



From wisdom to life satisfaction: Unpacking the mediating role of gratitude

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Abstract

Adolescents' life satisfaction is an important indicator of subjective well-being and has been associated with better mental health and academic adjustment. This study examined the effect of wisdom on life satisfaction among high school students and tested gratitude as a mediator of this relationship. A quantitative cross-sectional design was employed using simple mediation analysis (PROCESS Macro Model 4). The participants were 544 high school students in Semarang, selected through random sampling. Data were collected using validated Likert-type scales measuring wisdom, gratitude, and life satisfaction, all of which demonstrated satisfactory internal reliability. Indirect effects were tested using a bias-corrected bootstrap procedure with 10,000 samples. The findings revealed that wisdom significantly predicted gratitude and life satisfaction, while gratitude also significantly predicted life satisfaction. The indirect effect of wisdom on life satisfaction through gratitude was significant, indicating partial mediation. These results suggest that wisdom contributes to adolescents' life satisfaction both directly and indirectly by fostering gratitude as an important psychological resource. The study extends the positive psychology literature by clarifying the mechanism linking wisdom and life satisfaction and offers practical implications for school-based interventions aimed at promoting student well-being.

Introduction

Adolescence is an important stage characterized by rapid biological, cognitive, and social development that necessitates significant adaptation in family, school, and social contexts, while also involving greater emotional volatility, increased identity exploration, and a higher likelihood of exposure to both academic and social stressors. Consequently, adolescents become more prone to mental problems and the manifestation of anxiety and depressive symptoms compared to other developmental stages (Fergusson et al., 2015; Jiang et al., 2026a). It is established that the mental health of adolescents becomes a critical concern from a public health perspective, and numerous aspects of adolescents' health correlate with the increased probability of the emergence of depressive and anxious disorders (Baykal et al., 2025). The significance of mental well-being for educational purposes is also noteworthy, as

psychological well-being affects academic adaptation, motivation, and other aspects of academic performance.

Life satisfaction serves as an important indicator of mental health because it captures how individuals cognitively evaluate their overall quality of life, emotional functioning, and subjective well-being. It refers to an individual's cognitive judgment of their overall quality of life (Diener & Sim, 2024). Life satisfaction is an important issue, as low satisfaction among adolescents is linked to various developmental risks. Conversely, high levels of life satisfaction may act as a protective factor against mental health problems (Cavioni et al., 2021). In the educational context, it has been found that life satisfaction is correlated with lower levels of stress and better academic performance through more adaptive behaviors of students and college students (Kütük et al., 2023). Moreover, a review of adolescent life satisfaction found that it is affected by close relationships, health, and social engagement. Research also indicates that certain adolescent segments experience lower life satisfaction, underscoring the need to understand the psychological factors that could boost life satisfaction during the school years (Aulia & Kasyfillah, 2025). In addition, the latest bibliometric data show a spectacular rise in papers on adolescent life satisfaction and an increasing emphasis on adolescent research, which underline the need to study the mechanisms of well-being in this period (Kaçmaz & Çelik, 2025).

There has been growing research interest in wisdom within positive psychology, particularly regarding its role as a psychological resource that contributes to life satisfaction and subjective well-being (Ardelt, & Jeste, 2018). The concept of wisdom is defined psychologically as a complex construct encompassing mature reasoning, perspective-taking, emotional regulation, and a moral orientation toward the common good (Zhang et al., 2023). Research on the relationship between wisdom and well-being, which was measured using different indicators of hedonia and eudaimonia, revealed a statistically significant positive association, albeit one that varied in strength depending on the type of measurement (performance vs. self-report) used to assess wisdom (Dewangan et al., 2025; Zadworna, 2023). Thus, these studies provide evidence that the phenomenon of wisdom is a promising candidate for explaining why some people maintain their well-being despite life difficulties. Still, much of this literature focuses on adults and the elderly, leaving adolescents, especially high school students, relatively understudied, even though they face unique challenges at school.

