

The Impact of Forgiveness in Emotional Regulation and Resilience in the Face of Adversity Among Young Adults

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ABSTRACT

This research paper investigates the relationship between forgiveness, emotional regulation, and resilience in young adults facing adversity. Forgiveness is conceptualized as a deliberate and voluntary process of freeing oneself from negative emotions towards the person who has caused harm. Emotional regulation refers to the ability to manage and regulate one's emotions effectively, while resilience is defined as the ability to overcome adversity and maintain psychological well-being in challenging circumstances. The study employs a correlational research design and utilizes three main tools: the Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ), the Nicholson McBride Resilience Questionnaire (NMRQ), and the Heartland Forgiveness Scale (HFS). A sample of 100 young adults aged 18 to 25 years is randomly selected to ensure representation across diverse demographics. The results indicate a significant moderate positive relationship between forgiveness and resilience, supporting the hypothesis that forgiveness contributes to resilience in young adults. However, the correlation between forgiveness and emotional regulation is found to be non-significant, suggesting that forgiveness may directly enhance resilience independent of its effects on emotional regulation. Emotional regulation emerges as a significant factor contributing to resilience, highlighting its importance in fostering psychological adaptation and coping mechanisms in the face of adversity among young adults. These findings contribute to the growing body of knowledge in positive psychology and inform interventions aimed at promoting forgiveness and resilience in individuals and communities facing adversity.

Keywords: Forgiveness, emotional regulation, resilience, adversity, young adults, positive psychology, correlational study.

INTRODUCTION

Forgiveness: In psychological terms, forgiveness is a deliberate and voluntary process of freeing oneself from negative emotions such as resentment, anger or vengeance towards the person who has harmed you. It's about replacing these negative feelings with understanding, compassion and ultimately a sense of freedom.

Forgiveness, as understood by psychologists, encompasses various definitions and dimensions:

1. **McCullough, Pargament, & Thoresen (2000)**: They define forgiveness as a "process of overcoming the negative emotions associated with transgressions by replacing them with positive emotions." This definition emphasizes the emotional transformation involved in forgiveness.
2. **Enright & the Human Development Study Group (1991)**: Forgiveness is conceptualized as a "conscious, deliberate decision to release feelings of resentment or vengeance towards a person or group who has harmed you, regardless of whether they actually deserve your forgiveness." Here, forgiveness is seen as a voluntary act that benefits the forgiver.
3. **Worthington (2001)**: Forgiveness is described as "a gift freely given by the victim to the offender, involving a change in emotions and a decrease in avoidance behaviors towards the offender." This definition highlights forgiveness as both a cognitive and emotional process, resulting in reduced hostility and increased empathy.
4. **Toussaint & Webb (2005)**: They define forgiveness as "a complex construct that involves letting go of negative emotions, thoughts, and behaviors towards the offender while fostering positive feelings of compassion, empathy, and understanding." This perspective underscores the multifaceted nature of forgiveness, including cognitive, emotional, and behavioral components.

Important Theories:

1. **Enright's Process Model of Forgiveness**: Developed by Robert Enright, this model views forgiveness as a complex process involving multiple stages: uncovering anger, deciding to forgive, working on forgiveness, and discovery and release from emotional consequences. It emphasizes the cognitive decision-making aspect of forgiveness, suggesting that individuals must consciously choose to let go of negative emotions towards the offender.
2. **McCullough's Tripartite Model of Forgiveness**: Everett L. Worthington Jr., Michael E. McCullough, and Kenneth I. Pargament proposed this model, which suggests that forgiveness consists of three components: decisional forgiveness, emotional forgiveness, and behavioral forgiveness. Decisional forgiveness involves a conscious decision to let go of resentment and thoughts of revenge; emotional forgiveness involves reducing negative emotions towards the offender; and behavioral forgiveness involves replacing avoidance behaviors with positive ones.
3. **Attachment Theory**: Attachment theory, developed by John Bowlby and further expanded by researchers like Mary Ainsworth, suggests that our early attachment experiences influence our ability to forgive later in life. Securely attached individuals may find it easier to forgive, as they have a strong foundation of trust and support, while insecurely attached individuals may struggle with forgiveness due to issues such as fear of abandonment or lack of emotional support.
4. **The REACH Model**: Developed by Worthington, the REACH model outlines a five-step process for promoting forgiveness: Recall the hurt, empathize with the offender, offer Altruistic gift of forgiveness, commit to forgive, and hold onto forgiveness. This model emphasizes empathy, altruism, and commitment as key components of the forgiveness process.

