

Trabajo Final de Grado:

**TALLER BASADO EN FORTALEZAS: UN ESTUDIO
SOBRE LA EFICACIA DE UN PROGRAMA BASADO EN
LA GRATITUD Y EL OPTIMISMO**

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Resumen

Seligman y Csikszentmihalyi (2000) argumentaron que las creencias optimistas sobre el futuro, aunque estas no sean realistas, actúan como factor de protección frente a la enfermedad. Por otro lado, la evidencia científica dice que introducir muestras de gratitud, incrementa el bienestar psicológico (Davis et al 2016; Wong y col 2016). En este marco, se plantea el siguiente estudio que tiene como objetivo desarrollar las fortalezas de gratitud y de optimismo en un grupo de estudiantes, mediante la realización del ejercicio de las tres bendiciones y el de la carta desde el futuro, de forma simultánea durante tres semanas, y ver si estas fortalezas se incrementan o no a nivel grupal. Finalmente, se pretende investigar cuáles son las fortalezas más y menos predominantes en esta muestra, además de averiguar si la gratitud y el optimismo se correlacionan con la edad de los participantes. Para ello, se ha contado con una muestra de 8 personas. Al inicio de este estudio, se pasó el cuestionario VIAS a los participantes. Para medir el optimismo se empleó el cuestionario LOT-R, mientras que para evaluar la gratitud se empleó el Gratitude Questionnaire-6. Por último, se realizó el post-test. Los resultados indican que ha aumentado la gratitud y el optimismo en esta muestra de participantes. En este caso concreto, el optimismo es independiente de la edad, mientras que, en la gratitud, la correlación es más fuerte. Finalmente, existe una diferencia estadísticamente pequeña para la gratitud, mientras que para el optimismo se trata de una diferencia estadísticamente más grande. Además, se pudo comprobar mediante el cuestionario VIA que tanto la gratitud como el optimismo de los participantes aumentó, este último en mayor medida. Estos resultados van en consonancia con la eficacia de las intervenciones llevadas a cabo en el ámbito de la psicología positiva.

Palabras clave: gratitud, optimismo, fortalezas, estudiantes, COVID-19

Summary

Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) argued that optimistic beliefs about the future, even if these are unrealistic, act as a protective factor against disease. On the other hand, scientific evidence says that introducing displays of gratitude, increases psychological well-being (Davis et al 2016; Wong et al 2016). In this framework, the following study aims to develop the strengths of gratitude and optimism in a group of students, by performing the exercise of the three blessings and the letter from the future, simultaneously for three weeks, and see if these strengths are increased or not at the group level. Finally, the aim is to investigate which are the most and least predominant strengths in this sample, as well as to find out if gratitude and optimism correlate with the age of the participants. For this purpose, a sample of 8 people was used. At the beginning of this study, the VIAS questionnaire was passed to the participants. The LOT-R questionnaire was used to measure optimism, while the Gratitude Questionnaire-6 was used to assess gratitude. Finally, the post-test was carried out. The results indicate an increase in gratitude and optimism in this sample of participants. In this particular case, optimism is independent of age, while, in gratitude, the correlation is stronger. Finally, there is a statistically small difference for gratitude, while for optimism it is a statistically larger difference. Furthermore, it could be verified by means of the VIA questionnaire that both gratitude and optimism of the participants increased, the latter to a greater extent. These results are in line with the effectiveness of interventions carried out in the field of positive psychology.

Key words: gratitude, optimism, strengths, students, COVID-19

Introduction

On January 30, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the pandemic caused by COVID-19 as an international public health emergency. Since then, a series of measures have been adopted with the aim of curbing this global pandemic, which has inevitably led to significant changes in people's lifestyles, to the extent that it is considered a threat to both physical and mental well-being. Positive mental health, understood as both social, emotional, and psychological well-being (Lukat et al., 2016) has been observed to contribute to positive affect, give resilience, diminish the negative consequences of adverse experiences, and foster an adaptive response to uncertain situations (Iasiello et al., 2019; Teismann et al., 2019). Positive factors seem to be of specific importance for a more adaptive response to extraordinary situations (Galatzer-Levy et al., 2018), as is the case of the pandemic we are experiencing. The COVID-19 pandemic is having a psychological impact on individuals, (Asmundson et al., 2020; Li et al., 2020) and is causing effects on the mental health of different groups including university students. Moreover, for many of them, it is an opportune time for some individuals to find and develop new strengths.

OBJECTIVES

General objective: develop the strengths of gratitude and optimism in a group of students, and see whether or not these strengths increase at the group level.

Specific objectives: investigate which are the top five most predominant and the least predominant strengths in this sample and to find out whether gratitude and optimism correlate with the age of the participants

Methodology

TARGET GROUP:

People between 21 and 28 years of age, who are currently studying (vocational training, university...) and reside in Spain.

EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS:

- VIA Personal Strengths questionnaire
- Gratitude Questionnaire-6 (GQ6)
- Life Orientation Test (LOT-R)

Statistics	Age	G	O
M	23,7	32,6	13,4
Me	23	34,5	12,5
SD	2,5	6,0	3,9
RQ	3	3,5	6,25

DESCRIPTION OF THE WORKSHOP

The meet session was attended by all the participants, in which it was explained to them what their task would consist of during the 3 weeks of the study and doubts were resolved.

