

Forgiveness as a predictor of psychological well-being and aggression among young adult

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ABSTRACT

Forgiveness is widely recognized as a psychological process that enhances emotional well-being by reducing resentment and suppressing retaliatory impulses. Rooted in empathy and cognitive reappraisal, forgiveness is believed to mitigate negative evaluations of offenders. This study objectives to examine the relationship between forgiveness, psychological well-being, and aggression among young adults at the University of Balochistan, Quetta. A correlational research design was used, and a simple random sample of 200 students (100 males and 100 females) was selected. The Heartland Forgiveness Scale, Psychological Well-Being Scale, and Aggression Scale were administered. Pearson correlations revealed a significant positive relationship between forgiveness and psychological well-being, and a significant negative relationship between forgiveness and aggression. Reliability coefficients ranged between .80 and .86, indicating strong internal consistency. Independent sample t-tests also demonstrated notable gender differences across the study variables. The findings suggest that forgiveness contributes to enhanced psychological well-being and reduced aggressive tendencies among young adults. Promoting forgiveness-related skills may help foster emotional stability, life satisfaction, and healthier interpersonal behaviors within university populations.

Keywords: *Aggression, Forgiveness, Psychological Well-Being, Young Adults.*

INTRODUCTION

Forgiveness facilitates the release of suppressed feelings, which can cause stress. Relief and wellbeing might result from letting go of these feelings. Hatred, no matter how minor but is terrible because it can cause major physical, emotional, and spiritual problems. The degree of being hurt and

consequences caused by the transgression will depend on the degree of affective intimacy in the relationship. However, forgiveness is a personal act that varies from person to person and it helps with letting go of the situation. A more holistic approach that emphasizes the whole person mental and physical health is psychological well-being. It is the element that contributes to improve social skills, favourable regard, and self-esteem and also extremely important for both the individual's developmental and maturity stages. Additionally, it offers inspiration and supports the development of positive values, abilities, and aspirations. Young people should be conditioned so that no one's remarks can affect their confidence because they are extremely susceptible to all kinds of situations. These days, there is increasing worry about hostility and aggression. People are prone to negativity, which frequently results in psychological problems. They develop greater insecurities the more they are exposed to the negative world.

Forgiveness is defined as the act of avoiding or evading the one who has mistreated you and demanding revenge against someone who has shown anger, retaliation, or offensive behaviors. In other words, forgiveness is a process of letting go of the bad feelings and attitude towards the person who has wronged or wounded you Worthington & Scherer (2004). Forgiving someone is often defined as the psychological process of intentionally letting go of animosity, anger, hatred, and the desire for vengeance and malice against both them and ourselves. Forgiveness is sometimes defined as the process of reducing interrelated negative resentment-based feelings, impulses, and cognition Worthington et al. (2007). Forgiveness helps people let go of the past and improve their mental and physical health. For example: enhance mental health, reduce stress and maintain blood pressure. Numerous studies show that university students and young adults are susceptible to harm from others' remarks. However, it is crucial that they must be able to forgive everyone and cultivate a sense of wellbeing that aids in their personal development. According to psychologists, forgiveness is a logical process found on empathy, understanding, and affective responses that diminish a person's negative assessment Goodstein & Aquino (2010). Tolerance has numerous significant advantages for both victims and perpetrators when it is extended, including improved mental health (Karremans et al., 2003; Orcutt, 2006; L. Toussaint & Webb, 2005) and superior physiological strength (Harris et al., 2006; Lawler-Row, 2010; C. van O. Witvliet et al., 2001). According to Enright et al. (1991), forgiveness is not the same as pardon, which is the exact opposite of the legal arena; condonation, it is an excuse for a transgression; or excusing. It is generally accepted that releasing thoughts and emotions of anger, unpleasantness, wrath, and the need for revenge and retaliation toward someone we think has harmed us including ourselves is a personal, voluntary internal process. Additionally, forgiveness is linked to improve interpersonal effectiveness Rippentrop et al. (2005) particularly with the signs such as depression especially in connection of diagnosed psychiatric disorder L. L. Toussaint et al. (2008). Witvliet and McCullough (2007) and C. vanOyen Witvliet & Luna (2017) discussed that by reducing stress, negative coping mechanisms, and compounding positive emotional reactions, forgiveness can help to regulate emotions and improve health. More forgiveness has been linked to lessen the intensity of animosity, violence, and anger, suggesting that forgiving improves emotional functioning (Carson et al., 2005; Hernandez et al., 2009), reduced rumination, mood swings, and negative effects (Lawler et al., 2005; Stoia-Caraballo et al., 2008).

