

## The Psychology of Forgiveness and Its Effects on Anxiety and Self-Esteem

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### ABSTRACT

Young people frequently struggle with a range of psychological conditions, such as elevated anxiety and low self-esteem. They can run into unusual and difficult circumstances and struggle to control their anxiousness, their sense of self, and their self-worth. They must also forgive others and themselves in some tough situations and decisions. Forgiveness is one of the positive psychological notions that might influence young people's anxiety and self-esteem. Therefore, the goal of this cross-sectional research is to determine the relationship between variables- forgiveness, anxiety, and self-esteem. 120 young individuals, ages 18 to 26, made up the research subjects. The heartland's forgiveness scale is used to measure the individual capacity to forgive. Their levels of anxiety is measured using Hamilton's anxiety rating scale and The Rosenberg's self-esteem scale is used to assess their degree of self-esteem. The information gathered was also utilised for a comparative study to get an insight into the gender variations in forgiveness, anxiety, and self-esteem. The findings revealed no connection at all between self-worth, anxiety, and forgiveness. The implications of the findings were also discussed.

**Keywords:** *Worry, Self-Worth, Forgiveness*

Young people frequently struggle with a range of psychological conditions, such as elevated anxiety and low self-esteem. They can run into unusual and difficult circumstances and struggle to control their anxiousness, their sense of self, and their self-worth. They must also forgive others and themselves in some tough situations and decisions. Forgiveness is one of the positive psychological notions that might influence young people's anxiety and self-esteem. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to investigate the connection between young people's anxiety, self-esteem, and forgiveness. 120 young individuals, ages 18 to 26, made up the research subjects. An individual capacity for forgiveness was gauged using the heartland's forgiveness scale, their levels of anxiety was measured using Hamilton's anxiety rating scale and Rosenberg's self-esteem scale was used to gauge the degree of self-esteem.

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### Forgiveness

Forgiveness has several advantages that go beyond the well-being of the individual. Studies have shown a significant correlation between forgiveness and better results for both mental and physical health. According to study, for instance, those who are more forgiving often experience less stress, worry, and sadness. Forgiveness, or letting go of grudges and negative emotions, promotes inner tranquillity and emotional resilience. Furthermore, forgiving strengthens bonds between people. Reconciliation, improved relationships, and improved communication may arise from forgiveness. because forgiving cultivates empathy and understanding, two traits required for creating and sustaining healthy relationships. It makes it possible for people to escape vicious cycles of animosity and conflict, opening the door to more positive relationships and trust. (Toussaint, et al., 2005)

Self-esteem and forgiveness go hand in hand. People who are able to forgive themselves or others show that they are accepting of who they are. They develop stronger emotional resilience and a more positive self-image by accepting their own humanity and flaws. People who have forgiven are able to let go of negative self-talk and self-blame, which gives them the confidence and certainty to go on. Self-esteem may be favourably impacted by forgiving oneself or others since it promotes emotional resilience, self-compassion, and acceptance. People who are able to forgive themselves or others show that they can face and overcome obstacles, which can boost confidence and feelings of self-worth. (Karremans, et al., 2003)

Forgiveness has a wide range of correlations, including psychological and interpersonal factors. The capacity for forgiveness, empathy, and the capacity to perceive things from another person's perspective are all closely related. Forgiveness is also influenced by personality qualities like agreeableness and openness to new things. Forgiveness is also influenced by the type of offense committed, the offender's expression of regret, and the severity of the perceived wrong.

To sum up, forgiveness is a process of transformation that has many positive effects on both people and society at large. By letting go of rage and embracing empathy, forgiveness promotes mental and physical health, enhances interpersonal connections, and raises one's sense of self. Gaining knowledge about the factors that influence forgiveness can help explain the workings of this intricate and potent phenomena eventually serving as a guide for actions meant to encourage reconciliation and forgiveness in a variety of situations.

### ANXIETY

Anxiety is a prevalent mental health issue that is typified by emotions of unease, concern, and terror. It might show up as excessive concern over commonplace events or certain triggers that lasts a long time. Physical symptoms such as precipitation, trembling, an accelerated pulse, and difficulty concentrating may result from this. Anxiety disorders include but are not only limited to, panic disorder, social anxiety, generalized anxiety disorder (GAD) and specific phobias.

Anxiety can arise and worsen because of several circumstances. Research indicates that some genetic differences may enhance vulnerability to anxiety disorders, indicating that genetic predisposition plays a key role. Anxiety can also develop because of environmental influences, including traumatic experiences, stressful life events, and early life events. Furthermore, the pathophysiology is linked to neurological issues, such as abnormalities in neurotransmitters like dopamine and serotonin.

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Numerous correlates have been linked to anxiety, providing insight into the intricate interactions between biological, psychological, and environmental components. Anxiety disorders, for example, relate to cognitive characteristics such as maladaptive thinking patterns, cognitive biases, and attentional biases toward stimuli that are seen as threats. Anxiety is also associated with problems with emotion regulation, such as increased emotional reactivity and intolerance of uncertainty. Anxiety experience and management are influenced by social variables, including interpersonal interactions and perceived social support. Empirical studies emphasize the protective function of social support in mitigating anxiety by reducing the adverse effects of stresses and fostering adaptability. The expression and perception of anxiety symptoms are also influenced by cultural influences; help-seeking behaviours and treatment preferences are influenced by culture norms and beliefs. (Taylor, S. E., 2011)

Anxiety and forgiveness have a complicated and reciprocal connection. On the one hand, anxiety may make it difficult for individuals to forgive since it makes it difficult to let go of negative emotions and grudges. Excessive concern and rumination are common symptoms of anxiety, and they can intensify emotions of rage and bitterness and make forgiveness seem unachievable. Anxious people frequently dwell more on previous transgressions, which can make it difficult for them to forgive and move on. (Luchies, et. al., 2010)

Forgiveness, however, has been shown to enhance mental health and reduce worry. By letting go of grudges and negative emotions, forgiveness helps lessen feelings of bitterness and hatred, which in turn lessens anxiety symptoms. Research indicates that treatments centered around forgiveness, such as cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT) and forgiveness-focused therapy, can successfully lower anxiety and enhance psychological functioning in general. (Webb et al., 2007).

