



A Study on Happiness and Forgiveness among Young Adults

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Abstract

Forgiveness might have a different definition for every individual. Yet, in general, it entails making a conscious choice to let go of bitterness and hatred. In some cases, forgiving someone might even elicit sentiments of comprehension, empathy and compassion for the person who is the perpetrator. Forgiveness can aid in relationship restoration. Moreover, it is a sign of strength, it demonstrates how tough one is and how individual overcomes adversity. Happiness is something that plays a vital role in everyone's life. In today's world, there are few factors that affect our happiness, and some essential things are money, trust, independence, health, and so on. Happiness is the pinnacle of human aspiration and contentment, and forgiveness is a result of human grit, engagement, and optimistic thinking. Forgiveness gives the forgiver peace of mind and releases them from destructive rage and makes a person happier than before. The research aims to study happiness and forgiveness among young adults. A total sample of 30 young adults were taken in the age group 18-25 were collected. The results found out that there was a positive significant correlation between Forgiveness and Happiness.

Keywords: Happiness, Forgiveness, Gender difference, Young Adults

Introduction

“Happiness is when what you think, what you say, and what you do are in harmony.”

~ Mahatma Gandhi

Happiness is a feeling of joy and contentment that comes from within. It's something that we all strive for, and that can be achieved in many different ways. Happiness is the “secret sauce” that can help us to be and perform our best. Happy people are more likely to earn more money, can be more productive at work, can be higher on creativity and imagination. Happiness is an electrifying and elusive state. People who are happy live intentionally. Long term relationships, achieving their objectives, and living according to their ideas provide them delight. The individual finds gratification with the small joys in life, such as caressing a dog, relaxing under a tree, and enjoying a cup of tea. Happiness has several benefits such as happy people are smarter, cope better with stress and traumas, have greater friend circle, are more liberal. When we experience happiness, it can help us feel more positive, confident, and fulfilled.

Chaplin (2006) stated happiness was negatively associated with the presence of depressive symptoms. According to Argyle and Crossland (1987) three main components of happiness have been identified which includes, frequent positive affect or joy, a high average level of satisfaction over a period, and the absence of negative feelings such as depression and anxiety and as asserted by Diener et al. (2006). Happiness is a composite of life satisfaction.

Demir et al. (2015), conducted a study on friendship and happiness related to significant contributions to our understanding. The empirical data showed friendship to be a reliable and

consistent predictor of happiness in young adults. In addition to reviewing well-known indicators of friendship (such as quality, quantity and satisfaction) that are frequently discussed in the literature. For instance, studies have shown that in some situations, factors like the presence of romantic relationships or family support influence the benefits of friendship.

The research was conducted by Demir (2010) on close relationships and happiness among emerging adults. The current study investigated the impact of several close relationships (mother, father, best friend, romantic partner, if any) on happiness among emerging adults with and without a romantic partner. Only relationships between one's mother and best friend were found to be predicting happiness in the group of those without a spouse ($n=152$). The results, on the other hand, indicated that only three factors; the quality of the mother - child relationships, the quality of the romantic relationship, and conflict - were predictive of happiness in those who had a partner ($n=159$). The findings for this group also revealed that the quality of romantic relationships were protective of best friend conflict. Furthermore, best friend quality did not mitigate the detrimental effects of romantic partner conflict on happiness, indicating a lesser significance for best friends in happiness. The results imply, in other words, that the relevance of friends to happiness may be diminished or absent altogether for emerging adults who are in a romantic relationship. In light of the literature, the findings were analyzed, and recommendations for further study were suggested.

