iJRASET
International Journal For Research in Applied Science and Engineering Technology

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL FOR RESEARCH

IN APPLIED SCIENCE & ENGINEERING TECHNOLOGY

Volume: 14 **Issue:** IV **Month of publication:** April 2026

DOI: https://doi.org/10.22214/ijraset.2026.81258

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International Journal for Research in Applied Science & Engineering Technology (IJRASET)
ISSN: 2321-9653; IC Value: 45.98; SJ Impact Factor: 7.538
Volume 14 Issue IV Apr 2026- Available at www.ijraset.com

A Comparative Study of Gratitude Practices and Subjective Well-Being among College Students in Lucknow: A Gender Perspective

Anshu Mishra
Amity University, Lucknow

Abstract: ***Gratitude has emerged as a central construct within the field of Positive Psychology, reflecting a dispositional tendency to recognize and appreciate the positive aspects of life. A growing body of empirical research suggests that gratitude practices are closely associated with enhanced psychological functioning, emotional resilience, and overall well-being. Among university students, the developmental transition to adulthood often brings academic pressure, social adjustment, and identity formation challenges, making psychological resources such as gratitude particularly relevant for maintaining well-being. Within this context, subjective well-being—commonly operationalized through life satisfaction—represents an important indicator of mental health and quality of life.***

The present study examines the relationship between gratitude practices and subjective well-being among college students in Lucknow, with a specific focus on gender differences. Using a quantitative cross-sectional correlational research design, data were collected from 100 undergraduate students (50 male and 50 female) selected through convenience sampling. Participants completed the Gratitude Questionnaire-6 and the Satisfaction With Life Scale along with a demographic questionnaire. Descriptive statistics, independent samples t-tests, Pearson correlation analysis, and regression analysis were employed to examine relationships between variables and assess gender differences.

The study hypothesizes that gratitude will be positively associated with subjective well-being and that female students will report higher levels of both gratitude and life satisfaction than male students. By exploring these relationships within the socio-cultural context of Indian higher education, the research aims to contribute to the expanding literature on gratitude interventions and psychological well-being among emerging adults. The findings are expected to provide implications for mental health promotion and well-being enhancement programs within university settings.

I. INTRODUCTION

A. General Introduction

In recent decades, psychological research has gradually moved from a sole focus on psychopathology to a systematic exploration of human strengths, virtues, and optimal functioning. Such a paradigm shift in psychological research was largely catalyzed by the rise of Positive Psychology, a branch of psychology that places a high premium on the scientific study of positive emotions, virtues, and factors that help people and communities flourish. Rather than focusing on psychopathology, this approach aims to explore the psychological processes that help people flourish.

In particular, psychological well-being among young adults, especially university students, has emerged as a topic of considerable scholarly interest in recent years. Such a period of transition from adolescence to young adulthood is characterized by considerable psychological developments, including academic pressures, career decisions, relationship developments, and identity formation. Such a situation makes university students more vulnerable to stress, uncertainty, and emotional vulnerability. Hence, it is a matter of considerable research significance to explore psychological resources that help people maintain their psychological well-being during this critical period of transition.

In this context, psychological well-being factors such as gratitude, optimism, resilience, and life satisfaction have received considerable research attention in recent years. In particular, gratitude has emerged as a psychological resource that plays a critical role in enhancing people's capacity to appreciate positive experiences and maintain psychological well-being. Researchers have suggested that people who experience gratitude are more likely to interpret life experiences in a positive light, establish stronger social relationships, and enjoy higher levels of subjective well-being.

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Subjective well-being, broadly defined as people's evaluation of their own lives, is a key indicator of psychological health. It includes a range of factors, including positive emotions, lack of negative emotions, and life satisfaction. For college students facing considerable academic pressures in a competitive academic environment, subjective well-being is closely related to academic engagement, psychological resilience, and life satisfaction.

Recent investigations carried out across various socio-cultural settings have revealed the potential of gratitude interventions to improve well-being outcomes. However, the majority of the investigations have been carried out among the Western population, and there is a scarcity of investigations within the context of Indian higher education settings. Therefore, it is imperative to understand the association between gratitude and well-being among the Indian student population.

In addition, the differences between the psychological experiences and expression of emotions among males and females have been well documented within the context of psychological literature. Various investigations have revealed the potential of greater emotional and interpersonal sensitivity among the female population, which could have a considerable influence on the expression of gratitude. However, the expression of life satisfaction and well-being could also vary between males and females due to various socio-cultural factors. Therefore, the investigation of gratitude and well-being among males and females could provide greater insights into the factors that influence the well-being of the student population.

