Research Article

SENSE OF GRATITUDE IN RELATION TO INDIVIDUALS' PERCEPTION TOWARD FORGIVENESS AND RELATIONSHIP SATISFACTION

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ABSTRACT

The goal of this study was to see how forgiveness tendencies and relationship satisfaction influenced people's sense of gratitude or feelings of thankfulness. Following the purposive sampling technique, data was collected from 202 respondents who were either married or engaged in a romantic relationship using the translated Bangla form of the Heartland Forgiveness Scale and Gratitude Questionnaire and the adapted Bangla version of the Relationship Assessment Scale. Individuals' feelings of thankfulness were shown to be substantially connected with perceived forgiveness ($r = .331$, $p < .01$) and relationship satisfaction ($r = .433$, $p < .01$). The two independent variables, forgiveness and relationship satisfaction, have a significant inter-correlation ($r = .231$, $p < .01$). Furthermore, these two variables were predictors of people's feelings of gratitude, accounting for 24.4 percent of the variation. Relationship satisfaction was the largest predictor, accounting for 18.8% of the variation in feelings of gratitude. The findings of this study can be extremely beneficial to mental health practitioners in developing and implementing intervention strategies to expand the sense of gratitude, forgiveness tendencies, and satisfaction toward one's partner in order to promote positive mental health.

Introduction

Gratitude can be described as a feeling of gratefulness, thankfulness, or any other similar pleasant emotion felt and/or expressed by the receiver of compassion, presents, support, favoritisms, or other forms of kindness to the giver of those assistances (Polikarpov, 1996; John, 1814). Sansone and Sansone (2010) defined it as a general sense of appreciativeness for what is advantageous and relevant to oneself. According to Emmons and Crumpler (2000) gratitude is an emotional response to a gift and appreciation felt when one has been the recipient of kind and humanitarian act. Gratitude, according to positive psychology, is more than just feeling thankful: it is a deeper appreciation for someone or something that leads to longer-lasting happiness and positivity.

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The systematic study of gratitude in psychology began in 1998 when Martin Seligman developed a new area of psychology called 'positive psychology' (Emmons and Crumpler, 2000). It has been a topic of interest to the ancient, medieval, and modern as well as contemporary philosophers (Manela, 2015). The sensation of gratitude, according to Emmons and McCullough (2003) has two stages: (a) the acknowledgment of kindness in one's life; and (b) admitting that some of this goodness comes from sources other than oneself. The first level of thankfulness is to admit the wonderful in our life, and the second stage is to consider how this goodness came to us externally.

Gratitude has been related to a variety of excellent life outcomes, including greater mental and physical health, and relationships of high quality (Diener and Tay, 2017). Gratitude and forgiveness, these two human qualities might be considered as human strengths (Peterson and Seligman, 2004). However, forgiveness is the polar opposite of appreciation which can be defined as conscious, deliberate and constructive response to let go of sentiments of hatreds or revenge toward a person or group of people's wrongdoings and contraventions, regardless of whether or not they deserve forgiveness, by delivering kindness and compassion (Joanna, 1998; Doka, 2017). It's not about forgetting, reconciling, or even reuniting with the individual for whom forgiveness has been expressed. In actuality, forgiveness has everything to do with one's own heart and has nothing to do with the other person. When a person does not forgive someone, he or she feels rage, resentment, and hurt, and these feelings are harmful to him or her both emotionally or physically (Witvli *et al*. 2001).

Prior studies possess that forgiveness has been linked to overall relationship satisfaction. Rusbult and Buunk (1993) defined satisfaction in relationship as an interpersonal assessment of one's partner's positive feelings and attractiveness to the relationship. The tendency to forgive one's spouse or love partner boosts relationship pleasure by reducing negative conflict and increasing relational effort (Braithwaite *et al*. 2011). It has been discovered that the possibility of forgiving in intimate relationships has an impact on couples' happiness levels (Paleari *et al*. 2005). Willingness to forgive is a crucial element that elongates and preserves romantic or marital partnerships for the people who are in long-term romantic relationships or marriages (Fincham *et al*. 2002). Fincham (2009) also considered it as one of the most significant aspects of keeping a happy and healthy romantic relationship.

Rationale of the study

Gratitude is a naturally satisfying activity that makes people gracious. It might help one to form new social relationships or strengthen old ones. Even in times of struggle and transition, so many people can benefit from this common practice of expressing gratitude for their lives. Raising one's sense of thankfulness, satisfaction with one's relationship, and forgiveness tendency all are important factors in staying mentally and physically healthy and sound. A large body of positive psychology studies around the world has focused on the relationship between forgiveness, gratitude, and relationship satisfaction (Diener and Tay, 2017; Braithwaite *et al*. 2011; Fincham, 2009; Peterson and Seligman, 2004; Rusbult and Buunk, 1993). Majority of the studies were carried out in Western culture, and equivalent endeavors in Bangladesh appear to be rare. It is difficult to locate a conclusive study on the impact of perceived forgiveness and relationship satisfaction on people's feelings of gratitude in Bangladesh. The current study intends to analyze

the link between the factors and their influences on one another in order to fill this gap in the literature. The present study's findings will add to the existing literature, and the results may aid in the implementation of essential activities to encourage individuals to become more involved in humanitarian efforts.