Population limitations aside, another empirical gap is the uncertain psychological mechanisms that mediate the impact of wisdom on life satisfaction. Many papers demonstrate the connection between wisdom and well-being. However, the explanations of how this works vary widely, e.g., through mediators such as forgiveness in late adulthood or different psychological resource factors (Brudek et al., 2023). This variety of mediators can even lead one to think that the effect of wisdom on well-being may not always be direct, but through specific psychological processes. Hence, the importance of this relationship for further research, because first of all, life satisfaction is a well-being outcome that is very much a part of the student adaptation process; second, wisdom is conceptually associated with how individuals evaluate their life experiences and resolve dilemmas; however, these working models in school adolescents have not yet been verified through research.

In the present study, gratitude is hypothesized to be an important mediator of this process. Gratitude is the disposition to acknowledge and recognize the benefits/goodness one obtains either from other people or from the universe as a whole that leads to the experience of positive emotions, the maintenance of social ties, and the enhancement of life evaluations. There is now a fairly large body of empirical evidence demonstrating a positive association between gratitude and life satisfaction. A systematic review found a consistent positive association between gratitude and life satisfaction across the included studies. However, causal evidence for gratitude interventions on life satisfaction remains mixed and is moderated by the quality of control designs (Kerry et al., 2023). Contemporary research also supports a positive

relationship between gratitude and life satisfaction among students (Chauhan et al., 2025). Indeed, a recent longitudinal study demonstrates that gratitude mediates the association between social resources and mental well-being. These findings reveal gratitude as a more enduring psychological process rather than a momentary feeling (Akyil et al., 2025).

From a theoretical perspective, introducing gratitude as a mediator between wisdom and life satisfaction is warranted for the following reasons. First, wisdom entails self-reflection, intellectual humility, perspective-taking, and emotion regulation skills, which facilitate a meaningful understanding of personal experiences (Zhang et al., 2023). This state facilitates people's ability to see the positives and benefits of their day-to-day experiences, which is a key component of a grateful disposition. Furthermore, meta-analytic findings on wisdom suggest that it can be conceptualized as a psychological resource linked to well-being, which may enable it to enhance positive life assessments by fostering more positive emotions/attributions, a way gratitude manifests (Dong et al., 2023). Second, gratitude is also theoretically relevant as a mediator because gratitude increases people's attention to the positive facets of life, improves social support and relationships, and minimizes emphasis on flaws (Tian et al., 2025; Wong et al., 2024). All these mechanisms promote positive self-evaluations.

Moreover, the justifications for mediation are further strengthened by the mixed and partial results in the related literature. While gratitude and life satisfaction are generally strongly correlated, systematic reviews of gratitude interventions' effects on life satisfaction indicate that they are not always superior to those of control groups, suggesting that further investigation of mechanisms and boundary conditions is needed (Wood et al., 2010). Although there is a relatively consistent association between wisdom and well-being, the mediators differ across studies and include forgiveness, meaning, and resilience, suggesting that indirect pathways may be context- and population-specific (Ardelt & Jeste, 2022; Kaya & Odacı, 2024). The lack of consistency in examining a more specific mediation model involving high school students is particularly important given the conceptual overlap between gratitude and the reflective, appreciative, and meaning-making qualities of wisdom.

In this regard, a mediation model is an important consideration for examining how wisdom leads to life satisfaction. As shown, mediation models allow us to examine the indirect pathways by which independent variables influence dependent variables through psychological mediators (Coutts & Hayes, 2023; Rucker et al., 2011). The application of such models is also associated with the development of analysis methods in the sphere of positive psychology, which emphasizes the need to understand the psychological processes underlying connections among well-being variables.

This research is very timely and valuable. At a fundamental level, it refines the positive psychology literature by using gratitude as a bridging factor to explain the effect of wisdom on adolescents' life satisfaction. This group has so far been scarcely explored in wisdom research. On a practical level, the study results can serve as a basis for the design of school interventions, like guidance and counseling, character education, and warm school environments programs that aim not only to reduce psychological problems but also to enhance people's psychological make-up (wisdom and gratitude) for improving students' concept of life as the main indicator of well-being. This paper, which addresses the area of a high school student, is a valuable input for school policies that target student well-being as part of the quality of education.

