

Research Paper

The Psychological Correlation of Forgiveness on Self-Esteem and Displaced Aggression

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ABSTRACT

Forgiveness has been extensively studied as a psychological concept that is related to emotional health and how individuals interact with each other. This study investigated whether trait forgiveness impacts self-esteem and aggression in young adults by exploring its broader psychological effects. The study included 200 individuals, including 100 men and 100 women of age range between 18 to 30, mostly belonging to Lucknow. The study involved three standardized scales - the Trait Forgiveness Scale, the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, and the Displaced Aggression Questionnaire. The data was collected using structured response sheets and was analysed separately for male and female participants. Pearson's correlation analysis were used to explore the relationships between forgiveness, self-esteem and Displaced Aggression. Findings revealed gender-based differences in the relationship between variables. For female participants, forgiveness was related to lower levels of certain components of displaced aggression, meaning that those who tended to forgive were less likely to act aggressively or plan revenge. Self-esteem also demonstrated a negative relation with some aggression components in females. On the other hand, for male participants, forgiveness showed a weak negative relationship with self-esteem and no significant relationship with Displaced Aggression. Overall, the results indicated that the psychological effect of forgiveness varies across individuals and may be influenced by gender. Based on these findings, it can be concluded that forgiveness does not operate uniformly as either entirely beneficial or harmful, instead, it interacts with self-esteem and aggression in complex ways.

Keywords: *Displaced Aggression, Forgiveness, psychological impact, Self-Esteem*

Many people believe that forgiveness is crucial to effective healing and improving relationships. It is generally presented in studies and daily life as a productive step that aids in mental health improvement and the release of resentment (McCullough et al., 2000). However, this widely held perception overlooks an important point: what happens if you repeatedly forgive the same person for past wrongdoings, especially if you haven't properly managed your feelings or observed genuine change from them? This type of frequent forgiveness may do more damage than good, such as damaging

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your self-esteem and causing you to become angry, which may result in displaced expressions of anger toward unrelated individuals.

Forgiveness, in its visible sense, is the conscious, deliberate choice to let go of feelings of anger or revenge toward an individual or group that has harmed you, regardless of whether they actually deserve it (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000). According to Berry et al. (2005), the literature differentiates among trait forgiveness—a dispositional tendency to forgive in a variety of circumstances and across time—and state forgiveness, which is a temporary emotional reaction. Forgiveness has been linked to reduced anxiety, reduced sadness, and enhanced physical health. It has generally been correlated with psychological resilience and stabilised relationships (Toussaint & Friedman, 2009). The increasing criticism warns that forgiveness may have unexpected psychological consequences in certain situations, especially when it is granted repeatedly without justice or closure (McNulty, 2011; Luchies et al., 2010). These concerns give rise to uncertainty on whether forgiveness has beneficial or harmful effects, especially if it progresses into a habit in the face of repetitive wrongdoing.

The general subjective evaluation of one's own worth is known as self-esteem. Successful interpersonal functioning, resilience, and psychological well-being are all generally linked to enhanced self-esteem (Orth & Robins, 2014). On the other hand, low self-esteem has been associated with reduced emotional management, stress susceptibility, and depression (Sowislo & Orth, 2013).

Self-esteem impacts how people read social signs, settle disputes, and counter emotional dangers in the setting of interpersonal relations. Moreover, self-esteem is an important factor in understanding individual variations in coping tactics since it regulates the psychological impacts of relational behaviours like forgiveness.

A psychological phenomenon known as "displaced aggression" occurs when people redirect their violent tendencies from the primary target of provocation to a more secure or unrelated one. Based on the frustration-aggression theory, misdirected aggression happens when the person targets a replacement because the provocateur is unreachable, unsuitable to confront, or dangerous (Dollard et al., 1939; Marcus-Newhall et al., 2000). Behavioural misplaced aggressiveness, revenge plotting, and angry rumination are its three main components (Denson et al., 2006). Chronic stress, unsolved interpersonal conflict, and emotional suppression have all been linked to this type of aggressiveness. When unresolved anger is not focused on the right person, it can have a negative psychological impact that includes heightened hostility, reduced well-being, and strained relationships with those who are not involved.

