



**EXPLORING EMOTIONAL DYNAMICS: AN EXAMINATION OF HOW
FORGIVENESS AND GRATITUDE CONTRIBUTE TO EMOTIONAL
REGULATION IN YOUNG ADULTS**

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ABSTRACT

When it comes to emotional dynamics, forgiveness and gratitude are two cornerstones that play a major role in regulating emotions, especially in young adults. These complex processes affect not only the mental health of the individual but also social interactions and general well-being. The current study investigated how the predictor variables i.e., forgiveness and gratitude contribute to determining the criterion variable; emotional regulation among young adults. The sample consisted of 110 young adults, 55 males and 55 females and were randomly selected from Delhi and nearby states. The findings revealed that there is a significant relationship between (a) Forgiveness and Gratitude, (b) Forgiveness and Emotional Regulation, (c) Gratitude and Emotional Regulation and (d) Forgiveness and Gratitude contribute

significantly to determining Emotional Regulation. Thus, all four hypotheses formed were accepted and statistically significant.

Keywords: *Emotional Regulation, Gratitude, Forgiveness, Young Adults*

INTRODUCTION

Forgiveness

Forgiveness is defined as consciously setting aside anger for someone who has wronged you, treated you unfairly or cruelly, or in some other manner caused someone pain. It takes more than just giving up being angry or accepting what happened to be forgiven. Instead, it is a conscious change in an individual's thoughts, feelings, and actions so that, one can demonstrate kindness, generosity, or other positive traits toward the person who harmed us and are no longer controlled by resentment.

According to McCullough (1998), forgiveness reflects an increase in prosocial motivation toward another person, meaning that there is a greater desire to act positively toward the transgressor and less desire to harm or seek revenge against them. This notion is seen to be based on changes in motivation, with the person growing more charitable with time (McCullough et al., 2000a, 2000b). Forgiveness is also thought to be appropriate only in situations when another person has committed a transgression.

Walrond-Skinner (1998) put up a topology of seven categories of forgiveness:

Premature immediate forgiveness: An insincere type of pardon expressed by dismissing or failing to remember the transgression.

Arrested forgiveness: When the victim and the offender refuse to forgive one another.

Conditional forgiveness: The consent to pardon provided certain requirements are met, such as an apology, acceptance, and a shift in inappropriate conduct.

Pseudo or mutual forgiveness: The act of extending or accepting immature forgiveness in an attempt to mend the relationship that existed prior to the conflict.

Collusive forgiveness: The act of avoiding disagreement or confrontation even in cases of grave injustice that remain unresolved.

Authentic process forgiveness: Motivated by the self-regarding, selfless, pro-social, and unconditional desire to spare both the offender and one from retaliation.

Repetitive forgiveness: The series of haphazard attempts to mend a relationship gone wrong.

Gratitude

The Latin word “gratia”, which means grace, gratitude, and graciousness, is from where the word "gratitude" originated (Emmons, McCullough, & Tsang, 2003). According to Pruyser (1976, p. 69), the concepts derived from this Latin root are “kindness, generousness, gifts, and the beauty of giving and receiving.” Gratitude is described as a two-step process by Emmons and McCullough (2003): a) recognizing that one has obtained a positive outcome and b) recognizing that there is an external source for this positive outcome.

Typically, gratitude falls into one of three groups (Allen, 2018)

- As an affective trait which implies that it has to do with a person's overall personality. More often than not, some people are inherently grateful. Research has not, however, clearly shown a link to any of the Big Five personality qualities, including agreeableness, extroversion, and conscientiousness.

- As a mood, meaning that it might change with time. There may be moments when people feel generally more appreciative, and other times when this may not happen as often.
- As an emotion, which is a fleeting sensation that people encounter at that same moment. Individuals may be moved to express gratitude by a specific experience.

The Cognitive-Emotion Theory of Gratitude is a theory. Researchers Smith, Heider, Ortony, Clore, and Collins led the studies. Heider (2013) postulated that beneficiaries would be less grateful if they felt obliged to express gratitude and appreciation because the cognitive-emotion theorists believed that gratitude was an internal state rather than something that could be influenced by outside factors like duties and regulations.

Emotional Regulation

Emotional regulation is the capacity of an individual to control one or more emotions. It falls into two other categories:

Explicit emotion regulation: It involves conscious monitoring, employing strategies like learning to interpret situations differently to better manage them, shifting the focus of an emotion (like anger) to something more likely to result in a positive outcome, and realizing how various behaviours can be employed to support a particular emotional state.

Implicit emotion regulation: It modifies the strength or duration of an emotional reaction without conscious thought; it works without conscious monitoring. During life, emotional control usually gets better.

A process model of emotion regulation put out by Gross (1998) might offer a useful framework for examining variations in emotion control across age groups. This process model outlines the five primary families of regulatory processes; situation selection, situation modification, attention deployment, cognitive change, and response modification; that may be involved in controlling reactions to emotional situations. Throughout an emotional experience, several emotion management techniques can be used and shown to be beneficial at different times.