Worthington & Scherer (2004) has highlighted the emotional, communal, cognitive, and physical well-being as the four possible advantages of forgiveness. The lives of beings are influenced in some way by these four facets of existence. Happiness is closely linked to preserving one's bodily and mental well-being and being gratified with one's interpersonal relationships. People will probably be happy if they are

content with these phases of their lives. These phases are Deepening Phase (forgives as the release of emotional baggage and found purpose and meaning for their peace), Work Phase (this phase focuses on the efforts of the offender to comprehend and rebuild trust. The small hurtful events are forgiven but large ones require great patience and empathy), Decision Phase (it begins when one realizes things are not working out. Hence, one tries to forgive and move toward a positive direction in life), and Uncovering Phase (includes examining an individual's past experience with suffering. These include guilt, shame, anger, etc.). Consequently, it resulted in an increased awareness of the life significance and a decrease in aggression and depression. A number of psychometric research have concentrated on evolving self-report instructions that use forgiveness as an operational response McCullough (2000). People appear to be more forgiving in deep, devoted, and fulfilling relationships. Forgiveness does not mean forgetting, nor does it absolve or justify misconduct (Nelson, 1992; Rackley, 1993; Roloff & Janiszewski, 1989; Woodman, 1991). Although it might help restore relationships, forgiving someone does not mean that you have to apologize to them or release them from responsibility for their actions.

The concept of well-being is dynamic and encompasses social, behavioral, and health factors. Living a happy life greatly depends on having a sense of well-being. The totality of feeling happy both mentally and physically is known as psychological well-being. It is jeopardized, nevertheless, when it disrupts everyday functioning and interacts with unpleasant feelings. This has drawn a lot of attention with a particular emphasis on the development of the individual as a whole. A component that prioritizes life satisfaction as the primary metric is psychological well-being (Epstein, 1992; Ingram & Wisnicki, 1988; Martin & Rubin, 1995; Stephens et al., 1999). The absence of satisfaction creates a susceptible environment to possible future hardships. By promoting the positivity is a long-term rehabilitation while minimizing the negativity Ryff & Singer (1996).

Happiness is only one aspect of the idea of well-being. As opposed to having a limited emphasis, a good life encompasses all the different aspects of well-being, including; Ryff (1989a) self-compassion, personal development, the meaning of existence, favorable interactions with other people, Competence of surroundings and Autonomy. When it comes to establishing objectives in life morals, and mission youth mental health is a crucial stage in human development. It establishes a solid basis for future characteristics. Therefore, psychological well-being in young adults is characterized by contentment with life and an awareness that a high level of pleasant emotions is associated with excellent academic performance, social abilities, assistance, and physical health.

Hostility and aggression often manifest as silent, seemingly unintentional acts or as cold-blooded, directed against the victim. Incentives energies aggressive behavior, which is intended to do bodily injury to oneself or others Kanwal & Naqvi (2021). Among the behaviors that can have detrimental psychological impacts on people include verbal abuse, coercion, intimidation, and damaging management techniques. The inability to fulfill some intensely narcissistic desires might be emotionally expressed as aggression. Most of the time, it is a reaction to different difficulties or stressful situations that most individuals probably encounter during their lifetimes, even though it can result in severe life-altering stress Reeve et al. (2010). Furthermore, it is important to avoid exaggeration that how these activities affect people's enjoyment, sense of value, and social standing Kirkbir (2020).

Forgiveness is letting go of the bad feelings that come from treating someone badly. Research showed that self-control and social support could predict young adult's psychological well-being Lestari & Agung (2016). Forgiveness is a vital healing mechanism that helps people get over feelings of loss, sadness, unfairness, and guilt in order to achieve psychological wellness. Forgiveness can be both a social unit and

a personality feature that reflects a person's psychological state following unfavourable treatment. One definition of forgiveness is a collection of motivations to reduce retaliation, foster good deeds, and create a more positive atmosphere Pareek et al. (2016). The process of psychological recovery requires forgiveness, and research indicates that it is a source of human asset that allows people to preserve or improve their psychological health (Coyle & Enright, 1997; Freedman & Enright, 1996; Hebl & Enright, 1993; Hope, 1987).

