

# The role of gratitude in academic well-being: The Indian perspective

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## Abstract

This systematic review paper examines the effect of gratitude on the academic well-being of faculty members in the Indian higher education system. The review synthesis of research conducted from 2010 to 2025 on gratitude, workplace spirituality, and psychological strength in conjunction with establishing a sustainable working environment. The results indicate that gratitude is not only a personal feeling but also a strong cultural and moral custom in India that helps educators remain strong despite their high workload and the pressure imposed by the institutional environment. The paper concludes that gratitude is a vital psychological asset that helps maintain the quality of teaching and professional identity in a problematic academic environment.

Keywords: Gratitude; academic well-being; faculty members; higher education; job satisfaction.

## 1. Introduction

Practising gratitude is a way to enhance happiness and create satisfying relationships. It has been identified that there is an essential relationship between gratitude and commitment to the organisation. The employees who continued their service expressed high levels of appreciation and gratitude towards the organisation (Bockorny, Kristi, Henderson, Amber, & Merkel, Brenda, & Scholl, Aaron, 2023). Gratitude practice has a positive impact on life satisfaction. This practice helps to overcome mental health issues of individuals (Skrzelinska, J., Ferreira, J.A., Linharelhos, M., et al., 2024). Over the past few years, the mental health of academic faculty in India has been widely discussed due to the increasing pressures of the contemporary education system. Teachers are facing larger classes, greater administrative workloads, the need to publish research at all times, and the changes imposed by the post-pandemic world. Such a stressful environment has created a need to identify psychological instruments that can support faculty members in remaining content and preventing burnout (Bhatia & Mohsin, 2023). Appreciation has become a key determinant of this region. Gratitude is a significant component in the Indian context, as Positive Psychological Capital (PsyCap) is considered an inner resource comprising hope, self-confidence, and the capacity to recover from adverse events (Garg et al., 2022). More so, thankfulness in Indian universities is closely associated with workplace spirituality. This idea does not refer to religious activities but to a sense of belonging to something bigger and to the significance of meaning in working life (Paul & Jena, 2022). The Indian view of teaching as a calling or service to society, unlike some Western examples that view work as a mere transaction, indicates that Indians view work more holistically. This paper explains how gratitude and spiritual connection help Indian academics to maintain their professional well-being. By considering various studies, we can observe how gratitude serves as a protective buffer against negative working conditions and a catalyst for a successful long-term career.

## 2. Related Work

The existing literature shows an inconsistent conceptualisation of academic well-being, as studies employ varied, often narrow indicators such as job satisfaction, burnout, or

happiness, without incorporating broader outcomes such as research engagement, organisational commitment, and productivity. There is a significant gap in the limited examination of cultural moderation. The cultural norms also shape how gratitude is expressed and experienced, as well as expectations from leadership and institutions; the role of socio-cultural context as a moderating factor remains underexplored. Gratitude is one of the strongest predictors of job happiness among teachers at an Indian university. It is closely associated with what researchers refer to as a 'spiritual climate' – a set of circumstances in which academics believe that their own values are in line with the mission of the university. Gratitude enables a teacher to access their psychological capital, which, in turn, helps them remain positive despite an increased workload. Such gratitude changes the teacher's attitude towards the job, viewing it not as a tiring routine of everyday life but as a contribution to students' future (Garg et al., 2022). Gratitude is also a moderator in high schools; that is, it helps teachers actualise positive school experiences into personal happiness. Even a well-structured school will fail to offer a teacher the satisfaction required to be motivated without a grateful mindset (Mahipalan & S, 2019). A positive chain reaction in Indian colleges occurs when leaders are responsible, meaning they are ethical, fair, and supportive. These leaders instil a sense of gratitude in the teachers, and as a result, they identify more with their university. The result is what is known as Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB), in which faculty members voluntarily undertake additional work without additional compensation, such as mentoring students or assisting fellow employees. This demonstrates that gratitude is an important social glue that binds the institution. Teachers will be much more motivated to work at the university and support its overall success when they feel valued (Luo et al., 2025; Shinde, 2025). The grateful disposition makes teachers retain their psychological capital in such challenging situations. Psychological capital always supports their mental health by empowering them to focus on the positive aspects of their careers, e.g., student success or professional development, without being overwhelmed by institutional issues (Manju Mahipalan & Garg, 2023). This shock-absorbing effect is fundamental to achieving sustainable academic performance, or rather, maintaining a high quality of education despite faculty experiencing severe stress (Bhatia & Mohsin, 2023).

