

**INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF
EDUCATION, PSYCHOLOGY
AND COUNSELLING
(IJEPC)**www.ijepec.com**GRATITUDE PRACTICE AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-
BEING: A CORRELATIONAL STUDY**Nur Dian Seri Mohd Faizal¹, Errna Nadhirah Kamalulil^{2*}, Teoh Hooi Ping³¹ School of Education, Humanities and Social Sciences

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Article Info:**Article history:**

Received date: 13.02.2025

Revised date: 25.02.2025

Accepted date: 03.03.2025

Published date: 17.03.2025

To cite this document:

Faizal, N. D. S. M., Kamalulil, E. N., & Teoh, H. P. (2025). Gratitude Practice And Psychological Well-Being: A Correlational Study. *International Journal of Education, Psychology and Counseling*, 10 (57), 604-623.

DOI: 10.35631/IJEPC.1057039**This work is licensed under [CC BY 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)****Abstract:**

This study explores the correlation between gratitude practice and psychological well-being among Malaysian veterans. Veterans, having served in the military, often face psychological challenges such as post-traumatic stress and difficulty transitioning to civilian life, impacting their overall well-being. Despite the growing recognition of gratitude practice in improving psychological well-being, there remains a significant gap in research focused on Malaysian veterans. Existing studies primarily focus on Western veterans, neglecting the unique cultural and societal influences on well-being in Malaysia. The study aims to investigate the correlation between gratitude practice and the five components of the PERMA model: positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment, as components of psychological well-being in Malaysian veterans. A quantitative cross-sectional design was employed, with 370 Malaysian veterans responding to a structured questionnaire. The Gratitude Questionnaire (GQ-6) and PERMA-Profiler were used to assess the correlation between gratitude practice and psychological well-being components. The findings revealed significant positive correlations between gratitude practice and all five components of the PERMA model, with the strongest correlation observed between gratitude practice and positive emotions ($r = 0.766$, $p < 0.001$), followed by meaning ($r = 0.707$, $p < 0.001$). This study confirms that gratitude practice significantly enhances psychological well-being among Malaysian veterans, promoting positive emotions, engagement and stronger social connections. Future research should incorporate mixed-method approaches to explore other influencing variables such as social support. Overall, gratitude practice is a valuable tool for improving the mental health and psychological well-being of veterans transitioning to civilian life.

Keywords:

Gratitude Practice, Psychological Well-Being, PERMA Model

Introduction

A veteran, broadly defined, refers to an individual who has served in a nation's armed forces, typically with a long-term commitment (Becker et al., 2023). Veterans encompass those who have participated in combat or peacetime activities, contributing to national defense and security (Alruwaili et al., 2023; Burtin, 2020). In the Malaysian context, according to Jabatan Hal Ehwal Veteran Angkatan Tentera Malaysia (JHEV ATM) (2024), veterans include individuals who served in the Malaysian Armed Forces, regular forces, volunteer forces mobilised full-time and members of historical forces such as Force 136 and British forces active in Malaysia, Malaya or Singapore. These individuals hold a special status in the country for their sacrifices and contributions, often receiving recognition through various veterans' associations and government programs aimed at their welfare. Veterans, by their service, play an essential role in upholding national security and the recognition of their efforts is central to understanding their identity within Malaysian society.

Veterans in Malaysia include those who served full-time in the Malaysian Armed Forces and associated volunteer units (Rosier, 2022). The government of Malaysia recognizes veterans through legislation and support systems aimed at ensuring their well-being after retirement or discharge from military service. According to Jabatan Hal Ehwal Veteran Angkatan Tentera Malaysia (JHEV ATM) (2024), veteran groups in Malaysia are not limited to those who served in contemporary forces but also extend to those involved in the British Forces during colonial times and other historical formations. The Sarawak Rangers, for example, played a significant role in the protection and security of the region during the colonial era. These veterans, whether from active combat roles or in a supportive capacity, are an integral part of the nation's history and heritage. Understanding their needs and contributions involves a deep dive into their psychological, emotional and social well-being, especially after transitioning to civilian life.

The psychological well-being of veterans in Malaysia can be understood through the Butler and Kern (2016) and Seligman (2011)'s PERMA model, which highlights five key areas: positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment. Veterans, due to the intense nature of their service, may face a unique set of psychological challenges. Positive emotions such as joy, satisfaction and happiness can sometimes be hard to maintain post-service due to potential physical injuries, mental health struggles like post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or difficulties in reintegrating into civilian society (Kirby, 2020; Markowitz et al., 2023; Shea, 2024). Engagement in civilian life may also be diminished due to a lack of activities that provide the same sense of purpose or adrenaline that military service offered. Relationships can sometimes suffer, especially if veterans feel misunderstood or disconnected from those who have not shared their experiences (Pedersen, & Wieser, 2021). However, many veterans find deep meaning in their service, which continues to give purpose and direction to their lives even after retirement. The sense of accomplishment from their military careers can provide veterans with a source of pride, but it may also lead to a feeling of loss or inadequacy when transitioning into less structured civilian roles (Davis, 2022; Rutter, 2021).

Gratitude practice has been recognised as a valuable tool in improving psychological well-being (Adkins, 2020; McCullough et al., 2022). In the context of veterans, gratitude practice involves reflecting on the positive aspects of their service, relationships formed and the personal growth they experienced through their military journeys (Senger, & Gallagher, 2024; Umucu et al., 2022). Gratitude can help veterans focus on the positive memories and the support systems they have encountered during and after their service (Senger & Gallagher, 2024; Kumar et al., 2024). For Malaysian veterans, acknowledging the individuals, events and experiences that have shaped their military careers and post-service life can lead to an improved sense of well-being. Practicing gratitude may also help combat feelings of isolation and negativity by shifting focus to the positive, thus enhancing overall psychological health, including emotions, engagement, relationships and accomplishment (McGuire et al., 2021; Umucu et al., 2022). Thus, the aim of this study is to explore the correlation between gratitude practice and the psychological well-being of veterans in Malaysia.

