

Scrutinizing the Bachelor Level Students' Understanding of Forgiveness

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Abstract

Forgiveness, defined as a deliberate and voluntary act to release oneself from resentment, grievances and the urge for revenge, plays a prominent role in promoting compassion, harmony, and peace. Despite its profound prominence, different people retain a different understanding of its existence. The key objective of this article is to scrutinize the understanding of forgiveness among the bachelor level students enrolled in the faculties of Education and Management at Makawanpur Multiple Campus in Hetauda, Nepal during the academic year 2022-2023. Employing a cross-sectional survey research design, 329 students

were randomly gleaned from a pool of 2240 by maintaining a confidence level of 95% and a margin of error of 5%. The respondents were selected using computer-generated random numbers. Primary data were collected through close-ended questions regarding the students' understanding of forgiveness, while secondary data were compiled from extensive reviews of books, journal articles, and website documents spanning the years 1978 to 2013. The findings based on frequency and percent statistics reveal that 170 students (51.7%) perceived forgiveness as a strength, whereas 159 students (48.3%) regarded it as a weakness. Chi-square test shows that there was no significant association between gender and the students' understanding of forgiveness ($\chi^2 = 1.6$, $df=1$, $p > .05$), whereas there was a significant association between faculty and the students' understanding of forgiveness ($\chi^2 = 55.755$, $df=1$, $p < .05$). The practical implication of this article lies in underscoring the need for targeted educational interventions and curriculum enhancements aimed at promoting a deeper comprehension of forgiveness among students for enhancing human relationships and reducing negative emotions.

Keywords: empathy, forgiveness, mankind, reconciliation, resilience, virtue

Introduction

Human beings possess a multitude of virtues that contributes to the establishment of reconciliation, resilience, harmony, and peace worldwide. Despite the significance, forgiveness, an essential virtue is often disregarded in the current milieu. Defined as the act of refraining from revenge (Gull & Rana, 2013), forgiveness embodies a quality or trait considered morally and ethically commendable, reflecting positive attributes in an individual's character or conduct—a manifestation of high moral standards (Hornby, 2010). Forgiveness, following a transgression, entails a series of positive, socially motivated changes in an individual (McCullough, 2001). Though overshadowed by other virtues, it plays a pivotal role in nurturing compassion, healing wounds, and fostering the overall well-being of mankind. The term "mankind" refers to the collective human species, encompassing all individuals of the human race along with their shared attributes, experiences, and history (Hornby, 2010).

This article explores the psychological, social, and emotional dimensions of forgiveness, shedding light on its transformative potential. Within the intricate arras of human virtues, forgiveness stands as a luminous thread, weaving through the fabric of our existence. As life unfolds with its myriad challenges, transgressions, and conflicts, the virtue of forgiveness emerges as both a profound necessity and a regrettably underrated force. The psychotherapeutic process of forgiveness involves releasing resentment toward the offender and replacing it with mindful awareness and empathy (Menahem & Love, 2013). Empathy, defined as the ability to understand and share the feelings of another, creates a sense of connection and emotional resonance. It is a mode of understanding that specifically involves emotional resonance (Halpern, 2003), along with the capacity to comprehend another person's feelings and experiences (Hornby, 2010). Forgiveness, as a profound and transformative undertaking, involves a deliberate choice to relinquish feelings of resentment and animosity directed towards individuals or groups. It transcends mere acquiescence to wrongdoing. Instead, it is an active

and intentional decision to break free from the chains of bitterness. While deeply woven into the fabric of the human experience, its significance often remains in the shadows, overshadowed by more conspicuous virtues.

This profound concept unfolds its societal impact as a potent force capable of healing collective wounds. The veracity that forgiveness is not a symbol of frailty but rather a manifestation of collective strength becomes apparent in the resilience exhibited by communities that opt for reconciliation over revenge.