Jeter and Brannon (2017) did a study on research that suggests that college-aged students, especially first-year college students, are particularly prone to experience relational conflict. Interpersonal forgiveness has been well-documented as a variable that can reduce relational conflict among young adults. However, limited empirical research to date has explored the motivation and ability of college-aged students to engage in forgiveness granting behavior when they are the victim of an interpersonal conflict; this lack of empirical research is

especially noteworthy when considering the perpetrator's perspective and why (motivation) and how (ability) perpetrators engage in forgiveness seeking behaviors following conflict. The purpose of the current study was to examine how victims and offenders of interpersonal offenses sort and grant forgiveness. Results from a sample of 144 young adults show that those who were exposed to the justification for forgiving others all as well as a mindfulness or implementation planning approach were more likely to participate in forgiveness/seeking behaviors than those who were not. Participants' mood and attitudes toward forgiveness granting/seeking were enhanced by receiving both a message and a technique. These results were especially pronounced for victims of an interpersonal transgression who practiced mindfulness. Overall, mindfulness appeared to be the most promising technique in promoting forgiveness.

According to Rey et al. (2016) the research was conducted on psychological correlates and personality foundations of forgiveness. According to research findings, agreeableness may be the most reliable predictor of forgiveness and retaliation in a sample of young adults. The research further explored gender differences in the association between this dispositional quality and intergroup forgiveness. In addition, gender was investigated in this study as a potential moderator between dispositional factors and forgiveness dimensions. In the sample there were no gender differences in agreeableness, however women scored lower on avoidance motivations while men scored higher on revenge motive. Additionally, findings showed that agreeableness was substantially linked to avoidance and vengeance impulses in men exclusively (for both genders). Finally, the relationship between agreeableness and drive for retaliation was modified by gender. The need of taking these disparities into account in additional positive psychology intervention program in future study is highlighted by the researchers.

Psychological maltreatment, forgiveness, mindfulness and internet addiction study was conducted among young adults by Arslan (2017). Many people's lives are improved by using the Internet, but excessive use of it can have negative effects on both mental and physical health. The goal of the study was to understand how forgiveness and mindfulness can reduce the relationship between young adults' psychological abuse and Internet addiction. A total sample of 392 young people, with an average age of 22.01 was taken. Preliminary analysis revealed that the at-risk group for online addiction had lower levels of forgiveness and mindfulness but higher levels of psychological abuse than the normal group for Internet addiction. A structural equation model was also used to examine the impacts of mediator variables on internet addiction, and the results showed that forgiveness and mindfulness played the complete mediating function regarding the impact of psychological maltreatment on Internet addiction. The study's findings have important ramifications for mental health programs that can help young adults with their Internet addictions by reducing the impact of psychological abuse on them.

Happiness

According to Lyubomirsky (2001), happiness is defined as "the subjective assessment of whether a person is happy or unhappy and can be evaluated as a psychological state of well-being or contentment." According to Tatarkiewicz (1976), happiness has been defined as "a lasting, complete, and justified satisfaction with life as a whole." Veenhoven (1984) referred to happiness as the degree to which an individual judges the overall quality of his/her life favorably. Cohen (2002) stated that happiness is essential criteria for healthy life. Happiness has been defined as "the preponderance of positive affect over negative affect with a distinct focus on the affective evaluation of one's life situation" (Diener, 1984). The research was

conducted by Kennison (2022) on humor and resilience relationships with happiness in young adults. The previous studies have demonstrated that happier people tend to be more resilient. As per additional studies, those who use positive humor more frequently, (such as self-enhancing and affiliated humor) and who use negative humor less frequently, (such as aggressive and self – defeating humor), report feeling happier overall. Further, resilience entails a variety of protective variables that help people to do better than predicted despite past and present challenges. The study explored the possibility that using one or more humor types could work as unique resilience protective factors in predicting happiness. The research of 204 young adults (105 men and 99 women) who participated in an online survey revealed that, after resilience was taken into account, the negative humor types (Aggressive humor) were used less frequently. After resilience was controlled, there was no longer any additional variation in happiness that could be attributed to the employment of the positive humor techniques. The outcomes are in line with the body of knowledge that suggests alterations in behavior are connected to increase in well-being.

