

Research Paper

## A Gender-Based Analysis of Forgiveness and Psychological Well-being among College Students

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### ABSTRACT

The research problem on this topic is to examine the connection between forgiveness and psychological well-being in the group of college students, with specific reference to gender variations. Positive mental health particularly manifests during the time of young adulthood as it is a developmental stage faced with academic, social, and emotional problems. As the construct of positive psychology, forgiveness is a tool that helps people to reduce and eliminate any negative feelings about self, others, and situations that are not in their control in order to achieve emotional stability and mental health. The use of quantitative factorial and comparative research design was made. The sample consisted of 300 college students (150 males and 150 females) aged 18-25 years and was chosen from different colleges in the city of Ghaziabad. Forgiveness was measured through a Hindi translation of Heartland Forgiveness Scale that measures forgiveness of self, other people and circumstances. The Hindi adaption of Psychological Well-Being Scale was used to measure psychological well-being. Descriptive statistics, independent-samples t -tests, and two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) were used to analyze data. The results show that self-forgiveness, other forgiveness and situational forgiveness had a strong impact on the psychological well-being of college students. Students who showed more forgiveness levels of forgiveness indicated more psychological well-being compared to those who showed less forgiveness. Gender disparity occurred in the general psychological well-being whereby the females scored higher. But, there were no significant interaction effects on forgiveness in relation to gender indicating that forgiveness is a contributing factor to psychological well-being to a significant extent regardless of gender. The research finds that forgiveness is also a promotional variable to psychological well-being and that forgiveness-based programs should be included in educational and mental health programs among the young adults.

**Keywords:** *Forgiveness, Psychological Well-Being, Gender Differences, College Students, Positive Psychology*

Psychological well-being is one of the central aspects of positive mental health, which most frequently occurs in young adulthood as people deal with academic, social, and emotional difficulties (Ryff & Singer, 1996; Norvilitis & Reid, 2012; Ayoob et al., 2015). It is the positive psychological model of forgiveness which allows releasing negative

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emotions towards self, others and situations beyond ones control thus leading to emotional stability and general state of well-being in a person (Honmore & Jadhav, 2015; Wigtil & Henriques, 2015; Freire et al., 2016).

Forgiveness is a desirable psychological routine that is based on release of negative feelings like resentment, anger, blame etc to others, oneself and situations that one does not control (Aboalshamat et al., 2015). It is an essential part of positive psychology, as it allows people to recover emotionally, discharges of emotions, and a feeling of peace inside (Ain et al., 2021). Through forgiveness, people are able to mitigate the effect of past-injuries and establish a better emotional condition (Honmore & Jadhav, 2015; Wigtil & Henriques, 2015; Freire et al., 2016). Forgiveness has a considerable role of improving psychological well-being and helps people to overcome life challenges and have a better mental health (Anjum, 2022; García-Álvarez et al., 2021).

One of the key domains of positive mental health is psychological well-being, which is particularly crucial in young adulthood when a person has to deal with academic, social, and emotional stressors (Ryff & Singer, 1996; Norvilitis & Reid, 2012; Ayoob et al., 2015). It has been comprehended as the best form of functioning where people are satisfied with life, balanced emotionally, and with the sense of purpose (Ansari et al., 2013). The problem of fluctuation in psychological well-being among college students is especially susceptible to numerous factors, and it is crucial to consider it as a priority area in supporting mental health among students at colleges (Anwar & Rana, 2023; Wan, 2025).

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Psychological well-being is widely conceptualized as a multidimensional construct that reflects optimal psychological functioning rather than merely the absence of psychological distress (Tangmunkingvorakul et al., 2019; Irshad & Lone, 2025; Khairani et al., 2019). Ryff's model of psychological well-being identifies six core dimensions: autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance, all of which are particularly salient during emerging adulthood (Ryff & Singer, 1996). College students experience a unique combination of academic demands, social transitions, and identity-related challenges, making psychological well-being a critical concern in higher education contexts (Norvilitis & Reid, 2012; Ayoob et al., 2015; Can et al., 2021).

Within the framework of positive psychology, forgiveness has been recognized as an important psychological strength that contributes to emotional regulation, mental health, and overall well-being (Habelrih & Hicks, 2015). Forgiveness enables individuals to reduce negative emotions such as anger, resentment, and hostility, thereby promoting psychological balance and adaptive functioning (Honmore & Jadhav, 2015; Wigtil & Henriques, 2015). Empirical research consistently demonstrates a positive association between forgiveness and psychological well-being across student and adult populations, suggesting that forgiving attitudes play a protective role in mental health (Shafiq et al., 2015; Freire et al., 2016).

