

Correlational Study of Forgiveness with Life Satisfaction and Self-Esteem Among College Students

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ABSTRACT

Forgiveness is the transition of an individual's response to a transgression or an offense from negative response to positive or at least neutral response. The research had been conducted to study the correlation between forgiveness and life satisfaction and forgiveness and self-esteem of undergraduate and postgraduate college students between the age range of 18 to 25 years, belonging to the streams of art, science and commerce. The research focuses on studying dispositional forgiveness and its sub dimensions: forgiveness of self, forgiveness of others and forgiveness of situations in relation to life satisfaction and self-esteem. The data for measuring forgiveness was collected using the heartland forgiveness scale (HFS), whereas life satisfaction and self-esteem were measured using the satisfaction with life scale (SWLS) and Rosenberg self-esteem scale respectively. A total of 60 students (M=15; F=45) were selected as sample participants for the study. The results obtained using statistical analysis revealed that forgiveness and its dimensions, namely, forgiveness of self, others and situations had a significant positive correlation with life satisfaction and self-esteem of college students. Regression analysis also showed that forgiveness and its dimensions accounted for a significant variance in the levels of life satisfaction and self-esteem of college students.

Keywords: *Forgiveness, Life Satisfaction, Self-Esteem*

The concept of forgiveness as a psychological construct has been neglected for a long period of time. Human beings engage in certain transgressions and offenses that might lead to hurtful and negative emotions in an individual.

Although the importance of forgiveness has been greatly emphasized by philosophy, religions, etc. the current study intends to focus on the psychological aspect of forgiveness. The knowledge regarding the various components from the psychological perspective is not that popular among the masses, hence, this research intends to highlight this particular aspect of forgiveness.

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Received: September 17, 2022; Revision Received: November 30, 2022; Accepted: December 07, 2022

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Correlational Study of Forgiveness with Life Satisfaction and Self-Esteem Among College Students

Conducting a study on the relation of forgiveness with life satisfaction, would be of importance, as life satisfaction as well as self-esteem have been reported as being of great importance for the mental –being of an individual. The relation among these would provide insight about how individuals can have greater life satisfaction as well as self-esteem by practicing intra-personal forgiveness, forgiveness among their relationships as well as forgiveness for the situations that are beyond one's control.

A study conducted by Bintamur, D. (2019) studying the 'Association between Forgiveness and Life Satisfaction' among the total of 167 working young adults (118 females and 49 males) living Jabodetabek region of Indonesia, showed that the higher was one's level of forgiveness, higher was his or her level of life-satisfaction. The result of this study showed that there was a significant positive relationship between life satisfaction and dispositional forgiveness, Where Self-forgiveness and Situation-forgiveness were highly significant with life satisfaction, while others forgiveness was moderately significant with life Satisfaction.

Research conducted by Jyotsana and Devi, (2018), to study the relationship between forgiveness, self-esteem, and subjective well-being among the females of the age range of 20 to 59 years, showed that there was no significant difference among the females of different age groups in the levels of forgiveness and subjective well-being. It was revealed that self-esteem had a positive correlation with subjective well-being. It was also seen that self- esteem correlated positively with the levels of forgiveness i.e., higher an individual's self-esteem higher was his/her level of forgiveness.

Research by Espnes and Moksnes, (2013) was done to study the association of life satisfaction and self-esteem among the Norwegian adolescents between the range ranges of 13 to 18. It was found that Self-esteem positively correlated with life satisfaction, having 24 percent variance in the levels of life satisfaction. However, no difference was found in relation to the effect of gender and self-esteem or age and self-esteem with life satisfaction. The current study focuses on studying the relation of forgiveness with life satisfaction and self-esteem. Forgiveness is a concept that falls under the branch of Positive Psychology. As the field of positive psychology is still young there is less research in this field as compared to some of the other fields of psychology. Previous researchers have reported both life satisfaction as well as self-esteem as being of great importance for the well-being of an individual. Hence, this study would enable the researcher to gather empirical evidence about these variables in relation to each other.

