



Validation of the Transpersonal Gratitude Scale (TGS) and the Relationship between Transpersonal Gratitude, Spiritual Well-Being and Distress in India

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Abstract

This study explores the psychometric properties of the transpersonal gratitude scale (TGS) in the Indian context. It also examines the relationship between transpersonal gratitude, spiritual well-being, and distress. The psychometric properties (reliability and validity) of the TGS were evaluated with the help of two studies. In the first study, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) reported a four-factor solution. These four factors- expression of gratitude, value of gratitude, transcendent gratitude, and spiritual connection- explained 74.1% of the total variance. Further, CFA results indicated an excellent model fit of four-factor structure derived from EFA. These findings recommended appropriate factorial validity of TGS in the Indian context. In the second study, Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values recommended reliability of TGS among Indians. Also, the average variance explained (AVE) values and the Fornell–Larcker test concluded convergent and discriminant validity of the scale. In addition, positive correlations were reported between TGS, GRAT-16 (gratitude resentment and appreciation scale), and spiritual well-being scale scores. Also, a negative linkage was reported between TGS and distress score. These associations established criterion validity of the scale. Overall, the scale reported acceptable psychometric properties in the Indian context.

Keywords Transpersonal gratitude scale · Spiritual well-being · Distress · Psychometric · India

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Introduction

One of the most fundamental conceptualizations of gratitude is its triadic nature. It suggests that gratitude has three essential elements: a benefit, a benefactor, and a beneficiary (Roberts, 2004). Evolutionary theorists believe that gratitude has evolved from the notion of reciprocal altruism, which involves exchange of gifts between two parties. But gratitude has been distinguished from reciprocal altruism in three senses: (a) perceived value of the gift for beneficiary; (b) the intention of the benefactor; and (c) sacrifice of benefactor involved in giving (McCullough & Tsang, 2004). Also, action tendencies (beneficiary intentions and actions to revert back the benefit to benefactor) are also considered an inherent part of gratitude. Such an approach to understand gratitude has been referred to as benefit-triggered perspective to gratitude (Lambert et al., 2009). Buck (2004) called the conception of reciprocal benefits as the gratitude of exchange. However, there are growing debates on the centrality of benefactors in animate form, its intention to benefit the beneficiary, and action tendency of beneficiaries (Artinian, 2018). A growing number of scholars, including Hlava et al. (2014), Artinian (2018), Elfers and Hlava (2016), Steindl-Rast (2004), argue a paradigm shift from strict triadic to dyadic view of gratitude that allows a more comprehensive and holistic view of understanding and conceptualization of the whole spectrum of grateful experiences. The dyadic perspective of gratitude emphasizes only benefit and beneficiary without much contemplation on benefactor.

Such a novel perspective towards understanding gratitude without benefactors is quite different from the interpersonal connotation of gratitude. It focuses more on the significance of the gift and feelings of connectedness and oneness among all. In a praiseworthy work, Steindl-Rast (2004) depicted gratitude in a continuum based on the nature of benefit. On one end of the continuum is gratitude towards givers upon receiving a gift. And on the other end is gratefulness dawning out of one's realization with universal consciousness, oneness, and interconnectedness (Steindl-Rast, 2004). Such a profound experience of cosmic oneness may arise upon receiving an undeserved and unexpected gift or in a feeling of profound connection with nature. These two perspectives at two extreme ends of the spectrum are referred to as interpersonal and transpersonal gratitude (as it captures an experience which is beyond self). The transpersonal paradigm of gratitude has been appreciated by other scholars too. "Gratitude's other nature is ethereal, spiritual, and transcendent" (Emmons, 2008; p. 122). This broader understanding expanded the realm of gratitude from mere reciprocity to larger mutuality, from individualism to oneness, from natural action-reaction chain in response to benefits to greater appreciation to relationships, and from tangible benefactor to abundant blessings of life.

Based on this conceptualization of transpersonal gratitude, researchers have undertaken quite a few studies exploring its relationship with different variables. Transpersonal gratitude is negatively related to depression, anxiety, and stress (Chowdhury, 2020). People high on transpersonal gratitude express higher levels of emotional intelligence (Geng, 2018). It also fosters contentment and life satisfaction (Salvador-Ferrer, 2017). Artinian (2019) asserted that transpersonal gratitude leads

to empathy, humility, and positive interpersonal relationships between individuals and the rest of the world. Although there are a few studies on transpersonal conceptualization of gratitude, the field is not adequately explored. Majority of the previous studies (please see Watkins et al., 2003a, 2003b) have utilized Gratitude questionnaire-6 (GQ-6) and Gratitude Resentment and Appreciation Scale-16 (GRAT-16) to capture dispositional gratitude. However, these measures are often criticized for being based on a narrower perspective of gratitude that involves tangible benefits from others.

