Correlation between one's Dispositional Forgiveness and Facets of Personality

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Abstract

The aim of the study examine was to examine the relationship between forgiveness and the five-factor model of personality between males and females. The correlation research design was employed and the data were obtained for 60 participants i.e. 30 male and 30 female postgraduate students by using the Big five personality inventory and the Heartland forgiveness scale. The study was designed to understand: the correlation between one's dispositional forgiveness and facets of personality and to assess differences in the level of forgiveness between male and female participants. The results showed that the extraversion trait has a low-level positive correlation. It was seen that neuroticism has a negative correlation (r for males -.614 and females r is -.594) which is a strong level of correlation with forgiveness of situations for both males and females.Therefore, there's a significant relationship between neuroticism and forgiveness of situations.Hence if an individual can learn to forgive, the storm of emotions begins to calm and space is created to begin healing, allowing the knots to unfurl and release their grip on their life.

Keywords: Forgiveness, personality, wellbeing, postgraduate students, gender

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Introduction

Forgiveness

Forgiveness is a voluntary process that involves letting go of emotions and resentment or any other negative emotion which a person has towards someone. Although people differ in their capacity for forgiveness, forgiveness is a part of human nature that has evolved in the process of natural selection. Some people are more forgiving than others so forgiveness can also be a personality trait like qualities such as resilience.

Thus it can be comprehended that forgiveness is a situational response and involves a skill that can be learned. It is implied that forgiveness to a large extent is influenced by one's personality and is termed as trait personality. By sustaining these personality traits and attributes an individual can live successfully in the world by maintaining its social and interpersonal relationships. Personality traits help one in dealing with stressful situations and sometimes it facilitates in building one's attitude towards others by being warm and affectionate. Forgiveness is one of them, where an individual might forgive someone for their mistakes wholeheartedly or keep that grudge for the whole of their life. This trait is regarded as character strength and virtue worth following for everyone who desires a greater sense of well-being.

People have different personality traits which lead to individual differences in thought processes, cognitions and reactions towards situations around them. As a result, their forgiveness levels would also vary, keeping in mind these personality traits. Inability to forgive others can lead to psychological and behavioral problems. So it would be interesting to understand the relationship between personality and forgiveness.

Martin Seligman elucidated that most people are not able to forgive others because:

1. They feel that people do not deserve their forgiveness.
2. forgiving is exhibiting love to the wrongdoer but not to the victim.
3. forgiveness blocks revenge, which is an emotion many people hold onto tightly.

While these reasons emerge to be explicit and plausible for creating misconceptions about forgiveness. That's why we must review human propensity towards forgiveness as a form of momentary response to one another as well as a characteristic that could describe a relationship.Many kinds of research have also shown that forgiveness is an effective defense mechanism to deal with stressful situations and maintain mental health. Mahatma Gandhi has said, "The weak can never forgive; forgiveness is an attribute of the strong" (as cited in Denmark et al.

2006, p. 5).To examine the same the study aims to examine the relationship between forgiveness and the five-factor model of personality between males and females.

Factors affecting forgiveness

Social factors affecting forgiveness. Forgiveness is swayed by the characteristics of transgressions and the conditions in which it occurs. By and large, people find it more difficult to forgivethose misdemeanors that seem to be more deliberate, acute and have more negative effects or consequences. The extent to which an offender apologizes and seeks forgiveness for transgression also influences the victim's likelihood of forgiving.

Interpersonal Correlates of Forgiveness. Forgiveness may be subjectedto attributes of the interpersonal relationship in which an offense takes place. In numerous studies, researchers have found that individuals are more willing to forgive in relationships in which they feel satisfied, close, and committed.