The current study focuses on investigating the correlation between gratitude practice and the components of psychological well-being as outlined in the PERMA model among veterans in Malaysia, filling a critical gap in the existing literature. Past research, such as McGuire et al. (2021), Adkins (2020) and Umucu et al. (2022) has extensively examined the role of gratitude in improving psychological well-being, particularly in veterans, but there remains a need for context-specific studies that focus on Malaysian veterans and their unique experiences. McGuire et al. (2021) demonstrated that higher levels of gratitude were associated with decreased risks for psychiatric disorders and suicidal ideation in U.S. veterans. However, while these findings are significant, they do not fully address how gratitude interacts with various aspects of psychological well-being in a non-Western context, particularly among Malaysian veterans. Veterans in Malaysia, due to cultural, societal and historical differences, may experience unique challenges that affect their psychological health in ways not covered by Western-based studies. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by focusing specifically on Malaysian veterans, using the PERMA model to understand the relationship between gratitude practice and psychological well-being.

Another critical gap identified in previous research is the limited use of comprehensive models to measure psychological well-being in veterans. For instance, Adkins (2020) explored gratitude interventions to improve well-being in veterans, focusing primarily on aspects like life satisfaction and PTSD symptoms. While the study provided valuable insights into how gratitude can improve psychological health, a holistic model like PERMA was not integrated, which considers multiple components of psychological well-being that inclusive of positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning and accomplishment. Studies like those by Kumar et al. (2024) and Umucu et al. (2022) have focused on specific mental health outcomes, such as PTSD and suicidal ideation, but have not integrated the broader spectrum of psychological well-being components outlined in the PERMA model. This gap leaves room for the current study to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how gratitude practice influences multiple components of psychological health, particularly in veterans transitioning to civilian life in Malaysia. By using the PERMA model, this study will offer a more nuanced view of psychological well-being and provide evidence for targeted interventions to improve the lives of veterans.

Lastly, previous studies have predominantly used qualitative or mixed-method approaches, with limited emphasis on quantitative data that can establish clear correlational relationships between variables. For example, McGuire et al. (2021) and Adkins (2020) used qualitative interviews or mixed methods to explore veterans' experiences with gratitude, but these methods often limit the ability to generalise findings across a larger population. In contrast, the current study employs a quantitative approach, utilising a structured questionnaire design to measure gratitude practice and its correlation with psychological well-being components among a sample of Malaysian veterans. This approach aims to address the limitations of past studies by providing statistically significant findings that can be generalised to a broader population of veterans. Furthermore, by focusing on the specific context of Malaysian veterans, this study seeks to capture the unique challenges and cultural factors that may influence the role of gratitude in their psychological well-being. This will not only enhance the existing body of knowledge but also provide actionable insights for policymakers and support organisations in Malaysia. Therefore, this study consists of five research objectives (RO) as follow:

- RO1 : To investigate the correlation between gratitude practice and positive emotions as a component of psychological well-being of veterans in Malaysia.
- RO2 : To investigate the correlation between gratitude practice and engagement as a component of psychological well-being of veterans in Malaysia.
- RO3 : To investigate the correlation between gratitude practice and relationships as a component of psychological well-being of veterans in Malaysia.
- RO4 : To investigate the correlation between gratitude practice and meaning as a component of psychological well-being of veterans in Malaysia.
- RO5 : To investigate the correlation between gratitude practice and accomplishment as a component of psychological well-being of veterans in Malaysia.

Literature Review

Definition of Gratitude

Gratitude practice, as the independent variable in this study, refers to the intentional act of recognising and appreciating positive aspects of one's life, which can significantly influence overall psychological well-being (Adkins, 2020; McCullough et al., 2022). Veterans, due to their unique experiences, often have multiple sources of gratitude, ranging from relationships formed during service to personal growth gained through overcoming challenges. Senger and Gallagher (2024) highlight that gratitude acts as a buffering mechanism against stress, trauma and negative emotional states, making it a key contributor to resilience. For veterans in Malaysia, gratitude practice may take on a culturally specific component, where values such as community support and family bonds play significant roles in shaping their sense of gratitude. Furthermore, McGuire et al. (2021) found that veterans with higher levels of dispositional gratitude demonstrated reduced risks for psychiatric disorders, such as PTSD and major depressive disorder (MDD). By conceptualising gratitude practice as a behavioural and emotional process that enhances veterans' reflections on their life and service, this study seeks to investigate its role as a central factor contributing to various components of psychological well-being.

Definition of Psychological Well-being

Psychological well-being, as outlined in the PERMA model by Butler and Kern (2016) and Seligman (2011), encompasses five core components consisting of positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning and accomplishment. It refers to an individual's overall

mental health, encompassing emotional, psychological and social well-being (Marashi et al., 2023; Umucu, 2021; Weiss et al., 2023). Veterans often face unique psychological challenges, such as reintegration into civilian life and dealing with post-traumatic stress, which can significantly impact their well-being (Kirby, 2020; Markowitz et al., 2023; Shea, 2024). For Malaysian veterans, psychological well-being involves maintaining emotional resilience, finding fulfillment in post-service life and fostering meaningful relationships. The PERMA model provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how veterans can thrive in various aspects of life, despite the challenges they face (Marashi et al., 2023; Umucu, 2021; Weiss et al., 2023). This study aims to examine how gratitude practice correlates with each of the five components of psychological well-being in Malaysian veterans.

Positive emotions, one of the five components of the PERMA model, refer to the experience of joy, contentment and satisfaction in life (Marashi et al., 2023; Umucu, 2021; Weiss et al., 2023). Veterans, particularly those transitioning to civilian life, may struggle to maintain these emotions due to the mental and physical tolls of service (Shea, 2024). In the context of gratitude practice, studies such as those by McGuire et al. (2021) and Adkins (2020) have shown that gratitude is linked to higher levels of positive affect, which encompasses emotions like happiness, optimism and emotional stability. This is crucial for veterans, as positive emotions can buffer against mental health challenges like PTSD and depression (Kumar et al., 2024). In Malaysia, veterans who engage in gratitude practices may find themselves more capable of sustaining positive emotions, as gratitude shifts focus from the negative to the positive aspects of their lives. By examining this variable, the study aims to determine how gratitude influences veterans' abilities to cultivate and maintain positive emotions, providing insights into mental health interventions that emphasise emotional well-being.

