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## The relationship between self-forgiveness and human flourishing: Inferring the underlying psychological mechanisms

**Abstract:** The study aims to examine the role of Self-Forgiveness in shaping the Human Flourishing of the adults. Two hundred fourteen participants (18 to 30 years) comprising 100 males (Mean Age = 22.15(1.61)) and 114 females (Mean Age = 22.00(1.95)) were chosen for the study. Self-forgiveness (Mudgal & Tiwari, 2017a) and Mental Health Continuum-Short Form (Keyes, 2005) were used as the tools. Self-forgiveness comprises Realization & Reparation, Guilt, Attribution and overall self-forgiveness (sum of the first three) while Human Flourishing consists of Hedonic and Eudaimonic (Social plus Psychological) Well-Being. The aggregate of Hedonic and Eudaimonic is overall Human Flourishing. The findings suggested no gender differences in Self-Forgiveness of the participants. Conversely, gender differences were observed in all the dimensions of Human Flourishing in favour of males. Irrespective of gender, Realization & Reparation was positively correlated with Hedonic, Social, Psychological and Eudaimonic Well-Being as well as Human Flourishing except for Guilt and Attribution that showed small positive or negative correlations. Irrespective of gender, Overall Self-Forgiveness correlated positively with all the dimensions of Flourishing. Gender and Realization & Reparation emerged as the significant predictors accounting for significant variance in all the dimensions of Flourishing while Guilt and Attribution did not. The findings suggested that remorse, easy acceptance of wrongdoing, repairing the relationship with self and others, ability to minimize negative emotions towards self, monitoring others' positive behaviours and acknowledgements of valued and close relationships were the psychological mechanisms that may underlie the predictive strengths of self-forgiveness in regulating flourishing.

**Keywords:** self-forgiveness, realization & reparation, guilt, attribution, hedonic well-being, eudaimonic well-being, human, flourishing.

### Introduction

The scientific study of forgiveness has a recent origin. Many positive life outcomes have been suggested to be closely linked with forgiveness. The researchers have reported it to lower resentment and to improve positive strengths that include benevolence, compassion and love towards transgressors (Thompson et al., 2005; Worthington, 2001). Moreover, forgiveness improves relationships with self and others (McCullough, 2008) and health (Lawler et al., 2003; Toussaint, Worthington, & Williams, 2015; Worthington & Scherer, 2004). Forgiveness has also been observed to contribute to the clinical intervention aimed at lowering interpersonal and emotional problems on one hand and promoting well-being on the other (Baskin & Enright, 2004). The implications of the study of

forgiveness span from intrapersonal, interpersonal and collective to organizational levels (Aquino, Tripp, & Bies, 2006; Noor, Brown, Gonzalez, Manzi, & Lewis, 2008). Many health benefits of professing forgiveness have been reported. For example, the forgiveness of self and others carries positive emotions that directly strengthen physical and psychological health by shaping perceptions, attributions and physiological process of people (Davis et al., 2015; Toussaint et al., 2015; Woodyatt, Worthington, Wenzel, & Griffin, 2017). Forgiveness has been assumed to involve decisional and emotional dimensions. The former reflects the behavioural intention that facilitates the attribution of forgiveness whereas the later helps to substitute negative emotions with positive ones associated with forgiveness (Worthington, Witvliet, Pietrini, & Miller, 2007). It has been observed that forgiveness has been

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linked with better treatment outcomes for persons suffering from chronic disease like HIV/AIDS (Mudgal & Tiwari, 2015). Forgiveness is associated with reparative attribute significant for promoting the quality of life of the individuals with Post Traumatic Stress Disorders (Currier, Drescher, Holland, Lisman, & Foy, 2016).

Interpersonal forgiveness occurs in the face of perceived wrongdoing of others while self-forgiveness takes place in the condition of one's wrong to others. It has been argued that self-forgiveness is more difficult to occur than interpersonal forgiveness. In self-forgiveness, perceived transgression may lead to self-defeating and ruminating thoughts as well as shame or guilt that, in turn, may generate negative emotionality, withdrawal, restlessness, lowered self-esteem, hopelessness and well-being (Pandey, Tiwari, Parihar, & Rai, 2019; Prabhakar et al., 2019; Tiwari, Pandey, et al., 2019). Although interpersonal forgiveness and self-forgiveness differ in their nature and mechanisms, they also have interdependence. Lack of self-forgiveness has more serious consequences for an individual than interpersonal unforgiveness. These likely have the opposite effect on others. For instance, lack of self-forgiveness may lead to poorer self-esteem and psychological well-being and may generate anxiety, suicide and depression, poor social relationships. On the other hand, the damage caused by lack of interpersonal forgiveness may be confined to decreased external positive interaction and adaptation (Tangney, Boone, & Dearing, 2005). Self-forgiveness has been suggested to be closely associated with the forgiveness of others (Prabhakar et al., 2019). It has been argued that forgiving oneself may facilitate forgiveness of others (Macaskill, Maltby, & Day, 2002; Mills, 1995; Snow, 1993). Self-forgiveness helps establish equanimity with the higher self where the aim is to achieve common humanity or transcendence (Prabhakar et al., 2019). As a part of one's self, self-forgiveness facilitates alignment with the higher self, familiarizes one with a multitude of rewards of forgiveness and makes one aware of the processes and experiences of forgiveness. In this way, self-forgiveness acts a pre-requisite condition for forgiveness of others. It is also in consonance with the Indian cultural ethos (Prabhakar et al., 2019).