With the second wave of positive psychology (PP 2.0), there is a call for examination of transcendental experiences in both desirable and undesirable situations. There is a need to look beyond the narrow framework of self/individual and understand, acknowledge, and disseminate the notion of universal consciousness, interconnectedness, and oneness in this highly globalized and integrated world. When local or regional events like emergence of the COVID-19 in China, Ukraine-Russia war and US supreme court decision to struck down all state ban on same-sex marriage, have larger global repercussions, then there is no reason why desirable emotions or traits like gratitude, compassion, and love be restricted to personal or interpersonal connotations. This study attempts to rekindle the interests of academicians and researchers in examining transpersonal connotation. Accordingly, the study has three major contributions, (a) exploring psychometric properties of the TGS in the Indian context; (b) examining the relationship between transpersonal gratitude and spiritual well-being; and (c) investigating the association between transpersonal gratitude and distress.

Literature Review

Transpersonal Gratitude Scale

The transpersonal gratitude scale (TSG) was developed and validated by Hlava, Elfers, and Offringa (2014) through a rigorous study. In the first phase, as many as sixty-eight participants were interviewed for their lived gratitude experience. The interview transcripts were used to generate as many as 110 statements to measure transpersonal gratitude. In the second phase, four university professors, who have taught or researched emotion-experience were approached to comment upon readability, appropriateness, and alignment of 110 statements. Two persons from the target population were also recruited to examine readability and ease of comprehension. And, in the third phase, rigorous statistical procedures, including examination of content, convergent, discriminant validity, factorial structure, and reliability, were conducted to develop and validate the scale. At last, sixteen statements distributed over the following four dimensions of transpersonal gratitude were finalized.

- A) *Expression of gratitude* This dimension encapsulates one's disposition to express gratitude towards others. It contains statements that capture conditions and circumstances under which one expresses their appreciation for others (Hlava et al.,

- 2014). It also includes one's willingness to go out of their way to express their feeling of gratitude. The statement seems to follow Fredrickson's (2014) broaden-and-build of positive emotions that suggests that a grateful person will resort to innovative and unique ways to respond to benefactors. This subscale contains four statements and has a low internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.59$).
- B) *Value of gratitude* This dimension captures participants' perception of benefits of gratitude. It emphasizes the importance of gratitude in strengthening interpersonal relationships through removing obstacles and increasing openness and love and patience in the relationship. "his construct highlights the centrality of the relational context of gratitude to feelings of benefit, connection, and intimacy" (Hlava et al., 2014, p. 5). It exhibited high internal consistency with Cronbach's α at 0.86.
- C) *Transcendent gratitude* This factor expresses transcendental gratitude that goes beyond interpersonal gratitude. It prompts generalized conceptualization of gratitude that is not restricted to specific person, event, and circumstance. "The emotion-experience of transcendent gratitude is a feeling of connection to something greater and outside of the self" (Hlava et al., 2014, p. 5). This factor exhibited low internal consistency with Cronbach's α at 0.68.
- D) *Spiritual connection* Transpersonal gratitude is not directed towards anyone/anything specific, thus, it attributes benefits being derived from divine. This factor encompasses people's awareness, acknowledgement, and experience of spiritual connection. Hlava et al. (2014) reported that a significant number of survey participants identified spirituality as relevant to their gratitude experience. This factor has a high internal consistency, with Cronbach's α value of 0.93.

Motivation of the study

Apart from addressing a need to rejuvenate the studies on transpersonal nature of gratitude, there are three other reasons that necessitate the present study. First, gratitude is a culturally sensitive construct (Appadurai, 1985; Garg et al., 2021; Titova et al., 2017). Indigenous psychologists also assert that although emotions are universal in nature, they are experienced, appreciated, and expressed differently in different cultural contexts (Compton & Hoffman, 2013; Wong, 2019; Sharma et al., 2022; Mehta et al., 2022; Bansal et al., 2022). Furthermore, human interactions and actions are shaped by culture and meaning derived in any cultural context (Bruner, 1990; Garg, 2022; Morgan et al., 2014). Sommers & Kosmitzki (1988) reported different conceptualizations of gratitude among people of Germany and the USA, with men in Germany observing more frequent gratitude than that of the USA. In another study, Morgan et al. (2014) found that the people in the UK linked gratitude with negative emotions like indebtedness and guilt than did the people of the USA. Additionally, Tudge et al. (2016) reported that American children, regardless of age, express concrete gratitude and Russian children between the ages of 11 to 14 years express connective gratitude. Other researchers have also reported similar culture-based variations in the different facets of gratitude. Accordingly, researchers have argued exploration of psychometric properties of gratitude scales in different

cultures. For inference, the GRAT-16 has been validated with a sample of Dutch (Jans-Beken et al., 2015), Turks (Duran, 2017), Americans (Hammer and Brenne, 2017), and Indians (Garg & Mehak, 2021). Based on cultural variations, the GRAT-16 was reduced to GRAT-15 in the studies conducted by Froh et al. (2008) and Garg and Mehak (2021). Thus, it is imperative to examine the psychometric properties of the TSG in the Indian context to examine its suitability for Indians.

