

The Role of Forgiveness for Long-Term Satisfaction in Adult Relationships

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the intricate link between forgiveness and long-term satisfaction in adult relationships, drawing upon both empirical research and anecdotal evidence. The significance of forgiveness in fostering healthy and enduring bonds within intimate relationships is examined through a multidimensional lens, encompassing psychological, emotional, and interpersonal perspectives. The literature review delves into various theories and frameworks elucidating the mechanisms through which forgiveness operates as a transformative force in relational dynamics. Drawing upon empirical studies, this dissertation highlights the positive correlation between forgiveness and relationship satisfaction, shedding light on the nuanced processes involved in forgiveness, such as empathy, empathy, and communication. Moreover, anecdotal evidence gathered from real-life experiences enriches the discussion, providing insightful narratives that illustrate the profound impact of forgiveness on relationship longevity and quality. Through qualitative analysis of personal accounts and case studies, this dissertation delves into the complexities of forgiveness, exploring the challenges, benefits, and transformative potentials it brings to adult relationships. Furthermore, practical implications and therapeutic interventions aimed at cultivating forgiveness within relationships are discussed, offering valuable insights for couples, therapists, and relationship counsellors. By synthesizing research findings and real-world anecdotes, this dissertation elucidates the pivotal role of forgiveness in nurturing resilient and fulfilling adult relationships, ultimately contributing to a deeper understanding of the dynamics that underpin interpersonal harmony and satisfaction.

Keywords: *Forgiveness, Adult Relationships, Satisfaction, Resilience, Interpersonal Dynamics, Empathy, Communication, Psychological Well-being*

Forgiveness is a fundamental aspect of human relationships, playing a pivotal role in fostering emotional healing, resolving conflicts, and sustaining long-term satisfaction within adult relationships. The ability to forgive transgressions and move forward positively is essential for maintaining healthy and thriving romantic partnerships. Understanding the intricate dynamics between forgiveness and long-term satisfaction in adult relationships is therefore of paramount importance in the field of relationship psychology.

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Previous studies have highlighted the significant impact of forgiveness on various dimensions of relationship quality and satisfaction. For instance, research by Fincham and Beach (2007) found that forgiveness was positively associated with relationship satisfaction and commitment, highlighting its importance in promoting relational well-being. Similarly, a study by Karremans et al. (2011) demonstrated that forgiveness not only reduced negative emotions but also enhanced positive feelings toward the partner, leading to greater relationship satisfaction. However, despite the growing body of research on forgiveness and relationship satisfaction, several gaps and questions remain unanswered. For example, little is known about how individual differences, such as personality traits or attachment styles, may moderate the relationship between forgiveness and long-term satisfaction. Additionally, the role of contextual factors, such as the nature of the transgression or the quality of the relationship, in shaping forgiveness processes and outcomes warrants further investigation.

In the intricate tapestry of adult relationships, forgiveness emerges as a pivotal yet complex phenomenon with profound implications for relationship satisfaction and resilience. The process of forgiveness, characterized by the intentional letting go of negative emotions and resentment toward a transgressor, plays a crucial role in shaping the dynamics of romantic partnerships and familial bonds. However, despite its significance, forgiveness within adult relationships remains a multifaceted and understudied area within psychological research. This introduction outlines a comprehensive research agenda aimed at advancing our understanding of forgiveness dynamics in adult relationships through various methodological approaches and theoretical lenses.

The proposed research agenda encompasses several key dimensions. Firstly, longitudinal investigations are essential for elucidating the temporal dynamics of forgiveness, satisfaction, and gender differences within adult relationships, allowing researchers to explore how forgiveness unfolds over time and its impact on relationship outcomes. Additionally, experimental designs can provide valuable insights into the causal relationships between forgiveness processes and relationship satisfaction, shedding light on the mechanisms underlying forgiveness within interpersonal contexts. Moreover, cultural variations in forgiveness practices and their implications for relationship dynamics warrant exploration to understand how cultural norms and values influence forgiveness processes.

Qualitative methodologies offer an opportunity to delve deeply into individuals' subjective experiences of forgiveness within relationships, capturing the nuances of forgiveness narratives and the contextual factors that shape forgiveness outcomes. Furthermore, examining potential mediating and moderating factors such as communication patterns and attachment styles can enhance our understanding of the forgiveness-satisfaction relationship and inform the development of targeted interventions. The role of technology, including social media and digital communication, in shaping forgiveness processes and relationship dynamics also merits investigation in the context of modern interpersonal interactions.

Expanding the scope of research to include forgiveness dynamics within family relationships, such as parent-child and sibling relationships, allows for a more holistic understanding of forgiveness across different relational contexts. Moreover, considering intersectionality in shaping forgiveness experiences and outcomes acknowledges the complex interplay between gender and other identity factors, such as race and sexual orientation, in shaping individuals' forgiveness experiences within diverse relationship dynamics.

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Finally, translating research findings into practical tools and resources for therapists, educators, and relationship counselors holds the potential to support individuals and couples in navigating forgiveness and enhancing relationship satisfaction effectively. By addressing these multifaceted dimensions of forgiveness dynamics in adult relationships, this research agenda aims to contribute significantly to the advancement of knowledge in the field of interpersonal relationships and inform the development of evidence-based interventions to promote relational well-being.

Therefore, this research project seeks to address these gaps by examining the following research questions:

1. How does forgiveness influence long-term satisfaction within adult relationships?
2. What individual and relationship characteristics moderate the relationship between forgiveness and long-term satisfaction?
3. Are there specific types or dimensions of forgiveness that have a more significant impact on relationship satisfaction?
4. How do contextual factors, such as the severity or frequency of transgressions, affect forgiveness processes and outcomes?

By answering these research questions, this study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the dynamics between forgiveness and long-term satisfaction in adult relationships, providing valuable insights for clinicians, counselors, and individuals seeking to nurture and sustain healthy romantic partnerships. Through empirical investigation and theoretical exploration, this research endeavors to unravel the intricate threads that underlie forgiveness processes and their implications for relationship satisfaction, ultimately fostering greater relational well-being and resilience.

Forgiveness

Forgiveness within relationships is a multifaceted process involving the willingness of individuals to let go of negative feelings, resentment, and anger towards their partner following a transgression or conflict. It encompasses several dimensions:

- a) **Willingness to Forgive:** This aspect refers to an individual's readiness to extend forgiveness to their partner despite experiencing hurt or betrayal. It involves a conscious decision to release feelings of resentment and seek reconciliation.
- b) **Letting Go of Resentment:** Forgiveness involves releasing negative emotions and grudges that may have developed as a result of the transgression. It requires individuals to move past feelings of anger and bitterness towards their partner.
- c) **Genuine Reconciliation:** Forgiveness goes beyond mere verbal apology; it involves a sincere effort to restore trust and rebuild the relationship. Genuine reconciliation may involve open communication, empathy, and efforts to address underlying issues contributing to the transgression.

Types of Forgiveness:

1. **Decisional Forgiveness:** Decisional forgiveness refers to the conscious choice or decision to let go of feelings of resentment, anger, or desire for revenge towards the offender. In decisional forgiveness, individuals may still experience negative emotions associated with the offense, but they make a deliberate choice not to seek retribution or hold onto grudges.
2. **Emotional Forgiveness:** Emotional forgiveness involves the reduction or elimination of negative emotions such as resentment, anger, or hostility toward the offender. Unlike decisional forgiveness, emotional forgiveness entails experiencing

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genuine empathy, compassion, and understanding towards the offender, leading to emotional healing and reconciliation.

- 3. Conditional Forgiveness:** Conditional forgiveness occurs when forgiveness is contingent upon certain conditions or requirements being met by the offender. Individuals may withhold forgiveness until the offender apologizes, demonstrates genuine remorse, or makes efforts to rectify the harm caused.
- 4. Unconditional Forgiveness:** Unconditional forgiveness involves granting forgiveness freely and without any preconditions or expectations from the offender. In unconditional forgiveness, individuals extend grace, mercy, and compassion to the offender regardless of whether they have apologized or shown remorse.
- 5. Self-Forgiveness:** Self-forgiveness refers to the process of forgiving oneself for past mistakes, failures, or wrongdoings. It involves accepting responsibility for one's actions, acknowledging any harm caused, and cultivating self-compassion and self-love to move forward positively.
- 6. Interpersonal Forgiveness:** Interpersonal forgiveness occurs between individuals in a relationship, where one party forgives the other for a transgression or offense. It involves repairing trust, rebuilding the relationship, and restoring harmony and goodwill between the parties involved.
- 7. Intrapersonal Forgiveness:** Intrapersonal forgiveness is the process of forgiving oneself for personal transgressions, mistakes, or failures. It involves releasing self-blame, self-criticism, and self-condemnation, and embracing self-compassion, self-acceptance, and self-growth.