Self-forgiveness has received increasing scholarly attention due to its role in alleviating self-directed negative emotions such as guilt, shame, and self-blame (Holliman et al., 2021). Research conducted among college students indicates that higher levels of self-forgiveness are associated with greater self-acceptance, emotional stability, and psychological well-being (Luo & Brunsting, 2019; Malik et al., 2020). By fostering self-compassion and

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reducing maladaptive rumination, self-forgiveness supports personal growth and emotional resilience during early adulthood (Morton et al., 2020).

Forgiveness of others has also been linked to enhanced interpersonal functioning and emotional balance (Matteucci & Soncini 2021). Studies suggest that individuals who are more forgiving toward others experience reduced interpersonal stress, lower levels of hostility, and improved psychological well-being (Abbasi & Zubair 2015; Arshad & Rafique, 2016). Forgiving others promotes social harmony and positive relationships, which are key components of psychological well-being, particularly in educational and social environments where interpersonal interactions are frequent (Lai & Ma, 2016; Lopes et al., 2021).

Forgiveness of situations, which involves accepting uncontrollable or adverse life circumstances, has been identified as another important dimension of forgiveness. Research indicates that situational forgiveness helps individuals cope more effectively with uncertainty, stress, and negative life events, thereby contributing positively to psychological well-being (Tan et al., 2021). This dimension of forgiveness fosters adaptive coping strategies and resilience, which are especially valuable for college students navigating academic pressures and developmental transitions (Malighetti et al., 2023; Shengyao et al., 2024).

Research examining gender differences in psychological well-being and forgiveness has produced mixed and sometimes inconsistent findings (Benítez-Agudelo et al., 2025). Some studies suggest that females tend to exhibit greater emotional awareness and relational orientation, which may contribute to differences in psychological well-being outcomes (Punia, 2015; Sharma et al., 2022). However, other studies report minimal or inconsistent gender differences in forgiveness and well-being, emphasizing the role of contextual, cultural, and situational factors rather than gender alone (Osamika et al., 2021). Evidence further suggests that males and females may differ in emotional processing styles, coping mechanisms, and interpersonal orientations, which can influence how forgiveness is experienced and expressed (Chaliawala et al., 2025). These differences highlight the importance of examining gender variations across distinct dimensions of forgiveness, including forgiveness of self, others, and situations, in reference to psychological well-being (Chien et al., 2022).

In collectivistic cultural contexts such as India, forgiveness is deeply rooted in values of social harmony, relational interdependence, and emotional regulation. Studies conducted among Indian populations emphasize forgiveness as an important coping mechanism that supports psychological well-being and interpersonal balance (Siddiqui, 2015; Singhal & Prakash, 2020). Despite increasing scholarly attention to psychological well-being in higher education, limited empirical research has examined forgiveness as a multidimensional construct encompassing self, others, and situations within the Indian college student population (Sharma et al., 2022).

Although prior research has extensively examined forgiveness and psychological well-being, much of the literature has focused on these constructs independently rather than exploring their combined influence. Moreover, relatively few studies have conducted direct comparative analyses of male and female college students across both forgiveness and psychological well-being simultaneously. Overall, existing literature supports the positive role of forgiveness in enhancing psychological well-being; however, a significant gap

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remains in research that simultaneously investigates forgiveness of self, forgiveness of others, and forgiveness of situations while explicitly examining gender differences. Addressing this gap through a gender-based comparative analysis provides a comprehensive understanding of how forgiveness dimensions contribute to psychological well-being among college students and forms a strong rationale for the present study.

### *Research Gap*

Psychological well-being is widely recognized as a multidimensional construct reflecting optimal psychological functioning rather than merely the absence of mental illness. Research grounded in Ryff's model emphasizes dimensions such as autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations, purpose in life, and self-acceptance as crucial during emerging adulthood. Empirical studies indicate that college students face substantial academic and psychosocial stressors, making psychological well-being a critical concern in higher education. Within the framework of positive psychology, forgiveness has been identified as an important psychological resource that reduces negative emotional states such as anger, resentment, and rumination, thereby promoting psychological well-being. Prior research consistently reports a positive association between forgiveness and psychological well-being, with specific emphasis on self-forgiveness, forgiveness of others, and forgiveness of situations as contributors to emotional regulation, interpersonal harmony, and adaptive coping.