Secondly, Indian perspective on gratitude seems to be rooted in the notion of *Rnas* or pious or sacred duties explained in Indian spiritual texts and scriptures (Garg & Mehak, 2021; Garg et al., 2022; Pandey & Navare, 2018). And this notion of pious obligations is one of the most comprehensive and holistic conceptualizations of gratitude as it inscribes personal, interpersonal, and transpersonal nature of gratitude. In Hinduism, it is mandatory to observe these *Rnas* for spiritual growth and development (Mahipalan and Sheena, 2019). These sacred duties are Manuṣya-yajña (towards fellow human beings), Deva-yajña (towards God and nature), Pitr-Yajna (towards the family, ancestors, and cultural values), Brahma-yajña (towards knowledge, skills, and talents), and Bhūta-yajña (towards the Ecosystem) (Pandey & Navare, 2018). In Brahma-yajna, one is encouraged to express gratitude towards their knowledge, abilities and qualities. It epitomizes personal gratitude, wherein one is grateful for its blessings and possessions. Manuṣya-yajña and Pitr-yajna demand gratefulness and respect for ancestors, family, friends, and unknown fellow human beings for direct or indirect contribution in one's life (Garg, Mahipalan, and Sharma, 2023). Thus, these two types of yajna (duties) could be seen as expressions of interpersonal gratitude. And finally, Deva-yajña and Bhūta-yajña encompass transpersonal paradigm through an expression of gratitude for nature, environment, spirits, and God. Thus, the TGS seems a better fit to Indian culture. The examination of the TGS scale in the Indian context will allow future researchers to use the validated in gratitude studies with Indian samples.

Thirdly, although Hlava et al. (2014) adopted a rigorous statistical approach to examine reliability and validity of the TGS, there is still a requirement of additional measures of its psychometric properties. Low internal reliability of expression of gratitude and transcendent gratitude requires re-examination. Also, eigenvalues and percentage of variance explained in an EFA are not revealed in the study. There is also a need to investigate the convergent validity and divergent validity using average variance explained (AVE) and Fornell and Larcker testing methods. The AVE values are important indicators of consistency of items of a construct of a scale. And, the Fornell and Larcker testing suggests statistical distinction between different constructs of a scale. Thus, they reveal internal validity of any scale. The original study by Hlava et al. (2014) explored external validity of the TGS through calculating the association of TGS score with other scales like GQ-6. The present study attempts to put the TGS scale under more stringent and rigorous statistical analysis and interpretation.

The above-mentioned reasons necessitate an investigation of psychometric properties of the TGS in the Indian context. In this pursuit, two separate studies were conducted. The methodology adopted in the study has been previously recommended and used by authors like Yeatts et al. (2022), Chesnut et al. (2022), and Koenig and Al Zaben (2020). In the first study, the factorial validity of the scale was

examined using exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). And in the second study, reliability, internal and external validity were evaluated.

Study 1—Factorial Validity of the Transpersonal Gratitude Scale (TGS)

Study 1 explores the factorial validity of the Transpersonal Gratitude Scale (EGS) in an Indian context with the help of EFA and CFA performed on two independent samples.

Method

Participants and Instruments

The study 1 is based on a sample of 524 respondents approached through an online questionnaire posted on major social media platforms like Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, etc. The survey was open for students above an age of eighteen years engaged in higher educational institutions in India. The sample comprised of 53% male and 47% female respondents. Also, 54%, 37%, and 9% of students are registered in UG, PG, and PhD courses. The average age of the respondents was 27.8 years. The percentage of students enrolled in public and private educational institutions are 41% and 59%, respectively. The first part of the questionnaire captures the demographic information of the respondents. The second part measures transpersonal gratitude using the transpersonal gratitude scale developed and validated by Hlava, Elfers & Offringa (2014). The scale consists of sixteen statements rated on a six-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). A few statements of the scale are “It is difficult for me to express my gratitude”, “I go out of my way to acknowledge favours”, and “Gratitude helps me to address obstacles in my relationships”. A brief description of study, its objectives, and implications was highlighted on the first page of the questionnaire. Informed consent was sought by requesting respondents to tick on a checklist box. Also, they were promised strict confidentiality and anonymity of the collected data. It was clearly mentioned that the collected data would not be shared with another party in any circumstances.

