



RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MINDFULNESS AND FORGIVENESS

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ABSTRACT Mindfulness and forgiveness both are virtues and strength of character. Mindfulness is a technique that has been widely practiced and positive effects has been seen on people not only mentally but also physically. This helps a person to focus on now, on present otherwise Life can be painful and quickly pass by if we don't focus on positive and important. Its origin roots back to religion but now it has been accepted and used as psychological therapy. Forgiveness is letting go of the pain and moving on from the past. Present study is designed to study the relationship between mindfulness and forgiveness. For this purpose, a sample of 60 college going students (30 males, 30 females) was collected. The age range of 18-22 was taken. The purpose of the study was explained to them and their consent was taken. Statically methods of correlation and t-test were applied. A positive low significant correlation was found between Mindfulness and Forgiveness. No gender differences were found.

KEYWORDS : Mindfulness, Forgiveness, Positive Psychology

INTRODUCTION:**Mindfulness:**

"Living 24 hours with mindfulness is more worthwhile than living 100 years without it." – The Buddha

Life can be painful and pass by quickly if we don't focus on positive and important. Focusing on what really matters. Being mindful, being present in the moment can help.

Mindfulness is defined as a state that is achieved by focusing on the present and accepting our emotions and thoughts without any judgments. (Kabat-Zinn 1990) It is a technique used for relaxation. It encourages "metacognition" and focuses our attention. For example if you are drinking a cup of tea then you are only focusing on that, focusing only on your breath, keeping your mind at rest, at par. Mindfulness is often confused with the term meditation but there is a thin line between them, they do overlap. Meditation is a wider term which includes mindfulness as one of its techniques that help in meditating. The purpose is more or less the same. Even though its roots are 2500 years old in the past yet this practice is internationally very popular. People all over the globe indulge in this practice to help themselves. Mindfulness as a subject of psychology has also driven a lot of attention. To understand the concept of mindfulness we have to look at its origins. The contribution to this subject mostly lies in the teachings and religion of Buddhism and Hinduism but some analyst argue that it also has its roots in the religion of Islam, Judaism and Christianity but still the largest contribution remains of the former. (Trousselard et. Al. 2014) "Mindfulness" an English word is said to be a translation of a concept in Buddhism called sati. It is derived from the Step Seven of Buddhism's Eight-Fold path. This technique was used to achieve nirvana that leads to the end of suffering and also mindfulness is an important element in the vipassana meditation. The modern mindfulness technique has no involvement or mention of religion, it's secular. It's a mental training for bringing your consciousness to here and now. This notion was introduced in psychology by Dr. Jon Kabat-Zinn, a professor of medicine emeritus in 1970s. He has the biggest influence on the subject also the founder of the centre for mindfulness at the university of Massachusetts medical school and the Oasis Institute for Mindfulness-Based Professional Education. He was influenced and studied by the Buddhist monk's teachings; he started using the technique in his work with the sufferers of chronic pain. He developed an eight week program Mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) with the aim of reducing stress levels and improving well-being. The success of MBSR leads to the "The Mindfulness Movement" in the healthcare settings. It has been applied to various other areas like schools, sports, prison, and politics. There are so many instructors available for the same in more than 30 countries. Many mindfulness-based therapy programs, like Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT), Mindfulness based Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (MCBT), Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) and Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) are widely used to treat depression, anxiety, stress and insomnia. Significant works have been done to prove the contribution of this technique in treating these disorders. Not only have these disorders mindfulness also helped people to cope with social isolation and rejection. Some other

contributors of bringing this notion to the west were Sharon Salzberg, Joseph Goldstein and Jack Koenfield also the founders of Insight Meditation Society (IMS) 1975. Many Bunches of books and papers have been written on the topic, its benefits and how to go about it. Mindfulness has also been deeply intertwined with yoga. It has now become an accepted tool of positive psychology. A recent research attempted to combine positive psychology with mindfulness to improve the well-being of subjects, a program they named Positive Mindfulness Program. Their work was successful. Hence positive psychology is a way of using an ancient practice in today's world.

Forgiveness:

"To forgive is to assume a larger identity than the person who was first hurt."