Forgiveness

Enright and human development study group (1991) define forgiveness as, "willingness to abandon one's right to resentment, negative judgement, and indifferent behaviour towards one who unjustly injured us, while fostering the undeserved qualities of compassion, generosity and even love towards him or her."

Robert Enright introduced the 'Triad of forgiveness' in 1996. The 'Triad of forgiveness, consists of self-forgiveness, forgiveness of others and forgiveness of situations.

Self-forgiveness or forgiveness of oneself is the intra personal forgiveness of an individual. It refers to the tendency of an individual to forgive himself or her herself for offenses or behaviours that one commits across variety of circumstances over time that might lead to undesirable consequences.

Correlational Study of Forgiveness with Life Satisfaction and Self-Esteem Among College Students

Forgiveness of others refers to the general tendency for inter personal forgiveness or forgiving another person or persons for any transgression that they might commit. Forgiving another individual involves letting go of the feeling of vengeance or anger towards another person.

Forgiveness of situation refers to the tendency of being forgiving towards the situations beyond an individual's control. Examples of such situations include, illnesses, loss of a loved one, natural disasters such as tsunami, earthquake etc.

Life satisfaction

life satisfaction is the individual's personal and subjective satisfaction with his or her overall life. According to Diener, (1999) life satisfaction is the cognitive process of evaluation of an individual's entire life by himself or herself and it is based upon the comparison between the individual's subjective standards of life and the life that the individual has experienced so far.

Self-esteem

self-esteem can be understood in terms of an individual's sense of personal worth and the favourable or unfavourable attitude that one holds against himself or herself. The term self-esteem was introduced for the first time by William James in the year 1890. He stated self-esteem as being a ratio of successes compared to failures in the areas of life that are important to a given individual, or that individual's "success (to) pretensions" ratio (James 1890).

Objectives of the Study

1. To study the correlation between forgiveness and life satisfaction among college students.
2. To study the correlation between forgiveness and self-esteem among college students.

The Hypotheses of the Study

H1. There will be a positive correlation between forgiveness and life satisfaction.

- 1.1 There will be a positive correlation between forgiveness of self and life satisfaction.
- 1.2 There will be a positive correlation between forgiveness of others and life satisfaction.
- 1.3 There will be a positive correlation between forgiveness of situation and life satisfaction.

H2. There will be a positive correlation between forgiveness and self-esteem.

- 2.1 There will be a positive correlation between forgiveness of self and self-esteem.
- 2.2 There will be a positive correlation between forgiveness of others and self-esteem.
- 2.4 There will be a positive correlation between forgiveness of situation and self-esteem

METHODOLOGY

Sample

Table 1 showing the details of sample participants.

Age group	Males	Females	Total
18-25	15	45	60

The sample participants consisted of undergraduate and postgraduate students (UG=36; PG 24) belonging to arts, science and commerce streams between the age range of 18 to 25 years.

The sample had been collected through the convenient sampling method from India.

Instruments

Three questionnaires were used for the present study:

- **Heartland Forgiveness Scale (HFS) developed by Thompson et al. (2005)** is an 18-items self-report measure of dispositional forgiveness. It consists of three subscales, six-items in each subscale that measures forgiveness of self (items 1 to 6), forgiveness of others (items 7 to 12), and forgiveness of situations (items 13 to 18) respectively. The HFS total scale and subscale scores are calculated by summing the items on each scale. Thompson, et al. (2005) reported Cronbach’s Alpha for Forgiveness of Self as .75, Forgiveness of Others as .79, Forgiveness of Situations as .79 and Forgiveness of Total as .87; test-retest reliabilities were .72, .73, .77, and .83 respectively, with a three-week test-retest interval.
- **The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) was developed by Pavot and Diener (1993).** It is a 5-item instrument designed to measure global cognitive judgments of satisfaction with one's life. Each item scored on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Scale scores range from 5-35, with higher scores indicating greater life satisfaction. The test-retest reliability of the scale was reported to be .82 whereas, Cronbach’s alpha was reported to be .87.
- **Rosenberg self-esteem scale developed by Morris Rosenberg (1965)** is a 10-item scale where all items are answered using a 4-point Likert scale format ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Score range of this scale is from 10 to 40, higher score indicating higher level of self-esteem. Rosenberg (1965) found the internal consistency of this scale ranging from .85 to .88. Construct validity of this scale was found to be .72.