Data Analysis

Researchers have suggested that EFA and CFA should be conducted on two independent samples to examine factorial validity of a scale or model. EFA proposes a factorial structure and CFA examines the model fit of this proposed factorial structure. Accordingly, the sample of 524 was divided into two subsamples with the help of systematic random sampling. The first subsample contains all even responses and the second subsample comprises all odd responses. EFA using oblimin rotation was applied to the first subsample of 262 respondents using principal component analysis

in SPSS statistics 21. It has been suggested to examine suitability and factorability of the data using the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) test and Bartlett’s test of sphericity. The results state that the KMO value of sampling adequacy is 0.911. The findings also report statistically significant Bartlett’s test of sphericity at a significance level of 0.05. These results conclude suitability of the subsample 1 for EFA. Table 1 illustrates the results of EFA applied on the first subsample. Just like the original scale, EFA suggests a four-factor solution in the Indian context too. This four-factor structure explains 74.12% of the total variance with following factors.

Factor-1: Like the original scale, it has been named as “expression of gratitude” as it comprises the same four items as the original scale. It has an eigenvalue of 2.82 and explains 17.31% of variances.

Factor-2: It also consists of the same four statements like the original scale, thus, it has also been named as “value of gratitude”. It has an eigenvalue of 3.06 and explains 19.44% of variances.

Factor-3: Again, it is named as “transcendent gratitude” just like the original scale. It has an eigenvalue of 3.22 and explains 25.12% of variances.

Factor-4: Again, it is named as “spiritual connection” just like the original scale. It has an eigenvalue of 2.66 and explains 12.25% of variances.

Thus, EFA results recommend similar four-factor structure as suggested by Hlava et al. (2014) in their original study. Eigenvalues and variance explained

Table 1 Factor structure of the TGS

Factor	F1	F2	F3	F4
I show appreciation to others when they have positively influenced my life	0.845	0.311	0.212	0.033
It is difficult for me to express my gratitude	0.612	−0.324	0.342	0.396
I go out of my way to acknowledge favours	0.778	−0.422	0.212	0.033
I tell my friends that I am grateful for them	0.598	0.302	0.264	0.183
Gratitude helps me to address obstacles in my relationships	−0.282	0.648	0.366	−0.013
Gratitude helps me to feel open with others	0.174	0.669	−0.027	0.054
I have patience when I feel gratitude	0.385	0.585	0.294	0.382
Gratitude helps me to feel loving towards others	0.416	0.680	0.110	0.216
I feel grateful for just being alive	0.118	0.332	0.628	−0.036
I become overwhelmed with feelings of gratitude	−0.264	0.154	0.744	0.231
Thinking of the blessings that I’ve received helps me to appreciate life	0.076	0.278	0.760	0.067
I am grateful for the opportunities I have had in my life	0.385	0.004	0.584	−0.248
I say prayers of thanks for everything I have	−0.023	−0.334	0.243	0.688
I thank God for the good things I have in my life	0.264	0.250	−0.175	0.654
I know there is a divine presence that is blessing me	0.027	−0.224	0.032	0.780
I am grateful to a divine being for everything in my life	0.174	0.356	0.244	0.634

Bold values indicate factor loading of items included in the factor

Primary Data,* satisfactory factor loadings (i.e. greater than 1.40L), F1 Expression of gratitude, F2 value of gratitude, F3 Transcendentgratitude, F4 Spiritual connection