A study was conducted by Singh et al. (2017) on understanding happiness among young adults. The study aimed to predict the role of personality, psychological well-being, and gratitude on happiness among young adults. The study is based on a youth sample (N=109) with ages ranging from 18 to 23 years. There was a positive significant correlation observed among personality, psychological well-being, gratitude and happiness. Regression analysis was carried out step-wise to predict the best predictors of happiness. Results based on stepwise regression demonstrated that happiness among young adults is significantly predicted by psychological well-being, gratitude, and extroversion. The researchers further emphasized the importance of these variables in the happiness of young adults.

Correlates of happiness among young adults, was studied by Mukherjee and Basu (2008). The research looked at the factors associated with happiness in adults (n=100). Happiness

was positively correlated with secure attachment pattern, reality testing, judgment, sense of one's own reality as well as that of the world, regulation and control of one's drives, impulses, and objects, adaptive regression in service of the ego, defensive functioning, stimulus barrier, autonomous functioning, synthetic integrative functioning, mastery-competence, emotional intelligence, inner-other directedness, and meaning in life (presence). The findings of stepwise multiple regression demonstrated that the growth of happiness was highly influenced by emotional intelligence, existence of meaning in life, and secure attachment patterns.

Forgiveness

Fincham and Kashdan (2004) defined forgiveness in terms of its potential ability to offset the debilitating effects of anger and hostility associated with a desire to avenge the hurtful act of another. McCullough et al. (1997) described forgiving as a "complex" of motivational changes that occurs in the aftermath of a significant interpersonal offense. When offended people forgive, his or her basic motivations to (a) seek revenge and (b) avoid contact with the offender are lessened and other relationships and constructive motivation (such as the motivation to resume a positive relationship) are restored. Thompson and Snyder (2003) defined forgiveness as the "framing of a perceived transgression such that one's attachment to the transgressor, transgression and sequel of the transgression is transformed from negative to neutral or positive." The study investigated the relationship between the forgiveness cultures of young adults and their parents. The forgiveness scale was distributed to 166 adults, ages 18 to 33, together with their 166 biological moms, ages 34 to 66 and their 166 biological fathers age 34 to 72. Young people's propensities for resentment and retribution were correlated with their mothers' and fathers' levels of forgiveness, respectively. The

validity of emotions is explored in relation to gender stereotypes using these findings (Mullet et al. 2006).

A study was carried out on forgiveness in younger, middle-aged, and older adults by Ghaemmaghami et al. (2011). The purpose of the study was to examine how age and gender affect forgiveness for infractions that occurred in real life. Emerging adults as well as young, middle aged and older adults filled out the Transgression - Related Interpersonal Motivations Inventory (TRIM-18), which studied them avoidance, revenge and benevolence motivation towards an offender and revealed how much they are generally concerned with the subject of forgiveness. According to the findings, middle-aged adults tend to display avoidance more than younger adults. In addition, young men were more driven to exact retribution than middle-aged or older males. Women did not exhibit any such age difference. Furthermore, women and middle - aged adults found that the topic of forgiveness was more prevalent in their daily lives.

Hermaen and Bhutto (2020) conducted a study which explored the impact of gratitude and forgiveness in predicting well-being in young adults. The sample for study included 300 participants between the ages of 18 and 24 who were conveniently selected from a university in Karachi city. Gratitude Questionnaire (McCullough et al., 2002), Heartland Forgiveness Scale (Thompson et al., 2005) and Flourishing Scale (Diener et al., 2010) were used as the measures to collect data. Multiple linear regression analysis revealed gratitude to be a non-significant predictor of subjective well-being, whereas forgiveness was found to be a significant predictor of subjective well-being. In addition, a weak positive correlation between forgiveness and subjective well-being and appreciation and subjective well-being has been discovered. According to this study, general counseling for clients who are young adults may effectively use forgiveness and gratitude as well as other therapeutic strategies.

Methodology

Purpose

The purpose of the study is to investigate the correlations of happiness and forgiveness among male and female young adults.

Hypothesis

It is expected that there will be a significant positive correlation between Happiness and Forgiveness.