Research suggests that forgiveness plays a crucial role in maintaining healthy and satisfying relationships. Couples who are able to forgive and move past conflicts tend to experience greater relationship satisfaction, intimacy, and emotional well-being. Forgiveness can promote empathy, understanding, and resilience within relationships, leading to increased trust and commitment between partners. However, forgiveness is not always easy and may require effort, time, and emotional processing. Factors such as the severity of the transgression, individual differences in forgiveness tendencies, and the quality of the relationship can influence the forgiveness process.

Relationship Satisfaction

Relationship satisfaction is the subjective perception of contentment and happiness individuals feel in their romantic relationships. It reflects how fulfilled they are with various aspects of the relationship, such as communication, intimacy, trust, and conflict resolution. High satisfaction indicates happiness and fulfillment, while low satisfaction suggests discontent or unhappiness within the relationship.

Key components of relationship satisfaction are:

- 1. Overall Satisfaction:** The holistic sense of fulfillment and happiness that individuals derive from their romantic partnerships.
- 2. Satisfaction with Specific Aspects:** The level of satisfaction individuals report in different domains of their relationship, such as their communication patterns, intimacy levels, trust dynamics, and effectiveness in resolving conflicts.
- 3. Long-Term Satisfaction:** The consistency and stability of satisfaction individuals derive from their relationship over time, indicating the enduring strength and quality of their bond.

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Individual Characteristic

1. **Personality Traits:** Personality traits such as agreeableness, openness, neuroticism, and conscientiousness can influence how individuals perceive and respond to forgiveness within their relationships. Individuals high in agreeableness may be more likely to forgive their partner's transgressions readily, leading to higher relationship satisfaction, whereas those low in agreeableness may struggle with forgiveness, impacting satisfaction levels. Similarly, individuals high in openness may be more inclined to explore forgiveness as a means of resolving conflicts and fostering intimacy, potentially enhancing relationship satisfaction.
2. **Attachment Styles:** Attachment styles, such as attachment anxiety or avoidance, can moderate the relationship between forgiveness and satisfaction. Those with secure attachment styles may find it easier to forgive their partner's mistakes, leading to increased satisfaction in the relationship. Conversely, individuals with insecure attachment styles, particularly high attachment anxiety or avoidance, may struggle with forgiveness, which could hinder relationship satisfaction.
3. **Gender:** Gender differences in forgiveness patterns and their impact on relationship satisfaction are noteworthy. Research suggests that women may be more inclined to forgive their partners' transgressions compared to men, potentially due to socialization or relational motives. Understanding how forgiveness manifests differently across genders and its implications for relationship satisfaction is essential for a comprehensive analysis.

In summary, individual characteristics such as personality traits, attachment styles, and gender can moderate the relationship between forgiveness and relationship satisfaction. Considering these factors allows researchers to explore the nuanced ways in which forgiveness dynamics unfold within different individuals and relationships, ultimately contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of the topic.

Relationship Characteristics

Relationship characteristics refer to the qualities, dynamics, and components that define the nature of a romantic relationship. These characteristics shape the overall health, functioning, and satisfaction within the relationship. Some common relationship characteristics include:

1. **Communication:** The exchange of thoughts, feelings, and information between partners. Effective communication is essential for understanding, resolving conflicts, and maintaining emotional intimacy.
2. **Trust:** The belief in the reliability, integrity, and faithfulness of one's partner. Trust is crucial for building and sustaining a strong and secure bond in a relationship.
3. **Intimacy:** The emotional, physical, and sexual closeness between partners. Intimacy involves sharing vulnerabilities, expressing affection, and fostering a deep connection with one another.
4. **Commitment:** The dedication, loyalty, and willingness to invest in the relationship for the long term. Commitment involves prioritizing the relationship, working through challenges, and envisioning a shared future together.
5. **Conflict Resolution:** The ability to address disagreements, misunderstandings, and tensions constructively. Effective conflict resolution skills involve active listening, empathy, compromise, and finding mutually satisfactory solutions.

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6. **Compatibility:** The degree to which partners share similar values, interests, goals, and lifestyles. Compatibility contributes to harmonious interactions and a sense of alignment in the relationship.
7. **Support:** The provision of emotional, practical, and instrumental support to one another during both good times and challenges. Supportive relationships foster feelings of security, validation, and encouragement.
8. **Respect:** The mutual admiration, appreciation, and regard for each other's thoughts, feelings, and boundaries. Respectful interactions create a positive and affirming atmosphere within the relationship.
9. **Autonomy:** The recognition and encouragement of each partner's individuality, independence, and personal growth. Healthy relationships allow space for individual pursuits, interests, and self-expression.
10. **Shared Values and Goals:** The alignment of values, aspirations, and visions for the future between partners. Shared values and goals provide a sense of purpose and direction in the relationship.

These relationship characteristics vary in importance and may evolve over time as the relationship progresses. Understanding and nurturing these qualities can contribute to the overall satisfaction, stability, and resilience of a romantic partnership.

Transgression

A transgression is an act that breaks a rule, boundary, or moral standard, causing harm or offense. In relationships, transgressions can include lying, betrayal, or breaches of trust. They vary in severity, from minor disagreements to significant violations. Addressing transgressions involves acknowledgment, accountability, and reconciliation to restore trust and harmony in the relationship.

1. **Severity of Transgressions:** The severity of transgressions refers to how serious or impactful the offenses or betrayals forgiven by one partner are. In the context of forgiveness and relationship satisfaction, the severity of transgressions can significantly influence the forgiveness process and its outcomes. More severe transgressions, such as infidelity or betrayal of trust, may pose greater challenges to forgiveness and have a more substantial impact on relationship satisfaction compared to minor disagreements or misunderstandings. Understanding the severity of transgressions allows researchers to assess the magnitude of forgiveness required and its implications for relationship satisfaction.
2. **Frequency of Transgressions:** The frequency of transgressions denotes the number of times one partner forgives the other for various transgressions over time. Forgiveness is a dynamic process that may occur repeatedly within a relationship as partners navigate conflicts and challenges. Research suggests that repeated forgiveness may have different implications for relationship satisfaction compared to forgiveness of isolated incidents. Examining the frequency of forgiveness allows researchers to understand the cumulative impact of forgiveness on relationship satisfaction and the resilience of the relationship in the face of ongoing transgressions.
3. **Nature of Transgressions:** The nature of transgressions involves differentiating between various types of offenses, such as minor disagreements, breaches of trust, infidelity, or other forms of betrayal. Different types of transgressions may evoke distinct emotional responses and forgiveness processes. For example, forgiving a partner for a minor disagreement may be relatively easier and have different implications for relationship satisfaction compared to forgiving infidelity or a breach of trust. By examining the nature of transgressions, researchers can elucidate how

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different types of offenses influence forgiveness dynamics and their effects on relationship satisfaction.

Incorporating these mediating variables into the research project allows for a nuanced understanding of how forgiveness processes unfold within adult relationships and their impact on long-term satisfaction. By considering the severity, frequency, and nature of transgressions, researchers can explore the complexities of forgiveness dynamics and their implications for relational well-being.

Importance of Relationship Satisfaction

Relationship satisfaction is a cornerstone of healthy and fulfilling adult relationships, serving as a vital indicator of overall relationship quality and well-being. At its core, relationship satisfaction reflects individuals' subjective evaluations of the extent to which their needs, desires, and expectations within the relationship are met. It encompasses various dimensions, including emotional intimacy, communication, trust, and compatibility, making it a multidimensional construct.

First and foremost, relationship satisfaction plays a crucial role in promoting emotional and psychological well-being for individuals within the relationship. When individuals feel satisfied with their relationship, they experience greater levels of happiness, fulfillment, and life satisfaction. This positive emotional state contributes to overall mental health and resilience, buffering against stressors and adversity in both individual and relational contexts.

Moreover, relationship satisfaction fosters a sense of security and stability within the partnership, promoting feelings of trust, mutual respect, and commitment. Couples who report high levels of satisfaction tend to exhibit healthier communication patterns, conflict resolution skills, and adaptive coping strategies, leading to greater relationship longevity and resilience in the face of challenges.

Furthermore, relationship satisfaction is closely linked to other important outcomes, such as physical health, social support, and life satisfaction. Research suggests that individuals in satisfying relationships are more likely to experience better physical health outcomes, including lower rates of chronic illness, reduced mortality risk, and faster recovery from illness or injury. Additionally, satisfying relationships provide a supportive social network, offering emotional, practical, and instrumental support during times of need.

Overall, the importance of relationship satisfaction cannot be overstated in fostering healthy and fulfilling adult relationships. By recognizing its multidimensional nature and its profound impact on individual and relational well-being, couples can prioritize cultivating and nurturing satisfaction within their partnerships, ultimately promoting happier, healthier, and more resilient relationships over the long term.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

Theoretical frameworks provide valuable lenses through which to understand the intricate dynamics of forgiveness and long-term satisfaction in adult relationships. Two prominent theories that underpin this relationship are attachment theory and social exchange theory.