Emotional Regulation: The ability to manage and regulate one's emotions and expressions is referred to as "emotional regulation". To cope with the variety of situations and foster overall well being, it is accompanied by a number of processes including identification, understanding or adjustment of emotions.

Important Theories:

1. **Gross's Process Model:** James Gross describes emotion regulation as the processes by which individuals influence which emotions they have, when they have them, and how they experience and express these emotions. This model highlights strategies such as cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression.
2. **Thompson's Transactional Model:** Thompson proposes that emotion regulation involves a dynamic interplay between the person and the environment. It emphasizes the continuous transactional process of monitoring, evaluating, and modifying emotional experiences and expressions to adaptively respond to situational demands.
3. **Barrett's Constructivist Approach:** Lisa Feldman Barrett's constructivist view suggests that emotions are constructed by the brain in response to sensory input. Emotion regulation involves the modulation of these constructed experiences through attentional deployment, cognitive reappraisal, and situation selection.
4. **Gross & John's Individual Differences Model:** Gross and John propose that emotion regulation strategies vary among individuals and can be categorized into adaptive (e.g., cognitive reappraisal) and maladaptive (e.g., expressive suppression) strategies. This model emphasizes individual differences in emotion regulation tendencies and their impact on well-being.
5. **Affect Regulation Theory:** According to this theory, emotion regulation encompasses the processes by which individuals manage their emotional experiences to maintain or enhance their overall affective states. It involves both conscious and unconscious efforts to regulate emotions through various strategies, including attentional deployment, cognitive reappraisal, and response modulation.

Resilience: Resilience is the ability to overcome adversity, deal with challenges and respond positively to serious stresses. It's about the ability to maintain a psychological state of well-being, even under difficult circumstances.

Various definitions:

1. **American Psychological Association (APA):** APA defines resilience as the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats, or significant sources of stress.
2. **Ann Masten:** Ann Masten, a renowned resilience researcher, describes resilience as the capacity of a dynamic system to adapt successfully to disturbances that threaten system function, viability, or development.
3. **Norman Garmezy:** Garmezy, one of the pioneers in resilience research, defines resilience as the ability to adapt to significant adversity and maintain normal psychological and physical functioning.
4. **Michael Rutter:** Rutter, another influential figure in resilience research, describes resilience as the ability of individuals to steer their lives in a positive direction despite unfavorable circumstances.
5. **Urie Bronfenbrenner:** Bronfenbrenner, known for his ecological systems theory, sees resilience as the product of successful interaction between individuals and their environments, promoting adaptation and positive outcomes.

Important Theories:

1. **Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979):** This theory emphasizes the importance of understanding resilience within the context of a person's environment. Bronfenbrenner's model

identifies multiple systems (microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem) that influence an individual's development and resilience. Resilience is seen as emerging from the interaction between the individual and their environment.

