

Forgiveness among Adolescents in Goa: An Intervention Based Study

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Abstract: *Forgiveness is undoubtedly a healing virtue since it has a capacity to free an individual from being consumed by anger, check ones tendency toward cruelty, and opens doors to the restoration of broken relationships. A global increase in the tendency to forgive from adolescence to old age is note-worth-taking. Adolescents face a lot of issues that invite the role of forgiveness in their subjective wellbeing. The present study assessed the effects of an intervention programme on the virtue of Forgiveness. A sample of 40 adolescents (20 males- 20 females) were studied using a personal data sheet, Transgression- Related Interpersonal Motivations Scale and Trait Forgiveness Scale by Berry, Worthington, O'Connor, Parrott, & Wade (2005). A pre-test and post test administration was used. A t-test analysis indicated very highly significant differences in the sample group with regards to Forgiveness measures indicating the positive influences of the intervention module.*

Keywords: Forgiveness, Education, Adolescents

1. Introduction

Virtues have been defined as “the character strengths that make it possible for individuals to pursue their goals and ideals and to flourish as human beings” (Fowers, 2005, p. 4). In other words, virtue is not simply an understanding of one’s character strengths, but the presence of behaviours which are congruent with these strengths. Fowers (2005) explains that “a virtuous life is a life well-lived as a whole, with a coherent, integrated set of aims, the strengths of character necessary to pursue those ends, and the social bonds that give place a purpose to activities”. The key components worth remembering are 1) strengths of character, 2) flourishing, and 3) purpose.

Human beings and Adolescents in particular appear to have an innate proclivity to reciprocate negative interpersonal behaviour with more negative behaviour. When insulted by a parent or friend, forsaken by a lover, or attacked by an enemy, most people are motivated at some level to avoid or to seek revenge against the transgressor. The tendency to retaliate or seek retribution after being insulted or victimized is deeply ingrained in the biological, psychological, and cultural levels of human nature.

Interpersonal offenses frequently mar relationships. Theorists have argued that the responses victims adopt toward their offenders have ramifications not only for their cognition, but also for their emotion, physiology, and health.

Forgiveness is defined as “a process that leads to the reduction of unforgiveness (bitterness, anger, etc.) and the promotion of positive regard (love, compassion, or simply sympathy and pity) for the offender” (Wade & Worthington, 2005, p.160). Identified as a warmth-based virtue, one can recognize forgiveness as distinct from its conscientiousness-based counterpart, reconciliation, which is a social behaviour rather than an internal process.

Research in forgiveness has developed exponentially in recent years, and there have been about a dozen interventions researched and published over the last twenty years (Wade, Worthington, & Meyer, 2005). A meta-analysis conducted by Wade et. al. (2005) revealed that these interventions usually emphasize the following: defining forgiveness, helping clients to remember the hurt of the transgression, building empathy toward the offender, helping clients to achieve this empathy by identifying their own past offenses, and encouraging commitment to forgive the offender. A more recent meta-analysis (Hoyt, Wade, & Worthington, 2011) suggested the utility of many such interventions, but Worthington’s REACH intervention (2003) was one of two that stood out as a major player in the field of forgiveness interventions. Thus, we based our forgiveness intervention workbook on the REACH intervention.

Enright, R. D., & Fitzgibbons, R. P. (2000) in their book, *Helping clients forgive: An empirical guide for resolving anger and restoring hope* have synthesized over 20 years of research in forgiveness. The authors explain the process of forgiveness in psychotherapy in a way that can be applied by clinicians regardless of their theoretical orientation.

The present study aims at determining the various positive interventions that can foster and nurture Forgiveness among adolescents today.

Objectives of the study

To investigate whether workbook-based interventions promote Forgiveness.

Hypothesis

Workbook-based interventions aimed at promoting virtues will promote virtue namely Forgiveness (TRIM, TFS)

Participants

Purposive sampling method was employed and 40 adolescents (20 males and 20 females) were selected from the colleges of Goa.

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Tools:

Personal data sheet including the socio-demographic information of the participants.

TRIM Transgression- Related Interpersonal Motivations. The test consists of 18 items. It contains 4 dimensions, Revenge, Benevolence, Avoidance and Conciliation. The items are rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 strongly disagree to 5 strongly agree).

TFS Trait Forgiveness Scale (Berry, Worthington, O'Connor, Parrott, & Wade, 2005). To complete the TFS, participants score ten Likert-scaled items relating to their likelihood to forgive.

A **Self directed learning workbook** titled, *The Path to Positivity: Six practical sections for Becoming a More Forgiving person* by Caroline Lavelock and Everett Worthington was used.

