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PAYLING, HARN

University of Hsuan Chuang, Hsinchu, Taiwan

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THE EXPLORATORY STUDY ON THE RELATIONSHIPS AMONG TAIWANESE COLLEGE STUDENTS' CONSTRUAL-LEVEL, GRATITUDE AND INTIMATE ATTACHMENT

PAYLING, HARN*

University of Hsuan Chuang, Hsinchu, Taiwan

Keywords:

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Abstract. The purpose of the study was to explore relationships among Taiwanese college students' construal-level, gratitude and intimate attachment. This study adopted the questionnaire survey. The research respondent were college students in Taiwan. The Behavior Identification Form, the Inventory of Undergraduates' Gratitude (IUG) and the Experiences in Close Relationships-Revised (ECR-R) Questionnaire were used as the data collection tools. There were 139 valid questionnaires. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson product-moment correlation and multiple linear regressions. The results were as following : 1. Taiwanese college students are on medium level in construal-level and intimate attachment, but of the above medium level in gratitude. 2. Construal-level and gratitude were found to have significant positive correlation. There was also a significant positive correlation between gratitude and intimate attachment. Construal-level and intimate attachment also showed a significant positive association. 3. "Cherish what you have" for "attachment-related avoidance" had a significant prediction effect. "cherish what you have" for construal-level had a significant prediction effect. On the basis of research results, this paper puts forward the suggestions of facilitating gratitude applied to Taiwanese college students' mental health adaptation and researches.

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, since Seligman proposed positive psychology in 1998, which lead people to explore people's inner and outer positive capital and positive capital are used to promote happiness. Among them, Fredrickson (2001) used a new thesis to illustrate the function of positive emotions called "The Broaden and Build Theory" which to explain the positive emotion, not only can promote the individual happiness, but also can promote personal growth and development. The hypothesis of broadening and build theory is that positive emotional experience can broaden the instant action of thinking about people's capital to establish their personal resources for a long time, its scope including physiology, wisdom of social and psychological capital. Furthermore, positive emotion can develop an ability to have new viewpoints, to broaden on the inherent mode of thinking, and can learn new things to promote self-transformation and social connections with others, and promote long-term physical and mental health. In Fredrickson's list of positive emotions (2001), gratitude is involved in a benefactor and a beneficiary of positive interaction experience, and the tendency of a beneficiary of the

mental, emotional broadening to pay back. In Lee and Chen (2009) study, based on the theory of broadening and build, adopting undergraduate courses of gratitude as an intervention program, they found that gratitude, problem solving ability, and happiness were a positively correlated. Besides, gratitude was negative correlated with negative emotions. In a study on the effect of the intimacy relationship group, Harn and Shiao (2014) used gratitude as intervention strategies and then finding that "attachment-related anxiety" has significant effects of male members, for all "attachment-related avoidance" has a significant effect. The study of Gordon, Oveis, Impett, Kogan and Keltner (2012) proposed that gratitude (appreciative) has a significant negative correlation with "attachment-related avoidance", appreciated have significant negative correlation with "attachment-related anxiety" and "attachment-related avoidance". Gratitude disposition has significant negative correlation with "attachment-related avoidance". The results verified the effect of broaden and build of positive emotions. Gratitude can establish students' resources of cognition, interpersonal relationships, and

*Corresponding author: Payling, Harn
E-mail: plharn@hcu.edu.tw

emotions. Gratitude also has a partial correlation with intimate attachment. According to Erickson's perspective of the developmental psychology, college students are in a developmental crisis of intimacy versus isolation. Love relationship is the college students' importance route to learn intimate relationship. The essence of love needs come from the close attachment of inner demand. This is an important psychological capital on college students' interpersonal, emotional resources. The correlation and effect of gratitude and intimate attachment is the one of the motivations for this study.

Lee and Chen (2009) proposed that gratitude could broaden college students' mental resources and increase their ability to solve the problem. In addition to explore the development of external problem-solving coping ability, intrinsic motivation is also important factor to prompt college students learning continually. The researcher wanted to understand whether positive emotions could strengthen internal learning motivation in order to boost and build the mental ability. Fujita and Carnevale (2012) proposed "construal-level theory" which used "psychological distance" to illustrate its core concept. For people concerned, the most direct and the shortest psychological distance is the so-called "direct experience" (Lieberman & Trope, 1998). In dealing with this kind of an event, which does not need too much abstract thinking or spend too much time, psychological pattern of this kind of events is classified as low-level construal (Trope & Liberman, 2010). On the contrary, some events are not so easily can rely on short-term visible field of vision, or "direct experience" to get what we want results or success, such as family management, academic achievement, and career achievement. These events are more abstract and their psychological distance is farther (Lieberman & Trope, 1998). They actually need to be deconstructed and gradually achieved after restructuring. This is called the high-level construal (Trope & Liberman, 2010). High-level construal can help people to concentrate on planning and achieve long-term goals, and for the behavior of the abstract concepts, for example, the hard-working, honest, and filial piety also behaves better. High-level construal not only focus on the specific sensory and emotional immediately meet (Schmeichel & Vohs, 2009) but also can have good self-control to accomplish long-term goals, and will react to the better performance in all kinds of life in the future. These processes of mental ability development have echoed the broaden effect and build long-term resource's ability of thinking actions in positive emotions. Thus, researchers aimed at the correlation and effect of gratitude and construal-level to conduct discussions.

