

Research Paper

## Relationship between Empathy and Forgiveness with Resilience among Hindu, Muslim and Christian College Students

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### ABSTRACT

**Purpose:** The aim of the present research is to find out the essential relationship and interconnectedness with different cultural values among Hindu, Muslim and Christian college students. Culture and religions that foster strong faith develops an interconnected network of relations among the followers. A system of culture and religion provides a good platform for developing empathy and forgiveness which will improve resilience in an individual. **Method:** The present study adopted Within Group (Correlation) and Between Group (Comparison) research design. The study is conducted among 200 college students (Hindu = 65, Christian = 75 & Muslim = 60) who were selected through convenient sampling method. The variables Empathy, Forgiveness and Resilience were measured by using the Toronto Empathy Questionnaire (Spreng et al, 2009), Forgiveness Scale (Rye et al, 2001) and The Brief Resilience Scale (Smith et al, 2008) respectively. The data is analysed by using Correlation Coefficient Analysis and Analysis for group comparison. **Conclusion:** The research seems to be successful in finding out of the role of Empathy, Forgiveness on Resilience of different cultural values among college students.

**Keywords:** Empathy, Forgiveness, Resilience, Culture, Gender

The relationship between religious principles with respectful genuineness and culture has long been intensely debated ever since the world has evolved. The cultural elements must not be confused with the religious essentials (Baumard, N., & Boyer, P. 2013). Even then one may ask, 'Does religion make one more value oriented? Is it necessary for a superior living? Do these help youth in different cultures especially Hindu, Muslim and Christian college students to develop empathy, forgiveness and resilience? These questions should baffle all rational populace in general and college students in meticulous. Here the present investigation focuses the essential relationship and interconnectedness with different cultural values among college students. In the developing world the student suicide rates and acts of violence involving youth hit the headlines on a daily basis. The values and teachings of religion passed over generations are embedded in the rich traditions and diverse culture of our

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country. Our forefathers were the experts in guiding us on how we can live together in harmony despite the differences, as a united nation.

Religion is shaped and constrained by a finite but disparate set of evolved predispositions and values—what we might call “religious basics.” These foundations comprise a set of evolved domain-specific systems, together with the intuitions and predispositions that those systems instil (Baumard & Boyer, 2013). Religion can be a great source of growth, strength, solidarity and resilience at individual and community level. It involves beliefs and practices related to some divine form. Religious pathways enables individuals to meet the psychological ends like - social interaction, self-development, and intimacy, purpose of one’s life, moral ethics and closeness to god. It improves quality of life and support at times of crisis. This is an essential component of success of any community. Religion also helps in mitigating the harmful effects of stress. Moral code of all major religions encourage empathy, forgiveness, kindness, compassion, truthfulness, self-control and it discourages anger, pride, rage and envy among its followers. Religious schools strictly monitor in promoting positive virtues like empathy, forgiveness and resilience from our childhood itself. Religiosity is an important factor in building of these virtues.

The research conducted by Fox and Thomas (2008) found that religiosity is positively correlated with forgiveness. Among religious groups, religiosity was a stronger determinant of forgiveness than the specific religion an individual was affiliated with. Hardy et.al, (2012) conducted a study on Religiosity and adolescent empathy and aggression: The mediating role of moral identity. The study found indirect relationships between religious commitment and aggression and empathy by way of moral identity. Religious commitment was also directly related to empathy.

Behnam, Narges & Farideh, (2014), conducted a research to explore the relationship between religiosity and resilience in Secondary and High school students in Shiraz found that religiosity can promote students’ resilience. Emotional dimension in boys, emotional and consequential dimensions in girls were the significant dimensions of religiosity in predicting students’ resilience (Behnam, Narges & Farideh, 2014).

