

# Role and Relationship between Mental Health and Forgiveness

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**Abstract** - Human nature as understood through the lenses of evolutionary biology, moral philosophy, and theology contain the capacity for evil and for good, for harming and for helping, for offending or reconciling. Forgiving may be the most difficult task in person lives but it is a universal phenomenon. Forgiveness has physical, mental, social and spiritual benefits as well. Good mental health can enhance one's life, while poor mental health can prevent someone from living an enriching life. Forgiveness or beat contrary feelings and judgment of a man or of causing irritation, included mental, enthusiastic and Behavioral frameworks, it implies that individual will have no adverse feeling, judgment and behavior than the individual who forgive him. Forgiveness is a reaction that make possible to sustain relationships despite the mistakes, betrayal, or failure to meet the expectations. The purpose of present study was to ascertain the relationship of forgiveness with mental health. The reason of this problem can be done of the present study as the first step in connection with forgiveness and its relationship with Psychological variables such as mental health.

**Index Terms** – Forgiveness, Mental Health, Psychology etc.

## 1.INTRODUCTION

Forgiveness is a virtue which is possessed by human being. It is a basic part of human nature. Human nature refers to distinguishing characteristics, including ways of thinking, feeling and acting, that human tend to have naturally, which is independent of the influence of culture. The branches of contemporary science such as anthropology, sociology and psychology particularly evolutionary psychology and developmental psychology study human nature in general. Human nature as understood through the lenses of evolutionary biology, moral philosophy and

theology contain the capacity for evil and good, for harming and helping, for offending or retaliating and for forgiving or reconciling.

Humans and other social animals often work actively to restore positive, cooperative relationships with the individuals in their social networks following aggression and conflict. One of the tools for doing so is forgiveness. Forgiveness is a basic human dynamic which is universal phenomenon. Some persons forgive easily. They have learnt it by watching, experiencing and studying and have developed as a forgiving unit. Forgiveness is a concept which has psychological implications. While negotiating interpersonal relationships, people often experience many motives and preferences. Sometimes people's self motives and preferences may not correspond to those of a given relationship partner. Conflicts inevitably arise and challenge relationship. By forgiving each other, it appears that people are able to overcome the negative effects of conflict on their relationships. Forgiveness has physical, mental, social and spiritual benefits as well. Physically, forgiveness influences the regulation of blood pressure, reduction of cardiovascular disease, anxiety, depression and psychosomatic illnesses. Forgiveness is seen as a deliberate attempt to overcome unhappy feelings and thoughts in order to facilitate individual happiness. Forgiveness usually requires the individual's perception of the wrong doer (be it themselves or another person) to change from adopting a negative view to a more sympathetic view. Forgiveness is a suite of prosocial changes in one's motivations toward an interpersonal transgressor through which one becomes less avoidant and less vengeful towards the transgressor.

## 2. FORGIVENESS: HISTORICAL ANTECEDENTS, CONCEPT AND DEFINITIONS

Forgiveness has taken a major role in social life since the dawn of humankind. The concept of forgiveness is well described in the Qur'an, the Torah, and the Christian gospels. Numerous books have been devoted to this topic, and in 2008 only, the New York Times circulated above 750 articles talk about forgiveness and revenge.

Forgiveness has not played the major role in the beginning of psychology. Psychologists have not much emphasized about the concept of forgiveness. There are so many factors on which the forgiveness has been neglected in early decades of scientific psychology. One might point to the reality that forgiveness seems to have been neglected right through all of academic world, not just the social sciences (Enright & North, 1998). One point to the trouble that might be related with gathering reliable data about forgiveness, mainly during the Era when scientific psychology persisted on the examiner of observable behaviour. The 20th century has been the bloodiest and probably the most unforgiving century in human history. Majority of psychologist now accepts that a key aspect of forgiveness is to forgive oneself first for the exempt none from injury. To be fine do not protect one from hurt inflicted by others. Forgiveness meets the injurer with kindness. It admits that we all have the same destruction quality and we take inside ourselves the ability to impose pain on others. Shakespeare wrote in Coriolanus: "Anger's my meat: I sup upon myself!" To be anger is to invite the faults of others upon ourselves. Forgiveness is good for body and soul. Dr Redfold Williams says: "Re-living unsuccessful or humiliating situations in the past hurt over and over again and prove bad for health". Forgiveness was seen as within the domain of religion and science was uneasy with religion. But later on Lewis Smedes (1984) wrote in the book "forgive and forget: Healing the hurts we don't deserve." Through this he begins to send the message that forgiveness can benefit a person's mental health and well-being. Through, this book the therapist starts forgiveness in their therapy for healing the problem in anger, lack of hope, depression, and trauma. In mid-

1980s, when most people thought about forgiveness, they associated it with religion. Even though the people who are not religious, general society had introduce the term forgiveness from religious usage. As people became more postmodern and multicultural, though, forgiveness broke free limits of religious group of people and even religious association.