Informative talk on positive psychology and its benefits in relation to coping with adversity.

Whatsapp group in which doubts were solved at any time.

Activity 1: to record aspects to be thankful for on a daily basis, taking into account the COVID. Some days, before going to sleep, they were asked to try to identify some negative circumstance derived from the COVID that affected them, and to think and write down what could be positive in that fact. A variant of this exercise for those who found it more difficult was to carry out the classic exercise of the 3 blessings for 3 weeks.

Activity 2: write a letter to their present self, written by their future self in which they will tell how well they feel and why, where they are, what they are doing at that moment in their life, and the achievements they have made so far. They should also indicate any goals the participants may have. The letter could be modified as many times as they considered, and the idea is that they would read it during this time and reflect on it.

They had to write down on a calendar the days they performed each of the tasks in order to keep track of the days that each one of them practiced them.

Results

Pretest gratitude

Pearson correlation: R=0.565

Pretest optimism

Pearson's correlation: R= -0.353

Post-test gratitude

Pearson correlation: R=0.515

Post-test optimism

Pearson's correlation: R= -0.312

Gratitude

T-test: $t_{crit} = -5.4628$

Cohen's d: $d = -0,3744432$

Optimism

T-test: $t_{crit} = -2.2412$

Cohen's d: $d = -0.8463296$

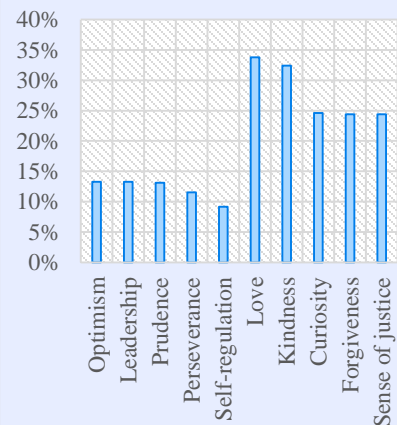
Statistics	Age	G	O
M	23,4	35,8	16,1
Me	22	37	16,5
SD	2,7	5,8	3,3
RQ	3	2,3	2,5

It can be concluded that there has been an increase in the values of the mean test scores of the final situation with respect to the initial one in this sample of participants.

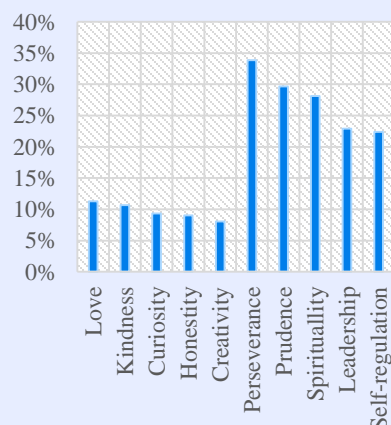
Optimism in this sample is independent of age, while in gratitude the correlation with age is stronger.

If we look at Cohen's d for gratitude, this study shows a statistically small difference ($d = -0.374$), while for optimism it is a statistically large difference ($d = -0.846$).

Pre-test strengths



Post-test strengths



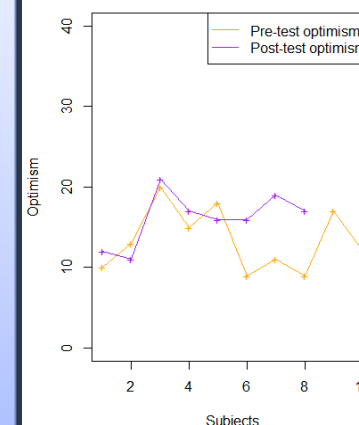
Conclusion

This study has several limitations:

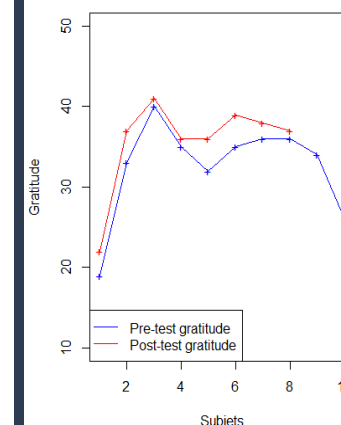
1. The sample is very small, and is composed only of people from Castilla la Mancha and the Valencian Community
2. In addition, all of them are both university and vocational training students.
3. The number of women is not similar to that of men
4. There was no control group, nor were there any control exercises that did not evaluate what was intended to be measured.
5. The students simultaneously combined participation in this study with the final period of the academic year.
6. In addition, they may have felt compelled to score higher on the final gratitude and optimism questionnaires than on the initial ones. This may occur either to justify their participation or to help in the present study.

Further studies are needed that also confirm the results obtained, with a larger sample, a control group, of a longer duration, and that evaluate changes over a longer period of time and follow-up of participants at 3 and 6 months after completion. In addition, it would be interesting to correlate gratitude and optimism with variables such as extraversion in future research.

Pre-test optimism & post-test optimism



Pre-test & post-test gratitude



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