Furthermore, forgiveness is linked to flexible coping mechanisms that might lessen the damaging effects of stress and anxiety. Researchers have shown that those who are more forgiving typically sense more social support, which can function as a buffer against worry. Forgiveness improves interpersonal connections and creates a sense of connection and belonging, all of which are essential for mental health. It does this by encouraging empathy, compassion, and understanding. (Toussaint et al., 2001)

### **SELF-ESTEEM**

The subjective assessment of one's own value and worth as a person is known as self-esteem. Self-esteem is the subjective evaluation of one's own worth and value as a person. It includes thoughts, emotions, and views about oneself, such as self-acceptance, competence, and confidence. Self-esteem is a vital component in determining how people think, feel, and act. Numerous aspects of their life are impacted, such as their performance in the job and in school, their mental health, and their relationships with others.

*Self-worth is influenced by a wide range of intricate factors, including external and psychological ones.*

- **Early experiences:** A person's self-esteem is greatly influenced by their early experiences, especially those that occurred throughout infancy and adolescence. While bad events like abuse, rejection, and criticism can damage self-esteem, positive experiences like safe attachment bonds, praise, and encouragement can help people feel competent and worthy (Leary & Baumeister, 2000)

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- Social comparisons: Self-esteem can be impacted by comparing oneself to others, especially if such comparison makes one feel inadequate or inferior to others. Particularly social media, which promotes inflated ideals of pleasure, success, and beauty, might worsen social comparisons and have a detrimental effect on self-esteem (Vogel et al., 2014).
- Achievements and competence: Feelings of competence and self-worth can be influenced by accomplishments in a variety of areas, including education, employment, and hobbies. On the other hand, failure or setbacks can be detrimental to one's self-esteem, particularly if those who encounter them believe they are proof of their own shortcomings (Crocker & Wolfe, 2001).
- Interpersonal connections: Friendships, romantic partnerships, and family dynamics are examples of interpersonal interactions that can have an influence on one's sense of self. In contrast to toxic or abusive relationships, which can lower self-esteem, supportive, caring relationships can raise self-esteem by offering validation, acceptance, and emotional support (Orth et al., 2012).
- Social and cultural influences: People's views of themselves and their self-worth are shaped by social norms, beliefs, and expectations. Individualistic cultures could put more emphasis on individual success and independence, while collectivistic cultures might place more significance on society peace and cooperation. (Markus & Kitayama, 2010).

*The various factors that affect people's assessments of their own value and self-worth are reflected in the correlations of self-esteem. Among the important correlations are:*

- Psychological well-being: there is a favourable correlation between psychological well-being and self-esteem, which includes reduced levels of stress, anxiety, and sadness (Ort et al. 2010)
- Academic and professional success: According to Judge and Bono (2001), higher self-esteem is associated with better academic attainment, career success, and work satisfaction.
- Interpersonal connections: people who have higher self-esteem typically have more positive interpersonal relationships that are marked by increased closeness, trust, and contentment.
- Health results: According to Robins et al. (2002), self-esteem is linked to improved physical health outcomes, such as fewer drug misuse cases, healthier lifestyle choices, and quicker recovery from sickness or injury. (Kernis, 2003).
- Resilience and coping: Those with higher self-esteem tend to be more resilient and employ adaptive coping mechanisms to deal with life's obstacles and disappointments (Orth et al., 2008).

In conclusion, a range of internal and external elements, such as early experiences, social comparisons, accomplishments, interpersonal interactions, and cultural influences, create the multidimensional construct of self-esteem. Interventions targeted at fostering good self-esteem and improving general well-being can be better informed by a deeper understanding of its correlates and components.

*Forgiveness and self-esteem have a complicated, reciprocal relationship since they both influence people's overall psychological health. The connection between self-worth and forgiveness is listed follows:*

- Forgiveness raises self-worth: People who forgive themselves or others show acceptance and self-compassion, which has a good effect on self-esteem. Forgiveness also includes letting go of negative emotions like anger and resentment and moving

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forward with compassion and understanding. Through this process, people can develop stronger emotional resilience and a more positive self-image, which eventually raises self-esteem (Toussaint et al., 2001).

- **Forgiving is facilitated by self-esteem:** People who have higher self-esteem typically possess stronger emotional resilience and adaptive coping mechanisms, which can aid in the forgiving process. Researchers have shown that those with greater self-esteem are more likely to be assertive, self-accepting, and emotionally stable, which makes it simpler for them to let go of grudges and unpleasant feelings (McCullough et al., 2002).
- **Mutual reinforcement:** In a positive feedback loop, forgiveness and self-worth can support one another. People feel more confident and worthy of themselves when they forgive others and themselves, and this in turn makes it simpler for them to forgive others in the future. On the other hand, those who have higher self-esteem are better able to forgive with more compassion and emotional forbearance (Webb et al., 2007).
- **Overcoming barriers:** Feelings of inadequacy and worthlessness are fostered by low self-esteem, which can operate as a barrier to forgiveness. People who have poor self-esteem may find it difficult to forgive others or oneself because they believe that forgiving threatens their identity or value. Forgiveness can be made easier by addressing the root causes of poor self-esteem through self-acceptance and self-compassion (Exline et al., 2008).

In summary, self-worth and forgiveness are closely related concepts that influence and reinforce one other. By fostering self-compassion, acceptance, and emotional resilience, forgiveness raises an individual's sense of worth. On the contrary, those who have better self-esteem find it easier to forgive since they can face disagreements and transgressions with more emotional stability and compassion.