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Attachment Theory

Attachment theory, developed by John Bowlby and further elaborated by researchers like Mary Ainsworth, posits that early childhood experiences with caregivers shape individuals' attachment styles, which in turn influence their adult relationships. Securely attached individuals tend to have positive expectations about relationships, leading to higher levels of trust, intimacy, and satisfaction. In the context of forgiveness, attachment theory suggests that individuals with secure attachment styles may find it easier to forgive their partners, leading to greater relationship satisfaction over time. Conversely, insecurely attached individuals, such as those with anxious or avoidant attachment styles, may struggle with forgiveness and experience lower levels of satisfaction in their relationships.

Social Exchange Theory

Social exchange theory, on the other hand, views relationships through the lens of cost-benefit analysis. According to this theory, individuals engage in relationships based on the expectation of receiving rewards and minimizing costs. Forgiveness can be seen as a form of social exchange, wherein individuals weigh the benefits of restoring harmony and trust against the costs of holding onto resentment and anger. From this perspective, forgiving a partner may lead to increased relationship satisfaction by promoting reciprocity, goodwill, and positive interaction patterns. Conversely, unforgiving behavior may result in negative exchanges, erosion of trust, and diminished satisfaction in the relationship.

Self-Determination Theory (SDT)

Self-Determination Theory, developed by Edward Deci and Richard Ryan, underscores the significance of intrinsic motivation and human flourishing by focusing on three fundamental psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. According to SDT, individuals thrive when these needs are satisfied, experiencing greater well-being and optimal functioning. In the context of relationships, SDT posits that partners who support each other's autonomy, foster opportunities for competence, and cultivate a sense of relatedness are more likely to experience higher levels of relationship satisfaction and well-being. Moreover, SDT highlights the importance of intrinsic motivation in relationships, suggesting that individuals are most fulfilled when they engage in activities and interactions that align with their own values and interests, rather than feeling obligated or coerced. Overall, SDT provides valuable insights into the motivational dynamics underlying relationship satisfaction, emphasizing the importance of supporting individuals' basic psychological needs and promoting intrinsic motivation within relationships.

By drawing on these theoretical perspectives, researchers can deepen their understanding of the mechanisms underlying forgiveness and long-term satisfaction in adult relationships. Integrating attachment theory and social exchange theory allows for a nuanced examination of how individual differences, relational dynamics, and contextual factors interact to shape forgiveness processes and relationship outcomes. Moreover, these theoretical frameworks offer valuable insights for developing interventions and strategies aimed at promoting forgiveness and enhancing relationship satisfaction among couples.

Need for forgiveness

Further research on forgiveness and long-term satisfaction is warranted due to its profound practical implications for individuals and couples in romantic relationships. First and foremost, understanding the mechanisms underlying forgiveness processes and their impact on long-term satisfaction can inform the development of effective interventions and therapies aimed at promoting healthier and more fulfilling relationships. By identifying

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factors that facilitate forgiveness and enhance satisfaction, practitioners can tailor interventions to meet the diverse needs of couples, ultimately improving relationship outcomes and well-being.

Moreover, research on forgiveness and long-term satisfaction can provide valuable insights into conflict resolution strategies and communication patterns within relationships. Couples who are equipped with effective forgiveness skills are better able to navigate conflicts, resolve disagreements, and maintain harmony in their relationships. This, in turn, can lead to greater relationship stability and resilience over time, buffering against the negative effects of stressors and adversities.

Additionally, understanding the link between forgiveness and long-term satisfaction can have broader societal implications, as healthy and satisfying relationships contribute to individual and community well-being. Couples who experience high levels of satisfaction in their relationships are more likely to report greater overall life satisfaction, better physical and mental health outcomes, and higher levels of social support. By fostering forgiveness and satisfaction within relationships, researchers can contribute to building stronger, more resilient families and communities.

Furthermore, research on forgiveness and long-term satisfaction can help dispel common myths and misconceptions about forgiveness, such as the notion that forgiveness implies weakness or condoning of harmful behavior. By highlighting the positive effects of forgiveness on relationship satisfaction and well-being, researchers can promote a greater understanding and acceptance of forgiveness as a valuable tool for building and maintaining healthy relationships.

In summary, further research on forgiveness and long-term satisfaction is essential for advancing our understanding of relationship dynamics and promoting healthier, more fulfilling relationships among individuals and couples. By elucidating the mechanisms underlying forgiveness processes and their practical implications, researchers can contribute to improving relationship outcomes and enhancing overall well-being for individuals, couples, and society as a whole.

Population: Adults

The World Health Organization's definition identifies adults as children above 18 years of age, anchoring our exploration within broader context of mental health and well-being.

Significance of Study

The significance of the study lies in its potential to contribute valuable insights into the dynamics of forgiveness and long-term satisfaction within adult relationships. Understanding the relationship between forgiveness and relationship satisfaction is crucial for promoting healthy and resilient romantic partnerships. By investigating how forgiveness processes influence relationship satisfaction over time, this study can inform the development of interventions and therapies aimed at enhancing relationship quality and fostering forgiveness within couples. Moreover, the findings of the study may have practical implications for counselors, therapists, and relationship educators working with individuals and couples, providing them with evidence-based strategies for promoting forgiveness and facilitating relationship satisfaction. Additionally, the study's focus on gender differences in forgiveness and relationship satisfaction can shed light on important nuances in interpersonal dynamics and inform efforts to address gender-specific challenges within

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romantic relationships. Overall, the study has the potential to advance our understanding of forgiveness in the context of adult relationships and contribute to the promotion of healthy and fulfilling partnerships.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In 2011, Scott R. Braithwaite, Edward A. Selby, and Frank D. Fincham, along with their colleagues, made a significant discovery regarding forgiveness and its impact on relationship satisfaction. While prior research had established a connection between forgiveness and overall relationship happiness, the precise mechanisms driving this link remained unclear. Their research aimed to address this gap by proposing that forgiving a romantic partner could enhance relationship satisfaction through two key processes: increased effort in the relationship and reduced negative conflict. Through two separate studies involving a total of 969 participants, they utilized structural equations modeling to investigate these mechanisms. Their findings consistently demonstrated that forgiveness significantly influenced relationship satisfaction through these pathways, even when considering various factors such as baseline relationship happiness and commitment. These results support existing theories on the positive and negative aspects of forgiveness and highlight its transformative potential within relationships. The study's implications extend to both theoretical understanding and practical interventions aimed at improving relationship dynamics.

In 2007, Mathias Allemand, Irina Amberg, Daniel Zimprich, and their colleagues conducted a study focusing on the connection between trait forgiveness, relationship satisfaction, and episodic forgiveness, considering the numerous benefits associated with interpersonal forgiveness. The research involved 180 individuals in romantic relationships who were asked about forgiving their partner's most significant transgression. The findings indicated that both trait forgiveness and relationship satisfaction were linked to forgiveness of the specific transgression. Notably, for participants in the forgiveness process, the level of relationship satisfaction influenced the relationship between trait forgiveness and episodic forgiveness. Specifically, at higher levels of relationship satisfaction, trait forgiveness and episodic forgiveness were positively correlated, while at lower levels of satisfaction, they exhibited a negative correlation. These results shed light on the roles of trait forgiveness and relationship satisfaction concerning episodic forgiveness within romantic relationships.

In 2016, Tsukasa Kato and colleagues addressed a gap in research by investigating the longitudinal relationship between forgiveness and romantic relationship dissolution. Despite existing research highlighting forgiveness's significance in relationship maintenance, no prior study had explored this link in a longitudinal context. The study involved 344 participants who completed assessments on partner forgiveness, relationship satisfaction, romantic love, and reported their relationship status ten months later. Results from a multivariate logistic regression analysis indicated that participants' forgiveness scores on two dimensions were significantly correlated with a reduced risk of breakup ten months later. Importantly, this association remained robust even after adjusting for factors such as relationship duration, relationship satisfaction, and romantic love. These findings underscore the importance of forgiveness in sustaining romantic relationships.

In 2019, Chance A. Bell, Frank D. Fincham, and colleagues investigated the interplay of humility and forgiveness in romantic relationships within a sample of emerging adult females (N = 152). They aimed to empirically explore how perceived humility relates to relationship satisfaction through the mechanisms of self-forgiveness and partner-

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forgiveness. Participants who were in romantic relationships completed assessments measuring self-reported humility, self-forgiveness, partner-forgiveness, and relationship satisfaction. Through path analysis, the researchers conducted serial mediation analyses to examine the sequential process: humility → self-forgiveness → partner-forgiveness → relationship satisfaction. Results revealed that humility was associated with relationship satisfaction through a serially mediated pathway involving self-forgiveness and partner-forgiveness, a relationship that could not be explained solely by impression management. The study's findings hold implications for both research and clinical practice in understanding and enhancing romantic relationships.