Although trait forgiveness, self-esteem, and displaced anger have all been well studied separately, a small amount of research has begun to imply that they may interact in intricate ways. Previous research has hypothesised that repeated forgiveness without emotional closure may impact how people view themselves and control unresolved emotions. Both self-evaluation and behavioural expression, including violence aimed at the source, may be negatively impacted by this. In order to contribute to a more comprehensive and enhanced knowledge of forgiveness and its psychological effects, the current study aims to investigate these possible interrelations more empirically.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Forgiveness is primarily understood as a constructive, prosocial response to misbehaviour in interpersonal relationships. Numerous studies indicate that forgiveness is associated with positive outcomes for the victim's emotional well-being. For instance, Kim et al. (2022) assert that research demonstrates forgiveness reduces anger, anxiety and depression for enhancing self-esteem and optimism for the future. Longitudinal studies of couples suggest forgiveness is linked to reduced marital hostility and enhanced harmony over time. Higher trait forgiveness tends to be associated with lower levels of depression, anxiety and stress. These findings support the notion that forgiveness can improve self-evaluation by diminishing lingering anger and rumination, thereby maintaining an individual's positive self-image. In summary, prevalent beliefs and extensive research indicate that forgiveness is advantageous, often restoring a sense of moral integrity that bolsters a victim's self-worth and life satisfaction.

Contrary to this positive view, growing research indicates there can be a "dark side" to forgiveness, especially when it occurs repeatedly or unconditionally. Luchies et al. (2010) introduced the term "doormat effect" to describe the surprising finding that forgiving can sometimes weaken victims' self-perceptions. In a series of studies with newlyweds, they discovered that forgiveness only maintained the victim's self-respect when the offender made changes. However, when forgiveness took place without sincere reparation, the victim's self-respect and self-awareness declined over time. In other words, forgiving an unrepentant partner left the victim feeling as though they had failed to uphold their own values. As Luchies et al. Noted, under certain conditions, "forgiveness negatively impacts the self." Similarly, Van Tongeren et al. (2015) found that "repeated forgiveness may turn people into a 'doormat', where they lose self-respect and self-concept clarity." These studies establish relationships using thorough methods like longitudinal surveys and control experiments, lending strength to their claims. However, they largely focused on marital or close relationship samples and defined self-evaluation using self-respect and self-concept clarity rather than explicit self-esteem. Nevertheless, the message is clear: when the victim repeatedly forgives the offender without any change from them, their self-esteem can suffer. This challenges the notion that forgiveness is always good for mental health.

In relation to aggression outcomes, much of the research on forgiveness focuses on direct responses to the offender. In this area, studies consistently show that people who forgive experience less anger and are less likely to retaliate against the original wrongdoer. For example, higher levels of forgiveness are linked to fewer hostile attributions and lower self-reported aggression in various contexts. This supports the usual idea that forgiveness reduces aggression. However, few studies have looked at displaced aggression, which is aggression directed towards others who are not involved when someone has suppressed their anger at the real offender. Theoretically, displaced aggression often follows rumination and unresolved anger. Classic research by Bushman et al. (2005) indicates that when provoked, participants have the chance to ruminate on the offence, they later direct their anger toward an innocent bystander. If they are distracted instead, this response does not occur. No previous research has directly measured displaced aggression in relation to forgiveness behaviours, particularly in the context of repeated forgiveness. Therefore, despite Strong logic, the relationship between forgiveness and displaced aggression is still an open question.

Comparing the findings reveals important patterns and contradictions. Virtually all studies agree that sincere forgiveness of a single offence tends to improve mood and social

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outcomes. Forgiveness interventions often demonstrate reduced negative affect and restored positive outlooks. Yet a minority of studies emphasise boundary conditions under which forgiveness backfires. While the literature broadly supports an adaptive view of forgiveness, it also contains suggestive but limited evidence for maladaptive sequelae when forgiveness is habitual or coerced.

Importantly, this review finds that no study has fully aligned with our research aims. Few have directly examined *repeated forgiveness tendencies* as an independent variable. We found no study that simultaneously examined repeated forgiveness, self-esteem, and displaced aggression. The cognitive emotional pathway (forgiveness → self-evaluation → aggression) has been teased apart in fragments but not tested end-to-end. For example, Bushman et al. (2005) clearly show that rumination leads to displaced aggression, but they do not involve forgiveness. Robinson et al. (2023) show how forgiveness relates to anger via rumination, but they did not measure self-esteem or repeated offences. Luchies et al. (2010) and Van Tongeren et al. (2015) convincingly document self-respect losses from forgiving, but they stop short of linking this to displaced aggression. Thus, the literature is coherent but compartmentalised. There is a pressing gap: an integrated model of how forgiving repeatedly might lower a victim's self-esteem and thereby make suppressed aggression spill over elsewhere.