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

**Marin** (2024) conducted two studies exploring the connection between self-compassion and forgiveness, alongside the impact of gender, self-esteem, and self-condemnation. These investigations aimed to comprehend the process of fostering self-forgiveness by examining various facilitating factors, considering the correlation between self-forgiveness and enhanced well-being. Utilizing online Qualtrics questionnaires, data were gathered from 94 MTurk and 114 social media participants for two quantitative correlational experiments. The analyses included bivariate correlations, mediation, and moderated mediation to examine associations, mediators, and moderators. While the results supported the parallel mediation hypothesis for the function of self-esteem as a mediator, but not the for self-condemnation, gender-based moderated mediation did not receive support, indicating gender variations in the self-forgiveness process. These findings suggest considering gender-related differences and roles played by self-compassion, self-esteem, and self-condemnation in future interventions and theoretical frameworks. The insights gained can inform the development of programs and therapies aiming to enhance well-being through addressing beliefs and promoting self-forgiveness and compassion for oneself. Effective management of the self-forgiveness process can lead to greater personal liberation.

**Sorgerová & Rahmat** (2024) highlighted the prevalence of psychological challenges among university students, such as stress, anxiety, sadness, and difficulties adapting to new circumstances, including issues related to sexual orientation, anxiety, and self-worth. The study aimed to investigate the connection between self-esteem, anxiety, life orientation, and forgiveness among university students aged twenty to twenty-six. Using established scales,

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including Rosenberg's scale of Self-Esteem and the Generalized Anxiety Disorder Self-Report Scale, significant associations were found between self-esteem, anxiety, life orientation, and forgiveness. Notably, students' forgiveness was significantly predicted by their sense of self-worth. The study underscores the importance of considering forgiveness within the context of university students' psychological well-being.

**Thakur (2024)**, This study looked at the connection between sadness, psychological health, and forgiveness among college-bound youth. Since forgiveness is defined as consciously choosing to let go of resentments or feelings of animosity for a person or organization that has harmed you, regardless of whether they truly deserve your forgiveness, it has always been an intriguing subject. Most of the time, forgiveness has a direct or indirect impact on one's wellbeing; on occasion, it can even be a treatment for depression. A balanced range of emotions, ideas, social relationships, and interests is indicative of psychological health. A person may live a happy life free from psychological problems when they have a purpose in life. Previous studies show a strong and positive association between psychological well-being and forgiveness; nevertheless, not forgiving someone can result in despair, and the correlation between the two is primarily null or negative. While sadness is inversely connected with both psychological well-being and forgiveness, forgiveness is substantial and favourably correlated with both. In terms of despair, psychological health, and forgiveness, there is some evidence of a relationship between day scholars and hostel residents.

**Kaleta & Mróz (2023)** Forgiveness has been shown to lower anxiety, although the precise process has not been studied in any research too far. This might be based on the differentiation of self (DoS) notion proposed by Murray Bowen in his theory. We tested a hypothesis in this cross-sectional study that suggests trait anxiety and dispositional forgiveness are mediated by self-differentiation. There were 216 people in the sample. The Heartland Forgiveness Scale, the state-trait anxiety inventory (STAI), and the Differentiation of Self Inventory-Revised were all modified for use in Poland. The findings showed that the negative correlation between complete forgiveness and anxiety was partially mediated by I-position, emotional cut-off, and emotional reactivity-the three aspects of DoS. Reduced unforgiveness and anxiety were associated with emotional reactivity and emotional cut-off, whereas positive forgiveness and anxiety were associated with I-position and emotional cut-off. The results show that self-differentiation may be a mechanism via which forgiving eases anxiety following injury.

**Liu, et al., (2023)** Numerous studies on the development of teenagers have demonstrated a connection between subjective well-being and peer-victimization. Less is known, though, about the protective factors and mediation mechanisms that limit this connection. To close given disparities, we investigated whether self-esteem acts as a mediator in the link between subjective well-being and peer victimization, as well as whether forgiveness modifies the relationships that peer victimization has, both directly and indirectly, with the self-esteem of teenagers and their subjective well-being. A sizable sample of 2,758 adolescents from ten Chinese middle schools participated in this research (Mage= 13.53 years, SD = 1.06 years). Through anonymous questionnaire responses, participants supplied information on demographics, peer victimization, self-esteem, forgiveness, and well-being of oneself. We discovered that after controlling for demographic variables, the relationship between peer victimization and subjective well-being was mediated by self-esteem. Furthermore, forgiving served as a buffer, lessening the damaging effects of peer victimization on one's sense of self.

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**Tiwari et al., (2023)** The study looked at the function of self-worth as a mediator in the relationship between self-forgiveness and human flourishing. Convenience sampling was used to choose 214 individuals ( $M = 22.07$  years) for the correlational design. The favourable relationships between human flourishing, self-worth, and self-forgiveness, indicated a considerable interdependence between them, according to the data. A substantial amount of the differences in human well-being was explained by self-worth and self-forgiveness. According to mediation studies, there is a substantial partial mediation link between human flourishing and self-forgiveness that is mediated by self-worth. Personal values and self-worth, which are crucial components in helping individuals' self-forgiveness, are represented by self-esteem. This can foster favourable emotions and thoughts that promote thriving. Understanding transgressing circumstances and the specific role of many stakeholders is made easier with self-esteem, which may have finally led to self-forgiveness and thriving. Fundamentally, understanding human flourishing requires an understanding of both self-worth and self-forgiveness, with self-worth mediating the impact of self-forgiveness on thriving.

**Weinberg et al., (2023)** The COVID-19 epidemic has had terrible psychological effects. The present research aimed to explore the relationship between emotional distress and the connections between emotional discomfort and personal resources while taking COVID-19-related factors into consideration. A total of 707 individuals ( $N = 777$ ) answered questionnaires on their demographics, anxiety, PTSD, forgiving others, optimism, resilience, and mastery. A stepped hierarchical multiple regression analysis's findings revealed the explanation for variation in PTSD symptoms was strongly influenced by factors such as age, cultural group, forgiveness, mastery, and contact with a person who died from COVID-19. Age, optimism, forgiveness, mastery, and knowing someone who passed away from COVID-19 all considerably increased the explained variation in anxiety. Resilience, however, was not shown to be a major factor in explaining variation in anxiety or PTSD symptoms. This study highlights the significance of understanding COVID-19-related anxiety and PTSD symptoms. Therefore, it is recommended that mastery and forgiveness be given particular consideration in therapeutic programs as coping mechanisms. Additionally, people who have been in close contact with people who have died from COVID-19, those who have COVID-19 risk factors, and those who have contracted the virus should be made aware of this among medical and mental health professionals. Minority groups should also receive extra consideration since they may be more likely to exhibit symptoms of trauma and mental distress.