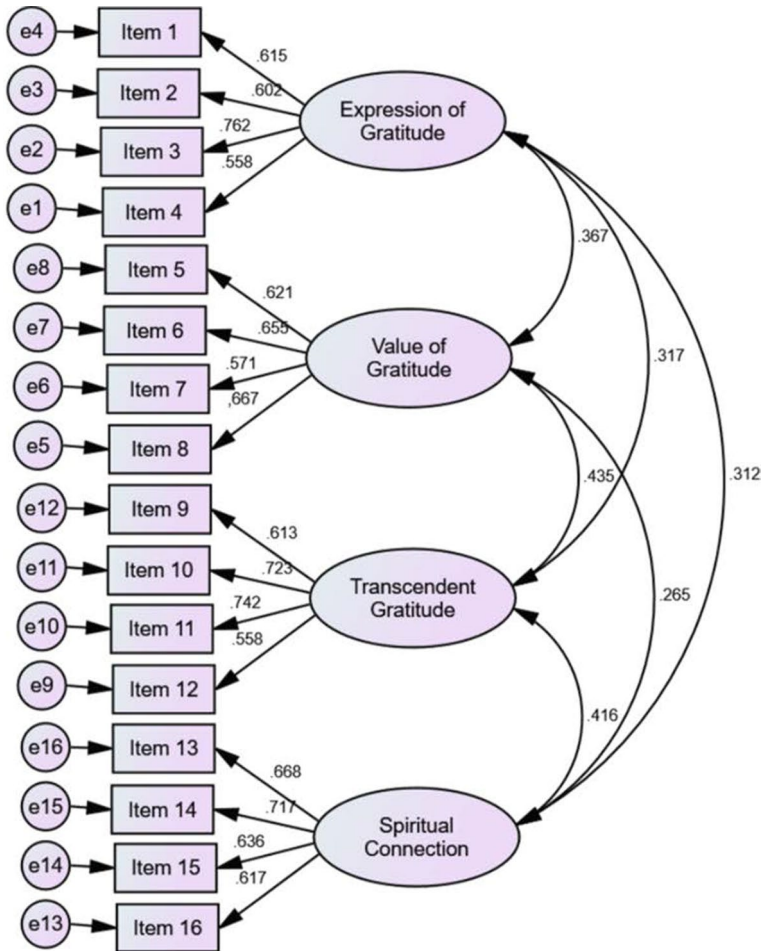


Fig. 1 Results of CFA

could not be compared as the original study did not mention it. Then the CFA was performed on the second subsample of 262 participants to examine the fitness of four-factor model proposed by EFA. The acceptable values of different CFA estimates are $GFI \geq 0.95$; $CFI \geq 0.97$; $SRMR \leq 0.05$; and $RMSEA < 0.08$ (Şimşek, 2007). The CFA results showed excellent model fit with fit indices as $GFI = 0.983$, $CFI = 0.992$, $SRMR = 0.015$, and $RMSEA = 0.011$. These results suggest an acceptable four-factor model of TGS in the Indian context too. Figure 1 illustrates the CFA model of the TGS.

Study 2: Reliability and Validity Testing

Participants and Instruments

The study 2 is based on a separate sample of 630 students approached through an online questionnaire posted on major social media platforms like Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram. The survey was open for students above an age of eighteen years engaged in higher educational institutions in India. The sample comprised of 55% male and 45% female respondents. Also, 61%, 33%, and 6% of students are registered in UG, PG, and PhD courses. The average age of the respondents was 25.7 years. The percentage of students enrolled in public and private educational institutions are 46% and 54%, respectively. The first part of the questionnaire captures the demographic information of the respondents. The second part measures transpersonal gratitude using Hlava et al.,’s (2014). The third part captures an individual’s gratitude disposition using Watkins et al., and and’s (2003a, 2003b) Gratitude Resentment and Appreciation-16 (GRAT-16) scale. It is a nine-point rating scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 9 (strongly agree). Sample items include: “There never seems to be enough to go around, and I never seem to get my share”, and “Oftentimes I have been overwhelmed at the beauty of nature”. In the fourth part, Paloutzian et al.’s (2012) spiritual well-being scale (SWBS) was used to measure one’s perceived spiritual well-being on the individual and congregational levels. The scale captured two dimensions of spiritual well-being: religious well-being (10 items) and existential well-being (10 items). It is a six-point rating scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (6). Sample items include “I don’t get much personal strength and support from my God”, “I feel a sense of well-being about the direction my life is headed in”, and “I believe that God is concerned about my problems”. The last part of the questionnaire assesses participants’ distress levels using Kessler Psychological Distress Scale (K10) developed by Kessler et al. (2003). It is a five-point scale ranging from 1 (none of the time) and 5 (all of the time). Sample items include: “In the past four weeks, how often did you feel nervous?” and “In the past four weeks, about how often did you felt so nervous that nothing could calm you down?” Informed consent was sought from the respondents. Also, they were promised strict confidentiality and anonymity of the collected data.

Data analysis

The reliability of four dimensions of the transpersonal gratitude scale was examined using Cronbach’s alpha (CA), and composite reliability (CR) estimates. It has been recommended that the values of CA and CR should be greater than 0.70 (Cronbach & Shavelson, 2004; George & Mallery, 2003). The CA values were calculated using SPSS 21, and the CR estimates were calculated using formula 1, as noted below. The Cronbach’s alpha values for expression of gratitude, value of gratitude, transcendent gratitude, and spiritual connection are 0.735, 0.783, 0.815, and 0.803. Also, the composite reliability values for expression of gratitude, value of gratitude,

Table 2 Descriptive statistics, reliability, validity estimates and Fornell and Larcker test

Variable	Mean	S.D	CA	CR	AVE	1	2	3	4
EG	3.77	0.89	0.735	0.805	0.513	1 (0.513)			
VG	4.01	1.23	0.783	0.804	0.507	0.103	1 (0.507)		
TG	3.80	0.90	0.815	0.878	0.642	0.181	0.077	1 (0.642)	
SC	4.14	0.75	0.803	0.821	0.539	0.107	0.107	0.144	1 (0.539)

Bold values indicate AVE values

Primary Data, *EG* Expression of gratitude, *VG* Value of gratitude, *TG* Transcendent gratitude, *SC* Spiritual connection, *CA* Cronbach’s alpha, *CR* Composite reliability, *AVE* Average Variance Explained, AVE values are in bold (diagonally)

transcendent gratitude, and spiritual connection, are 0.805, 0.804, 0.878, and 0.821. These CA and CR values conclude appropriate reliability of four dimensions of TGS in the Indian context. All values are mentioned in Table 2.

