

## GRATITUDE: EMPIRICAL FINDINGS AND THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

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### **Abstract**

*Expressing gratitude and responding it are rare things in Indonesia. It is interesting and surprising because in the Holy Quran there are so many verses about gratitude commands, moreover, God will give Muslim more if he is grateful. But we find most Muslims who are ungrateful. Based on this problem, this article aims to elaborate the significance of expressing gratitude and its correlation to the quality of faith to God, emotion, and happiness, and interpersonal relationship using the Quran and psychology as the conceptual framework and also based on empirical findings. The conclusion of this paper underlines that the Quran and psychology have common view on gratitude. The research results that grateful correlated with intrinsic religiousness positively and with extrinsic religiousness negatively and prayer increases gratitude, prayer plays a causal role in promoting gratitude as well. It is similar with the teaching of Surah An-Nisa' (4): 147 and Surah Luqman (31): 12. People who often say thank you have strong relationship with the other as they do not only think of their relationship to God but also to other humans. All these findings are strongly in line with the research that gratitude is correlated to fewer depressive symptoms.*

### **Abstrak**

Mengekspresikan rasa terima kasih dan menanggapi adalah hal yang masih langka di Indonesia. Sangat menarik dan mengejutkan, karena dalam Al-Quran ada begitu banyak ayat tentang perintah syukur, apalagi Tuhan akan memberi lebih banyak muslim jika dia bersyukur. Tapi kami menemukan sebagian besar muslim yang tidak tahu berterima kasih. Berdasarkan masalah ini, artikel ini bertujuan untuk menguraikan pentingnya mengekspresikan rasa terima kasih dan korelasinya dengan kualitas iman kepada Tuhan, emosi dan kebahagiaan, dan hubungan interpersonal menggunakan Al-Quran dan psikologi sebagai kerangka kerja konseptual

dan juga berdasarkan temuan empiris. Kesimpulan dari artikel ini menggarisbawahi bahwa Al-Quran dan psikologi memiliki pandangan yang sama tentang rasa terima kasih. Hasil penelitian yang bersyukur berkorelasi dengan religius intrinsik secara positif dan dengan religiusitas ekstrinsik negatif dan doa meningkatkan rasa syukur, doa memainkan peran kausal dalam mempromosikan rasa syukur juga. Ini mirip dengan ajaran Surah An-Nisa '(4): 147 dan Surah Luqman (31): 12. Orang yang sering mengucapkan terima kasih memiliki hubungan yang kuat dengan yang lain karena mereka tidak hanya memikirkan hubungan mereka dengan Tuhan tetapi juga untuk manusia lain. Semua temuan ini sangat sejalan dengan penelitian bahwa rasa terima kasih berkorelasi dengan gejala depresi yang lebih sedikit.

**Keywords:** empirical findings; gratitude; theoretical perspective.

## **Introduction**

In this present era, saying thank you and replying to one have become rare in our country. When a busker has been given money, when someone has been helped with holding the button of elevator door so that the person who was out are not pinched or does not miss entering the elevator, when parents have been helped by their children with the houseworks, when a child has been given pocket money or gifts by parents, when a teacher or professor has been helped by students with erasing the board and setting up LCD projector, when a boss has been served a drink by his maid, when a maid is given a gift or salary by his boss, when a grandson has been given a souvenir by his grandmother, when someone has been given praise by his friend, when someone has been lent friend's pencil, when an officer has been helped carrying the bag by his men, when a priest has been helped preparing meals by his students, when a student has been given knowledge by his teacher, when a visitor has been assisted by parking attendants parking his motorcycle or car, even when the parking attendants has received his parking fee, they rarely thank.

Similarly, when someone says thanks to someone else, the person seldom replies the same. Somewhat different from when passing by a foreigner, receiving people's assistance or help, they would spontaneously remark "Oh, thank you" or even "Thank you, it's really kind of you". Even foreigners who look less friendly though will still say,

"Thank you." What is interesting but also surprising is that Muslims themselves rarely express or reply thanks. Whereas there are many verses in the Quran, which calls for being grateful. Even God blesses those who are able to give thanks with multiple favors. In addition, viewed from the psychological aspect, people who have an attitude of gratitude will live happier far from the stress and have a more harmonious relationship with the people around so as to minimize conflicts. Moreover, from the spiritual side, people who have an attitude of gratitude have faith in God higher than those who rarely or even not at all have an attitude of gratitude. Therefore, to say and to reply thank-you very urgent for human life in their contact with the other and with God. This paper will elaborate the importance of conveying gratitude and replying thanks as well as its correlation with ones' belief in God, emotions and happiness, and interpersonal relationships with the others from the theoretical perspective of the Quran and empirical findings of Psychology.

### **Theoretical Perspective Of The Qur'an**

Shihab<sup>1</sup> explained the meaning of the word *gratitude* (شُكْرٌ) as to open and to reveal, the opposite of *kufr* which means to close and to hide. The essence of gratitude is to manifest favors, for instance to use it in its right place and in the manner intended by the giver, also to mention the giver well. This means that the favors Allah bestow, demands contemplation, for what they are given, and then to use these favors in accordance with the purpose of the giving. To open or to reveal God's favor, among others, is in the form of giving a portion of the favor to others, while to cover them is to be miserly. "And as for the favor of your Lord, do announce (it)" (Surah Adh-Dluha (93): ll)<sup>2</sup>.