Engagement, another component of the PERMA model, refers to the extent to which individuals immerse themselves in activities that they find meaningful and enjoyable (Marashi et al., 2023; Umucu, 2021; Weiss et al., 2023). Veterans often face difficulties in maintaining engagement after their military service, as civilian life might lack the structure and purpose they previously experienced (Markowitz et al., 2023). Research by Adkins (2020) and McGuire et al. (2021) suggests that gratitude practice can enhance veterans' levels of engagement by helping them to reflect on past achievements and focus on current opportunities for involvement in meaningful activities. Senger and Gallagher (2024) further argue that gratitude can foster a sense of purpose, encouraging individuals to actively participate in their communities and personal interests. For Malaysian veterans, engagement may be closely tied to cultural values of contribution and societal involvement. By focusing on this variable, the current study seeks to explore how gratitude may serve as a mechanism to reengage veterans in civilian life to improve their sense of purpose and psychological well-being.

Relationships, a core aspect of psychological well-being in the PERMA model, refer to the quality and satisfaction individuals derive from their social connections (Marashi et al., 2023; Umucu, 2021; Weiss et al., 2023). Veterans often experience difficulties in maintaining or building relationships after leaving military service due to feelings of isolation or disconnection from those who have not shared similar experiences (Pedersen & Wieser, 2021). Gratitude practice, as discussed by McGuire et al. (2021) and Umucu et al. (2022) has been shown to improve interpersonal relationships by fostering positive interactions, increasing empathy and encouraging expressions of appreciation toward others. Veterans who practice gratitude are more likely to acknowledge the support they receive from family, friends and community

members, which can strengthen these bonds. For Malaysian veterans, where family and community hold significant cultural value, gratitude can be a key factor in enhancing relational satisfaction and social support systems. This study will examine how gratitude influences veterans' relationships, exploring its potential to improve their social networks and reduce feelings of loneliness or isolation.

Meaning, as conceptualised in the PERMA model, refers to the sense of purpose and significance individuals derive from their life experiences (Marashi et al., 2023; Umucu, 2021; Weiss et al., 2023). Veterans often struggle with finding meaning post-service, as they transition from highly structured and purpose-driven military roles to more ambiguous civilian life (Davis, 2022). Research indicates that gratitude practice can help individuals rediscover or create new meaning in life by encouraging reflection on past experiences and personal growth (Senger & Gallagher, 2024). McGuire et al. (2021) found that veterans who engaged in gratitude practices reported higher levels of purpose and meaning, which acted as protective factors against mental health challenges like PTSD. For Malaysian veterans, meaning may be closely linked to national pride, family responsibilities and community involvement. This study aims to investigate how gratitude influences veterans' sense of meaning by focusing on how acknowledging positive aspects of their military service can foster a renewed sense of purpose in their civilian lives.

Accomplishment, the final component of the PERMA model, refers to the sense of achievement individuals feel when they reach personal or professional goals (Marashi et al., 2023; Umucu, 2021; Weiss, Donaldson, & Reece, 2023). Veterans, especially those transitioning out of military service, may experience a loss of this sense of accomplishment as they navigate less structured civilian environments (Rutter, 2021). Gratitude practice has been linked to increased self-efficacy and motivation that helps individuals recognise their past achievements and set new goals (Adkins, 2020). McGuire et al. (2021) demonstrated that veterans who engaged in gratitude practices were more likely to feel a sense of accomplishment, both from their military service and in their civilian lives. For Malaysian veterans, accomplishment may be tied to personal milestones such as family well-being or community contributions. This study will explore how gratitude can enhance veterans' perceptions of accomplishment to provide insights into how gratitude practice can improve motivation and goal-setting in their post-military lives.

PERMA Model

The Positive Emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment (PERMA) model, proposed by Seligman (2011) and later expanded by Butler and Kern (2016), is a comprehensive framework that aims to measure and enhance individual well-being across five essential components. The PERMA model has gained widespread acceptance in positive psychology as a multidimensional tool to understand the complex nature of well-being. The model is especially relevant for veterans, whose unique life experiences, ranging from military service to reintegration into civilian life that require a holistic approach to mental and emotional health. The PERMA model provides a suitable theoretical foundation for the current study by offering a framework that allows for the measurement of how gratitude practice can influence each component of psychological well-being consisting of positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning and accomplishment.

Gratitude, as a core construct in positive psychology, complements the PERMA model by fostering psychological well-being across these five components (McCullough et al., 2022). Positive emotions are enhanced through gratitude by shifting individuals' focus from negative to positive aspects of their lives (Adkins, 2020). Veterans, who may face post-traumatic stress and other mental health challenges, benefit from gratitude practice as it helps mitigate negative emotions and encourages positive emotional states (McGuire et al., 2021). The practice of gratitude fosters engagement by encouraging individuals to reflect on the positive elements of their experiences which in turn increases their involvement in meaningful activities (Senger & Gallagher, 2024). For veterans, who may find it challenging to reengage in civilian life, gratitude practice can rekindle their motivation to participate in social and personal pursuits. Relationships, another critical aspect of the PERMA model, are also positively influenced by gratitude, as veterans are more likely to express appreciation for the support they receive, thereby strengthening their social connections and reducing feelings of isolation (Umucu et al., 2022).

The PERMA model also aligns with gratitude practice by enhancing veterans' sense of meaning. Veterans often struggle to find purpose in life after their service ends, but reflecting on the positive impact of their contributions can restore a sense of meaning (McGuire et al., 2021). Gratitude encourages individuals to acknowledge the significance of their experiences which is crucial for veterans in navigating the often-challenging transition from military to civilian life (Senger & Gallagher, 2024). Accomplishment, the final pillar of the PERMA model, is closely tied to gratitude as well, as veterans who practice gratitude are more likely to recognise their achievements and feel a sense of pride in their past accomplishments (Kumar et al., 2024). Gratitude practice can boost veterans' self-esteem and motivate them to set and pursue new goals that enhance their overall sense of accomplishment.