Many benefits of self-forgiveness have been reported and initial findings regarding self-forgiveness for addicts have been encouraging. For example, Hanna (2012) has reported that self-forgiveness helped to answer the ambiguities of addictions and improved the subjective quality of life and well-being of ex-alcohol and other drug abusers in a longitudinal study using pre-treatment, post-treatment and four-month follow-up. In essence, self-forgiveness has shown its strength to extend correctional outcomes for substance abusers (Biron, 2007; Webb, Hirsch, & Toussaint, 2011). Some initial studies about the benefits of self-forgiveness have suggested it to be linked with a lower level of hostility, depression, anxiety and physical symptoms in college students (Maltby, Macaskill, & Day, 2001). Self-forgiveness has been reported to be associated positively with self-esteem, well-being, close-

-relationships, self-activity and social activity among female victims of domestic violence (Coates, 1996). Mental and physical health benefits, as well as flourishing and resilience, have been suggested to be closely related to self-forgiveness of individuals in the studies of recent past (Davis et al., 2015; Tuck & Anderson, 2014; Woodyatt et al., 2017). Likewise, self-forgiveness has been reported to lower depression and suicidal behaviour of College students and adults (Hirsch, Webb, & Jeglic, 2011; Nsamenang, Webb, Cukrowicz, & Hirsch, 2013).

Self-forgiveness is associated with physical and mental health, somatic symptoms and psychological distress that may mediate health behaviours, social support, interpersonal functioning, flourishing and resilience (Tuck & Anderson, 2014; Webb, Hirsch, Visser, & Brewer, 2013). Self-forgiveness may have many benefits relevant for understanding and improving intra-personal and interpersonal relationships. For example, the study of self-forgiveness has important usefulness for helping individuals in problematic relationships such as divorce and adjustment problems (Rohde-Brown & Rudestam, 2011). Self-forgiveness carries protective and strengthening attributes as it entails reparation, resilience, coping and enhanced self-acceptance (Cornock, 2005; Ingersoll-Dayton & Krause, 2005).

### Present Study

The foregoing discussion showed that most of the previous research efforts have been confined to the study of interpersonal forgiveness and its associated life outcomes. Self-forgiveness refers to a willingness to abandon self-resentment in the face of one's own acknowledged objective wrong while fostering compassion, generosity and love toward oneself (Enright, 1996). Self-forgiveness also involves motivational changes that help to avoid negative stimuli and decrease retaliation against the self (Hall & Fincham, 2005). A close perusal of the previous studies evinced that self-forgiveness has been associated with significant life outcomes and shows close links with age (Steiner, Allemand, & McCullough, 2011), gender (Chandra, 1996) and marital status (Fincham, Hall, & Beach, 2006). Many positive psychological constructs such as psychological well-being (Mauger et al., 1992), positive affect (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988), spirituality (McCullough, Pargament, & Thoresen, 2000), empathy (Hall & Fincham, 2005), hope (Snyder et al., 1991), gratitude (McCullough & Witvliet, 2002), optimism (Scheier, Carver, & Bridges, 1994), self-esteem (Al-Mabuk, Enright, & Cardis, 1995) and happiness (Joseph, Linley, Harwood, Lewis, & McCollam, 2004) have been suggested to be associated closely with self-forgiveness.

It has been argued that the understanding of nature and associated outcomes of self-forgiveness have been limited due to many reasons. One reason may be a lack of empirical theorizing that builds the ground for further empirical exploration. It was Hall and Fincham (2005) who first proposed a model of self-forgiveness based on the findings of interpersonal forgiveness. This model suggested that attributions and transgression severity play a key role in the

origin and development of self-forgiveness. The model (Hall & Fincham, 2005) has further suggested that guilt and conciliatory behaviours toward the victim may prompt self-forgiveness. In their modified model of self-forgiveness, they argued that transgression severity, guilt, conciliatory behaviours and perceived forgiveness may be sufficient for self-forgiveness to occur and to be practised (Hall & Fincham, 2008). This model of self-forgiveness was reported to be inadequate by Ranganadhan and Todorov (2010) who argued that guilt positively affects self-forgiveness by prompting both other-oriented empathy and conciliatory behaviour. The assumptions of Hall and Fincham' Model were again tested by McConnell, Dixon and Finch (2012) for the third time that suggested offence severity, guilt, conciliatory behaviours and perceived forgiveness from the victim account for self-forgiveness. These findings were integrated by McGaffin, Lyons and Deane (2013) who suggested guilt-proneness influences other-oriented empathy, conciliatory behaviours and acceptance that, in turn, may predict self-forgiveness.

A perusal of the above arguments showed that these models of self-forgiveness provide for transgression severity, shame, guilt, conciliatory behaviours and perceived forgiveness from the victims to be important for self-forgiveness. One common pitfall of these models was that they lacked empirical validation of their corollaries. Besides, they have their genesis in interpersonal forgiveness theorizing. Employing exploratory research design, Mudgal and Tiwari (2017a) have proposed a Three-Factor Model of Self-Forgiveness. These three factors/dimensions of Self-Forgiveness are 1) Realization & Reparation, 2) Guilt, and 3) Attribution. Realization & Reparation refer to the practice and realization of the acts contravening the social norms and unpredictability of the moment that facilitate moving severe guilt out, acceptance of wrongdoings, feel sorrow and decision to rebuild a positive relationship with the victim. Guilt denotes a negative emotional state that is created after an individual accepts the responsibilities of his/her acts, reflects unsolicited desires to bear the consequences and remains prepared to apologize at the appropriate occasion. Attribution represents the understanding of the causes and consequences of wrongdoings towards oneself and others in the light of ethical concerns and self-criticism. This model of self-forgiveness resulted in the development of a new scale of self-forgiveness that was Well-validated with the scores of general health and quality of life on Indian adult population (Mudgal & Tiwari, 2017b, 2017c).

A meta-analytic study of gender differences has been carried out by Miller, Worthington and McDaniel (2008) that reported gender differences in favour of females. These researchers have argued for a multitude of reasons behind gender differences in forgiveness. For example, the method of studying forgiveness, dispositional qualities (McCullough et al., 1998), differences in affective traits (Bettencourt & Miller, 1996), attachment style (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991), orientations to either justice-based (Kohlberg & Kohlberg, 1984) or warmth-based morality (Gilligan, 1994), situational factors and religious orientations (Freese, 2004) are some of the suggested

causes of gender differences in forgiveness. The findings showed that females are more forgiving than males. These studies have almost all involved interpersonal forgiveness and there is no systematic study of gender differences in self-forgiveness (Miller et al., 2008).