Despite extensive international research, several gaps remain. Findings related to gender differences in forgiveness and psychological well-being are inconsistent, with some studies reporting higher well-being among females and others suggesting minimal or no gender differences, indicating the influence of cultural and contextual factors. Moreover, although forgiveness is acknowledged as a multidimensional construct, limited empirical studies have simultaneously examined forgiveness of self, others, and situations in relation to psychological well-being, particularly among Indian college students. The scarcity of research focusing on gender differences within different levels of forgiveness further highlights the need for systematic investigation. Addressing these gaps, the present study aims to examine the multidimensional nature of forgiveness and its influence upon psychological well-being among male and female college students within the Indian socio-cultural context.

### *Objectives of the Study*

1. To examine the influence of gender on psychological well-being
2. To examine the influence of forgiveness of self on psychological well-being.
3. To examine the influence of forgiveness of others on psychological well-being.
4. To examine the influence of forgiveness of situations on psychological well-being.

### *Hypotheses*

- **H<sub>0</sub>1:** Gender would have no significant effect on psychological well-being.
- **H<sub>0</sub>2:** Forgiveness of self would not influence psychological well-being significantly.
- **H<sub>0</sub>3:** Forgiveness of others would not influence psychological well-being significantly.
- **H<sub>0</sub>4:** Forgiveness of situations would not influence psychological well-being significantly.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### *Research Design*

The current research followed quantitative, comparative, and factorial types of research in this study and also carry out a comparison of the male and the female students. This design was also favourable in addressing both main effect and interaction effect of the gender and dimensions of forgiveness on the psychological well-being and is considered through inferential statistics.

### *Sample*

The sample size was 300 college students who were 18 years to 25 years divided into 150 males and 150 females who were chosen in different colleges within Ghaziabad city. The respondents were from undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. To perform the analysis, the sample was split equally into two groups high forgiveness and low forgiveness to have 150 students in each group (75 males and 75 females).

### *Sampling Method*

Participants in the identified colleges were generated through the use of a random sampling technique. Male and female students were represented equally so as to make gender comparisons without bias.

### *Tools Used:*

- 1. Heartland Forgiveness Scale (HFS)** - This scale, which was initially designed by Thompson et al. (2005) to assess dispositional forgiveness, has three areas of assessment, namely, forgiveness of self, forgiveness of others, and forgiveness of situations and translated in Hindi by Gyanesh Kumar Tiwari and Sujata Mudgal (2016).
- 2. Psychological Well-Being Scale (PWBS)** - This is the hindi adaptation of Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Scale which was adapted by Prof. S. N. Rai and Mrs. Deepika Gupta (2007). It is a scale assessing six dimensions of well-being, which include autonomy, mastery over the environment, personal growth, positive relationships with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance.

*Table 3.1: Reliability of the Tools*

Instrument	Reliability Coefficient ( $\alpha$ )
Heartland Forgiveness Scale (HFS)	0.86
Psychological Well-Being Scale (PWBS)	0.77

*Table 3.2: Validity of the Tools*

Instrument	Type of Validity	Validity Value / Status
Heartland Forgiveness Scale (HFS) – Hindi Version	Construct Validity	0.86
Psychological Well-Being Scale (PWBS) – Hindi Version	Content & Construct Validity	Established through standardization

### **Questionnaire Design**

The questionnaire was divided into two standardized self-report scales namely, the Heartland Forgiveness Scale the Psychological Well-Being Scale. Both scales had positively and negatively worded items and reverse scoring was used where necessary. The higher the scores, the more was the forgiveness and psychological well-being.

**Data Collection Procedure**

The same had been done with the permission of the concerned college authorities. Informed consent was taken and the participants were aware of what the study was about. The collection of data was done in the group during college time. The first scale to be used was the Forgiveness Scale, and the second was the Psychological Well-Being Scale given with a short break to eliminate the impact of fatigue. The process was done in the form of confidentiality and anonymity.