The suitability of the PERMA model for the current study on veterans in Malaysia lies in its ability to address the multi-faceted nature of psychological well-being which is crucial for this population. Veterans face complex mental health challenges including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression and difficulty in reintegrating into civilian life, all of which can impact their overall well-being (Markowitz et al., 2023). The PERMA model's emphasis on positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning and accomplishment allows for a comprehensive analysis of how gratitude practice influences these aspects of veterans' lives (Butler & Kern, 2016; Seligman, 2011). The model provides a structured approach to measure the psychological well-being of veterans in Malaysia where cultural factors such as community support, family bonds and national pride play essential roles in shaping individuals' experiences of gratitude and well-being. By using the PERMA model, this study aims to contribute to a more profound understanding of how gratitude can serve as a protective and enhancing factor for the psychological well-being of veterans in a non-Western context.

Gratitude Practice and Psychological Well-being

This section discusses the previous literatures on the relationship between gratitude practice and psychological well-being components inclusive of positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning and accomplishment.

Gratitude Practice and Positive Emotions

The first hypothesis (H1) posits that there is a significant positive correlation between gratitude practice and positive emotions as a component of psychological well-being of veterans in

Malaysia. This hypothesis is strongly supported by previous studies that have found gratitude to be a critical factor in enhancing positive emotions. Gratitude, as a positive psychology intervention, is known to increase feelings of happiness, contentment and satisfaction (McGuire et al., 2021). For veterans, who often face post-traumatic stress and mental health challenges, maintaining positive emotions can be difficult. However, research by Adkins (2020) and McGuire et al. (2021) indicates that gratitude practice can help shift veterans' focus from the negative aspects of their experiences to the positive, thereby promoting emotional stability and well-being. The importance of positive emotions for veterans cannot be overstated, as they play a protective role against mental health disorders such as PTSD and depression (Kumar et al., 2024). McGuire et al. (2021) found that a nationally representative sample of 3,151 United States veterans who practiced gratitude experienced higher levels of positive emotions which helped buffer against psychiatric disorders. Although this study was conducted in a Western context, the findings are relevant to Malaysian veterans, as the cultivation of positive emotions through gratitude can similarly enhance their psychological resilience. Thus, H1 is supported by evidence that gratitude practice promotes positive emotional states which are crucial for the psychological well-being of veterans.

H1 : There is a significant positive correlation between gratitude practice and positive emotions as a component of psychological well-being of veterans in Malaysia.

Gratitude Practice and Engagement

The second hypothesis (H2) suggests a significant positive correlation between gratitude practice and engagement as a component of psychological well-being of veterans in Malaysia. Engagement, as defined in the PERMA model, refers to the deep involvement in meaningful activities which can be challenging for veterans transitioning to civilian life (Markowitz et al., 2023). Past research has demonstrated that gratitude can enhance engagement by encouraging individuals to reflect on their achievements and focus on the present (Senger & Gallagher, 2024). Veterans often face a loss of structure and purpose after leaving the military which can lead to disengagement from daily activities (Pedersen & Wieser, 2021). However, studies like those by McGuire et al. (2021) and Adkins (2020) have shown that gratitude practice can reignite veterans' sense of purpose by motivating them to participate in activities that they find meaningful. By acknowledging the positive aspects of their past experiences and current circumstances, veterans who practice gratitude are more likely to reengage in their communities and personal interests. This is particularly relevant in the Malaysian context where community involvement and cultural values of contribution play a significant role in well-being. The evidence from previous studies supports H2, demonstrating that gratitude practice fosters engagement which is a crucial component of psychological well-being.

H2 : There is a significant positive correlation between gratitude practice and engagement as a component of psychological well-being of veterans in Malaysia.

Gratitude Practice and Relationships

The third hypothesis (H3) posits that there is a significant positive correlation between gratitude practice and relationships as a component of psychological well-being of veterans in Malaysia. Relationships, according to the PERMA model, refer to the quality and satisfaction individuals derive from their social connections. Veterans, particularly those dealing with post-service trauma or isolation, often struggle to maintain relationships which can have a detrimental effect on their well-being (Pedersen & Wieser, 2021). Gratitude practice has been shown to improve interpersonal relationships by increasing empathy, fostering positive interactions and

encouraging individuals to express appreciation for the support they receive from others (McGuire et al., 2021). Research by Umucu et al. (2022) highlights the role of gratitude in enhancing social support systems, particularly for veterans who face challenges in reconnecting with their families and communities after military service. Veterans who practice gratitude are more likely to acknowledge the importance of their social connections which can lead to stronger relationships and reduced feelings of loneliness. This is especially relevant in the Malaysian context where family and community bonds are culturally significant. The findings from previous studies support H3, indicating that gratitude practice plays a vital role in improving relationships, thereby enhancing psychological well-being.

H3 : There is a significant positive correlation between gratitude practice and relationships as a component of psychological well-being of veterans in Malaysia.

Gratitude Practice and Meaning

The fourth hypothesis (H4) suggests a significant positive correlation between gratitude practice and meaning as a component of psychological well-being of veterans in Malaysia. Meaning, as conceptualised in the PERMA model, refers to the sense of purpose and significance individuals derive from their life experiences. For veterans, finding meaning after military service can be particularly challenging, as they transition from highly structured, purpose-driven roles to the more ambiguous nature of civilian life (Davis, 2022). Gratitude practice can help veterans rediscover or create new meaning by encouraging reflection on their past experiences and personal growth (Senger & Gallagher, 2024). McGuire et al. (2021) found that veterans who engaged in gratitude practices reported higher levels of meaning which acted as a protective factor against mental health challenges such as PTSD and depression. Gratitude allows veterans to focus on the positive aspects of their service by helping them to derive a sense of purpose from their contributions. In Malaysia, where national pride and community involvement are significant cultural values, veterans who practice gratitude may find it easier to reconnect with a sense of meaning in their civilian lives. The evidence from previous studies supports H4, demonstrating that gratitude practice enhances veterans' sense of meaning, which is a key component of their psychological well-being.

H4 : There is a significant positive correlation between gratitude practice and meaning as a component of psychological well-being of veterans in Malaysia.