Design

The study aims to explore the relationship of Forgiveness with Life Satisfaction and Self-esteem among college students; therefore, correlational research design was used.

Procedure

The sample participants were provided with questionnaires to measure their scores on forgiveness and its dimensions as well as life satisfaction and self-esteem. Their informed consent was taken after which they had been instructed to fill the questionnaires measuring their dispositional forgiveness, life satisfaction and the self-esteem levels. The inclusion criteria for the sample were the undergraduate and postgraduate college students between the age group of 18 to 25 years, belonging to the arts, science or commerce streams. The students belonging to the various vocational courses were excluded from the study. After the questionnaires had been collected and scoring was conducted according to the manual. The scores were then analysed to study the correlation of forgiveness with life satisfaction and self-esteem.

RESULTS

Table No. 2 Correlation between Total Forgiveness and Life Satisfaction among college students.

		Total Forgiveness	Total Life Satisfaction
Total Forgiveness	Pearson Correlation	1	.553**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<.001
	N	60	60

***. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*

Correlational Study of Forgiveness with Life Satisfaction and Self-Esteem Among College Students

Analysing the scores from total forgiveness and total life satisfaction among college students using the Pearson correlation method it was found that there is a significant positive correlation between total forgiveness and total life satisfaction among college students. The correlation is significant at 0.01 level.

Table no. 2.1 Regression Analysis (N=60) Criterion Variable: Life satisfaction

Predictor	R	R-square	Beta-value	t	Significance
Total Forgiveness	.553*	.306	.553	5.058	.702 <.001

It can be observed from table 2 and 2.1, the correlation of the predictor variable with the criterion variable i.e., life satisfaction is .553 which is highly significant (F=25.583, p<0.01). The variance explained by the predictor variable is 30.6%.

Table No. 3 Correlation between Forgiveness of self and total life satisfaction among college students.

	Forgiveness of self	Total Life Satisfaction
Forgiveness of self	Pearson Correlation 1	.634**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001
	N	60

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Analysing the scores from Forgiveness of self and total life satisfaction among college students using the Pearson correlation method it was found that there is a significant positive correlation between forgiveness of self and total life satisfaction among college students. The correlation is significant at 0.01 level.

Table no. 3.1 Regression Analysis (N=60) Criterion Variable: Life satisfaction

Predictor	R	R-square	Beta value	t	Significance
Forgiveness of Self	.634	.402	.634	6.240	.315 <.001

It can be observed from table 3 and 3.1, the correlation of the predictor variable with the criterion variable i.e., life satisfaction is .634. which is highly significant (F=38.939, p<0.01).

The variance explained by the predictor variable is 40.2%.

Table No. 4 Correlation between Forgiveness of others and total life satisfaction among college students.

	Forgiveness of others	Total Life Satisfaction
Forgiveness of others	Pearson Correlation 1	.312*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.015
	N	60

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Analysing the scores from Forgiveness of others and total life satisfaction among college students using the Pearson correlation method it was found that there is a significant positive correlation between forgiveness of others and total life satisfaction among college students. The correlation is significant at 0.05 level.

Correlational Study of Forgiveness with Life Satisfaction and Self-Esteem Among College Students

Table no. 4.1 Regression Analysis (N=60) Criterion Variable: Life satisfaction

Predictor	R	R-square	Beta value	t	Significance
Forgiveness of others	.312	.097	.312	3.499	.015b

It can be observed from table 4 and 4.1, the correlation of the predictor variable with the criterion variable i.e., life satisfaction is .312. which is significant (F=6.246). The variance explained by the predictor variable is 9.7%.

Table No. 5 Correlation between Forgiveness of situation and total life satisfaction among college students.

	Forgiveness of situation	Total Life Satisfaction
Forgiveness of situation	Pearson Correlation 1	.312*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.015
	N	60

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Analysing the scores from Forgiveness of situation and total life satisfaction among college students using the Pearson correlation method it was found that there is a significant positive correlation between forgiveness of situation and total life satisfaction among college students. The correlation is significant at 0.01 level.

