Research Paper

Forgiveness and Self-Esteem: An Empirical Study of Interconnected Psychological Constructs Based on Gender

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ABSTRACT

Forgiveness is essential for both individual development and social harmony. By encouraging boundaries, communication, assertiveness, and good self-esteem, it improves health and fosters social peace as well as emotional well-being. The purpose of this study is to further research in this field by examining the association between forgiveness and self-esteem as well as any differences in these relationships between genders using validated measures in a random sample of 60 people chosen from Jaipur in India. The study discovered that young people's forgiving levels are below average. Inferential statistics, however, did not reveal any noteworthy variations. Study's finding indicate that forgiveness and self-esteem were strongly correlated. Still, the results are constrained by the limited sample size. In order to prevent social desirability bias, future research should examine the relationship between forgiveness, self-esteem, personality development, mindfulness, loneliness, and depression using multi-method evaluation and naturalistic approaches.

Keywords: *Forgiveness, Self-Forgiveness, High Esteem, Low Esteem*

Our lives have been immensely impacted by our thoughts, particularly that which we hold onto. This may be the reason behind forgiveness and self-esteem being treated important concepts everywhere.

Forgiveness is a complex, multifaceted idea with philosophical, spiritual, and human psychology foundations. It has drawn interest from many different academic disciplines. Developmental, social, and clinical psychologists have been delving deeper and using more scientific methods into the concept of forgiveness since the latter half of the 20th century (McCullough, 2000). A fundamental element of interpersonal relationships (Watkins et al., 2011) and personal growth is forgiveness (Ong, 2023). There have been significant changes in forgiveness levels, stress, and mental and physical health symptoms over time, with increases in forgiveness leading to decreased stress and mental health symptoms (Toussaint et al., 2016). Furthermore, professionals who research or teach forgiveness make it clear that when you forgive, you do not minimize or dismiss the gravity of an offense committed against you. To be forgiven is not to forget. It frees you from the weight of resentment and anger, enabling you to achieve inner peace and move on with your life. In the end, forgiveness is an effective means of promoting recovery and personal development.

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Since self-esteem influences resilience and confidence, it is essential for personal growth. Healthy self-esteem promotes assertiveness, effective communication, and the capacity to set limits in interpersonal interactions, which strengthens forgiveness and respect for one another. Significant correlations have been found between self-esteem and situational forgiveness, but not between self-forgiveness and forgiving of others (Soudi, 2015). Furthermore, compromising thinking predicted decisional forgiveness but not subjective forgiveness. Additionally, it was found that the conditional effects of compromise thinking on emotional and decisional forgiveness were moderated by self-esteem (Hong et al., 2020). Men are more likely than women to forgive and move past grudges, but there is little difference in their overall optimistic outlook. Kaleta & Mróz, 2021).

Rationale of the study
This study specifically looks into potential gender differences in the relationship between forgiveness – whether it be internal or external and self-esteem. This research intends to offer a more nuanced view of the ways in which self-esteem and forgiveness interact in various gender circumstances by investigating potential gender inequalities. Furthermore, examining the mutual link that exists between self-esteem and forgiveness can reveal important details about how forgiveness-promoting practices support the growth and upkeep of a positive sense of esteem. The explanation is used to formulate the study's aim and hypotheses.

Aim
The major objective of the current study is to identify any potential relationships between forgiveness and self-esteem as well as any differences in these relationships between genders.

Hypotheses
- The younger generation is capable of forgiveness.
- There is a significant positive relationship between forgiveness and self-esteem.
- People who have a high sense of self-worth usually forgive others.
- Females tend to be more forgiving than males.
- There is a likelihood of high esteem in males.

METHOD
Sample
30 male and 30 female samples falling in the age group of 18-55 were taken from Jaipur for the investigation. The method employed to obtain the sample is called random sampling.

Variables
Self-esteem and forgiveness are the study's variables.

Research design
An exploratory research design was used for this investigation. Descriptive statistics were used to determine the forgiveness rate, but inferential statistics were used to verify the hypothesis.

Instruments
- **Demographic assessment:** The only essential information requested on the survey form is the age, gender, and level of education of the participants.