Research Gap

The literature offers an incomplete but indicative picture. It is revealed that forgiveness can improve psychological health in many cases, but it also warns that forgiveness can weaken the victim's self-image when the offender does not show accountability. These mixed findings underline the need for further study. Our proposed research will directly address the gaps by measuring individuals' tendencies to forgive repeatedly (particularly in the face of recurrent offence), evaluating their self-esteem and any displaced aggression, and testing cognitive emotional mediators such as rumination and anger. This approach will clarify whether and how forgiveness becomes maladaptive by integrating and extending the fragmented literature, thereby fulfilling the study's objectives. It is necessary to develop a balanced understanding of forgiveness, acknowledging both its virtues and its potential costs. Our study findings will help resolve the contradictions and fill the knowledge gaps identified in this review.

Rationale of the Study

The rationale of this study arises from growing awareness that forgiveness can have different and context-dependent effects on a person's well-being, even though often seen as a virtue and psychological resource. However, the emotional experience of forgiveness is not always positive. In real-life situations, forgiving may lead to complex emotional outcomes for the person offering forgiveness, especially those with constant offences or unequal power dynamics. In daily life, many people forgive due to fear of conflicts, social pressure or the desire to keep relationships intact rather than out of emotional readiness. This form of habitual or repeated forgiveness may lower self-esteem or create emotional dissonance. At the same time, forgiveness can decrease harmful emotional patterns like rumination or hostility and help boost self-esteem by increasing compassion, agency and moral identity. These contrasting items make it vital to understand when forgiveness leads to harmful versus helpful results by underscoring the psychological depth of it. This study seeks to explore how forgiveness relates to two key psychological variables: displaced aggression and self-esteem. We can gain a more ample understanding of how people manage

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interpersonal harmony and process emotional harm by examining forgiveness alongside these two variables.

Objectives of the Study

1. Examine the connection between repeated forgiveness and self-esteem.
2. Study if repeated forgiveness is linked to displaced Aggression.
3. Explore how forgiveness, self-esteem and displaced aggression might be related to cognitive-emotional mechanisms.
4. Help create a clearer view of forgiveness by looking at both its positive and negative psychological effects.

Hypotheses

- **H1:** There will be a significant negative relationship between tendencies for repeated forgiveness and self-esteem.
- **H2:** There will be a significant positive relationship between tendencies for repeated forgiveness and displaced aggression.
- **H3:** People with higher levels of trait forgiveness will report higher self-esteem and lower levels of displaced aggression compared to those with lower levels of forgiveness.

METHODOLOGY

Sample

This study comprised young adults aged 18-30 years, primarily from Lucknow, India. A large portion of the sample consisted of university students, thereby reflecting the educational and social characteristics of the urban youth demographics. Most participants were aged 18 to 22 and were pursuing undergraduate studies at the time of the research. Regarding marital status, most participants were single. A survey was carried out through purposeful and snowball sampling methods, targeting those who had experienced interpersonal situations involving forgiveness. Participants were enlisted through institutional networks, online student forums, and social media. The final sample included individuals who met the basic criteria of being within the specified age range and those who voluntarily chose to participate.

Measures

Trait forgiveness was measured using the Trait Forgiveness Scale (TFS), which includes 10 items that evaluate how likely people are to forgive others in various situations. Respondents rated each item on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The TFS has both positive and negative items, and higher scores indicate a stronger tendency to forgive. The Scale has shown good internal consistency and is valid in different populations.

Self-esteem was measured using the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES), a widely used 10-item scale meant to estimate overall self-worth. Each item is rated on a 4-point Likert Scale, from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). The RSES ensures response variety and reduces bias by including five reverse-coded items. Higher scores indicate higher Self-esteem. The scale is a standard tool in psychological studies and has been broadly validated.

Displaced Aggression was measured using the Displaced Aggression Questionnaire (DAQ), including 31 items, divided into three subscales: angry rumination, revenge planning, and

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behavioural displaced aggression. Each item is rated on a 7-point Likert scale, from 1 (extremely uncharacteristic of me) to 7 (extremely characteristic of me), therefore showing how much each item represents their typical behaviour facets of displaced aggression and is a very useful tool for understanding how unexpressed anger may be directed at unrelated targets or individuals.

