



FORGIVENESS, GRATITUDE, AND MENTAL WELL-BEING OF POST GRADUATE STUDENTS

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Abstract

Objective-This study aims to explore the correlations between forgiveness, gratitude, and mental wellbeing among post graduate students, as well as any potential gender differences that may exist. The study hypothesizes that there will be significant positive correlations between forgiveness and mental wellbeing, as well as between gratitude and mental wellbeing among post graduate students. It is also hypothesized that there will be significant positive correlations between gratitude and forgiveness among post graduate students. These hypotheses are based on the assumption that individuals who possess higher levels of forgiveness and gratitude are more likely to experience positive emotions, which are associated with improved mental wellbeing. Moreover, the study aims to investigate whether there are any gender differences in forgiveness, gratitude, and mental wellbeing among post graduate students. To test these hypotheses, the study utilizes three psychometric tools: the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS), the Gratitude Questionnaire – Six Item Form (GQ-6), and the Heartland Forgiveness Scale (HFS). The WEMWBS is a 14-item scale that measures subjective well-being and psychological functioning, with items scored on a 1 to 5 Likert scale. The GQ-6 is a six-item self-report questionnaire that measures individual differences in the proneness to experience gratitude in daily life. Finally, the HFS is an 18-item self-report questionnaire that measures dispositional forgiveness. The results of this study have important implications for understanding the relationship between forgiveness, gratitude, and mental wellbeing among post graduate students. Furthermore, identifying any potential gender differences can help inform interventions aimed at improving mental wellbeing in post graduate students.

Key Words: Forgiveness, Gratitude, Mental wellbeing, Post Graduate Students

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Introduction

Postgraduate students often face a unique set of challenges that can have a negative impact on their mental health and overall well-being. These challenges can include academic demands, pressure to publish, financial stress, and uncertainty about their future prospects. These stressors can lead to increased levels of anxiety, depression, and burnout, which can negatively affect a student's ability to cope with the demands of graduate school and their personal life. To cope with these challenges, postgraduate students can use various strategies, such as exercise, social support, and time management. However, two practices that have been found to be effective in promoting mental well-being are forgiveness and gratitude.

Forgiveness involves letting go of negative emotions towards oneself or others. It is a process of releasing resentment, anger, and bitterness and moving towards a state of acceptance and compassion. Practicing forgiveness can help postgraduate students let go of grudges and negative emotions that may be holding them back and can promote a more positive outlook on life.

Gratitude involves recognizing and appreciating the good in one's life, even when facing challenges or difficulties. It is a way of focusing on the positive aspects of life and can help postgraduate students shift their perspective towards more positive thinking. Practicing gratitude can help postgraduate students develop a more optimistic outlook on life, which can improve their overall well-being. Both forgiveness and gratitude can have a positive impact on mental well-being and can be applied to the academic and personal lives of postgraduate students. For example, forgiving oneself for a past mistake or forgiving a colleague for a disagreement can promote a more positive work environment and improve relationships with others. Practicing gratitude by focusing on positive experiences in one's academic work, such as receiving positive feedback from a professor or successfully completing a project, can promote a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction. It is important to note that forgiveness and gratitude are not a substitute for seeking professional help when needed. While these practices can be beneficial in promoting mental well-being, they should not be relied upon solely to address mental health concerns. It is important for postgraduate students to seek professional help if they are

experiencing significant levels of stress, anxiety, or depression.