2. **The Resilience Framework (Masten, 2001):** Ann Masten's work on resilience suggests that it arises from a combination of personal attributes, external supports, and interactions between the individual and their environment. She identifies three main factors contributing to resilience: individual attributes (e.g., intelligence, temperament), external resources (e.g., supportive relationships, access to services), and the interaction between these factors.
3. **Transactional Model of Stress and Coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984):** This model posits that resilience is influenced by an individual's cognitive appraisal of stress and their coping strategies. Lazarus and Folkman propose that individuals engage in primary appraisal (evaluating the significance of the stressor) and secondary appraisal (evaluating their resources for coping). Resilience is fostered when individuals perceive stressors as manageable and have effective coping mechanisms.
4. **The Socio-Ecological Model of Resilience (Ungar, 2011):** Michael Ungar's model highlights the importance of considering resilience within the broader social and cultural context. This model emphasizes the role of social support, community resources, cultural beliefs, and systemic factors in fostering resilience. Ungar argues that resilience is not solely an individual trait but is shaped by the interaction between individuals and their social environment.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A study done by Ho MY, Van Tongeren DR. (2020) explored the connection between self-regulatory processes, emotion regulation, and forgiveness among Hong Kong Chinese college students. It reveals that lower self-regulatory fatigue is linked to a higher tendency to forgive, supporting the strength model of self-regulation. Additionally, cognitive reappraisal positively correlates with forgiveness. This research addresses a gap in understanding the interplay between self-regulatory fatigue and forgiveness, uncovering that cognitive reappraisal mediates this relationship. Christian individuals show higher forgiveness tendencies, suggesting a potential influence of religious beliefs. This study provides valuable insights into the complex processes underlying forgiveness, with implications for diverse cultural contexts. Study done by Yahya, Farzan. (2013) investigated gender differences in emotional regulation and forgiveness among Pakistani participants, utilizing the Cognitive Emotional Regulation Questionnaire (CERQ) and Heartland Forgiveness Scale (HFS). Despite cultural influences on emotional expression, men show higher cognitive emotional regulation. Surprisingly, CERQ does not predict forgiveness levels, challenging initial hypotheses. Gender significantly influences cognitive emotional regulation, but other demographic variables show no consistent impact. Men exhibit higher forgiveness levels, and socioeconomic status influences positive reappraisal. Inter-correlation analyses reveal complex relationships between age, gender, socio-economic status, and emotional regulation/forgiveness scores. The findings emphasize the intricate interplay of cultural, gender, and socio-economic factors in shaping emotional processes. Study done by Soni, Pooja. (2016) show that trait forgiveness is linked to increased well-being. Resilience is explored through self-efficacy, hope, and coping, while research among older adults indicates a modest but significant correlation between resilience and forgiveness. The intersection of resilience, forgiveness, and anger expression is noted, suggesting commonalities. Limitations include a homogeneous sample, and the study proposes a comparative analysis between military and civilian populations. Overall, the findings have implications for counseling, advocating forgiveness to build resilience and cope with life challenges.

Studies done by Baynal, Fatma & Uysal, Saliha. (2023) investigates the links between psychological resilience, forgiveness, and God perception among adults. Using a relational survey model with 549 participants, findings reveal gender, marital status, and income impact God perception and forgiveness. Religiosity is linked to forgiveness, and self-forgiveness relates to psychological resilience. The main hypothesis is partially confirmed. The study suggests future research should explore the connections among self-forgiveness, religiosity, and resilience, considering environmental factors. Overall, the research provides insights into the complex relationships shaping these psychological constructs. Studies done by Bonfiglioli, Luisa., Forlani, Elisa & Bitti. Pio Enrico Ricci (2015) investigates the role of emotional regulation strategies in the forgiveness process after interpersonal offenses. With 143 adults, emotions like anger and sadness are prominent post-offense, diminishing with forgiveness. Significant correlations emerge between emotional regulation scores and forgiveness dynamics, as well as between trait forgiveness scores and the persistence of rancor. The research enhances our understanding of forgiveness by exploring the interplay of emotions and regulation strategies, contributing valuable insights to this complex psychological process. Research done by Kravchuk, Svetlana. (2020) clearly explores the connections between forgiveness propensity, psychological resilience, and various personality factors. Positive correlations are found between forgiveness and resilience, while divergent validity is established through inverse correlations with aggression, neuroticism, and other traits. Factors influencing resilience include challenge perception, personal growth, sociability, control, forgiveness propensity, self-efficacy, commitment, self-acceptance, and environmental management. The study acknowledges limitations, emphasizing the importance of future research incorporating implicit measures for a more comprehensive understanding of psychological resilience. Study done by Ahmad, Izaddin Aziz & Yildirim, Murat. (2019) explores the connection between resilience and forgiveness among Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). Findings indicate lower resilience and forgiveness levels in IDPs, with a positive correlation between higher resilience and increased forgiveness. Ecological resilience significantly influences emotional, behavioral, and cognitive forgiveness. This study emphasizes the potential of interventions targeting resilience and forgiveness to improve the mental health of IDPs. Challenges in cross-cultural assessments are acknowledged, urging further research. Despite limitations, this study had provided valuable insights for designing tailored interventions in the context of displacement.

RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

The Rationale of the research is to study the impact of forgiveness in emotional regulation and resilience in the face of adversity among young adults. It stems from a personal interest and a recognition of its broader societal implications. The research was driven by a curiosity to understand the practical applications of forgiveness, inspired by past experiences where it played a pivotal role in navigating challenges. Moreover, forgiveness holds profound significance across various social and cultural contexts, making it a compelling subject for exploration. By uncovering the links between forgiveness, emotional regulation, and resilience, this research aims to inform therapeutic interventions and counseling practices, empowering individuals to cope more effectively with adversity. Furthermore, this study addresses existing research gaps by elucidating the mechanisms through which forgiveness influences emotional wellbeing. By contributing to this body of knowledge, the main aim to enrich the field of Positive Psychology research, paving the way for practical interventions that promote forgiveness, emotional Regulation and resilience in individuals and communities.

METHODOLOGY

OBJECTIVE:

The objective of this research is to study the impact of Forgiveness in Emotional Regulation and Resilience in the face of adversity among young adults.

HYPOTHESIS:

H1: There will be a positive correlation between Forgiveness levels and Resilience.

H2: There will be a positive correlation between Forgiveness levels and Emotional Regulation.

H3: there will be a positive correlation between Emotional Regulation and Resilience.

H0: There will be negative correlation in all the variables.

VARIABLES:

Independent variable: Forgiveness

Dependent Variables: Resilience and emotion

RESEARCH DESIGN:

Correlation

TOOLS:

1. Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ): The Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ) was developed by James J. Gross and John J. John to measure individual differences in emotion regulation strategies. It consists of two dimensions: Cognitive Reappraisal and Expressive Suppression. Cognitive Reappraisal assesses the tendency to regulate emotions by changing the interpretation of situations, while Expressive Suppression measures the inclination to inhibit outward emotional expressions. Respondents rate their agreement with statements reflecting these strategies on a Likert scale, providing insights into how they manage their emotions. Researchers and clinicians employ the ERQ to understand how these strategies relate to psychological well-being, interpersonal relationships, and mental health outcomes.

2. Nicholson McBride Resilience Questionnaire (NMRQ): The Nicholson McBride Resilience Questionnaire (NMRQ) is a psychological assessment tool developed by Nicholson McBride, a consulting firm specializing in organizational psychology. The questionnaire is designed to measure an individual's resilience, which refers to their ability to bounce back from adversity and adapt to challenging situations. The NMRQ assesses resilience across several dimensions, including Emotional Stability (the ability to remain calm and composed under pressure), Purposefulness (a sense of direction and motivation), Internal Locus of Control (the belief in one's ability to influence outcomes), Tenacity (the determination to persevere in the face of obstacles), and Support (the availability and utilization of social support networks). Respondents answer a series of statements on a Likert scale, indicating the extent to which they agree or disagree with each statement, and their responses provide insight into their level of resilience across these dimensions. The NMRQ is often used in organizational settings to assess employees' resilience and inform interventions aimed at enhancing individual and organizational well-being.

3. Heartland Forgiveness Scale (HFS): The Heartland Forgiveness Scale (HFS) is a psychological assessment tool developed by Thompson, Snyder, Hoffman, Michael, Rasmussen, Billings, Heinze, Neufeld, and Shorey, designed to measure forgiveness across different dimensions. It evaluates forgiveness as a multidimensional construct, assessing both cognitive and affective aspects. The scale

measures forgiveness by examining factors such as letting go of negative emotions towards the offender, reducing the desire for revenge, and promoting empathy and understanding towards the offender. The HFS consists of three main dimensions: (1) decisional forgiveness, which focuses on the cognitive aspect of forgiveness and involves a conscious choice to let go of resentment and desire for revenge; (2) emotional forgiveness, which pertains to the affective aspect of forgiveness and involves reducing negative emotional responses towards the offender; and (3) situational forgiveness, which considers forgiveness in the context of specific situations or offenses. The scale is widely used in research and clinical settings to assess forgiveness and its relationship with psychological well-being and interpersonal relationships.

