

Relationship Between Forgiveness and Resilience Among Young Adults in Baguio City, Philippines

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Received: 26 Dec 2024	<p>Young adults are navigating a critical period of transition, marked by challenges that test their emotional resilience. In this journey, forgiveness plays a crucial role by helping them release offenses, personal mistakes, and uncontrollable circumstances, which strengthens their capacity to bounce back and thrive. This descriptive-correlational study examined the relationship between forgiveness and resilience among 388 young adult college students at the University of the Cordilleras in Baguio City, Philippines. The study also evaluated forgiveness levels among young adults across three dimensions (self, others, situations) and resilience across three aspects (mastery, relatedness, emotional reactivity). Data were collected through adopted questionnaires (Heartland Forgiveness Scale and Resilience and Resiliency Scale for Young Adults). The study found a weak positive correlation between forgiveness and resilience based on the computation of Pearson R, the value of 0.22, and with the p-value of <0.05, which suggests that as forgiveness levels increase, there is a slight tendency for resilience to also increase. This outcome highlights the complex nature of the relationship, with potential influences from factors like coping mechanisms and social support. The study contributes to understanding how forgiveness and resilience interact in young adults, emphasizing the importance of self-compassion and emotional regulation in fostering resilience.</p> <p>Keywords: Forgiveness, Resilience, Young Adult, Generation Z, Filipino.</p>
Revised: 17 Feb 2025	
Accepted: 26 Feb 2025	

INTRODUCTION

The evolution of forgiveness is to be considered as a generation transition from one philosophy to another [1]. The willingness to forgive tends to increase with age. This is because people develop throughout their lives and become more willing to compromise, tolerate others, and accept them for who they are [2]. As compared to the previous generations, younger generations exhibit a lesser inclination to forgiveness. It is stated that as individuals age and become increasingly aware of the constraints on their time, they prioritize regulating inner emotions rather than pursuing who is right or wrong [3]. Perspectives on forgiveness is affected by generational shifts, particularly in Generation Z, reveal distinctive challenges in emotional resilience and coping mechanisms. Generation Z is often seen as a group that has grown up in a generally safe and stable environment, with less conflict and a more stable economy. Even so, they are open about their willingness to forgive but also choose not to buy certain products linked to the offense which was fueled by social media contents [4].

The decline in forgiveness was accompanied by a decrease in resilience. A study has shown that Generation Z manifested a lower level of resilience than the previous generations [5]. A study has shown that Generation Z manifested a lower level of resilience than the previous generations [5]. Young adults may be less focused on positive emotions and more focused on other things, such as their careers or social status. This may make them less likely to forgive [2]. Generation Z respondents conveyed diminished personal confidence and self-esteem, coupled with discontent regarding their personal and professional spheres. There is still a gap in understanding why previous generations exhibit resilience in times of crisis and the present generation is starting to be exposed to dynamic, complex, rapidly changing environments, and unexpected challenges [1].

With these challenges laid down, forgiveness plays a crucial role in fostering resilience by transforming unforgiveness into a heightened sense of purpose and enhanced social connections following traumatic events [6]. It was seen that individuals who practice forgiveness tend to develop greater resilience, enabling them to manage expressions of anger more effectively [7]. This highlights the importance of incorporating forgiveness-based interventions into programs aimed at supporting the mental health and well-being of young adults. In academic and professional contexts, fostering forgiveness and resilience can create supportive environments and enhance personal growth [8]. Forgiveness in workplace conflicts reduces negative emotions and promotes harmony, particularly when positive relationships are maintained, leading to better work outcomes [9]. Resilience, acting as a mediator in coping and psychological adjustment, is essential for reducing burnout and adapting to change, especially in high-stress fields like palliative care [10].

1.1 Objectives of the Study

This study aims to clarify the relationship between forgiveness and resilience among young adults. Therefore, we set the following two specific objectives for this study:

- (1) To assess the level of forgiveness among young adults along with forgiveness to the self, forgiveness towards others, and forgiveness toward the situation
- (2) To assess the level of resilience among young adults along sense of mastery, sense of relatedness, and emotional reactivity
- (3) To investigate the relationship between forgiveness and resilience among young adults