Resilience, defined as the ability to rebound from adversity, adapt positively to challenges, and endures setbacks with strength and flexibility, is a testament to human fortitude (Hornby, 2010). Likewise, reconciliation, signifying the restoration of friendly relations and conflict resolution, nurtures harmony and understanding between individuals or groups. It is the art of allowing disparate ideas, facts, or perspectives to coexist without inherent opposition. Societies that embrace the ethos of forgiveness cultivate environments steeped in empathy, understanding, and communal healing. This underscores that the act of pardoning is not solely a personal virtue but emerges as a social imperative. In doing so, these societies demonstrate the transformative power of forgiveness in fostering interconnectedness and shared well-being. Fostering forgiveness necessitates a conscientious commitment at both individual and societal levels. Educational programs, therapeutic interventions, and community initiatives emerge as pivotal agents in championing forgiveness as a virtue. By underscoring the transformative influence of forgiveness across diverse contexts, these efforts contribute to cultivating a more compassionate and interconnected global community.

Objective of the Study

The objective of this article is to assess bachelor level students' understanding of forgiveness, and test whether there is a significant association between faculty and gender with the students' understanding of forgiveness.

Significance of the Study

Undeniably, the research holds substantial significance in uncovering the potential of forgiveness for healing, fostering societal harmony, and enhancing personal well-being. It sheds light on forgiveness as a transformative force, fostering empathy, reconciliation, and emotional resilience. The insights gleaned from this study have the potential to contribute significantly to the cultivation of communities marked by compassion and understanding. In the realm of virtue exploration, where studies extensively delve into honesty, compassion, integrity, courage, generosity, justice, humility, respect, gratitude, and responsibility, this article uniquely positions forgiveness as its central focus. It highlights the often-overlooked virtue and emphasizes its importance in the broader landscape of human values. It can be a unique research study in this precinct.

Hypothesis of the Study

The research involved two null hypotheses:

H₀: There is no significant association between gender and the students' understanding of forgiveness.

H₀: There is no significant association between faculty and the students' understanding of forgiveness.

Delimitations of the Study

The study went through the following delimitations:

- The research was carried out only with the bachelor level students studying in the Faculties of Education and Management in the academic year 2022-2023 at Makawanpur Multiple Campus, Hetauda.
- Only few instances that represent the strength and weakness of forgiveness were under considerations.
- Only frequency and percent were used as descriptive statistics, and chi-square test as inferential statistics.

Literature Review

Virtues encompass positive qualities and attributes that are deemed morally good and desirable. They serve as benchmarks for behaviors reflective of high moral and ethical standards. These principles steer individuals in making choices that contribute to personal and collective well-being, often associated with traits fostering positive interactions and societal relationships. Examples of common virtues include honesty, integrity, compassion, courage, justice, generosity, humility, forgiveness, respect, responsibility, and gratitude. This article focuses on forgiveness as an integral virtue.

Within the expansive realm of literature exploring human virtues, forgiveness emerges as a captivating and multifaceted subject that has engaged scholars, philosophers, and theologians across diverse cultures and historical periods. Notably, forgiveness is deemed acceptable when extended to remorseful offenders (Haber, 1990) and is characterized as the key to action and freedom (Arendt, n. d.). Despite its centrality to the human experience, forgiveness is paradoxically overlooked in contemporary discourse through a critical examination of its nuanced dimensions. Operationally defined as surrendering the entitlement to seek retaliation following an injury (Pingleton, 1989), forgiveness is also explored through a psychological lens. Studies emphasize its role in releasing negative emotions, promoting resilience, and enhancing overall life satisfaction. This perspective views forgiveness not merely as an altruistic act but as a self-liberating endeavor, wherein the forgiver finds solace and freedom by letting go of resentment and anger. Interpersonally, forgiveness can be expressed through reconciliation.

The interpersonal dimensions of forgiveness are crucial in literature. It highlights its role in building and sustaining meaningful relationships. Scholars, drawing upon social psychology and communication theories, investigate forgiveness dynamics within families, communities,

and broader societal contexts. Forgiving individuals tend to experience less dispositional anger, rumination, and revenge seeking. It promotes positive social relations (Berry et al., 2005; Brown, 2003).

Research underscores forgiveness as an essential component of conflict resolution, providing a pathway for repairing and strengthening interpersonal bonds. Scholars such as McCullough (2000) and Pargament (2011) explore the intersection of forgiveness and spirituality, emphasizing the deep intertwining of forgiveness with one's beliefs and values.