Objectives of the study

The main objective of this study was to see how people's feelings of thankfulness were affected by their perceptions of forgiveness and relationship satisfaction. The study's specific goals were:

i)   To determine whether people's perceptions of forgiveness is related to gratitude or thankfulness.

ii)   To determine whether relationship satisfaction is related to gratitude or thankfulness in any way.

iii) To examine the impact of forgiveness and relationship satisfaction on gratitude, both individually and in combination.

Materials and Methods

Participants

Purposive sampling was used to choose a total of 202 respondents, ranging in age from 18 to 42 years old. All of the participants were married or in a romantic relationship at the time of data collection. There were 39.1% males and 60.9% females among them. The following table 1 shows the demographics of the participants:

Table 1. Demographic information of the participants.

Variables	Level	Frequency	Percent
Age	18-30 years	188	93.1
	31-42 years	14	6.9
Gender	Male	79	39.1
	Female	123	60.9
Family Type	Joint	134	66.3
	Nuclear	68	33.7
Relationship Status	Married	44	21.8
	Affair	158	78.2
Socio-economic Status	Upper class	11	5.4
	Upper middle class	38	18.8
	Middle class	145	71.8
	Lower class	8	4

Note: N = 202

Measuring Instruments

The following tools were utilized to conduct the research-

1. The Gratitude Questionnaire- Six Item Form (GQ-6)

2. The Heartland Forgiveness Scale (HFS)
3. The Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS)

A personal information form (PIF) was also utilized to collect demographic data such as the age, gender, family type, relationship status, and socioeconomic status of the participants.

Description of the Instruments

1.   Gratitude Questionnaire- Six Item Form (GQ-6)

The Gratitude Questionnaire-Six-Item Form (GQ-6; McCullough *et al*. 2002) is self-report questionnaire that assesses individual differences in the likelihood of experiencing gratitude in everyday life. The scale has six items, two of which are negative (items 3 and 6) and the other four are positive. It's a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). For negative elements, the order is reversed. The overall score of the scale for an individual was the sum of all item scores. A high score implies a great level of gratitude. The current researchers translated this scale. The scale's internal consistency alpha was found .73.

2.   The Heartland Forgiveness Scale (HFS)

HFS was developed by Thompson and Snyder (2003). It is an 18-item self-report questionnaire that measures a person's overall willingness to forgive. For the HFS, four scores are calculated. Each of the three HFS subscales has its own score, as does the Total HFS (Forgiveness of Self subscale, Forgiveness of Others subscale, and Forgiveness of Situations subscale). Total HFS scores vary from 18 to 126, indicating how forgiving someone is of themselves, others, and uncontrollable circumstances in general. The three HFS subscales have scores ranging from 6 to 42, which indicate how forgiving one is towards oneself, others, and situations beyond one's control, respectively. Higher scores imply higher forgiveness levels, whereas lower scores suggest low forgiveness levels. Scores of 31 are average on the three subscales, while a score of 93 is average on the Total Forgiveness scale. This scale was translated by the present researchers. Internal consistency alpha for forgiveness of self was .76, for forgiveness of others was .79, for forgiveness of situation was .76 and for overall HFS overall .85.

3.   The Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS)

The Bangla version (Chowdhury *et al*. 2016) of RAS was originally developed by Hendrick in 1988. The responses were graded on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (low satisfaction) to 5 (high satisfaction). Negative items (items 4 and 7) were scored in the opposite direction. After summing the individual scores of the seven items, respondents' total score is found. The scale's scores range from 7 to 35. The higher the scores, the greater the level of satisfaction. The validity and reliability of the Bangla RAS are excellent (Cronbach's Alpha of .86, split-half reliability of .82, and test-retest reliability of .88).

Design

The current study was conducted using a cross-sectional survey research design.

Procedure

Initially, permission was sought from the participants. To obtain consent, each respondent was informed of the study's overall purpose at the outset. The information was gathered through the above-mentioned questionnaires from respondents who were spontaneous and enthusiastic about the study. The responders were also informed that any information they provided would be kept private. They were given written and spoken directions to clarify what they were supposed to accomplish and how to fill out all of the surveys. After the survey was completed, all of the respondents were thanked for their time.

Results and Discussion

The present study was intended to explore how people's judgments of forgiveness and relationship satisfaction influenced their sentiments of gratitude. Pearson product moment correlation and multiple regression analysis were used to analyze the data. The results are provided in the tables below.