That definition of gratitude is reconfirmed by some verses of the Quran that confront the word of gratitude to the word of *kufr*,

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<sup>1</sup> M. Quraish Shihab, "Tafsir Al Misbah: Pesan, Kesan Dan Keserasian Al Qur'an," in *Jilid 7* (Jakarta: Lentera Hati, 2001).

<sup>2</sup> Departemen Agama Republik Indonesia, *Al-Qur'an Dan Terjemahnya* (Bandung: CV. Darus Sunnah, 2015).

including in Surah Ibrahim (14): 7: "And when your Lord made it known: If you are grateful, I would certainly give to you more, and if you are ungrateful, My chastisement is truly severe." Then it is resumed in Surah Ibrahim (14): 8: "And Moses said: If you are ungrateful, you and those on earth all together, most surely Allah is Self-sufficient, Praised." The Verse 7 conveys the mandatory of grateful and avoidance of kufr, and it was part of the commemoration of Prophet Moses. Yet, what must be kept in mind is that the execution of the order was not for the sake of Allah. Because this verse continues that: "And Moses said, "If you should disbelieve, you and whoever is on the earth entirely - indeed, Allah is Free of need and Praiseworthy." Surah Ibrahim (14): 8.

Shihab<sup>3</sup> also revealed that the verse of the Quran states explicitly that the benefits of gratitude will be returned to the grateful man itself as contained in Surah An-Naml (27): 40 "Say: Tell me if the chastisement of Allah should overtake you or the hour should come upon you, will you call (on others) besides Allah, if you are truthful?" Although Allah does not derive any, though little, benefit from His creatures' gratitude, for His mercy, He reveals Himself as *Syakirun 'Alim* (شَاكِرٌ عَلِيمٌ) in Surah Al-Baqarah (2): 158 and *Syakiran' Alima* (شَاكِرًا عَلِيمًا) in Surah An-Nisa' (4): 147, both of which mean "Most Thankful, Knowing," which bestows many gifts that add even for those who are grateful as mentioned in Surah Al-Baqarah (2): 158 "... Indeed, as-Safa and al-Marwah are among the symbols of Allah. So whoever makes Hajj to the House or performs 'umrah - there is no blame upon him for walking between them. And whoever volunteers good - then indeed, Allah is grateful and Knowing (*syaakirun 'alim*)." The meaning Allah is Grateful in Surah Al-Baqarah (2): 158 is that God will give the rewards of all activities based on sincerity and obedience to Him<sup>4</sup>. Criticism, curse and a threat are to anyone who hides

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<sup>3</sup> Shihab, "Tafsir Al Misbah: Pesan, Kesan Dan Keserasian Al Qur'an," 2001.

<sup>4</sup> M. Quraish Shihab, "Tafsir Al Misbah: Pesan, Kesan Dan Keserasian Al Qur'an," *Jilid 1* (2001).

knowledge and kindness. God knows the intentions and activities of the culprit.

Surah An-Nisa' (4): 147 mentions, "Why should Allah chastise you if you are grateful and believe? And Allah is the Multiplier of rewards and Knowing". This verse describes the nature of *Allah the Merciful, the Most Grateful and the Knowing* of people who obey and do good, so that nothing is hidden from Him and His gratitude even in the slightest. This verse takes the gratitude for the faith precedence because gratitude can deliver a person to faith. People who see the universe unfolds with all the benefits already exist and can be achieved, will be delivered to faith and trust in Allah. Furthermore, if faith is honed, then the believer will achieve the highest level of gratitude<sup>5</sup>. The word *syakir* derived from *syakara* meaning *plants that grow though with a little water* or *animal fat although with a bit of grass*; both named *Syakur*. Of that meaning, the meaning that God is *syakir* is that He who develops even the little practices of his servants, and multiplying them. The multiplying can reach 700 times, even without limit (Surah Al-Baqarah (2): 261)<sup>6</sup>, because God continues to multiply for whom He is willing<sup>7</sup>. Whoever repays goodness exponentially, he named grateful for such kindness. Whoever praises who does good, he can be called grateful. If the meaning of gratitude is seen from the meaning of rewards multiplication, then the most reasonable named *syakir* is only Allah. His reward multiplication is not limited.

Allah *syakir* means "He who gives rewards to the perpetrators of little kindness or obedience, He who confers pleasure with unlimited time for deeds that count with certain limited days." *Syukur* also means *praise*, and if the meaning of gratitude is seen from the term

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<sup>5</sup> M. Quraish Shihab, "Tafsir Al Misbah: Pesan, Kesan Dan Keserasian Al Qur'an," *Jilid 2* (2001).

<sup>6</sup> Mahmud Y Zayid, *The Quran Dar: An English Translation of the Meaning of the Quran* (Beirut: Dar Al-Choura, 1980).