According to the 2011 census, there were 365 million youths in India between the ages of 10 and 24 and according to the UN World Population Report (2022, 2023), there was 379 million youth with aggressive behavior. India has the highest rate of youth depression and aggression. According to a WHO report, depression affects one in three people. According to this study, students who practice forgiveness report feeling happier and more cheerful having decreased levels of anxiety, despair, and rage. The idea of psychological well-being explains why and how people can take charge of their lives and behaviors. These days, depression is a growing reason for concern. Students attending college are particularly vulnerable and deal with issues including relationships, academics, parental neglect, societal pressure. After several studies have been cited, it shows that this research has potential to be explored further.

Research on day scholars and hostelers from university young adults' mental health, psychological well-being, and forgiveness is scarce. As a result, there is a significant research deficit that requires attention. Helping university-bound students deal with the negative effects that the world has on them and lead to aggression and depression is crucial. Therefore, it is central to address youth issues because if they are safe, so the future is harmless.

There is an immediate relation between forgiveness and psychological well-being but less is known of this relationship among university-level students of Quetta Balochistan (both male and female). This will broaden our understanding of forgiveness and psychological well-being and how it can bring happiness and life satisfaction. We also evaluate how forgiveness brings a peaceful environment and positive feelings toward a transgressed person.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The goal of the study is to determine how forgiveness affects young adult's psychological well-being Wulandari & Megawati (2020). According to earlier theoretical and empirical research, forgiveness can help people feel better Berry et al. (2001). Many health-related problems and medical disorders have been greatly impacted by forgiveness. While talking about the hidden impact of forgiveness on health, both direct and indirect consequences are identified Worthington et al. (2007).

In an experimental study on adults, Karremans et al. (2003) altered forgiveness and assessed how it affect wellbeing. The findings show a connection between forgiveness in partnerships with high interpersonal commitment and high self-esteem, good feelings, reduced negative emotions, and life satisfaction. The study also shows that tension and dissatisfaction result from an unwillingness to forgive in these kinds of relationships, this could serve as a buffer between remorse and rage. Similarly, improving interpersonal interactions between the forgiver and the offender have been linked to forgiveness in various cross-sectional and longitudinal research . Adolescents' well-being enhances if they are able to forgive themselves, other people, or circumstances. Likewise, forgiveness has been linked to wellbeing in the current study McCullough (2000). Forgiveness can be conceptualized as a positive societal shift in feelings, attitudes, or actions toward other people McCullough & Witvliet (2002). Such modifications could involve

recognizing and embracing intense feelings like rage, letting go of unmet needs, changing one's perspective on other people, growing empathetic toward them, and creating a new narrative about the circumstances Malcom & Greenberg (2000). These beneficial modifications could lead to a rise in wellbeing.

A study conducted of 435 young adults, 325 of them were female and the findings showed that while self-forgiveness and aggression are adversely significant and there is a positive and substantial association between self-forgiveness and life gratification. In addition to its obvious benefits, forgiving has a good correlation with mental health and support individuals reestablish close associations Karremans et al. (2003).

The investigation of psychological health and forgiveness showed that a total of 150 samples 71 boys and 79 females were collected from St. Andrews College in Gorakhpur. The findings demonstrated the favorable and significant correlation between self-forgiveness and psychological well-being and its components, including autonomy, personal development, healthy interpersonal relationships, and life purpose.

It has been shown that forgiveness helps people deal with their anger and other negative feelings associated to transgressions, which has several positive effects on their mental and physical health (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2015; Lawler et al., 2005; Lee & Enright, 2019; L. Toussaint et al., 2015; Worthington & Scherer, 2004). If the criminal agrees and apologizes, it may allow for a reconciliation and give forgivers the motivation and determination to pursue justice for the unfairness they have endured in the past Enright (2001). Forgiveness programs have had a significant impact on lowering anger and raising hope and confidence and also improves the psychological well-being of adult and adolescent populations who have been victims of violence and interpersonal trauma. The mediating functions of frustration and courage between forgiveness and other psychological outcomes are important psychological advantages towards forgiveness (Baskin & Enright, 2004; Wade et al., 2014).