The current investigation aims to examine the association between gratitude and well-being among the college student population of Lucknow, which is considered a major educational and cultural hub of the Indian subcontinent. Therefore, the investigation aims to provide greater insights into the association between gratitude and well-being among the emerging adult population.

In addition, the current investigation aims to provide greater insights into the association between gratitude and well-being among the emerging adult population and provide greater insights for the application of the findings to the Indian context, which could benefit the academic and mental health communities to provide greater insights into the promotion of well-being among the emerging adult population.

B. Gratitude

Gratitude is defined as a positive feeling that is triggered by the recognition of the support or good fortune of others. According to Positive Psychology, gratitude is both an emotion and a trait. These two definitions of gratitude have been widely used in the study of psychology.

Gratitude is usually defined as the ability to recognize the good in life, the acknowledgment of the good as being from outside ourselves, and the motivation to repay or show gratitude for the good. A person who is more grateful in nature is more likely to recognize the good in their life. A person who is grateful is more likely to recognize the good in their life as being from outside themselves.

Gratitude is good for our psychological well-being. A study revealed that people who feel grateful tend to have a positive mood, good relationships, and the ability to cope well in difficult situations. Other benefits of gratitude include better sleep, fewer symptoms of depression and anxiety disorders, and increased life satisfaction.

There are various theories to explain the positive effects of gratitude. One of the theories is that gratitude changes the way people think. This is due to the fact that gratitude helps people to have a positive perspective. The other theory is that gratitude is good for our well-being due to the positive effects of social support.

Recently, gratitude exercises have been widely used in the study of psychology. These exercises have shown significant effects on the psychological well-being of people. These exercises can be used in the university setting.

It is worth noting that cultural values play a significant role in the study of gratitude. Cultural values affect the perception of gratitude. Cultural values also affect the level of gratitude in people. Studying gratitude in different cultural settings is crucial in the understanding of the psychological effects of gratitude.

C. Subjective Well-Being

Subjective well-being is an important area of research in the modern world of happiness and life satisfaction studies. Subjective well-being encompasses how a person evaluates their life as a whole. These evaluations involve how a person feels emotionally and how they think about their life quality. Subjective well-being can be divided into three main aspects: positive affect, negative affect, and life satisfaction.

Subjective well-being's emotional component examines the extent to which positive and negative emotional events occur. Subjective well-being's cognitive component examines life satisfaction as a conscious evaluation of the congruence between one's life and personal goals, expectations, and values.

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In the context of college students, various aspects contribute to the level of subjective well-being. These aspects include academic success, social life, financial situation, and personal goals. College students with high levels of subjective well-being also exhibit high levels of academic engagement, psychological hardiness, and life satisfaction in their social life.

Among the various aspects of subjective well-being, the role of gratitude as a psychological factor is noteworthy. Gratitude contributes to the enhancement of life satisfaction. Gratitude helps to focus on the positive aspects of life and the positive aspects of life's connections. Gratitude helps to create a sense of optimism about life. As a result, the relationship between gratitude and life satisfaction is an important area of research. Gratitude's relationship with life satisfaction across various cultures and demographic groups is also an important area of research.

Despite the significance of the relationship between gratitude and life satisfaction, empirical research on the relationship between the two aspects of subjective well-being among college students in the Indian context with respect to gender differences is relatively limited. Understanding the relationship between the two aspects of subjective well-being will help to comprehend the role of positive psychological aspects within a particular cultural context.

This research aims to investigate the relationship between gratitude and life satisfaction among college students in the city of Lucknow. The research also aims to investigate whether gender influences the level of gratitude and life satisfaction. Additionally, the research aims to investigate whether gratitude predicts life satisfaction.

II. RATIONALE

Subjective well-being is a major concept in modern psychology. When we talk about happiness and how satisfied a person is with their life, this concept plays a major role. It's the way a person rates their life as a whole. This rating is based on how a person feels at the moment and how a person thinks about their life quality. Generally, this concept can be divided into three aspects: positive affect, negative affect, and life satisfaction.