The concept of forgiveness is a complex topic that has been extensively researched in the field of psychology. It refers to the process of releasing negative emotions like anger, resentment, and revenge towards someone who has caused harm or offense. Forgiveness is multifaceted and involves various cognitive, emotional, and behavioral processes. In this essay, we will delve into the nature of forgiveness, its benefits, and the factors that affect the forgiveness process. Forgiveness plays a crucial role in social relationships, helping individuals repair and maintain connections that have been damaged by conflict or harm. It involves a shift in the emotional response of the victim towards the offender, from negative feelings like anger and resentment to positive emotions such as empathy and compassion. Forgiveness can also lead to a change in behavior, such as refraining from seeking revenge or retribution. Research has shown that forgiveness has numerous benefits for those who practice it. For example, forgiveness can reduce stress, anxiety, and depression, improve physical health, and increase satisfaction with life and positive emotions such as happiness and gratitude. Forgiveness is also linked to better interpersonal relationships and increased social support, which can enhance well-being. However, forgiveness is not always an easy process and can be influenced by several factors. One such factor is the severity of the offense, with more severe offenses being more difficult to forgive. The relationship between the victim and the offender can also impact the forgiveness process, with forgiveness being harder to achieve when the victim and offender are not close or have a history of conflict.

Gratitude is a moral virtue that has been emphasized in various religious traditions, including Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism. Philosophers have long discussed the importance of cultivating gratitude, with Cicero describing it as the greatest virtue and the mother of all remaining virtues, while Seneca ranked ingratitude as worse than theft, rape, and adultery. Hume regarded ingratitude as the most horrid and unnatural crime that humans could commit, while Adam Smith believed that gratitude was essential for fostering goodwill in society. (Emmons & Crumpler, 2000) [484], (McCullough, Kilpatrick, Emmons, & Larson, 2001) [1134], (Manela, 2015) Gratitude is a

widely recognized concept that has been emphasized by religious, cultural, and academic traditions. It is generally believed that gratitude is essential for moral and ethical behavior and is fundamental to being a responsible and well-rounded global citizen. But what exactly is gratitude? The answer to this question may vary depending on who you ask. Gratitude is a positive and impactful emotion that has gained significant attention in recent psychological research. It is often defined as an expression of appreciation or thankfulness towards the positive aspects of life, including personal accomplishments, supportive relationships, and opportunities for growth and development. In this essay, we will examine the nature of gratitude, its benefits, and the factors that can shape the experience and expression of gratitude. Firstly, gratitude is a crucial aspect of positive psychology, which seeks to promote well-being and positive emotions. It involves acknowledging and valuing the positive experiences and relationships in our lives and expressing appreciation for them. Gratitude can be expressed through a range of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral processes, such as reflecting on positive experiences, showing gratitude to others, and engaging in acts of kindness and generosity.

Although most people have a basic understanding of what gratitude is, it can be challenging to define. Is it an emotion, a virtue, or a behavior? In fact, gratitude can have different meanings for different people and in different contexts. However, researchers have developed various frameworks for conceptualizing gratitude, enabling its scientific study. For example, Robert Emmons and Michael McCullough define gratitude as a two-step process:

- 1) "Recognizing that one has obtained a positive outcome" and
- 2) "Recognizing that there is an external source for this positive outcome." While most of these positive benefits come from other people—hence gratitude's reputation as an "other-oriented" emotion—people can also experience gratitude toward God, fate, nature, etc. Some psychologists further categorize three types of gratitude: gratitude as an "affective trait" (one's overall tendency to have a grateful disposition), a mood (daily fluctuations in overall gratitude), and an emotion (a more temporary feeling of gratitude that one may feel after receiving a gift or a favor from someone). Most of the studies in this paper focus on trait (or "dispositional" gratitude) and/or gratitude as an emotion.

Research has demonstrated that gratitude has numerous benefits for individuals who experience it. For example, gratitude is associated with higher levels of happiness, life satisfaction, and positive emotions such as joy and contentment. Gratitude is also linked to better physical health outcomes, such as improved sleep quality, reduced symptoms of illness, and increased longevity. Additionally, gratitude is associated with greater resilience and coping abilities in the face of stress and adversity.