Miller et al. (2008) have argued further that culture is an important factor that may cause gender differences in forgiveness. For example, people in collectivistic societies are motivated to promote and maintain group harmony (Hook, Worthington, & Utsey, 2009) whereas people from individualistic societies are inclined towards the pursuit of personal peace. The cultural value-orientations may induce gender differences (Gaines et al., 1997) that, in turn, may lead to gender differences in forgiveness (Sandage & Williamson, 2005). For example, it has been observed in a study that Japanese participants paid more attention to the relationship with the transgressor while American counterparts paid more attention to the perceived controllability of the offence (Takaku, Weiner, & Ohbuchi, 2001). Moreover, the Japanese viewed transgressions as violations of norms and roles while Americans viewed forgiveness as violations of justice (Takaku et al., 2001). Thus, the conclusions drawn from interpersonal forgiveness cannot be generalized to understand self-forgiveness that differs in nature, origin and mechanisms from interpersonal forgiveness. Kmieciak (2009) has reported that males have higher levels of state forgiveness than women while no sex differences were found in trait forgiveness. It was argued that it may also be due to the higher empathy in men than women. Moreover, some studies have reported no gender differences in forgiveness (Macaskill et al., 2002; Toussaint & Webb, 2005). Unlike traditional sex roles that view males to be more aggressive and vengeful than females, the equal socialization of values may facilitate higher forgiveness in males. Miller and Worthington (2010) have reported that males are more forgiving in close relationships.

Roothman, Kirsten and Wissing (2003) have reported male participants to exhibit higher scores on physical self-concept, positive thought, constructive thinking, cognitive flexibility, self-concept and hardiness whereas the female participants evinced better performance on the expression of affect, somatic symptoms and religious well-being. It has been argued that males have higher self-reported levels of ego and cognitive strength, whereas females portray themselves as stronger in social, emotional and spiritual aspects (Bond, Kwan, & Li, 2000; Crose, Nicholas, Gobble, & Frank, 1992). The gender differences in well-being may reflect patterns of differences in social norms and role requirements regarding being a male or a female which are encouraged by societal expectations (Morin & Rosenfeld, 1998) and outdated beliefs regarding sex roles and stereotypes (Felder, Felder, Mauney, Hamrin, & Dietz, 1995). Thus, due to gender-related social status (Crose et al., 1992) and resources and responses (Altmaier, 1995; Verma & Tiwari, 2017), the males have been observed to show higher flourishing than females. Moreover, due to higher incomes, employment and authority ascribed to males, they may show higher scores on well-being measures as compared to females (Inglehart, 2002).

Thus, it is explicit that the construct of self-forgiveness lacks empirical theorizing in spite of its initial predictive and promotive strengths for many sorts of positive life outcomes. To fill this gap, the present study was planned to understand and establish the predictive strengths of the newly developed empirical model of self-forgiveness and to validate the self-forgiveness scale originated from this model in Indian setting with the objective to prompt the future researchers for the further exploration and verification of the findings. In this background, the study aimed to examine the predictive strengths of self-forgiveness for Hedonic well-being, Social Well-Being, Psychological Well-being, Eudaimonic Well-Being and Human Flourishing of the male and the female participants. In essence, the study endeavoured to understand the underlying mechanisms of Self-Forgiveness in shaping Human Flourishing with its Hedonic and Eudaimonic dimensions. The measure of Self-forgiveness comprises Realization & Reparation, Guilt, Attribution and overall self-forgiveness (the aggregate of the first three). Likewise, Human Flourishing consists of two components: 1) Hedonic and 2) Eudaimonic (Social + Psychological Well-Being) Well-Being. The aggregate of Hedonic and Eudaimonic is overall Human Flourishing.

### Objectives

- (1) To understand gender differences in Self-Forgiveness and Hedonic Well-Being, Social Well-Being, Psychological Well-Being, Eudaimonic Well-Being and Human Flourishing of the participants,
- (2) To understand the nature of association among the scores of Realization & Reparation, Guilt, Attribution and Overall Self-Forgiveness and the scores of Hedonic Well-Being, Social Well-Being, Psychological Well-Being, Eudaimonic Well-Being and Human Flourishing of the participants, and
- (3) To partial out, the variance accounted for by gender, Realization & Reparation, Guilt and Attribution in Hedonic Well-Being, Social Well-Being, Psychological Well-Being, Eudaimonic Well-Being and Human Flourishing of the participants.

### Hypotheses

The following hypotheses have been framed to be tested through the findings of the present study:

- (1) The male participants will show higher mean scores on the various subscales of Self-Forgiveness and Human Flourishing as compared to the females.
- (2) The scores of Realization & Reparation, Attribution and Overall Self-Forgiveness will show positive correlations with the scores of Hedonic Well-Being, Social Well-Being, Psychological Well-Being, Eudaimonic Well-Being and Human Flourishing of the participants. However, negative correlations will be observed among the scores of Guilt and the criterion measures.
- (3) Realization & Reparation and Attribution will account for significant variability in the scores of

Hedonic Well-Being, Social Well-Being, Psychological Well-Being, Eudaimonic Well-Being and Human Flourishing of the participants whereas Guilt will not contribute for these measures.

### Methods and Procedure

The following are the details of the basic features of the methodology employed in the study to collect, process and analyze the data:

#### Research Design

A correlational research design was employed that involved choosing the standard psychometric tools and taking measures of the intended variables independently.