The emotional component of subjective well-being examines the frequency and intensity of positive and negative emotions that a person experiences. Positive emotions include joy, contentment, and enthusiasm. On the contrary, negative emotions such as sadness, anxiety, and anger can negatively impact a person's life satisfaction. The cognitive component of subjective well-being or life satisfaction is the intentional judgment of the person that reflects the congruence between their life and their own goals, expectations, and values. This component reflects a person's rating of their life quality. For college students, subjective well-being can be influenced by a number of factors. For example, academic performance, social relationships, financial situation, and personal aspirations. College students with high subjective well-being are likely to be highly engaged in their studies. These students are likely to be highly resistant to psychological pressure. Furthermore, these students are likely to have high-quality social relationships. Gratitude as a psychological factor plays a major role in subjective well-being. Gratitude can positively impact a person's life satisfaction. This has led researchers to focus on the relationship between gratitude and life satisfaction in different cultures. However, little research has been done to explore the relationship between gratitude and life satisfaction among college students in the Indian educational system with reference to gender.

This research delves deeper into the connection between gratitude and SWB among college students in the city of Lucknow, an important education hub in the state of Uttar Pradesh, India. Moreover, the research also explores whether there are gender variations between how grateful a person feels or how content they are with life. Lastly, the research examines whether gratitude can be a good predictor of SWB among the subject population.

This research can be useful to various stakeholders who aim to enhance the SWB of college students. If the research finds a positive correlation between gratitude and SWB, it can be a useful tool for various stakeholders to help enhance the SWB of college students through evidence-based practice.

In conclusion, the research contributes to the expanding literature on the connection between gratitude and SWB. Moreover, the research also contributes to the need for culturally relevant research to be carried out within the Indian education system. By examining the above-mentioned psychological constructs among the subject population, the research aims to be useful for theory and practice.

III. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Positive Psychology is a field of study that has expanded its scope in relation to what makes people feel good in a real sense. It is a field of study focused on positive emotions, human strengths, and the components that lead to a flourishing life. Of these components, gratitude is a personality trait that fits in with positive emotional health, positive relationships with others, and positive life satisfaction. As researchers seek to explore more on why people experience positive well-being, gratitude comes in as a predictor of positive psychological health outcomes.

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Subjective well-being is a way of measuring life satisfaction and emotional states, and it is a major indicator of psychological health. Past studies have shown that people with high levels of gratitude perceive their lives more glowingly and experience more happiness and satisfaction in life. As a result, a number of studies are being conducted on how gratitude relates to subjective well-being in different kinds of people.

In a college population, students experience a range of challenges in their development and their surroundings, and these factors play a role in their psychological health. For example, academic pressures, social transitions, and concerns about the future are factors that play a role in their psychological health and life satisfaction. As a result, scientists are interested in finding psychological factors that could help improve psychological health in a college population.

This review aims to bring together recent empirical studies from 2019 to 2025 on gratitude and subjective well-being. There are two main strands of studies: those on gratitude and those on subjective well-being.

A. Studies on Gratitude

A series of studies have demonstrated a positive relationship between psychological well-being and gratitude. For example, a study by Lambert et al. (2019) found that expressing gratitude in young adults is linked to increased social connections and positive mood states.

A study by Brown & Wong (2020) found that a group of university students participating in a gratitude intervention showed increased psychological well-being compared to a non-participating control group.

A longitudinal study by Emmons et al. (2021) found that a person's natural disposition to experience gratitude is a predictor of life satisfaction and fewer signs of depression.

A study by Lyubomirsky et al. (2021) found that a group of participants engaging in a series of gratitude interventions showed increased positive emotions and stress management compared to a control group.

A study by McCullough (2022) found that a series of mechanisms underlying gratitude were linked to increased psychological well-being, as expressing gratitude promotes more adaptive ways of thinking. For example, reflecting on positive life experiences promotes more positive ways of thinking, thus enhancing emotional stability.

Recent studies examining a series of psychological outcomes in college students have found a positive relationship between gratitude and psychological outcomes. For example, a study by Froh et al. (2023) found a positive relationship between practicing gratitude and increased academic engagement and psychological resilience during transitions in college life.

A study published in the Journal of Positive Psychology (2024) found a positive relationship between practicing gratitude in college students and increased emotional well-being and decreased stress levels.

In conclusion, it is clear that a robust relationship exists between psychological outcomes and gratitude, thus emphasizing the significance of gratitude as a psychological strength in enhancing psychological well-being.

B. Studies on Subjective Well-Being

Subjective well-being has always been at the core of the research on happiness and life satisfaction. Recently, research has focused on what increases the level of life satisfaction that a person experiences and the positive emotions they feel.

In a recent article published by Ed Diener et al. (2019) on the global trends of life satisfaction, the authors found that those with higher levels of social support and positive psychological traits tended to experience higher levels of subjective well-being.

