



Forgiveness Across Gender and Other Demographics: A Brief Review

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ABSTRACT

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The reliability of the Heartland Forgiveness Scale (HFS) Urdu version was evaluated in this article, along with the gender differences between males and females in adults. This is an 18-item self-report questionnaire devised to assess a person's forgiving disposition. In accordance with research by Davis, Hook, Van Tongeren, and Worthington Jr (2012), Goman, Kelley, and Wiesenthal's (2016), and Johnstone et al. (2015), forgiveness, a coping strategy, enhances relationships by facilitating healing, transformation, and liberation, thereby fostering social harmony and promoting healing and enhancing interpersonal relationships. The sample composed of 160 adults (80 females, 80 males) age range was 21 to 47 ($M=30.65$, $SD = 4.836$) through convenience sampling technique. Moreover, in this study personal information form (Rohner & Berger, 2023) was used to collect student and teacher demographic information and validity and reliability studies were carried out, were applied. The scale consists of 18 items with 7-points Likert option. The finding of this study revealed that Urdu version (HFS) had adequate internal consistency ($\alpha=.75$) and it can be used to assess to forgiveness disposition among Pakistani sample. Moreover, t test also calculates to examine gender difference in forgiveness between male and female result indicates ($t=1.219$) which indicates insignificant gender difference among participants.



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1. Introduction

The notion that women are inherently more forgiving than men is widely acknowledged, yet studies comparing gender differences often yield conflicting results (Kaleta, Wojtysiak, & Polańska, 2016). Moreover, there remains a lack of understanding regarding the specific factors or distinguishing characteristics of forgiveness behavior between genders. In IPAR Theory, forgiveness is conceptualized as dispositional, reflecting an individual's enduring propensity to forgive interpersonal transgressions. Conversely, vengeance, as described by Rohner and Berger (2023), involves the cognitive desire or behavioral pursuit of retribution against those perceived to have wronged the individual.

Understanding these concepts within the framework of gender-specific patterns provides valuable insights into the complexities of forgiveness and vengeance dynamics. By examining forgiveness as a dispositional trait, researchers can better grasp how individuals across genders differ in their long-term tendencies toward forgiveness. Similarly, exploring

vengeance sheds light on the various ways individuals seek retaliation against perceived wrongdoers, ranging from overt acts of retribution to subtler forms of retaliation (Fingerman & Charles, 2010; McCullough, 2000; Toussaint & Webb, 2005). Recent research conducted by Ali, Butt, and Rohner (2024) indicates that women are commonly perceived to exhibit greater levels of forgiveness, gratitude, and reconciliation due to their personality traits such as agreeableness, empathy, and the importance they place on relationships. Additionally, this perception often aligns with higher tendencies towards religiosity and maintaining a secure relationship with God. Moreover, Gender-related differences in forgiveness, though often overlooked by researchers, merit greater empirical investigation. Such exploration is crucial not only for a deeper understanding of forgiveness but also for the development of effective interventions and therapeutic strategies. Studies indicate that individuals who are forgiving tend to possess heightened dispositional abilities to mitigate negative emotional states and to distance themselves from persistent rumination, in contrast to those who are less forgiving (Kaleta et al., 2016).

This research aimed to investigate gender differences in forgiveness disposition among both males and females. The study investigated the significance of forgiveness disposition to gain a better understanding of how it varies between the two genders. With optimism, it is anticipated that the findings of this research will contribute to raising awareness about the importance of forgiveness disposition. The objective of this paper is to determine the reliability of the Urdu version Heartland Forgiveness Scale (HFS). Further, we also evaluate the differences in forgiveness disposition between males and females based on their gender. Forgiveness disposition will be high in females than in male adults. This study is an empirical survey research that was conducted through a standardized questionnaire, Heartland Forgiveness Scale.

1.2 Participants

The sample composed of 160 adults (80 females, 80 males) age range was 21 to 47 ($M=30.65$, $SD = 4.836$). The sample was collected from the general population in Karachi city. The convenience sampling technique was used to collect data. With respect to educational attainment, 7.0% reported having matriculation as the highest level of education PhD, 3.8% reported having attained master's degree, 24.4%, bachelor's degree, and 64.2%, 7.0% reported having matriculation. Regarding marital status, 49.4% of participants were married, 45.6% were unmarried, 1.3% were separated, 2.5% divorced, and 1.3% were widowed.

Also referred to as the Heartland Forgiveness Scale (HFS), the Thompson and Martin (2005) self-report scale measures dispositional forgiveness and comprises 18 items. Each of the three subscales comprising the scale comprises six elements. Forgiveness towards situations, forgiveness towards individuals, and forgiveness towards oneself are assessed by these subscales. The participants are requested to provide their normal reactions to infractions on a seven-point rating scale, which spans from 1 (which indicates almost always more false than true) to 7 (which indicates almost always true of me). Enhanced levels of forgiveness are denoted by higher ratings on each specific subscale within each category. After reversing their respective scores, the aggregate rating of Items 2, 4, 6, 7, 9, 11, 13, 15, and 17 yields the ultimate score. The PIF was designed to develop by Rohner and Berger (2023) collect demographic Information of the participants about gender, age, marital status, qualification, professional.