This study examines the relationship between wisdom and life satisfaction among high school students, positing gratitude as a mediating mechanism. By testing whether gratitude explains how wisdom contributes to students' life satisfaction, this study addresses a gap in prior research that has largely focused on adult and older populations. The findings are expected to extend positive psychology literature and offer practical implications for school-based programs aimed at strengthening students' wisdom, gratitude, and psychological well-being.

Methods

Design

This study employed a quantitative approach with a simple mediation analysis design using Model 4 in PROCESS Macro (Hayes, 2013). This design was chosen to test the mechanism underlying the relationship between wisdom (independent variable, X) and life satisfaction (dependent variable, Y) via gratitude (mediator variable, M). Through this approach, the study focused on analyzing the magnitude of the direct effect, the indirect effect through the mediator (indirect effect), and the total effect to explain the extent to which gratitude mediates the relationship between wisdom and life satisfaction.

Participants

The study population comprised high school students in Semarang City, from both public and private schools. The sampling technique used was random sampling to ensure equal opportunity for each member of the selected population to become a respondent. The sample size for this study was 544 respondents, determined using the Isaac and Michael table based on population estimates and a specified error rate. Detailed participant information was presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Research Sample Description

Sample Characteristics	<i>f</i>	%
Sex		
Male	212	39
Female	332	61
School Status		
Public Schools	399	73
Private Schools	145	27
Age		
14 years old	50	9
15 years old	148	27
16 years old	254	47
17 years old	55	10
18 years old	37	7
<i>N</i> = 544		

Instruments

Data collection used a Likert scale, allowing respondents to rate their level of agreement with statements representing each construct. The research instrument consisted of three scales below.

The gratitude scale was adapted from Grimaldy & Haryanto (2020) which consists of 11 statement items that include 2 aspects, namely continuous appreciation for life experiences with the example of the statement item "*I feel grateful towards everyone*" and the second aspect related to the expression of gratitude to individuals who play a role in the respondent's life with the example of the statement item "*There are many things that I should be grateful for in life*". The Gratitude scale shows good internal reliability ($\alpha = 0.851$).

The life satisfaction scale is based on Diener's adaptation of Kunwijaya et al. (2021) consisting of 10 statement items covering 4 aspects, namely the desire to change life with the example of the item "*I want to change a lot of things in my life*", the aspect of satisfaction with the current life with the example of the item "*I have excellent living conditions*", the aspect of satisfaction with the past life with the example of the item "*I want to change my past*", and the

aspect of satisfaction with future life with the example of the item "*My future looks so promising*". The Life Satisfaction Scale has an internal reliability of $\alpha = 0.87$.

The wisdom scale uses Ardel (2003) framework consists of 19 statement items, which include 3 dimensions, namely cognitive with the example of the item "*It's better not to know too much about things that can't be changed*", the reflective dimension with the example of the item "*Things often go wrong for me by no fault of my own*", and the affective dimension with the example of the item "*If I see people in need, I try to help them one way or another*". These three dimensions represent wisdom as a multidimensional construct; this scale has a reliability of $\alpha = 0.812$.

Procedure

The research procedure began with a request for authorization from the high school-level administration at the Central Java Provincial Office, as all high schools in Central Java are directly under the Provincial Office's jurisdiction. Furthermore, the institution was informed of the research's purpose and nature. The researcher captured respondent data by distributing questionnaires through several student communities, with assistance from the Guidance and Counseling Teacher community. At the beginning of the questionnaire, informed consent was obtained, including an explanation of the research purpose, the principle of data confidentiality, and the rights respondents could obtain. After that, respondents will be asked to provide demographic data, such as initials, gender, age, school status, and final agreement, to confirm their willingness to participate in the research. The researcher continued collecting results and checked the completeness of the data obtained. The entire data collection process is carried out in a single measurement. The incoming research data were analyzed for initial checks, including tests of classical assumptions such as normality, linearity, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity, before the mediation analysis was conducted. This is done to ensure that the data meet the utilization criteria specified in the analysis parameters (Sugiyono, 2019).