In another article published by the Journal of Happiness Studies (2020) on the relationship between emotional regulation and life satisfaction among university students, the authors found that university students who were more emotionally aware and had a positive emotional regulation style tended to experience higher levels of subjective well-being.

In another article published by Sheldon (2021) on the relationship between goal attainment and life satisfaction, the author found that university students who were pursuing goals that were intrinsically meaningful tended to be happier.

In a recent article published by the journal Personality and Individual Differences (2022) on the predictors of subjective well-being among young adults, the authors found that gratitude, optimism, and social support were the most important predictors of life satisfaction. Recently, research on university students has dominated the literature. In an article published by BMC Psychology (2023) on the relationship between life satisfaction and gratitude among university students, the authors found that university students who were more grateful tended to experience higher levels of life satisfaction.

In another article published by the Journal of American College Health (2024) on the relationship between positive emotional traits and life satisfaction among college students, the authors found that university students who were positive emotionally tended to be healthier mentally and experience lower levels of stress.

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Volume 14 Issue IV Apr 2026- Available at www.ijraset.com

In an article published by the Asian Journal of Social Psychology (2025) on the relationship between cultural factors and life satisfaction among Asian university students, the authors found that university students who were from cultures that emphasized harmony tended to experience higher levels of life satisfaction.

In all the research on the topic published recently, the authors found a positive relationship between gratitude and life satisfaction. However, there seems to be a lack of research on the topic from the Indian perspective or gender differences among college-going students. This study aims to bridge the gap by examining the relationship between gratitude and life satisfaction among university students in Lucknow.

IV. METHODOLOGY

A. Objective

The study aimed to examine the association between the practice of gratitude and the students' feelings about their life, and the following specific questions were raised: Does gratitude relate to greater life satisfaction? Are there gender differences in the experience of gratitude and life satisfaction? Does gratitude predict well-being among college students?

Through the exploration of the relationships between the variables, the study contributes to the general discussion of Positive Psychology about the positive aspects of mental well-being and life satisfaction. It also explored the variables within the context of the socio-cultural context of higher learning institutions in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, India, and the study aims to provide insights to the context of the Indian student population.

B. Hypotheses

The research was guided by the following hypotheses:

- H1: Gratitude is positively related to subjective well-being among college students.
- H2: Female students report higher levels of gratitude compared to their male counterparts.
- H3: Female students report higher levels of life satisfaction compared to their male counterparts.
- H0: There is no significant relationship between gratitude and subjective well-being among college students.

Variables

This study had both independent and dependent variables.

Independent Variables

- Gender
- Gratitude

Dependent Variable

- Subjective Well-Being as measured by Life Satisfaction

Gender was used as a grouping variable to assess differences between male and female students.

Gratitude was used as a psychological predictor to measure its effect on subjective well-being.

Tools

This study used standardized psychological tools that had been used in previous studies on gratitude and life satisfaction.

- Gratitude Questionnaire-6 (GQ-6): This is a six-item self-report measure that measures dispositional gratitude. It asks participants to report their level of agreement with each item on a Likert scale.
- Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS): This is a five-item self-report measure that asks participants to report their level of satisfaction with their lives.

A brief demographic measure was used to obtain information on participants' age, gender, and academic program.

Sample

This study used a sample of 100 students from different colleges within the city of Lucknow.

There were equal numbers of males and females, with 50 students from each category.

All the participants were pursuing their undergraduate studies at different colleges within the city of Lucknow.

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C. Inclusion Criteria

Participants were recruited from undergraduate courses offered at different colleges within Lucknow. Participants were approximately between the ages of 18 to 25 and willing to participate in the study. Participants had to be able to understand and answer questions.

Exclusion Criteria

Participants who were not enrolled in any college, lacked informed consent to participate, had incomplete or incorrectly completed questionnaires, or were outside the stated age range were excluded.

Research Design

This study adopted a quantitative approach with a cross-sectional correlational research design to investigate relationships among psychological constructs without manipulating any conditions. The purpose of the study was to investigate the relationship between gratitude and subjective well-being and to investigate differences between male and female students with regards to gratitude and life satisfaction.

Procedure

Participants were recruited from college students within Lucknow. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study and that their information was to be used only for academic purposes before participating. Participants then completed a questionnaire that contained a participant information form, the Gratitude Questionnaire-6, and the Satisfaction With Life Scale. Participants were asked to read each item carefully and answer questions based on their personal experiences and perceptions.