**Demographic Profile**

**Table 3.3: Demographic Profile of the Sample (N = 300)**

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
<b>Gender</b>	Male	150	50
	Female	150	50
<b>Age (Years)</b>	18–20	120	40
	21–23	130	43.33
	24–25	50	16.67
<b>Educational Level</b>	Undergraduate	200	66.67
	Postgraduate	100	33.33
<b>Forgiveness Level</b>	High Forgiveness	150	50
	Low Forgiveness	150	50
<b>Geographical Area</b>	Ghaziabad City	300	100

The demographic composition on the sample shows that the sample is well balanced in gender with a 50/50 ratio of males and females. In terms of age, the highest percentage of respondents (43.33) comprises of the 21-23 years old age, and 40% is composed of the 18-20 years age group and 16.67 in the 24-25 years age group. On educational level, the majority are undergraduate students and this is 66.67 with 33.33 being postgraduate students. Regarding the level of forgiveness, the sample is also balanced with half in the high level of forgiveness and half in the low level of forgiveness. Lastly, the sample size (100%), is of Ghaziabad City. It is a well-balanced distribution with a variety of representation on the most important demographic variables.

**Descriptive Statistics**

**Table 3.4: Descriptive Statistics of Psychological Well-Being Scores**

Variable	Group	N	Mean	SD
<b>Gender</b>	Male	150	198.53	15.25
	Female	150	203.27	14.62
<b>Forgiveness of Self</b>	High	150	203.47	15.35
	Low	150	197.05	13.93
<b>Forgiveness of Others</b>	High	150	206.73	14.31
	Low	150	198.99	13.95
<b>Forgiveness of Situations</b>	High	150	203.27	14.62
	Low	150	200.9	15.1

The descriptive measures of the psychological well-being scores of the various groups are as follows: Females have a higher mean psychological well-being score (203.27) than males (198.53) and also the variability is lesser among females (14.62) than males (15.25). To forgive self, high forgiveness levels record a higher mean score (203.47) than the low forgiveness levels (197.05) with the high forgiveness levels recording a slightly higher

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(15.35 vs. 13.93). In the same way, the high forgiveness group has a higher mean (206.73) than the low forgiveness group (198.99) with the high forgiveness group once again having slightly higher variability (14.31 vs. 13.95). Finally, situations forgiveness has a mean score of 203.27 and a low forgiveness a mean score of 200.90, which is relatively small with a standard deviation of 14.62 vs. 15.10. This distribution underscores the fact that people who have greater forgiveness in all dimensions are more likely to report psychological well-being.

### DATA ANALYSIS

*Table 4.1: Summary Table of Analysis of Variance for Forgiveness of Self and Psychological Wellbeing*

Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-Value	Significance Level
Gender (A)	2108.446	1	2108.446	9.908	0.007
Forgiveness of Self (B)	3115.316	1	3115.316	14.639	0.002
A × B	434.728	1	434.728	2.043	0.154 (Non-Significant)
SSW (Within)	62992.59	296	212.813		
SST (Total)	12176450	300			

Table 4.1 variability analysis results show that the most important impact of gender on psychological well-being is statistically significant ( $F = 9.908, p < 0.01$ ). As a result, male and female college students have a significant difference in the levels of their psychological well-being. Also, a significant primary effect of self-forgiveness was found ( $F=14.639, p < 0.01$ ), implying that self-forgiveness is a key determinant of the psychological state. Students with greater self-forgiveness levels have significantly better psychological well-being than those with lesser self-forgiveness levels. Nevertheless, the gender and self-forgiveness interaction was not statistically significant ( $F 2.043, p > 0.01$ ) and shows that there is no significant difference in the relationship between self-forgiveness and psychological well-being between genders.

### Gender difference in PWB

*Table 4.2: Male vs Female (in terms of Forgiveness of Self)*

Groups	N	Mean	Standard Deviation (S.D.)	t-Value	Significance Level
Male	150	198.53	15.25	2.75	0.007
Female	150	203.27	14.62		

Table 4.2 provides a comparison of psychological well-being between male and female students as far as forgiveness of self is concerned. The scores indicate that female students had better scores in psychological well-being ( $M = 203.27, SD = 14.62$ ) than male students ( $M = 198.53, SD = 15.25$ ). The statistical significance of the difference was also statistically significant ( $t = 2.75, p < 0.01$ ) implying that female students are psychologically well compared with male students as far as forgiveness of self is concerned.