Narratives from various cultural and religious traditions further enrich the discourse, offering insights into how forgiveness is conceptualized and practiced across different contexts. For example, the Christian tradition views forgiveness as a divine imperative, while Eastern philosophies like Buddhism emphasize forgiveness as a means of personal liberation from the cycle of suffering. The primary function of forgiveness appears to be down-regulating and reducing negative affective states and stressful reactions (Brown, 2003; Worthington & Scherer, 2004).

At a societal level, the role of forgiveness in healing collective wounds and fostering social cohesion is emphasized. Instances from historical accounts and case studies illustrate the pivotal role forgiveness plays in the aftermath of conflict and trauma. A poignant example is Desmond Tutu's advocacy for truth and reconciliation in post-apartheid South Africa, showcasing forgiveness as a catalyst for societal healing. Individuals who practise forgiveness often exhibit high dispositional abilities to regulate negative affective states and disengage from ruminative thoughts compared to less forgiving individuals (Allemand et al., 2008).

Nevertheless, challenges to societal integration of forgiveness are apparent, as justice-oriented paradigms and cultural norms sometimes overshadow forgiveness's potential in building resilient communities. The literature highlights the necessity for comprehensive approaches that combine justice and forgiveness to address the complexities of societal reconciliation. Notably, hostility emerges as an independent risk factor for coronary heart disease and premature death (Miller et al., 1996). While the literature paints a rich tapestry of the virtues and complexities of forgiveness, it also acknowledges challenges. The tension between justice and forgiveness, cultural variations in forgiveness norms, and the need for interventions to cultivate forgiveness are areas deserving continued exploration. In the workplace, forgiveness holds potential restorative power, representing a method to repair damaged relationships after a personal offense (Bradfield & Aquino, 1999).

The most common understanding of forgiveness involves aspects of release or letting go over time. This release may focus on anger, revenge, shame, a record of wrongs, and resentment. The temporal aspect, viewing forgiveness as an unfolding process taking months or even years to achieve, is a fundamental component emphasized by many scholars (Cunningham, 1985; Enright and the Human Development Study Group, 1996; Fitzgibbons, 1996; Hope, 1987; Hunter, 1978; Hargrave, 1994; Kaufman, 1984; Kirkup, 1993). Bass and Davis (1994) and Davenport (1991) outline six essential components necessary for forgiveness, including recognizing inflicted harm, substituting self-blame with self-compassion, experiencing anger

with minimal defenses, fostering a proactive relationship with the wrongdoer, cultivating appropriate hope, and perceiving the offender with complexity rather than dehumanization. However, forgiveness encounters resistance due to cultural, societal, and individual factors. Some view forgiveness as a sign of weakness, rooted in cultural perceptions that equate it with vulnerability. In certain contexts, retaliation may be prioritized for self-protection or justice. The fear of exploitation and the misconception of forgiveness as condoning wrongdoing contribute to the belief that forgiveness is a weakness.

Literature on forgiveness underscores its profound implications for individual, interpersonal, and societal well-being. As the world evolves, understanding and promoting forgiveness become imperative for fostering a compassionate and harmonious global community. Future research should explore innovative approaches to cultivating and applying forgiveness across diverse cultural and social contexts.

Methodology of the Study

Research Design

This article is based on a cross-sectional survey research design as the primary data were collected from participants at a single point in time in 2023.

Population

The population consisted of 2240 bachelor level students who studied in the Faculties of Education and Management at Makawanpur Multiple Campus, Hetauda, Nepal during the academic session 2022-2023.

Participants

First, second, third and fourth year students from the faculties of Education and Management were the participants of the research study. They were both boys and girls.

Table 1

Distribution of Population Across Faculties

Faculties	Population		Total	Percent
	Boys	Girls		
Education	119	332	451	21.1
Management	1032	757	1789	79.9
Total	1151	1089	2240	100

A large percent of the population was composed of the students from the Faculty of Management.

Sampling Design

A proportionate stratified sampling technique was used to select the participants. The whole population was classified into two ways: Gender wise and Faculty wise. Furthermore, There were two strata according to gender: Male and Female, and two strata faculty wise: Education and Management.