### ***Empathy:***

In Christian literature it is said, be happy with those who are happy, and weep with those who weep. The Islamic teachings advise “None of you will have faith till he wishes for his (Muslim) brother what he likes for himself.” (Al-Bukhari) .This hadith necessitates cognitive empathy. According to the vedic knowledge ‘Yogi is the best who puts himself in the place of others at all times and seeing his own identity with them, he is able to experience their pain and pleasure’

### ***Forgiveness:***

The Christian teachings advise ‘Without forgiveness, our growth and maturity with Christ, and our integrity with others, cannot be built...We forgive because God has forgiven us’ (Psalm 32; Matthew 18:21-35). From Islamic texts Allah is Al-Ghaffur "The Oft-Forgiving", Forgiveness is honour, raises the merit of the forgiver in the eyes of Allah, and enables a forgiver to enter paradise. In Hindu literature ‘Forgiveness is virtue, is sacrifice, is the Vedas, is the Shruti, is asceticism, is holiness and by forgiveness is it that the universe is held together.’ (Mahabharata)

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### ***Resilience***

From the Christian texts 'Jesus himself assures his followers that "in the world you have tribulation, but take courage, I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). In Islam it is said 'Each calamity has the potential to cause a black spot in your heart to form. By remaining patient through these hard times, you'll pull through with the help of Allah.' "Verily, with every difficulty there is relief (Qur'an 94:5-6). The Hindu teachings say "They that read these verses about the overcoming of difficulties, which recite them to others, and that of speak of them unto Brahmanas, succeed in overcoming all difficulties. I have now, O sinless one, told thee all those acts by which men may overcome all difficulties both here and hereafter"

The correlational study by Broyles, (2005) investigated how psychological resilience might be associated with forgiveness in older adults. The analyses indicated a low, but statistically significant correlation between resilience and forgiveness, as forgiveness increased, resilience tended to increase somewhat. Age was not found to be significantly associated with either resilience or forgiveness in bivariate correlations, but did prove significant when in combination with other variables.

Anderson, (2006), conducted research to investigate whether certain adolescent resiliencies significantly related to positive or negative affective, behavioural, or cognitive levels of forgiveness and certain types of anger expression in adolescents. The results showed that resilience was significantly correlated with forgiveness as well as anger. The data revealed that age and gender has no significant affect on anger expression.

The research conducted by Toussaint & Webb (2010), to examine and describe the gender differences in the relationship between empathy and forgiveness reveals that women were more empathic than men, but no gender difference was apparent for forgiveness. However, the association between empathy and forgiveness did differ by gender. Empathy was associated with forgiveness in men, but not in women.

### ***Theoretical Framework:***

According to resiliency theory (Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005) promotive factors like positive contextual, social and individual variables operate in opposition to risk factors, and help youth overcome negative effects of risk exposure. This theory is taken as the theoretical frame work of the present investigation supposing religion, religious teachings and values promotes virtues like empathy and forgiveness which might be related to the resilience of individuals.

### ***Objectives:***

- (1) To find out the significant relationship of empathy and forgiveness with resilience among college students belong to Hindu, Muslim and Christian communities.
- (2) To find out the significant differences on empathy, forgiveness and resilience among college students belong to Hindu, Muslim and Christian communities.

### ***Hypotheses:***

- H0.1. There will not be significant relationship of empathy and forgiveness with resilience among college students belong to Hindu, Muslim and Christian communities
- H0.2. There will not be significant differences on empathy, forgiveness and resilience among college students belong to Hindu, Muslim and Christian communities.

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### **METHOD**

*The methodological considerations of the present investigations are the following.*

#### **Research design:**

The present study adopted Within Group (Correlation) and Between Group (Comparison) research design.

#### **Population:**

The population of present investigation is college Students. The population consists of 65 Hindu, 75 Christian and 60 Muslim college students. The sample was collected by using convenient sampling method.

- **Inclusion Criteria:** College students who were between 18 – 24years
- **Exclusion Criteria:** College students who were not willing to participate in this study and who were above 24 years

#### **Operation definitions:**

Empathy is operationally defined as the capacity to think and feel oneself in to the inner life of another person. (Kohut, 1984). Forgiveness is defined as, a willful process in which the forgiver chooses not to retaliate but rather respond to the offender in a loving way (Studzinski, 1986). Psychological resilience has been characterised by the ability to bounce back from negative emotional experiences and by flexible adaptation to the changing demands of stressful experiences (Tugad & Fredrickson, 2004).