Personality factors and forgiveness. Forgiving individualshold a different view from a less forgiving individual on many personality attributes. For instance, forgiving people state fewer negative effects such as anxiety, depression and hostility. Forgiving people are also less ruminative, less exploitative, and more empathic in comparison to their less forgiving counterparts. Forgivers also tend to approve socially desirable attitudes and behavior (Mauger et al., 1992). Moreover, self-ratings of the disposition to forgive correlate negatively with scores on hostility and anger as well as with clinicians' ratings of hostility, passive-aggressive behavior, and neuroticism (Mauger et al., 1996). the disposition to forgive appears to be related most strongly to agreeableness and neuroticism. In this way, the forgiving person is relatively high in agreeableness and slightly low in neuroticism/negative emotionality.

Thus when a person remains in a state of unforgiveness, they are attached like a gnarly knot to those who have mistreated or done something wrong to them. T.D. Jakes an Inspirational author once said, "Unforgiveness, left unchecked, becomes cancer in our soul." He explains that just as cancer quietly and slowly eats our different body parts in the same manner unforgiveness also impacts our body in the same manner, including the good part. If an individual can learn to forgive, the storm of emotions begins to calm and space is created to begin healing, allowing the knots to unfurl and release their grip on their life.

Forgiveness is an antidote for our body, mind, and spirit. It has been observed that forgiveness improves health, elevates mood, enhances optimism, and reduces anger, stress, anxiety, and depression. The negative emotions experienced in a state of unforgiveness elicit a natural stress response that can lead to chronic health issues.

Thus, being forgiving can help an individual be more mindful and live a healthy life without any stress or anger. As a result, people will be happier, experience less depression or anxiety, improved physical and mental health. It will make a person more compassionate towards each other also.

Method

Participants

The sample consisted of 60 college students in the age group of 18-24 years, out of which there are 30 males and 30 females. These college students were distributed across India pursuing different courses. All the participants had a high school degree and were enrolled in a university. The participants were selected through convenient sampling. Theywere asked to fill a self-administered Google form after obtaining the consent and it was made sure that the respondents are well informed that all of their responses will remain confidential.

Design

A cross-sectional survey was conducted to understand how personality influences forgiveness and also how it impacts the wellbeing of the person. For the same purpose, Heartland Forgiveness Scale (HFS) was kept as a basis for the present study and a self-administered questionnaire was used. Before the final data collection, to assess the feasibility of the tools and detect problems, if any, in the research study, a pilot study was conducted. The scale was then administered to college-going students between the age group of 18-24 years. The obtained results were used to assess the influence of forgiveness and how it impacts the wellbeing of the person.

Procedure

A survey was conducted to understand how personality influences forgiveness and also how it impacts the wellbeing of the person. The first step was to make a Google form containing quantitative items of the questionnaire. The total number of participants was 60 and the targeted age group was 18-24 years old college-going students. Convenience sampling was used to find the participants for the conduction of the study. Then, rapport formation was done viaWhatsAppto make them feel comfortable and at ease before beginning the study. The second step was to devise and send the Google form to the participants along with the introduction and purpose of the practical. They were asked to respond to the statements that were presented to them in the Google form. The participants were not compensated in any way. Their consent was taken and they were also asked to give their honest responses. A Microsoft excel sheet was generated to compile all the responses and statistical tools were used to find out the results for the study.

Instruments used

The Heartland Forgiveness Scale (HFS) is used which is an 18-item, self-report questionnaire that assesses a person's dispositional forgiveness (i.e., one's general tendency to be forgiving) rather than forgiveness of a particular event or person. There is a score for the Total HFS and a score for each of the three HFS subscales (HFS Forgiveness of Self subscale, HFS Forgiveness of Others subscale, and HFS Forgivenessof Situations). The other scale used was a 44-item inventory that assesses an individual on the Big Five Factors (dimensions) of personality (Goldberg, 1993). They are further divided into personality facets that are Openness vs. closedness to experience, Neuroticism vs. emotional stability, Conscientiousness vs. lack of direction, agreeableness vs. antagonism & Extraversion vs. introversion.

