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Research Paper

Role of Self-defeating Interpersonal Style and Forgiveness in Mental Health Among Adults

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ABSTRACT

The self-defeating interpersonal style scale (SELF-DISS) is a new measure developed by Atkinson (2017). SELF-DISS is found to predict depression over and above Big-5 traits (Atkinson et al.,2019). Very few researches are available related to SELF-DISS in the current scenario. So, the current study aims to find out the relationship between Self-defeating interpersonal style, Forgiveness, and mental health. A sample of 121 participants of ages between 15 to 35 years was selected and all the participants filled out the Self-defeating Interpersonal Style, Heartland Forgiveness Scale (HFS), and General Health Questionnaire-12 (GHQ-12). The data was collected using Google forms. Findings revealed that Self-defeating interpersonal style is negatively related to the subscales of HFS and positively related to GHQ-12. Self-forgiveness and Situational forgiveness both are found to be correlated negatively with the GHQ-12. Additionally, the moderating and mediating effect of forgiveness was analyzed between Self-defeating interpersonal style and mental health. Results showed that forgiveness does not significantly moderate the relationship between self-defeating interpersonal style and mental health but forgiveness mediates this relationship.

Keywords: *Self-Defeating Interpersonal Style, Mental Health, Forgiveness*

Worth Health Organization (WHO) (2014) defines mental health as "a state of well-being in which an individual realizes his or her potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and can make a contribution to her or his community". The absence of mental diseases such as depression or anxiety is regarded as mental health. Mental health issues have an impact on one's thoughts, feelings, behaviors, and social interactions. No one will ever experience mental illness in their lifetime., but everyone may experience mental health challenges or struggles., just as we all have issues with our physical well-being.

An increasing number of research in the psychological literature show the beneficial relationship between forgiveness and mental health in interpersonal relationships (Fincham & Beach, 2007). Forgiveness can be defined as the act of letting go of negative affect, cognitions, and behavior toward the offender (Rye et al., 2001). Un-forgiveness is an

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unpleasant and persistent complex mental state that is removed through the process of forgiveness (Enright, 2001; Worthington, 2007). According to research, the personality attribute of forgiveness is positively correlated with positive affect, life satisfaction, and optimism (Allemand et al., 2012) and inversely related to adverse affect (Berry et al., 2005; McCullough, 2000). Webb et al. (2013) used interpersonal connections, interpersonal social support networks, and health-related activities as mediators to assess the link between forgiveness and health (N=363). Findings revealed that the association between forgiving others and overall health was found to be mediated by interpersonal functioning, social support, and healthy behavior. Also, Overall health (both physical and mental health), psychological distress, and somatic symptoms were all substantially connected with both one's forgiveness as well as the forgiveness of others. Mental health is connected with both forgiveness of oneself and forgiveness of others, however, self-forgiveness was more significantly correlated to depression, anxiety, and mental health variables than interpersonal forgiveness (Tenklova & Slezackova, 2016).

It is believed that the Self-defeating interpersonal style is a persistent way of relating to people that are often motivated by dysfunctional relationship patterns, a poor conception of oneself, and a propensity to tolerate and/or justify different types of mistreatment (Atkinson & Vernon, 2017). SELF-DISS is a reliable and valid measure developed by Atkinson and Vernon (2017) that assesses the Self-defeating interpersonal style of the person. A study by Atkinson, Lasky, Boyle, and Vernon (2019) investigated that the SELF-DISS can significantly predict depression which will be more than Big-5 constructs can predict. The findings of this study supported all the purposes.

METHODOLOGY

Objectives

- To explore the relationship between measures of Self-defeating interpersonal style and mental health.
- To examine the relationship between measures of forgiveness and mental health.
- To study the contribution of self-defeating interpersonal style and forgiveness in mental health.
- To examine the moderating role of forgiveness in the connection between self-defeating interpersonal style and mental health.
- To examine the mediating role of forgiveness in the link between self-defeating interpersonal style and mental health.

Hypotheses

- There exists a positive relationship between Insecure attachment, Undeserving self-image, self-sacrificing nature, and mental health problems.
- A negative relationship exists between self-forgiveness, others' forgiveness, situational forgiveness, and mental health problems.
- Self-defeating interpersonal style and forgiveness will contribute substantially to mental health.
- Forgiveness moderates the relationship between self-defeating interpersonal style and mental health.
- Forgiveness mediates the connection between self-defeating interpersonal style and mental health.