**Table 4.3: Comparison of High and Low Forgiveness of Self Groups with Regard to Psychological Wellbeing as a Whole**

Groups	N	Mean	Standard Deviation (S.D.)	t-Value	Significance Level
High Forgiveness of Self	150	203.47	15.35	3.68	0.002
Low Forgiveness of Self	150	197.05	13.93		

Table 4.3 is the comparison of psychological well-being of students with high and low amounts of self-forgiveness. The results show that the average psychological well-being of students with high self-forgiveness (M= 203.47, SD=15.35) was higher than among students with low self-forgiveness (M=197.05, SD=13.93). The obtained t -value (t=3.68) was significant at the 0.01 level (p < 0.01). These findings demonstrate the hypothesis that self-forgiveness is an appropriate predictor of improved psychological well-being among the collegiate population.

**Table 4.4: Summary Table of Analysis of Variance for Forgiveness of Others and Psychological Wellbeing**

Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-Value	Significance Level
Gender (A)	835.42	1	835.42	7.10	0.008
Forgiveness of Others (B)	2134.68	1	2134.68	18.13	0.006
A × B	198.53	1	198.53	1.69	Non-Significant
SSW (Within)	34842.10	296	117.71		
SST (Total)	38010.70	299			

The two-way ANOVA findings presented in Table 4.4 indicate that the main effect of gender on psychological wellbeing is statistically significant F=7.10, p<0.01. This result demonstrates that there is a significant difference in overall psychological wellbeing between male and female students when scores are averaged across levels of forgiveness of others.

The analysis further reveals that the main effect of forgiveness of others is highly significant F=18.13, p<0.01, highlighting the substantial role that forgiving others plays in influencing psychological wellbeing. Students with higher levels of forgiveness toward others exhibit significantly better psychological wellbeing than those with lower levels of forgiveness, underscoring forgiveness as an important psychological factor contributing to mental health.

In contrast, the interaction effect between gender and forgiveness of others is not statistically significant F=1.69, p>0.05. This indicates that the relationship between forgiveness of others and psychological wellbeing does not differ significantly between male and female students. In other words, forgiveness of others contributes to psychological wellbeing in a similar manner across genders.

The significant gender effect observed in the ANOVA reflects an overall difference between male and female students when data are aggregated across levels of forgiveness. In contrast, the subgroup t-tests assess simple effects within smaller sample sizes, which reduces

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statistical power and increases the likelihood of non-significant results despite the presence of an overall gender difference.

Furthermore, the non-significant interaction effect supports this interpretation by indicating that the relationship between forgiveness of others and psychological wellbeing does not vary by gender. Therefore, while gender contributes independently to psychological wellbeing at a general level, its influence may not be sufficiently strong to produce statistically significant differences within specific forgiveness subgroups.

Consequently, the combination of a significant main effect of gender in the ANOVA and non-significant gender differences in subgroup *t*-tests is coherent, statistically sound, and theoretically justified.

**Table 4.5: Male vs Female (in terms of Forgiveness of Others)**

Groups	N	Mean	Standard Deviation (S.D.)	t-Value	Significance Level
Male	150	198.99	13.95	4.85	0.008
Female	150	206.73	14.31		

The comparison in Table 4.5 shows that the female students had much higher levels of psychological well-being (M = 206.73, SD = 14.31) compared to male students (M = 198.99, SD = 13.95). The t-value obtained (t = 4.85) was significant at the 0.01 level indicating that females are more psychologically well than the male students when the forgiveness of others is taken into account.

**Table 4.6: Comparison of High and Low Forgiveness of Others Groups with Regard to Psychological Wellbeing as a Whole**

Groups	N	Mean	Standard Deviation (S.D.)	t-Value	Significance Level
High Forgiveness of Others	150	206.73	14.31	3.33	0.006
Low Forgiveness of Others	150	198.99	13.95		

Table 4.6 presents the comparison of psychological wellbeing of students with high and low levels of forgiveness of others. The results indicate that the mean psychological wellbeing score of students with high forgiveness of others (M = 206.73, SD = 14.31) was higher than that of students with low forgiveness of others (M = 198.99, SD = 13.95). The obtained t-value (t = 3.33) was found to be statistically significant at the 0.01 level (p = 0.006). These findings support the hypothesis that forgiveness of others is a significant predictor of enhanced psychological wellbeing among the collegiate population.