<sup>7</sup> M. Quraish Shihab, *Wawasan Al-Qur'an Tafsir Tematik Atas Pelbagai Persoalan Umat* (Bandung: Mizan, 2007).

praise, then it can be marked that a compliment to the recent commendable be in place if there is a good done with consciousness, and not forced. Every deed or any good thing that is born in the universe is by the permission and the favor of God. Any kindness of human beings, in essence is of God alone. If so, any praise given to humans, eventually goes back to God as well. Indeed, Allah praises Himself, His prophets, His obedient servants, yet His praise to whoever is essentially a compliment back to himself as well.<sup>8</sup>

Fakhruddin Razi distinguishes between *syukur* and *hamd* (compliment). *Syukur* is used to praise favors obtained, while *hamd* for favors we receive or received by others. If so, when it is said that Allah is *al-Hamid* (Praiseworthy), then this is a compliment to him, either because we receive His favor or others receive it. But if we are grateful for it, then it is because we feel the grace that we get. There are three elements in acts that must be met by the doer so that he gets praise, namely: (1) is beautiful/well, (2) is done consciously, (3) is not by force or coercion. The word *al-Hamid* as the nature of Allah means that Allah in all of His actions has met the three elements of praise mentioned above. Allah *al-Hamid* means He who creates everything and everything is created well and on the basis of His effort and His will without coercion. Thus, his deeds are all commendable and all the commendable is His work, so it should be if He bears the nature or the title of *al-Hamid*.<sup>9</sup>

Imam al-Ghazali defined the meaning of the Allah attribute of *al-Hamid* is that Allah is commendable by Himself since *azal* and is also praised by His creatures continuously. The word *al-hamid* taken from the letter *ha'*, *mim* and *dal* shows the antonyms of *reprehension*, such as the name of the prophet Muhammad where nothing inherently reprehensible was his.<sup>10</sup> From the above explanation it appears that Allah, besides praised by His creatures, also praises Himself.

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<sup>8</sup> Shihab, "Tafsir Al Misbah: Pesan, Kesan Dan Keserasian Al Qur'an," 2001.

<sup>9</sup> Shihab, "Tafsir Al Misbah: Pesan, Kesan Dan Keserasian Al Qur'an," 2001.

<sup>10</sup> Shihab.

From its language aspect, words such as *al-Hamid* could mean the subject and the object. In the Quran it is also found the praise of Allah for Himself. Note Surah al-Fatihah, which begins after *Basmalah* with *al-Hamdulilah*. His own praise is part of His teaching to the creature. Attribute Coupling of *Hamid* and *Ghaniyy* indicates that praise to Allah is not at all needed by Him; praise does not add to his glory and perfection; slur and rebellion do not diminish His power and absoluteness. Affirmed in Surah Luqman (31): 12, which reads, "And We had certainly given Luqman wisdom (and said), "Be grateful to Allah," And whoever is grateful is grateful for (the benefit of) himself. And whoever denies (His favor) - then indeed, Allah is Free of need and Praiseworthy." Human's praise to Allah begins with realizing from the deepest of heart the greatness of His blessing and grace, accompanied by submission and admiration that spawned a love to Him, and the couragement to praise Him by saying meanwhile doing His wills of conferring them. Gratitude is defined by ulama (Muslim scholars) with functioning the grace received in accordance with the purpose of the giving, that is, using the gift as desired by its bestowal, so its use leads to point to the bestower. Of course, for this purpose, the grateful should recognize the bestower (in this case Allah), know the favors bestowed on him as well as their functions, and how to use them as supposed. Therefore, the awardee can actually use them in accordance with what is desired by the giver; only then grace can function at the same time leads to refer Allah. As a result, in turn, this delivers him to praise Allah which is grown from the sense of admiration to Him and the gratitude for His grace.<sup>11</sup>

Surah Al-Baqarah (2): 152, which reads, "Therefore remember Me, I will remember you, and be thankful to Me, and do not be ungrateful to Me," contains the command to remember Allah without forgetting, be obedient to Him without infidelity or insubordination due to the abundance of His gifts. The gratitude of this man emerges

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<sup>11</sup> Shihab, "Tafsir Al Misbah: Pesan, Kesan Dan Keserasian Al Qur'an," 2001.

from his sincerity to Him.<sup>12</sup> Shihab explains that remembering and expressing gratitude to Allah should be with the tongue, mind, heart and limbs, "Tongue purifies and praises Me, mind and heart pay attention to My signs, and limbs do by way of carrying out my orders. If you do all of them, then I shall remember you too. So that I will always be with you in your pleasure and your grief. And be grateful to me with your heart, tongue and deeds, undoubtedly I shall add you favors, and do not deny my favors so that my punishment shall not befall you." The rights mentioned above imply that Allah put the commands to remember Himself over His blessings, because remembering Him is far more important than remembering His favors.<sup>13</sup>

The content of Surah An-Naml (27): 40 explains that whoever is grateful to Allah, then indeed it is for his own good, and whoever is *kufir* (denying) then it is a calamity for him. Allah does not grow richer with the gratitude of his servant, nor touched with shortcomings by human act of infidelity. Allah the Prosperous and the Noble is not affected at all with the gratitude and infidelity of His creatures.<sup>14</sup> Praise and thanks are only to Allah, but that does not mean He forbids being thankful or grateful to humans. In fact it is also highly recommended by Allah as revealed in Lukman [31]: 14, which reads: "And We have enjoined man in respect of his parents, his mother bears him with faintings upon faintings and his weaning takes two years, saying: Be grateful to Me and to both your parents; to Me is the eventual coming." The *surah* implies that the above verse and the next verse was rated by many Muslim scholars not as part of Lukman's teaching to his children. It is inserted within the Quran to show that respect and devotion to both parents occupy second place after the exaltation to Allah. Tahir Ibn Asyur declared that this verse is the insertion deliberately placed after Lukman's on the necessity of

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<sup>12</sup> Shihab, "Tafsir Al Misbah: Pesan, Kesan Dan Keserasian Al Qur'an," 2001.

<sup>13</sup> Shihab.