Note. The term "mental health problems" reflects that the person has poor mental health and the term "mental health" refers to the person's good mental health.

Participants

This study involves 121 participants (male = 43 and female = 78) ages between 15 to 35 years. The data was collected by using google forms. The appropriate instructions and consent form were mentioned in the google form. After collecting the participants' responses, the data were analyzed using SPSS VERSION 26.

Tools used in the study

- **Self-defeating Interpersonal Style Scale (SELF-DISS).** The 35 items form of this scale was used in the current study. This scale is developed by Atkinson (2017). Each statement was rated on a 10-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (Strongly Disagree) to 10 (Strongly Agree). This scale has three subscales that measure insecure attachment (INA) (α = .91), an undeserving self-image (USI) (α = .93), and a self-sacrificing nature (SSN) (α = .93). The subscales were highly intercorrelated (Allemand et al., 2012) and the alpha coefficient for the subscales INA, USI, SSN, and for the whole scale were α = .91, α = .93, α = .93, and α = .97 respectively (Berry et al., 2005).
- **Heartland Forgiveness Scale (HFS).** Thompson et al. (2005) created a three-dimensional scale to measure the many facets of the individual's dispositional forgiveness. Forgiving others (OF), situational forgiveness (SiF), and self-forgiveness (SF) are the three dimensions. The test's 18 statements measured each of the three subscales. A seven-point Likert scale is used to rate each response, with 1 denoting "almost always true of me" and 7 denoting "almost always false of me". The participant's greater forgiveness is indicated by the higher score on the subscales. According to Thompson et al. (2005), the overall scale's Cronbach alpha was = 0.86.
- **General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-12).** The GHQ scale is frequently used to identify signs of mental health problems. Williams and Goldberg constructed this scale (1988). This scale can be applied to adolescents as well as adults. This scale assesses somatic symptoms, social disengagement or dysfunction, anxiety, depression, and depression. A 4-point Likert-style scoring system can be used to evaluate each statement. Higher GHQ scores suggest mental health problems, which correspond to poor mental health for the person.

RESULTS

The data collected from the google form was first analyzed for the outliers and missing responses. After removing the missing cells data and outliers, the data of 149 participants was reduced to 121 participants' data only. After that, the data was analyzed for skewness and kurtosis as shown in Table 1. In terms of skewness and kurtosis, all values adhere to the assumptions of the normal distribution. Correlations among the concerned variables were also carried out, as shown in Table 2.

Table 1 Descriptive statistics for all the variables

Variables	Mean (N=121)	Standard deviation	Skewness Statistic	Standard error	Kurtosis Statistic	Standard error
ISA	60.46	28.38	.418	.220	-.640	.437
USI	45.08	22.40	.442	.220	-.581	.437
SSN	43.90	16.16	.213	.220	-.873	.437
SF	27.42	5.21	.413	.220	-.214	.437
OF	27.05	4.85	.308	.220	-.422	.437
SiF	25.93	4.98	.297	.220	-.012	.437
TGHQ	13.08	6.79	.107	.220	-.512	.437

Note. TGHQ- overall mental health.

The Insecure attachment subscale correlated negatively with self-forgiveness (r= -.365, p<.01), situational forgiveness (r= -.430, p<.01), and positively with mental health problems (r= .391, p<.01). Undeserving self-image subscale found to be negatively correlated with self-forgiveness (r= -.560, p<.01), situational forgiveness (r= -.410, p<.01), and positively correlated with mental health problems (r= .414, p<.01). Self-sacrificing nature subscale is positively associated with mental health problems (r=.424, p<.01), and associated negatively with self-forgiveness (r= -.341, p<.01) and situational forgiveness (r= -.431, p<.01). Forgiveness for other is uncorrelated with the subscales of self-defeating interpersonal style and mental health. Self-forgiveness (r= -.479, p<.01) and situational forgiveness (r= -.549, p<.01) are negatively correlated with mental health problems.

Regression analysis
By selecting mental health as the dependent variable, stepwise multiple regression analyses give out three potential predictors of mental health from all concerned variables. Situational forgiveness is the first and most powerful predictor of mental health included in the equation's first step. The multiple R and R^2 are .549 and .302 respectively. The beta value for the variable exhibits a negative

Table 2 Correlations among the measures of self-defeating interpersonal style, forgiveness, and mental health.