In recent years, the studies which related broaden and build theory of positive emotions, illustrated the broaden phase thinking, behaviour is helpful to the mind, and in mental, emotional, and social resources. However, those were much to explore the external behaviour or coping strategy development. Researchers are putting on their personal and inner psychological process of mental resources as the theme to explore and

understand the effect of positive emotions on people's inner demand and psychological pattern. Therefore, this study was to explore Taiwanese college students in degree of construal-level, intimate attachment, and gratitude, and the correlation of gratitude, construal-level, and intimate attachment, further explored the predictive power of gratitude to construal-level and intimate attachment.

METHODS

Participants

The research objects were college students in Taiwan. There were a total of 139 valid samples, including 42 men and 97 women. The range of participants' age was between 18 and 26 years old.

Measures

Inventory of Undergraduates' Gratitude (IUG)

This study adopted "Inventory of Undergraduates' Gratitude" (IUG) (Lin & Yeh, 2011), which was a Likert 5 point scale. Full scale was consisting of five subscales. (1) "thanks others", 6 items, the amount of variability was (12.04%). (2) "thanks God", 5 items, the amount of variability was (11.42%). (3) "cherish what you have", 5 items, amount of variability was (10.62%). (4) "appreciate the hardship", 5 items, amount of variability was (8.58%). (5) "appreciate the moment", 6 items, amount of variability was (7.52%). Correlation coefficient of five factors was from (.718) to (.856), which has a good construct validity. Cronbach's α coefficient of the IUG was (.930) (26 items), subscales of Cronbach's α coefficients respectively, were (.844), (.824), (.796), (.750), (.742), they have a good internal consistency.

Experiences in Close Relationship-Revised (ECR-R)

"Experiences in Close Relationship – Revised" (ECR-R) was compiled by Fraley, Waller and Brennan (1998). Full scale was consisted of two subscales which were "subscale of attachment-related anxiety" and "subscale of attachment-related avoidance" respectively has 18 items. It was a Likert 7 point scale. Avoidance dimension was used to measure individuals in relationships, whether they might escape intimacy, whereas anxious dimension related to the belief of self-worth, which was used to measure individuals whether they might worry about others rejecting or accepting them. Reliability of subscale of attachment-related anxiety was .91. Reliability of subscale of attachment-related avoidance was .94. In validity section, anxiety subscales and the fear of rejection had a high correlation ($r = .89$), and afraid of being abandoned had a high correlation ($r = .82$). To avoid subscales and close had a high correlation ($r = .88$).

Behavior Identification Form (BIF)

"Behavior Identification Form" was compiled by (Vallacher & Wegner, 1998). It was used to measure the individuals' identification ways of behaviors. There was a total of 25 items. Each behavior offers two different ways of identifying, from low

construal-level to high construal-level. Participants chose one from them to illustrate the identification of their behavior to this way. Correlation coefficient were from (.28) to (.48). Internal consistency reliability was .85, Test-retest reliability was .91 after two weeks later.

DATA ANALYSIS

Researchers used descriptive statistical mean and standard deviation to understand the status of participants in gratitude, intimate attachment and construal-level. Second, researchers used Pearson correlation to analyze gratitude, intimate attachment and construal-level. Finally, the first step was using simple regression to find the variables that had significant correlation, and then

using stepwise regression to conduct the prediction of gratitude for intimate attachment and control-level.

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics of Taiwanese College Students' Gratitude, Intimate Attachment and Construal-Level

Table 1 showed the mean and standard of the objects of study on Inventory of Undergraduates' Gratitude, Experiences in Close Relationship- Revised, and Behavior Identification Form. Three scales were respectively 5 points scale, 7 points scale, and 1 point scale. According Table 1, participants are of medium level in construal-level and intimate attachment, but have above medium level in gratitude.

TABLE 1
Mean and Standard Deviation of IUG, ECR-R, BIF

Variables	Scale	Mean	S.D
Gratitude	Thanks others	3.952	.9555
	Thanks God	3.371	.8337
	Cherish what you have	3.849	.7910
	Appreciate the hardship	3.609	.8004
	Appreciate the moment	3.751	.8003
Intimate attachment	Attachment-related anxiety	3.952	.9555
	Attachment-related avoidance	2.882	.8774
Construal-level	Behavior identification form	0.647	.1649

Table 2 was a summary table of Pearson product moment correlation of the objects of study on Inventory of Undergraduates' Gratitude, Experiences in Close Relationship-Revised, and Behavior Identification Form. According to Table 2, gratitude and intimate attachment had a significant negative

correlation, while to construal-level had a significant positive correlation. The results indicated when the degree of gratitude was high, the degree of attachment-related anxiety and attachment-related avoidance were. High degree of gratitude had a higher construal-level.