METHODOLOGY

Aim

The study aimed to explore Forgiveness and Gratitude impact on Emotional Regulation, and their relationship among young adults.

Research Objectives

- To evaluate correlation between Forgiveness and Gratitude in young adults
- To evaluate correlation between Forgiveness and Emotional Regulation in young adults
- To evaluate correlation between Gratitude and Emotional Regulation in young adults
- To evaluate the combined contribution of Forgiveness and Gratitude in determining Emotional Regulation in young adults.

Hypotheses

- There will be significant correlation between Forgiveness and Gratitude
- There will be significant correlation between Forgiveness and Emotional Regulation
- There will be significant correlation between Gratitude and Emotional Regulation

- There will be significant contribution of Forgiveness and Gratitude in determining Emotional Regulation in young adults.

Variables

Predictor Variable: Forgiveness and Gratitude

Criterion Variable: Emotional Regulation

Description of the Tools

Bolton Forgiveness Scale: Developed by Amanze and Carson (2019), is a 15-item scale that requires responses on a scale from 1 to 6. The scale is further divided into 3 subscales: Coming to terms and letting go subscale, developing positive feeling subscale and giving benefit of doubt subscale. The reliability of the final model of the BFS was assessed using Cronbach's alpha and test-retest reliability. It is important to note that while the BFS alpha is high (.82), one of the subscales; "Giving benefit of the doubt" reported a low alpha (.60). The measure also yields a psychometrically good and valid measure of dispositional forgiveness.

Gratitude Questionnaire-6 (GQ-6): The GQ-6 developed by McCullough et al. (2002), is a short, self-report measure of the disposition to experience gratitude. Participants answer 6 items on a 1 to 7 scale (1 = "strongly disagree", 7 = "strongly agree"). Two items are reverse scored to inhibit response bias. The GQ-6 has good internal reliability, with alphas between .82 and .87.

Emotional Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ): A 10-item scale developed by Gross et al. (2003) was designed to measure respondents' tendency to regulate their emotions in two ways: (1) Cognitive Reappraisal and (2) Expressive Suppression. Respondents answer each

item on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The expressive suppression subscale obtained a α Cronbach of 0.76, an Ω of 0.76, and the corrected item-total correlation ranged from 0.50 to 0.66. The cognitive reappraisal subscale obtained an α of 0.82, an Ω of 0.82, with an item-total correlation corrected from 0.46 to 0.67. Regarding the temporal stability of the factors, it is observed that the test–retest correlation in cognitive reappraisal, $r = 0.69$, $p < 0.001$, and expressive suppression, $r = 0.70$, $p < 0.001$, are satisfactory.

Sample

The study's sample came from Delhi and nearby states. 110 young adults aged 18-25 years were randomly selected.

Inclusion Criteria

- Young adults aged 18-25 years were randomly selected.
- Education qualification of atleast high school.
- Unmarried young adults were randomly selected for this study.

Exclusion Criteria

- Young adults with any physical or mental disability and married, separated, and divorced couples were excluded from the study.

Research Design

Correlational research was employed in this study. Using statistical data, correlational research aims to ascertain the strength of a relationship between two or more variables.

Through the use of statistical data analysis, this kind of research seeks to ascertain the kind and degree of the correlation or connection between various variables.

Statistical Analysis

The Pearson Product Moment Coefficient of Correlation was used to analyse the data, and Multiple Regression analysis was carried out for additional analysis through the SPSS software.

RESULT

After data collection, statistical analysis was employed to the raw scores. The primary objective of which was to acquire the meaning from the raw scores, test hypotheses and draw inferences. Multiple Regression analysis was applied to observe the significant contribution of Forgiveness and Gratitude as predictors of Emotional Regulation in young adults. The coefficients of correlation were computed for the statistical analyses of the obtained raw scores. Table 4.1 depicts the mean values and standard deviation scores for the 2 predictor variables, viz, Forgiveness and Gratitude.

Table 4.1
Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Standard Deviation	N
Forgiveness	60.63	15.43	110
Gratitude	27.80	5.49	110
Emotional Regulation	50.20	12.75	110

Table 4.2

Correlations between the selected variables for the study, viz, Forgiveness and Gratitude.

Variables	Forgiveness	Gratitude	Emotional Regulation
Forgiveness	1		
Gratitude	.335	1	
Emotional Regulation	.529	.464	1

Multiple Regression analysis was employed to analyse the degree to which predictor variables (Forgiveness and Gratitude) predict the criterion variable (Emotional Regulation). The generated R square, as shown in Table 4.3, can be used to interpret the findings of Multiple Regression Analysis. It shows the variance caused by the combined influence of all predictor variables.