Gratitude Practice and Accomplishment

The fifth hypothesis (H5) posits that there is a significant positive correlation between gratitude practice and accomplishment as a component of psychological well-being of veterans in Malaysia. Accomplishment, as defined in the PERMA model, refers to the sense of achievement individuals feel when they reach personal or professional goals. Veterans, especially those transitioning to civilian life, may struggle with feelings of loss or inadequacy as they leave behind the structured environment of the military (Rutter, 2021). However, gratitude practice has been linked to increased self-efficacy and motivation by helping veterans recognise their past achievements and set new goals (Adkins, 2020). McGuire et al. (2021) demonstrated that veterans who practiced gratitude were more likely to feel a sense of accomplishment, both from their military service and in their civilian lives. By focusing on their strengths and successes, veterans can boost their self-esteem and develop a more positive outlook on their future. In the Malaysian context, accomplishment may be tied to personal milestones such as family well-being or community contributions. The findings from previous studies support H5, indicating that gratitude practice enhances veterans' perceptions of accomplishment, which is crucial for their overall psychological well-being.

- H5 : There is a significant positive correlation between gratitude practice and accomplishment as a component of psychological well-being of veterans in Malaysia.

Conceptual Framework of Study

The hypotheses developed for this study are strongly supported by previous research which demonstrates the positive correlation between gratitude practice and various components of psychological well-being. The existing literature on gratitude practice in veterans highlights its potential to improve positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning and accomplishment, all of which are essential for enhancing psychological well-being. The findings from past studies provide a robust foundation for the current research framework, which aims to explore these relationships in the specific context of Malaysian veterans. Figure 1 shows the conceptual framework of this study to illustrate the correlation between gratitude practice and various components of psychological well-being that are positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning and accomplishment.

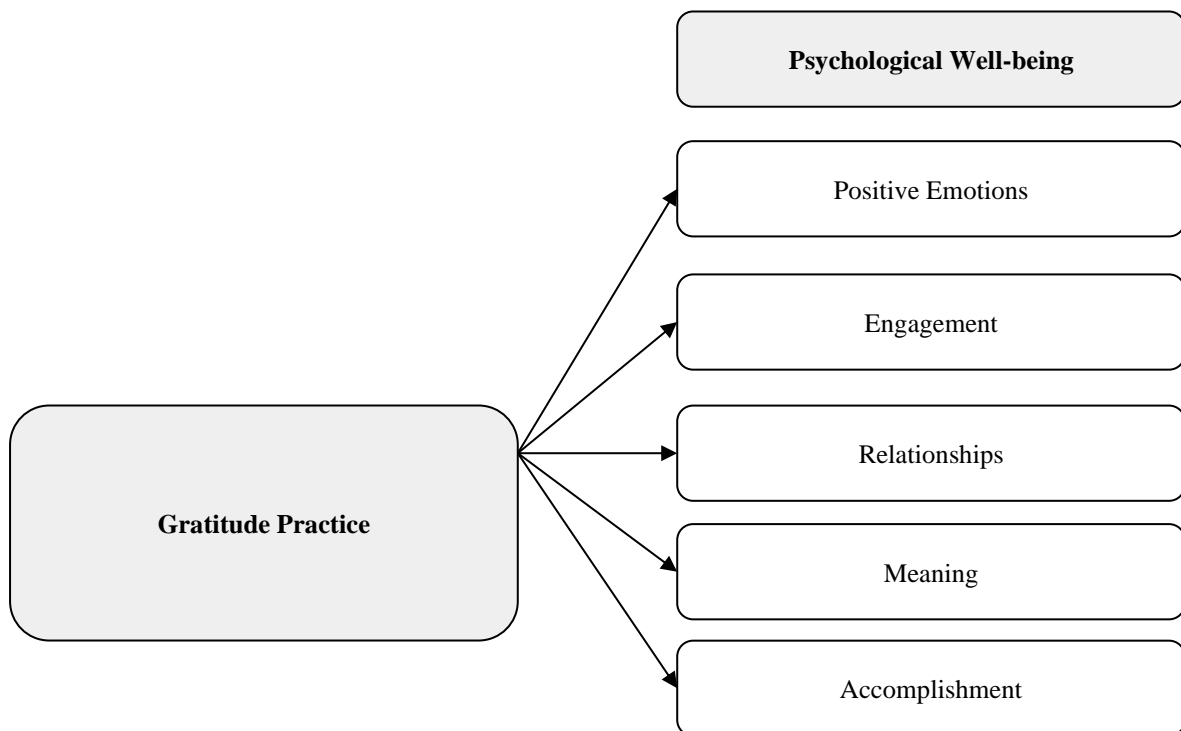


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of Study

Methodology

Research Design

This study employs a quantitative cross-sectional research design to investigate the correlation between gratitude practice and the various components of psychological well-being among veterans in Malaysia. According to Setia (2016), a cross-sectional approach allows for the collection of data at a single point in time by providing a snapshot of the relationships between gratitude practice and the psychological well-being components of positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning and accomplishment. Quantitative research design enables the use of structured questionnaires which can yield statistically significant results and allow for the generalisation of findings to a broader population of veterans (Sellers, 2021). By

employing a cross-sectional survey, this study will collect data from a sample of Malaysian veterans to assess the strength and direction of the correlations between the study variables. Such a design is advantageous in terms of time and resource efficiency, making it appropriate for exploratory studies aimed at identifying potential patterns or relationships (Connelly, 2015). This method also allows for the examination of specific cultural and contextual factors influencing veterans' psychological well-being in Malaysia.