The distinctive educational experience and culturally sensitive outcomes effects the university students and young adults coping mechanisms and mental health. There were 98 Latin undergraduates in the sample. The study found that the cultural contiguity scale and the psychological well-being short scale differed significantly Gloria et al. (2005). Two other investigations were carried out as part of a systematic investigation to examine the connection between wellbeing and divine pardon. Divine forgiveness and anxiety were found to be negatively correlated in the first study, which involved 574 people and was determined by perspective towards God. In the second investigation, which was repeated with 430 participants, divine forgiveness and life satisfaction were found to be positively correlated. Additionally, the study found that these interactions were mediated by both favorable and unfavorable assessments of one's relationship with God Fincham & May (2024)

Positive psychological and physical effects of forgiveness are observed in people Pareek et al. (2016). It was concluded from a qualitative study that included in-depth interviews with ten men and twenty women that frequent forgiveness practice improves subjective well-being, happiness, and quality of life Gull & Rana (2013). Women who are more forgiving are more likely to show signs of better psychological health. It has been discovered that forgiveness influences university students' subjective well-being both directly and indirectly through social support, appreciation, interpersonal satisfaction, and other associated aspects Aricioglu (2016). Forgiveness for a variety of interpersonal transgressions in real life may be useful in assessing psychological health, particularly in the spiritual community Akhtar et al. (2017). There is shown to be a greater correlation between forgiveness and psychological well-being among those who were more devoted to their spouses, people who forgive those who have wronged them are

more amiable and emotionally stable (Bono et al., 2008; McCullough, 2000). Forgiveness and gratefulness are positively connected with well-being and are mediated by effect and beliefs L. Toussaint & Friedman (2009). According to W. S. Tse & Yip (2009), forgiveness has a good correlation with psychological health and interpersonal adjustment Harris et al. (2007) and adversely linked to anxiety and depression Maltby et al. (2004).

A meta-analysis of forgiveness therapies conducted to discover that the lower level of aggression, stress, anxiety, and depression improves subjective well-being (Lundahl et al., 2008; Wade et al., 2014) and the ability of forgiveness to lessen resentment and increase optimism are empirically studied Freedman & Enright (1996). The other elements such as spiritual well-being, may have an impact on university students' mental health. The research revealed a negative correlation between university students' spiritual well-being and violence Papazisis et al. (2014). One of the essential human elements that diminishes suffering, improves coping, and supports mental health is spiritual well-being Brown et al. (2013).

METHODOLOGY

This research study was completed through a correlation research design, which permits to find out the relationship between Forgiveness, Psychological Well-Being and Aggression in order to evaluate how they are correlated with each other. Three scales questionnaires "Scale of Psychological Well-Being", "Heartland Forgiveness Scale", "Aggression Scale", consent form and demographic sheet were used. Scale of Psychological Well-Being was developed by Ryff (1989b) to assess the psychological well-being of the individual. It consists of 18 items

Heartland Forgiveness Scale (HFS)

Thompson et al. (2005) has presented the "Heartland Forgiveness Scale" (HFS) is an 18-item self-report questionnaire that assesses a person's attitudes towards forgiveness, or their overall tendency to be forgiving, as opposed to their forgiveness towards particular incident or individual. Each of its three subscales has six items: forgiveness of self, forgiveness of others, and forgiveness of the situation. It consists of a 7-point Likert scale.

The Aggression Scale (AS)

Aggression scale was used to assess aggression among students. The self-report measures aggression scale developed by Pamela Orpinas & Frankowski (2001) for the purpose of what you actually did during the last 7 days. It contains 11 items and 7 points Likert scale 0. times to 6 or more times. It contains .80 reliability level.