Table no. 5.1 Regression Analysis (N=60) Criterion Variable: Life satisfaction

Predictor	R	R-square	B	t	Significance
Forgiveness of situation	.400a	.160	.400	3.328	.002b

It can be observed from table 5 and 5.1, the correlation of the predictor variable with the criterion variable i.e., life satisfaction is .400. which is highly significant (F=11.078). The variance explained by the predictor variable is 16.0%.

Table No. 6 Correlation between Total Forgiveness and Self-esteem among college students.

	Total Forgiveness	Total Self-Esteem
Total Forgiveness	Pearson Correlation 1	.758**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001
	N	60

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Analysing the scores from Total Forgiveness and total self-esteem among college students using the Pearson correlation method it was found that there is a significant positive correlation between forgiveness of situation and total life satisfaction among college students. The correlation is significant at 0.01 level.

Table no. 6.1 Regression Analysis (N=60) Criterion Variable: Self-Esteem

Predictor	R	R-square	B	t	Significance
Total Forgiveness	.758a	.574	.758	8.844	.004 <.001

It can be observed from table 6 and 6.1, the correlation of the predictor variable with the criterion variable i.e., self-esteem is .758. which is highly significant (F=78.219).

The variance explained by the predictor variable is 57.4%.

Table No. 7 Correlation between Forgiveness of self and Self-esteem among college students.

		Forgiveness of Self	Total Self-Esteem
Forgiveness of Self	Pearson Correlation	1	.772**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<.001
	N	60	60

***. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*

Analysing the scores from Forgiveness of self and total self-esteem among college students using the Pearson correlation method it was found that there is a significant positive correlation between forgiveness of self and total self-esteem among college students. The correlation is significant at 0.01 level.

Table no. 7.1 Regression Analysis (N=60) Criterion Variable: Self-Esteem

Predictor	R	R-square	B	t	Significance
Forgiveness of self	.772a	.597	.772	9.262	.075 <.001

It can be observed from table 7 and 7 .1, the correlation of the predictor variable with the criterion variable i.e., self-esteem is .772 which is highly significant (F=85.784).

The variance explained by the predictor variable is 59.7%.

Table No. 8 Correlation between Forgiveness of others and Self-esteem among college students.

		Forgiveness of Others	Total Self-Esteem
Forgiveness of Others	Pearson Correlation	1	.417**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<.001
	N	60	60

***. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*

Analysing the scores from Forgiveness of others and total self-esteem among college students using the Pearson correlation method it was found that there is a significant positive correlation between forgiveness of others and total self-esteem among college students. The correlation is significant at 0.01 level.

Table no. 8.1 Regression Analysis (N=60) Criterion Variable: Self-Esteem

Predictor	R	R-square	B	t	Significance
Forgiveness of others	.417a	.173	.417	3.489	.159 <.001

It can be observed from table 8 and 8 .1, the correlation of the predictor variable with the criterion variable i.e., self-esteem is .417 which is significant (F=12.175).

Correlational Study of Forgiveness with Life Satisfaction and Self-Esteem Among College Students

The variance explained by the predictor variable is 17.3%.

Table No. 9 Correlation between Forgiveness of situation and Self-esteem among college students.

	Forgiveness of Situation	Total Self-Esteem
Forgiveness of Situation	1	.649**
Pearson Correlation		
Sig. (2-tailed)		<.001
N	60	60

***. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*

Analysing the scores from Forgiveness of situation and total self-esteem among college students using the Pearson correlation method it was found that there is a significant positive correlation between forgiveness of situation and total self-esteem among college students. The correlation is significant at 0.01 level.

Table no. 9.1 Regression Analysis (N=60) Criterion Variable: Self-Esteem

Predictor	R	R-square	B	t	Significance
Forgiveness of situation	.649a	.421	.649	6.495	935 <.001

It can be observed from table 9 and 9.1, the correlation of the predictor variable with the criterion variable i.e., self-esteem is .417 which is significant (F=42.190).

The variance explained by the predictor variable is 42.1%.