Population and Sampling

The population of veterans in Malaysia is significant with approximately 386,000 individuals who have served in the armed forces according to VECONAC (2024). Among these, 216,039 are registered with MAF Veteran Affairs Department (JHEV) as of September 2024, comprising 113,594 service pension receivers, 31,011 derivative pension receivers and 71,434 non-pension veterans. The Veterans Association of Malaysian Armed Forces (VAMAF) represents about 160,000 members that play a key role in providing welfare support to all veterans and their families regardless of membership status. Given this large population, this study aims to receive a representative sample of the overall veteran population through a simple random sampling approach. This is to ensure each individual has an equal chance to be selected regardless of their categories. Krejcie and Morgan (1970) offer a widely accepted method for determining sample size based on population figures. According to their formula, a population of 386,000 would require a sample size of approximately 384 participants to yield statistically significant results. This sample size is appropriate for the cross-sectional design employed in this study to ensure that the data collected will be representative of the larger veteran population in Malaysia. By using a structured questionnaire, the study aims to gather insights into the correlation between gratitude practice and psychological well-being among Malaysian veterans with the sample being selected to account for diverse experiences across pension and non-pension veterans. The involvement of both members and non-members of VAMAF ensures inclusivity in capturing the experiences of the broader veteran community, further enhancing the generalisability of the study's findings.

Data Collection Procedure

For this study, data will be collected using a structured questionnaire distributed through Google Forms. This method is advantageous due to its accessibility and ease of use that enable veterans across Malaysia to participate regardless of their geographical location. Google Forms allows for efficient distribution and collection of responses while also ensuring data security and confidentiality. The questionnaire had been shared via email, social media platforms and relevant veterans' associations such as VAMAF to reach a wide audience. Respondents had been given clear instructions on completing the survey with assurances of anonymity to encourage honest responses. The online platform also facilitates real-time data monitoring and collection to ensure timely and organised data handling for further analysis. This approach aligns with the cross-sectional design of the study that provide a cost-effective and scalable method for gathering the necessary data from a diverse veteran population.

Research Instruments

The primary research instrument for this study is a structured questionnaire designed to measure the correlation between gratitude practice and psychological well-being among Malaysian veterans. The questionnaire is divided into three sections: demographic information, gratitude practice and the five components of psychological well-being based on the PERMA model inclusive of positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning and

accomplishment. The items for gratitude practice are adapted from McCullough et al. (2002), Gratitude Questionnaire (GQ-6) while the items for psychological well-being are adapted from Butler and Kern's (2016) PERMA-Profil. Each item uses a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree, allowing for quantifiable responses that can be analysed statistically. This structured format ensures consistency in data collection and provides a reliable measure for examining the relationships between the variables of interest in the study.

Data Analysis

The data collected through the structured questionnaires were analysed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics was used to summarise demographic information to provide information on the gender, age, years of service and qualification levels of the respondents. Inferential statistics, including Pearson's correlation coefficient, was employed to assess the strength and direction of the relationships between the gratitude practice and the psychological well-being components, including positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning and accomplishment.

Research Ethics and Ethical Considerations

The study adheres strictly to ethical guidelines to ensure the protection of respondents' rights and confidentiality. Informed consent had been obtained from all respondents before they completed the questionnaire with clear explanations provided about the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation and their right to withdraw at any time. Personal identifying information was not collected and responses were anonymised to protect respondents' identities. Data was securely stored and accessible only to the research team. This approach ensures compliance with ethical standards and guarantees that respondents' privacy and confidentiality are maintained throughout the research process. The research also ensured that no harm came to respondents during the study, particularly given the sensitive nature of the veteran population. Psychological well-being is a deeply personal topic and care had been taken to avoid questions or interactions that could potentially cause distress.

Findings and Discussion

Demographic Background of Respondents

Online questionnaires were distributed to Malaysian veterans via online platforms, including email and social media to ensure a broad and diverse reach across the country. The researcher received 370 completed responses which represent a response rate of 74%. Although the target sample size, as determined by Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) formula, was approximately 384 participants, the study fell short by 14 responses. This minor shortfall could be attributed to several factors, including limited access to online platforms for some veterans, lack of interest in participating or time constraints faced by the respondents. Despite this, the sample of 370 responses is still considered statistically robust for conducting the analysis and drawing reliable conclusions, as it represents a significant portion of the veteran population in Malaysia, particularly those who are active within the available online networks.

The demographic profile of the respondents as presented in Table 1 reveals significant insights into the characteristics of the Malaysian veterans who participated in this study. Out of the 370 respondents, 82.4% were male (305 participants) while 17.6% were female (65 participants). This gender distribution reflects the male-dominant nature of military service in Malaysia. In

terms of age, all respondents fell into the category of 45 years old and above, which is expected given that the sample comprises veterans who have retired or completed long-term military service. Regarding nationality, all respondents were Malaysian, consistent with the study's focus on veterans in Malaysia. The educational background of the respondents varied with the majority (68.1%) having attained an SPM/STPM/Diploma level qualification. This was followed by 18.1% of respondents holding a degree and 13.8% with a master's degree. The range of educational qualifications indicates a diverse level of academic achievement within the veteran population. Lastly, in terms of working experience, all respondents had more than 20 years of service in the military. This extensive experience underscores the significant contributions these veterans have made to national defense and security over their long careers. The comprehensive nature of their service also makes them an ideal sample for investigating the relationship between gratitude practice and psychological well-being, as they have had substantial exposure to military life and its subsequent transition to civilian life.

Table 1. Demographic Background of Respondents

Characteristics	Categories	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	305	82.4
	Female	65	17.6
Age Group	45 years old and above	370	100.0
Highest Qualification Level	SPM / STPM / Diploma	252	68.1
	Degree	67	18.1
	Masters	61	13.8
Working Experience	More than 20 years	370	100.0

Descriptive Analysis

Based on the descriptive analysis results provided in Table 2 and the interpretation of mean score ranges, each variable in the study reflects a high level of agreement among the respondents. Using the interpretation thresholds from Landell (1977), where scores from 3.68 to 5.00 are considered high, the mean scores for all variables fall within this range, indicating high levels for each component of psychological well-being. Gratitude practice has a mean of 4.0338 (SD = 0.71303), suggesting that veterans generally express strong gratitude for their experiences. Positive emotions also score high with a mean of 4.0189 (SD = 0.74592), indicating frequent positive emotional experiences. Engagement, with a mean of 3.9063 (SD = 0.84026), similarly falls in the high range, suggesting that veterans are actively engaged in meaningful activities post-service.