<sup>14</sup> Shihab, "Tafsir Al Misbah: Pesan, Kesan Dan Keserasian Al Qur'an," 2001.



keeping Oneness of God and being grateful to Him. With these insertions, Allah depicts how early on He has bestowed His grace to His servants with bequeathing children to be dutiful to his parents. Here Allah shows that He hastens ahead of anyone to give grace virtues to whoever paying attention to His rights. This statement is reinforced by putting the command to thank to Allah in line with one to obey parents. Thanking Allah is for He creates humans and provides them with happiness. Being grateful to both parents is for they are as intermediaries for the presence of children in the world.<sup>15</sup>

This gratitude must absolutely be expressed by humans because only to God is the gratitude to be given and not to other than Him, though the gratitude are spoken to both parents. Thanksgiving (gratitude) to parents is a form of thanksgiving to God, because both parents as intermediaries for the pleasure received by children in this world. Another verse in the Quran that orders to be grateful is Surah Saba' (34): 13 which means, "They made for him what he pleased of Fortresses and images, and bowls (large) as watering-troughs and cooking-pots that will not move from their place; give thanks, O family of Dawood! and very few of My Servants are grateful." They worked for Him as what He wants as tall buildings and statues as well as dishes as if ponds and fixed pots. "Do good, (O) family of David, as a sign of gratitude. And a little of my servants are perfectly grateful." Shihab<sup>16</sup> revealed that the word *qolil* (slight) in the verse is displayed in the form of *nakirah* or indefinitive so it means very little. With the use of hyperbole in the word *syakur* and "very little" it means that the grateful, although not perfect, is not so little; they might be quite a lot. Indeed, gratitude is stratified and includes the aspects of heart, saying, and deed. *Syakur* word is hyperbole of the word *syakir*, the people who possess steady and great amount of gratitude. His words "*qolilun min 'ibadiya asy-syakuur* (a little of my servants possess a perfect gratitude)" underline the little number of God's servants grateful steadily.

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<sup>15</sup> Shihab, "Tafsir Al Misbah: Pesan, Kesan Dan Keserasian Al Qur'an," 2001.

<sup>16</sup> Shihab.

Thanksgiving of favors is none other than being grateful to all the gifts of Allah, a little or a lot. Prophet Muhammad said, "He who does not appreciate a little gift, so he will not be able to appreciate the many gifts. Whoever would not be grateful to the man then he will not be able to give thanks to God".

Humans in terms of God's favor are divided into three groups<sup>17</sup>:

1. Those who are inattentive to God, while negligence has peaked. He does not believe that the favors he received are from God, even he is more convinced that the favor of God is upon his own efforts or the help of his friends. These actions are categorized in shirk that destructs faith
2. Those who forget creatures and only remember to Allah. His belief has defeated his memory to the world, because of his desire to encounter Allah. The feeling of divinity beats his vision to the creature. So he is just busy worshiping and forgets the relationship with humans
3. Those who are close to God and close with His creatures as well. This third group covers the servants who can fulfill their obligations to God and his duty to his fellow man. Here are the very special humans.

Humans in facing the gifts of God's favor are divided into three:

1. Those who are delighted with the favors, not to that who give them, only because of the delicacy of favors they receive. These individuals are negligent in accordance with Surah Al-An'am: 44.
2. Those who are delighted with the gifts, because they understand that the gifts they received are from God as according to Surah Yunus: 58.
3. Those who rejoice only with Allah, not affected with the inner and outer delicacy of the gifts as they are just busy worshiping God by forgetting their interaction with humans. This is in accordance with Surah Al-An'am (6): 91.

Gratitude is the attitude of the soul of God's servants to God, therefore, being grateful to God as the One who bestows grace to

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<sup>17</sup> Syahad Abd Allah Banī 'Aṭā, "Al-Manhaj Al-Nabawiy Fī Tarbiyah Al-Aṭfal," *Majallah Ulūm Al-Insāniyyah Wa Al-Ijtima'iyyah*, 2017, 418.

humans becomes a liability and includes worshipping. Besides being grateful for the favors of God received, then their duty with the other is to mutually give and take of what have been received from God's favor. Humans also should be grateful to each other because the gifts of God enjoyed by human beings are one of the results of their close cooperation among themselves.

If we take a closer look at the meaning of expressing gratitude in the verses of the Quran, it can be concluded that any good things born in the universe is by the permission and the will of Allah. Good things received by humans in essence are from Allah alone. Therefore, any praise or thanksgiving that we deliver to others, eventually return to Allah as well. All forms of praise (gratitude) should be addressed to Allah. The Quran commands Muslims to thank God and to human beings because human beings as an intermediary for the emergence of favors received. Muslims are taught by God to say "*Alhamdulillah*" (الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ) or "all praise (only) be upon God". The Quran also explicitly states that the benefits of being grateful return to the grateful, where God does not obtain, even does not need the slightest of gratitude of His creatures (Surah An-Naml (27): 40).<sup>18</sup> The Quran also mentions that the servants of God who are able to be grateful are not much, just a little. This means that only the chosen people and only the true believers who are able to give thanks to Allah with their heart, sayings, and deeds and are able to say thanks to the other human beings who have done good to them.

Humans' gratitude to God that must be with heart, sayings and deeds starts by being aware from the heart of His great blessing and grace, followed by submission and admiration that arise love to Him and encouragement to give thanks with the tongue and deeds. As His words in Surah Saba' (34): 13, humans grateful to the other human or creatures are the ones who praise the goodness and repay it with something better or more than what have been received. People who give thanks to humans, in the other words, they are also grateful to God. Prophet Muhammad said, "Whoever would not be grateful for

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<sup>18</sup> Indonesia, *Al-Qur'an Dan Terjemahnya*.

man then he is not grateful for God" (Hadith by Abu Dawood and At-Turmuzi). The Hadith means that anyone who is not clever to thank for the good of man would not be clever to thank God, because the good received from the other persons comes from God as well.