- **Heartland Forgiveness Scale (HFS) by Thompson et al. (2005):** It is a brief instrument, which has 18 items, is intended to assess forgiveness on three different subscales: situations, people, and oneself. The HFS has great reliability and powerful psychometric qualities; its internal consistency guarantees the stability of its assessments. The process of scoring is adding up the answers to the 18 items, yielding a numerical representation of a person's capacity for forgiveness.
- **Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) by Morris Rosenberg (1965):** The scale, which consists of ten elements, measures a person's whole confidence and sense of worth. The scale has routinely shown internal consistency across a range of demographics, demonstrating its high reliability.

Data collection
Data for the study was gathered from the mentioned using Google survey forms. Informed consent was obtained for the study's use of the data.

Statistical analysis
The data is statistically evaluated relative to the project's objectives. The raw data is statistically analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics, as well as other relevant techniques. The data's relevancy was evaluated using SPSS and Microsoft Excel.

RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to investigate the connection between self-esteem and forgiveness based on gender. For the sample, descriptive and inferential statistics were calculated in order to assess the hypothesis's significance.

Table 1. Mean, SD, and Std. Error of Mean for Forgiveness, its Sub-scales and Self-esteem

	N Statistic	Mean Statistic	Std. Error	Std. Deviation Statistic
Forgiveness for Self	60	26.70	.554	4.288
Forgiveness for Others	60	26.30	.706	5.469
Forgiveness for Situations	60	26.00	.654	5.062
Total Forgiveness	60	79.00	1.442	11.166
Self-esteem	60	28.85	.630	4.878

The table 1 shows the mean, SD, and Std. Error of mean for forgiveness, its sub-scales and self-esteem.

The average score for forgiveness for oneself is 26.70, which is below the threshold value of 31 based on norms. This suggests that there are low levels of forgiveness for oneself within the study population.

The mean test score for forgiveness for others is 26.30, which is below than the threshold value of 31. This suggests that the sample youngsters had poor levels of forgiveness for others. The mean forgiveness score for situations is 26.00, which is below the 31 thresholds. This suggests that the sample analysed had low levels of situational forgiveness.

The mean score for total forgiveness is 79.00 which falls below the threshold value of 93. This indicates that low levels of forgiveness are found in the sample population in general, of themselves, others, and negative uncontrollable circumstances.

According to the mean scores obtained for each of the sub-scales and total forgiveness, the hypothesis that the young generation is capable of forgiveness is not found to be true as all the scores fall below the threshold value of the norms. Therefore, the hypothesis is rejected. In the sample population under study, the mean score for self-esteem is 28.85, indicating above average, or strong self-esteem.

Table 2. Mean Comparison for Forgiveness, its Sub-scales and Self-esteem

Gender		Forgiveness for Self	Forgiveness for Others	Forgiveness for Situations	Total Forgiveness	Self-esteem
Male	Mean	25.72	25.86	26.66	78.24	29.07
	SD	3.936	5.097	3.921	10.013	5.063
Female	Mean	27.61	26.71	25.39	79.71	28.65
	SD	4.462	5.849	5.937	12.270	4.772

The table 2 shows mean comparison for forgiveness, its sub-scales and self-esteem.
Males score 25.72 on the forgiveness of self scale, with a standard deviation of 3.936, and females score 27.61 on the same scale, with a standard deviation of 4.462. The mean scores for both genders are below the cutoff point of 31, however, with a little higher mean score than men, women tend to be more self-forgiving than men.

Males average 25.86 with a standard deviation of 5.097 on the forgiveness for others scale, while females average 26.71 with a standard deviation of 5.849, both genders being below the threshold point of 31. However, compared to men, women seem to be more forgiving for others as they have a higher mean score.

Males average 26.66 with a standard deviation of 3.921 and females average 25.39 with a standard deviation of 5.937 when it comes to forgiving for situations. Although, both genders are below the cutoff point of 31, males tend to show relatively higher forgiveness for situations, i.e., negative circumstances, events, or situations that are beyond anyone's control.

