



A study on Forgiveness, Mental Well-being, Spirituality & Happiness among College Students

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ABSTRACT

Forgiveness is a choice we make consciously in which initially a person feels inadequate or deceived but goes through changes in feelings, thoughts, or attitudes about a wrongdoer and tries to overcome negative feelings or emotions such as resentment or desire for revenge. If we let, go of moments that create agony in our lives and we can become free from the circle of pain. Mental well-being consists of emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects our way of thinking, feeling, and acting. It helps us to deal with negative emotions such as stress, anxiety, etc. Happiness is an emotional state attributed to feelings of satisfaction, delight, fulfillment, and well bring. The definition of spirituality has been modified over the years. In layman's terms, it is the search for the sacred. It is a holistic view involving life, mind, and spirit. Incorporates coming to terms with a feeling that something bigger than ourselves exists. Standardized scales were used to measure forgiveness, mental well-being, spirituality, and happiness among college students aged 18-25. The results found that mental well-being is significantly positively correlated to forgiveness & happiness & spirituality is significantly positively correlated with happiness & forgiveness. Students should give priority to their happiness, and mental well-being. They ought to take some time out of their hectic schedule, engage in self-introspection, and build a habit of consuming healthy food, getting good sleep, practicing meditation, sharing their troubles with their near and dear ones, etc. They should express their feelings to loved ones and seek help for their problems.

Keywords- Forgiveness, Mental Well-Being, Spirituality, Happiness, College Students

Introduction

"To forgive is to set a prisoner free and discover the prisoner was you" - Lewis B. Smedes.

Mental health is an issue that is not discussed with thoughtfulness. Everyone is so busy in their life no one has time to listen to anyone. Students undergo a lot of pressure to excel in their personal and professional life. They become so preoccupied with their new surrounding that they radically neglect their mental health, resulting in anxiety, stress, emotional breakdown, and so on. Over time, many institutions took the initiative to educate students about good mental health; set up webinars and counseling sessions to help them out. As college students are on the edge of entering a transitional phase of their life where they are neither adolescents nor adults, during this phase, there's a sense of introspection and exploration that encourages them to find their true ideal selves. They aim to handle their relationships maturely and try to forgive offenders, let go of the past and seek to resolve their conflicts, and search for their inner selves, seeking to understand the world and the meaning of spirituality to them. They also concentrate on their emotional, social, and psychological well-being. Everyone wants to live a happy life; people work hard to live a happy life ahead, and the goal of human beings is to live a happy life. On the intellectual level, forgiving is unlike just forgetting, letting go, or burying the actions of wrongdoers. In some ideologies, it is an individual and "voluntary" effort to rebuild relationships with others. So, their mental peace does not get muddled. Spirituality is an inclusive idea with room for many views. In general, it includes a sense of link to something mightier than human beings and it involves hunting for the meaning in life. Humans may describe it as a pure sacred experience. Few people feel connected with God to visit worship places like churches, gurudwara, etc. Some people find comfort during meditation when they feel connected to high power. Happiness is the subject of mental or emotional state, it is a positive own and has pleasing emotions ranging from enlightenment to serenity. People feel happy when they do what they want to do and when they feel whatever they are doing is worth it. It also improves mental and physical health. A person feels positive and satisfied with life and it also raises their standard of living and well-being of people. Well-being is also known as wellness or quality of life. It means what is constitutionally valuable to someone. It includes how we act, feel, and think. It refers to how we pass through life and react to its roughness. It varies from day to day. Some days you will feel happy and other days you feel the opposite. It gets improved through various steps like networking with people, learning new skills, being mindful, and performing the exercise.

Lower (2014), conducted a study on 299 undergraduate college students about the relationship between resilience and happiness. The researcher found that there is a positive relationship between happiness and resilience and it also found happiness and spirituality to be the best predictors of resilience.

Jafari et al. (2010), conducted a study at Payame Noor University, Iran, about spiritual well-being and mental health in university students. The results showed that there is a significant relationship between spiritual well-being and mental health.

Mental well-being

World Health Organization (2004) defined good mental health as “a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community.”

NHS Scotland (2006) defined ‘mental well-being in terms of wider well-being and as encompassing subjective feelings of life satisfaction, optimism, self-esteem, mastery and feeling in control, having a purpose in life, a sense of belonging and support.’

Covarrubias et al. (2015) conducted a study on college students about family achievement guilt and mental well-being, and it is found that family achievement guilt is associated more with depressive symptoms and less self-esteem among students.

Assari (2018) conducted a US study on racial differences in the effect of parental educational attainment on mental well-being in college students. It revealed that high parental educational achievement is associated with better mental well-being which is independent of race, age, and gender.

A study conducted on college students about the effect on mental health and well-being found that stress is high in students once they begin at the university, although it reduces throughout their studies (Macaskill, 2013; Mey & Yin, 2015).

Forgiveness

Pingleton (1989) defined forgiveness as “recognizes, anticipates, and attempts to mitigate against the lex talionis or law of the talon, the human organism’s universal, almost reflexive propensity for retaliation and retribution in the face of hurt and pain at the hand of another. Thus, forgiveness can be understood as comprising the antithesis of the individual’s natural and predictable response to violation and victimization.”

McCullough et al. (2000) described forgiveness as an “intraindividual, prosocial change toward a perceived transgressor that is situated within a specific interpersonal context”.

Abid et al. (2015) conducted a study on college students about the association between personality factors and level of forgiveness, results showed that there is a positive relationship between conscientiousness, extraversion, openness, agreeableness, and level of forgiveness. It was summarized that neuroticism is negatively correlated with the level of forgiveness.