The meaning of happiness has been a topic of discussion since the time of the ancient Greeks and continues to receive a good deal of attention today in a variety of disciplines. Though the term "happiness" is commonly used so are a number of other related terms such as: "well-being," "subjective well-being," "quality of life," "life-satisfaction," among others. Recently, Sirgy et al. (2006) have reviewed the history, present status, and future directions of work related to happiness in sociology, psychology, economics, and medicine. Our conceptualization of well-being lies close to the notion of "subjective wellbeing" frequently discussed in psychology and we refer to it generally as "well-being." There are a number of ways of defining well-being. Some of the earlier definitions in psychology and sociology focused on well-being as the ultimate goal of life (Bradburn 1969; Fordyce 1988). These definitions also tended to focus on the affective nature of wellbeing, and Bradburn is often credited for initially demonstrating the relative independence of positive and negative affect in a general population sample. He further showed that it was the critical balance between positive and negative affect that was an important component of well-being. Research has also shown that in addition to the importance of positive and negative affect, an independent aspect of well-being is cognitive evaluations (Pavot and Diener 1993; Sirgy et al. 2006). This tripartite model of well-being has enjoyed much support and popularity, and while other conceptualizations of well-being have also been considered (Friedman 1989; Ryff 1995; Ryff and Keyes 1995), few appear to have been as widely accepted. Though our review is not intended in any way to be exhaustive, it is meant to convey the sense that well-being is comprised of multiple dimensions. Under these circumstances we believe that well-being should be defined and measured in a multifaceted fashion. To that end, we include measures representing each of the three

components of the tripartite model: positive affect, negative effect, and cognitive evaluation. Mental Well-being refers to a state of optimal psychological functioning, characterized by positive emotions, resilience, and the ability to cope with stress and adversity. Mental well-being is an essential aspect of overall health and quality of life, and is influenced by a range of individual, social, and environmental factors. In this essay, we will explore the nature of mental well-being, its benefits, and the factors that can impact mental well-being. Firstly, mental well-being is characterized by a positive state of mind, including positive emotions such as joy, contentment, and satisfaction. Mental well-being also involves a sense of purpose and meaning in life, as well as the ability to cope with stress and adversity. Individuals who experience high levels of mental well-being are better able to adapt to changes and challenges in their lives, and are more likely to engage in healthy behaviors such as exercise, good nutrition, and seeking social support. Research has demonstrated numerous benefits of mental well-being. For example, individuals who experience high levels of mental well-being are more likely to report higher levels of life satisfaction and happiness, better physical health outcomes such as lower rates of chronic illness and longer lifespan. Additionally, mental well-being is associated with better cognitive functioning, such as improved memory and attention, and greater creativity and problem-solving abilities.

Methodology

Objectives

To assess correlation among forgiveness, gratitude, and mental wellbeing among post graduate students.

To assess gender difference on forgiveness, gratitude, and mental wellbeing among post graduate students

Hypothesis

1. There will be significant positive correlations between forgiveness and mental wellbeing among post graduate students.
2. There will be significant positive correlations between gratitude and mental wellbeing among post graduate students.
3. There will be significant positive correlation between gratitude and forgiveness among post graduate students.
4. There will be significant gender difference on forgiveness among post graduate students.
5. There will be significant gender difference on gratitude among post graduate students.

6. There will be significant gender difference on mental wellbeing among post graduate students.

Sample

Postgraduate students from different parts of the country. The final data set contains 209 Postgraduate Students.

Procedure

Cross-sectional study using simple random sampling and purposive sampling was adopted using selection of suitable techniques, such as scales, to evaluate the variables to be measured. Following the evaluation of the variables, the appropriate statistical method was used to validate the findings for their significance. Finally, the suggested hypotheses as well as the previous literature were cross-checked with the initial findings to determine the intended outcome. The required sample was collected through online survey administration. Prior consent was obtained before filing the actual questionnaire. The participants were informed about the purpose and necessity of the study. All the tools were administered individually. The participants were assured of the confidentiality of the obtained data, and they were further assured that their information would be used only for research purposes. The respondents took about 8-10 minutes to complete the questionnaire. They were allowed to ask any queries about any of the test items through e-mails. Documentation of data and, accordingly, data entry was done for further statistical analysis. Under data entry, mainly Excel worksheets were generated. Raw scores, percentiles, and, accordingly, the category of each sample were noted for all three variables. Appropriate statistical techniques were applied for the interpretation of collected data.