Given the importance to have a sense of gratitude, many verses in the Quran call for being grateful. Even God gives the example of those who are able to give thanks will be given multiple favors. In addition, the very beginning Surah in the Quran namely Al-Fatehah begins with "Alhamdulillah". In times of praying, our religion also teaches us to give praise and give thanks to God before praying. The following verses of the Qur'an represent commands to be a grateful:

1. Praying to Express Gratitude

*"(13). That you may firmly sit on their backs, then remember the favor of your Lord when you are firmly seated thereon, and say: Glory be to Him Who made this subservient to us and we were not able to do it (14). And surely to our Lord we must return." (QS. Az Zukhruf [43]:13-14).<sup>19</sup>*

2. Praying of Salomo Prophet to Become A Grateful Man

*"So he smiled, wondering at her word, and said: My Lord! grant me that I should be grateful for Thy favor which Thou hast bestowed on me and on my parents, and that I should do good such as Thou art pleased with, and make me enter, by Thy mercy, into Thy servants, the good ones." (QS. An Naml [27]:19)*

3. Allah Best Knows The Grateful

*"And thus do We try some of them by others so that they say: Are these they upon whom Allah has conferred benefit from among us? Does not Allah best know the grateful?"(QS. Al An'am [6]:53)*

There are so many verses of the Quran that urge to always be grateful. Even parables on that are narrated so beautifully so that people can understand the meaning contained in those lessons. Being thankful itself closely related to *qona'ah*, i.e., receiving and feeling suf-

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<sup>19</sup> Zayid, *The Quran Dar: An English Translation of the Meaning of the Quran*.

ficient with what one he has and abstaining from the feeling of excessive dissatisfaction, insufficient or materialism. People who have always thanked God and like to thank other human beings will also have *qona'ab* in them, because the ones who hold *qona'ab* will always accept any gift from God with sincerely and gratefully, so that it can provide peace of mind and peace of heart. The Quran is not only an inspiration to the science problems, but also inspires the answers or scientific explanations, including the attitude of gratitude.

### **Perspective of Psychology and Empirical Findings**

Nathaniel Lambert, in the journal *Psychological Science* revealed that when someone expresses gratitude to someone else, then that person will be more focus on the good things that have been done to her. This will make people more focus on the positive things in relation to others. In a study conducted by Lambert, it was found that the majority of respondents who expressed their gratitude to the closest people feel their relationship becomes stronger. People who received an expression of thanks will also be moved to do the same thing. Emmons<sup>20</sup> explained that gratitude is the key to the activity of receiving and giving. It is not only related to the response of the recipient of goodness from the kindness he has received, but also related to the motivation of the recipient of goodness to do good actions in the future.

Many people would agree that responding with gratitude after receiving some benefit is a moral obligation. Gratitude as a basic and necessary emotion that promotes social stability by guiding people to respond to others' goodwill toward them. Expressing gratitude is almost universally considered a virtue, and withholding it seems to be universally regarded as a vice. This is reflected in the scornful connotations universally attached to ingratitude. The ubiquitous presence of norms of reciprocity in many cultures may very well be an indication of the fundamental value of expressing gratitude. However, while the regular practice of politeness may help ensure that people

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<sup>20</sup> Robert A Emmons, "Queen of the Virtues? Gratitude as a Human Strength," *Reflective Practice: Formation and Supervision in Ministry* 32 (2012).

give thanks to their beneficiaries, adherence to etiquette alone may not guarantee that people notice many of the things they can be thankful for in the first place. And though religious doctrines may help remind people of the many things to be thankful for, they may still not ensure that people assume a grateful outlook, and thus, be open to the benefits to be had in everyday life. Helping people to realize the gifts for which they could be thankful in everyday life is one important challenge to which gratitude interventions could be fruitfully applied.<sup>21</sup>

Lambert explained, in today's modern life, a person tends to dwell with personal gain. One is often looking for what people have not done for him. This is where the importance of gratitude exists because it can turn a negative into a positive focus. If one focuses his mind on the positive, then the behavior will be positive. Thoughts and feelings affect behavior. The mind is food for the mind.<sup>22</sup> Lambert et al.<sup>23</sup> found that people who like to thank others have interpersonal harmony with the other greater than those who rarely express gratitude. Gratitude can elevate the strength of the communal feeling relationship, because to thank is not only as a form of communication between people who say thank you to the people who are given one, but also as a form of communication between people who say thank you to themselves. Through this self-perception, people who say thank you acknowledge the good that has been done by others to him. Thus, he feels sure that he wants to establish good relations with the people who have given him relief. In addition, the expression of gratitude is a form of behavior of granting direct response to people who are already giving kindness and a form of behavior that indicates the existence of attention and concern for the

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<sup>21</sup> Bono Giacomo, Robert A. Emmons, and Michael E. McCullough, "Gratitude in Practice and the Practice of Gratitude," in *Positive Psychology in Practice* (New York: John Wiley & Sons Inc, 2004), 464–481.

<sup>22</sup> Ibrahim Elfiky, *Terapi Berpikir Positif* (Jakarta: Zaman, 2009).