TABLE 2
Construal-Level, Intimate Attachment, Gratitude in Relationships Scale

Variable	Construal-Level	Intimate Attachment	Gratitude
Construal-Level	—	-.013	.220**
Intimate Attachment	-.013	—	-.183*
Gratitude	.220**	-.183*	—

Note. **, $p < 0.01$ *, $p < 0.05$

The Regression Analysis Results of Taiwanese College Students' Gratitude, Intimate Attachment and Construal-Level: The Regression Analysis of Gratitude for Intimate Attachment

In the regression analysis of gratitude for intimate attachment, researchers used simple regression to analyze respectively the prediction of “thanks others”, “thanks God”, “cherish what you have”, “appreciate the hardship”, and “appreciate the moment” for intimate attachment. Only “cherish what you have” ($F(1,139)=13.61, p=.000$) and “appreciate the hardship” ($F(1,139)=7.956, p= 0.005$) for “attachment-related avoidance

”had a significant prediction effect. Their explained variances were (8.3%, 4.7%) respectively. Researchers put “cherish what you have” and “appreciate the hardship” in the stepwise regression analysis, then results showed that only “cherish what you have” ($F(1,139)=13.61, p =.000$) was elected to the equation. “Cherish what you have” had (8.9%) of the explanatory power for “attachment-related avoidance”. “Cherish what you have” had the best predictive power for “attachment-related avoidance”. Five subscales of Inventory of Undergraduates' Gratitude were not significant predictive power for “attachment-related anxiety”. The summary of results analysis showed on table 3.

TABLE 3
The Type of Gratitude Predict Attachment-Related Avoidance in Stepwise Regression Analysis

	B	SE. B	B	R ²	ΔR ²	F
Cherish what you have <i>n=139</i>	-.331	.090	-.299***	.089	.083	13.610***

Note.***, $p < 0.001$

The Regression Analysis of Gratitude for Construal-Level

In the regression analysis of gratitude for the construal-level, researchers used simple regression to analyze respectively the prediction of “thanks others”, “thanks God”, “cherish what you have”, “appreciate the hardship”, and “appreciate the moment” for construal-level. Only “cherish what you have” ($F(1,139)=11.259, p=0.01$) and “appreciate the hardship” ($F(1,139)=4.602, p=0.034$) for construal-level had a significant

prediction effect. Their explained variances were (6.8%, 2.5%) respectively. Researchers put “cherish what you have” and “appreciate the hardship” in the stepwise regression analysis, then results showed that only “cherish what you have” ($F(1,139)=11.259, p=0.001$) was elected to the equation. “Cherish what you have” had (6.8%) of the explanatory power for construal-level. “Cherish what you have” had the best predictive power for construal-level. The summary of results analysis showed on table 4.

TABLE 4
The Type of Gratitude Predict Construal-Level in Stepwise Regression Analysis

	B	SE. B	B	R ²	ΔR ²	F
Cherish what you have <i>n=139</i>	1.427	.425	.274**	.075	.068	11.259**

Note. ** $p < 0.01$

CONCLUSION

This study was to understand Taiwanese college students' gratitude regarding the effect of intimate attachment and construal-level in order to verify the effect of positive emotions broaden and build the ability in the inner interpersonal and mental. Participants are on medium level in construal-level and intimate attachment, but of above medium level in gratitude. These showed that grateful experience is widespread on Taiwanese college students' psychological feelings. Secondly, Participants are of high level of attachment-related anxiety of intimate attachment, which showed they felt more highly anxious that others refuse them in the intimate relationship. Participants are on medium level in the construal-level, which showed they

have some ability of abstract reasoning to view about things.

In the relationship between gratitude, intimate attachment, and construal-level, which showed gratitude and intimate attachment had a significant negative correlation, while two construal-level had a significant positive correlation. The results indicated that who had the trait of gratitude, also had better intimate attachment. Gratitude and high-level construal had a positive correlation. Further, using gratitude to predict intimate attachment, the results showed that “Cherish what you have” and “appreciate the moment” for “attachment-related avoidance” had a significant prediction effect. And “Cherish what you have” had the best predictive power. “Cherish what you have” and “attachment-related avoidance” can present a kind of treasure for the

environment and life, which were a higher level of gratitude traits contributing the attachment of intimacy. The results were consistent with previous research results are mostly (Gordon, Oveis, Impett, Kogan & Keltner, 2012; Harn & Shiao, 2005). In this study also found “cherish what you have” and “appreciate the moment” for construal-level had a significant prediction effect, and “cherish what you have” had the best predictive power. It also

suggested that a high level of gratitude traits can contribute to learning the breadth and depth of thinking mode for developing high-level construal. However, gratitude for intimate attachment and construal-level were only about (9% and 7%) of the explained variance. Future research can be incorporated into more positive emotional variables to predict in order to ascertain the effect of broaden-and -build in different positive emotions.

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