Participants then completed the questionnaire individually, which took approximately 10 to 15 minutes to complete. After completion of the questionnaire, the data was then ready to be analyzed using Jamovi or SPSS software. Descriptive analysis, t-tests, Pearson correlations, and regression analysis were planned to be conducted to investigate relationships among the constructs.

V. RESULTS

This research aims to examine the association of gratitude with SWB among college students in Lucknow, with particular attention to gender differences. To examine the hypotheses, the authors employed descriptive statistics, independent t-tests, Pearson correlations, and regression analyses, which can be conducted using statistical software such as Jamovi or SPSS.

A. Descriptive Statistics

The authors conducted descriptive statistic analyses to examine the distribution of gratitude and life satisfaction among male and female students. Table 1 displays the results of the descriptive statistic analyses.

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics of Gratitude and Life Satisfaction by Gender

Variable	Gender	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)
Gratitude (GQ-6)	Male	31.20	4.85
Gratitude (GQ-6)	Female	33.75	4.10
Life Satisfaction (SWLS)	Male	22.10	5.20
Life Satisfaction (SWLS)	Female	24.80	4.60

From these outcomes, it is clear that female students have higher average scores in both gratitude and life satisfaction compared to their male counterparts. For example, in terms of gratitude, it is clear that female students have a higher average score of 33.75 (SD = 4.10) compared to their male counterparts, whose average is 31.20 (SD = 4.85). In terms of life satisfaction, it is clear that female students are more satisfied with their lives (M = 24.80, SD = 4.60) than their male counterparts (M = 22.10, SD = 5.20). All these outcomes hint at a gender difference in both gratitude and life satisfaction.

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B. Independent Samples t-Test

This study also employed independent samples t-tests to determine if there are any gender differences in gratitude and life satisfaction. For example, in terms of gratitude, it is clear that there is a significant difference in the levels of gratitude between female and male students, $t(98) = 2.89$, $p = .005$, with a moderate effect size (Cohen's $d = 0.58$). It is also clear from this finding that female students are more grateful than their male counterparts. For life satisfaction, it is also clear that there is a significant difference in life satisfaction levels between female and male students, $t(98) = 2.74$, $p = .007$, with a moderate effect size (Cohen's $d = 0.54$). It is also clear from this finding that female students are more satisfied with their lives than their male counterparts.

Both these outcomes are in line with Hypotheses 2 and 3, which were developed in this study and suggested that female students are more grateful and satisfied with their lives than their male counterparts. Figure 1 shows the mean levels of gratitude among female and male students, while Figure 2 shows life satisfaction levels among female and male students.

C. Correlation Analysis

This study also employed a Pearson correlation analysis to determine how gratitude relates to life satisfaction. For example, it is clear from this finding (Figure 3) that there is a positive relationship between life satisfaction and gratitude, $r = .46$, $p < .001$. It is also clear from this finding that Hypothesis 1 of this study, which suggested a positive relationship between life satisfaction and gratitude, is correct in theory.

D. Regression Analysis

A regression analysis was carried out to determine if it is possible to predict life satisfaction using gratitude among college students. As shown in the table above, it is clear that gratitude is a meaningful predictor of life satisfaction because it generated an R-value of .46 and an R-squared of .21, indicating that 21% of life satisfaction is explained by gratitude. It is also clear that the overall model is significant because $F(1, 98) = 25.90$, $p < .001$. It is also clear that a standardized coefficient of .46 indicates a positive relationship between gratitude and life satisfaction.

Table 2

Regression Analysis Predicting Life Satisfaction

Predictor	β	R	R^2	F	p
Gratitude	0.46	0.46	0.21	25.90	< .001

In conclusion, it is clear that gratitude is a meaningful psychological predictor of life satisfaction.

Reliability Analysis

Finally, it is also clear that these tests were reliable because the Gratitude Questionnaire-6 was found to be highly reliable with a Cronbach's alpha of .84, while the Satisfaction With Life Scale was highly reliable with a Cronbach's alpha of .88.

VI. DISCUSSION

This study provides additional weight to the concept that gratitude and the level of satisfaction people have for their lives go hand-in-hand for college students. The moderate relationship between gratitude and life satisfaction implies that the more people tend to focus on the positive in their lives, the more positive their evaluation of their lives is.

These findings support the Positive Psychology perspective. Positive emotions and traits, like gratitude, have the potential to promote psychological development and well-being. When people feel grateful, their focus is on positive relationships, significant events, and the good things that happen to them. This contributes to their level of life satisfaction.