Both a science and art, as a word it is easy to understand but as an action it one of the most difficult task but holding on to is much more stressful and harmful. It's more like a goal that everyone should try to strive. Who inflicts the pain cannot be chosen but forgiving can. Heartbreaks, insults, betrayal etc. are inevitable and anger or resentment is the most common reaction, powerlessness in a way. Forgiveness on the other hand is painful something that is not easy to achieve, it brings us closer to the source of the pain, its reimagining the relation with it. If we look at it from the evolutionary point of view harmony, peace and cooperation among the clan member or husband -wife or mother-children has evident benefits. Man is a social being and conflicts have always been a part of this social life and forgiving can make this cooperation with other beings much easier. Forgiveness is defined as ones deliberate and conscious decision to let go of the pain, feeling of revenge, guilt or resentment towards the one who harmed. Even though there is no specific definition of how one can define forgiveness, conflicts have always been there. It is more like a skill. Forgiveness comes after we understand, understanding is the matter of application and time, which we can also start right in the beginning if we wish so. In Bible "forgiveness" means "to let go". "Forgive us our sins, for we ourselves also forgive everyone who is in debt to us." It is a gift, not to others but to us. Acknowledgement of the pain, expression of the feelings in non-harmful way, trying to understand the perspective of others is a part of process called forgiveness. It has power to hold relations together. We must know what forgiveness is not, forgiving doesn't means forgetting or accepting the person who did wrong, it is just acceptance of the event rather than staying stuck at what could've happened. It is moving on from the past to present. Another concept that forgiveness should be separated from is reconciliation i.e. giving the same trust in relationship but this is not an aspect of forgiveness, you can forgive someone and may not continue a relation. Forgiving is not always a choice, you must know and set your boundaries, some things are not meant for forgiving. John Steinbeck "no man really knows about other human beings. The best he can do is to suppose that they are like him." This notion helps us to understand most of our conflicts, everyman has a different perspective and a lack of understanding might lead to conflict and forgiveness is the tool for mending the relationships. We often think forgiveness as a sign of weakness but let's break it down being angry and bitter are so easy but forgiving someone takes a whole process, it's powerful and liberating.

It can be a trait and state as well. As a Trait it helps more to deal and overcome stressful situation. (Harris et. all 2006) There is conflicting literature about whether the phenomena require positive actions and feeling towards the offender or absence of negative response is enough. Even though these both are independent dimensions of forgiveness but maybe have different outcomes. This notion has been positively correlated with health benefits. Less stress, rumination and reactivity has been observed. It is also linked to reduced depression, anxiety and other disorders, benefits in physical health were also seen. (Weir K. 2017) Religion is another factor that plays a great role in forgiving. Positive correlation between the both is observed. People who regularly go to temples or churches or any other religious place have forgiveness high on their priority list. Not only has the clinical and religious domain, forgiveness had its major impact on popular culture. We have singers and lyricist writing about forgiveness and its impact in their life. It has gained a lot of public attention.

Review of literature:

In an unpublished doctoral dissertation by Humphrey, studied mindfulness and forgiveness, goal was to make it easier to forgive deep pain and reduce anxiety and stress. Twenty women participated in this eight week program, they reported painful experiences, difficulty in forgiveness and higher levels of anxiety. They were recruited at an obstetrical/gynecological medical practice. Nine women were included in an intervention group and eleven in a waitlist condition. The author of the thesis developed practices of forgiveness meditation, mindfulness, relaxation techniques, other types of meditation, informative material on stress and anxiety. Record of the practice of mindfulness and forgiveness was kept (not by all). Significantly high forgiveness, less anxiety, less depression was obtained in intervention group in comparison to waitlist condition subjects. However the small size of the group is the limit of the study. (Klevnick 2008)

Another study hypothesized that greater self-forgiveness, reduced rumination, better emotional regulation in the subjects practicing MBSR. People who practice mindfulness are better at forgiving. Positive correlation between mindfulness, self-forgiveness and other forgiveness was found. (Klevnick 2008)

In an Indian study significant gender differences in mindfulness and perceived stress was found between undergraduate males and females. Males were better at mindfulness, conscious of what they are doing and better attention. They were more in the present. (Sharma O. & Vijay D. n.d.)

Kohlberg and Gilligan theorized that gender differences in forgiveness may exist due to moral reasoning. Females try to maintain relationships more than males which may encourage them to forgive more rather than seeking justice. Men on the other hand are more driven towards justice and revenge. (Kohlberg 1984) (Gilligan 1994)

Objective of the study

- To study the relationship between mindfulness and forgiveness
- To study gender differences between males and females.

Hypothesis

- H1: There will be a significant relationship between mindfulness and forgiveness.
- H2: Males will score higher than females on mindfulness.
- H3: Females will score higher than males on forgiveness.