Procedure

Participants were informed about the purpose of the study and provided consent before participation. Data were collected using structured response sheets administered both online and offline. Participants completed the Trait Forgiveness Scale, Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, and Displaced Aggression Questionnaire. The responses were anonymised and analysed using Pearson correlation analysis through SPSS software. Participants were informed about the voluntary nature of participation and the confidentiality of responses. No identifying information was collected, and responses were used solely for academic research purposes.

RESULTS

Descriptive statistics

Descriptive statistics were calculated separately for male and female participants (N=100 per group). Table 1 summarises the mean and standard deviation for each scale across both genders. On average, females reported slightly higher scores on the Trait Forgiveness Scale (TFS) and Displaced Aggression (DA1 and DA2). Whereas males reported marginally higher levels of Self-Esteem (RSE). Notably, DA3 scores (Angry Rumination) were fairly similar across groups.

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics by Gender

Variable	Male Mean	Male SD	Female Mean	Female SD
TFS	29.91	3.16	31.11	3.14
RSE	28.11	4.54	28.09	5.16
DA1	29.43	8.03	31.57	7.86
DA2	22.90	9.06	19.61	9.31
DA3	26.06	12.44	26.49	10.18

(Note. TFS = Trait Forgiveness Scale; RSE = Rosenberg Self-Esteem; DA1 = Angry Rumination; DA2 = Revenge Planning; DA3 = Behavioural Displaced Aggression.)

Correlational analysis

Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated to examine the relationships between forgiveness, self-esteem, and different forms of displaced aggression. Separate analyses were conducted for male and female groups to identify any gender differences.

Female participants

As shown in Table 2, Trait Forgiveness (TFS) had a significant negative correlation with both DA2 ($r = -.335, p < .001$) and DA3 ($r = -.345, p < .001$). Trait forgiveness was not significantly associated with DA1 or self-esteem. Self-Esteem (RSE) showed a strong negative correlation with DA1 ($r = -.379, p < .001$) but was not related to TFS or DA3. The displaced aggression subscales DA1, DA2, and DA3 were significantly correlated with each other.

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Table 2 Pearson Correlation Matrix (Female Participants)

	TFS	RSE	DA1	DA2	DA3
TFS	1	.103	-.122	-.335**	-.345**
RSE	.103	1	-.379**	-.125	.014
DA1	-.122	-.379**	1	.349**	.175
DA2	-.335**	-.125	.349**	1	.496**
DA3	-.345**	.014	.175	.496**	1

Note. $p < .05$, $p < .001$.

Male participants

Among male participants (Table 3), the pattern of relationships among male participants was comparatively weaker and less consistent. Forgiveness (TFS) had a weak negative correlation with RSE ($r = -.253$, $p < .05$) but no significant relationship with DA1, DA2, or DA3. Notably, DA1 and DA2 had a moderate positive correlation ($r = .398$, $p < .001$). There were no statistically significant associations between TFS and the aggression variables among males.

Table 3 Pearson Correlation Matrix (Male Participants)

	TFS	RSE	DA1	DA2	DA3
TFS	1	-.253*	.139	-.036	-.041
RSE	-.253*	1	-.041	.010	-.196
DA1	.139	-.041	1	.398**	.165
DA2	-.036	.010	.398**	1	.056
DA3	-.041	-.196	.165	.056	1

Note. $p < .05$, $p < .001$.

DISCUSSION

The present study aimed to examine the psychological impact of trait forgiveness on self-esteem and displaced aggression among young adults. In addition to exploring these relationships at a general level, the study also investigated whether the patterns differed across gender groups. Using a quantitative research design, the study analysed correlations between trait forgiveness, self-esteem, and different components of displaced aggression among university-aged individuals. The results revealed several notable patterns that contribute to a deeper understanding of the psychological role of forgiveness.