Data Analysis

Initial analysis used descriptive statistics to measure the variables under investigation. First, it should be noted that the skewness and kurtosis values for all variables were within ± 2 . Furthermore, the Kolmogorov–Smirnov normality test indicated that all variables were normally distributed ($p > 0.05$). The multicollinearity test indicated no collinearity issues, with VIF values < 10 and tolerances > 0.10 . The heteroscedasticity test using the Glejser method also indicated no violation of the assumptions ($p > 0.05$). Second, the average scores for wisdom, gratitude, and life satisfaction were above the midpoint of the rating scale. This indicates that the respondents exhibited above-average levels of wisdom and gratitude and reported high levels of life satisfaction.

As the next stage of the statistical study, following descriptive statistical analysis, a mediation analysis was conducted to determine whether gratitude mediates the relationship between wisdom and life satisfaction. For this purpose, we used IBM SPSS Statistics 25.0 PROCESS Macro Model 4. Mediation was assessed by examining the indirect effect of wisdom on life satisfaction. The significance of the mediation effect was tested using a bias-corrected bootstrap procedure with 10,000 samples to provide a more accurate evaluation. The indirect effect was considered statistically significant when the 95% coefficient interval (CI) for the coefficient did not include zero (Hayes, 2013).

Results

A simple mediation analysis was conducted using PROCESS Model 4 with Wisdom as the predictor (X), Gratitude as the mediator (M), and Life Satisfaction as the outcome (Y). The analysis was based on 544 respondents, with indirect effects estimated using 10,000 bootstrap samples and 95% confidence intervals.

Based on the mediator model analysis presented in Table 2, the results showed that wisdom positively and significantly predicts gratitude, $B = 0.235$, $SE = 0.033$, $\beta = 0.296$, $t = 7.201$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [0.1709, 0.2991]. This simple regression model of gratitude from wisdom was significant: $R = 0.296$, $R^2 = 0.087$, and $F(1, 542) = 51.855$, $p < .001$, indicating that wisdom explained 8.73% of the variance in gratitude. The standardized coefficient indicated a moderate positive effect.

Table 2 also showed that wisdom and gratitude simultaneously significantly predicted life satisfaction, with $R = 0.408$, $R^2 = 0.167$, and $F(2, 541) = 54.109$, $p < .001$. Those two variables together explained 16.67% of the variance in life satisfaction. Partially, wisdom remained a positive and significant effect on life satisfaction after gratitude was entered into the model, $B = 0.142$, $SE = 0.036$, $t = 3.961$, $p = .0001$, 95% CI [0.072, 0.213]. The standardized coefficient indicated a positive effect, but it was smaller than the total effect ($\beta = 0.163$). Moreover, gratitude also had a positive and significant effect on life satisfaction, $B = 0.362$, $SE = 0.045$, $t = 8.019$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [0.274, 0.451]. Its standardized coefficient ($\beta = 0.329$) indicates that gratitude is a stronger predictor of life satisfaction than wisdom in this full model.

As shown in Table 3, the total effect of wisdom on life satisfaction was also significant, $B = 0.228$, $SE = 0.036$, $\beta = 0.260$, $t = 6.271$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [0.156, 0.299]. This total effect model yielded $R = 0.260$, $R^2 = 0.068$, and $F(1, 542) = 39.321$, $p < .001$, indicating that wisdom directly explains 6.76% of the variance in life satisfaction when gratitude is not taken into account.

Bootstrap testing showed that the indirect effect of wisdom on life satisfaction through gratitude was significant, $\beta = 0.085$, $BootSE = 0.016$, 95% Boot CI [0.057, 0.118]. Since the bootstrap confidence interval did not cross zero, the mediation was declared significant. The fully standardized indirect effect was also significant, $\beta = 0.097$, $BootSE = 0.017$, 95% Boot CI [0.066, 0.132]. Overall, the findings of this study are visualized in Figure 1.