Shekhar et al. (2016) conducted a study on college students. A total sample of 100, 50 males and 50 females were taken to study the correlation between forgiveness and happiness. The result revealed that there was a significant difference in happiness and forgiveness across genders and a weak correlation between them.

Happiness

According to Beusekom (1973), “Happiness is the satisfaction experienced in the relations with one’s (social)environment”.

Hart (1940) defined happiness “is any state of consciousness which the person seeks to maintain or attain”.

According to Tatkiewicz (1976), “Happiness is a lasting, complete and justified satisfaction with life.”

Kaya (2016) conducted a study on college students about the relationship between leisure satisfaction and happiness. Results found that there is a positive relationship between them.

Khalek (2004) conducted a study on 140 Kuwaiti students about happiness among them. Results found that the average happiness appeared to be low as compared to students from other countries.

Spirituality

Reed (1992) defined “spirituality in its broadest sense is a part of the ontologic foundation of nursing; it is regarded as a basic characteristic of humanness, important in human health and well-being.”

Clark (1958) defined spirituality as ‘can be most characteristically described as the inner experience of the individual when he senses a beyond, especially as evidenced by the effect of this experience on his behavior when he actively attempts to harmonize his life with the beyond.’

Muller & Dennis (2007) conducted a study on college student cohorts about life change and spirituality. Results found that students who are experiencing higher levels of change, both positive and negative, scored low on spirituality.

In a study conducted by Luquis et al. (2012) on 960 college students about the association between religiosity, spirituality, and sexual behavior. Results showed that sexual attitudes, religiosity, and spirituality were associated with sexual behaviors among students.

Purpose

The purpose is to study forgiveness, mental well-being, spirituality & happiness among college students.

Hypothesis

There will be a significant positive correlation between forgiveness, mental well-being, happiness, and spirituality.

Method

Sample

A total of 71 college-going students, aged 18-25 years from Chandigarh participated in this study.

Measures

1. **Bolton Forgiveness Scale:** BFS as given by Amanze and Carson (2019), consists of 14 questions, each rated on a six-point scale from 'always false of me' to 'always true of me'.
2. **Warwick Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale (WEMWBS):** given by NHS Health Scotland (2006), consists of 14 test items on a 1 to 5 Likert scale of 1 (None of the time) to 5 (All of the time).
3. **The Subjective Happiness Scale:** SHS as given by Lyubomirsky & Lepper (1999). It is a 4-item scale, each item is completed by choosing one of 7 options. The options are different for each of the four questions. Likert is the linear grid. For 1 question it is 'not a very happy person' to 'a very happy person'. For 2 questions it is 'less happy' to 'more happy'. For 3 and 4 it is 'not at all' to 'a great deal'.
4. **Daily Spiritual Experience Scale (DSES):** as given by Underwood & Teresi (2002), consists of 16 items self-report measure, for 1 to 15 questions Likert is multiple choice grid, options are 1 (many times a day) to 5 (never or almost never) and the last question is multiple choice question, options are Not close, Somewhat close, Very close, As close as possible.

Procedure

The participants were informed about the purpose of the research and the questionnaires were filled through Google forms; each participant was thanked for their cooperation. Standardized Psychological Tests were administered to the participants.

Analysis of Data

Results

Table 1: shows the Mean and Standard deviation data of the sample

	forgiveness	happiness	spirituality	mental wellbeing
N	71	71	71	71
Mean	56.1	18.6	68.3	47.5
Standard deviation	11.6	3.87	17.5	11.0

Table 2: shows a correlation between Forgiveness, Happiness, Spirituality, and Mental well-being

	forgiveness	happiness	spirituality	mental wellbeing
forgiveness	—			
happiness	0.338 **	—		
spirituality	0.556 ***	0.383 ***	—	
mental wellbeing	0.234 *	0.516 ***	0.219	—

Note. * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001

Discussion of Results

The results found out that there is a significant positive correlation between forgiveness and happiness ($r=0.338, p<.01$), significant positive correlation between mental well-being and forgiveness ($r=0.234, p<.05$) & a significant positive correlation between happiness and mental well-being ($r=0.516, p<.001$). The results further found a significant positive correlation between spirituality & forgiveness ($r=0.556, p <.001$) and between spirituality & happiness ($r=0.383, p<.001$)

Triantoro (2014) conducted a study on 81 college students about the relationship between gratitude and forgiveness among them. The result showed that gratitude gives a contribution to happiness but there is no significant relationship between forgiveness and happiness. Gratitude is an important factor to contribute to happiness among them. Yalcin (2015) conducted a study on 482 college students to investigate whether hope and forgiveness are a mediator between meaning in life and subjective well-being. The results revealed that hope and forgiveness fully mediated the relation between meaning in life and subjective well-being.

Conclusion

The research aims to study the correlation between forgiveness, happiness, spirituality, and mental well-being among college students. As students undergo a lot of challenges in spirituality, they should make minimal changes in their lifestyle like doing meditation, keeping a gratitude journal, spending time in nature, breathing exercises and practicing mindfulness, spending quality time with friends and family, performing yoga, and thinking positively. Colleges should adopt various strategies to educate students about mental well-being; set up counseling sessions and organize seminars of psychologists and spiritual leaders about good mental health and teach them about time management and discourage them to use any type of drugs. We should start forgiving by letting go of small things. We should not hold grudges against anyone and strive to communicate with other people and listen to their perspectives also and seek to solve them. Focus on good things first and try to find happiness around you. These simple practices can ameliorate our mental well-being and quality of life.

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