The convergent validity of the TGS was ensured using Average variance explained (AVE) values calculated with the help of below-mentioned formula-2. The AVE estimate must be greater than 0.50 to conclude a convergent validity of the scale (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Table 2 suggests that the AVE values for expression of gratitude, value of gratitude, transcendent gratitude, and spiritual connection are 0.513, 0.507, 0.642, and 0.539. These values recommend convergent validity of the scale in an Indian sample.

$$CR = \left(\sum \lambda_i \right)^2 / \left(\left(\sum \lambda_i \right)^2 + \sum (1 - \lambda_i^2) \right) \tag{1}$$

$$AVE = \left(\sum \lambda_i^2 \right) / N \tag{2}$$

where λ is the standardized factor loading for the item, N is the number of items in a factor.

In addition, the discriminant validity of the TGS was established using the Fornell and Larcker testing system. According to the test, the AVE values of the factors should be greater than the squared correlation of the factors to recommend the discriminant validity. Table 2 represents the results of the results of the Fornell and Larcker test, which suggests discriminant validity of the scale in the Indian context. Besides, the criterion validity was examined by calculating the correlation between expression of gratitude, value of gratitude, transcendent gratitude, and spiritual connection, GRAT-16, SWBS, and K10 scores. Hlava et al. (2014) suggested that people high on transpersonal gratitude have higher levels of dispositional gratitude. On the similar grounds, it is hypothesized that four dimensions of transpersonal gratitude will have significant positive relationship with GRAT-16 scores. It is also hypothesized that four factors of transpersonal gratitude will be positively related to SWBS and negatively correlated with K10 scores. Table 3 reports correlations between different variables of the study. It suggests significant positive correlation

Table 3 Correlation matrix

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
EG	1							
VG	0.322*	1						
TG	0.426*	0.278*	1					
SC	0.328*	0.329*	0.380*	1				
GRAT-16	0.444*	0.573*	0.488*	0.534*	1			
RWB	0.411*	0.530*	0.562*	0.445*	0.329*	1		
EWB	0.332*	0.477*	0.480*	0.512*	0.446*	0.536*	1	
K10 score	-0.384*	-0.472*	-0.577*	-0.560*	-0.498*	-0.485*	-0.330*	1

Primary data, * Sig. at 0.01, *GRAT-16* Gratitude Resentment and Appreciation Scale-16, *RWB* Religious Well-being score, *EWB* Existential Well-being score, *K10* Kessler's distress score, *EG* Expression of gratitude, *VG* Value of gratitude, *TG* Transcendent gratitude, *SC* Spiritual connection

between GRAT-16 score and expression of gratitude ($r=0.444$, $p<0.01$), value of gratitude ($r=0.573$, $p<0.01$), transcendent gratitude ($r=0.488$, $p<0.01$), and spiritual connection ($r=0.534$, $p<0.01$). Researchers argue that SWBS highly confounds with psychological well-being, thus correlations between TGS scores and two dimensions of SWBS (religious well-being and essential well-being) are examined. Table 3 reports significant positive association between religious well-being, expression of gratitude ($r=0.411$, $p<0.01$), value of gratitude ($r=0.530$, $p<0.01$), transcendent gratitude ($r=0.562$, $p<0.01$), and spiritual connection ($r=0.445$, $p<0.01$). Similarly, it illustrates statistically significant positive correlation between existential well-being, expression of gratitude ($r=0.332$, $p<0.01$), value of gratitude ($r=0.477$, $p<0.01$), transcendent gratitude ($r=0.480$, $p<0.01$), and spiritual connection ($r=0.512$, $p<0.01$). In addition, K10 score reported negative association with expression of gratitude ($r=-0.384$, $p<0.05$), value of gratitude ($r=-0.472$, $p<0.05$), transcendent gratitude ($r=-0.577$, $p<0.05$), and spiritual connection ($r=-0.560$, $p<0.05$). These results are in accordance with initial propositions and thus, they conclude criterion validity of the TGS in the Indian context.