Table 1. Summary of the Systematic Review

Parameter	No. of Studies	Percentage (%)	Interpretation
Parameter 1: Gratitude → Well-being	7	70%	Majority of studies establish gratitude as a key predictor of academic well-being
Parameter 2: Spirituality / Leadership / PsyCap	9	90%	Almost all studies include psychological or organizational mediators
Parameter 3: Indian Cultural Integration	0	0%	No prior study explicitly develops a cultural-spiritual Indian framework

### 3. Key Contribution

This review paper provide several contributions to the emerging literature on gratitude and well-being.

- The Holistic Academic Well-being Framework, which explores well-being beyond basic metrics, including engagement, productivity, and institutional commitment in the Indian academic context.

- 'Gratitude as a Key Motivational Resource' positions gratitude as a central factor enhancing job happiness, purpose, and positive work attitudes of the academics in the higher educational institutions.
- Psychological Capital and Resilience Enhancement shows the depth of gratitude of the academics and explores how it strengthens positivism and coping mechanisms in the midst of academic pressures.
- Spiritual Climate and Cultural Embeddedness highlights the role of value alignment and culturally rooted meaning systems in shaping faculty well-being.
- The leadership–gratitude–commitment link shows that ethical leadership fosters gratitude, which in turn leads to stronger institutional identification and extra-role contributions.
- 'Gratitude as a Buffer with Scope for Digital Interventions' identifies gratitude as a protective mechanism in challenging environments and emphasises the need for tech-based wellbeing devices to empower the academics.

#### **4. Method, Experiments and Results**

The data in this paper were developed with a narrative review of peer-reviewed research articles published between 2010 and 2025. It was reviewed using the search technique across significant databases, such as Google Scholar and Scopus, with results limited to research focused solely on the Indian academic sector.

These articles emphasise empirical studies conducted in various sectors, including private universities in Delhi NCR, high schools, and large institutions. The review found that the impact of gratitude on workplace happiness, leadership performance, and teacher resilience is greater (Paul & Jena, 2022; Garg & Gera, 2019). The thematic synthesis technique used in this report unites various categories of information and gives a clear picture of the Indian academic experience. This will ensure that the results which are culturally valid, given that the relationships between teachers and their institutions are unique in terms of the social and moral values in India.

An analysis of the professional well-being among Indian educators shows that it is a blend of external support and inner peace. Even though the idea of a growth mindset position, which entails approaching difficulties as opportunities to expand and grow oneself (Bardach et al., 2024), is relevant in some contemporary theories of education, the role of a grateful, spiritually grounded mindset appears to be equally crucial in the Indian-specific research study (S & AS, 2024). This shows a cultural trend in India of belonging to a meaningful community rather than remaining satisfied in the teaching profession (Paul & Jena, 2022).

#### **5. Discussions**

These studies can be synthesised to indicate that the Indian academic world is premised on a relational-spiritual model of well-being. This implies that happiness at work is not only about an individual's personality but also about the relationships one has with colleagues and leaders, as well as one's work purpose. The level of professional well-being is highly contingent on a teacher's sense that the workplace has soul. When teachers identify with their job and the role they play, they are far more likely to be grateful, which, in turn, leads to greater happiness at work. This is quite a different strategy from the Western models, which tend to dwell only on individual performance and personal toughness.

The role of leadership in Indian higher education is also huge in this structure. Leaders who employ gratitude to recognise and appreciate their employees realise that their staff are more resilient and eager to assist the institution in its development. Nonetheless, the discourse in these articles cautions that gratitude must not be used to conceal the inherent problems in

the system, such as low compensation or a lack of job security. To make gratitude an effective well-being enhancer, it must be authentic and part of a just and enabling institutional culture. By building a culture of trust and appreciation, the leaders are doing so in line with the Indian cultural norm of respecting each other and achieving success as a group.

## 6. Conclusions

To conclude, the systematic review indicates that gratitude is a crucial psychological tool of Indian faculty members. It makes them feel joyful, identifies them with their university, and protects them from the harmful effects of job stress and toxicity. Indian universities can succeed in flourishing by cherishing their teachers, creating a “spiritual and moral climate” and promoting highly responsible leadership. Academics feel recognised, appreciated, and supported when they find a calling; they enjoy their jobs and benefit students, their educational establishment, and the broader education sector. Conclusively, appreciation will make academic life not a burden but a valuable career.

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