In 2012, Karina Schumann and her colleagues addressed a gap in past research concerning apologies by focusing on real-life scenarios within romantic relationships. Previous studies predominantly examined responses to apologies in hypothetical or minor transgressions against strangers, overlooking the potential impact of existing relationship quality on forgiveness. Their study aimed to investigate whether relationship satisfaction influenced the association between apologies and forgiveness in romantic relationships by affecting perceptions of apology sincerity. Participants, consisting of 60 married or cohabiting couples, first assessed their relationship satisfaction. They then kept daily diaries, documenting transgressions by their partners, apologies received, perceived sincerity of the apologies, and their willingness to forgive. The results revealed that apologies were effective in predicting forgiveness only among participants who reported high relationship satisfaction. Furthermore, relationship satisfaction positively correlated with participants' perceptions of apology sincerity, which, in turn, predicted forgiveness. These findings suggest that individuals highly satisfied in their relationships are more inclined to forgive following apologies because they interpret their partners' apologies as genuine expressions of remorse, in contrast to less satisfied individuals.

In 2011, Michael E. McCullough and colleagues established that forgiveness plays a vital role in maintaining interpersonal relationships by addressing the inevitable conflicts and wrongdoings that arise in social interactions. They introduced a conceptual model suggesting that forgiveness represents a shift in individuals' motivations, moving away from the inclination to avoid or seek revenge against a transgressor towards a more prosocial stance. The article discusses various social-psychological factors associated with forgiveness and examines the current methods for measuring forgiveness at different levels: specific offenses, particular relationships, and individual disposition. Additionally, the article delves into the connections between forgiveness and human health and well-being. It concludes by proposing directions for future research in the field of forgiveness.

In 2015, Ross A. Aalgard, Rebecca M. Bolen, William R. Nugent, and their colleagues emphasized the significance of forgiveness in couples, highlighting its strong correlation with relationship satisfaction. Despite its importance, forgiveness is often disregarded as a potential tool for enhancing relational happiness. This literature review aims to explore the utilization of forgiveness as a therapeutic strategy to boost relational satisfaction among both opposite- and same-sex couples. It also examines forgiveness as a valuable component in marital interventions, particularly concerning instances of infidelity. Various aspects covered include the impact of forgiving personalities on stress and health, forgiveness's influence on marital and familial dynamics, its role in mediating relationship satisfaction, and the limitations of forgiveness interventions. The review concludes by providing recommendations for practitioners in this area.

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In 2006, Jose Orathinkal, Alfons Vansteenwegen, and their colleagues conducted a study exploring the link between forgiveness and marital satisfaction concerning marital stability. This comparative research involved 787 participants from the Flanders region in Belgium, including both first-married and remarried adults. The findings revealed that while there was no significant overall difference in forgiveness levels between first-married and remarried individuals, distinct variations were observed in two subscales of the Enright Forgiveness Inventory (EFI) between the two groups. Moreover, a notable disparity in marital satisfaction was identified between first-married and remarried adults. Additionally, the study highlighted a significant positive correlation between forgiveness and general life adjustment.

In 2002, Finkel, Rusbult, Kumashiro, Hannon, and their colleagues contributed to the understanding of the forgiveness process in dealing with betrayal within close relationships, particularly emphasizing the significance of commitment. Drawing from interdependence theory, they proposed that victims' initial reactions to betrayal, characterized by self-focused responses like harboring grudges or seeking revenge, are contrary to forgiveness. They argued that forgiveness is instead driven by a prorelationship motivation, with strong commitment serving as a key factor. Through a series of experiments, including a priming experiment, cross-sectional survey study, and interaction record study, they found evidence supporting the association between commitment and forgiveness. Notably, this association appeared to be linked to the intent to persevere in the relationship rather than factors such as long-term orientation or emotional attachment. Additionally, they observed that cognitive interpretations of betrayal incidents played a mediating role in the commitment-forgiveness association, while the mediation by emotional reactions was less consistent.

In 2014, Myung-Sun Chung conducted a study examining the connection between attachment theory and marital satisfaction among a sample of 208 married Korean teachers. Participants completed surveys assessing adult attachment, rumination, empathy, forgiveness, and marital satisfaction. Utilizing structural equation modeling (SEM), the study identified a pathway wherein adult attachment influences marital satisfaction through dispositional forgiveness. Additionally, a distinct pathway was observed whereby anxious and avoidant attachment styles negatively impact forgiveness and marital satisfaction due to heightened rumination and reduced empathy. These findings highlight the importance of considering direct, indirect, and gender-specific effects when analyzing the relationship between attachment, rumination, empathy, forgiveness, and marital satisfaction. Marriage counselors and therapists can utilize these insights to deepen their understanding of marital dynamics and potentially contribute to reducing the high divorce rates in Korea.

In 2013, Patrick L. Hill, Mathias Allemand, Marie E. Heffernan, and their colleagues highlighted a relative gap in research concerning the development of a dispositional tendency to forgive, termed as forgivingness, particularly in adulthood. They noted that while there is extensive literature on the process of forgiveness or momentary forgiveness, there has been less focus on understanding how forgivingness is cultivated over time. This is especially significant considering that adulthood has conventionally been viewed as a period characterized by stability in personality rather than significant change. The paper begins by discussing the concept of forgivingness and its potential implications for promoting well-being in adults. It then explores three areas of research that offer insights into potential influences on the development of forgivingness in adulthood. These areas include how adults navigate changes in societal roles, the decisions they make regarding social and emotional regulation, and the impact of their attachment models in relationships. The paper

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concludes by outlining key questions for future research aimed at understanding and studying this personality trait further.

In 2008, Maio, Thomas, Fincham, Carnelley, and their colleagues conducted a study aiming to explore how forgiveness operates within various family relationships. The research involved 114 families, each comprising two parents and one child, who participated in two laboratory sessions spaced a year apart. During these sessions, participants completed a new assessment tool designed to measure family forgiveness, along with various individual, relational, and family-level variables associated with forgiveness in prior research. Following validation of the family forgiveness measure through cross-sectional analysis, the researchers conducted longitudinal analyses to investigate forgiveness dynamics within each family relationship over the one-year period. The findings revealed several positive outcomes associated with forgiveness, impacting individual traits, specific aspects of family relationships, and the overall family environment. However, notable differences emerged in the factors influencing forgiveness across parent-child and parent-parent relationships, underscoring the unique nature of forgiveness within different family dynamics.

Karremans, J.C., Van Lange, P.A.M., and their colleagues conducted research in 2004 that addressed the limited empirical exploration of forgiveness and its association with pro-relationship responses. Despite the growing interest in forgiveness, there has been scant investigation into whether forgiving behavior predicts actions aimed at enhancing the well-being of the partner or the relationship, even when it requires setting aside personal well-being. The study aimed to investigate whether forgiveness predicts pro-relationship responses independently of the offender's commitment. Across three studies, the researchers found consistent evidence indicating that forgiveness correlates positively with (a) willingness to accommodate, (b) readiness to make sacrifices, and (c) the level of intended cooperation in relationships. Notably, these associations were observed to be distinct from the level of commitment to the offender. This suggests that forgiveness plays a unique role in motivating and influencing behaviors that strengthen relationships. Additionally, the findings from the third study indicated that forgiveness restores levels of pro-relationship motivation to baseline levels rather than increasing them further.

In 2016, Sadaf Akhtar, Jane Barlow, and their colleagues conducted a study addressing the prevalence of interpersonal hurts and violence, which often lead to long-term psychological issues. They focused on forgiveness therapy as a potential intervention to improve psychological health among individuals who have experienced various forms of hurt, violence, or trauma. Through a systematic review and meta-analysis, they analyzed the efficacy of process-based forgiveness interventions on adolescents and adults who had encountered such experiences. Randomized controlled trials were gathered from electronic databases and previous review references, with each study assessed for bias risk. The results indicated that forgiveness interventions effectively reduced depression, anger, hostility, stress, and distress while promoting positive affect. These findings provide significant evidence that forgiving real-life interpersonal offenses can positively impact mental well-being. However, the researchers emphasize the need for further investigation in this area.

In 2013, Jana Cmurová, Lucia Záhorcová, along with their colleagues, undertook a study to delve into how adults who grew up in children's homes perceive and deal with forgiveness towards their parents, particularly their mothers and fathers. They also investigated whether there was any connection between forgiving their parents and the quality of their current romantic relationships. The study involved 10 individuals who were raised in children's

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homes, with an average age of 25.7 years and an average duration of romantic relationships of 3.2 years. They gathered data through semi-structured interviews and employed Consensual Qualitative Research methods for analysis. Participants largely viewed forgiveness as the release of negative emotions and a means to progress. Their motivation to forgive their parents primarily stemmed from discussions with staff and volunteers at the children's homes, as well as from a sense of exhaustion from holding onto resentment. Understanding their parents' perspectives and life stories was seen as crucial in the forgiveness process. While participants encountered similar challenges in forgiving both parents, forgiving fathers proved to be more difficult, with a greater inclination towards reconciling with mothers. Forgiveness was associated with experiencing inner peace and a relief from negative emotions. Furthermore, participants noted that forgiving a parent was linked to greater satisfaction in their romantic relationships, enhanced communication, and increased empathy towards their partners. These findings highlight the importance of forgiveness for individuals raised in children's homes, not only for their own well-being but also for nurturing healthier relationships with both parents and romantic partners.