#### Sample

The study used a convenient sampling method to choose the participants. Initially, three hundred participants with an equal number of males and females attending undergraduate and postgraduate programmes from the Schools of studies of Humanities and Social Sciences, Languages, Science, Engineering and Technology, Commerce and Law attending Dr. Harisingh Gour Vishwavidyalaya (University), Sagar, Madhya Pradesh, India, were chosen. Majority of the participants belonged to middle socioeconomic status. All the participants were fluent in Hindi and English languages although their local dialect was Bundelkhandi. The religious affiliations of the participants were diverse. Majority of them were Hindu (63.12%) while the rest were Muslim (17.89%), Jain (15.61%) and Christian (3.38%). After screening the outliers with SPSS, the data of only 100 males age ranging from 18 years to 25 years (Mean Age = 22.15, SD = 1.61) and 114 females age spanning from 19 years to 30 years (Mean Age = 22.00, SD = 1.95) were used for final analysis. The data were collected in the classroom setting on a voluntary basis with the due permission from the competent authority. Yet, due to other academic activities, a sizable number of the participants (86) could not have paid desirable attention to the wordings of the items of the scales. One part of the data was collected just a few days before the end semester examinations. This was evident as some of them reported their significant pre-occupation in studies due to the closer dates of forthcoming examinations. Due to examination anxiety and involvement in their studies, the participants could not have devoted themselves properly to respond to the items of the scales. This might be a reason behind the unusual greater number of outliers in the present study. The screening of the outliers was done through SPSS V25 as per the method suggested by Donald (2016).

#### Psychometric Tools

The following psychometric tools were used in the study for data collection:

##### *Self-forgiveness Scale*

The study employed the Self-Forgiveness Scale developed by Mudgal and Tiwari (2017a) to measure the



self-forgiveness of the participants. The scale consists of 30 items with seven-point scale (1 – very strongly disagree, 2 – strongly disagree, 3 – somewhat disagree, 4 – neutral, 5 – somewhat agree, 6 – strongly agree, 7 – very strongly agree). The scale contends to measure three dimensions of self-forgiveness namely Realization & Reparation, Guilt and Attribution with the help of 19 items, 6 items and 5 items for each component, respectively. The aggregate of the scores of these three subscales of Self-Forgiveness Scale represents overall self-forgiveness of the participants. The reliability coefficients of Self-Forgiveness Scale (Mudgal & Tiwari, 2017a) were estimated by computing Cronbach Alpha which has been found to be 0.90, 0.70, 0.62 and 0.77 for the first, second, third components of self-forgiveness and the overall scale, respectively. Its validity was estimated by computing correlation between the scores of this scale and overall quality of life component of The World Health Organization Quality of Life Instrument, Short Form (World Health Organization, 1996) that was 0.261. The coefficients of Cronbach Alpha for the scores of the present sample on Realization & Reparation, Guilt, Attribution and Overall Self-Forgiveness scale were estimated to be 0.927, 0.642, 0.600 and 0.858, respectively.

#### *Mental Health Continuum-Short Form (MHC-SF)*

Human Flourishing was measured using the Mental Health Continuum-Short Form (Keyes, 2005). The scale is based on the model of flourishing having theoretical origin from three sources: studies on emotional well-being (Diener, Suh, Lucas, & Smith, 1999), studies on hedonic (subjective or emotional) well-being and eudaimonic (psychological) well-being (Ryff, 1989) and studies on social well-being (Keyes, 1998). The scale consists of 14 items. Each item is scored according to respondents' experiences over the last month on a 6-point Likert scale ('never', 'once or twice', 'about once a week', '2 or 3 times a week', 'almost every day', or 'every day'). Three items represent Emotional Well-Being (Hedonic Well-Being), six items represent Psychological Well-Being and five items represent Social Well-Being. The aggregate of Social and Psychological Well-Being measures of the scale represents Eudaimonic Well-Being. It has been reported that internal consistency reliability for each of the three sets of measures-Emotional, Psychological, and Social Well-Being in the MHC short and long forms have been more than 0.80 (Keyes, 2005). The Cronbach Alpha for the scores of the participants of the present study on Hedonic, Social, Psychological and Eudaimonic dimensions of well-being were estimated to be 0.817, 0.710, 0.709 and 0.801, respectively. For the scores of the participants on the Overall Human Flourishing measure, the Cronbach Alpha was computed to be 0.848.

#### **Procedure**

After setting the objectives of the study, the tools were procured. The Mental Health Continuum Scale was originally available in English. As a majority of the participants were native speakers of the Hindi language,

the scale was first translated in Hindi followed by a back-translation in English by three experts fluent in both the languages. Then, the proposal was submitted to the Ethics Committee of the University for its approval. These preparations led to select the participants for the submission of their written consent to take part in the study. The data were started to be collected after debriefing the goals of the study. For the sake of convenience and accuracy, the whole sample was divided into 20-25 groups. The first and third authors collected the data. Various scales were administered and the scoring was carried out as per the guidelines depicted in their manuals.

#### **Data Analyses Plan**

The obtained raw scores were arranged as per the requirements of the statistical tools proposed to be employed in the study. As the task of data collection was over, the same were treated with the help of SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) 25 version, a software programme to analyse the data. The mean, standard deviations, coefficient of correlation and hierarchical regression analysis were computed with the help of SPSS. In this study, self-forgiveness with its four components (Realization & Reparation, Guilt, Attribution and overall self-forgiveness) were treated as independent variable while human flourishing was employed as a dependent variable that comprised of Emotional Well-Being (Hedonic Well-Being), Psychological Well-Being, Social Well-Being, Eudaimonic Well-Being (the aggregate of Social and Psychological Well-Being) and overall human flourishing (the aggregate of Hedonic Well-Being and Eudaimonic Well-Being).

## **Results**

The results have been presented in two sections. In the first section, preliminary analyses of mean differences and coefficients of correlation have been presented whereas the second section comprises of hierarchical regression analyses.

#### **Preliminary Analyses**

To understand the gender differences in Realization & Reparation, Guilt, Attribution (components of Self-Forgiveness), Hedonic Well-Being, Social Well-Being, Psychological Well-Being, Eudaimonic Well-Being (combined scores of Social and Psychological Well-Being) and Human Flourishing (combined scores of Hedonic, Social and Psychological Well-Being), mean scores and standard deviations (SDs) were computed the details of which have been presented in Table 1. Moreover, the coefficient of correlation was also carried out to explicate the nature and extent of association among the various measures (see Table 2).