Participants and Procedures

Before conducting the main study, permission from the psychology department was taken. The 200 sample of male and female students from arts and science department was taken randomly each 5th student was listed for the purpose of data collection. Before handing over the questionnaire, the participants were briefed regarding the research purpose, consent was taken from the students and demographic sheet was given to be filled prior to the research scales. Privacy and confidentiality were assured. After collecting data, the data was analyzed through SPSS version 23.0. The research findings provided an understanding that by forgiveness the subjective well-being will be enhanced.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The current study's goal was to look into the connection between forgiveness, psychological health and aggression among enrolled young adults at university of Balochistan. Additionally, the benefits of forgiveness on psychological health were investigated. Inferential statistical analysis was applied to achieve the goal. Analysis in the current study includes Reliability Coefficient, Pearson Product Movement Correlation (PPMC), and Independent-sample t-test.

Table 1

Reliability Coefficient for score of participants on SPWB, HFS and TAS (N=200)

Ser no	Scales	A	K	M	SD	Range	Med
1	SPWB	.80	18	70.0	2.03	0-32	11
2	HFS	.86	18	50.43	11.13	18-72	49
3	TAS	.80	11	15.86	9.47	6-69	39

Note. SPWB= Scale of psychological well-being, HSF= Heartland Forgiveness Scale, TAS= The aggression scale
Med= Median, K= Number of items, a= Cronbach's Alpha, M= Mean, SD= Standard Deviation

Table 1 showed psychometric properties, descriptive statistics and reliability coefficients of Scale of psychological well-being-SPWB, Heartland Forgiveness Scale- HSF, The Aggression scale-TAS. The symbol k indicated the number of items in each scale respectively while the symbol α represents the reliability coefficient commonly known as Cronbach's alpha. The reliability analysis indicated that reliability coefficients of all major scales were up to the marks i.e. all of them were greater than the benchmark of .50. The results showed that the reliability coefficients of Scale of psychological well-being-SPWB, and The Aggression Scale-TAS is .80 and Heartland Forgiveness Scale- HSF shows .86 respectively. Hence, the scales had good and satisfactory reliabilities.

Table 2

Correlation Coefficient for the participants score on SPWB, HFS and TAS (N=200)

Ser no	Scale	N	M	SD	1	2	3
1	PWB	200	.70	2.03	-		
2	HFS	200	50.43	11.13	.329**	-	
3	TAS	200	15.86	9.47		-.66**	-

Note. SPWB= Scale of psychological well-being, HSF= Heartland Forgiveness Scale, TAS= The aggression scale
n=total number, M= Mean, SD= Standard Deviation

The table shows that there is a significant positive correlation between the Scale of psychological well-being, Heartland Forgiveness Scale ($r=.329, p>0.05$) and negative correlation between Scale of psychological well-being and The aggression scale ($r=-.66, p>0.05$). the result is non-significant.

Table 3

Independent Sample t-test showing gender differences in study variables (N=200)

Scales	Male (n=100)		Female (n=100)		T	P	95% CI		Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD			LL	UL	
PWB	70.0	2.03	67.0	8.03	3.46	.000	5.62	.80	0.512
HFS	49.73	11.02	50.43	11.13	1.18	.000	-3.30	4.70	0.063
TAS	28.89	5.21	15.86	9.47	1.42	.66	1.70	2.06	1.70

Note. SPWB= Scale of psychological well-being, HSF= Heartland Forgiveness Scale, TAS= The aggression scale

The table shows the differences in mean and standard deviation of men and women on the score of Scale of psychological well-being-SPWB, Heartland Forgiveness Scale- HSF, The aggression scale-TAS (N=200). The result indicates that there are differences in mean and standard deviation on the score of SPWB, HSF and TAS among men and women. The mean difference between men and women is considered as significant on the level of .001 by the scale of psychological well-being-SPWB, and Heartland Forgiveness Scale- HSF and The aggression scale-TAS shows a non-significant result.

The recognition of forgiving someone is a way to disrupt the blame cycle. Confronting someone is not necessary in order to forgive them. It can also be carried out internally. It somehow has a connection to people's general well-being. It causes a person to become calm and improve their both physical and emotional well-being. We tend to underestimate the act of forgiveness. We do carry the suffering with us, which is frequently seen to be a sign of aggression. People with strong psychological well-being are also thought to have less symptoms of aggression. However, it cannot be said to be totally accurate. A more optimistic perspective of the surroundings and the world around us can be fostered by concentrating more on the here and now, forgiving others, and forgetting past mistakes.

