

Forgiveness and Altruism as predictors of Psychological Well- Being

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Abstract

The present study was aimed to explore forgiveness and altruism as the predictor of psychological well-being. The participants comprised of 100 university adolescents. In order to collect data, the Heartland's Scale of Forgiveness, Self-Report Altruism Scale and Ryff's Psychological Well-being scale were used. Data were analyzed through Pearson correlation, t-test and stepwise linear regression. Results of the study indicated that forgiveness and altruism showed a significant positive relationship with psychological well-being. Also, both altruism ($\beta=.771$, $p=000$) and forgiveness ($\beta=.503$, $p=000$) predict psychological well-being in a significant manner. The study also revealed that adolescent's females differ significantly on forgiveness. Adolescent's females showed high forgiveness level than male adolescents. Thus, positive psychological resources like forgiveness and altruism are indeed essential for enhancing one's psychological well-being. The implications of the findings are also discussed in the light of empirical pieces of evidence.

Keywords: Forgiveness, Altruism and Psychological well-being.

Adolescence is considered to be an intermediate phase of growth between childhood and adulthood as well as often portrayed as a challenging survival phase of turmoil and stress (Arnett, 1999). In the present era, Modernization, the present age of extreme competition and their excessive use of media and technology have had a great impact on their lives, as a result of which they are becoming too much logic oriented, self-centered and more thoughtful with meeting their materialistic needs. Today, their social life is largely centered on the Internet, iPods and mobile devices (Roberts, Yaya, & Manolis, (2014). As a result, modern society has seen an overwhelming amount of research studies indicating that adolescents feel that their lives are no longer worth living (Schalkwijk, 2014; Wilburn, & Smith, 2005; Harrington, 2001), they are losing touch with their community (White, 2004), having less emotional stability (Thompson, et al., 2012) and showing poor mental health (Dashiff et al 2009). With the passage of time, their moral standards are often seen falling and they are just becoming like a machine with very few emotions. The propensity to provide a helping hand to others without expecting anything in return is the thing of the past now. After committing any mistake committed by oneself, others and the circumstances, the concern of forgiving is increasingly becoming an issue for this age group's adjustment survival in this disruptive era. It is important to protect the psychological well-being of adolescents as the future of society lies in their hands. Psychological well-being is about having a good life. It emphasizes on letting us feel better and work efficiently. It is important to include forgiveness and an altruistic element for this age group when discussing about psychological well-being in this age of technological advancement.

Most of the previous researches has centered on the relationship of forgiveness and altruism with religion, but so far there is limited data on the relationship of forgiveness and altruism with psychological well-being in the context of adolescence. Also, there is still a lack of clarity with gender between both variables in the current literature. So, in light of the above, the aim of the present research study is to explore forgiveness and altruism as predictors of psychological well-being. Adolescence is considered a time of heightened sense of creativity, empathy, idealism and adventure, so, to recognize about forgiveness and altruism as predictors of psychological well-being will serve as a base for teachers, trainers, parents and mental health professionals in fostering a positive environment to step up adolescent's personal growth. Thus, proper nurturing of adolescents can motivate them to make significant contribution to the national development.

Forgiveness

Forgiveness is a function of healing and making strong oneself by compromising with past. Forgiveness in psychology is described as, “a deliberative decision to abandon one’s right to resentment, negative judgment and indifferent behavior toward one or group who unjustly hurt you” (Coyle & Enright, 1998). ” According to Yildiz (2017), “forgiveness is a process of abandon the resentment and getting well.” The Previous empirical and theoretical researches revealed that the persons who can forgive others appear to have higher psychological well- being (Lawler-Row, 2010; Toussaint& Friedman, 2009; Wulandari & Megawati, 2020).

Krause and Ellison (2003) found an association between forgiveness and psychological well-being. The results showed that older people who were able to forgive others easily tend to show less depressive symptoms, lower level of death anxiety and showed more life satisfaction. Forgiveness is also affined with gender. Swickert, Robertson, & Baird (2016) suggested that women were found more forgiving and more compassionated with offenders as compared to younger men. Root and Exline (2011) opined that women considered forgiveness as a desiring healing process as well as found more prone to forgive as compared to men.