<sup>23</sup> Nathaniel M Lambert et al., "Benefits of Expressing Gratitude: Expressing Gratitude to a Partner Changes One's View of the Relationship," *Psychological Science* 21, no. 4 (2010): 574–80, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0956797610364003>.

person who gives kindness that their behavior is appreciated and desired.

Lambert and Fincham<sup>24</sup> showed that expressing gratitude would increase positive perception of a relationship partner, thereby increasing comfort in expressing relationship concerns, which is a form of relationship maintenance. They explored the mechanism through a longitudinal, experimental design and found that participants assigned to express gratitude reported higher comfort voicing concerns and more positive perception of partner than did control participants. Moreover, positive perception of partner mediated the relationship between condition and comfort in voicing relationship concerns. DeWall, Lambert, Pond, Kashdan, Fincham<sup>25</sup> showed that gratitude is linked to lower aggression. Higher empathy mediated the relationship between gratitude and lower aggression. These findings have widespread applications for understanding the role of emotion on aggression and can inform interventions aimed at reducing interpersonal aggression. Although gratitude increases mental well-being, it is not known whether gratitude mitigates against aggression. Gratitude motivates people to express sensitivity and concern for others and stimulates prosocial behavior.

Haidt and Gable<sup>26</sup> explained that gratitude may function to promote relationship formation and maintenance. Gratitude is about more than repaying benefits; it is about building relationships. The social functional account fits with and extends previous empirical findings to propose that gratitude is a detection-and-response system to help find, remind, and bind ourselves to attentive others. Relationships with others who are responsive to our whole self—our likes

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<sup>24</sup> Nathaniel M Lambert and Frank D. Fincham, "Expressing Gratitude to a Partner Leads to More Relationship Maintenance Behavior," *Emotion* 11, no. 1 (n.d.): 52.

<sup>25</sup> C Nathan Dewall et al., "A Grateful Heart Is a Nonviolent Heart : Cross-Sectional , Experience Sampling , Longitudinal , and Experimental Evidence," *Social Psychological and Personality Science* 3, no. 2 (2012): 232–40, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1948550611416675>.

<sup>26</sup> Sara B Algoe, Jonathan Haidt, and Shelly L Gable, "Beyond Reciprocity : Gratitude and Relationships in Everyday Life," *Emotion* 8, no. 3 (2008): 425–29, <https://doi.org/10.1037/1528-3542.8.3.425>.

and dislikes, our needs and preferences— can help us get through difficult times and flourish in good times. Gratitude can be understood as an emotion that serves the social function of promoting such relationships. B.F. Skinner, operant conditioning theorist argued that the development is observed behavior, which is determined by reward and punishment.<sup>27</sup> Albert Bandura's social learning theory states that the environment is an important factor affecting the behavior, even though humans have the ability to control their own behavior.<sup>28</sup> Likewise with thanks, being grateful can reinforce the behavior as the expression is a gift from the person who has been granted kindness to those who already give goodness.

Lambert et al<sup>29</sup> found that people who often thanked each other and had higher attitude of gratitude to God had better satisfaction of life and did not have a materialistic nature than those who rarely thanked others and to God. Attitude of gratitude greatly affects a person's emotions to become more positive. Attitude of gratitude is correlated with happiness. The word *thanks* or *gratitude* is a description of a person's positive emotion. The word *gratitude* is taken from the Latin *gratia* which means graciousness, grace, or gratefulness. All derivatives from this Latin root 'have to do with kindness, generosity, gifts, the beauty of giving and receiving, or getting something for nothing'. Although a variety of life experiences can elicit feelings of gratitude, prototypically gratitude stems from the perception of a positive personal outcome, not necessarily deserved or earned, that is due to the actions of another person. Gratitude has been defined as “the willingness to recognize the unearned increments of value in one’s experience.”

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<sup>27</sup> John W. Santrock, *Adolescence Perkembangan Remaja*, ed. Terj. Shinto B.Adelar Dkk (Jakarta: Erlangga, 2003).

<sup>28</sup> John W. Santrock, *Life-Span Development* (Jakarta: Erlangga, 2002).

<sup>29</sup> Nathaniel M Lambert et al., “More Gratitude , Less Materialism : The Mediating Role of Life Satisfaction,” *The Journal of Positive Psychology* 4, no. 1 (2009): 32–42, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760802216311>.



Wood, Maltb, Leicester, Stewart, Joseph<sup>30</sup> found that gratitude and appreciation are a single-factor personality trait. They suggest integration of gratitude and appreciation literatures and provide a clearer conceptualization of gratitude. Gratitude has historically been a cornerstone of philosophical and theological accounts of human functioning and social life. Froh, Fan, Emmons, Bono, Huebner, Watkins<sup>31</sup> explained that gratitude is the appreciation experienced by individuals when somebody does something kind or helpful for them. It has been defined more specifically as “a sense of thankfulness and joy in response to receiving a gift, whether the gift be a tangible benefit from a specific other or a moment of peaceful bliss evoked by natural beauty. Gratitude has been conceptualized as an emotional trait, mood, or emotion. Trait gratitude, or the disposition toward gratitude, is a life orientation toward noticing and appreciating the positive in life. As a moral emotion, the experience and expression of gratitude promotes beneficial exchanges and relationships between people and the welfare of society at large, a view that has long been shared by religions and cultures across the globe. Gratitude serves three moral functions. It serves as a *moral barometer* for beneficiaries by signaling the value of the relationship with the benefactor for the gift bestowed upon them; as a *moral reinforcer* by increasing the probability that the benefactor will bestow gifts again in the future; and as a *moral motive* by spurring beneficiaries to respond prosocially toward the benefactor or toward other people.