The present study aimed to evaluate forgiveness, psychological well-being, and aggression among young adults. The sample of 200 was selected and consideration was given to the differences that occurs due to differences in variables. Following the collection of demographic information, the forgiveness, psychological well-being, and aggression scales were administered. The result showed that all the variables of aggression, psychological well-being and forgiveness were accepted. Aggression is negatively correlated to forgiveness, and psychological well-being is positively correlated with forgiveness.

A study was carried out to assess the connection among young adults from university of Balochistan psychological well-being, anxiety, aggression and depression. The findings showed a negative correlation between aggression and psychological well-being. Future research is advised to explore the relationship between mood state and unpleasant life events and psychological well-being Liu et al. (2009). The assessment of hostility was observed in forgiveness that went beyond the impact of intimacy and transgression. According to the findings of 119 Chinese university students, aggressive people were less likely than normal people to forgive a little incident. As a result, it indicates that the two variables have a

negative association M. C. Tse & Cheng (2006). The study demonstrated a good and significant association between psychological well-being and forgiveness. Indicating a person higher on forgiveness will be higher on psychological well-being. There exists a partly significant difference between men and women about forgiveness, psychological well-being, and aggression. As mean for both psychological well-being and aggression is higher for men than for women. The mean for forgiveness is slightly superior in women than for men.

Further, a study examines the relationship between forgiveness, psychological health and physiological parameters among people with cardiovascular functioning. It was observed that individuals higher on forgiveness have lower levels of cardiovascular disease Friedberg et al. (2009). The literature demonstrates that there are occasions in which challenging revenge is advantageous to one's health and can be confirmed to be constructive and pro-social Ysseldyk (2005). Typically, seeking revenge serves a variety of purposes, including boosting the victim's self-esteem, preventing further injustice, and deterring future criminals from doing the same crime McCullough (2000). Giving tit for tat, a figurative action that aims to encourage the offender that a specific behavior will not be accepted, children must be taught, meanwhile, that retaliation is appropriate in certain circumstances but not in others, and that there is a distinction between maladaptive and adaptive retaliation. Adaptive retaliation serves a protective purpose, the psychological equilibrium is restored, self-esteem is preserved and it is not harmful. Rather, it promotes advancement, allows for acceptance and ego-stability, and gradually diminishes. Maladaptive retaliation, on the other hand, results in mass murder and homicide.

The most recent results have added to the body of literature by offering insightful information about the behavior of Pakistani adolescents and young adults and guidance for creating interventions that help young people distinguish between constructive and destructive conflict resolution techniques.

CONCLUSION

The study concentrated on the connection between young adults and their psychological health, forgiveness, and violence. One hundred males and one hundred female students made up the sample of 200 participants. According to the study, forgiveness and psychological health are significantly positively correlated. It was also evident that there is a strong negative association between aggression and forgiveness. Additionally, it has been noted that forgiveness and psychological health are related. The current study presented gender differences while practicing forgiveness, the state of psychological well-being and level of aggression is also shown different in men and women.

Forgiveness emerges as a transformative force for promoting psychological well-being and resilience in adolescents. By embracing forgiveness, adolescents can navigate interpersonal conflicts, cope with emotional distress, and cultivate meaningful connections with others. As educators, parents, and mental health professionals, it is essential to recognize the pivotal role of forgiveness in adolescent development and to integrate forgiveness-promoting practices into interventions and support frameworks. By fostering forgiveness skills and creating environments conducive to healing and reconciliation, we can empower adolescents to thrive emotionally, socially, and academically, laying the foundation for a brighter and more compassionate future. According to the study, hostility and forgiveness are negatively correlated. Maladaptive habits can be dangerous in the future and have negative effects if they are consistently promoted.

As a result, forgiveness stops people from appreciating actions that could result in mass murder or homicide.

RECOMMENDATION

- To comprehend the adolescent perspective, experimental and qualitative research should be carried out in Pakistan.
- A more comprehensive understanding of this idea is desperately needed. People with aggressive thoughts and feelings have greater mental health issues.
- Adolescents need regular awareness campaigns to encourage a good and healthy attitude in order to enhance their wellbeing.

Since morally pure political leaders can help to uphold national norms for governance and civilized conduct, there should be policies or educational initiatives to support the moral development of political leaders.

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