Scales

Keeping in view, our variables, the aims of the study, and the nature of the sample, appropriate tools were selected. In this study we selected the following tools:-

1. Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS): WEMWBS is a 14 item scale of mental well-being covering subjective well-being and psychological functioning, in which all items are worded positively and address aspects of positive mental health. The scale is scored by summing responses to each item answered on a 1 to 5 Likert scale. The minimum scale score is 14 and the maximum is 70. WEMWBS has been validated for use in the

UK with those aged 16 and above. Validation involved both student and general population samples, and focus groups

2. The Gratitude Questionnaire – Six Item Form (GQ-6): The Gratitude Questionnaire-Six-Item Form (GQ-6) is a six-item self-report questionnaire designed to assess individual differences in the proneness to experience gratitude in daily life.

3. The Heartland Forgiveness Scale (HFS): It is an 18-item, self-report questionnaire that measures a person's dispositional forgiveness (i.e., the general tendency to be forgiving), rather than forgiveness of a particular event or person

Ethical Considerations

Before participating in the study, the participants were asked to for their consent to fill the questionnaire and only volunteer consenting

subjects were included. The participants were explained about the form and its objective. Rapport was established with the participants. Confidentiality of the participants and privacy of their responses were assured and ensured. Once the participants consented the forms were given to them and each participant completed the same in an average time of 15 minutes.

Data Analysis

Software program Statistical Package for Social Science Version 16 (SPSS 16) is utilized for statistical analysis. Data were collected, coded, and descriptive analysis was completed. The Pearson correlation coefficient was used to establish the substantial association between forgiveness, gratitude, and mental wellbeing among post graduate students,. This test is parameterized because we already know the population distribution is normal, or if not, we can quickly estimate it to a normal distribution.

Result and Discussion

Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
GRATITUDE	25.26	7.766	209
FORGIVENESS	83.82	21.123	209
MENTAL WELL BEING	46.8852	10.27348	209

Variables	Gratitude	Forgiveness	Mental well being
Gratitude	1	.347	.453
Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000
Forgiveness	.347	1	.423
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000
Mental well being	.453	.223	1
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	

The present study investigated the relationships between gratitude, forgiveness, and mental well-being among a sample of 209 participants. The mean score for gratitude was 25.26, with a standard deviation of 7.766, while the mean score for forgiveness was 83.82, with a standard deviation of 21.123. The mean score for mental well-being was 46.8852, with a standard deviation of 10.27348.

The results of the correlation analysis showed that there was a significant positive correlation between gratitude and forgiveness ($r = .347$, $p < .01$) as well as between gratitude and mental well-being ($r = .453$, $p < .01$). Additionally, there was a significant positive correlation between forgiveness and mental well-being ($r = .423$, $p < .01$).

These findings suggest that gratitude and forgiveness are positively associated with mental well-being, which is consistent with previous research on the topic. The positive relationship between gratitude and mental well-being may be explained by the fact that gratitude is a positive emotion that can help individuals focus on the positive aspects of their lives, leading to increased happiness and well-being. Similarly, forgiveness may also promote mental well-being by reducing negative emotions such as anger and resentment.

Group Statistics

	GROUP	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
GRA	FEMALE	120	23.28	8.497	.776
	MALE	89	27.93	5.687	.603
FOR	FEMALE	120	88.62	23.552	2.150
	MALE	89	77.35	15.190	1.610
MWB	FEMALE	120	47.6667	10.89702	.99476
	MALE	89	45.8315	9.32401	.98834

The given table shows the group statistics of three variables, namely gratitude, forgiveness, and mental well-being, based on gender. The sample size for females and males in each variable is 120 and 89, respectively.