Sample Size

Sample size of the study involved 329 students. The sample size was determined by following the sample size calculator software <http://www.raosoft.com/samplesize.html> with a confidence level of 95% and a margin of error of 5%.

Table 2

Sample Size Based on Gender

Respondents	Population		Proportionate Stratified Sampling	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Male				
Students	1151	51.4	169	51.4
Female				
Students	1089	48.6	160	48.6
Total	2240	100	329	100

The percent of the male students was higher than that of female students in the sample size (329).

Table 3

Sample Size Based on Faculties

Respondents From	Population		Proportionate Stratified Sampling	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Education	451	20.1	66	20.1
Management	1789	79.9	263	79.9
Total	2240	100	329	100

The percent of the students from the Faculty of Management was higher than that of the students from the Faculty of Education in the sample size.

Data Collection Tools

The primary data were collected in 2013 by employing close-ended questions regarding the students' understanding of forgiveness as strength or weakness. The questions were distributed to the students for mustering their responses. The responses were categorical.

Variables in the Study

The study focused on three primary variables: gender (male and female as two levels), faculty (education and management as two levels), and understanding (forgiveness as strength and weakness as two levels).

Ethical Considerations

We carried out this research study on bachelor level students' understanding of forgiveness with integrity and respect for the well-being of the participants and the broader academic community by carefully addressing the some essential ethical considerations. The participants were given clear and concise information about the research. Their identities and responses were kept confidential. Their names or other identifying information should not be linked to their responses. Their participation in the research was voluntary. Moreover, we treated all the participants with respect and dignity. We were especially careful to protect the rights and well-being of student participants. We submitted the research design and findings for peer review to ensure that the study met ethical standards and contributed valuable insights to the academic community.

Analysis and Interpretation of Data

The collected data were presented in the tables and were analyzed by using descriptive statistics, such as frequency and percent. Chi-square test was executed to test the null hypotheses by employing SPSS Version 25.

Descriptive Statistics

Frequency and percent as descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data.

Table 4

Gender Wise Students' Understanding of Forgiveness

Count	Understanding of Forgiveness		
	Strength	Weakness	Total
SEX			
Boys	93	76	169
Girls	77	83	160
Total	170	159	329

More boys held forgiveness as strength than the girls involved in the study. Consequently, more girls took forgiveness as weakness.

Table 5

Faculty Wise Students' Understanding of Forgiveness

Count	Understanding of Forgiveness		
	Strength	Weakness	Total
Faculty			
Education	7 (10.6%)	59 (89.4%)	66 (100.0%)
Management	163 (62.0%)	100 (38.0%)	263 (100.0%)
Total	170	159	329

More students in the Faculty of Education took forgiveness as weakness, whereas more students in the Faculty of Management regarded forgiveness as strength.

Table 6

Understanding of Forgiveness as Strength or Weakness

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative
Percent					
Valid	Strength	170	51.7	51.7	51.7
	Weakness	159	48.3	48.3	100.0
Total		329	100.0	100.0	

This table clearly reveals that the number of students who took forgiveness as strength (51.7%) was higher than that of those who regarded it as weakness (48.3%).

Aspects of Strength

There are several reasons that turn forgiveness as strength. Some of the crucial reasons garnered from the extensive literature are presented in the table below.

Table 7

Students' Understanding of Forgiveness as Strength Formed by Assorted Reasons

Strength	Frequency	Percent (%)
Reconciliation	29	17.1
Resilience	8	4.7
Harmony	10	6.0
Peace	31	18.2
Motivation	15	8.8
Freedom from bitterness	22	12.9
Freedom from negative emotions	22	12.9
Creation of empathy	10	5.9
Improvement of satisfaction/ happiness	9	5.3
Building of social relationships	6	3.5
Increase in optimism	8	4.7
Total	170	100.0

The number of respondents holding forgives as strength was 170. The highest percent of the students viewed peace as the greatest strength of forgiveness, whereas the fewest students regarded the building of social relationship as the lowest virtue or strength of forgiveness. "Freedom from bitterness" and "Freedom from negative emotions" were equally treated by the respondents.