Sample

A total sample of 30 was taken males (12) and females (18) in the age range of 18 to 25 years. The samples were collected from Tricity (Chandigarh, Mohali & Panchkula).

Measures

The following standardized test and tools were used -

- Oxford Happiness Questionnaire Scale (Argyle & Hills, 2002)
- Bolton Forgiveness Scale (BFS) (Amanze & Carson, 2019)
- **Oxford Happiness Questionnaire:** The questionnaire was developed by Argyle and Hills (2002). The scale has 29 items. It measures global happiness and feelings about the self. The responses are given on a 6-point Likert-type scale ranging from 6 (Strongly Agree) to 1 (Strongly Disagree). Some items were reverse scored. It

includes questions such as (I don't feel particularly pleased with the way I am), (I am intensely interested in other people), (I feel that life is very rewarding). An item marked (R) should be scored in reverse. Firstly, add scores of all 29 questions and then divide them by 29.

- **Bolton Forgiveness Scale (BFS):** The questionnaire was developed by Amanze and Carson (2019). The scale has 15 items and has 4 sub scales -
 - a) **BFS - Coming to terms and letting go of subscales BFS- CTLG**, the score 42 is higher score, the score between 28-35 are high scores, the scores between 22-27 are good scores and the score less than 21 is low and poor.
 - b) **BFS - Developing positive feeling subscale BFS-DPF**, the score 30 is the highest score, the scores between 18 to 23 are high scores, the score between less than 13 are low and poor.
 - c) **BFS - Giving benefit of doubt subscale BFS- GBD**, the score 18 is the highest score, the score more than 12 is very good and the scores less than 9 is low and poor.
 - d) **Total BFS** the score 90 is the highest score, the scores less than 45 is poor, the score between 45-58 is good, the scores between 59-70 is very good and the scores from 70 and above is excellent (exceptionally forgiving).

It includes questions such as (with time I can understand of bad things in my life), (I have compassion for the person who wronged me), (with time I let go of negative thoughts about bad things that are beyond anyone's control).

Procedure

The participants were informed about the purpose of the research and the questionnaire were filled through Google forms. The scales were used; Oxford Happiness Questionnaire and

Bolton Forgiveness Scale (BFS). Each participant was thanked for their cooperation; Standardized Psychological Tests were administrated to the participants.

Analysis of data

Scoring for all the given tests was done as per the scoring instructions as given in the manual. The raw scores were tabulated and subjected to various statistical analysis by using Statistical Product and Service Solutions (SPSS) Package. Keeping in view the objectives of the study, statistical analysis was conducted. Means, Standard Deviations and correlation were computed.

Results

Table 1

Mean and Standard Deviation scores of 30 young adults with variables happiness and forgiveness

	BFS-CTLG	BFS-DPF	BFS-GBD	TOTAL-BFS	HAPPINESS	MEAN OF HAPPINESS
N	30	30	30	30	30	30
Mean	31.0	19.4	12.2	62.6	127	4.39
Standard deviation	3.78	3.45	2.37	7.45	18.6	0.642

Table 2

Correlation Matrix of happiness and forgiveness among 30 young adults

	BFS-CTLG	BFS-DPF	BFS-GBD	TOTAL-BFS	HAPPINESS	MEAN OF HAPPINESS
BFS-CTLG	—					

	BFS-CTLG	BFS-DPF	BFS-GBD	TOTAL-BFS	HAPPINESS	MEAN OF HAPPINESS
BFS-DPF	0.213	—				
BFS-GBD	0.484 **	0.577 ***	—			
TOTAL-BFS	0.760 ***	0.755 ***	0.831 ***	—		
HAPPINESS	0.210	-	-	0.004	—	
MEAN OF HAPPINESS	0.210	-	-	0.004	1.000 ***	—

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Discussion of Result

The results of this study enlighten us about critical linkages between Happiness and Forgiveness. The results reveal that there is positive significant correlation between BFS-GBD and BFS-CTLG ($r = 0.484$, $P < 0.1$) also between BFS-GBD and BFS-DPF ($r = 0.577$, $P < 0.001$). Another result reveals that there is also a positive significant correlation between Total-BFS and BFS-CTLG ($r = 0.760$, $P < 0.001$), total-BFS and BFS-GBD ($r = 0.755$, $P < 0.001$), total-BFS and BFS-GBD ($r = 0.831$, $P < 0.001$). Moreover, there is a positive correlation between means of happiness and happiness where ($r = 1.000$, $P < 0.001$).