The first hypothesis predicted that there would be a significant negative relationship between tendencies for repeated forgiveness and self-esteem. However, the findings did not provide strong support for this assumption. Among female participants, trait forgiveness was not significantly related to self-esteem, whereas among male participants, a weak negative association was observed. These findings suggest that forgiveness does not necessarily enhance self-evaluation in all circumstances. Although forgiveness is frequently conceptualised as a positive psychological trait associated with emotional well-being, the present findings indicate that its influence on self-esteem may depend on contextual and relational factors. One possible explanation for this pattern is that repeated forgiveness without emotional resolution may sometimes weaken an individual's sense of personal boundaries. When individuals repeatedly forgive others in situations where the wrongdoing persists, they may begin to question their self-respect or interpersonal agency. This interpretation aligns with the findings of Luchies et al. (2010), who introduced the concept of the “doormat effect,” suggesting that forgiveness can sometimes erode self-respect when

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the offender fails to demonstrate genuine behavioural change. Similarly, McNulty (2011) found that forgiveness in certain relational contexts may unintentionally allow harmful behaviour to continue, thereby influencing the victim's psychological self-evaluation. In such situations, forgiveness may not necessarily contribute to stronger self-esteem.

The second hypothesis proposed that repeated forgiveness would be positively associated with displaced aggression. The results offered partial support for this assumption. Among female participants, trait forgiveness showed significant negative relationships with certain components of displaced aggression, particularly revenge planning and behavioural displaced aggression. This finding indicates that individuals who reported higher tendencies to forgive were less likely to engage in aggressive thoughts or behaviours directed toward unrelated individuals. In contrast, no significant relationships between forgiveness and displaced aggression were observed among male participants. These findings are consistent with previous research suggesting that forgiveness can reduce aggressive tendencies by facilitating emotional regulation and reducing rumination about interpersonal conflicts (Kim et al., 2022; García-Vázquez et al., 2020). Forgiveness may help individuals cognitively reframe interpersonal offences and release lingering resentment, thereby reducing the likelihood that suppressed anger will manifest as aggression toward unrelated targets. Psychologically, forgiveness may interrupt cycles of anger rumination that often contribute to displaced aggression. When individuals reinterpret interpersonal conflicts in a constructive manner, emotional arousal decreases and aggressive impulses may be reduced. However, the absence of similar patterns among male participants suggests that forgiveness may function differently across gender groups. Gender socialisation processes may influence how individuals experience and express forgiveness. Females are often encouraged to prioritise emotional communication and relational harmony, which may allow forgiveness to function as an adaptive coping mechanism. In contrast, males may be more likely to suppress emotional experiences or interpret forgiveness as a sign of weakness or loss of control. Consequently, forgiveness may not necessarily translate into emotional resolution or behavioural change among male participants. Previous studies have also observed gender differences in emotional regulation and forgiveness tendencies, suggesting that females are generally more likely to engage in relational coping strategies that support emotional processing (Miller et al., 2008).

The third hypothesis proposed that individuals with higher levels of trait forgiveness would report higher self-esteem and lower levels of displaced aggression compared to individuals with lower levels of forgiveness. The findings partially supported this assumption. While forgiveness was associated with lower levels of displaced aggression among female participants, it did not significantly predict higher self-esteem. This suggests that forgiveness may primarily influence emotional regulation and behavioural responses rather than directly shaping individuals' overall evaluation of self-worth. Self-esteem is a relatively stable psychological construct influenced by a wide range of personal and social experiences, which may explain why the relationship between forgiveness and self-esteem was weaker than expected.

The theoretical implications of these findings can be understood through the General Aggression Model (Anderson & Bushman, 2002). According to this model, aggression emerges from interactions between personal traits and situational factors that influence cognitive, emotional, and physiological states. Forgiveness may influence these internal processes by reducing anger rumination and hostile interpretations of interpersonal events. When individuals forgive, they may reinterpret the situation in a way that reduces emotional

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arousal and the motivation for retaliation. As a result, forgiveness may indirectly reduce displaced aggression by altering cognitive and emotional responses to interpersonal conflict. Additionally, the findings can also be interpreted through cognitive appraisal perspectives of emotion regulation. According to these frameworks, emotional outcomes depend largely on how individuals interpret and evaluate interpersonal situations. Forgiveness may facilitate adaptive cognitive reappraisal by encouraging empathy, perspective-taking, and reinterpretation of harmful experiences. Through this process, individuals may reduce the emotional intensity associated with anger and resentment, which in turn may reduce the likelihood of aggressive behaviour toward unrelated individuals. An important contribution of this study lies in its identification of gender differences in the psychological consequences of forgiveness. The findings suggest that forgiveness may serve different emotional and behavioural functions for males and females. For female participants, forgiveness appeared to operate as a constructive coping strategy that reduced aggressive tendencies. For male participants, however, forgiveness did not demonstrate the same psychological benefits. These differences may reflect broader cultural expectations surrounding emotional expression and interpersonal behaviour. In many societies, males are encouraged to maintain emotional control and assertiveness, whereas females may be more socially encouraged to engage in emotional reflection and reconciliation. Such differences may influence how forgiveness affects emotional processing and behavioural outcomes.