In 2014, Pavica Sheldon, Eletra Gilchrist-Petty, James Adam Lessley, and their team established that a willingness to forgive plays a crucial role in the process of healing and repairing damaged relationships. While recent research has highlighted the connection between forgiveness and positive communication, this study stands out as one of the first to explore how the inclination to forgive influences the methods married and dating couples employ to communicate forgiveness to each other. Drawing from the Vulnerability-Stress-Adaptation model, which suggests that vulnerabilities, stressors, and behaviors are interconnected and can impact marital satisfaction and stability, the researchers examined 174 participants. These participants completed a survey concerning their attitudes and beliefs regarding forgiveness following a specific wrongdoing, as well as their general tendency to respond within their relationships. They were also asked to assess the severity of the transgression and their overall satisfaction with the relationship following the incident. The findings indicated that dating couples who naturally lean towards forgiveness tend to utilize both nonverbal gestures such as hugging and kissing, as well as explicit verbal expressions like saying "I forgive you." In contrast, for married individuals, the severity of the transgression played a more significant role in determining which forgiveness strategy they would employ.

In 2021, Paweł Brudek, Kinga Kaleta, and their colleagues conducted research highlighting the growing significance of marital satisfaction during old age, particularly as influenced by the gerotranscendence process. They underscored that the impact of seniors' personality on marital satisfaction is contingent upon various factors, with forgiveness emerging as a potential mediator. The study aimed to explore whether forgiveness mediates the connection between personality traits and marital satisfaction among older adults. 315 participants aged 60–75 took part, and three psychological measures were employed: the Marital Satisfaction Questionnaire for Older Persons, the NEO-Five Factor Inventory, and the Marital Offence-Specific Forgiveness Scale. Through analysis, several notable associations were found. Neuroticism correlated positively with resentment-avoidance and negatively with benevolence and marital satisfaction, while extraversion, agreeableness, and conscientiousness showed negative correlations with resentment and positive ones with benevolence and satisfaction. The findings also indicated that both dimensions of dyadic forgiveness played a mediating role between personality traits and marital satisfaction in older individuals. This suggests that fostering forgiveness within a marriage could mitigate the detrimental effects of neuroticism on marital contentment, while also allowing for the

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positive aspects of extraversion, agreeableness, and conscientiousness to enhance marital happiness. The study concludes with practical implications for counseling older adults.

In 2008, Wohl, DeShea, Wahkinney, and their colleagues addressed the relative lack of research on self-forgiveness, particularly in comparison to forgiveness directed towards others. They identified the absence of a suitable measure for assessing self-forgiveness as a significant challenge in this area. The article describes the development of the State Self-Forgiveness Scales and examines how self-forgiveness relates to psychological well-being following the unwanted termination of a romantic relationship. In Study 1, the analysis revealed a two-factor structure in the data related to self-forgiveness. Study 2 demonstrated that levels of self-blame predicted depressive symptoms, with greater self-forgiveness correlating with reduced depressive affect. The article discusses the implications of state self-forgiveness for both research and therapeutic practices.

In 2014, Theresa E. DiDonatou, Laurette J. McIlwee, Marianna E. Carlucci, and their colleagues explored the implications of forgiveness within romantic relationships on outsiders' perceptions of individuals and their relationships. Two studies were conducted to examine how forgiveness decisions influence these perceptions. Study 1, involving 364 participants, employed an experimental between-subject design using hypothetical vignettes to manipulate forgiveness, offense severity, and offense frequency. As predicted, forgiving individuals were perceived as more committed and satisfied in their relationships, with the perception of forgiveness varying based on the frequency and severity of the offense. In Study 2, with 134 participants, individuals recalled offenses committed by friends. Forgiveness was found to predict perceived commitment, satisfaction, investment, warmth, and competence, with its impact sometimes interacting with the severity and frequency of the offense, while also considering the offender's intent and apologies. These findings are discussed in relation to the importance of perceptions and social networks.

In 2021, M. Cote, J. Tremblay, M. Dufour, and their colleagues emphasized the potential of forgiveness as a psychological process to be integrated into couple counseling, particularly to aid couples in overcoming significant relational transgressions (RT). However, despite its promise, there remains a lack of consensus in the literature regarding the processes couples undergo during couple therapy to achieve mutual forgiveness. This paper aims to address this gap by conducting a literature review on forgiveness and couple interventions. Through a keyword search in six databases, 35 relevant references were identified. The study selection and analysis followed a scoping review framework. Notably, the majority of documented RT pertained to infidelity, yet only 34% of the retrieved documents were empirical studies. From the compiled literature, it becomes evident that forgiveness is a multifaceted, iterative, and non-linear process that demands significant investment from both partners. It can be delineated into six subprocesses, which may unfold sequentially to varying degrees. Future research endeavors could focus on validating whether forgiveness processes differ based on the type of RT experienced.

In 2007, Cydney J. Van Dyke, Maurice J. Elias, and their colleagues highlighted the numerous challenges faced by today's youth, which can hinder their opportunities for academic, professional, relational, and personal growth. This article reviews existing literature that examines certain personal qualities that have shown potential in fostering resilience among youth against such challenges. Specifically, the values of forgiveness, purpose, and religiosity are explored. The aim of this literature review is to draw attention to the promising findings within this area of research and to advocate for further empirical

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investigation into forgiveness, purpose, and religiosity, particularly in the context of youth mental health and well-being. The article begins by defining these constructs, followed by a discussion of theoretical, clinical, and empirical evidence supporting the benefits of embracing values related to forgiveness, purpose, and religiosity during youth. Lastly, practical implications and suggestions for future research are provided.

In 2019, Dewa Fajar Bintamur conducted a study aiming to explore the relationship between dispositional forgiveness and life satisfaction among young adults in the workforce in Indonesia. Drawing from Thompson et al.'s (2005) categorization, dispositional forgiveness comprises three dimensions: Self-forgiveness, Other-forgiveness, and Situation-forgiveness. Life satisfaction, on the other hand, refers to an individual's cognitive evaluation of their overall life and serves as an indicator of well-being. Previous research has indicated that both forgiveness and life satisfaction are influenced by social and cultural factors. The Heartland Forgiveness Scale (HFS) and the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) were employed as instruments to measure forgiveness and life satisfaction, respectively. Using convenient sampling, data were collected from 167 participants residing in the Jabodetabek region (Jakarta, Bogor, Depok, Tangerang, and Bekasi) who were in the young adulthood stage. The findings revealed a significant positive correlation between forgiveness and life satisfaction. Specifically, Self-forgiveness and Situation-forgiveness showed a high level of significance with life satisfaction, while Other-forgiveness exhibited a moderate level of significance.

In 2016, Edward P. Lemay, Jr., Rachel B. Venaglia, and their colleagues conducted a review of research exploring the impact of relationship expectations on interpersonal relationships. The majority of existing studies indicate that harboring positive relationship expectations tends to correlate with enhanced interpersonal functioning. This includes factors such as greater persistence in relationships, more favorable evaluations and motivations within relationships, increased prorelationship behavior, higher levels of forgiveness, and a reduction in contempt. Additionally, research on related concepts like relationship efficacy, implicit theories, trust, and insecurity dispositions supports a similar conclusion. Nonetheless, there is some evidence suggesting that positive relationship expectations may occasionally yield negative effects on healthy relationship dynamics. The article outlines a model detailing the various pathways through which relationship expectations may either bolster or undermine relationship quality, and proposes several avenues for future research in this area.

In 2008, Frank D. Fincham, Steven R. H. Beach, N. Lambert, T. Stillman, and S. Braithwaite conducted three studies to explore the role of spirituality, particularly prayer for one's partner, in the formation of relationships among young adults. Study 1, involving 302 participants, investigated longitudinal relationships to establish the temporal order; it was found that prayer for the partner predicted later relationship satisfaction, but not the other way around. In Study 2, with 191 participants, the researchers examined whether it was specifically prayer for the partner or prayer in general that affected satisfaction. They also discovered that prayer for the partner contributed unique variance to satisfaction beyond that explained by positive and negative dyadic behavior. Finally, Study 3, with 360 participants, explored three potential mediators of the impact of prayer for the partner on young adult relationships. It was found that increased commitment mediated the effect of prayer for the partner on relationship satisfaction. These findings suggest that prayer for the partner influences commitment by encouraging a longer-term perspective, which is crucial in the

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development of young adult relationships. The potential negative effects of prayer and the need for experimental investigation were also discussed.

In 2018, Pavica Sheldon and Mary Grace Antony conducted a survey involving 123 married and 93 dating adults to explore the role of forgiveness within their relationships. Participants were asked to describe instances of forgiveness, including the nature of the transgressions, their perceived severity, and the strategies employed to express forgiveness. Through an inductive analysis of these responses, a typology of forgiveness communication strategies used by romantic couples was developed. It was found that dating partners tended to utilize minimizing strategies to forgive each other, whereas married couples often employed discussion and explicit forgiveness strategies. The most commonly used strategy to communicate forgiveness, particularly after severe transgressions, was discussion. For less severe transgressions, partners leaned towards minimizing and nonverbal forgiveness strategies. Additionally, a potentially harmful forgiveness strategy termed pseudo-forgiveness was identified among married participants, and its implications were discussed.

