parks, A.C. (2006). Positive psychotherapy. *American Psychologist*, 61, 774–788
- Seligman, M.E.P., Steen, T.A., Park, N., & Peterson, C. (2005). Positive psychology progress: Empirical validation of interventions. *American Psychologist*, 60, 410–421.
- Shaughnessy, J. J., Zechmeister, E. B., & Zechmeister J. S. (2009). *Research methods in psychology* (2nd Ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill
- Sheldon, K. M., & Elliot, A. J. (1999). Goal striving, need-satisfaction, and longitudinal well-being: The self-concordance model. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 76, 482–497.
- Sheldon, K. M., & Lyubomirsky, S. (2004). Achieving sustainable new happiness: Prospects, practices, and prescriptions. In A. Linley, & S. Joseph (Eds.), *Positive psychology in practice* (pp. 127-145). Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.
- Sheldon, K. M., & Lyubomirsky, S. (2006a). Achieving sustainable gains in happiness: Change your actions, not your circumstances. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 7, 55-86.
- Sheldon, K. M., & Lyubomirsky, S. (2006b). How to increase and sustain positive emotion: The effects of expressing gratitude and visualizing best possible selves. *Journal of Positive Psychology*, 1, 73-82.
- Sheldon, N. Abad, Y. Ferguson, A. J. Gunz, L. Houser-Marko, C. Nichols, S. Lyubomirsky, S. (2010). Persistent pursuit of need-satisfying goals leads to increased happiness: A 6-month experimental longitudinal study. *Motivation and Emotion*, 34, 39-48.
- Sin, N. S., & Lyubomirsky, S. (2009). Enhancing well-being and alleviating depressive symptoms with positive psychology interventions: a practice-friendly meta-analysis. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 65, 467-487.
- Solomon, R. C. (1977). *The passions*. Garden City, NY: Anchor Books.
- Sommers-Flanagan, J. & Sommers-Flanagan, R. (2004). *Counseling and psychotherapy theories in context and practice: Skills, Strategies, and Techniques*. (1st ed.). New Jersey: John Wiley and Sons.
- Toepfer, S. & Walker, K. (2009). Letters of gratitude: improving well-being through expressive writing. *Journal of Writing Research*, 1, 181-198.
- Watson, D., A., Tellegen & L. Clark (1988). Development and validation of brief measures of positive and negative affect: The PANAS scales, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. 54,1063-1070.