Because the direct effect of wisdom on life satisfaction remained significant after gratitude was included in the model, the obtained pattern indicates partial mediation. Substantively, this means that wisdom increases life satisfaction through two pathways simultaneously: a direct pathway and an indirect pathway through increased gratitude. Compared with the total effect, the indirect effect of 0.085 accounts for approximately 37.4% of the total influence of wisdom on life satisfaction. Thus, gratitude can be understood as an important, but not the sole, psychological mechanism in explaining the relationship between wisdom and life satisfaction.

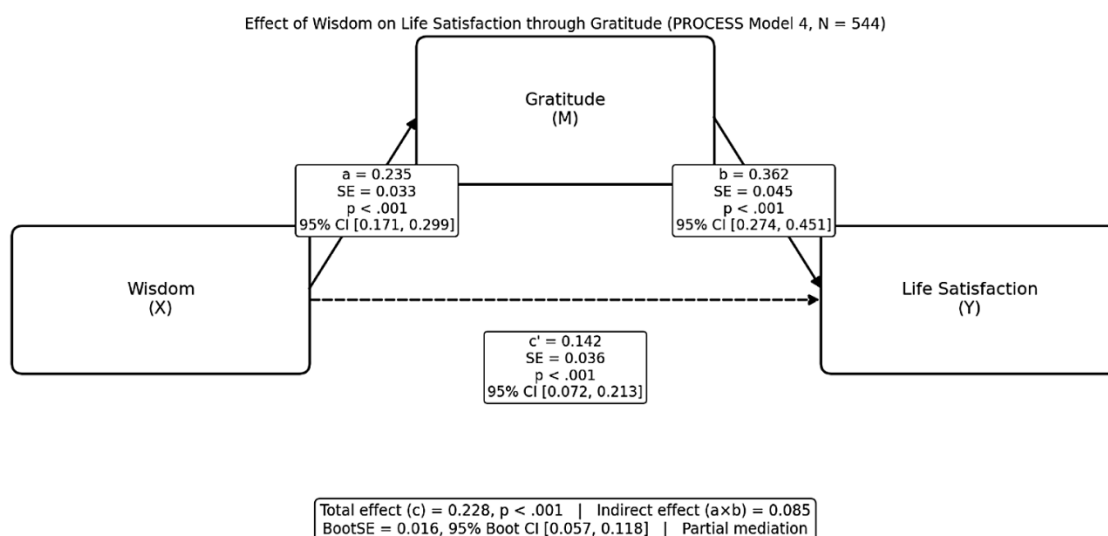


Figure 1. The Results of Data Analysis Mediation Model

Table 2. Summary of mediation models

Jalur / Model	B	SE	β	t	p	95% CI	R ²	F
Wisdom → Gratitude (a path)	0.235	0.033	0.300	7.201	< .001	[0.171, 0.299]	0.087	51.855
Gratitude → Life Satisfaction (b path)	0.362	0.045	0.329	8.019	< .001	[0.274, 0.451]	0.167*	54.109*
Wisdom → Life Satisfaction (total effect, c path)	0.227	0.036	0.260	6.271	< .001	[0.156, 0.299]	0.068	39.321
Wisdom → Life Satisfaction (direct effect, c' path)	0.142	0.036	0.163	3.961	< .001	[0.072, 0.213]		

Table 3. Total, direct, and indirect effects

Efek	Estimate	BootSE	t	p	95% CI
Total effect (c)	0.228	0.036	6.271	< .001	[0.156, 0.299]
Direct effect (c')	0.142	0.036	3.961	< .001	[0.072, 0.213]
Indirect effect (a × b) via Gratitude	0.085	0.016	—	—	[0.057, 0.118]
Completely standardized indirect effect	0.097	0.017	—	—	[0.066, 0.132]

Discussion

It can be concluded that there is a positive correlation between wisdom and life satisfaction, either direct or indirect via gratitude. In fact, wisdom can be empirically linked to gratitude, while gratitude can be empirically linked to life satisfaction. The indirect relationship between wisdom and life satisfaction, mediated by gratitude, is also significant. Thus, the influence of wisdom on life satisfaction does not only occur directly, for example, at the cognitive stage, but it can also happen indirectly through an affective-cognitive approach, which is gratitude. In other words, wise people not only have good judgment in assessing their lives but also can perceive their positive aspects, which leads to satisfaction with their lives.