#### **Tools:**

The variables of the present investigation were measured by using the following tools.

1. **Socio demographic data sheet.**  
It includes the demographic details of a person such as name, gender, age, religion, education.
2. **Toronto Empathy Questionnaire (Spreng et al., 2009).**  
The TEQ is a 16 item scale which includes a wide range of attributes associated with the theoretical facets of empathy. The affective aspect of empathic responding such as emotional contagion, emotion comprehension, sympathetic physiological arousal and con-specific altruism are represented in TEQ items. Items 1 and 4 target the perception of an emotional state. Item 8 assess emotion comprehension in others and other items address the assessment of emotional states in others.
3. **Forgiveness Scale (Rye et al., 2001).**  
The forgiveness scale is a 15-item Likert-type scale designed to measure forgiveness toward an offender. The forgiveness scale contains two subscales (i.e., Absence of Negative, Presence of Positive). The maximum score possible for Absence of Negative subscale is 50 and the minimum score possible is 10. The maximum score possible for Presence of Positive subscale is 25 and minimum score possible is 5. The highest score indicate high level of forgiveness towards the wrongdoer. The lowest score indicate low level of forgiveness towards the wrongdoer.
4. **Brief Resilience Scale (Smith et al., 2008)**  
Brief resilience scale (BRS) is a six – item scale designed to assess the ability to bounce back. The maximum score possible for Brief Resilience Scale is 30 and minimum score possible is 6. The highest score indicate high level of resilience and lowest score indicate low level of resilience.

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### *Statistical analysis and Techniques:*

The data was analysed by using the following statistical techniques.

- Correlation Coefficient analysis,
- Regression Analysis,
- Analysis for group comparison.

### **RESULT AND DISCUSSION:**

*Table 1: shows the descriptive statistics of the samples taken for the study.*

Category		Total
Hindu college students	65	200
Muslim college students	60	
Christian college students	75	

The above Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics of the samples collected for the research. The total data collected from the college students constitutes 200 among which Hindu students are 65, Muslims students are 60 and Christian Students are 75 respectively.

*Table 2: shows the relationship between empathy and forgiveness with resilience among college students.*

Variables		Resilience
Empathy	<i>r</i>	-0.148*
	<i>Sig.</i>	0.037
	<i>N</i>	222
Forgiveness Absence of Negative	<i>r</i>	-0.340**
	<i>Sig.</i>	0.000
	<i>N</i>	222
Forgiveness Presence of Positive	<i>r</i>	0.045
	<i>Sig.</i>	0.532
	<i>N</i>	222

$P < 0.05^*$ ,  $p < 0.01^{**}$

Table 2 indicates that empathy is significantly correlated with resilience ( $r = -1.48$ ,  $p = .037$ ), The Forgiveness absence of negative is highly significantly correlated with Resilience ( $r = -3.40$ ,  $p = .000$ ) and the forgiveness presence of positive is not significantly correlated with Resilience ( $r = .045$ ,  $p = .532$ ).

*Table 3: Relationship between Empathy and Forgiveness with Resilience among Hindu, Christian & Muslim College students.*

Religion	Variables		Resilience
<b>Hindu</b>	Empathy	<i>r</i>	-0.054
	Forgiveness Absence of Negative	<i>r</i>	-0.166
	Forgiveness Presence of Positive	<i>r</i>	-0.008
<b>Christian</b>	Empathy	<i>r</i>	-0.195
	Forgiveness Absence of Negative	<i>r</i>	-0.382**
	Forgiveness Presence of Positive	<i>r</i>	0.118
<b>Muslim</b>	Empathy	<i>r</i>	0-.255
	Forgiveness Absence of Negative	<i>r</i>	0-.416*
	Forgiveness Presence of Positive	<i>r</i>	0-.010

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

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Table 3 indicates that among Hindu college students, Empathy is not significantly related with resilience ( $r = -.054$ ), The Forgiveness Absence of Negative is not significantly related with resilience ( $r = -.17$ ) and The Forgiveness Presence of Positive is not significantly related with resilience ( $r = -.008$ ). Among Christian, The Forgiveness Absence of Negative is highly significantly correlated with Resilience ( $r = -.382$ ), but not with Empathy ( $r = -.195$ ) and The Forgiveness Presence of Positive ( $r = .118$ ). Among Muslim, The Forgiveness Absence of Negative is significantly correlated with Resilience ( $r = -.416$ ) but not with Empathy ( $r = -.255$ ) and The Forgiveness Presence of Positive ( $r = -.010$ ).