Variables	ISA	USI	SSN	SF	OF	SiF	TGHQ
ISA	1	.545**	.482**	-.365**	-.136	-.430**	.391**
USI		1	.541**	-.560**	.013	-.410**	.414**
SSN			1	-.341**	-.101	-.431**	.424**
SF				1	.249**	.542**	-.479**
OF					1	.233*	-.160
SiF						1	-.549**
TGHQ							1

** Significant at .01 probability level
*Significant at .05 probability level.

correlation (β= -.341) and the F-ratio is found to be 51.475. In step two, self-forgiveness was included in the equation. As a result, multiple R rose to .590, and R^2 became.348. F-ratio obtained at step two is equal to 31.557 and the beta value is β= -.226. Self-sacrificing nature is entered into the equation at step three. Now, the multiple R increases to .617, and R^2 became .380. At this step, F-ratio is equal to 23.936, and the beta value is .200. From the results, it can be said that situational forgiveness, self-forgiveness, and self-sacrificing nature all account for 38 % variance in mental health.

Table 3 Stepwise multiple regression analysis (Dependent variable- Mental health)

Variables	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	F	β	df	Sig.
SiF	.549	.302	.296	51.475	-.341	1/119	.001
SF	.590	.348	.337	31.557	-.226	2/118	.001
SSN	.617	.380	.364	23.936	.2	3/117	.001

Moderation analyses
Model 1 and Model 4 from PROCESS v.4.1, created as an SPSS macro by Andrew F. Hayes (2022), were used to investigate the moderation and mediation effect of forgiveness respectively. Because of a single investigation in complex models using a regression-based bootstrapping method with macros, which are often examined and continually evolving,

Hayes produced data concerning more than one parameter. The 5000 bootstrap sample and bootstrap coefficient were eliminated for this study, and a 95 percent confidence interval was created in association with this. For the results of these analyses to be considered significant, the confidence interval must not include zero between the lower and upper limits. In this study, the total SELF-DISS score represents the self-defeating style of a person and the total forgiveness score represents the person's general tendency to forgive.

The existing study assessed the moderating role of forgiveness on the relationship between self-defeating interpersonal style and mental health. The results revealed the non-significant moderating effect of forgiveness on the association between self-defeating interpersonal style and mental health (B= .0001, t= .0636, p= .95, CI [-.001, .002]). The output of data for mediation analyses is shown in Table 4.

Self-defeating interpersonal style significantly predicts forgiveness (B= -.102, SE= .016, 95 % CI [-.134, -.070], β= -.500, p<.001) and forgiveness significantly predict mental health (B= -.231, SE= .052, 95% CI [-.333, -.129], β= -.383, p<.001). Self-defeating interpersonal style predicts mental health significantly (B= .036, SE= .010, 95% CI [.015,.057], β= .297, p<.001) in the presence of mediator (forgiveness). The relationship between self-defeating interpersonal style and mental health is significantly mediated through forgiveness (B= .023, BootSE= .007, 95% CI [.011,.037], β= .192).

Table 4. Mediation analyses summary (Unstandardized coefficients)

Relationship	Total effect	Direct effect	Indirect effect	Confidence Lower Bound	Interval Upper bound	t-statistics	Conclusion
Self-defeating interpersonal style → Forgiveness → Mental health	.060 (p<.001)	.036 (p<.001)	.023	.011	.037	3.55	Partial mediation

DISCUSSION

The present study finds out that the measures of self-defeating interpersonal style are negatively correlated with the measures of forgiveness and positively correlated with the measure of mental health problems. This makes the first hypothesis prove to be true. Also, self-forgiveness and situational forgiveness are inversely related to mental health problems. Therefore, the second hypothesis is also proved to be true. The Self-defeating interpersonal style was found to predict depression (Atkinson et al., 2019). In the current study, stepwise multiple regression analysis revealed three variables (Situational forgiveness, self-forgiveness, and self-sacrificing nature) account for 38 % of the variance in mental health. Here, the third hypothesis is found to be true. When forgiveness was analyzed for the moderating role between the self-defeating interpersonal style and mental health, no significant role of forgiveness is found as the moderator. This makes the fourth hypothesis to be rejected. Additionally, the mediating role of forgiveness was also analyzed by using the SPSS macro process between self-defeating interpersonal style and mental health. The results showed that forgiveness mediates the link between self-defeating interpersonal style and mental health. So, the fifth hypothesis proved to be true.

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Conflict of Interest
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