It was evident that there were no gender differences in Realization & Reparation ( $d = .12$ ), Guilt ( $d = .09$ ), Attribution ( $d = .20$ ) and Overall Self-Forgiveness ( $d = .12$ ) of the participants. Accordingly, the effect sizes of these mean differences are small. It has been suggested

**Table 1. Mean scores, SDs and t values of Realization & Reparation, Guilt, Attribution, Overall Self-Forgiveness and the various subscales of the Human Flourishing of the male (N = 100) and the female (N = 114) participants**

S. No.	Measures	Gender	Mean	SD	t	df	p	Cohen's d
<b>A. Self-forgiveness</b>								
1.	Overall Self-forgiveness	Male	284.68	25.37	0.88	212	.381	0.12
		Female	281.58	26.17				
		Total	283.03	25.79				
1a.	Realization & Reparation	Male	110.35	13.03	0.84	212	.400	0.12
		Female	108.86	12.77				
		Total	109.56	12.88				
1b.	Guilt	Male	19.49	5.26	0.65	212	.514	0.09
		Female	19.96	5.17				
		Total	19.74	5.20				
1c.	Attribution	Male	25.00	5.24	1.49	212	.139	0.20
		Female	23.95	5.11				
		Total	24.44	5.19				
<b>B. Human Flourishing</b>								
2.	Overall Human Flourishing	Male	81.80	13.30	4.02	212	.001	0.56
		Female	73.08	17.75				
		Total	77.15	16.38				
2a.	Hedonic Well-being	Male	12.49	2.10	2.84	212	.005	0.39
		Female	11.46	3.07				
		Total	11.94	2.71				
2b.	Eudaimonic Well-being	Male	56.82	11.37	3.86	212	.001	0.53
		Female	50.17	13.58				
		Total	53.28	12.99				
2b (i).	Social Well-being	Male	16.84	4.67	4.22	212	.001	0.58
		Female	13.87	5.53				
		Total	15.26	5.35				
2b (ii).	Psychological Well-being	Male	23.14	3.60	1.29	212	.198	0.18
		Female	22.43	4.35				
		Total	22.76	4.02				

that *d* values of 0.10, 0.30 and 0.50 indicated low, medium and large effect size (Cohen, 1988, 1992). Contrarily, the male participants achieved higher mean scores on Hedonic Well-Being as compared to their female counterparts

$t(212) = 2.84, p \leq .005, CI.95 .32-1.75$ . Cohen's effect size value ( $d = .39$ ) suggested approximately a moderate practical significance (Cohen, 1988, 1992). Likewise, the males also evinced significantly higher mean score on

Social Well-Being in comparison to the females  $t(212) = 4.22, p \leq .001, CI.95 1.58-4.36$ . Cohen's effect size value ( $d = .58$ ) indicated a moderate to high practical significance (see Table 1).

Moreover, the males again showed a significantly higher mean score on Eudaimonic Well-Being in comparison to the females  $t(212) = 3.86, p \leq .001, CI.95 3.25-10.06$ . Cohen's  $d$  for effect size was 0.53 that evinced a large practical significance. Lastly, the males exhibited to achieve significantly higher mean score on Human Flourishing in comparison to the females  $t(212) = 4.02, p \leq .001, CI.95 4.45-12.99$ . Cohen's  $d$  for effect size was .56 that showed a large practical significance. Conversely, no gender difference was recorded between the mean scores of the males and females on the Psychological Well-Being measure. The effect size of the difference ( $d$ ) was .18 that shows a small effect size (see Table 1).

Table 2 shows that the effect sizes of the correlations among the various components of the Self-forgiveness scales ranged from NS, small to medium. Realization & Reparation demonstrated significant positive correla-

tions with the scores of Hedonic Well-Being, Social Well-Being, Psychological Well-Being, Eudaimonic Well-Being and Human Flourishing of the male participants. The effect sizes of the correlations among Realization & Reparation and Flourishing measures were mostly medium. This was mostly true for the females except that the Realization & Reparation did not correlate significantly with Social Well-Being. This trend in results was also true for all the participants irrespective of their gender. Conversely, Guilt exhibited either low positive or negative non-significant correlations with the scores of Hedonic Well-Being, Social Well-Being, Psychological Well-Being, Eudaimonic Well-Being and Human Flourishing of both the gender (see Table 2). It demonstrated that the effect sizes of the correlations among Guilt and Flourishing measures were mostly NS and very small.

Attribution component of Self-Forgiveness showed significant positive correlations with Hedonic Well-Being, Social Well-Being, Psychological Well-Being, Eudaimonic Well-Being and Human Flourishing of the male participants. Conversely, Attribution did not correlate with

**Table 2. Coefficients of correlations among the scores of Age, Realization & Reparation (R & R), Guilt (G), Attribution (A), Overall Self-Forgiveness (R & R, G and A) and the various subscales of the Human Flourishing of the participants (N = 214)**

S. No.	Measures		Cronbach's $\alpha$	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.
1.	Age	-	-	1									
2.		R & R	-	.927	.040	1							
3.	Self-forgiveness	G	-	.642	.019	-.266**	1						
4.		A	-	.600	-.007	.097	-.163*	1					
5.		OSF (R & R +G+A)	-	.858	.046	.911**	.105	.232**	1				
6.	Human Flourishing	HWB	HWB	.817	.137*	.302**	-.070	.073	.288**	1			
7.		SWB	SWB	.710	.227**	.195**	-.058	.143*	.200**	.427**	1		
8.	Human Flourishing	EDWB	PWB	.709	.055	.345**	-.007	.096	.362**	.475**	.447**	1	
9.		OEDWB (SWB +PWB)	OEDWB (SWB +PWB)	.801	.204**	.267**	-.050	.147*	.277**	.499**	.961**	.677**	1
10.		OHF (HWB +OEDWB)	OHF (HWB +OEDWB)	.848	.207**	.312**	-.062	.141*	.315**	.726**	.904**	.694**	.958**

**Note 1.** R & R = Realization & Reparation, G = Guilt, A = Attribution, OSF = Overall Self-forgiveness, HWB = Hedonic Well-being, SWB = Social Well-being, PWB = Psychological Well-being, EDWB = Eudaimonic Well-being, OEDWB = Overall Eudaimonic Well-being, OHF = Overall Human Flourishing.