Statistical Analysis

The main aim of the present study was to find the association between forgiveness and personality facets of individuals and to compare the differences in girls and boys concerning their forgiveness levels. accepted. To find an association between forgiveness and personality facets, a correlation was used. The Correlation Coefficient is also calculated as a hypothesis test of the "significance of the correlation coefficient" to decide whether the linear relationship in the sample data is strong enough to use to model the relationship in the population.

Objectives

The present study was designed to understand:

1. The correlation between one's dispositional forgiveness and facets of personality
2. To assess differences in the level of forgiveness between male and female participants

Result

Table 1

Depicts the correlation of total Heartland Forgiveness Score of male and female participants with scores of 5 facets of personality

Sum Hf N=30, females/males	Extraversion		Neuroticism		Openness		Agreeableness		Conscientiousness	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
r	. 203	.400*	-.456*	-.434*	.221	-.101	.222	.148	.327	.189

* Significant at 0.05 level (2-tailed).

** Significant at 0.01level (2-tailed).

Table 2

Depicts the correlation of Heartland Forgiveness subscale (self, others and Situational) scores of male and female participants with scores of 5 facets of personality

Sum Hf N=30, F/M	Extraversion		Neuroticism		Openness		Agreeableness		Conscientious ness	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Self. r	.113	.086	-.267	-.400	.191	.041	.080	.082	.257	.265
Others. r	-.122	.350	-.214	.061	.195	.035	.272	.548**	.207	-.035
Situational r	.272	.365*	-.614**	-.594**	.136	-.187	.230	-.066	.313	.239

* Significant at 0.05 level (2-tailed).

** Significant at 0.01level (2-tailed).

Discussion

The present study was conducted to assess the correlation between the level of forgiveness and the five facets of personality are extraversion, neuroticism, openness, agreeableness and conscientiousness. The comparison is made between the total Heartland Forgiveness Score and subscales (self, others and Situational) scores of male and female participants. The Heartland Forgiveness Scale is used to assess score the Total HFS and a score for each of thethree HFS subscales (HFS Forgiveness of Self subscale, HFS Forgiveness of Others subscale, and HFS Forgiveness of Situations). The other scale used is a 44-item inventory that measures an individual on the Big Five Factors (dimensions) of personality.

Table 1 shows the correlation between the total HFS score on the Heartland Forgiveness Scale and scores of facets of personality of male and female participants. The total HFS indicates how forgiving a person tends to be of oneself, other people, and uncontrollable situations. It is found that the extraversion trait has a low-level positive correlation (r=. 203 in males and .400 in females) with forgiveness. Therefore a moderate level of positive correlation is seen in female participants, unlike male participants,which is insignificant. This shows that women tend to score higher than men on warmth, gregariousness, and positive emotions in most of the researches across cultures. Extraversion reflects sociability, Assertiveness, and positive emotionality, all of which have been linked to sensitivity to rewards (Depue and Collins, 1999; DeYoung and Gray, 2009).Given the importance of Extraversion to the interpersonal domain, it may be expected that women would consistently score higher than men.

There's a significant negative correlation between neuroticism and total HSF for male participants, r is -.456 and for female participants, r is -.434. Male participants

showed a stronger negative correlation. Stuckless and Goranson (1992) surveyed revenge in undergraduates. Both the studies showed that males tend to score higher than females on trait revenge. The reason for this could be that men are always encouraged to be more aggressive and take they are given the responsibility to take justice into their own hands while women are encouraged to work things out to restore relationship harmony. Thus it shows thatwomen tend to forgive more than do men.This might be due to personal qualities such as valuing relationships, personality or dispositional qualities such as agreeableness and empathy. Almost certainly, women's orientation toward an ethic of care plays a role, but the nature and strength of the role that ethic of care plays are not well specified.

The correlation coefficient between total HSF and openness, r for males and females is low therefore not significant. Similarly, there's no significant correlation between total HSF and agreeableness and conscientiousness for both male and female participants.