Regarding gratitude, the mean score for females (23.28) is lower than that for males (27.93),

which indicates that males tend to express more gratitude than females. The standard deviation for females (8.497) is higher than that for males (5.687), indicating that there is more variability in gratitude scores among females

Variables	Gender	N	Mean	S D	t-value	p-value
Gratitude	Male	89	27.93	5.687	4.479	.000
	Female	120	23.28	8.497		
Forgiveness	Male	89	77.35	15.190	3.945	.000
	Female	120	88.62	23.552		
Mental Well Being	Male	89	45.8315	9.32401	1.279	.202
	Female	120	47.6667	10.89702		

For forgiveness, the mean score for females (88.62) is higher than that for males (77.35), which suggests that females tend to be more forgiving than males. The standard deviation for females (23.552) is also higher than that for males (15.190), indicating that there is more variability in forgiveness scores among females. Regarding mental well-being, the mean score for females (47.67) is slightly higher than that for males (45.83), indicating that females tend to have slightly better mental well-being than males. The standard deviation for females (10.897) is higher than that for males (9.324), indicating that there is more variability in mental well-being scores among females.

The table shows the results of independent samples t-tests performed on three variables - Gratitude, Forgiveness, and Mental Wellbeing - across two groups, Female and Male.

The first row shows the results for Gratitude. The Levene's test for equality of variances was statistically significant ($p < .001$), indicating that the assumption of equal variances was violated. Therefore, the t-test with equal variances not assumed was used. The t-test showed that there was a significant difference in the mean scores of

gratitude between Female ($M = 23.28$, $SD = 8.497$) and Male ($M = 27.93$, $SD = 5.687$) groups ($t(205.017) = -4.741$, $p < .001$, Cohen's $d = .78$). The mean difference was -4.658, with a 95% confidence interval ranging from -6.594 to -2.721.

The second row shows the results for Forgiveness. The Levene's test was statistically significant ($p < .001$), indicating that the assumption of equal variances was violated. The t-test with equal variances not assumed showed that there was a significant difference in the mean scores of forgiveness between Female ($M = 88.62$, $SD = 23.552$) and Male ($M = 77.35$, $SD = 15.190$) groups ($t(203.396) = 4.195$, $p < .001$, Cohen's $d = .68$). The mean difference was 11.268, with a 95% confidence interval ranging from 5.972 to 16.564.

The third row shows the results for Mental Wellbeing. The Levene's test was statistically significant ($p = .043$), indicating that the assumption of equal variances was violated. The t-test with equal variances assumed showed that there was no significant difference in the mean scores of mental wellbeing between Female ($M = 47.6667$, $SD = 10.89702$) and Male ($M =$

45.8315, SD = 9.32401) groups ($t(207) = 1.279$, $p = .202$, Cohen's $d = .18$). The mean difference was 1.83521, with a 95% confidence interval ranging from -.92970 to 4.60011.

Conclusion

Based on the data analysis presented, several conclusions can be drawn about the relationships between gratitude, forgiveness, and mental well-being among postgraduate students, as well as the gender differences in these variables.

Firstly, the results of the correlation analysis showed that gratitude and forgiveness were positively correlated with mental well-being. This finding is consistent with previous research on the topic, which suggests that gratitude and forgiveness can contribute to increased happiness and well-being. The positive correlation between gratitude and mental well-being may be explained by the fact that gratitude is a positive emotion that can help individuals focus on the positive aspects of their lives, leading to increased well-being. Similarly, forgiveness may promote mental well-being by reducing negative emotions such as anger and resentment.

Secondly, the data analysis revealed some interesting gender differences in the variables of gratitude, forgiveness, and mental well-being. Males tended to express more gratitude than females, while females tended to be more forgiving than males. Additionally, females had slightly better mental well-being than males. These findings are in line with previous research that has also found gender differences in these variables. However, it is important to note that these differences were relatively small and that there was considerable variability within each gender group.

In conclusion, the present study provides important insights into the relationships between gratitude, forgiveness, and mental well-being among postgraduate students, as well as gender differences in these variables. While the study has some limitations, it contributes to the growing body of literature on the topic and provides directions for future research and interventions aimed at promoting mental well-being among postgraduate students.

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