The author used a quasi-research design and replicated previous studies documenting comparisons among demographic variables collected through PIF (see above). All participants gave their consent before completing HFS and PIF. They were told that their personal and data information would be kept confidential and anonymous and were free to terminate their session whenever they wanted; no compensation was given for participation. The author used SPSS 21.0 (Kim, Payne, & Tracy, 2022; Sarfaraz & Malik, 2023).

2. Results

The Cronbach alpha was used to assess the consistency of items with one another. The measure whose reliability score exceeds .70 is considered to one. The total scale obtained

in this study for (HFS) Urdu version (18 items) was discovered. 75 (see Table 1) indicates good reliability. The results of this research line up with previous research and indicate adequate internal consistency, Cronbach’s alpha, with values between 0.72 and 0.8 (Gallo-Giunzioni, Prieto-Ursúa, Fernández-Belinchón, & Luque-Reca, 2021).

Table 1
Psychometric Properties of HFS and its subscales

Scale-Subscale	k	α	Mean (SD)	Min	Max
Self	6	.70	24.42 (6.24)	8.0	42
Others	6	.69	26.16 (7.89)	6.0	42
Situation	6	.73	24.24 (7.12)	8.0	42
Total	18	.75	74.83 (18.23)	35.00	116

Note. k = Number of items, α = Cronbach Alpha

The mean difference is 3.050 with a standard error difference of 2.363. The 95% confidence interval of the difference ranges from -1.6181 to 7.7191. Since the p-value is greater than 0.05, the finding concludes that there is no significant difference in the total HFS scores between males and females. The number of previous studies showed a similar trend and supporting present results (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Butt, Rohner, & Zaki, 2023).

Table 2
Mean Difference between Male (n=80) and Female (n=80) students on Forgiveness and their subscales

Forgiveness and subscales	Male	Female	t(158)	p	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference
	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)			Lower
Self	26.544 (4.761)	22.375 (6.852)	4.451	0.000	2.3190
Others	28.190 (6.510)	24.238 (8.664)	3.249	0.001	1.5494
Situation	25.835 (5.466)	22.738 (8.196)	2.800	0.006	0.9127
Total	34.722 (10.181)	31.763 (5.71)	4.094	0.025	5.8457

3. Discussion

The current study investigated the gender difference in forgiveness disposition among females and males. The study also examines the reliability of the HFS questionnaire among the Pakistani population. The sample consisted of 160 adults (80 females and 80 males) whose age range was 21 to 47 (M = 30.65, SD = 4.836). The participants who participated in this study were 50% females and 50% males. Furthermore, the hypothesis of this study states that forgiveness disposition will be high in females than in male adults. Moreover, forgiveness of self-subscale: The t-value is 2.198 with a p-value of 0.029, which is less than 0.05, indicating a significant difference in the forgiveness of self-scores between the males and females. Moreover, This finding supporting by prior studies (Allemand, Maier, & Smith, 2012; Miller, Worthington Jr, & McDaniel, 2008). While the study provides valuable insights, it's important to acknowledge its limitations. Cross-sectional and correlational data prevent the establishment of causality, and reliance solely on self-report measure. In order to deepen our comprehension of the relationship between forgiveness, revenge, and the principles of the parental acceptance-rejection theory, it is imperative to transcend these limitations and adopt a more all-encompassing approach in future research. Ultimately, forgiveness is a skill that can be learned and improved through intentional practice and education. Studies suggest that forgiving is essential for achieving optimal mental well-being. This study aims to fill this gap in information by directly comparing men and women in their inclination to forgive and investigating how it is linked to emotional traits (Freedman & Levine, 1998; Snyder, Baucom, & Gordon, 2007).

4. Conclusion

Finally, research on forgiveness has given us useful knowledge about its importance and benefits, as well as the complicated processes that are involved. Understanding forgiveness can have a positive impact on individuals and their relationships, and it remains a subject of ongoing research and discovery. Furthermore, studies of forgiveness have revealed a lot about the psychological, emotional, and interpersonal aspects of this modern phenomenon.

4.1 Limitation

Limitations include using convenience sampling from Karachi city, limiting the findings' generalizability. Future research should involve more diverse age groups to better understand forgiveness across different life stages. This broader approach can inform more tailored interventions for promoting healing and reconcile.

4.2 Implementations

Integrating forgiveness into therapy can have wide-ranging benefits beyond individual mental health, extending to the quality of interpersonal relationships and even societal harmony. As our understanding of forgiveness continues to evolve, so too will our ability to develop more nuanced and effective interventions to support individuals in their journey towards forgiveness and healing.

Authors Contribution:

Beenish Sarfaraz: Conducted research design and methodology, and collected and analyzed data

Zahid Iqbal: Provided expertise on legal frameworks.

Rimsha Nadeem: Proofread, review and designed the analysis, manuscript draft.

Conflict of Interests/Disclosures

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest w.r.t the research, authorship and/or publication of this article.

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