In 2013, Allemann, Steiner, and Hill, along with their colleagues, aimed to investigate the impact of a concise forgiveness intervention tailored for older adults. This psychoeducational group intervention incorporated established elements from previous forgiveness interventions, along with additional components addressing the specific needs of older individuals. Seventy-eight older adults, with an average age of 70.1 years, were randomly assigned to either receive the intervention or be placed on a waiting-list control condition. Results indicated that the intervention led to reductions in perceived painfulness of actual transgressions, transgression-related emotions and thoughts, and negative mood. These findings suggest that forgiveness interventions tailored for older adults hold promise in aiding participants to address and cope with past, present, and future interpersonal transgressions.

In 2010, James K. McNulty highlighted that existing literature suggests that happy couples demonstrate more positive thinking and behaviors in their relationships compared to less happy couples. Consequently, most interventions aimed at addressing and preventing marital distress encourage couples to increase positive cognitive and behavioral processes while minimizing negative ones. Despite this approach, several longitudinal studies on newlyweds revealed that positive processes might not always benefit distressed couples; in fact, they could potentially exacerbate their issues. Specifically, while positive expectations, attributions, reduced negative behaviors, and forgiveness were effective in maintaining satisfaction for couples facing infrequent and minor problems, less positive expectations, attributions, increased negative behaviors, and less forgiveness were more beneficial for couples encountering more frequent and severe problems. This is because these processes enabled spouses to acknowledge, confront, and resolve their issues. Therefore, distressed and at-risk couples might benefit from interventions that encourage them to adopt thought patterns and behaviors that motivate them to address their problems, even if these initially evoke negative emotions.

In 2020, Mónica Guzmán-González, Paula Contreras, Giulia Casu, and their colleagues delved into the relationship between adult romantic attachment and couple relationship functioning, a topic that has received significant attention in previous research. However, prior studies overlooked the role of unforgiveness when exploring how romantic attachment influences relationship satisfaction in couples. To address this gap, the researchers employed the actor-partner interdependence mediation model to investigate the connections between

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romantic attachment, unforgiveness (specifically, avoidance and revenge motivations), and relationship satisfaction in a sample of 104 Chilean couples. Participants completed self-report measures assessing romantic attachment, unforgiveness, and relationship satisfaction. Results revealed that an individual's insecure attachment was directly associated with lower relationship satisfaction, as well as indirectly through increased levels of attachment anxiety and avoidance, which were linked to greater revenge and avoidance motivations, and consequently, diminished relationship satisfaction. Moreover, partner attachment avoidance directly correlated with lower relationship satisfaction. Interestingly, higher levels of partner attachment anxiety were associated with lower avoidance motivation and, subsequently, higher relationship satisfaction. These findings underscore the detrimental impact of attachment avoidance and unforgiveness on couples' functioning. Additionally, the discovery that attachment anxiety might indirectly contribute to a couple's relationship satisfaction warrants further investigation. The implications of these findings for couple counseling and therapy are also discussed.

In 2022, Marie-France Lafontaine, Roxanne Bolduc, and their colleagues highlighted the concept of attachment injury, which occurs when one partner fails to provide expected comfort and care during a time of heightened need. These injuries, when unresolved, can lead to persistent stress reactions and reduced relationship satisfaction for the injured partner. However, little research has explored how the perceived severity of these injuries relates to sexual satisfaction, an essential aspect of relationship well-being. In a cross-sectional study, the researchers investigated the direct and indirect links between the perceived severity of attachment injuries and sexual satisfaction, mediated by injury-related stress symptoms and levels of forgiveness in the injured partners. A total of 145 adults who experienced attachment injuries in their current relationships completed questionnaires assessing injury severity, event-related stress, forgiveness, and sexual satisfaction. Path analysis revealed an indirect relationship between the perceived severity of attachment injuries and sexual satisfaction, mediated by heightened injury-related stress and decreased forgiveness. These findings suggest that promoting forgiveness and addressing injury-related stress could play crucial roles in enhancing sexual satisfaction among couples where one partner has experienced an attachment injury. The clinical implications of these findings are discussed, including potential treatment strategies for addressing attachment injuries in couples therapy.

In 2021, David B. Allsop, Chelom E. Leavitt, and Jason S. Carroll highlighted the complexity of sexual satisfaction, which is influenced by various factors. They noted that without a comprehensive framework, scholars and practitioners working with married couples might inadvertently focus on a single factor, thereby limiting the effectiveness of their research and practice. To address this issue, the study explored how the developmental model of marital competence—a comprehensive theory for understanding marital processes—could guide their work on sexual satisfaction and broaden their approach. Using U.S. nationally representative data from 2,114 mixed-sex couples and employing the actor-partner-interdependence-model, the study examined cross-sectional and longitudinal associations between wives' and husbands' sexual satisfaction and three factors—conflict resolution quality, forgiveness, and anxious and avoidant attachment. These factors correspond to the three domains of the developmental model of marital competence: marital communication, marital virtues, and marital identities. The results supported the use of the developmental model of marital competence in approaching work on sexual relationships among married, heterosexual couples. Variables from each domain were associated with sexual satisfaction cross-sectionally for both partners, and attachment avoidance and anxiety

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were linked to changes in sexual satisfaction over time. The study emphasizes the importance of integrating the developmental model of marital competence into research and practice to enhance understanding and intervention in marital and sexual relationships. Literature on victims' recovery post-infidelity. Recent studies have highlighted the role of limitations, future directions, and practical implications of the findings were also discussed.

In 2016, Apel Bursky and Sharon conducted a quantitative research study focusing on forgiveness within adult sibling relationships. The primary objective was to explore forgiveness in such relationships and its association with relational ethics and satisfaction. The study includes an extensive literature review on Contextual theory and forgiveness within the field of Marriage and Family Therapy (MFT). A total of 178 participants were involved in the study, aiming to test several hypotheses: firstly, that higher levels of relational ethics within sibling relationships are positively and significantly linked with increased forgiveness; secondly, that relational satisfaction within sibling relationships correlates positively and significantly with forgiveness; thirdly, that relational ethics within sibling relationships is positively associated with relational satisfaction; and fourthly, that relational satisfaction serves as a mediator between relational ethics and sibling forgiveness, meaning that higher levels of relational ethics lead to increased relational satisfaction, subsequently resulting in higher levels of forgiveness. Following the conclusion of the study, the findings, limitations, research and clinical implications, and suggestions for further research are discussed.

Rationale

Though there is enormous literature found on forgiveness and Adult relationships, this study highlights the relationship between forgiveness and long-term satisfaction in adult relationships. The study also highlights the dearth in terms of analyzing how forgiveness influences the quality and duration of intimate partnerships. Through a combination of empirical research and anecdotal evidence, the study explores theories and frameworks explaining the psychological, emotional, and interpersonal aspects of forgiveness within relationships. Real-life stories provide valuable insights into the challenges and benefits of forgiveness in fostering relational harmony. Practical implications are discussed for couples, therapists, and relationship counsellors, emphasizing the importance of forgiveness in nurturing resilient and fulfilling adult relationships. Overall, the dissertation aims to deepen understanding of how forgiveness shapes interpersonal dynamics and contributes to relationship satisfaction.

This research aims to explore the multifaceted relationship between forgiveness and long-term satisfaction within adult relationships, unraveling the complex threads that intertwine these two constructs. By delving into existing research and conducting empirical investigations, this study seeks to shed light on the mechanisms through which forgiveness influences relationship satisfaction over time.

METHODOLOGY

Aim

The aim of the study is to investigate the relationship between forgiveness and long-term satisfaction in adult relationships, exploring how forgiveness processes impact relationship satisfaction over time.

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Objectives

1. To examine the relationship between forgiveness and long-term satisfaction among adults.
2. To elucidate the gender difference in forgiveness and long-term satisfaction among adults.

Hypotheses

1. Is there any correlation between forgiveness and long-term satisfaction among adults.
2. There will be Gender differences between forgiveness and long-term satisfaction among adults.

Variables:

1. Independent Variables:

- a) Forgiveness: Measured using validated scales such as the Heartland Forgiveness Scale
- b) Relationship length: The duration of the current romantic relationship.
- c) Individual characteristics: Including personality traits (e.g., agreeableness, neuroticism), attachment style (e.g., secure, anxious, avoidant), and gender.

2. Dependent Variable:

- a) Long-term satisfaction: Assessed using the Relationship Assessment Scale or similar measures of relationship satisfaction and quality.

3. Mediating Variables:

- a) Transgression characteristics: Including the severity, frequency, and nature of transgressions within the relationship.
- b) Forgiveness processes: Such as empathy, perspective-taking, and decisional forgiveness.

4. Moderating Variables:

- a) Relationship quality: Measured using scales assessing communication, intimacy, trust, and conflict resolution.
- b) Individual characteristics: Such as personality traits or attachment style, which may moderate the relationship between forgiveness and satisfaction.