Table 4.3

Multiple Regression Analysis for ER

Regression Statistics	
Multiple R	.610
R Square	.372
Adjusted R Square	.360
Standard Error	10.204
Observations	110

The statistical test for the significance of R is an F ratio which has been depicted in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4*Showing the F-value for ER*

	<i>df</i>	SS	MS	F	Significance F
Regression	2	6599.54	3299.77	31.689	.000
Residual	107	11142.05	104.13		
Total	109	17741.60			

Table 4.5*Regression Coefficients of Predictor Variables for ER*

S. No.	Variables	Regression Coefficient	Standard Error of Coefficient	Correlation Coefficient	t- value	β	Coefficient of Determination
1	Forgiveness	.348	.067	.529	5.17	.421	.000
2	Gratitude	.749	.189	.464	3.96	.323	.000

Regression equation between Emotional Regulation (ER) and Predictor Variables: -

$$Y = 0.348 X_1 + 0.749 X_2 + 8.4111$$

$$Y = 1.097 + 8.4111 = 9.5081 \text{ (mean criterion variable)}$$

DISCUSSION

In Table 4.2, the coefficient of correlation suggests a positive relationship between Forgiveness and Gratitude ($r = .335$, $p < 0.01$). This is indicative of the fact that Forgiveness is highly correlated to Gratitude and is significant at 0.01 level. Hence, the first hypothesis stating, *“There will be significant correlation between Forgiveness and Gratitude,”* is accepted.

The table also indicates that a positive relationship exists between Forgiveness and Emotional Regulation ($r = .529$, $p < 0.01$). This suggests that Forgiveness is highly correlated to Emotional Regulation and is statistically significant at 0.01 level. Thus, the second hypothesis which states that, “*There will be significant correlation between Forgiveness and Emotional Regulation,*” is also accepted.

On further analysing Table 4.2, a positive significant relationship could be seen between Gratitude and Emotional Regulation ($r = .464$, $p < 0.01$). This suggests that Gratitude is highly correlated to Emotional Regulation and is significant at 0.01 level. Hence, the third hypothesis stating, “*There will be a significant relationship between Gratitude and Emotional Regulation,*” is accepted.

Table 4.3 shows .610 as the calculated Multiple R value which indicates a moderate to strong relationship between the predictor and criterion variables. The table also reflects the obtained R square value of .372 which entails that the predictors (Forgiveness and Gratitude) together account for 37.2% of the contribution in causing variance in the criterion variable i.e., Emotional Regulation.

Table 4.4 reflects the F value of 31.689, $p < 0.01$ which suggests that a considerable percentage of the variability in the criterion variable (Emotional Regulation) is explained by the predictors (Forgiveness and Gratitude) that are part of the model as a whole.

Table 4.5 reveals the coefficient for forgiveness is 0.348, meaning that there is a 0.348-unit increase in emotional regulation for every unit rise in forgiveness. With a p-value of 0.000, this coefficient is statistically significant, indicating that young people's emotional regulation is

significantly influenced by forgiveness. The coefficient for gratitude is 0.749, meaning that there is a 0.749-unit increase in emotional regulation for every unit rise in gratitude. With a p-value of 0.000, this coefficient is likewise statistically significant and shows that, in young adults, gratitude has a significant role in determining emotional regulation. Higher levels of emotional regulation are positively correlated with forgiveness and gratitude, indicating that these two positive feelings have a favourable impact on emotional regulation. Furthermore, according to the standardized coefficients, in this model, forgiveness has a marginally greater impact on emotional regulation than gratitude.

Thus, the results in Table 4.5 indicate that both predictor variables (Forgiveness and Gratitude) have a significant contribution in determining the criterion variable i.e., Emotional Regulation in young adults and so the fourth hypothesis stating, *“There will be significant contribution of Forgiveness and Gratitude in determining Emotional Regulation in young adults,”* is also accepted.

CONCLUSION

The aim of the study was to explore if Forgiveness and Gratitude contribute to Emotional Regulation among young adults. The interpretation of the results obtained provides the findings that there is a positive relationship between Forgiveness and Gratitude ($r = .335$, $p < 0.01$, Table 4.2) Thus, the first hypothesis was accepted.

There is a positive relationship between Forgiveness and Emotional Regulation ($r = .529$, $p < 0.01$, Table 4.2). Thus, the second hypothesis was accepted. Furthermore, there is a positive relationship between Gratitude and Emotional Regulation ($r = .464$, $p < 0.01$, Table 4.2). Thus, third hypothesis was accepted, and Forgiveness and Gratitude contribute

significantly to determining Emotional Regulation in young adults as shown in Table 4.5. Thus, the fourth hypothesis was also accepted.

Limitations

The current study's scope is limited due to its exclusion of married, separated, and divorced couples, making it difficult to establish causation between forgiveness, appreciation, and emotional regulation. The correlational nature of the study design may also impact the results' generalizability, as the sample of young people may not be typical of the general population. Expanding the scope to include a range of demographic traits and cultural backgrounds could improve the research findings' external validity.

Future Recommendations

Future studies on emotional dynamics, particularly the impact of forgiveness and appreciation on young adults' emotional regulation, should include longitudinal studies to understand the developmental stages of forgiveness and gratitude. Intervention studies should be conducted to improve young adults' capacity for appreciation and forgiveness, assessing their effectiveness in reducing stress, anxiety, and sadness.

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