METHOD:

Participants: The sample for the current study is collected from college going students i.e. 30 males and 30 females. The age of the participants ranged from 18-22 years. They were told the aim of the current study and consent was taken. The participants majorly belonged to middle socio- economic status.

Measure Used:

Heartland Forgiveness Scale: Thompson L., Snyder C., Hoffman L. (2005), The consists of 18 items, it is rated using 7- point Likert scale, 1 presents "Strongly Disagree" and 7 presents "Strongly Agree" only at the extremes. It has three subscales Forgiveness of self, Forgiveness of others, forgiveness of situations. A few items were negatively scored. Total was calculated by adding all the items. The scores show how forgiving one is. Higher the score higher the level of forgiveness, low level of scores indicates lower level of forgiveness.

Mindful Attention Awareness Scale: Brown, K.W. & Ryan, R.M. (2003) designed a 15 item scale to assess mindfulness, awareness and

attention to environment and present. It is valid for the use over college students. Items were rated using 6-point Likert scale, 1 presents "almost always" and 7 represents "almost never". Scores were calculated by adding all the items. Higher scores signify higher level of mindfulness. It takes 10 minutes or less to complete the test.

PROCEDURE

This study was designed to study the relationship between mindfulness and forgiveness and gender difference between both. The samples of subject were selected randomly from college with an age range of 18-22 year. Two scales were administered to each participant i.e. Heartland forgiveness scale measuring levels of forgiveness and Mindful Attention Awareness scale measuring levels of dispositional mindfulness.

Results

Table 1 showing Mean, S.D., t value

Variable	Mean (females-30)	S.D.(female s-30)	Mean(males-30)	S.D.(male s-30)	T value
Mindfulness	3.63	0.80	3.96	0.85	0.070
Forgiveness	82.4	13.38	0.85	12.48	0.48

Table 2 showing correlation, total sample – 30 males and 30 females

Variables	Mindfulness	Forgiveness
1.	0.38*	0.42*

*significant at 0.05 level

Table 1 shows mean values, standard deviation values, t-value, and p-values. The values were found insignificant which means that there exist no significant gender differences between mindfulness and forgiveness.

Table 2 shows the Pearson product method correlation between the two variables – mindfulness and forgiveness i.e. 0.38 and 0.42 respectively for the sample of 30 males and 30 females. It was found to be significant on 0.05 levels.

DISCUSSION:

The objective of the study has been reached which was to examine the relationship between mindfulness and forgiveness and also to study the gender difference between males and females. The findings support our hypothesis H1 which states that it was expected that there will exist a significant relationship between mindfulness and forgiveness which has been accepted since a positive significant correlation (0.38 and 0.42 respectively) was found. Our H2 states, that it was expected that males will score higher than females on mindfulness and our H3 states, that it is expected that females will score higher than males on forgiveness. But no gender differences were found which rejects our H2 and H3.

A t- test compared the means of two groups i.e. males and females students to examine if any gender differences between mindfulness and forgiveness exists or not. According to the results no significant differences between the means were found. (t-0.070 and 0.48). In a study in 2005, found no significant difference between the males and females on forgiveness was found even though they were found to be more empathetic, which is an important step for forgiveness but no difference were found. (Toussaint & Jon R. Webb 2005). A study conducted examined the effects of (MBSR) for therapists. even though women were more than men in this study but they found no significant support for gender difference. (Shapiro S., Brown K. & Biegel G. (2007).

A Pearson product moment correlation coefficient was calculated to find the relationship between the two variables. A positive significant low correlation was found. For mindfulness (r=0.38) and for forgiveness (r=0.42). to support our findings an overview of already available literature suggested that mindfulness skills may help individual to facilitate forgiveness. It has also been associated with regulation of anger and increase in empathic nature (Block-Lerner et al. 2007; Dekeyser et al. 2008; Wachs and Cordova 2007). IN some other empirical studies significant positive relationship between mindfulness and trait forgiveness was found. People who were more in their present and focused on current situation were more forgiving across circumstances. (e.g., Oman et al. 2008; Webb et al. 2012).

This current study adds to small number of empirical study on

relationship between mindfulness and forgiveness. Though, there is some limitation in this study. The participants were selected from colleges hence it was a convenient sample and it doesn't represent the whole population. The sample number was also small and targeted only one type of population i.e. young adults. In sum, this study, to our best knowledge, is one of the first Indian studies to find no gender differences between mindfulness and forgiveness.

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