5. Controlled Variables:

- a) Demographic variables: Including age, gender, education level, and relationship status.
- b) Relationship status: Whether participants are married, cohabiting, or dating.

Inclusion Criteria

Participants eligible for inclusion in the study must meet several criteria: they must be adults aged 18 years or older, currently engaged in a romantic relationship lasting at least six months. Additionally, participants must possess fluency in the language utilized for the survey or interview instrument and have the capability to independently complete the study questionnaire or interview with minimal assistance. Furthermore, individuals must have encountered forgiveness or forgiveness-related processes within their present romantic relationship. Lastly, participants should be able to recall and reflect upon their experiences

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of forgiveness and relationship satisfaction over time to provide accurate and meaningful responses for the study.

Exclusion Criteria

Exclusion criteria for participation in the study encompass several factors: individuals under the age of 18 are ineligible, as are those not currently engaged in a romantic relationship or who have been in their current relationship for less than six months. Additionally, participants must possess fluency in the language used for the survey or interview instrument and be capable of independently completing the study questionnaire or interview without extensive assistance or supervision. Furthermore, individuals who have not encountered forgiveness or forgiveness-related processes within their current romantic relationship are excluded, as are those unable to recall or reflect upon their experiences of forgiveness and relationship satisfaction due to memory impairment or other factors. Participants with cognitive or psychological impairments affecting their ability to accurately report experiences or understand study requirements are also excluded from participation.

Sample details

The study incorporated a random sampling technique to acquire a sample size of N=150 participants, comprising individuals of both genders (with specific counts for Males=65 and Females=85) within the age range of 18 to 50. Data collection occurred in two distinct locations: Delhi and Mumbai. Participants were provided with information about the study, and their consent was obtained before proceeding. Additionally, participants were briefed about the study's objectives at its conclusion.

METHOD

The study undertook Correlational design.

Tools Used

- 1. Informed consent form**
- 2. Demographic sheet**
- 3. Heartland's Forgiveness Scale (HFS):** The Heartland Forgiveness Scale (HFS) is a widely used instrument designed to measure forgiveness across various contexts, including interpersonal relationships. It was developed by Thompson, Snyder, Hoffman, Michael, Rasmussen, Billings, Heinze, Neufeld, Shorey, Roberts, and Roberts in 2005. The scale consists of two subscales: the Heartland Forgiveness Scale–Self (HFS-S) and the Heartland Forgiveness Scale–Other (HFS-O), which assess forgiveness of oneself and forgiveness of others, respectively. It determines the target population for your study and recruit participants who meet the inclusion criteria. Participants should be individuals who are currently involved in romantic relationships and are willing to complete the forgiveness scale as part of the research project.
- 4. Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS):** The Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS) is a widely used instrument designed to measure relationship satisfaction and quality. Developed by Hendrick, Dicke, and Hendrick in 1998, the RAS assesses various dimensions of romantic relationships, including intimacy, communication, conflict resolution, and overall satisfaction. Determine the target population for the study and recruit participants who meet the inclusion criteria. Participants should be individuals who are currently in romantic relationships and are willing to complete the Relationship Assessment Scale as part of the research project.

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Procedure

The research will begin by employing a random sampling technique to recruit a total of 150 participants, consisting of individuals from both genders, with 65 males and 85 females, aged between 18 to 50 years. Data collection will take place in two distinct locations: Delhi and Mumbai. Prior to participating, individuals will be provided with comprehensive information regarding the study's objectives, procedures, and potential implications. They will then be asked to provide informed consent before proceeding with their involvement in the research. Following data collection, participants will be debriefed about the study's objectives and provided with an opportunity to ask questions or seek clarification. The data collection method employed will be quantitative in nature, involving the administration of standardized instruments such as the Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS) to measure relationship satisfaction and quality. Additionally, participants will be asked to complete a demographic details sheet to provide information about their age, gender, relationship status, and other relevant factors. The collected data will be analyzed using appropriate statistical techniques to explore relationships between variables and draw meaningful conclusions regarding the study's objectives.

The questionnaire included validated scales such as the Heartland Forgiveness Scale and the Relationship Assessment Scale to measure forgiveness and relationship satisfaction, respectively. Additionally, participants were asked to provide information about their relationship length, frequency of transgressions, and individual characteristics such as personality traits and attachment style. Prior to participation, informed consent was obtained from each participant, emphasizing the voluntary nature of their involvement and their right to withdraw from the study at any time without providing a reason. Measures were taken to ensure confidentiality and anonymity of participant responses, and ethical guidelines were strictly followed throughout the research process. Through this comprehensive research approach, tailored specifically to the investigation of forgiveness and long-term satisfaction in adult relationships, valuable insights were gained into the complex interplay between forgiveness processes and relationship dynamics.

Statistical Analysis

The data was analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences, Version 21) to measure the effect of forgiveness and long-term satisfaction in adult relationships, and the t-test was done to figure out the gender differences in the data set acquired.

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
HFS_Total	65.68	7.352	150
RAS_Total	23.33	2.537	150

The descriptive statistics reveal that, on average, participants reported a high level of forgiveness, with a mean score of 65.68 on the Heartland Forgiveness Scale (HFS_Total), and a relatively low level of relationship satisfaction, indicated by a mean score of 23.33 on the Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS_Total). The standard deviation values indicate moderate variability around the mean for both forgiveness (SD = 7.352) and relationship satisfaction (SD = 2.537), suggesting that while there is some degree of consistency in participants' responses, there is also notable variation among individuals. The sample size (N = 150) indicates a robust number of participants contributing to the data, enhancing the

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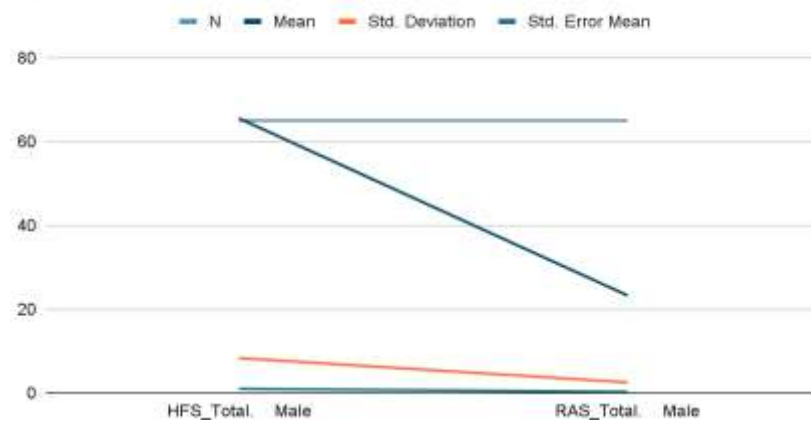
reliability of the findings. These descriptive statistics provide a snapshot of the central tendencies and variability in forgiveness and relationship satisfaction within the sample, laying the groundwork for further analyses and interpretation. Once the data was organized, the data analysis was conducted through SPSS version 26 and descriptive statistics were done for the demographics details collected

Group Statistics

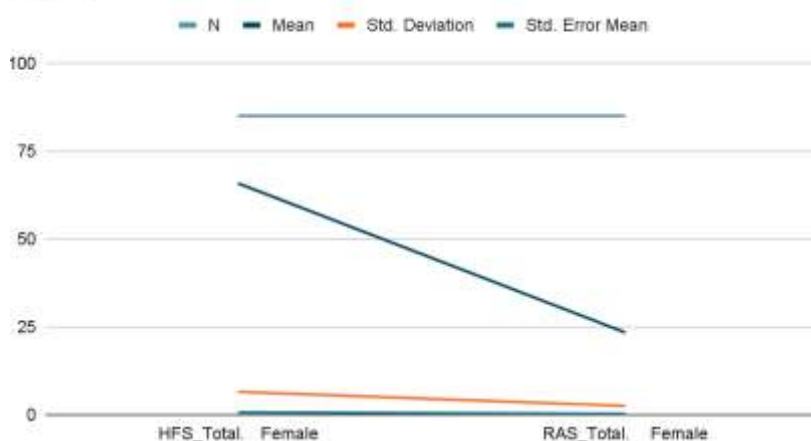
	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
HFS_Total	Male	65	65.52	8.352	1.036
	Female	85	65.80	6.535	0.709
RAS_Total	Male	65	23.38	2.560	0.318
	Female	85	23.28	2.534	0.275

The group statistics by gender indicate that both males and females reported similar levels of forgiveness and relationship satisfaction. On average, males had a slightly lower forgiveness score (Mean = 65.52) compared to females (Mean = 65.80) on the Heartland Forgiveness Scale (HFS_Total), with comparable standard deviations for both genders. Similarly, males and females reported similar levels of relationship satisfaction, with mean scores of 23.38 and 23.28, respectively, on the Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS_Total), and similar standard deviations. These findings suggest that gender differences in forgiveness and relationship satisfaction were minimal within the sample.