Procedure

This research was executed in two phases. In the First phase, the scales were administered on the sample selected and the participants' conviction to be part of the study was ensured. In the Second Phase, the participants were administered a pre-test (TRIM and TFS scales). Further, the intervention workbook was provided with due guidance by the researcher. After the completion of the interventions, the scales were re-administered as a post test to study the impact of the intervention.

Statistical Technique

A t-test assessing significant differences in the sample group.

2. Results and Discussion

Workbook-based interventions aimed at promoting virtues will promote virtues namely Forgiveness (*Trait Forgiveness, Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations*) among the forgiveness group.

Table 1.1: Mean, Standard Deviation and t-Value scores of the Forgiveness group

Scales	N	Mean	SD	t-Value	
TFS (P)	Pre-test	40	43.48	5.70	2.84**
	Post-test	40	47.96	9.61	
TFS (N)	Pre-test	40	59.33	4.60	5.69***
	Post-test	40	50.90	9.53	
Avoidance TRIM	Pre-test	40	57.98	5.91	3.73***
	Post-test	40	51.55	10.53	
Revenge TRIM	Pre-test	40	56.06	9.80	3.13*
	Post-test	40	50.29	12.80	
Benevolence TRIM	Pre-test	40	101.98	10.48	21.40***
	Post-test	40	54.09	10.06	
Conciliation TRIM	Pre-test	40	57.53	7.27	2.84**
	Post-test	40	52.60	9.51	

*** P<0.001: Very Highly Significant

** P<0.01: Highly Significant

* P<0.05: Significant

Note: **TFS (P)** = *Trait Forgiveness Scale Positive*, **TFS (N)** = *Trait Forgiveness Scale Negative*, **TRIM** = *Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations*.

The observation of Table No. 1.1 reveals that for Trait Forgiveness scale (P) the mean scores for pretest and post test were 43.48 and 47.96 respectively with a corresponding SD of 5.70 and 9.61 respectively. The t-value was computed to be 2.84 and is highly significant (P<0.01). The performances of the post test as indicated in the table above have shown a marked improvement. This confirms the impact that the Forgiveness intervention has had on the adolescents' Forgiveness scores. The various exercises in the text of the Intervention modules have made a positive impact leading the subjects to be more forgiving than their previous state. In the present study, the forgiveness intervention was used as a tool for the victim to utilize in order to reduce excessive or chronic anger and psychological distress related to any offender.

For TFS (N) the mean scores for pretest and post test were 59.33 and 50.90 respectively with a corresponding SD of 4.60 and 9.53 respectively. The t-value was computed to be 5.69 and is very highly significant (P<0.001). The performances of the post test as indicated in the table above have shown a marked depletion in the scores. This Intervention module had an impact on the subjects making them more forgiving and less on holding grudges.

For *TRIM*, in the dimension of *Avoidance*, the mean scores for pretest and post test were 57.98 and 51.55 respectively with a corresponding SD of 5.91 and 10.53 respectively. The t-value was computed to be 3.73 and is very highly significant (P<0.001). The Post test scores reveal a marked change in the attitudes of the subjects as a decrease in the avoiding behaviour towards the transgressor is experienced and reported by the subjects through the scale.

For *TRIM*, in the dimension of *Revenge*, the mean scores for pretest and post test were 56.06 and 50.29 respectively with a corresponding SD of 9.80 and 12.80 respectively. The t-value was computed to be 3.13 and is significant (P<0.05). This significant difference is felt because the intervention workbook has reduced the tendency and feelings of seeking revenge over the transgressor. The Subjects felt little need for revenge to feel better after a transgression.

For *TRIM*, in the dimension of *Benevolence*, the mean scores for pretest and post test were 101.98 and 54.09 respectively with a corresponding SD of 10.48 and 10.06 respectively. The t-value was computed to be 21.40 and is very highly significant (P<0.001). Although the beneficial effects of forgiveness for one's well being are well documented, the mechanisms through which these effects occur are largely unknown. According to Fincham, Hall & Beach, 2006, Benevolence involves the presence of conciliatory thoughts, feelings, motivations and behaviours towards the offender towards whom the victim shows an attitude of goodwill.

For *TRIM*, in the dimension of *Conciliation*, the mean scores for pretest and post test were 57.53 and 52.60 respectively with a corresponding SD of 7.27 and 9.51 respectively. The t-value was computed to be 2.84 and is highly significant (P<0.01). The observation in the present study that conciliation reduced post intervention indicates the importance to help adolescents understand oneself and to

help them to talk about negative emotions and hurtful emotional experiences.

As indicated in the above findings, the virtue of Forgiveness among the adolescents in the present study was further enhanced while their unforgiving nature reduced as an effect of the work book based interventions.

3. Conclusion

The hypothesis that Workbook-based interventions aimed at promoting virtues will promote virtues namely Forgiveness (*Trait Forgiveness, Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations*) among the forgiveness group is accepted.

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