**Note 2.** \* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level,

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

any of the measures of Human Flourishing among the female participants. For the total sample, Attribution demonstrated significant positive correlations with Social Well-Being, Eudaimonic Well-Being and Human Flourishing of the participants while it showed non-significant positive correlations with Hedonic and Psychological Well-Being measures. In the case of the correlations among Attribution and Flourishing measures, the effect sizes ranged between NS, very small to small. Overall Self-Forgiveness showed significant positive correlations with all the dimensions of well-being, namely Hedonic Well-Being, Social Well-Being, Psychological Well-Being, Eudaimonic Well-Being and Human Flourishing of the participants. This was also true for male participants. In the case of the female participants, Overall Self-Forgiveness did not correlate significantly with Social Well-Being whereas all the other dimensions of Human Flourishing showed significant positive correlations with it (see Table 2). In essence, the effect sizes of the correlations among Overall Self-Forgiveness and Flourishing measures spanned between NS, very small, small to medium. The correlation between Realization & Reparation and Guilt was significant negative whereas it was non-significant positive with Attribution. Conversely, Realization & Reparation, and Overall Self-Forgiveness had

a significant positive correlation. The effect sizes of these correlations were small, very small and very large, respectively (see Table 2).

### Hierarchical Regression Analyses

The hierarchical regression was employed to partial out the relative contributions of Gender, age, Realization & Reparation, Guilt, and Attribution, the three dimensions of Self-Forgiveness measure used in this study, to account for variance in Hedonic Well-Being, Social Well-Being, Psychological Well-Being, Eudaimonic Well-Being and Human Flourishing of the participants. The demographic variables (gender and age) were entered at step 1 followed by Realization & Reparation, Guilt, and Attribution which were entered together in step 2 once demographics were controlled (see Table 3).

The results showed that demographic variables (gender and age) accounted for significant variance by contributing 5.00% in the scores of Hedonic Well-being ( $R^2 = .05$ ,  $F(2, 211) = 5.93$ ,  $p = .003$ ). Likewise, gender and age exhibited their significant contributions of 12.00% and 11.00% in Social Well-being ( $R^2 = .12$ ,  $F(2, 211) = 14.92$ ,  $p = .001$ ) and Human Flourishing ( $R^2 = .11$ ,  $F(2, 211) = 12.96$ ,  $p = .001$ ) as has been depicted in model 1, respectively. The results also demonstrated that

**Table 3. Results of Hierarchical Regression analyses using Gender, Age, Realization & Reparation, Guilt and Attribution as predictor variables and subscales of Human Flourishing as outcome variables (N = 214)**

Predictors	Human Flourishing and its components									
	HWB		Components of Eudaimonic Well-being						OHF (HWB & EDWB)	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
Gender	-.19**	-.17**	-.27**	-.25**	-.09	-.06	-.25	-.23**	-.26**	-.23**
Age	.13	.12	.23**	.21**	.05	.04	.19	.19**	.20**	.19**
R & R		.29**		.17**		.36**		.25**		.29**
G		.02		.01		.10		.04		.04
A		.03		.10		.07		.11		.10
R <sup>2</sup>	.05	.13	.12	.16	.01	.14	.10	.17	.11	.20
ΔR <sup>2</sup>	.05	.08	.12	.04	.01	.13	.10	.07	.11	.09
F for change in R <sup>2</sup>	5.93*	6.68**	14.92**	3.31*	1.11	10.28**	12.11**	6.08**	12.96**	8.12**

**Note 1.** All regression coefficients are standardized coefficients ( $\beta$ ).

**Note 2.** All standardized regression coefficients ( $\beta$ ) belong to final step of the analyses. df Model 1 = (2, 211) and Model 2 = (3, 208)

**Note 3.** R & R = Realization & Reparation, G = Guilt, A = Attribution, HWB = Hedonic Well-being, SWB = Social Well-being, PWB = Psychological Well-being, EDWB = Eudaimonic Well-being, OEDWB = Overall Eudaimonic Well-being, OHF = Overall Human Flourishing.

**Note 4.** \*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level,

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.



Realization & Reparation, Guilt and Attribution (the three factors of Self-Forgiveness) jointly contributed significantly to Hedonic Well-Being ( $R^2 = .14$ ,  $F(3, 208) = 6.68$ ,  $p = .001$ ), Social Well-Being ( $R^2 = .16$ ,  $F(3, 208) = 3.31$ ,  $p = .021$ ), Psychological Well-Being ( $R^2 = .14$ ,  $F(3, 208) = 10.28$ ,  $p = .001$ ), Eudaimonic Well-Being ( $R^2 = .18$ ,  $F(3, 208) = 6.08$ ,  $p = .001$ ) and Human Flourishing ( $R^2 = .20$ ,  $F(3, 208) = 8.12$ ,  $p = .001$ ) of the participants. Cohen's  $f^2$  for effect size of the combined contributions of Realization & Reparation, Guilt and Attribution (the three factors of Self-Forgiveness) for Hedonic Well-being, Social Well-being, Psychological Well-being, Eudaimonic Well-being and Human Flourishing were .11 ( $t = 4.31$ ,  $p \leq .001$ ,  $CI.95 .03-.09$ ), .05 ( $t = 2.50$ ,  $p \leq .013$ ,  $CI.95 .01-.12$ ), .15 ( $t = 5.38$ ,  $p \leq .001$ ,  $CI.95 .07-.15$ ), .10 ( $t = 3.77$ ,  $p \leq .001$ ,  $CI.95 .12-.38$ ) and .11 ( $t = 4.53$ ,  $p \leq .001$ ,  $CI.95 .21-.53$ ), respectively which reflected very small to small practical significance. The comparisons of standardized beta ( $\beta$ ) coefficients of the three factors of Self-Forgiveness showed that Realization & Reparation (0.29) has an upper hand in the total contribution of Self-Forgiveness to Hedonic Well-being measure as compared to Guilt (0.02) and Attribution (0.03). This trend of significant and bigger contribution of Realization & Reparation as compared to Guilt and Attribution in other measures of Human Flourishing was also observed (see Table 3).