In relation to previous literature where Shekhar et al. (2016) conducted a study to assess the happiness and forgiveness among college going students and to discover a correlation between these two variables using Oxford Happiness Questionnaire by (Argyle & Hills, 2000) to assess happiness and Heartland Forgiveness Scale (Thompson & Synder, 2003) to assess forgiveness. 100 students were included in the data, 50 of them were males and 50 of them were females. The present study found that there was a significant difference and forgiveness across gender. Another study was done to study the association between forgiveness at work and employee happiness. The study was conducted on 357 employees in

the Indian Organization (North India). The results proved that there is a significant positive correlation between forgiveness and employee happiness (Dahiya, 2021).

Conclusion

Forgiveness might have a different definition for every individual. Yet, in general, it entails making a conscious choice to let go of bitterness and hatred. In some cases, forgiving someone might even elicit sentiments of comprehension, empathy and compassion for the person who is the perpetrator. Forgiveness can aid in relationship restoration. Happiness is something that plays a vital role in everyone's life. In today's world, there are few factors that affect our happiness, and some essential things are money, trust, independence, health, and so on. Happiness is the pinnacle of human aspiration and contentment, and forgiveness is a result of human grit, engagement, and optimistic thinking. Forgiveness gives the forgiver peace of mind and releases them from destructive rage and makes a person happier than before. The research aims to study happiness and forgiveness among young adults. A total sample of 30 young adults were collected. The results found out that there was a positive significant correlation between forgiveness and happiness.

Suggestions

There are many ways to improve happiness, and what works for one person may not work for another. Here are some suggestions that one may find helpful -

- Practice gratitude: Take time each day to reflect on what one is grateful for. This can help shift one's focus from what one doesn't have to, what one does have.
- Exercise: Regular exercise can improve one's mood and increase one's energy levels.
- Connect with others: Spending time with friends and family can provide a sense of belonging and increase feelings of happiness.

- Engage in activities one enjoys: Doing things one enjoys can bring a sense of accomplishment and fulfilment.
- Practice mindfulness: Mindfulness involves being present in the moment and focusing on one's thoughts and feelings without judgment. This can help reduce stress and increase happiness.
- Get enough sleep: Lack of sleep can negatively impact mood and energy levels.
- Set goals: Setting and achieving goals can provide a sense of purpose and increase self-esteem.
- Give back: Volunteering or helping others can increase feelings of happiness and fulfilment.
- Practice self-care: Taking care of oneself physically, emotionally, and mentally can improve overall well-being and increase happiness.

Forgiveness is a complex process and can be challenging, but there are steps one can take to increase forgiveness. Here are some of the suggestions:

- Acknowledge the hurt: Recognize and validate the pain one experiences. This can help one to move towards forgiveness.
- Take responsibility for one's own feelings: Understand that one's feelings are one's responsibility, and one has control over how one responds to the situation.
- Practice empathy: Try to understand the other person's perspective and the reasons behind their actions. This can help one feel more compassionate and less resentful.
- Communicate one's feelings: Express how one feels and what one needs from the other person. This can help repair the relationship and create a path towards forgiveness.

- Let go of resentment: Holding onto resentment can be toxic and prevent forgiveness from happening. Practice letting go of negative thoughts and emotions.
- Practice self-forgiveness: Forgiving oneself is just as important as forgiving others. Acknowledge one's mistakes and taking responsibility for one's actions, but also being kind and compassionate towards oneself.
- Seek support: Forgiveness can be a challenging process, so one should not be afraid to seek support from friends, family, or a therapist.

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