Table 2. Correlations among perceived forgiveness, relationship satisfaction and   gratitude.

Variables	1	2	3
1. Forgiveness	-		
2. Relationship Satisfaction	.231**	-	
3. Gratitude	.331**	.433**	-

*** $p < .01$, N = 202*

Table 2 shows that respondents' feelings of thankfulness were significantly connected with perceived forgiveness ($r = .331$, $p < .01$) and relationship satisfaction ($r = .433$, $p < .01$). There was also an inter-correlation between two independent variables, perceived forgiveness and relationship satisfaction ($r = .231$, $p < .01$), according to the findings. These outcomes are in line with earlier studies as well (Diener and Tay, 2017; Braithwaite *et al*. 2011; Fincham, 2009; Peterson and Seligman, 2004; Rusbult and Buunk, 1993). Many things can evoke positive feelings of gratitude or appreciation, which can lead to a good and joyful interpersonal connection. The ability to forgive one's spouse or love partner enhances relationship satisfaction and sense of gratitude among the individuals. The more a person's proclivity for forgiving, the happier he or she is in a romantic relationship and the more grateful he or she is.

A multiple regression was carried out to investigate whether forgiveness tendency and relationship satisfaction could significantly predict participants' sense of gratitude. Table 3 shows the average and standard deviation of the scores.

Table 3. Means and standard deviations of the scores for forgiveness, relationship satisfaction and respondents' sense of gratitude.

Variables	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Perceived Forgiveness	202	78.33	9.637
Relationship Satisfaction	202	27.46	7.156
Gratitude	202	30.75	4.808

According to table 3, the mean scores for forgiveness, relationship satisfaction, and gratitude were 78.33, 27.46, and 30.75, respectively.

Table 4. Results of multiple regression of forgiveness and relationship satisfaction.

Independent Variables	β	t	p
Forgiveness	.244	3.846	.001
Relationship Satisfaction	.377	5.951	.001

Dependent variable: Sense of Gratitude

According to table 4, the partial standardized betas (β s) suggested that the two independent variables in the model, perceived forgiveness ($\beta = .244$, $p < .001$) and relationship satisfaction ($\beta = .377$, $p < .001$), were predictors of gratitude or feelings of thankfulness. The strongest predictor in this case was relationship satisfaction. Gratitude and forgiveness have been shown to influence relationship satisfaction in previous studies. However, the current data imply that forgiveness and relationship satisfaction can both predict thankfulness. The relationship between these three factors can be thought of as reciprocal: higher levels of forgiveness tendencies can boost relationship satisfaction, which in turn can boost feelings of gratitude.

Table 5. Selected statistic from regression of sense of gratitude on forgiveness (HFS) and relationship satisfaction (RS).

Variables	R	R^2	R^2 Change	p
RS	.433	.188	.188	.001
RS and HFS	.494	.244	.056	.001

Dependent variable: Sense of Gratitude

Note: R = Multiple correlation coefficient, R^2 = Variability

The R value in the above table 5 reveals the strength of the link between the dependent variable (sense of gratitude) and all of the independent or predictor variables (relationship satisfaction and forgiveness) together. Here, $R = .494$, which is a satisfactory connection. This indicates that the current model is a relatively acceptable predictor of the outcome. R^2 value indicated that the two variables jointly explained 24.4% of the variance in people's sense of gratitude. Here, relationship

satisfaction was the largest predictor of respondents' gratitude or feelings of thankfulness, accounting for 18.8% of the variance. Forgiveness was found to be another predictor of gratitude, accounting for 5.6 percent of the variation.

Table 6. Results of overall F-test for regression of gratitude on perceived forgiveness and relationship satisfaction.

Source of variance	SS	df	MS	F	p
Regression	1133.048	2	566.524		
Residual	3512.576	199	17.651	32.096	.001
Total	4645.624	201			

Predictors: Perceived Forgiveness and relationship satisfaction

Dependent variable: Gratitude

Note: *SS*= Sum of Square, *df* = Degree of Freedom, *MS*= Mean Square

Table 6 indicated that the model was significant. The significant F [F (2, 199) = 32.096, $p < .001$] for the model showed that the variation in gratitude was accounted for by joint linear influences of perceived forgiveness and relationship satisfaction. So, it can be said that these two variables were significant predictors of people's feelings of gratitude.

Conclusion

The current study has its own virtues in which it sheds light on areas that need more attention and investigation. Gratitude, forgiveness, and relationship satisfaction could all be feasible areas of intervention in handling of emotional disturbances, as well as taking enlightening initiatives aimed at improving mental health. The current study has a number of flaws that point to future research directions. The number of subjects involved in future studies should be increased. However, further research is needed to include additional variables like subjective well-being, life satisfaction, happiness, and so on that may influence people's feelings of thankfulness.

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