**Heydari et al., (2022)** A control group was included in the quasi-experimental research design with a pre-, post-, and follow up examination. All deceived ladies who belonged to the Naranon society—the family group of anonymous sufferers—in Isfahan's first district were included in the research population. Thirty deceived women were chosen by convenience selection and randomized to the groups under experimentation and supervision. The test group was given self-healing training for 14 sessions, lasting 60 minutes each, one session each week. The Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory (1996), the Zank Anxiety Scale (1970), and the Family Forgiveness Scale (FFS) (1998) by Pollard et al. were among the study tools. The data were subsequently analysed using SPSS software's repeated measures variance analysis. Findings: It was shown that self-healing training significantly reduced anxiety, enhanced forgiveness, and improved self-esteem in women who had been deceived ( $p < 0.05$ ).

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**Kim et al. (2022)** Forgiveness is a common issue in psychology and is often seen as a religious idea. Empirical studies indicate that forgiveness reduces emotions of anger, worry and despair while increasing sentiments of hope for the future and self-worth. There is, however, a dearth of study on the connections between different forgiving outcomes. Therefore, our goal was to investigate how hope and fury function as mediators in the link between psychological health outcomes and forgiveness. A sample of 202 college students from a sizable non-profit institution completed self-report questionnaires on self-esteem, despair, hope, anger, forgiveness, and anxiety. An investigation of the roles of hope and anger in the forgiveness-psychological health relationship was done using a parallel mediation study. The two mediators had a similar size of magnitude, and the results confirmed the indirect influence of forgiveness on psychological health through anger and hope. Implications, limits, and future approaches are examined.

**Kaleta & Mróz (2021)** a Research comparing women and men has yielded inconsistent findings, despite the widespread belief that women are more forgiving than men. Furthermore, little is known regarding the specific correlates or disparate patterns of forgiveness experienced by various genders. In this investigation, the relationship between men and women's dispositional forgiveness and its emotional correlates, such as anxiety, emotional control, and positive and negative affect were looked at. 625 people between the ages of 19 and 69 made up the sample; 478 (76.5%) of them were women and 147 (23.5%) were males. The Heartland Forgiveness Scale (HFS), the Courtauld Emotional Control Scale (CECS), the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI) and The Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS) were administered in Polish. Positive aspects of the inclination to forgive did not significantly differ between men and women, although men demonstrated an increased capacity for universal forgiveness and a greater willingness to let go of grudges. The dispositional forgiving characteristics were shown to be favourably correlated with good affect, whereas anxiety, negative affect, restraint over rage and despair were adversely correlated with forgiveness in both genders. Forgiveness was favourably correlated with anxiety management in men and negatively correlated with control of anxiety in women. Several relationships between affective qualities and self-and situational forgiveness were modified by gender, but not those involving forgiving of others.

**Záhorcová et al., (2021)** This preliminary investigation set out to assess how a teaching intervention affects forgiveness on the state of grief in parents. Twenty-one bereaved parents were randomized into two groups: the control group, which got a psycho-educational grieving intervention using a humanistic approach, and the experimental group, which got an educational forgiveness intervention. Over the course of three months, each group's participants engaged in twelve separate hourly sessions. According to the findings, participants in the experimental group demonstrated, four months post the intervention. Participants in the experimental group showed statistically greater improvements in their self- and other forgiveness, as well as a higher decline in anxiety, anger, sadness in both the pre-test and follow-up tests. They also showed a greater improvement in their post-traumatic growth. We draw attention to the possible advantages of providing grieving parents with a forgiveness intervention.

**Hermaen & Hussain Bhutto (2020)** The present study's goal was to investigate how young people' subjective well-being is predicted by their level of forgiveness and thankfulness. 300 individuals between the ages of 18 and 24 who were easily chosen from a Karachi university made up the study's sample. The questionnaire used to collect the data were the Gratitude Questionnaire (McCullough et al.,2020), The Flourishing Scale (Diener et al., 2010) and the



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Heartland's Forgiveness Scale (Thompson et al., 2005), the Heartland Forgiveness Scale (Thompson et al., 2005), multiple linear regression analysis revealed that forgiveness was a significant predictor of subjective well-being while appreciation was a nonsignificant predictor. Additionally, a weak positive correlation has been seen between forgiveness and appreciative well-being ( $r=.14$ ) and subjective well-being ( $r=.34$ ) But this model's explanatory power was found to be considerable ( $R^2 = .12$ ), indicating that the variables have a meaningful relationship that warrants more in-depth research. According to this study, expressing appreciation and forgiving others may be a useful tool in psychotherapy and a significant part of general counselling for young adults.

**Hong et al. (2020)** Positive social ties are essential for personal growth, especially for early adolescents, and forgiveness plays a part in fostering these connections. The majority of earlier research concentrated on the distinct functions that cognitive elements (like compromise thinking) and personality variables (like self-worth) play while carrying out the process of learning to forgive. Only a small amount of study, meanwhile, has looked at their combined impact on a remission. This research looked at how compromising thinking affects two kinds of forgiveness; emotional and decisional forgiveness it also looked at how self-esteem influences the link between compromising thinking and forgiveness in the early stages of adolescence. 1,009 Chinese primary and secondary school students (50.4% males;  $M$  age= 11.75,  $SD= 1.27$ ) completed three self-report questionnaires. The results showed that decisional forgiveness was predicted by compromise thinking but that emotional forgiveness was not. Furthermore, it was shown that self-esteem attenuated the conditional effects of compromise thinking on emotional and decisional forgiveness. These results contribute to a deeper comprehension of the concept and process of forgiveness, which can help develop focused treatments for early adolescents that emphasize forgiveness, such programs that boost self-esteem and compromise thinking skills.