SAMPLE:

Participants: Young adults of age groups 18-25 Years of age were included representing diverse demographics, religions, locations, and races.

Sample size: 100

Sampling method: Participants were selected through random sampling to ensure a representative sample.

INCLUSION CRITERIA:

- Individuals aged 18 to 25 years of age.

EXCLUSION CRITERIA:

- Individuals under 18 years and above 25 years of age.

PROCEDURE

The sample was collected from 100 participants of the age groups (18-26 years,). The purpose of the study was made clear to the participants. The participants were asked to fill in their responses on the given questionnaire. Instructions were given to them, and all the queries were resolved. They were assured that their information would be kept confidential throughout the study. The data collected was then calculated with the help of SPSS.

RESULTS

Table. 1 This table shows the descriptive statistics including the mean and standard deviation for a sample size of 100.

VARIABLES	MEAN	STD. DEVIATION	N
Forgiveness	81.9600	8.66657	100
Emotional Regulation	48.8800	10.29983	100
Resilience	39.4200	7.83437	100

Inference: Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics of the sample size of 100. The mean of Forgiveness is 81.9600, Emotional Regulation is 48.8800 and of Resilience is 39.4200. The Standard Deviation of Forgiveness is 8.66657, of Emotional Regulation is 10.29983 and Resilience is 7.83437.

Table. 2 This table shows Pearson correlation of Forgiveness and Resilience of sample size of 100.

Variables		Forgiveness	Resilience
Forgiveness	Pearson correlation	.348**	1
	Sig. (2 – tailed)	<.001	

	N	100	100
Resilience	Pearson correlation	1	.348**
	Sig. (2- tailed)		<.001
	N	100	100

Inference: Table 2 shows the Results of the Pearson correlation indicated that there is a significant moderate positive relationship between X (resilience) and Y(forgiveness), $(r(98) = .348, p < .001)$.

Table 3 This table shows Pearson correlation of Forgiveness and Emotional Regulation of sample size of 100.

Variables		Forgiveness	Emotional Regulation
Forgiveness	Pearson correlation	1	.155
	Sig. (2 – tailed)		.125
	N	100	100
Emotion Regulation	Pearson correlation	.155	1
	Sig. (2- tailed)	.125	
	N	100	100

Inference: Table 3 shows that Results of the Pearson correlation indicated that there is a non-significant small positive relationship between X(forgiveness) and Y(emotional regulation), $(r(98) = .155, p = .125)$.

Table 4 This table shows Pearson correlation of Emotional Regulation and Resilience of sample size of 100.

Variables		Emotional Regulation	Resilience
Emotional Regulation	Pearson correlation	1	.545**
	Sig. (2 – tailed)		<.001
	N	100	100
Resilience	Pearson correlation	.545**	1
	Sig. (2- tailed)	<.001	
	N	100	100

Inference: Table 4 shows Results of the Pearson correlation indicated that there is a significant large positive relationship between X(emotional regulation) and Y(resilience), $(r(98) = .545, p < .001)$.

DISCUSSION:

In this study, three main variables were investigated: forgiveness, emotional regulation, and resilience. Forgiveness: It is defined as a deliberate and voluntary process of freeing oneself from negative emotions towards the person who has caused harm, forgiveness is crucial for emotional well-being and interpersonal relationships. Emotional Regulation: It refers to the ability to manage and regulate one's emotions effectively. It includes strategies such as cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression, which play a significant role in coping with stress and adversity. Resilience: It is defined as the ability to overcome adversity and maintain psychological well-being in the face of challenges. Resilience is a key factor in promoting mental health and thriving despite difficult circumstances. Positive psychology emphasizes the study of strengths and virtues that enable individuals to thrive and lead fulfilling lives. Investigating

forgiveness, emotional regulation, and resilience aligns with the principles of positive psychology by focusing on factors that contribute to psychological well-being and adaptive functioning, even in the face of adversity. By exploring how forgiveness can enhance emotional regulation and resilience, this research contributes to the growing body of knowledge in positive psychology and informs interventions aimed at promoting psychological health and resilience.