For relationships, the mean score is 3.9991 (SD = 0.79879), showing strong relational support and satisfaction. Meaning, with a mean of 3.9766 (SD = 0.80127) also reflects a high sense of purpose and significance in the veterans' lives. Lastly, accomplishment has a mean of 3.9396 (SD = 0.86709), indicating a strong sense of achievement among the participants. Thus, all variables exhibit high levels of psychological well-being that confirm the Malaysian veterans generally maintain a positive outlook in their post-service lives with no variables falling into the average or low categories as defined by the scoring thresholds.

Table 2. Descriptive Analysis of Gratitude Practice and Psychological Well-being Components

Variable	Min	Max	Mean	Standard Deviation
Gratitude Practice	1.67	5.00	4.0338	0.71303
Positive Emotions	1.33	5.00	4.0189	0.74592
Engagement	1.00	5.00	3.9063	0.84026
Relationships	1.00	5.00	3.9991	0.79879
Meaning	1.00	5.00	3.9766	0.80127
Accomplishment	1.00	5.00	3.9396	0.86709

Correlation between Gratitude Practice and Positive Emotions

Table 3 shows that the correlation between gratitude practice and positive emotions is strong, as indicated by a correlation coefficient of 0.766 with a significance level of <0.001 . A correlation coefficient closer to 1.00 suggests a stronger relationship between the two variables (Schober, Boer, & Schwarte, 2018). In this case, the result demonstrates a significant positive correlation, meaning that as gratitude practice increases, veterans' experience of positive emotions also increases. This supports the idea that veterans who engage in gratitude practices are more likely to maintain a positive emotional outlook which aligns with previous studies showing gratitude enhances emotional well-being. Therefore, H1 is accepted where there is a significant positive correlation between gratitude practice and positive emotions as a component of psychological well-being of veterans in Malaysia.

Table 3. Correlation Between Gratitude Practice and Positive Emotions

		Gratitude Practice	Positive Emotions
Gratitude Practice	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	0.766
	Sig (2-tailed)		<0.001
	N	370	370
Positive Emotions	Correlation Coefficient	0.766	1.000
	Sig (2-tailed)	<0.001	
	N	370	370

One of the most significant findings of this study is the strong positive correlation between gratitude practice and positive emotions ($r = 0.766$, $p < 0.001$). This aligns with previous studies conducted in Western contexts, such as McGuire et al. (2021) who found that gratitude practice significantly improved positive affect among veterans, helping them to buffer against mental health disorders like PTSD and depression. In the Malaysian context, these findings are particularly relevant because of the cultural emphasis on community support and interpersonal relationships. Malaysian veterans, who may face isolation or difficulty transitioning to civilian life are likely to benefit from gratitude practices that help shift focus from their challenges to the positive aspects of their service and personal lives. This result suggests that gratitude interventions could be an effective means of promoting emotional well-being among Malaysian veterans which help them maintain a positive outlook in the face of post-service challenges. The findings are consistent with past studies that reinforce the idea that gratitude fosters emotional resilience which is crucial for veterans' psychological well-being.

Correlation between Gratitude Practice and Engagement

The correlation between gratitude practice and engagement shows a moderate positive relationship with a correlation coefficient of 0.604 and a significance level of <0.001 , as shown in Table 4. This indicates a statistically significant connection where increased gratitude practice is associated with greater engagement in activities. While not as strong as the correlation with positive emotions, this moderate relationship suggests that gratitude contributes meaningfully to veterans' sense of involvement and immersion in daily life that reinforce the idea that gratitude helps in sustaining purposeful engagement after military service. Therefore, H2 is accepted where there is a significant positive correlation between gratitude practice and engagement as a component of the psychological well-being of veterans in Malaysia.

Table 4. Correlation Between Gratitude Practice and Engagement

		Gratitude Practice	Engagement
Gratitude Practice	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	0.604
	Sig (2-tailed)		<0.001
	N	370	370
Engagement	Correlation Coefficient	0.604	1.000
	Sig (2-tailed)	<0.001	
	N	370	370

The moderate positive correlation between gratitude practice and engagement ($r = 0.604$, $p < 0.001$) further highlights the role of gratitude in encouraging veterans to immerse themselves in meaningful activities. Engagement, as defined in the PERMA model, involves being absorbed and interested in activities that provide a sense of purpose. Past research, such as Adkins (2020), found that veterans who practiced gratitude were more likely to engage in activities that contributed to their sense of purpose. This study extends those findings to the Malaysian context, suggesting that veterans who reflect on their past achievements and express gratitude for their service are more likely to find fulfillment in their post-military lives. Veterans often struggle with feelings of disengagement or a loss of purpose after leaving the highly structured environment of the military. By focusing on the positive aspects of their experiences, gratitude practice may help Malaysian veterans reconnect with activities that bring them joy and purpose, whether through community involvement, hobbies or new career pursuits.

Correlation between Gratitude Practice and Relationships

Referring to Table 5, gratitude practice also shows a positive and moderately strong correlation with relationships with a correlation coefficient of 0.674 and a significance of <0.001 . This finding suggests that gratitude practice is positively linked to the quality of relationships among veterans with higher gratitude practice leading to better interpersonal relationships. Veterans who regularly engage in gratitude practices tend to feel more connected and satisfied with their social bonds which reflect the beneficial role of gratitude in fostering healthy and supportive relationships. Therefore, H3 is accepted where there is a significant positive correlation between gratitude practice and relationship as a component of psychological well-being of veterans in Malaysia.

Table 5. Correlation Between Gratitude Practice and Relationships

		Gratitude Practice	Relationships
Gratitude Practice	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	0.674
	Sig (2-tailed)		<0.001
	N	370	370
Relationships	Correlation Coefficient	0.674	1.000
	Sig (2-tailed)	<0.001	
	N	370	370

In terms of relationships, the correlation between gratitude practice and relationship satisfaction ($r = 0.674$, $p < 0.001$) underscores the importance of gratitude in fostering strong interpersonal connections. Previous research by Umucu et al. (2022) indicated that gratitude practice enhances social bonds by increasing empathy and encouraging veterans to express appreciation for their relationships. This finding is particularly relevant in the Malaysian context where family and community play a pivotal role in personal well-being. Veterans who practice gratitude are more likely to acknowledge the support they receive from loved ones and community members which leads to stronger social connections. Given that social isolation is a common issue among veterans, these findings suggest that gratitude practice could serve as a valuable tool for improving veterans' relational well-being. By fostering gratitude, veterans can strengthen their social support networks which are crucial for their mental and emotional health. This aligns with findings in Western contexts but highlights the unique cultural importance of relationships in Malaysia.