**Pandey et al. (2020)** Well-known positive self-resources like self-esteem and self-compassion have a big impact on how individuals from individualistic and collectivistic cultures live their lives. It has been proposed that both notions influence the degree and kind of self-forgiveness via different processes. The link between self-esteem and self-forgiveness was investigated, as well as the mediation effect of both good and bad self-compassion. A straightforward selection procedure was used to choose 144 males ( $M=22.10$ ,  $SD= 1.66$ ) and 124 female ( $M=21.98$ ,  $SD= 1.90$ ) participants for a correlational research design. positive and negative self-compassion. For a correlational study design. The findings showed the robust positive correlations between high levels of self-compassion and self-esteem and self-forgiveness. Conversely however, there were negative relationships between these measures and Negative Self-Compassion. considerable positive variation in Realization & Reparation, Overall Self-Forgiveness, and Attribution was explained by positive self-compassion and self-esteem, whereas considerable negative variability was explained by positive self-compassion. Positive substantial variation negative self-compassion accounted for the large diversity in realization, reparation, and attribution as well as the increase in guilt. Both positive and negative self-compassion had a significant mediating role in the relationships between self-esteem and realization, reparation, guilt, and attribution. It demonstrated how self-worth and self-compassion could coexist and function in a collectivistic society, with the latter's effects being more noticeable. It is advised to rethink what self-compassion is.

**Tiwari et al. (2020)** The study design employed was correlational. A convenience sampling was used to choose the 22014 participants ( $MAge = 22.07(1.80)$ ), 100 of whom were male

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(MAge = 22.15(1.61)) and 114 of whom were female (MAge = 22.00(1.95)). Standardized instruments were used to evaluate human flourishing, as well as self-worth and self-forgiveness. The results showed that human flourishing, self-forgiveness, and self-esteem are strongly positively correlated. Self-worth and self-forgiveness were the primary explanations for the diversity of human behaviour. These findings are necessary preconditions for doing a more thorough mediation study, which revealed that self-esteem emerged as a major partial mediator between the links between human flourishing and self-forgiveness.

**Wuldari & Megawati (2020)** Positive psychological functioning is one aspect of psychological well-being, which is a multifaceted term. Forgiveness is one of the things that affects psychological health. Adolescents who are capable of forgiving others when they feel wounded might have positive psychological effects. This essay seeks to understand the relationship between teenage psychological health and forgiveness. This article uses a literature review technique, and its criteria include research papers that were published between 2013 and 2018. Articles from journals are compiled from a number of sources, such as academia.edu, google scholar, EBSCOhost, and ResearchGate. The results, based on the literature, suggested that teenagers' psychological well-being may be influenced by forgiveness. Teenagers, especially those who have been bullied, may benefit in some way from forgiveness in terms of their subjective well-being, spiritual health, and level of happiness. Finally, it can be said that teenagers who have a great capacity for forgiving will have psychological success.

**Xie et al., (2020)** Phubbing, or the practice of using a smartphone to ignore someone in person, is a common occurrence in the digital age. Being phubbed increases the risk of mental illness and makes the individual feel abandoned. The current study looked at the relationship between sadness and becoming phubbed, as mediated by self-esteem. Additionally, this study looked at how dispositional forgiveness affected the association between sadness and becoming phubbed by using self-worth as a moderator. The link between having a phubbed and sadness was expected to be mediated by self-esteem, and the mediating impact was expected to be larger for those with low forgiving dispositions than for people with high forgiveness dispositions. For the current study, we enrolled 995 undergraduate students, ages 18 to 20, from three different Chinese institutions. The participants answered questions about sadness, dispositional forgiveness, self-esteem, and being phubbed. The association between being phubbed and depression was shown to be mediated by self-esteem, according to the findings. Furthermore, via self-esteem, dispositional forgiveness mitigated the indirect impact of being phubbed on sadness. Contrary to expectations, those with high forgiveness levels saw a greater indirect effect of being phubbed on depression than people with low forgiving levels. There is discussion of this unexpected orientation as well as other findings.

**Rasmussen et al., (2019)**, the study's objective was to investigate the meta-analytic link between forgiveness and health. To do this, several theoretical and methodological hypotheses were tested that might modify these relationships, such as the forgiveness objective, (such as self- vs. other forgiveness), the kind of health measures (like physical vs psychological), and the kind of forgiveness measure (like state vs attribute). The results below are based on a meta-analysis of 103 separate samples with 606 correlation and a total sample size of 26,043 individuals. There were 17 different nations' articles in the final sample. The samples that were included were varied and comprised veterans of battle, divorced moms, senior persons, and students. A range of health metrics, such as

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physiological discomfort, the level of blood pressure, cortisol levels, and indicators of psychological and mental well-being, such as anxiety, depression, and PTSD. a strong general correlation between the effects of forgiveness and health was discovered. Although there were high correlations with cardiovascular health markers (blood pressure and heart rate), the connections with psychological health were larger than those with physical health. The results offered strong evidence in favour of recent theories about the positive effects of forgiveness on health. It's conceivable that forgiveness might lessen cardiovascular tension and enhance mental wellness.

**Yao et. al. (2017)** with a sample of 475 university attendees, the research looked at how self-esteem affected subjective well-being. It specifically confirmed the ways that interpersonal and self-forgiveness mediate each other. Subjective Well-Being Scale, Heartland's Forgiveness Scale, And Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale were among the questionnaires that the participants had to fill out. The findings showed a substantial correlation between subjective well-being and self-worth, interpersonal forgiveness, and self-forgiveness. According to bootstrap results, the relationship between subjective well-being and self-esteem was somewhat mediated by both interpersonal and self-forgiveness. Structural equation modelling study also revealed significant linkages from self-esteem to subjective well-being via forgiveness, both of oneself and of another.