Emmons<sup>32</sup> defined gratitude as ‘the recognition and appreciation of an altruistic gift. Three important components of gratitude

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<sup>30</sup> Alex M Wood, Stephen Joseph, and John Maltby, “Gratitude Uniquely Predicts Satisfaction with Life: Incremental Validity above the Domains and Facets of the Five Factor Model,” *Personality and Individual Differences* 45 (2008): 49–54, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2008.02.019>.

<sup>31</sup> Jeffrey J. Froh et al., “Measuring Gratitude in Youth: Assessing the Psychometric Properties of Adult Gratitude Scales in Children and Adolescents,” *Psychological Assessment* 23, no. 2 (2011): 311–24, <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0021590>.

<sup>32</sup> Robert A. Emmons and Michael E. McCullough, *The Psychology of Gratitude* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

including: (a) a warm sense of appreciation for something or somebody; (b) a sense of goodwill toward that thing or person; and (c) a resultant disposition to act positively due to appreciation and goodwill. Three core dimensions of the ‘materialistic ideology’: (1) material possessions lead to happiness; (2) success is best defined in material terms; and (3) acquisition of material goods is central. These researchers also identified four traits of materialistic individuals: (1) a need for a material complexity, which often results in reliance on technology to solve problems and a lack of concern for nature or the environment; (2) a greater emphasis on financial security and less on interpersonal relationships; (3) a preference to spend more on themselves and less on others; and (4) a lower level of satisfaction with their life in general. Materialistic striving seems to focus an individual on self and what one does not have and is trying to acquire. Conversely, an important aspect of gratitude is a recognition, appreciation,<sup>33</sup> and savoring of what one does have.

These two foci appear mutually exclusive. McCullough, Emmons and Tsang<sup>34</sup> argue that only with great difficulty could an individual be both grateful and materialistic at the same time. Gratitude should cause people to feel that their life is imbued with the goodwill of other people, and the security and completeness from such an experience would likely reduce materialistic strivings. Gratitude will build a sense of satisfaction with life, which will make individuals less inclined to pursue materialistic strivings. Besides, being grateful is also correlated with the faith in God. Theologians and philosophers have long seen gratitude as the center of God-human relations. God is understood as a personal being that is the source of goodness

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<sup>33</sup> Nathaniel M Lambert, Frank D. Fincham, and Steven M Graham, “A Prototype Analysis of Gratitude: Varieties of Gratitude Experiences,” *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 35, no. 9 (2009): 1193–1207, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167209338071>.

<sup>34</sup> Michael E McCullough, Robert A Emmons, and Jo-ann Tsang, “The Grateful Disposition: A Conceptual and Empirical Topography,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 82, no. 1 (2002): 112–27, <https://doi.org/10.1037//0022-3514.82.1.112>.

and the first giver of all gifts, to whom many owe.<sup>35</sup> Watkins and colleagues<sup>36</sup> found that gratitude is positively correlated with intrinsic religiousness and negatively correlates with extrinsic religiousness. The emergence of gratitude is a positive affective feature of people who are involved religiously and spiritually. likewise the absence of depressive symptoms is an affective characteristic of people who are involved spiritually and religiously. They see all the good he receives as a gift from God as the main cause of all benefits.

Praying with gratitude positively predicted admitting to being in a romantic relationship. Higher levels of gratitude in prayers predicted significantly less extra-dyadic behavior. Lambert, Fincham, Braithwaite<sup>37</sup> reported that prayer increases gratitude, prayer plays a causal role in promoting gratitude. Potential reason for why praying increases gratitude is that praying may shift one's perspective of previously unnoticed, every day surroundings (nature, oxygen to breathe, life in general) to being viewed as gifts from God. Prayer increases gratitude, prayer plays a causal role in promoting gratitude, and gratitude is also correlated with life stress reduction. Krause<sup>38</sup> found that an expression of gratitude to God reduced the effects of stress on older adults. In adults who have a low level of gratitude to God, the impact of depression is greater, especially related to finance. Symptoms of depression because of the negative effects of financial stress on adults can be eliminated by increasing gratitude. Gratitude to God adds a unique variation in predicting happiness and life satisfaction above and beyond gratitude in general. Emmons and McCullough<sup>39</sup> conducted a 3-week study in which participants who

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<sup>35</sup> Emmons, "Queen of the Virtues ? Gratitude as a Human Strength."

<sup>36</sup> Emmons and McCullough, *The Psychology of Gratitude*.

<sup>37</sup> Nathaniel M Lambert et al., "Can Prayer Increase Gratitude ?," *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality* 1, no. 3 (2009): 139–49, <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0016731>.

<sup>38</sup> Emmons, "Queen of the Virtues ? Gratitude as a Human Strength."

<sup>39</sup> Robert A Emmons and Michael E Mccullough, "Counting Blessings Versus Burdens : An Experimental Investigation of Gratitude and Subjective Well-Being in Daily Life" 84, no. 2 (2003): 377–89, <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.84.2.377>.

kept gratitude journals reported higher levels of optimism, felt better about their lives as a whole, were more likely to have made progress toward important personal goals, exercised more regularly, and reported fewer negative health symptoms. In another sample, it found that participants assigned to a gratitude condition were more likely to report having helped someone with a personal problem or having offered emotional support to someone else relative to control conditions. In a final sample of adults with neuromuscular disease, participants assigned to a gratitude intervention reported greater amounts of high-energy positive moods, more optimistic ratings of one's life, greater sense of feeling connected to others, and better sleep quality and duration relative to a control group.