Correlation between Gratitude Practice and Meaning

Table 6 shows that the correlation between gratitude practice and meaning is relatively strong with a correlation coefficient of 0.707 and a significance level of <0.001 . This finding highlights a robust positive relationship between practicing gratitude and finding meaning in life. Veterans who engage in gratitude practices tend to perceive a stronger sense of purpose and significance in their lives, indicating that gratitude plays a crucial role in helping veterans find meaning post-service. The strong correlation suggests that gratitude may be a key mechanism in enhancing veterans' psychological well-being through a deeper sense of life purpose. Therefore, H4 is accepted where there is a significant positive correlation between gratitude practice and meaning as a component of psychological well-being of veterans in Malaysia.

Table 6. Correlation Between Gratitude Practice and Meaning

		Gratitude Practice	Meaning
Gratitude Practice	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	0.707
	Sig (2-tailed)		<0.001
	N	370	370
Meaning	Correlation Coefficient	0.707	1.000
	Sig (2-tailed)	<0.001	
	N	370	370

The study also reveals a strong positive correlation between gratitude practice and meaning in life ($r = 0.707$, $p < 0.001$) which suggests that veterans who engage in gratitude practice are more likely to find a sense of purpose and significance in their post-service lives. Senger and Gallagher (2024) highlighted the role of gratitude in helping veterans rediscover meaning by

encouraging reflection on their experiences. This study extends those findings to Malaysian veterans who may struggle to find meaning after leaving the structured environment of the military. Gratitude practice allows veterans to focus on the positive impact of their contributions that help them to find a renewed sense of purpose. In Malaysia, where national pride and community involvement are highly valued, gratitude may help veterans reconnect with a sense of meaning through their contributions to society. This finding is consistent with previous research and emphasises the importance of gratitude in fostering psychological well-being.

Correlation between Gratitude Practice and Accomplishment

The correlation between gratitude practice and accomplishment is moderately strong with a correlation coefficient of 0.683 and a significance level of <0.001 , as presented in Table 7. This indicates that veterans who practice gratitude feel a stronger sense of accomplishment and achievement in their lives. The positive relationship suggests that as veterans focus more on gratitude, they are likely to recognise and appreciate their personal and professional successes, boosting their overall sense of accomplishment. This supports the idea that gratitude helps veterans maintain a positive outlook on their achievements that contribute to their psychological well-being. Therefore, H4 is accepted where there is a significant positive correlation between gratitude practice and accomplishment as a component of psychological well-being of veterans in Malaysia.

Table 7. Correlation Between Gratitude Practice and Accomplishment

		Gratitude Practice	Accomplishment
Gratitude Practice	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	0.683
	Sig (2-tailed)		<0.001
	N	370	370
Accomplishment	Correlation Coefficient	0.683	1.000
	Sig (2-tailed)	<0.001	
	N	370	370

The correlation between gratitude practice and accomplishment ($r = 0.683$, $p < 0.001$) indicates that veterans who practice gratitude are more likely to feel a sense of achievement and pride in their accomplishments. This aligns with research by McGuire et al. (2021) who found that veterans who engaged in gratitude practices were more likely to recognise their achievements and feel motivated to set new goals. For Malaysian veterans, who may face a loss of structure and a sense of purpose after leaving the military, gratitude practice can help them focus on their strengths and successes, boosting their self-esteem and motivation. By reflecting on their past achievements, veterans can maintain a positive outlook on their future, setting and achieving new goals in their civilian lives. This finding supports the idea that gratitude is an important factor in helping veterans maintain a sense of accomplishment which is beneficial for their overall psychological well-being.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study provides valuable insights into the significant positive correlation between gratitude practice and the five components of psychological well-being that are positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning and accomplishment among Malaysian veterans. The findings suggest that practicing gratitude can help veterans maintain a positive outlook, reengage with meaningful activities, strengthen relationships and find renewed

purpose and accomplishment in their post-service lives. While the study has limitations, including its quantitative design and focus on a single independent variable, it nonetheless contributes to the growing body of literature on veterans' mental health and highlights the importance of gratitude as a tool for enhancing psychological resilience. Future research that incorporates mixed methods and explores additional variables could provide a more comprehensive understanding of how to support veterans in their transition to civilian life.

Limitations of Study

One key limitation of this study is the use of a quantitative research design which while providing statistically significant data, the findings may not fully capture the depth of veterans' experiences with gratitude and its effect on their psychological well-being. The reliance on self-reported questionnaires could lead to response bias where participants may provide socially desirable answers rather than their true feelings. Besides, there is probability of not including the non-registered veterans who may have different experiences. Additionally, the study focuses solely on gratitude practice, neglecting other potential variables that could influence psychological well-being such as social support systems, coping mechanisms or the nature of veterans' military experiences. The cross-sectional nature of the research also limits the ability to assess changes in psychological well-being over time.

Recommendations for Future Research

Given the limitations, future research should consider adopting a mixed-methods approach to gain richer understanding into how gratitude practice affects psychological well-being among Malaysian veterans. Incorporating qualitative interviews or focus group discussion would allow for a more nuanced understanding of veterans' experiences by providing additional information to the statistical findings. Besides, a broader sampling frame such as engaging with the non-registered veterans is required to ensure inclusivity. Additionally, future studies could explore other variables such as resilience, social support and coping strategies, which may interact with gratitude practice to affect psychological well-being. Investigating other components of the PERMA model in more detail or even expanding the model to include factors like mental health outcomes and life satisfaction could also provide further insights. Longitudinal studies tracking the long-term effects of gratitude practice on psychological well-being over time would be beneficial in understanding how gratitude helps Malaysian veterans during different stages of their civilian lives.

Acknowledgment

The authors thank Wawasan Open University and all respondents for their insights.

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