The tools used in this research are:

Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ): This questionnaire assesses individuals' tendency to regulate their emotions through cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression. It provides valuable insights into how individuals manage their emotions in different situations, which is crucial for understanding emotional regulation processes.

Nicholson McBride Resilience Questionnaire (NMRQ): This questionnaire measures individuals' level of resilience by assessing their ability to overcome adversity and maintain psychological well-being. It provides a comprehensive assessment of resilience across various domains, including emotional, cognitive, and behavioral aspects.

Heartland Forgiveness Scale (HFS): This scale evaluates individuals' level of forgiveness by assessing their willingness to forgive others and let go of negative emotions. It provides insights into individuals' forgiveness tendencies and attitudes, which are essential for understanding how forgiveness contributes to emotional regulation and resilience. The results of the study shed light on the intricate relationship between forgiveness, emotional regulation, and resilience in young adults facing adversity. This discussion will delve into the implications of the findings, their alignment with existing literature, and potential avenues for future research.

1. Positive Correlation between Forgiveness and Resilience: The significant moderate positive relationship between forgiveness and resilience ($r = .348, p < .001$) supports the hypothesis that individuals who are more forgiving tend to exhibit higher levels of resilience (H1). This finding is consistent with prior research indicating that forgiveness is associated with better psychological adaptation and coping mechanisms in the face of challenges (Kravchuk, 2020; Ahmad & Yildirim, 2019). It suggests that cultivating forgiveness may serve as a protective factor against the adverse effects of stress and trauma, ultimately fostering resilience in young adults.

2. Non-Significant Relationship between Forgiveness and Emotional Regulation: Contrary to expectations, the correlation between forgiveness and emotional regulation was found to be non-significant ($r = .155, p = .125$), failing to support the hypothesis that forgiveness is positively correlated with better emotional regulation (H2). This result suggests that while forgiveness and emotional regulation are both important components of psychological well-being, they may operate independently of each other in the context of resilience. It highlights the need for further research to explore the nuanced dynamics between forgiveness and emotional regulation and their respective contributions to resilience.

3. Significant Positive Relationship between Emotional Regulation and Resilience: The significant large positive relationship between emotional regulation and resilience ($r = .545, p < .001$) confirms the hypothesis that individuals with better emotional regulation tend to exhibit higher levels of resilience (H3). This finding is consistent with existing literature emphasizing the role of emotional regulation as a key mechanism for coping with adversity and maintaining psychological well-being (Gross, 2015; Bonfiglioli et al., 2015). It underscores the importance of developing effective emotion regulation skills as a means of bolstering resilience and adaptive functioning in young adults.

Implications and Future Directions:

The findings of this study have important implications for theory, practice, and future research in the field of psychology. Firstly, they highlight the complex interplay between forgiveness, emotional regulation, and resilience, suggesting that these constructs may influence each other in intricate ways. Future research could explore potential moderators or mediators of these relationships, such as cultural factors or individual differences in coping styles. Practically, the results underscore the importance of incorporating forgiveness-based interventions and emotion regulation training into therapeutic approaches aimed at promoting resilience and coping skills in young adults facing adversity. By enhancing forgiveness and emotional regulation abilities, individuals may be better equipped to navigate challenges and maintain psychological well-being. In terms of future research, longitudinal studies could provide valuable insights into the long-term effects of forgiveness and emotional regulation on resilience across different developmental stages and life contexts. Additionally, qualitative research methods could offer a deeper understanding of the subjective experiences and mechanisms underlying forgiveness, emotional regulation, and resilience.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study contributes to our understanding of how forgiveness can enhance emotional regulation and resilience in the face of adversity. By investigating the interplay between forgiveness, emotional regulation, and resilience, this research provides valuable insights into factors that promote psychological well-being and adaptive functioning. The findings have important implications for positive psychology and inform interventions aimed at promoting forgiveness and resilience in individuals and communities. Overall, this study underscores the importance of forgiveness in fostering psychological health and resilience, highlighting its potential as a key factor in promoting positive outcomes in the face of adversity.

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