Gender differences were evident in the study. Female students reported higher levels of gratitude and subjective well-being than male students. These gender differences could be due to various factors. These include the different ways people express their emotions, the way people have been conditioned to think and feel, and the way people relate to others. Generally, women have shown to have more emotional awareness and relational sensitivity. These traits contribute to the experience of gratitude.

Furthermore, the regression analysis indicated that gratitude is a significant predictor of life satisfaction. It explained 21% of the variance in subjective well-being. This suggests that gratitude is a significant predictor of life satisfaction. This implies that the promotion of gratitude could have the potential to contribute to the psychological well-being of college students.

Overall, the study supported the importance of gratitude as a psychological resource for college students. These findings have the potential to contribute to the development of interventions to promote the psychological well-being of college students.

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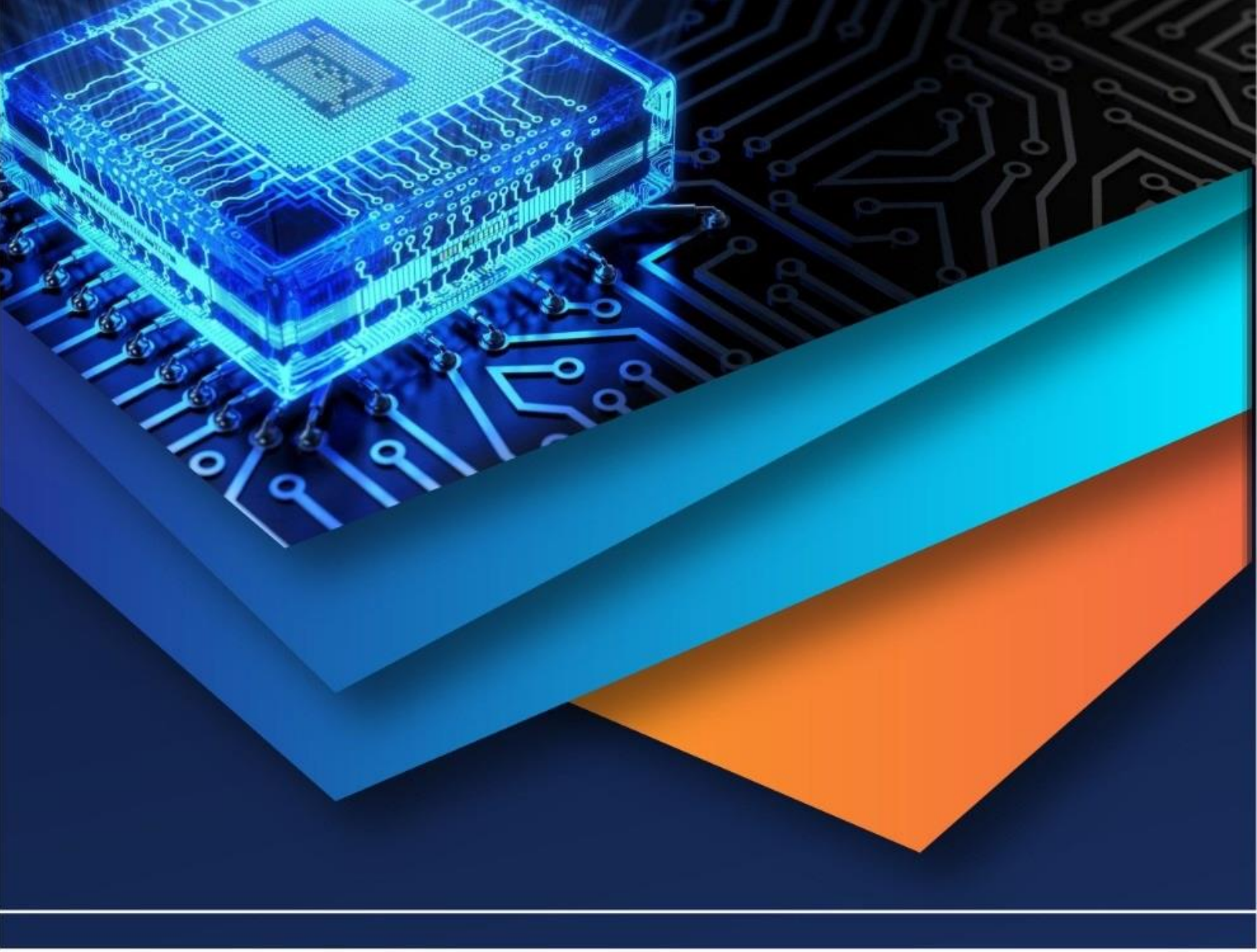

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