## 3. MENTAL HEALTH

Health is related to level of functional or metabolic efficiency in a living organism. In humans, it is the general condition of a person's mind and body, usually meaning to be free from illness, injury or pain. World Health Organization (WHO) defined health as "a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity" (World Health Organization, 2006). Generally physical health aspects are given more importance than mental health by general population (International Health Organisation, 1990). According to World Health Organization (WHO) mental health includes subjective well-being, perceived self efficacy, autonomy competence, international dependence and self actualization of one's intellectual and emotional potential. Maintaining good mental health is crucial for living a long and healthy life. Mental health is an indivisible part of public health which significantly affects countries and their human social and economic capital. Positive mental health is a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully and can contribute to his or her community. According to Richards et al. (2010), "There is growing evidence that is showing emotional abilities are associated with prosocial behaviours such as stress management and physical health".

Numerous factors affect human health and forgiveness is one of the effective factors. People, who easily forgive, change their citations about the causality and the offender's personality. This change in citations affect the concept and this way affect the mental and physical health (Berry et al., 2005). Pembroke (2008) found that forgiving responses decreased cardiac reactivity and blood pressure decreased facial tension

during imaginary forgiving scenarios, decreased levels of depression and anxiety.

#### 4. METHODOLOGY

##### 4.1 Research Design

The present study is based on the primary survey. In order to answer questions, quantitative approach was used

##### 4.2 Sample Size

For the present study, the sample size were 400.

##### 4.3 Sampling Technique

The study followed the random sampling method.

##### 4.4 Statistical Analysis

The present study is based on the quantitative data. Statistical tools used to analyse the data are Pearson Product Moment Correlation and Multiple Regression.

#### 5. RESULTS

##### 5.1 Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test

To check the normality of data distribution, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was employed. This test is used to check whether the distribution deviates from a comparable normal distribution. If the  $p$ -value is non-significant ( $p > .05$ ), we can say that the distribution of a sample is not significantly different from a normal distribution, therefore it is normal. If the  $p$ -value is significant ( $p < .05$ ) it implies that the distribution is not normal. Table 1 presents the results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test For mental health and forgiveness.

Table 1: The Results of K-S Test

	Statistic	df	Sig.
Mental Health	.077	400	.092
Forgiveness	.084	400	.070

As it can be seen, the obtained sig value for all variables is higher than .05. Therefore, it can safely be concluded that the data is normally distributed across all the variables and parametric analysis can be used.

##### 5.2 Descriptive Statistics

Table 2 presents descriptive statistics of self-esteem, mental health, locus of control, and forgiveness

including the mean, standard deviation, maximum and minimum scores. The comparison of these scores appears in the following pages.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Self-Esteem, Mental Health, Locus of Control, and Forgiveness

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Mental Health	400	86.00	219.00	157.63	10.35
Forgiveness	400	42.00	124.00	99.96	6.98

As it can be seen in Table 2, that number of participant is 400 in the present study. The possible range of score for Mental Health with 56 (four-point Likert) items is between 56 and 224. The minimum score of Mental Health is 86.00 and its maximum score is 219.00. The mean score of Mental Health is 157.63 with standard deviation of 10.35. The possible range of score for Forgiveness with 18 (seven-point Likert) items is between 18 and 126. The minimum score of Forgiveness is 42.00 and its maximum score is 124.00. The mean score of Forgiveness is 99.96 with standard deviation of 6.98.

##### 5.3 Reliability of the Questionnaires

Table 3 summarizes the information obtained from Cronbach's alpha analyses. As can be seen, the utilized questionnaires gained acceptable indexes of Cronbach's alpha as a whole.

Table 3: Results of Cronbach alpha indexes after reliability analysis

Scale	Number of items	Cronbach alpha
Mental Health	56	.75
Forgiveness	18	.83

The alpha coefficient for 10 items of Total Self-Esteem .92, for 56 items of total Mental Health .75, for 23 items of total Locus of Control .86, and for 18 items of total Forgiveness .83, suggest that the items have relatively high internal consistency (a reliability coefficient of .70 or higher is considered "acceptable" in most social and psychological science research situations).

##### Hypothesis Testing

There is a significant relationship between forgiveness and mental health

Forgiveness is positive significant predictor of mental health ( $\beta = .27, p < 0.05$ ). In order to have a better understanding of the relationship between forgiveness and mental health, Pearson correlation was conducted. Table 4 shows the results of the relationship between forgiveness and mental health.

Table 4: Results of Correlation between forgiveness and mental health

		Mental Health
Forgiveness	Pearson Correlation	.23**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001
	N	400

\*\*Correlation is significant at the level of 0.01

The results of Pearson correlation indicated that there is a positive weak significant relationship between forgiveness and mental health ( $r = .23, p < .05$ ). Therefore, the third null hypothesis was rejected.

## 6. CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between forgiveness and mental health. The result of current research is in line with Krause and Ellison (2003) that they examined the relationship between forgiveness of others and well-being in a large national probability sample of 1,316 older individuals. Dispositional interpersonal forgiveness was significantly negatively associated with depressive affect. Interpersonal transgressions are emotionally laden experiences that often stimulate negative and arousing memories or imagined emotional responses. According to Lang's theory, unforgiving memories and mental imagery might produce negative facial expressions and increased cardiovascular and sympathetic reactivity, much as other negative and arousing emotions (e.g., fear, anger) do. In contrast, forgiving responses should reduce the negativity and intensity of a victim's emotional response, quelling these physiological reactions, as more pleasant and relaxing imagery does.

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