Relationship Between Transpersonal Gratitude, Spiritual Well-Being, and Distress

Although Table 3 suggests significant correlations between transpersonal gratitude, spiritual well-being, and distress, it is always advised to complement correlation results with more rigorous regression analysis. Accordingly, four dimensions of transpersonal gratitude were regressed over spiritual well-being and distress, separately. Table 4 reports that four dimensions of transpersonal gratitude are significant predictors of spiritual well-being of an individual. It suggests that spiritual connection (Beta=0.632, $p<0.05$) is the most potent predictor of spiritual well-being followed by transcendent gratitude (Beta=0.531, $p<0.05$). Table 4 concludes that the overall regression model is significant and four dimensions of transpersonal gratitude explains 47.8% of variations in spiritual well-being. Similarly, Table 5 reports that four dimensions of transpersonal gratitude are significant predictors of one's

Table 4 Results of multiple regression analysis (DV- Spiritual well-being)

Model	Variable	Unstandardized coefficient		Standardized coefficient Beta	<i>t</i> -value	Sig
		B	Std. error			
1	Constant	0.324	0.110		4.765	.010*
	Expression of gratitude	0.456	0.118	0.405	4.446	.000*
	Value of gratitude	0.568	0.142	0.519	0.628	.048*
	Transcendent gratitude	0.587	0.177	0.531	2.373	.019*
	Spiritual connection	0.684	0.222	0.632	4.015	.003*
	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> Square	Adjusted <i>R</i> square	SE	<i>F</i>	Sig
	0.738	0.544	0.478	0.115	6.576	0.013*

Primary data, * Sig. at 0.01, *SE* Standard Error

Table 5 Results of multiple regression analysis (DV- Distress)

Model	Variable	Unstandardized coefficient		Standardized coefficient Beta	<i>t</i> -value	Sig
		B	Std. error			
2	Constant	0.163	0.004		1.393	0.383
	Expression of gratitude	− 0.355	0.138	− 0.386	3.765	.014*
	Value of gratitude	− 0.434	0.067	− 0.487	3.690	.019*
	Transcendent gratitude	− 0.525	0.180	− 0.590	2.767	.035*
	Spiritual connection	− 0.518	0.295	− 0.574	2.974	.037*
	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> Square	Adjusted <i>R</i> square	SE	<i>F</i>	Sig
	− 0.816	0.665	0.616	0.276	8.198	.027*

Primary data, * Sig. at 0.0, *SE* Standard Error

level of distress. The findings observed that transcendent gratitude (Beta = − 0.590, $p < 0.05$) is the strongest predictor of distress followed by spiritual connection (Beta = − 0.574, $p < 0.05$). Table 5 concludes overall significance of the model with 61.6% variance. These results clearly mandate that transpersonal gratitude increases the spiritual well-being of the students. It is also observed that transpersonal gratitude leads to lower levels of distress.

Discussion

With a growing call for breaking the shackles of benefit-triggered gratitude research, and broader conceptualization of gratitude, researchers advocated examination of the transpersonal perspective of gratitude. But despite being a more comprehensive outlook, it somehow failed to generate interest among contemporary researchers

for two probable reasons. First, it is always a bit challenging to comprehend and measure any transcendental phenomenon. It is relatively easier to capture emotion or dispositional traits, but capturing something beyond self or ego is somewhat difficult. Although researchers adopt various means like interviews, observations, and *verstehen*, their objectivity remains a matter of debate among scholars. Any scientific study requires objective measurement of underlying phenomena that could be coded into numeral form for further statistical analysis. Such difficulties might have eluded scholars' interest in exploring the transpersonal nature of gratitude. Second, transcendental studies have a certain degree of religious connotation. Theologians have often claimed that transcendence and consciousness are their subject matters and major religions of the world have common belief of universal oneness. And a strong desire for secular studies might have eluded modern scholars from transpersonal studies. The studies on workplace spirituality also faced similar challenges in its initial years (Garg, 2017). But later on, it was realized that spirituality and religion are two different constructs, after which, it gained immense popularity among scholars. In the same way, the rise of transcendental psychology might encourage contemporary researchers to examine transpersonal gratitude.

The present study intends to encourage Indian researchers to ponder upon transpersonal conceptualization of gratitude. And the first and foremost requirement of any scientific research is availability of a reliable and valid questionnaire to measure the construct. Accordingly, this study evaluates the psychometric properties of the TGS scale in Indian context with the help of two studies. In the first study, EFA and CFA were conducted to evaluate the factorial structure of the TGS. EFA results showed the same four-factor solution as the original scale. These four factors- expression of gratitude, value of gratitude, transcendent gratitude, and spiritual connection- explained 74.12% of the total variance. Further, CFA results indicated an excellent model fit of four-factor structure derived from EFA. These findings recommend appropriate factorial validity of TGS in the Indian context. In the second study, pertinent values of the Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability recommended reliability of four dimensions of TGS. Further, the AVE values and the Fornell–Larcker test concluded convergent and discriminant validity of the scale. In addition, positive associations between TGS, GRAT-16, and SWBS scores and a negative linkage between TGS and distress score suggested criterion validity of the scale in the Indian context. All these results concluded that the TGS is a reliable and valid instrument to capture transpersonal gratitude among Indians too.