Altruism

The term altruism and pro-social behavior are often applied interchangeably. Altruism refers to the behavior of someone that promotes the wellbeing of others at one's own expense, even putting one's own life in danger. It is recognized as unselfish behavior without wishing any reward in return. Smith et al. (2006) pondered altruism as “behavior that is intended to benefit others beyond simple sociability or duties associated with role (i.e., family or work).”

Pro-social behavior has been received attention from past researchers as a crucial component of fostering health, adjustment, happiness, life satisfaction, well- being and social integration (Piliavin 2003; Van Willigen, 2000). Fechter (2016) suggested that people with performing altruistic acts have shown better psychological well-being because it filled them with a feeling of satisfaction for helping someone in need which also endows a sense of meaning to life. Soosai-Natah et al. (2013) examined the possibility of altruism in enlarging meaning in life: a significant dimension of psychological well-being. The researchers came to the conclusion that a

higher perceived degree of altruism was associated with a high degree of presence of meaning in life across cultural boundaries.

Hypotheses of the present study

1. There shall be significant relationship between forgiveness and psychological well-being among adolescents.
2. There shall be significant relationship between altruism and psychological well-being among adolescents.
3. There shall be significant difference between male and female in forgiveness among adolescents.
4. There shall be significant difference between male and female in altruism among adolescents.

Method

Participants

The sample of the present research included one hundred adolescent (N = 100) (50 boys and 50 girls) with the age group between 18-21 years. The sample was randomly selected from different universities in the state of Haryana. The sample was included in the research only on its availability basis and after ensuring willingness.

Procedure

A good rapport was constituted with adolescents in order to enlist the purpose of the present research study. The objectives of research were plainly mentioned to them and the informed consent was obtained in advance. Confidentiality was assured too. As per the convenience, the tests were administered both individually and in groups. Any confusion was cleared up. The completed questionnaires were gathered and as per manual's guidelines, responses were scored. Further, the statistical analysis of the collected data was done and inferences were drawn in line with the objectives of the research.

Measures

Heartland Forgiveness Scale (HFS) (Thompson et al., 2005): The 18-item self-administered scale is designed to assess a person's general propensity to forgive him or herself, others and uncontrollable circumstances. The scale is a 7-point Likert type scale. The scale comprised of three

subscales with six items each: forgiveness of oneself, forgiveness of others, and forgiveness of situations. The Total HFS has a score range of 18 to 126. The three HFS subscales have a range of 6 to 42 possible scores. Higher scores depicted more forgiveness, whereas lower scores depict less forgiving. For each subscale, the scale's reliability analysis reports a Cronbach alpha level of .75, .78, .79 respectively and .86 for the overall score.

Psychological well-being scale (Ryff & Keyes, 1995): This 18 items scale is used to measure psychological well-being (PWB) and its dimension autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance. This is a 7 point scale where '1' denotes strong agreement and "7" denotes extreme dissent. Items are scored in positive order as 1,2,3,4,5,6,7 and in reverse order as 7,6,5,4,3,2,1. The scale has good psychometric properties with internal consistency. The test-retest reliability coefficient of the scale was 0.82.

Adapted from the Self-Report Altruism Scale (Rushton, et al., 2009) : This 14 item adapted version of self-report altruism scale is utilized to assess how frequently people participate in altruistic activities. The digits (0), (1), (2), (3), and (4) on a 5-point scale stand for Never, Once, More Than Once, Often, and Very Often, respectively. The Reliability of scale is .80. The sum of all items will be calculated for enlisting scores together. The higher level of score depicts greater altruism.