Table 2 represents the correlation of Heartland Forgiveness subscale (self, others and Situational) scores of male and female participants with scores of facets of personality.It was found that traits like extraversion, openness, Conscientiousness and agreeableness have a low level of positive correlation with forgiveness of self for both male and female participants, which is insignificant. The correlation coefficient between neuroticism and the forgiveness of self among males is -.267 and for females is -.400. Here, there's a low level of negative correlation for males. However, for females, it is relatively strong.

The research indicates that women score higher on the Five-Factor Model (FFM) traits of Neuroticism and Agreeableness (Costa, Terracciano& McCrae 2001). Neuroticism reflects distress proneness and propensities toward the experience of a variety of negative emotions, while Agreeableness reflects amicability, altruism, trust, tender-mindedness, and compliance. The tendency to be less forgiving about oneself is related to the characteristics of neuroticism such as an overall tendency toward negative emotions, feeling of anxiety, self-doubt, irritability, being self-conscious and poor emotional stability. Researches also reveal that females tend to be higher on social physique anxiety levels and lower on physical self-esteem levels than males by demonstrating that these differences are consistent across age groups because of their social upbringing.

Table 2, row II, represents the correlation between the forgiveness of others and personality traits. It is found that among all the traits, the correlation between extraversion, openness and conscientiousness have a low level of correlation with forgiveness of others for both male and female participants. There is no significant

relationship between the above traits and the forgiveness of others among participants. Even though the correlation coefficient for females between conscientiousness and forgiveness of others is negative but is insignificant.

The r for agreeableness and forgiveness of others for male participants is .272 and for females is .548. The r for male participants is positive but insignificant. However, for females, it's relatively strong and significant. Higher agreeableness in females is consistent with the results of many researchers (Shuqin, Wang, & Rocklin, 1995; Goldberg,Sweeney, Merenda,& Hughes, 1998; Budaev, 1999; Costa, Terracciano, & McCrae, 2001. This finding could be interpreted by both evolutionary and social role theories.

Evolutionary explanations emphasize the adaptive advantage for reproduction and preservation of offspring granted by sensitivity, nurturance and agreeableness (Buss, 1995), while social role theory attributes female nurturing behavior and agreeableness to the socialization of feminine gender role (Eagly, 1987)

Row III in Table 2 shows a correlation between forgiveness of situations and personality traits among participants. There is an insignificant and low level of positive correlation between forgiveness of situations and traits like openness, agreeableness and conscientiousness. It is found that extraversion has a positive correlation (.272), for males which is a very low positive correlation with forgiveness of situations and this correlation is not significant. However, in the case of female participants, r is .365, relatively strong and significant at 0.05 level (p).

As shown in the table neuroticism has a negative correlation (r for males -.614 and females r is -.594) which is a strong level of correlation with forgiveness of situations for both males and females. However, r for males is stronger than females in case of forgiveness of situations. Therefore, there's a significant relationship between neuroticism and forgiveness of situations.

Similar results are found across various studies. Studies unanimously show neuroticism traits and vengeance has a statistically significant negative relationship with forgiveness.Using a sample of 275 college students, a study conducted by Lesley et al., examined the relationship between forgiveness of others (i.e., situational and dispositional) and the five-factor model of personality. The study shows that all the forgiveness factors were negatively correlated with Neuroticism and positively correlated with Agreeableness. Whereas extraversion was seen to be positively related to one forgiveness measure. None of the forgiveness measures were related to Openness or Conscientiousness.

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Limitations

1. The sample size was small.
2. The sample was confined to urban and young populations.

Conclusion

Keeping in view the objectives of the present study the below conclusions were drawn:Among female participants, the only extraversion among all the traits has a relatively moderate level of positive significant correlation with total forgiveness. For both males and females neuroticism has a significant negative correlation with total forgiveness, where the correlation coefficient being stronger for males. Neuroticism and extraversion among females have a significant correlation with total forgiveness. There's no significant relationship between all traits of personality and forgiveness of self for the entire sample of the population. Agreeableness has a significant positive relationship with the forgiveness of others among females. Neuroticism has a significant negative correlation with forgiveness of situations for both males and females.

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