Aspects of Weakness

Some of the respondents assumed forgiveness as weakness because of diverse reasons. Some of them are mentioned in the table below.

Table 8

Students' Understanding of Forgiveness as Weakness Formed by Diverse Reasons

Weakness	Frequency	Percent (%)
Acceptance of wrongdoings	26	16.3
Inability to protect oneself	19	12.0
Inability to seek for justice	27	17.0
Humility	27	17.0
Timidity	17	10.7
Encouragement to the evil doers	43	27.0
Total	159	100.0

The number of respondents assuming forgiveness as weakness was 159. The greatest percent of the students viewed “Encouragement to the evil doers” as the greatest weakness of forgiveness, whereas the fewest students regarded “Timidity” as the lowest weakness of forgiveness. “Inability to seek for justice” and “Humility” were equally treated by the respondents.

Inferential Statistics

Chi-square test was performed to examine the association between two categorical variables. This test was executed to test the two null hypotheses.

H_0 : There is no significant association between gender and the students' understanding of forgiveness.

Table 9

Chi-Square Test With Gender and Students' Understanding of Forgiveness as Categorical Variables

	Value	Df	Asymptotic Significance (2- sided)	Exact Sig. (2- sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	1.569 ^a	1	.210		
Continuity Correction ^b	1.305	1	.253		
Likelihood Ratio	1.570	1	.210		
Fisher's Exact Test				.226	.127
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.564	1	.211		
N of Valid Cases	329				

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 77.33.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

A chi-square test was run to assess whether boys and girls differ in their understanding of forgiveness. The test shows that the chi-square $\chi^2 (1) = 1.6$ that was smaller than the critical value 3.841, and the p -value (.210) was greater than .05. The result shows that the null

hypothesis “there is no significant association between gender and the students’ understanding of forgiveness” was accepted.

H₀: There is no significant association between faculty and the students’ understanding of forgiveness.

Table 9

Chi-Square Test With Faculty and Students’ Understanding of Forgiveness as Categorical Variables

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	55.755 ^a	1	.000		
Continuity Correction ^b	53.717	1	.000		
Likelihood Ratio	61.724	1	.000		
Fisher's Exact Test				.000	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	55.586	1	.000		
N of Valid Cases	329				

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 31.90.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

A chi-square test was conducted to assess whether faculties differ in their understanding of forgiveness. The test shows that the chi-square $\chi^2(1) = 55.755$ that was greater than the critical value 3.841, and the *p*-value (.000) was smaller than .05. The result shows that the null hypothesis “there is no significant association between faculty and the students’ understanding of forgiveness” was rejected. It means there was a significant association between faculty and the students’ understanding of forgiveness.

Results and Discussion

In the study, it was observed that a higher proportion of boys considered forgiveness as a display of strength, whereas a greater number of girls perceived forgiveness as a sign of weakness. This trend continued within specific academic faculties, with more students in the Faculty of Education viewing forgiveness as a weakness, while their counterparts in the Faculty of Management regarded it as a strength.

Analyzing the data further, 51.7% of students identified forgiveness as a strength, surpassing the 48.3% who categorized it as a weakness. Specifically, 170 respondents held the view that forgiveness was a strength. Interestingly, when examining virtues associated with forgiveness, the majority of students considered peace as the most significant strength, contrasting with a minority who deemed the building of social relationships as its least prominent virtue. On the contrary, 159 respondents perceived forgiveness as a weakness. Notably, a considerable percentage of students identified "Encouragement to the evil doers"

as the greatest weakness, while a minority saw "Timidity" as the least significant weakness. Noteworthy is the equal treatment of "Freedom from bitterness" and "Freedom from negative emotions" by respondents.

To assess gender differences in forgiveness understanding, a chi-square test was conducted. The results ($\chi^2 = 1.6, p = .210$) indicated no significant association between gender and students' forgiveness perspectives, leading to the acceptance of the null hypothesis.

Conversely, when examining the influence of academic faculties on forgiveness perceptions, a chi-square test revealed a significant association ($\chi^2 = 55.755, p = .000$). Consequently, the null hypothesis asserting no significant association between faculty and students' understanding of forgiveness was rejected. This implies a notable connection between academic faculty and how students perceived forgiveness.