**Table 4.7: Summary Table of Analysis of Variance for Forgiveness of Situations and Psychological Wellbeing**

Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-Value	Significance Level
Gender (A)	1186.42	1	1186.42	5.75	0.005
Forgiveness of Situations (B)	2564.87	1	2564.87	12.44	0.002
A × B	314.09	1	314.09	1.52	Non-Significant

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<b>SSW (Within)</b>	61024.4	296	206.16
<b>SST (Total)</b>	65089.7	299	

Results of Table 4.7 demonstrate that there is a statistically significant overall effect of gender on psychological well-being ( $F = 5.75, p < 0.01$ ), as there is a difference in the levels of psychological well-being between male and female students. Another important primary impact of forgiveness of situations was also found ( $F = 12.44, p < 0.01$ ), indicating that, more forgiving students of situations had a better psychological well-being. The gender and forgiveness situation interaction effect did not show significance, and it was found that there is no difference existed between the situational forgiveness and psychological well-being across gender.

**Table 4.8: Male vs Female (in terms of Forgiveness of Situations)**

Groups	N	Mean	Standard Deviation (S.D.)	t-Value	Significance Level
<b>Male</b>	150	198.53	15.25	2.75	0.005
<b>Female</b>	150	203.27	14.62		

Table 4.8 reveals the comparison of psychological well being males and female students regarding the act of forgiving situation. The outcomes show that female students perform better in terms of the mean score ( $M = 203.27, SD = 14.62$ ) in comparison with male students ( $M = 198.53, SD = 15.25$ ). It was also found to differ significantly ( $t = 2.75, p < 0.01$ ) and proved that female students to be in a better position psychologically in relation to forgiving situations.

**Table 4.9: Comparison of High and Low Forgiveness of Situations Groups with Regard to Psychological Wellbeing as a Whole**

Groups	N	Mean	Standard Deviation (S.D.)	t-Value	Significance Level
<b>High Forgiveness of Situations</b>	150	203.27	14.62	3.33	0.002
<b>Low Forgiveness of Situations</b>	150	200.90	15.10		

A comparison between the high and low forgiveness of situations groups of psychological well-being is presented in Table 4.9. The results indicate that high forgiveness of situations by students had a higher score on psychological well-being ( $M = 203.27, SD = 14.62$ ) compared to low forgiveness of situations ( $M = 200.90, SD = 15.10$ ). The authors identified a statistically significant difference ( $t = 3.33, p < 0.01$ ) between forgiveness of situations and the psychological well-being, which means that forgiveness of situations has a positive effect on it.

## DISCUSSION

The present study aimed to examine the influence of forgiveness on psychological well-being among college students, with particular emphasis on gender differences across dimensions of forgiveness. The findings derived from two-way ANOVA and independent-samples t-tests provide clear empirical support for the role of forgiveness as a significant determinant of psychological well-being during young adulthood.

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The results revealed a statistically significant main effect of gender on psychological well-being, indicating that female college students consistently reported higher levels of psychological well-being than male students across all analyses. This finding is supported by significant differences observed in overall psychological well-being scores as well as within the contexts of forgiveness of self, forgiveness of others, and forgiveness of situations. These results are in line with earlier research suggesting that females tend to exhibit greater emotional awareness, relational sensitivity, and adaptive coping strategies, which may contribute to higher psychological well-being (Punia, 2015; Sharma et al., 2022).

With respect to forgiveness dimensions, self-forgiveness emerged as a strong and significant predictor of psychological well-being. Students with high levels of self-forgiveness demonstrated significantly better psychological well-being than those with low self-forgiveness. This finding supports existing literature that highlights self-forgiveness as a crucial mechanism for reducing self-directed negative emotions such as guilt, shame, and rumination, thereby enhancing emotional stability and self-acceptance (Shafiq et al., 2015; Malik et al., 2020).

Similarly, forgiveness of others showed a significant positive effect on psychological well-being, with students exhibiting higher forgiveness toward others reporting superior psychological health compared to their low-forgiveness counterparts. Forgiving others may reduce interpersonal conflict, hostility, and emotional distress, thereby fostering positive relationships and emotional balance—core components of psychological well-being (Abbasi & Zubair 2015; Arshad & Rafique, 2016).

The findings further indicate that forgiveness of situations significantly contributes to psychological well-being, suggesting that students who are more accepting of uncontrollable or adverse circumstances experience better mental health. This form of forgiveness may promote adaptive coping, resilience, and emotional regulation, which are particularly valuable during the transitional and stress-laden phase of college life.