It is also evident that the additions of Realization & Reparation, Guilt and Attribution (the three factors of Self-Forgiveness) at step 2 caused 0.08 unit significant change in Hedonic Well-being. Likewise, the additions of the three factors of Self-Forgiveness (Realization & Reparation, Guilt and Attribution) at step 2 contributed significant change of 0.04 unit, 0.13 unit, 0.07 and 0.09 unit (the standardized  $\beta$  coefficients) in the Social Well-Being, Psychological Well-Being, Eudaimonic Well-Being and Human Flourishing measures, respectively (see Table 3). Overall, Realization & Reparation emerged as the primary significant factor accounting for bigger variability in all the measures of Human Flourishing as evident in their relative  $\beta$  coefficients (see Table 3).

## Discussion

The findings of the present study suggested self-forgiveness to evince its significant relevance to understand the dynamics of the various dimensions of human flourishing. Moreover, gender also emerged as an important contributor to underscore dissimilar performance on the various dimensions of human flourishing. In essence, the findings showed that Realization & Reparation has a pivotal role in shaping and predicting Hedonic Well-Being, Social Well-Being, Psychological Well-Being, Eudaimonic Well-Being and Human Flourishing. Conversely, Guilt and Attribution did show their relevance to underscore the various dimensions of Human Flourishing.

### Gender, Self-Forgiveness and Human Flourishing

The findings suggested non-significant gender differences in Realization & Reparation, Guilt, Attribution

(three dimensions of self-forgiveness) and Overall Self-Forgiveness of the participants. No gender differences in Self-Forgiveness of the participants may be explained in terms of the very nature of self-forgiveness and socio-cultural factors. The experiences of self-forgiveness exist in the inner core of self that is not easily approachable through tangible and ordinary means. The individuals themselves are not very much aware of the cognitive, affective and behavioural markers of self-forgiveness. The unavailability of the experiences associated with self-forgiveness has been reported in qualitative studies of the children and adults (Ahirwar, Tiwari, & Rai, 2019; Mudgal & Tiwari, 2017a). These studies demonstrated that the participants could not understand the method to tap and report their self-forgiveness experiences expected to be communicated to the interviewer in the initial phases of the interviews. The participants also reported that they become slightly able to directly report the experiences associated with their self-forgiveness after a long and deliberated effort (Ahirwar et al., 2019). This may be one reason behind non-significant gender differences in self-forgiveness of the participants in the present study.

Gender differences are commonly reported in studies of forgiveness of others (Clemmons, 2018; Marigoudar & Kamble, 2014; Miller et al., 2008). We found none for self-forgiveness in this study. The possible reason behind no gender differences in self-forgiveness measure may be the similarities in the core features of self-forgiveness of the males and the females having their genesis in the internalizations of experiences arising out of equal opportunities in educational, socio-cultural, legal, socialization-related, parental expectations, informational and other treatments causing analogous self-forgiveness. The contradictory findings regarding gender differences in self-forgiveness have also been reported in many previous studies. Few researchers have suggested that females are more religious than men and thus, are more forgiving (Freese, 2004; Miller & Hoffmann, 1995). Some other researchers have argued that gender differences in forgiveness may be an artefact of methodological moderators (Miller et al., 2008). This is to bear in mind that these findings of gender differences are related to interpersonal forgiveness and may not be generalized to understand self-forgiveness.

Contrary to gender differences in self-forgiveness, gender differences on the various components of Human Flourishing have emerged in favour of the males except for Psychological Well-Being where gender difference did not surface. This may happen due to the fact that various dimensions of Human Flourishing such as Hedonic Well-Being, Social Well-Being and Psychological Well-Being have their genesis in socio-cultural and socialization patterns along with positive self-resources like self-forgiveness. In Indian society, gender differences in socialization, parental and social expectations, educational and other opportunities exist in subtle form even today (Ram, Strohschein, & Gaur, 2014). This dissimilar access to various social, emotional and organizational resources to the males and females may be assumed to cause gender

differences in the various subscales of human flourishing. These findings have been mirrored in a recent study that has reported gender differences in Psychological Well-Being due to differences in basic need satisfaction (autonomy, competence, relatedness and satisfaction) and social achievements of males and females (Gómez-Baya, Lucia-Casademunt, & Salinas-Pérez, 2018). The data of the study was collected from the 6th European Working Conditions Survey in 2015 by the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions from Bulgaria, Norway, Spain, and the UK.

### Self-Forgiveness and Human Flourishing

Irrespective of gender, Realization & Reparation was positively correlated with Hedonic Well-Being, Social Well-Being, Psychological Well-Being, Eudaimonic Well-Being and Human Flourishing of the participants. Guilt showed no relationship with the dimensions of human flourishing. Attribution showed positive relationships with Social Well-Being, Psychological Well-Being, Eudaimonic Well-Being and Human Flourishing but no relationship with Hedonic well-being of the males. Conversely, these measures showed no relationship for the females. Irrespective of gender, Overall Self-Forgiveness showed a positive relationship with all the dimensions of human flourishing. Contrary to what is said, Overall Self-Forgiveness did not correlate with the Social Well-Being of the females. The hierarchical regression analyses demonstrated that gender and age emerged as the significant predictors of Hedonic Well-Being, Social Well-Being, Eudaimonic Well-Being and Human Flourishing of the participants.