Males average 78.24 with a standard deviation of 10.013 and females 79.71 with a standard deviation of 12.270 for overall forgiveness. The scale norms show that both males and females have low levels of overall forgiveness, as mean score is below the threshold value of 93. But with a comparatively higher mean score than men, women tend to be more forgiving.

The aforementioned mean comparison indicates that women tend to be more forgiving of themselves and others than men are, on both the subscales of forgiveness and the overall forgiveness scale. Men tend to be more forgiving of situations. Overall forgiveness is seen relatively higher in case of females.

The average self-esteem score for men is found to be 29.07. For males, the self-esteem standard deviation is found to be 5.063. According to the results, women's self-esteem scores average 28.65, with a standard deviation of 4.772. In spite of the fact that both genders had

high self-esteem, men in the sample population had comparatively higher self-esteem than women.

The independent sample t-test for the variables is used to test the significance of the mean scores for forgiveness, its sub-scales, and self-esteem in relation to gender. The Cohen's d effect size is used to report the strength of the differences found.

Table 3. Independent Samples t-test for Forgiveness, its Sub-scales and Self-esteem

	t-test for Equality of Means					
	t	**df**	**p-value**	**Mean Difference**	**Std. Error Difference**	**Cohen's d**
Forgiveness for Self	-1.734	58	.088	-1.889	1.089	-.448
Forgiveness for Others	-.597	58	.553	-.848	1.421	-.154
Forgiveness for Situations	.969	58	.337	1.268	1.308	.250
Total Forgiveness	-.506	58	.615	-1.468	2.903	-.131
Self-esteem	.334	58	.740	.424	1.270	.086

Note. t-test is not significant at .05 level.

Table 3 reports the t-value, degrees of freedom, p-value, mean difference standard error of difference and Cohen's d for forgiveness, its sub-scales and self-esteem of the sample analysed.

With 58 degrees of freedom and a p-value of 0.88, the reported t-value of -1.734 suggests that there is no statistically significant difference in self-forgiveness between males and females. We are unable to reject the null hypothesis since the p-value (0.88) is much higher than the 0.05 threshold significance level. The groups' average forgiveness scores differ by -1.889. Also, a small to medium effect size is indicated by the Cohen's d, i.e., -0.448, indicating no practical significance of the variations.

According to the reported t-value of -0.597 with a p-value of 0.553, there isn't a statistically significant difference in the groups that were compared when it comes to forgiving others. We are unable to reject the null hypothesis since the p-value (0.553) is greater than the significance level of 0.05. The groups' average differences in forgiving others are indicated by the mean difference of -0.848. However, a very small impact size is suggested by the Cohen's d of -0.154, which is less than 0.2, suggesting no practical significance of the differences found.

The stated p-value of 0.337 and t-value of 0.969 suggest that there is no statistically significant difference in the forgiveness for the various situations among the both the genders. As the p-value is higher than the significant cutoff point of 0.05, we do not have sufficient evidence to reject the null hypothesis. The average variance in forgiveness for situations among the genders analysed is shown in the mean difference of 1.268. However, Cohen's d of 0.250, indicates a small impact size that although there is a numerical difference, its practical importance might not be great.

The t-value of -0.506, and a p-value of 0.615, does not show statistical significance in the variations in the total forgiveness scores between both the genders. Since the p-value is greater than the predefined cutoff of 0.05, we do not have sufficient evidence to reject the null hypothesis, indicating that there is little variation in the forgiveness scores which is also

indicated by the mean difference of -1.468. Nonetheless, a small effect size with no practical important is suggested by the Cohen's d, which is -0.131.

Therefore, according to the inferential statistics performed for forgiveness and its sub-scales, the hypothesis that females tend to be more forgiving than males is not proved due to the lack of significant statistical evidences. The statistical analysis performed supports the null hypothesis.

The stated t-value of 0.334, and a p-value of 0.740, is insufficient to demonstrate a statistically significant difference in the both genders' self-esteem scores. The null hypothesis cannot be rejected since the p-value is greater than the predefined threshold of 0.05, indicating that any observed fluctuations in self-esteem scores could be the result of chance. The average difference in self-esteem scores is minimal (mean difference = 0.424). Cohen's d of 0.086 indicates a extremely small effect size.