**Table 4: Summary of Regression Analysis predicted Resilience by Absence of Negative aspect of Forgiveness among Young adult belong to Christians and Muslim.**

Religion	B	S.E	$\beta$	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	F	Sig.
Christian	-.280	.069	-.382	.146	.137	16.223	.000
Muslim	-.348	.130	-.416	.173	.149	7.134	.012

Table 4 indicates that Among Young Adults belong to Christianity Absence of Negative of Forgiveness predicts 14% of variance in their Resilience, since  $\beta = -0.382$ ,  $F = 16.223$ ,  $P = 0.000$ . Among Young Adults belong to Islam Absence of Negative of Forgiveness predicts 17% of variance in their Resilience, since  $\beta = -.416$ ,  $F = 7.134$ ,  $p = .012$ .

**Table 5: Summary of descriptive statistics and ANOVA analysis comparing Empathy among College Students belong Hindu, Christianity and Muslim**

Religion	N	Mean	SD	F	Sig.
Hindu	65	41.32	8.172	.38	.700
Christian	75	41.60	6.705		
Muslim	60	40.42	6.371		
Total	200	41.29	7.141		

Table 5 indicates that there is no significant difference of empathy ( $F = .38$ ,  $sig = .700$ ) among Hindu, Muslim & Christian college students.

**Table 6: Summary of descriptive statistics and ANOVA analysis comparing Forgiveness Absence of negative among College Students belong Hindu, Christian and Muslim**

Religion	N	Mean	SD	F	Sig.
Hindu	65	29.03	4.323	4.358	.014
Christian	75	30.87	4.568		
Muslim	60	31.22	3.855		
Total	200	30.33	4.441		

Table 6 shows that there is a significant difference of The Forgiveness Absence of Negative ( $F = 4.358$ ,  $sig = .014$ ) among Hindu, Muslim & Christian college students

**Table 7: Summary of Post Hoc Test of ANOVA comparing the Absence of Negative dimension of Forgiveness among Hindu, Christian and Muslim College Students.**

Religion	Religion	Mean Difference	Sig.
Hindu	Christian	-1.835	.025
	Muslim	-2.191	.044
Christian	Hindu	1.835	.025
	Muslim	-.356	.908
Muslim	Hindu	2.191	.044
	Christian	.356	.908

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Table 7 indicates that there is a significant difference of The Forgiveness Absence of Negative among Hindu and Christian College Students ( $p=.025$ ) and also among Hindu and Muslim College Students ( $p=.044$ ).

**Table 8: Summary of descriptive statistics and ANOVA analysis comparing Forgiveness Presence of Positive among College Students belong Hinduism, Christianity and Islam**

Religion	N	Mean	SD	F	Sig.
Hindu	65	14.97	3.072	2.202	.113
Christian	75	15.99	3.377		
Muslim	60	15.28	2.480		
Total	200	15.53	3.152		

Table 8 indicates that there is no significant difference of The Forgiveness Presence of Positive ( $F=2.202$ ,  $sig=.113$ ) among Hindu, Muslim & Christian college students

**Table 9: Summary of descriptive statistics and ANOVA analysis comparing Resilience among College Students belong Hindu, Christian and Muslim**

Religion	N	Mean	SD	F	Sig.
Hindu	65	18.08	3.079	2.097	.126
Christian	75	17.18	3.348		
Muslim	60	16.89	3.223		
Total	200	17.4s2	3.257		

Table 9 indicates that there is no significant difference of Resilience ( $F=2.097$ ,  $sig=.126$ ) among Hindu, Muslim & Christian college students.