This study's outcomes correlate with findings from contemporary wisdom literature. Most agree that wisdom is a bridge between a psychological source and a positive outcome concerning emotional and psychological well-being. Dong et al. (2023) showed that the meta-analysis of 30 years of wisdom research found that indicators of wisdom and well-being showed positive associations across all well-being assessments. This study's findings further support the argument that wisdom is associated not only with well-being but also with satisfaction and quality of life. Thus, this study provides additional evidence that wisdom positively influences the individual's psychological assessments and life satisfaction.

The concept that gratitude acts as a partial mediator is significant in its own right. There is abundant cross-population research supporting the association between gratitude and life satisfaction. In their systematic review, Kerry et al. (2023) examined this phenomenon. They noted that many studies across many countries and diverse sample populations have shown a positive association between life satisfaction and gratitude. However, they also noted the relative neglect of the mechanisms behind this phenomenon. In this regard, this study contributes by suggesting that gratitude can be understood as one 'psychological bridge' that helps explain how wisdom, in this case, embodies life satisfaction. Therefore, this study does not limit itself to the view that gratitude in and of itself is "good" for life satisfaction, but instead seeks to explain one of the psychological resource systems to which gratitude should be linked: wisdom.

Earlier research has generally treated gratitude either as an immediate predictor of life satisfaction or as a mediating variable between other constructs, such as social support, self-

worth, or psychological health (Kardas et al., 2019; Kim et al., 2024; Li & Chen, 2025). However, the present research treats wisdom as the antecedent construct and gratitude as the mediating mechanism through which wisdom influences life satisfaction. Consequently, the uniqueness of this research lies in bringing together three individual constructs to establish a structure for psychological processes. It is unique in that it adds to the growing field of positive psychology, which is generally concerned with correlations among variables rather than causal mechanisms.

The fact that the gratitude factor has a higher coefficient than the wisdom factor in the outcome model is very interesting. One implication is that wisdom may be a higher-order ability that shapes how people interpret their life experiences. In contrast, gratitude is the immediate mechanism that influences life satisfaction. From a psychological perspective, the wise ones are usually good at self-reflection, accept that life is uncertain, and are very aware of the value of relationships and experiences. Such traits predispose them to feeling gratitude. Hence, this explanation is more in line with the "to what extent one finds one's life satisfying" evaluation. Moreover, this notion aligns with Brudek et al. (2023) view that wisdom affects well-being not only through direct pathways but also through psychological mediators that enable individuals to adapt to life experiences more effectively.

In terms of the theory of positive emotions, these results also make sense. Many studies have found that gratitude is a positive emotion that helps individuals expand their attention to resources and develop an adaptive outlook on life. As noted by Chauhan et al. (2025), gratitude is associated with good mental health and life satisfaction. It may function as a coping strategy that enhances psychological resilience. Based on these research findings, wisdom could be regarded as a background for reflection that helps individuals maturely evaluate the intricacies of life. In contrast, gratitude helps individuals make this mature evaluation manifest in their appreciation of life.

However, these findings have to be treated with some reservations. First, because the research design was cross-sectional, the mediating role of gratitude can be viewed as a statistical rather than a causal explanation. Also, as Kerry et al. (2023) suggested, self-report measures of gratitude and life satisfaction can be influenced by response biases, positive expectations, and potential reciprocity between variables. Second, given that the direct link between wisdom and life satisfaction remained significant once gratitude was introduced into the model, gratitude should not be viewed as the only mediator. It means that another way of explaining the correlation between wisdom and life satisfaction could be through meaning in life, resilience, forgiveness, and, more broadly, psychological well-being. In other words, the current study highlights just one aspect of the phenomenon.