Overall, the findings of the present study highlight the complex and context-dependent nature of forgiveness. Although forgiveness is often portrayed as a universally beneficial psychological virtue, the results indicate that its effects may vary depending on interpersonal circumstances and individual characteristics. Forgiveness may reduce aggressive tendencies when it facilitates emotional resolution and cognitive reframing. However, its influence on self-esteem appears to be less straightforward and may depend on whether forgiveness occurs alongside meaningful interpersonal change and emotional closure.

In conclusion, the present study contributes to the growing body of literature examining both the adaptive and nuanced consequences of forgiveness. By exploring its relationships with self-esteem and displaced aggression among young adults, the study provides a more balanced understanding of forgiveness as a psychological process that can influence emotional regulation, interpersonal behaviour, and self-evaluation in complex ways.

Limitation

Despite its contributions, this study has limitations. First, the cross-sectional design limits casual interpretations. Even though the relationships were observed among trait, forgiveness, self-esteem, and displaced aggression, the direction of these relationships remains clear. Longitudinal studies would better capture change over time and clarify whether forgiveness improves self-worth and reduces aggression, or vice versa. Second, relying on self-report measures may introduce issues like social desirability or inaccurate memory, especially regarding sensitive topics like aggression. Including behavioural measures or reports from close individuals provided a deeper understanding. Third, the sample mainly consisted of university students aged 18 to 22, and it was primarily limited to young adults from Lucknow, restricting how broadly the findings can be applied to different groups or social contexts. The overall sample size was relatively small, even though sufficient for initial analysis, which may limit the ability to identify smaller effect sizes and statistical strength. Finally, while the study addressed gender differences, it did not delve into relational, personality or cultural factors that might influence the forgiveness-self-esteem-aggression link.

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Implications

The findings of the present study offer several theoretical and practical implications for understanding the psychological role of forgiveness among young adults. First, the results highlight that forgiveness is not a universally beneficial psychological process, but rather a complex emotional response whose outcomes may depend on contextual and individual factors. This suggests that psychological models of forgiveness should adopt a more balanced perspective that considers both its potential benefits and limitations. The observed gender differences also indicate that forgiveness may operate differently across social and cultural contexts, emphasising the need for future theoretical frameworks to incorporate gender-based emotional processing patterns.

From a practical perspective, the findings may inform mental health professionals, counsellors, and educators working with young adults. Interventions aimed at promoting forgiveness should also emphasise healthy emotional boundaries and self-reflection, ensuring that forgiveness does not occur at the cost of an individual's self-esteem or psychological well-being. Additionally, programs designed to improve emotional regulation and conflict resolution among young adults may benefit from incorporating discussions about constructive forgiveness and healthy expression of emotions.

Overall, the study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of forgiveness and highlights the importance of considering emotional, relational, and cultural factors when examining its psychological outcomes.

CONCLUSION

This study examines the psychological impact of trait forgiveness on self-esteem and displaced aggression among young adults. Focusing on three main objectives, the research explores whether the trait forgiveness correlates with higher self-esteem, reduced displaced aggression and whether those with stronger gain attendances report more positive emotional outcomes. The key finding shows a gender pattern in the effects of forgiveness. Trait forgiveness was not significantly associated with self-esteem but showed a negative relationship with components of displaced aggression. These results align with previous evidence, suggesting that forgiveness can improve self-esteem and lessen hostility when expressed genuinely. Conversely, for female and male participants, forgiveness was negatively linked to self-esteem and showed no significant connection to aggression. This contrast indicates that the role of forgiveness in mental health may differ by gender, possibly due to the difference in emotional upbringing, identity norms, or beliefs about forgiveness. Overall, these findings strengthen the understanding that forgiveness isn't inherently good or bad. It depends on the situation. The results contribute to psychological theory by demonstrating that forgiveness can interact with self-evaluation and aggression differently among individuals, challenging the one-size-fits-all assumption in clinical and interpersonal settings.

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Conflict of Interest

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