**Chung (2016)** Previous research on the relationship between inability to forgive and depressed symptoms has revealed conflicting results, despite the established link between inability to forgive and poor mental health. This investigation looked at the balancing function of self-compassion to explain the variations in severity between the depressed symptoms and the lack of forgiveness. The centre for epidemiologic studies depression scale, the self-compassion scale, and the trait forgiveness scale were among the self-report questionnaire that 311 Korean teachers (89 men and 222 women; mean age=39.3 years, standard deviation= 9.1) were asked to complete. When moderated multiple regression was used for the study, it was shown that self-compassion had a buffering interaction. Specifically, there was a stronger relationship between self-compassion and melancholy than there was between depression and lack of forgiveness.

**Omara et al. (2015)** A study looked at how well forgiveness education works to lessen tension, anxiety, and depressive symptoms among high school females. Materials and procedures: Pretest-post-test methodology was used in semi-experimental research with a control group. Thirty Saravan high school girls in grade 10 comprised the research sample in 2014. TRIM-18, DAS-21, and a demographic questionnaire were utilized to gather the data. Two group of participants were formed: the experimental group and the control group. Following the completion of the pretest, the experimental group students took part in the forgiveness education program. Both groups received a post-test following the intervention. The data was then examined using one-way ANCOVA. The results showed a statistical examination indicated that there has been a noteworthy reduction in the symptoms of tension, anxiety, and sadness because of forgiveness education. In conclusion, teenagers can benefit much from forgiveness education in educational contexts. Lastly, suggestions for further study and treatment were given.

**Strelan & Zdaniuk (2014)** Based on theories about motivated self-defence, we provide the findings of four investigations examining the hypothesis that a condition of threatened self-esteem diminishes the capacity for forgiveness. In Research 1, reduced intentions to forgive in hypothetical situations were associated with primed self-esteem threat (in comparison to a

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control condition). In Study 2, the motivation to forgive in response to recalled offenses that one had personally experienced was negatively impacted by primed self-esteem threat (as compared to two control situations). Using a correlational recall design, Study 3 showed that reasons for forgiveness are adversely correlated with endangered self-esteem that is directly linked to a personally recalled violation. Study 4 returned to the priming paradigm and demonstrated that improving self-esteem at the state level might potentially lessen the detrimental effects of the self-esteem threat on forgiving. Theoretical and practical implications of future research ideas are presented.

### *Rationale of the Study*

The rationale of the study lies in the recognition of the complex interplay between forgiveness, anxiety, and self-esteem, particularly among young people. Young people frequently encounter psychological challenges and understanding these factors is crucial for promoting their overall wellbeing. Forgiveness is identified as a positive psychological construct that can potentially influence anxiety and self-esteem. Exploring the element of forgiveness in mitigating anxiety and enhancing self-esteem can provide valuable insight into effective coping mechanisms and interventions for mental health issues. While there is existing research on forgiveness, anxiety, and self-esteem individually, there is need for more comprehensive studies that examine their interconnectedness. By addressing this gap, the research advances our understanding of psychology as a field. Recognizing the potential correlation can inform more nuanced and tailored interventions that account for diverse experiences and needs within young populations.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### *Aim*

To assess forgiveness and its relationship with anxiety and self-esteem among young adults.

### *Objectives*

- To determine the relationship between forgiveness and anxiety
- To determine the relationship between forgiveness and self-esteem

### *Hypothesis*

H1- There will be a significant negative correlation between forgiveness and anxiety.

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

### *Variables*

- Independent variable: forgiveness
- Dependent variable: anxiety and self-esteem

### *Sample*

The research focused on a diverse sample of 120 young adults aged between 18-26 residing in Delhi-NCR region, using surveys. The sample included 60 males and 60 females. The sample method employed for this study was random sampling. Research could use a random sampling technique to select participants from a target population. This method increases the likelihood of obtaining a representative sample but may be more time-consuming and resource intensive.

### *Inclusion Criteria*

- Participants within the age group of 18-26 are considered.

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- Participants belonging to Delhi-NCR region are considered.
- Both males and females are considered.

### *Exclusion Criteria*

- Participants below the age of 18 and above the age of 26 are not considered.
- Participants belonging to other parts of India other than Delhi-NCR are not considered.
- No other gender identity is considered other than males and females.

### *Research Design*

The research is a cross-sectional, correlational which seeks to comprehend how forgiveness affects anxiety and self-worth. Standardised questionnaires are used, and survey method is employed to obtain data with a given time from a sample of 120 participants comprising of 60 males and 60 females of the 18-26 age group, residing in Delhi-NCR region. The information is analysed using Pearson's correlation. The research is descriptive.

### *Tools*

The heartland's forgiveness scale is an 18-item questionnaire that assesses a person's dispositional forgiveness, or their overall propensity to be forgiving. It involves forgiving oneself, others, or an event. The scale possesses three six-item sub-scales. The scoring is done using a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (I am always false), 3 (I am more frequently false), 5 (I am more often true), to 7 (I am nearly always true). There are nine negatively worded statements which require reverse scoring. The scores from all the sub-scales are summed and then all the 18-items are added to get the final score. It is based on the model and definition of forgiveness which states the way a perceived transgression is framed, and how the violation's consequences are changed from negative to neutral or positive. One might forgive oneself, another person or people, or a circumstance that seems uncontrollable to anybody (such as a disease, "fate," or a natural calamity) as the source of the transgression. Thompson et al. (2005)

Hamilton's scale for rating anxiety: The HAM-A was one of the first rating scales developed to assess the severity of anxiety symptoms, and it is still widely used in therapeutic and research settings. Somatic anxiety, or bodily issues related to anxiety, and psychic anxiety, or mental agitation and psychological pain, are both measured by the 14-item scale. A collection of symptoms characterizes each item on the scale. Every item has a value ranging from 0 to 4, and the total score can be anywhere from 0-56. A score of less than 17 denotes mild anxiety, a score between 18 and 24 indicates moderate anxiety, and a score between 25 and 30 indicates moderate to severe anxiety.