Overall, this investigation yields one central take-home message: wisdom positively predicts life satisfaction, and this effect is partially mediated by gratitude. These results support the view that subjective well-being is shaped not only by rational assessments of life situations but also by how well an individual makes sense of life and appreciates what they have.

Implications

Theoretical Implications

The study's conclusions have important theoretical implications for the establishment of a positive psychology theory of subjective well-being. The first conclusion is that the support for the claim that the concept of life satisfaction can be seen as a product of multi-level psychological mechanisms, rather than a sole predictor. From this perspective, wisdom becomes a resource variable, while gratitude is an intermediary variable that partially mediates the impact of wisdom on life satisfaction. Such a perspective corroborates the results of previous studies in the domain, which have revealed that both psychological and subjective well-being can be determined based on mediating variables like epistemic curiosity, meaning

in life, resilience, or mental well-being (Jiang et al., 2026b; Reil & Bono, 2026; Shi et al., 2025; Tian et al., 2025).

Second, this study offers a new theoretical perspective on the role of wisdom as a productive psychological resource for enhancing well-being. Recent studies have shown wisdom to be associated with diverse indicators of adaptive functioning, such as psychological well-being and mental health, as well as with the reduction of psychological distress and the promotion of psychological resilience (Dewangan et al., 2025; Hassan et al., 2025; Jeste et al., 2026; Zadworna, 2023). However, most of the studies fall short of addressing the role of wisdom as a facilitator of process outcomes. This study demonstrates that wisdom is an antecedent of gratitude, which fosters increased life satisfaction. This is an important development, as it demonstrates that wisdom is associated with a deeper orientation toward life and a sense of appreciation.

Third, this research broadens the scope of the gratitude literature. It shows that gratitude can serve not only as a direct predictor of well-being but also as a psychological mechanism that connects more abstract intrapersonal resources with more concrete life evaluations. Several recent studies have demonstrated that gratitude is positively associated with life satisfaction, mental well-being, relationship quality, and various facets of psychosocial functioning (Chauhan et al., 2025; Kerry et al., 2023; Nicuță et al., 2025; Sururin et al., 2026). What is more, several follow-up studies identified gratitude functioning as a link between psychosocial resources and more stable mental health outcomes (Tian et al., 2025). The present paper, in addition to these studies, reveals that gratitude can be seen as a mediator of the effect of wisdom on life satisfaction. Hence, this research conceptualizes gratitude not merely as a positive mood that comes and goes, but rather as a transformational process that brings the concept of psychological wisdom into the realm of normal day-to-day life judgments.

Fourth, the findings of this study indicate partial mediation, suggesting that more than one psychological process underlies well-being. While gratitude has been investigated as a mediator of the association between wisdom and life satisfaction, the importance of this association is not well studied, and, as a result, the role of gratitude as a mediator remains questionable. This result, therefore, might be in line with other studies proposing that the impact of psychological factors on life satisfaction may be moderated by other elements of the relation, such as (but not exclusively) forgiveness, resilience, mental health, and life meaning (Brudek et al., 2023; Chauhan et al., 2025; Goulden et al., 2026; Zhen et al., 2021). Hence, in this study, the main objective is to contribute to a multi-mechanism conceptualization of life satisfaction, with gratitude as a significant, but not the only, mediator.

Practical Implications

Life satisfaction can be improved by considering adjustable psychological factors, especially gratitude. Studies indicate that gratitude is no longer just a conceptual term; it can be trained to positively affect people's mental state and well-being. For instance, there are studies showing how the use of apps to promote gratitude reduces the worries and anxieties of users, specifically those with personalized instructions in accordance with the user's preference (Schienle et al., 2025). Moreover, other studies show that gratitude increases people's well-being, thereby improving their life satisfaction (Chauhan et al., 2025).