Stone (2002) asserts that forgiveness allows for greater creativity and innovation, leading to increased profitability in business. Wuthnow (2002) states that forgiveness helps overcome feelings of guilt. Everett et al. (2007) remark that emotional forgiveness involves psychophysiological changes, with direct health and well-being consequences. Huang and Enright (2000) emphasize the essential role of forgiveness in living a meaningful and happy life. Similarly, Novitz (1998) maintains that forgiveness results in satisfaction.

Reports indicate that forgiving individuals experience more positive effects, including greater life satisfaction, optimism, happiness, environmental mastery, and self-acceptance (Hill & Allemand, 2010, 2011; Krause & Ellison, 2003; Maltby et al., 2005; Sastre et al., 2003).

Exploring the psychological dimensions of forgiveness provides a captivating entry point to grasp its profound impact on individual well-being. Psychological research has illuminated the correlation between forgiveness and mental health, demonstrating that individuals practicing forgiveness often experience lower levels of stress, anxiety, and depression. The act of forgiveness is not solely a virtue benefiting the transgressor; it equally serves as a salve for the forgiver's wounded soul. Within the complexities of our internal landscapes, forgiveness emerges as a pathway to personal liberation, a mechanism releasing us from the weight of grudges and resentments. This process involves releasing resentment toward oneself for a perceived transgression or wrongdoing (DeShea & Wahkinney, 2003) and takes on a more expansive role in human relationships.

Interpersonal dynamics, fraught with moments of misunderstanding, betrayal, and conflict, find the virtue of forgiveness acting as a linchpin for repairing and sustaining meaningful connections. Families, communities, and societies rely on forgiveness as the adhesive that binds these connections. The supreme quality of forgiveness lies in the forgiver relinquishing resentment, to which they have a right, and offering the gift of compassion to which the offender has no right (Hall & Fincham, 2005). It represents a liberation from negative attachments to the source that has transgressed against the person (Thompson et al., 2005). The ability to forgive transforms discord into an opportunity for growth, allowing individuals and communities to evolve beyond grievances and build bridges of understanding.

Longitudinal research has demonstrated a positive relationship between changes in forgiveness and changes in subjective well-being, adjustment, and negative affect, as well as physical symptoms (Bono et al., 2008; Orth et al., 2008). Experimental and intervention studies support the strong relationship between forgiveness and well-being (Karremans et al., 2003; Worthington et al., 2007). Continued research raises questions about conditions that might alter this relationship.

As this exploration of forgiveness unfolds, readers are invited to unravel the intricate layers of this indispensable yet overlooked virtue. Forgiveness is not merely a balm for individual wounds but a compass guiding us toward a more compassionate, interconnected, and harmonious world.

Psychologically, forgiveness is a dynamic process involving letting go of resentment, anger, and the desire for revenge. Studies consistently show that forgiveness is linked to improved mental health, reduced stress, and increased life satisfaction. Forgiving is not just altruistic; it liberates individuals from the burdens of negativity and can be expressed interpersonally through reconciliation, defined as the extent to which the victim makes an effort to repair or improve relationships with the offender following the offense (McCullough et al., 1998; Bradfield & Aquino, 1999).

People generally become more forgiving with age, and gender differences suggest that forgiveness of others is associated with decreased depression in women, while forgiveness of oneself is linked to decreased odds of depression in men (Toussaint et al., 2008). Forgiveness and spirituality contribute to a reduction in psychological symptoms and an increase in positive psychological outcomes (Levenson et al., 2006). Increased forgiveness is associated with better and stronger relationships, as well as enhanced psychological well-being (Bono et al., 2008). Gratitude, love, and forgiveness are deemed essential for human happiness and subjective well-being (Diener, 2000; Emmons et al., 2003; Duckworth et al., 2005; Seligman et al., 2005; Dahigaard & Seligman, 2005; Lambert & Erekson, 2008).