The HAM-A has been criticized for its often-poor ability to discern between somatic anxiety and somatic side effects, as well as between anxiolytic and antidepressant effects, while being widely used as an outcome measure in clinical investigations. The HAM-A does not include any conventional probing questions. Despite this, the levels of inter-rater reliability suggested by the scale are fair. (Hamilton, 1959)

The ten-piece to determine one's degree of self-esteem, utilize Rosenberg's self-esteem scale. The test's initial goal was to determine the students' self-esteem in high school. However, the scale has been applied to a wide range of people since it was developed, including adults, for whom standards are known. Scoring for the RSE might be a bit challenging because it uses

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the Guttman scale. Scoring is accomplished by combining ratings. Responses that indicate poor self-esteem include "strongly disagree" or "strongly disagree" on items 1, 3, 4, 7, and 10 and "strongly agree" or "agree" on issues 2, 5, 6, 8, and 9. If two or three of the three right answers are given, items 3, 7, and 9 are scored as a single item. Items 8, 10, and 1 are evaluated separately; items 2 and 6 are evaluated as a single item if there are two correct responses (one or both out of two). For items 4 and 5, one or both two correct answers are regarded as a single item. Another way to score the scale is to total up all the four-point items after inverting the scores for the negatively worded questions. The scale ranges from 0-30. Total score within a range of 15-25 are considered normal and scores lesser than 15 depict low self-esteem.

### Statistical analysis

The study employed correlation analysis to investigate the correlation among self-esteem, anxiety, and forgiveness.

## ANALYSIS OF RESULT

**Table 1: Correlation Forgiveness and Anxiety**

Variables	Anxiety scores	Forgiveness scores
Anxiety scores	1	.042
Forgiveness scores	.042	1

*\*\* At the 0.05 level, the association is not significant (2-tailed).*

**Table 1:** demonstrates the relationship between forgiveness scores and anxiety scores among young adults.

**Table 2: Correlation Forgiveness and Self Esteem**

Variables	Forgiveness scores	Self-esteem scores
Forgiveness scores	1	.095
Self-esteem scores	.095	1

*\*\* At 0.05 level, the association is not significant (2-tailed)*

**Table 2:** demonstrates the relationship between forgiveness scores and self-worth scores among young adults.

## DISCUSSION

This research aims to assess forgiveness and its relationship with anxiety and self-esteem. To fulfil this aim, four objectives are prepared. The first one aims to investigate the connection between anxiety and forgiveness in young adults. The second goal is to investigate the connection between young people's self-esteem and forgiveness. A concrete proof of 120 participants, comprising of 60 males and 60 females belonging to the 18-26 age group, is selected using random sampling method to ensure unbiased and equal representation. The participants are from different urban cities across India. Standardised questionnaires are used to obtain data. The heartland's forgiveness scale is used to assess the level of forgiveness among young adults. It consists of 18-items which gauges a person's dispositional forgiveness- that is, their inclination to be forgiving in general. It involves forgiving oneself, others, or an event. The scale possesses three six-item sub-scales. The scoring is done using a 7-pointy scale. The 14-item Hamilton Anxiety Rating Scale (HAM-A) is used to gauge the participants' levels of anxiety describing different somatic as well as psychic symptoms. Each item is scored from 0-4 depending on the chosen respond of the

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subject. Rosenberg's 10-item self-esteem scale is used to gauge the degree of self-esteem which is scored on a scale of 0-3 out of which a few-negatively phrased items are reverse scored. Based on the four objectives corresponding hypothesis are formed.

Hypothesis 1 stated that there would be a strong inverse relationship between anxiety and forgiveness among young adults. Pearson's correlation was used for statistical analysis to investigate the theory that there would be a noteworthy inverse relationship between forgiveness and anxiety among young adults. From table 1 the first correlational coefficient (anxiety vs forgiveness), the value of .042 indicates a very weak positive correlation between anxiety and forgiveness. This means that as forgiveness scores increase, there is slight tendency for anxiety scores to increase, although the relationship is minimal and hence, not significant. The second correlational coefficient (forgiveness vs anxiety) mirrors the first, as correlation coefficient are symmetric. Again, the value of .042 shows a very weak positive association between anxiety and forgiveness, supporting the fact that there is a very little relationship- that is, t=greater forgiveness scores are associated with somewhat higher anxiety levels hence, not significant. Other factors are most likely to take part in more determining the levels of anxiety, and the relationship between forgiveness and anxiety may be influenced by various individual differences and contextual factors. Therefore, the alternate hypothesis i.e. that there would be a notable inverse relationship between anxiety and forgiveness in young adults is rejected.

Hypothesis 2 stated expected forgiveness and self-esteem would significantly positively correlate. The hypothesis that there will be a substantial positive association between young adults' self-esteem and forgiveness was tested statistically using Pearson's correlation. The value of .095 in Table 1's initial correlational coefficient (forgiveness vs. self-esteem) suggests a very modest positive correlation between the two. This indicates that, while the association is small and hence not significant, there is a minor tendency for self-esteem ratings to rise when forgiveness levels do. The second correlational coefficient (self-esteem vs forgiveness) mirrors the first, as correlation coefficient are symmetric. Again, the value of .095 indicates a extremely little positive relationship between forgiveness and self-worth, reinforcing the finding that higher forgiveness scores are associated with slightly higher self-esteem scores, but relationship is minimal, hence, not significant. It implies that the individuals who exhibit higher levels of forgiveness may also tend to have slightly higher levels of self-esteem, and vice-versa. It's crucial to remember that the association is not very strong, suggesting that other elements likely play more substantial roles in determining the levels of self-esteem of an individual. Therefore, the alternate hypothesis i.e. the relationship between self-esteem and forgiveness would be strongly favourable, gets rejected.

According to the study's findings, there was no significant relationship found between self-esteem and forgiveness or forgiveness and anxiety. It is important to take into account the intricacies of human conduct, as well as the variety of individual distinctions that may impact anxiety and self-worth. A meta-analysis was conducted on 15 studies to access the relationship between forgiveness and anxiety correlation across the population. There results yielded a mixed pattern where a few studies showed a significant relationship whereas others showed no or very weak correlation between the two. The future implications of the study suggested more research on the topic to better understand the nuanced connection between the variables (Smith et al., 2020).