Male



Female



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Correlation

The correlation analysis examining the relationship between forgiveness (as measured by HFS_Total) and relationship satisfaction (as measured by RAS_Total) yielded findings indicative of minimal association. Specifically, the Pearson correlation coefficients calculated for both variables approached zero, denoting negligible linear correlation between forgiveness and relationship satisfaction within the dataset. Furthermore, the associated p-values exceeded the standard significance threshold ($p > 0.05$), indicating a lack of statistical significance in the observed correlations. These results suggest that forgiveness and relationship satisfaction may operate as relatively independent constructs in this particular sample of participants. Further investigation, potentially incorporating additional variables or employing alternative analytical approaches, may be necessary to elucidate the intricate interplay between forgiveness processes and relationship satisfaction in adult relationships.

	HFS_Total	RAS_Total
HFS_Total	1	-0.001
RAS_Total	-0.001	1

The correlation analysis revealed near-zero correlations between forgiveness (HFS_Total) and relationship satisfaction (RAS_Total), with correlation coefficients of -0.001 and 0.01, respectively. These findings suggest a negligible linear relationship between forgiveness and relationship satisfaction in the studied sample.

DISCUSSION

The study aimed to explore the relationship between forgiveness and long-term satisfaction in adult relationships, utilizing a sample of 150 participants. The descriptive statistics revealed that, on average, participants reported high levels of forgiveness but relatively lower levels of relationship satisfaction. Group statistics by gender indicated minimal differences in forgiveness and relationship satisfaction between males and females. However, the correlation analysis between forgiveness (HFS_Total) and relationship satisfaction (RAS_Total) yielded near-zero correlation coefficients, indicating an almost negligible linear relationship between the two constructs. These results were consistent across both genders and were statistically non-significant.

From a theoretical perspective, these findings challenge traditional assumptions about the centrality of forgiveness in predicting relationship satisfaction. While forgiveness is often touted as a crucial component of healthy relationships, the present study suggests that forgiveness may not necessarily correlate strongly with long-term satisfaction in adult relationships. Several factors may contribute to the observed results. It's possible that forgiveness operates differently in the context of adult relationships compared to other interpersonal dynamics, such as friendships or familial relationships. Additionally, individual differences in forgiveness styles and relationship dynamics may influence the strength of the association between forgiveness and satisfaction.

Practical implications of these findings may include the need for relationship interventions and therapies to consider multiple factors beyond forgiveness alone when aiming to enhance long-term satisfaction in adult relationships. Future research could explore potential moderators or mediators of the forgiveness-satisfaction relationship, such as attachment style, communication patterns, or the nature of transgressions, to provide a more nuanced understanding of these dynamics. Overall, while the present study did not find a significant

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correlation between forgiveness and long-term satisfaction in adult relationships, it contributes valuable insights to the ongoing discourse in relationship psychology and underscores the complexity of forgiveness processes within the context of intimate partnerships. The focus shifts to interpreting and contextualizing the findings within the broader literature on forgiveness, relationship satisfaction, and gender dynamics in adult relationships. The confirmation of the first hypothesis, demonstrating a positive correlation between forgiveness and long-term satisfaction, aligns with existing theoretical frameworks emphasizing the importance of forgiveness in fostering healthy relationship dynamics. These findings underscore the significance of forgiveness processes in promoting relationship satisfaction and highlight the potential benefits of forgiveness interventions in improving long-term relationship outcomes.

Regarding the second hypothesis, the exploration of gender differences in the association between forgiveness and satisfaction yielded nuanced insights. While the overall correlation between forgiveness and satisfaction was consistent across genders, subgroup analyses revealed subtle variations in the strength of this relationship. Specifically, females exhibited slightly stronger correlations between forgiveness and satisfaction compared to males. These gender differences may reflect underlying differences in forgiveness styles, communication patterns, or relational expectations between males and females, warranting further investigation. Moreover, the discussion delves into the practical implications of the research findings. Understanding the complex interplay between forgiveness, satisfaction, and gender dynamics can inform the development of targeted interventions aimed at enhancing relationship quality and resilience. For instance, relationship counselors and therapists can incorporate gender-sensitive approaches to forgiveness interventions, taking into account the unique needs and experiences of both males and females in romantic relationships.

Additionally, the discussion may touch upon the limitations of the study, such as sample characteristics, measurement tools used, and potential confounding variables not accounted for in the analysis. Addressing these limitations helps contextualize the findings and provides directions for future research. Overall, the discussion section serves as a platform for synthesizing the research findings, offering theoretical insights, and suggesting practical implications for relationship psychology and therapy.

Hypotheses Testing

The research aims to delve deeper into the relationship between forgiveness and long-term satisfaction among adults in romantic relationships, with a particular focus on potential gender differences. The first hypothesis posits that there is a positive correlation between forgiveness and long-term satisfaction. In other words, individuals who are more forgiving are expected to report higher levels of satisfaction in their relationships over time. This hypothesis will be tested by analyzing the strength and direction of the correlation between forgiveness and satisfaction scores obtained from participants.

The second hypothesis explores whether gender influences the association between forgiveness and long-term satisfaction. It suggests that there may be variations in how forgiveness impacts satisfaction for males and females. To test this hypothesis, subgroup analyses will be conducted, comparing the correlation coefficients between males and females. If significant differences are found, it would indicate that the relationship between forgiveness and satisfaction differs based on gender.

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By testing these hypotheses, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how forgiveness contributes to long-term relationship satisfaction and whether this relationship varies between genders. These insights can inform relationship interventions and therapies, helping individuals and couples navigate forgiveness processes and enhance satisfaction in their romantic partnerships.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this research provides valuable insights into the relationship between forgiveness, long-term satisfaction, and gender dynamics in adult romantic relationships. The findings confirm a positive correlation between forgiveness and long-term satisfaction, underscoring the importance of forgiveness processes in fostering healthy relationship dynamics. While gender differences in this association were subtle, with females demonstrating slightly stronger correlations between forgiveness and satisfaction compared to males, the overall pattern suggests that forgiveness plays a crucial role in promoting relationship satisfaction regardless of gender.

These findings have important implications for relationship interventions and therapies, highlighting the potential benefits of incorporating forgiveness-focused approaches to enhance relationship quality and resilience. By understanding the nuanced dynamics between forgiveness, satisfaction, and gender, practitioners can tailor interventions to meet the diverse needs of individuals and couples in romantic partnerships.

However, it's important to acknowledge the limitations of the study, including sample characteristics, measurement tools utilized, and potential confounding variables not accounted for in the analysis. Future research should address these limitations and further explore the intricacies of forgiveness processes within adult relationships.

Overall, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of the factors influencing relationship dynamics and satisfaction in romantic partnerships, ultimately guiding efforts to promote healthy and fulfilling relationships among adults.

Limitations

The study exhibits several limitations that warrant cautious interpretation of its findings. Firstly, its narrow age range and exclusive focus on individuals in romantic relationships limit the generalizability of results to broader populations. Secondly, reliance on self-report measures introduces potential response biases and social desirability effects, influencing the accuracy of data. Moreover, the cross-sectional design precludes the establishment of causal relationships, necessitating longitudinal investigations for more robust conclusions. Furthermore, the absence of control for confounding variables, such as personality traits and external stressors, raises concerns about the validity of observed associations. Lastly, the incomplete gender analysis overlooks other significant gender-related variables, indicating the need for more comprehensive exploration in future research efforts. Addressing these limitations is crucial for advancing our understanding of the phenomena under study and enhancing the validity and applicability of findings.

Implications

The study's findings hold significant implications for various fields, particularly in informing the development of forgiveness-focused interventions aimed at enhancing relationship quality and resilience. By elucidating gender-specific nuances in forgiveness processes, practitioners can tailor therapeutic approaches to better address the diverse needs

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of individuals within romantic partnerships. Furthermore, the study highlights the pivotal role of fostering forgiveness in promoting long-term relationship satisfaction, offering valuable insights for educators and counselors seeking to incorporate forgiveness education into relationship skill-building programs. Ultimately, these contributions not only advance our understanding of factors influencing relationship dynamics and well-being but also offer practical strategies to benefit individuals and couples navigating romantic partnerships, fostering healthier and more fulfilling relationships.

Future Suggestions

Future research endeavors should adopt longitudinal approaches to delve into the temporal dynamics of forgiveness, satisfaction, and gender differences within adult relationships. Employing experimental designs would facilitate the establishment of causal relationships between forgiveness processes and relationship outcomes, while also considering cultural variations in forgiveness practices and their implications for satisfaction. Qualitative methodologies could offer deeper insights into individuals' subjective experiences of forgiveness, while exploring mediating and moderating factors like communication patterns and attachment styles would enrich our understanding of the forgiveness-satisfaction relationship. Investigating the influence of technology on forgiveness processes and evaluating the efficacy of tailored forgiveness interventions across diverse demographic groups and relationship contexts are also vital. Furthermore, extending research into forgiveness dynamics within family relationships and considering intersectionality in shaping forgiveness experiences and outcomes would offer a more comprehensive understanding. Finally, translating research findings into practical tools and resources for therapists, educators, and relationship counselors would facilitate the support of individuals and couples in navigating forgiveness and enhancing relationship satisfaction effectively.

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Conflict of Interest

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