## DISCUSSION

The results of present investigation seem to be successful in finding out the relationship of empathy and forgiveness with resilience among college students belong to Hindu, Muslim and Christian communities. Moreover, the current research is also booming in bringing to light the difference among college students belong to Hindu, Muslim and Christian communities on empathy, forgiveness and resilience. Besides, The study focused on college students belong to Hindu, Muslim and Christian communities who are in any society the energy source of in up building the strength of that society. For this one need to inflate value oriented life style which unites each individual. Values and strengths embedded in our religion is a great asset of our culture (Zimmerman & Arun kumar, 1994). The young adult years can be considered as a time of adversity which is associated with a moderate amount of stress. This transition period in young adult's life requires them to cope with various adjustments such as social, psychological, behavioural, emotional and financial Therefore a deeper understanding regarding the variables involved in opposition of risk factors appears to be crucial for college students (Benson, J., & Elder, G. H., Jr., 2011).

The study examined the relationship of empathy and forgiveness with resilience among college students belong to Hindu, Muslim and Christian communities. The results indicated that in contrast with the null hypothesis there is a significant relationship of Empathy and Forgiveness with Resilience among college students. The young adult's perceived moderate level of empathy, forgiveness and resilience among themselves. This implies that youth acknowledges that these constructs are relevant in their lives and will help them in enhancing

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their overall quality of life (Mark, L Savickas & Erik, J. Profeli.2012). The results of correlation show that there is a significant negative relationship between empathy and resilience. It reveals the identification with others. That is to say, if state of being too sensitive to others experiences that we become overwhelmed by their suffering and we begin to suffer ourselves. It encourages us to move beyond self-centredness and entering the mind-space of others. Besides, empathy could be said as one of the most important and beneficial human qualities (Taylor S., 2016).

We recoil from other's experience of suffering in the same way we recoil from our own suffering. We often feel a strong impulse to *relieve* the suffering of others, so as we ruminate, the experiences will wound us more. Thus we began to feel more resentment and anger. Latching on to and identifying with the experience of another person brings most of the pain and this will have a negative impact on our ability to cope up with traumatic and stressful situations.

The result of correlation also indicates that there is a significant negative relationship between the forgiveness absence of negative and resilience. Several researches indicate that resilient individuals have optimistic and energetic approaches to life. Those who experience positive emotions and control negative feelings up to a certain extend amidst of stress are able to benefit from their broadened mind sets and successfully cope up from their negative experiences. Reducing negative feelings towards those who harmed us can sometimes make us emotionally strong which may be helpful in improving our ability to cope up with stressful situations.

The study also attempted to find out the difference among college students who belong to these religious communities on empathy, forgiveness and resilience. The results indicated that there is a significant difference of the forgiveness absence of negative among Hindu, Muslim & Christian college students, but there was no significant difference on Empathy, The Forgiveness Presence of Positive and Resilience. This may be due to the equal exposure to other religions in schools and colleges.

### CONCLUSION

- The findings show that college students give importance to empathy, forgiveness and resilience which will help them in enhancing their overall quality of life.
- The college students are able to build up the cultural values irrespective of their religion.
- A state of being too sensitive to other's experiences that we become overwhelmed by their suffering and we begin to suffer ourselves.

### RECOMMENDATIONS / IMPLICATIONS

- The study recommends the importance of generating empathy and forgiveness among college students to become resilient.
- Knowledge, values and morals embedded in the religious teaching must be imparted to the future generations.
- The role of religion has to be studied in detail by researchers in the field of mental health.

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- The religious organizations, families, NGO, social workers should undertake actions that promote the values of empathy, resilience and forgiveness through the teachings of religion
- Religious values and not religious fanaticism must be promoted.

### **LIMITATIONS:**

- Convenient sampling method was used for the study
- For generalization of the study, sample size could have been larger.
- An experimental study could have been used.

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### **Conflict of Interest**

The authors carefully declare this paper to bear not conflict of interests

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