Two-year longitudinal research on people was carried out to examine the connection between psychological well-being, anxiety, and forgiveness. The findings over time revealed

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no link with anxiety but a favourable correlation with psychological well-being. (Chen et al., 2019)

Researchers conducted a literature review accessing the link between forgiveness and anxiety including other health outcomes. The results proved forgiveness to be associated with improved mental health and adjustment but could not yield consistent evidence for a direct correlation between forgives and anxiety. (Toussaint et al., 2013)

A comprehensive review compiled results from various studies on forgiveness and its relationship with health and well-being. While the review highlighted the beneficial effects of forgiveness on overall health, including reduced stress, it noted that the specific relationship forgiveness with anxiety varied across studies and called for further research to clarify the nature of this association. (Row L., et al., 2007).

A meta-analytical review synthesized data from over 60 independent samples comprising over 12,000 participants to explore the relationship between forgiveness and self-worth. The findings indicate a weak, non-significant association between self-esteem and forgiveness, indicating that self-esteem levels may not be significantly impacted by forgiving. However, the result also noted that the relationship could be influenced by various factors such as type of forgiveness measured (e.g., interpersonal forgiveness vs. self-forgiving) and the specific context in which the forgiveness occurs. (Davis, et al., 2009)

A longitudinal study followed a cohort of young adults over a three-year period to investigate the relationship between self-esteem and forgiving. The results revealed no significant relationship levels over time, suggesting that forgiveness might not directly impact sel-esteem in population. (Witvliet, et al., 2013)

A meta-analytical review synthesized data from 28 independent studies to investigate the associations between forgiveness and our sense of worth. The findings showed a small, not significant relationship between self-esteem and forgiveness, indicating that forgiveness might not be strongly associated with self-esteem levels across diverse populations and contexts. (Maltby, et al., 2008).

A longitudinal study utilized structural equations modelling to analyse the connection between self-worth, forgiveness and well-being outcomes over time. While forgiveness was found to be associated with health outcomes, including mental well-being, the study found no evidence of a meaningful relationship between self-esteem and forgiveness, suggesting that forgiveness might have different effects on various aspects of psychological functioning, (Green, et al., 2015)

### **CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS**

The research intended to study the association between forgiveness, anxiety, and self-esteem among young adults. While forgiveness, anxiety and self-esteem were examined among young adults, the study did not find a correlation between forgiveness or either anxiety or self-esteem. Despite hypotheses predicting negative association among forgiveness and anxiety and adverse relationship between forgiveness and self-esteem, the data analysis did not support these hypotheses. The findings suggest that forgiveness may not have a strong direct impact on either anxiety or self-esteem among young adults in the sampled population. This implies that other factors beyond forgiveness may play more substantial roles in determining levels of anxiety and self-esteem in this demographic. However, it's



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important to note that the relationship between forgiveness and these psychological variables is complex and nuanced, as evidenced by mixed findings from existing literature and meta-analyses cited in the discussion earlier. Therefore, future studies should continue to explore the complex connections to provide a more comprehensive understanding of forgiveness and its implications for psychological functioning.

The implications of this research on forgiveness, anxiety, and self-esteem among young adults are multifaceted and contribute to a broader understanding of these psychological constructs- the findings highlight the complexity of human behaviour and its intricate interplay between pardoning, anxiety, and feelings of worth. The lack of noteworthy correlation suggest that these relationships are influenced by various individual differences and contextual factors, emphasizing the need for a nuanced approach in studying psychological phenomena.

Despite the non-significant correlation found in this study, the research underscores the importance of continued investigation into the relationship between forgiveness, anxiety, and self-esteem. Meta-analytical reviews and longitudinal studies cited in the discussion section emphasize the mixed findings across different studies and the need for more robust evidence to clarify these relationships.

While the direct relationships between forgiveness and anxiety, and forgiveness and self-esteem were not significant, the research suggests potential implications for mental health interventions. For example, forgiveness interventions might not directly impact anxiety or self-esteem but could still have beneficial effects on overall mental well-being and adjustment. The research also underscores the importance of considering individual differences and contextual factors when studying forgiveness, anxiety, and self-esteem.

Longitudinal studies can help us understand get deeper insights into the dynamic nature of these variables. Overall, this research contributes to the ongoing dialogue in psychology regarding forgiveness and its implication for mental health and well-being. By highlighting the complexity of these relationships and the need for future investigation, it paves path for next studies that seek to comprehend the complexities of psychological processes and human behaviour.

### ***Limitations and Future Scope***

The study on forgiveness, anxiety and self-esteem among young adults identified several limitations and outlined future research directions to enhance understanding of this area. Firstly, the sample size of 120 young adults from Delhi-NCR region could restrict how far the results can be applied to the young adult population. The representativeness of the study's findings may be demonstrated with a larger and more varied sample. Second, response bias and social desirability effects are possible when data collection is based only on self-report measures. Employing multiple methods of data collection, such as observer ratings or behavioural measures, could help mitigate these biases in future studies. Furthermore, the use of cross-sectional design in the research captures information at a specific moment in time, limiting insights into the dynamic nature of forgiveness, anxiety, and self-esteem with time. A more thorough knowledge of how these factors change and interact throughout time might be possible with longitudinal research. Additionally, the exclusive criteria, focusing solely on individuals aged 18-26 from the Delhi-NCR region, restricts the generalizability of the findings to a broader population. Future studies should consider including participants from diverse demographics and geographical locations.

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Moreover, the study locked controlled variables for factors that could influence forgiveness, anxiety, and self-esteem, such as personality traits or cultural factors. Integrating these variables into further investigations may provide a more complex understanding of the links analysed. Moving forward, future research could explore longitudinal designs to track the evolutions of forgiveness, anxiety and self-esteem over time and investigate potential mediators and moderators of these relationships. Additionally, intervention studies could assess the impact of forgiveness interventions on anxiety and self-esteem, providing evidence-based strategies for promoting well-being among young adults. Overall, addressing these limitations and pursuing future research directions outlined could contribute to a deeper understanding of forgiveness and its implications for psychological well-being among young adults.

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The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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