Implications of the Study

The findings of this study bear significant theoretical and practical implications. The study's inclination towards transpersonal nature of gratitude is poised to encourage researchers, academicians, and practitioners to reorient their studies towards broader conceptualization of gratitude. Gratitude research is primarily dominated by triadic notion; however there is a lot of room for psychological, philosophical, managerial and educational exploration of non-targeted and unspecified forms of gratitude. In general, expressions of gratitude are shaped

by societal expectations and moral norms. For inference, western expression of thankfulness is tangible in the form of gifts sharing; however, Indians express their gratefulness intangibly through silent prayers, and blessings. Transpersonal expression of gratitude elicits mental and emotional states of thankfulness that reflects, recognizes, and appreciates goodness of others (Artinian, 2018). Although, the broaden-and-build theory reflects that gratitude helps one to build social relationships. The value of gratitude subscale of transpersonal gratitude gives profound importance to social relationships and connections. The TSG was developed following interviews of sixty-eight people for whom gratitude is most valuable for ensuring deep connections with others. This emphasis on salience of profound interconnectedness might shape future research on gratitude. In addition, transcendent gratitude focuses on being grateful for mere existence or whatever one possesses without reference to any specific benefactor or benefit. It goes beyond intentional agency or value of gifts to something more, deeper, formless, and inanimate self. Such a wide connotation is poised to broaden the scope and reach of the gratitude research. And lastly, transpersonal perspective has rightly included spiritual connection. It seems to pose a serious challenge for an idiom-“there is no free lunch.” It is being argued that most significant aspects of life like human life, physical and mental health, sunlight, air, and water, are absolutely free. Similarly, nature’s gift in terms of diversity, colours, and beauty can not be tied in a narrow benefactor-beneficiary relationship. It is an apt time to include spiritual connection to the domain of gratitude, without which any exploration of gratitude would be incomplete.

Apart from the gratitude research, the contribution of the present study could be seen in the background of the call for context-specific indigenous research by proponents and followers indigenous school of thought. Any scientific investigation is incomplete without explanations from different cultural worldviews (Anuradha & Kumar, 2015). Indigenous research provides alternate ways of knowing (Jack & Westwood, 2009). Modern studies on gratitude could elaborate on the continuum of gratitude emotion. This study augments the understanding through Indian notion of *rnas* that offers a unified conceptualization\ inscribing personal, interpersonal and transpersonal gratitude. It is no wonder that the TGS model reports excellent psychometric properties in the Indian context. Also, modern empirical exploration of gratitude is mostly confined to western settings (Garg, 2020). Although a few researchers like Sarkar and Garg (2020), Saxena et al. (2020), Mehta et al. (2022), and Mahipalan and Sheena (2019) have examined the Indian’s experience of gratitude, they were based on narrower benefit-triggered version of gratitude. The findings of appropriate reliability of validity of the TGS in the Indian context will encourage indigenous scholars to test modern understanding of gratitude in light of Indian notions of gratitude.

The study also reported a significant positive association between four dimensions of transpersonal gratitude and spiritual well-being. It reflects the importance of expression and one’s perception of the value of gratitude for spiritual well-being. Thus, well-being practitioners may develop specific interventions that promote expression of gratitude. Here practices like gratitude letters, gratitude visits, thanks-giving days/weeks, prayers, old age home or orphanage visits, and one help

everyday activity could help. It is imperative to make younger people aware of the importance of expressing their thankfulness for others, unknowns, nature, and God.

Limitations and Scope for Future Research

The findings of this study should be seen in the light of a few limitations. The first limitation is related to the variety of respondents. This study is limited to two samples of students only. Future researchers could opt for a mixed sample of people from all ages. Secondly, the study suffers from inherent limitations of cross-sectional survey-based research design. Future research may also include qualitative techniques such as interviews and observation to elicit true and real-life gratitude experiences of Indians. Also, an experimental research design, double source data, or longitudinal data are better suited to comment upon causality of TGS, GRAT-16, SWLB, and K10 scores. Third, reliability testing is limited to internal consistency. Future researchers might be interested in examining test–retest, alternate form, or inter-rater reliability for better results. Although this study has deep Indian contextual insights, the scale needs to be validated in different cultural settings to encourage around the globe to investigate the transpersonal perspective of gratitude.

Conclusion

In summary, gratitude has a special significance and meaning in the Indian context, which can undermine both interpersonal and transpersonal notions of gratitude. Future researchers may try to develop and validate a scale based on Indian conception of *rnas*, which seems comprehensive and broader.

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Declarations

Conflict of interest Research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

Informed Consent Informed consents were taken from participants prior to collection of data.

Ethical Approval All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki Declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards.

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