More importantly, the findings revealed that Realization & Reparation component of self-forgiveness significantly predicted all the dimensions of Human Flourishing accounting for 4.00% to 13.00% variance in the various dimensions of human flourishing. The Cohen's  $f^2$  for effect size of Realization & Reparation for predicting Hedonic Well-Being, Social Well-Being, Psychological Well-Being, Eudaimonic Well-Being and Human Flourishing were .11, .05, .15, .10 and .11 that reflected very small to small significance. Guilt and Attribution did not contribute to any of the dimensions of human flourishing. These findings partially supported Hypotheses 1, 2 and 3 framed to be tested through the findings of the study. Guilt exhibited significant negative correlation and Attribution showed a non-significant positive correlation with Realization & Reparation for the total sample. The hierarchical regression that involved stepwise entering of Realization & Reparation, Guilt and Attribution at step 2 showed that Guilt accounted for non-significant change ranging from .000 to .008 whereas Attribution accounted for change spanning from .001 to .011 in the various measures of Human Flourishing. Contrarily, Realization & Reparation accounted for significant variance in all the measures of Human Flourishing. The findings of correlation and regression analyses showed that Guilt and Attribution had little relationship to human flourishing.

A close perusal showed that Realization & Reparation involves feeling and easy acceptance of wrongdoing, assuming responsibility, repairing of relationship with self and others, tendency and ability to minimize negative emotions towards self, strong adherence to non-repetition of wrongdoing in future, monitoring positive behaviours of the transgressor, remorse, easy forgetting of past wrongdoings, easy forgiveness to others, acknowledgements of valued and close relationships, rational self-love, readiness to self-correction, readiness to seek forgiveness from others, explicit positive behaviours towards others, better understanding of physical and emotional consequences of non-forgiving others, efficient assessment of situations and moral strength. These attributes belong to flourishers. Thus, this might be the reason behind the positive role of Realization & Reparation for the various components of human flourishing.

A good number of previous studies have shown that self-forgiveness is positively associated with self-esteem (Leary, Terry, Batts Allen, & Tate, 2009; vanDellen, Campbell, Hoyle, & Bradfield, 2011). Self-forgiveness may exert its flourishing impacts by enhancing self-esteem. For example, forgiveness is valued in all societies and makes a person high in his eyes as it improves one's social standing. Self-esteem emerges out of social comparison in the context of achievement. In this sense, forgiving to oneself may be assumed to culminate in enhanced self-esteem and this, in turn, may have strengthened the various dimensions of the Human Flourishing of the participants in the present study.

The outcomes of interpersonal forgiveness can also be generalized to understand the outcomes of self-forgiveness. Interpersonal forgiveness is closely linked with self-forgiveness (Hall & Fincham, 2008) and interpersonal forgiveness has been observed to be positively related with well-being (Massengale, Choe, & Davis, 2017; Woodyatt et al., 2017). The findings of the previous studies explaining the direct role of self-forgiveness may also be used to understand its protective strengths and mechanisms impacting flourishing. A small number of studies have also been undertaken to understand the role of self-forgiveness in impacting positive life outcomes. They have shown that self-forgiveness is directly associated with positive aspects of human functioning namely self-esteem, well-being, close-relationships, self-activity and social activity (Coates, 1996). Self-forgiveness has been reported to play a causative role in close-relationships, emotion regulation (Rey & Extremera, 2016), self and social activities (Coates, 1996), reparation, resilience, coping and self-acceptance (Cornock, 2005; Tuck & Anderson, 2014), compassion and generosity (Enright, 1996), avoidance of negative stimuli and lowering of self-retaliation (Hall & Fincham, 2005), positive affect (Watson et al., 1988), spirituality (McCullough et al., 2000), empathy (Hall & Fincham, 2005), hope (Snyder et al., 1991), gratitude (McCullough et al., 2000) and optimism (Scheier et al., 1994). These positive aspects linked with self-forgiveness may be assumed to be working behind its protective and predictive strengths for the various dimensions of flourishing in the present study.

Some of the observations of this study may not be applicable to Western sample due to inner-directedness of Indian culture where more emphasis is on knowing 'thyself'.

### Summary and Conclusions

The findings of the study evinced no gender differences in self-forgiveness of the participants. Conversely, the male participants showed higher mean scores on all the dimensions of Human Flourishing in comparison to their female counterparts with no gender difference in Psychological Well-Being. Irrespective of gender, Realization & Reparation was positively correlated with Hedonic, Social, Psychological and Eudaimonic Well-Being along with Human Flourishing. Guilt did show either low positive or negative non-significant correlations with the various dimensions of Flourishing. Further, for men and for the total sample Attribution exhibited positive correlations with Social Well-Being, Eudaimonic Well-Being and Human Flourishing. Moreover, irrespective of gender, Overall Self-Forgiveness correlated positively with all the measures of Flourishing. Gender and Realization & Reparation emerged as the significant predictors accounting for significant variance in Hedonic, Social, Psychological and Eudaimonic Well-Being and Human Flourishing.

### Implications and Future Directions

The findings provided a small contribution to explicating the relationship between Self-Forgiveness and Human Flourishing. Moreover, the findings also carry theoretical and practical significance for future researchers and practitioners. The study of self-forgiveness is in its infancy. The future researchers may contribute to the field of self-forgiveness by further exploring its links with spirituality (Sharma, Tiwari, & Rai, 2019), general health (Mudgal & Tiwari, 2017b), positive body image (Jain & Tiwari, 2016), interdependent happiness (Raj, Tiwari, & Rai, 2019) and positive mental health (Tiwari, Rai, et al., 2019). Future researchers may advance the knowledge of self-forgiveness by further employing qualitative and mixed methods research designs. The intervention plans based on the findings of the present study may signify another contribution. Besides, cross-cultural verifications of these findings may constitute another dimension for future researchers. The findings may also be useful to develop intervention plans for the well-being of older people (Prabhakar et al., 2019).

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