Statistical Analyses

With the use of descriptive statistics in relation to mean and standard deviation, the data for the current research study were examined. T-ratio has been calculated for comparison. Pearson's product moment coefficient of correlation was used to examine the link between the variables in the current study. Further, stepwise regression analysis was used to investigate the effect of forgiveness and altruism in explaining psychological well-being. Forgiveness and Altruism has been used as predictor of psychological well-being. The results of the present study are shown in Table 1, 2 & 3.

Results and Discussion

Table 1. Inter correlation matrix of Psychological well-being(PWB) with forgiveness and altruism

Variables	Forgiveness	Altruism	PWB
Forgiveness	1	.835**	.741**
Altruism		1	.771**
PWB			1

****Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)**

From the above table it can be interpreted that forgiveness is significantly and positively correlated with psychological well-being ($r = .741, p < 0.01$). The Findings indicated that higher the forgiveness level higher will be psychological well-being.

It is also observed from the above table of inter-correlation matrix that Altruism is significantly and positively correlated with Psychological well-being ($r = .771, p < 0.01$). The research study opined that people who have showed high altruism level have better psychological wellbeing in comparison to those people who showed low altruism level.

The coefficient of correlation of forgiveness with altruism is also found positive and significant to each other ($r = .835, p < 0.01$). Thus, the findings pointed out that those individuals with higher levels of forgiveness and altruism will relish higher well-being compared to those with low levels of forgiveness and altruism.

Table 2. Mean, SD, and t-value of male and female adolescents on forgiveness and altruism

Variables	Groups	N	Mean	SD	t-value
Forgiveness	Males	50	68.94	16.94	2.28*
	Females	50	77.00	18.37	
Altruism	Males	50	35.96	8.91	1.60
	Females	50	38.56	7.19	

Note: ** Significant at 0.01 level, * Significant at 0.05 level

From the above table, it can be depicted that, on the variable i.e. forgiveness, the Mean and SD score of males was 68.94 and 16.94 respectively and the Mean and SD score of adolescents was 77.00 and 18.37 respectively. The acquired t-value was 2.28 ($p < .05$) which was found to be significant. Obtained value demonstrates that adolescents male have a significantly lower level of forgiveness as compared to adolescents females.

On the other variable, i.e. altruism, the Mean and SD score of adolescent males was 35.96 and 8.91 respectively and the Mean and SD score of adolescent females was 38.56 and 7.19 respectively. The obtained t-value was 1.60 which was found to be not significant. It grasps the distinction in the mean values is solely because of chance factors and on altruism, there is found no significant gender difference.

Predictors of psychological well-being for adolescents

Since the stepwise method has been probably the most popular, it embarked appropriate for opting the predictor variables for the regression model. Table 3 displayed the regression model considering psychological well-being as the criterion variable and forgiveness & altruism as predictor variables.

Table 3. Summary of Stepwise Regression analysis

Predictors	R	R ²	R ² Change	B	F	Sig.
Altruism	.771	.595	.595	.771	143.789	.000
Forgiveness	.791	.626	.031	.503	81.118	.000

Note: ** Significant at 0.01 level, * Significant at 0.05 level

The findings of stepwise regression presented in the above table revealed that both variables (altruism and forgiveness) emerged as a significant predictor of psychological well-being among adolescents. In this regard, forgiveness and altruism could predict 62.6% of variations in psychological well-being of adolescents.

The first variable altruism is the strongest predictor of psychological well-being for adolescents. The maximum prediction was interpreted by altruism with multiple R of .771 and R square equal to .595 (F= 143.789, p <.001). It showed that altruism explains 59.5 percent of the variance in the dependent variable i.e. psychological well-being. Altruism emerged as a significant positive predictor of psychological well-being, according to the regression coefficient b (.771).

The second variable forgiveness also predict psychological well-being. The maximum prediction was explained by forgiveness with multiple R of .791 and R square equal to .626 (F =81.118, p <.001). The results revealed that forgiveness alone accounts for 3.1 percent of the variance in the dependent variable, i.e. psychological well-being. The regression coefficient b (.503) revealed that forgiveness also emerged as a significant predictor of psychological well-being.