Forgiveness operates as a cohesive force that binds individuals together in the realm of interpersonal relationships. In human interactions, disputes, betrayals, and conflicts are inevitable occurrences. However, the capacity for forgiveness enables individuals to mend and fortify relationships. Families, communities, and societies embracing forgiveness foster an environment of empathy and understanding, cultivating unity and resilience in the face of adversity. Interpersonal expression of forgiveness often takes the form of reconciliation.

Notably, forgiveness extends its benefits to physical health, a claim supported by religious writings and the recommendations of health professionals (Thoresoen et al., 2000). Additionally, forgiveness is linked to well-being, aiding in the maintenance of stable, supportive relationships (McCullough, 2000). On a broader scale, forgiveness contributes to societal harmony, historically demonstrated by societies that have exhibited resilience and the ability to overcome collective trauma.

Lawler-Row et al. (2008) suggest that forgiveness may have positive effects on the forgiver's health. Psychological research plays a crucial role in unraveling the complex nature of

forgiveness, revealing its profound impact on individual mental health. Forgiveness can be viewed as a contextualized psychological process or as a disposition (McCullough et al, 2003; Allemand & Steiner, 2012).

The transformative power of forgiveness, as emphasized by Enright et al. (1996) and Worthington et al. (2007), is associated with reduced levels of stress, anxiety, and depression. Reconciliation, defined as the victim's effort to repair relationships with the offender (McCullough et al., 1998), is an interpersonal expression of forgiveness. Enright's model (1996) outlines forgiveness as a journey involving uncovering, decision, work, and deepening and stressing its intentional nature with far-reaching psychological implications.

People tend to be more forgiving if they see themselves as capable of similar offenses (Exline et al., 2008). The association between forgiveness and subjective well-being is evident in theoretical and empirical research (McCullough, 2000; Toussaint & Webb, 2005). Despite its intrinsic value, forgiveness faces challenges in a justice-oriented landscape, with cultural norms often overshadowing its transformative potential. Educational initiatives and therapeutic interventions are crucial in fostering a culture that values forgiveness as an indispensable virtue.

Conclusion

Frequency and percent statistics under the study show that more students perceived forgiveness as a strength, whereas the fewer ones regarded it as a weakness. Chi-square test shows that there was no significant association between gender and the students' understanding of forgiveness, whereas there was a significant association between faculty and the students' understanding of forgiveness. Forgiveness stands as a virtue with vast potential for personal and societal advancement, offering a pathway to a more compassionate and harmonious world. Recognizing forgiveness as an essential element of human nature opens avenues for healing, reconciliation, and overall well-being. By actively promoting and practicing forgiveness, humanity can harness a potent force for positive transformation. Within the intricate tapestry of our shared existence, forgiveness emerges as a thread of profound significance, impacting psychological, interpersonal, and societal realms. Beyond mere benevolence, forgiveness becomes a liberating force from a psychological perspective. Letting go of resentment and animosity unfolds as a journey toward mental well-being. In the realm of interpersonal relationships, forgiveness acts as a powerful adhesive, binding individuals together and providing a route to resolution and personal growth. On a societal scale, forgiveness serves as a cornerstone for collective healing, as evidenced by case studies and historical narratives showcasing societies that, amidst adversity, embraced forgiveness, fostering reconciliation and resilience. Despite its transformative potential, challenges persist, with a justice-oriented paradigm often overshadowing forgiveness in societal discourse. Navigating the complexities of the modern world necessitates the cultivation and acknowledgment of forgiveness as imperative. Though occasionally obscured, the threads of forgiveness weave a fabric of compassion, understanding, and unity. Overlooking forgiveness means neglecting a virtue capable of healing wounds, bridging divides, and creating a world where the transformative

power of forgiveness is celebrated. In embracing forgiveness, humanity possesses a key to unlocking a future marked by empathy, reconciliation, and a deeper understanding of our shared humanity. This article contends that forgiveness is not only indispensable but also frequently overlooked. We strongly advise future researchers to extend their investigations to other colleges by engaging students from various faculties, in order to comprehensively examine their understanding of forgiveness. Such research studies will contribute to a more robust and genuine understanding of forgiveness across diverse academic disciplines, and enrich the overall body of knowledge in this domain.

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