Gratitude identification is a mood, nature, emotion. Grateful disposition can be defined as stable affective nature. As an emotion, gratitude can be understood as a relatively short psycho-physiological reaction when receiving goodness from others. As a stable mood, gratitude also has a subtle, broad and longer impact on consciousness. Gratitude is a virtue, not just temporary emotion. Grateful people are more likely to respond with gratitude and are more likely to pay attention to the goodness of others with emotions of gratitude than with negative emotions such as shame, guilt or revenge.

Lambert, Fincham, Stillman<sup>40</sup> showed that that gratitude is related to fewer depressive symptoms, with positive reframing and positive emotion serving as mechanisms that account for this relationship. Lambert, Graham, Fincham<sup>41</sup> found that concepts of gratitude are prototypically organized and explored whether lay concepts of gratitude are broader than researchers' concepts of gratitude. In five studies, evidence was found that concepts of gratitude are indeed prototypically organized. lay conceptions of gratitude are broader than current research definitions. The attitude of gratitude makes

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<sup>40</sup> Nathaniel M Lambert, Frank D Fincham, and Tyler F Stillman, "Gratitude and Depressive Symptoms: The Role of Positive Reframing and Positive Emotion," *Cognition & Emotion* 26, no. 4 (2012): 615–33, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02699931.2011.595393>.

<sup>41</sup> Lambert, Fincham, and Graham, "A Prototype Analysis of Gratitude: Varieties of Gratitude Experiences."

ones accept the state of themselves, love to share, and not conceited. People who are grateful realize that God favors given to him is not just for himself, but also includes the rights of others which should be given.

### **Similarity between the Teachings in the Quran with the Results of Empirical Findings in Psychology**

The research results of Lambert, Fincham, Braithwaite, Emmons, Watkins and colleagues found that gratitude is positively correlated with intrinsic religiosity and negatively correlates with extrinsic religiosity and prayer increases gratitude, prayer plays a causal role in promoting gratitude as well. It is similar with the teaching of Surah An-Nisa' (4): 147 and Surah Luqman (31): 12. The difference is that the research of Lambert, Fincham, Braithwaite, Emmons, Watkins and colleagues found that prayer increases gratitude, prayer plays a causal role in promoting gratitude as well, but Surah An-Nisa' (4): 147 and Surah Luqman (31): 12 implies that people who are thankful (grateful) will know Allah and His grace, will then be followed with admiration and obedience to Him. So in Islam, its teachings are grateful first, will then bring obedience to Allah. Obedience to Allah will make someone prayerful.

In addition, in the Quran there is also teaching of *Qona'ab*. Being thankful itself is closely related to *qona'ab*, i.e., receiving and feeling sufficient with what one he has and abstaining from the feeling of excessive dissatisfaction, insufficient or materialism. People who have always thanked God and like to thank other human beings will also have *qona'ab* in them, because the ones who hold *qona'ab* will always accept any gift from God with sincerely and gratefully, so that it can provide peace of mind and peace of heart. People who like to say thanks to God and be grateful to other human beings will have a good relationship with humans because they do not just think of their relationship with God, but also their relationship with humans. The person realizes that the man is an intermediary of goodness and God-given favors.

This is in line with the research by Lambert, Fincham, Stillman<sup>42</sup> that showed that gratitude is related to fewer depressive symptoms, with positive reframing and positive emotion serving as mechanisms that account for this relationship. Krause<sup>43</sup> found that gratitude to God can reduce the impact of stress on elderly adults. Emmons and McCullough<sup>44</sup> explained that participants who kept gratitude journals reported higher levels of optimism, felt better about their lives as a whole, were more likely to have made progress toward important personal goals, exercised more regularly, and reported fewer negative health symptoms. Emmons<sup>45</sup> explained that gratitude acts as a key link in the dynamics of activities between receiving and giving. McCullough, Emmons and Tsang<sup>46</sup> reported that gratitude will build a sense of satisfaction with life, which will make individuals less inclined to pursue materialistic strivings. Haidt and Gable<sup>47</sup> explained that gratitude may function to promote relationship formation and maintenance.

## **Closure**

Gratitude is not a word without meaning, but it gives great psychological impacts for people that influences their attitudes and behaviors. Have we always expressed gratitude to our children and also the others when they gave us their kindness? From now on, let us provoke the thanksgiving to our children, pupils, students and all people around us. We teach them to express their gratitude to Allah, relatives, friends, teachers, parents and every person who give them

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<sup>42</sup> Lambert, Fincham, and Stillman, "Gratitude and Depressive Symptoms : The Role of Positive Reframing and Positive Emotion."

<sup>43</sup> Emmons, "Queen of the Virtues ? Gratitude as a Human Strength."

<sup>44</sup> Emmons and Mccullough, "Counting Blessings Versus Burdens : An Experimental Investigation of Gratitude and Subjective Well-Being in Daily Life."

<sup>45</sup> Emmons, "Queen of the Virtues ? Gratitude as a Human Strength."

<sup>46</sup> Mccullough, Emmons, and Tsang, "The Grateful Disposition : A Conceptual and Empirical Topography."

<sup>47</sup> Algoe, Haidt, and Gable, "Beyond Reciprocity : Gratitude and Relationships in Everyday Life."

kindness, no matter what they do. we hope, they be persons who can always express their gratitude to God and others.

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