Discussion

The purpose of the present research was to explore forgiveness and altruism as the predictor of psychological well-being. The Results of the research study announced that higher the forgiveness level higher will be psychological well-being. The results are in line with the findings of Damirchi et al. (2017) which showed a positive correlation between psychological well-being and forgiveness. Der Waal et al. (2016) found indeed relation of forgiveness with increased psychological wellbeing. So, it can be said that forgiveness frees an individual from grudges and the individual will be able to handle any difficult circumstances easily.

The findings of the study also documented that the people with high altruistic behavior showed higher level of psychological well-being. That means they consistently demonstrate more concern for the welfare of others. Soosai-Natah et al. (2013) investigated the potential role of altruism in increasing a key dimension of psychological well meaning named meaning in life. The outcome of the research showed that a greater perceived level of altruism was linked to a stronger impendence of meaning in life. In a study conducted by Khanna et al. (2017) found that that pro-social behavior is sheer related to well-being and happiness.

As per findings of the research study, both variables (altruism and forgiveness) emerged as a significant predictor of psychological well-being in adolescents. Here, Altruism was found the strongest significant predictor of psychological well- being for adolescents. Some supporting confirmation about the present study came from Elsherbiny (2022) wherein the researcher find out the relationship between self-transcendence, altruism and psychological well-being and the results of the researcher found that self-transcendence and altruism predict psychological well-being. Khadim and Shahid (2017) found gratitude and altruism as a predictor of higher psycho-social well-being. In the same regard, Hooshmand et al. (2020) concluded gratitude and forgiveness as a crucial predictor of psychological well-being among students. Bono et al. (2008) stated that enhancing forgiveness are associated with rising level of psychological well-being.

The hypothesis of the study mentioned that adolescents males and females differ significantly on the variable forgiveness got accepted. Forgiveness is found more visible in female than male adolescents. This may be explained by women's inherent tendency to care and forgive without seeking a spirit of retaliation even after being suffered by others. In the same line, Miller et al. (2008) identified women to be much forgiving than men. Though both adolescent's males and females distinguish from each other on both the variables but the difference was not significant for altruism.

On the footing of above findings, it can be hinted that adolescents with strong altruistic trait will show selfless affair for the care of others and ease their suffering by offering helping hand. In this regard, it can also be stated that adolescence with a high level of forgiveness will feel better and restrain from anger by letting go of the burden easily created by bully so that future relationships can be improved in future.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the findings of this study revealed that both altruism and forgiveness were found positively and significantly correlated with psychological well-being. Also, the results indeed stated a predictive relationship of altruism and forgiveness with psychological well-being. Altruism was found to be a greater predictor of psychological well-being than forgiveness, indicating that people who exhibit high levels of altruism will exhibit a high spirit of warmth, selfless care, empathy, trust and affection as well as healthy relationships with others that promote well-being. Also, individual with high forgiveness level will be able to rescue easily from feeling of guilt and grudges after facing hurt by others. The findings also revealed that adolescent's females showed the higher level of forgiveness than adolescent males.

Implications

The findings of this study should have some significance for mental health policy makers, school counselors, educationists as well as psychologists who are working with emotional problems among adolescents. This research may guide them to assess whether it is a lack of forgiveness or altruism that is causing the adolescents to be unable to cope with daily challenges. As a result, they can explore the ways and mediums of executing identical school-based interventions for adolescents. The necessity to foster altruism and forgiveness in adolescents should be tracked now and the present study was a succinct step in that direction, even though with the expectation that the steps would be abundant and our adolescents would be prosperous.

Limitations

- For this research, a small sample size of 100 adolescents was selected. A large sample size could be used to generalize the findings.
- Only adolescents were included in this study. Young adults and the oldest adults could be included in future research.
- The design of this study was cross-sectional. Longitudinal studies could be conducted with these variables in the future.
- Only forgiveness and altruism were explored in the present research study. Other positive psychological variables like optimism, gratitude, hope, self-efficacy, resilience, etc. could be investigated to predict psychological well-being.

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