Based on the data, there is no statistically significant evidence to support the hypothesis of high self-esteem in males. The non-significant p-value and the minimal effect size suggest that any observed differences in self-esteem scores between the groups are likely due to chance and of no practical use.

Table 4. Pearson Correlations between Forgiveness, its Sub-scales and Self-esteem

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
Forgiveness for Self	1				
Forgiveness for Others	.427**	1			
Forgiveness for Situations	.212	.389**	1		
Total Forgiveness	.689**	.830**	.725**	1	
Self-esteem	.256*	.152	.456**	.379**	1

Note. *. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
  **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 4 demonstrates the correlation between forgiveness, its sub-scales and self-esteem. Forgiveness and its sub-scales correlate with each other significantly at less than .01.

Self-forgiveness showed a significant positive connection (r=.256*) with self-esteem at the 0.05 level, suggesting that self-assured individuals are more likely to forgive themselves.

Forgiveness for others did not exhibit correlation with self-esteem (r=.152) at the significance level of 0.05, providing insufficient data to reach any conclusion.

Forgiveness for situations exhibited significant positive connection with self-esteem (r=.456**) at the 0.01 level showing persons with high self-esteem likely to forgive situations, i.e., unpleasant circumstances, occurrences, or situations that are beyond anyone's control.

The Pearson correlation for overall forgiveness and self-esteem is found to be r=.379** with significance at the level of 0.01 indicating a positive correlation between forgiveness and self-esteem.

Henceforth, the hypothesis that there is a significant positive relationship between forgiveness and Self-esteem is proven in the presence of statistically significant empirical data.

Also, the positive sign of the Pearson correlation coefficient suggests a positive linear relationship between forgiveness and self-esteem, that is, higher self-esteem correlates with higher forgiveness. Therefore, the hypothesis that people who have a high sense of self-worth usually forgive others is proven as per the product moment correlation.

DISCUSSION

Forgiveness in the study population is below average across all sub-scales. The population has a high sense of esteem. There was a strong positive association found between self-esteem and the ability to forgive oneself and forgive situations in general. It was determined that the data did not support the hypothesis that self-esteem and forgiveness for others are correlated statistically. Additionally, the study discovered that the mean scores for forgiveness and self-esteem varied numerically between the genders. However, there were no statistically or practically notable differences found using inferential statistical measures like the t-test and Cohen's d. The findings conflicted with earlier studies that revealed a strong relationship between situational forgiveness and self-esteem but not between self-forgiveness and forgiving others (Soudi, 2015) as well as though there is minimal variation in their general positive outlook, males are more likely than women to forgive and move past grievances (Kaleta & Mróz, 2021). The current study's findings are consistent with those of Fehr et al. (2010), who performed meta-analyses on 53 studies involving 8,366 participants and found no correlation between gender and forgiveness, and Miller et al. (2008), who discovered a gender difference in forgiveness with a small to moderate effect size, indicating that female respondents were more willing to forgive. Although the study's small sample size prevents generalisation, the findings yet show a favourable correlation between self-esteem and forgiveness. The small sample size also contributes to the identified negligible gender differences.

CONCLUSION

The findings of the data gathering and analysis indicate that the forgiveness levels of young people are below average. Forgiveness and self-esteem showed numerical disparities in the mean comparison of the data studied. According to the inferential statistics, however, there was no statistically significant difference seen. The study discovered a strong correlation between the two variables—forgiveness and self-esteem. Lastly, the study provided significant new understandings into the relationship between self-esteem and forgiveness among young people in the demographic it studied. Further research on the subject could improve our understanding of the relationship between self-esteem and forgiveness, which could then help with the creation of intervention plans for people who struggle with poor relationship and personality development. One of. the study's primary weaknesses are the small sample size of 60 participants, which makes it difficult to extend the findings.

Suggestions

Conduct future studies on larger sample with diverse background. In order to prevent social desirability bias, future research should examine the relationship between forgiveness, self-esteem, personality development, mindfulness, loneliness, and depression using multi-method evaluation and naturalistic approaches. Also, go for meta-analysis to study the previous trends in-depth.

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