Importantly, across all dimensions of forgiveness—self, others, and situations—the interaction effects between gender and forgiveness were not statistically significant. This indicates that although males and females differ in their overall levels of psychological well-being, the beneficial impact of forgiveness on psychological well-being operates similarly across genders. In other words, forgiveness functions as an independent and robust psychological resource that enhances well-being regardless of gender differences. This finding is consistent with previous research emphasizing the universal role of forgiveness in promoting mental health across demographic groups (Osamika et al., 2021).

Overall, the results underscore forgiveness as a vital positive psychological strength that significantly enhances psychological well-being among college students. Given its consistent and gender-independent benefits, the incorporation of forgiveness-based interventions within educational and mental health programs may be particularly effective in promoting emotional resilience, psychological growth, and overall well-being among young adults (Yurayat & Seechaliao, 2021).

Objective	Hypothesis	p-value	Significant	Outcome of the study
<b>Objective 1: To examine the influence of gender on psychological well-being</b>	H <sub>01</sub> : Gender would have no significant effect on psychological well-being.	0.007	Yes	Rejected
<b>Objective 2: To examine the influence of forgiveness of self on psychological well-being</b>	H <sub>02</sub> : Forgiveness of self would not influence psychological well-being significantly.	0.002	Yes	Rejected
<b>Objective 3: To examine the influence of forgiveness of others on psychological well-being</b>	H <sub>03</sub> : Forgiveness of others would not influence psychological well-being significantly.	0.006	Yes	Rejected
<b>Objective 4: To examine the influence of forgiveness of situations on psychological well-being</b>	H <sub>04</sub> : Forgiveness of situations would not influence psychological well-being significantly.	0.002	Yes	Rejected

**Summary of Findings**

1. A statistically significant gender difference was observed in the overall psychological well-being of college students, with female students consistently reporting higher levels of psychological well-being than male students.
2. Self-forgiveness emerged as a significant determinant of psychological well-being. Students with higher levels of self-forgiveness demonstrated significantly better psychological well-being compared to those with lower levels of self-forgiveness.
3. Forgiveness of others was found to have a significant and positive influence on psychological well-being. Students who exhibited higher forgiveness toward others reported greater psychological well-being than students with lower levels of forgiveness of others.
4. Forgiveness of situations significantly contributed to psychological well-being. Students with higher levels of situational forgiveness showed better psychological well-being than those with lower levels of forgiveness of situations.
5. Gender differences in psychological well-being were evident at the overall level across all analyses. However, the interaction effects between gender and the different dimensions of forgiveness (self, others, and situations) were not statistically significant, indicating that the impact of forgiveness on psychological well-being does not vary across genders.
6. The absence of significant interaction effects suggests that forgiveness operates as an independent psychological resource, enhancing psychological well-being similarly for both male and female college students.
7. Overall, the findings demonstrate that forgiveness—across all its dimensions of self, others, and situations—plays a crucial and consistent role in enhancing psychological well-being among college students. While females exhibited higher overall psychological well-being, the beneficial effects of forgiveness were comparable across genders, underscoring its universal importance in promoting mental health during young adulthood.

## CONCLUSION

The present study examined the influence of gender and forgiveness on the psychological wellbeing of college students. The findings indicate that forgiveness is a significant and positive contributor to psychological wellbeing, with students who reported higher levels of forgiveness demonstrating better overall psychological wellbeing than those with lower levels of forgiveness. This highlights forgiveness towards self, others and situations functions as an important psychological resource for enhancing mental health among young adults.

The results also revealed a significant main effect of gender on psychological wellbeing, with female students showing higher overall psychological wellbeing compared to male students. However, the interaction between gender and forgiveness of others was not significant, suggesting that the positive impact of forgiving others on psychological wellbeing is consistent across both genders.

### *Limitations of the Study*

1. Only college students in one geographical location were considered in the study and this can limit the application of the study results to students of other regions.
2. Only male and female students were included in the sample; the rest of the gender identities were not available.
3. It was only the dimensions of forgiveness that were selected; the other psychological related variables like empathy, resilience or emotional control were not studied.

### *Suggestions for Future Research*

1. In the future, the research can involve participants of different geographical areas to advance the external validity of the results.
2. The design of longitudinal research can be used to analyze the variations in forgiveness and psychological well-being throughout the years.
3. More studies can involve members of different gender orientations to offer a more diverse interpretation of forgiveness and wellness.

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