This model recognizes that, while gratitude plays a mediating role in the relationship between wisdom and life satisfaction, programs based solely on gratitude are likely to be less effective. The findings of this study actually justify a two-tier strategy. At the first tier, gratitude-centered activities such as gratitude journaling, writing down three things that went well during the day, reflecting on social support, or completing tasks that help people to find the good in their lives, can be used. In contrast, at the second tier, wisdom developmental activities can be implemented. These can include reflecting on life events, discussing the multiple dimensions of an issue, guiding people in the art of informed and purposeful choice,

and addressing difficult life events. Recent studies show that wisdom is highly malleable, emphasizing reflective practice, the art of informed and purposeful choice, and the integration of lived experiences and graduate-level perspective-taking (Hassan et al., 2025; Jeste et al., 2026). Thus, this study's findings recommend the design of practices that integrate wisdom and gratitude, which, in turn, will foster participants' overall well-being.

In terms of its application to education, the study has important implications for guidance and counseling services, character development programs, and mental health promotion curricula. Recent research has argued that adolescent and young adult life satisfaction is also associated with protective factors such as resilience, meaning in life, and other adaptive resources that schools may promote (Goulden et al., 2026; Jiang et al., 2026b). Thus, schools can lead with programs that teach coping skills and promote reflective wisdom and a gratitude orientation. More specifically, guidance and counseling teachers or counselors may also conduct sessions on narrative reflection, writing exercises on significant experiences, conversations on life dilemmas, or group activities that focus on “staking out positive values in life. With these devices in hand, gratitude is cultivated not simply as a fleeting positive feeling but as a byproduct of a more developed meaning-making process.

The findings of the current study indicate the need to transition from an overly problem-focused mental health care paradigm to one that emphasizes strengths. According to recent literature, psychological resources such as wisdom, gratitude, resilience, and meaning in life serve not only as complementary but also as fundamental bases for healthy psychological development (Dewangan et al., 2025; Jeste et al., 2026; Jiang et al., 2026b). Accordingly, organizational policies within schools, universities, and other community institutions may foster gratitude and wisdom, thereby promoting long-term well-being. In this respect, the study provides grounds for developing programs that address psychological issues and also foster positive personal attributes, thereby enhancing satisfaction with life.

Conclusion

The research findings indicate that wisdom is a major factor in enhancing life satisfaction, both directly and indirectly through gratitude. The mediation test results indicate that gratitude is a critical psychological pathway through which wisdom positively impacts life satisfaction. Therefore, people with high wisdom are capable of experiencing gratitude and, as a result, report high life satisfaction.

Conceptually, these results suggest that the association between wisdom and life satisfaction is complex, indirect, and mediated by proximal psychological mechanisms. In this respect, gratitude is a significant, but not the only, mediating factor that explains the association. Hence, this research advances the literature on positive psychology by presenting a more holistic model of the interrelationships among wisdom, gratitude, and life satisfaction.

In terms of practical implications, this study's findings indicate that initiatives to enhance satisfaction with one's life should address psychological issues and foster positive psychological traits, such as wisdom and gratitude. The use of reflective practice to develop wisdom and gratitude practice to enhance gratitude can make the initiative worthwhile when applied in educational and mental health settings.

Nevertheless, since the study adopted a cross-sectional design, establishing causality should be done with great caution. Future studies are encouraged to use longitudinal or experimental designs and to consider additional mediators to better understand the link between wisdom and life satisfaction.

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Author Contribution Statement

All authors (SG, MN, and SN) were involved in developing the overall research concept. Specifically, SG designed the research framework and objectives, developed the instruments, collected data, and drafted the manuscript. MN ensured the quality of the research and provided academic guidance in developing the theoretical constructs used. SN assisted in designing the research instruments and in validating and analyzing the research data. All authors reviewed and finalized the manuscript.

AI Declaration

The author declares that artificial intelligence (AI), including ChatGPT, was used solely as an aid for language refinement, academic style editing, and paragraph organization. All ideas, analyses, and theoretical interpretations originate from the author, and the final content has been verified in accordance with ethical scholarly standards.

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