DISCUSSION

The research focused upon studying the relationship of forgiveness with life satisfaction and self-esteem among college students. The major objectives of conducting this research were to study the correlation between forgiveness and life satisfaction and to study the correlation between forgiveness and self-esteem. Primary data was collected using self-report questionnaires and the data was analyzed using the statistical methods: descriptive statistics, Pearson's correlation and regression analysis.

The results found that there was a significant positive correlation between total forgiveness and its dimensions. Forgiveness of self, others and situations with life satisfaction as well as self-esteem. The results were similar to the research conducted by Bintamur, D (2019) who found that there was a significant positive correlation of forgiveness and its sub factors with life satisfaction. The results were also akin to the results found by Jyotsana and Devi, (2018) which showed that forgiveness and its dimensions were positively correlated with self-esteem.

The findings of this study would enable the researchers, psychologists and others to gain information about the concept of forgiveness from a psychological perspective, as well as to know how forgiveness can impact the mental well-being of an individual.

The organizations or institutes can utilize the research conducted in relation to forgiveness as empirical evidences and conduct awareness sessions that would help individuals in gaining insight regarding forgiveness, different aspects and levels of forgiveness as well as how forgiveness and its dimensions are related to their levels of life satisfaction and self-esteem, which might encourage them to learn to be forgiving towards self, others and

Correlational Study of Forgiveness with Life Satisfaction and Self-Esteem Among College Students

situations. The institutes and also conduct psychoeducation workshop which would educate the members regarding different models of forgiveness and how they can utilize these models to increase their levels of forgiveness.

CONCLUSION

The results found that there was a significant positive correlation between total forgiveness and life satisfaction of college students. It was also seen that sub dimensions of forgiveness i.e., forgiveness of self, others and situations correlated positively with life satisfaction of college students. The results also found that there was a significant positive correlation between total forgiveness and self-esteem of college students. There was a significant positive correlation between forgiveness of self, others and situations and the self-esteem of college students. It was also found that life satisfaction had a significant positive correlation with self-esteem levels of college students.

Limitations

The study has been conducted on a relatively small group of participants belonging to 18–25-year-old college students and thus, it cannot be generalized to the other groups beyond the age limit. Another limitation is that self-report questionnaires were used to collect the data in which the participants might have provided socially desirable responses.

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Correlational Study of Forgiveness with Life Satisfaction and Self-Esteem Among College Students

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Acknowledgement

The author appreciates all those who participated in the study and helped to facilitate the research process.

Conflict of Interest

The author declared no conflict of interest.

How to cite this article: Sana, S. (2022). Correlational Study of Forgiveness with Life Satisfaction and Self-Esteem Among College Students. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 10(4), 1085-1096. DIP:18.01.107.20221004, DOI:10.25215/1004.107

APPENDIX A

Table Showing the descriptive statistics of forgiveness of self, forgiveness of others, forgiveness of situation, total forgiveness, total life satisfaction and total self-esteem.

Statistics

		FORGIVENESS OF SELF	FORGIVENESS OF OTHERS	FORGIVENESS OF SITUATION	TOTAL FORGIVENESS	TOTAL LIFE SATISFACTION	TOTAL SELF ESTEEM
N	Valid	60	60	60	60	60	60
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean		28.0667	29.8167	28.6667	86.5500	22.4833	17.9833
Median		28.5000	30.0000	29.0000	88.5000	23.0000	18.0000
Mode		30.00	32.00	22.00 ^a	69.00	29.00	15.00
Std. Deviation		6.39350	6.50030	6.77399	15.89097	6.92696	6.63451
Skewness		-.136	-.218	.070	.030	-.315	-.161
Std. Error of Skewness		.309	.309	.309	.309	.309	.309
Kurtosis		-.754	-.358	-.937	-.901	-.524	-.996
Std. Error of Kurtosis		.608	.608	.608	.608	.608	.608
Percentiles	25	23.0000	24.2500	22.2500	71.5000	18.0000	13.0000
	50	28.5000	30.0000	29.0000	88.5000	23.0000	18.0000
	75	33.0000	34.0000	35.0000	98.7500	28.0000	24.0000

a. Multiple modes exist. The smallest value is shown