1.2. Conceptual Framework

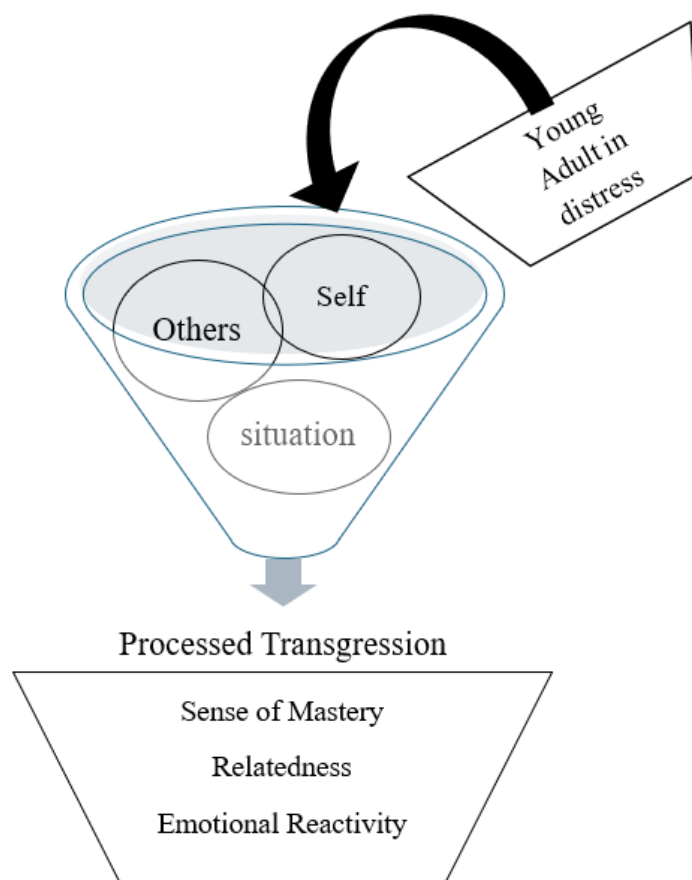


Figure 1 Research Framework

The research framework illustrates how young adults in distress can process transgressions to achieve self-forgiveness, fostering resilience through a sense of relatedness, mastery, and emotional regulation. As a result, those who develop resilience through this process are better equipped to handle similar situations in the future.

1.2.1 Dimensions of Forgiveness

Forgiveness is classified as what individuals release towards self, others, and situation [11]. Forgiveness of the self is seen as an emotion-focused mechanism of coping which involves the abandonment of the person's negative thoughts, feelings, and behavior by substituting them with a more positive one that will direct the individual to behaviors of compassion and love [12]. It is the willingness to release self-resentment when facing one's acknowledged mistakes, while nurturing compassion, generosity, and love toward oneself. This shift moves one from self-estrangement to a sense of inner harmony, freeing one from denial, guilt, and shame, and embracing the understanding that, as humans, we are naturally prone to making mistakes [13]. Transgressions may also be man-made trauma where exposure increases stress in an individual. Having the ability to forgive others is correlated with psychological healing and the lessening of the symptoms of anxiety and depression ([14]. Abandoning feelings of blame, condemnation, and revenge against transgressors are involved in the forgiveness of others. The act of letting go fosters feelings of compassion, generosity, and love for deserving individuals [13]. The last dimension of forgiveness is the acceptance that situations are beyond one's control. It correlates with having life satisfaction, less anxiety, depression, and anger. With this, individuals showing high levels of forgiveness of situations have higher and wealthier levels of psychological well-being [11]. The process of forgiveness involves the uncovering phase, work phase, and deepening phase. Going through the process allows the person to survive painful situations and Covid-19 is an example. The research found that the development of forgiveness involves gratitude, religion, self-compassion, empathy, and self-control [15].

1.2.2 Dimensions of Resilience

Prince-Embury developed a model called Three-Factor model of personal resilience which includes sense of mastery, sense of relatedness, and emotional reactivity which also serves as protective factor. It encompasses traits such as high self-confidence and the ability to perceive adversity as an opportunity for growth. It includes optimism about the future and confidence in one's ability to adapt to changing circumstances effectively, serving as a protective factor associated with greater resilience [16]. Sense of mastery is drawn from prior concepts of self-efficacy and self-competence, and influences individuals' beliefs about their capabilities to handle future challenges, impacting self-regulatory processes and resilience to stress [17]. Another dimension of resilience is sense of relatedness includes trust, support, comfort, and acceptance of diversity, emphasizing the importance of strong, consistent relationships with caregivers and other important figures in building resilience [16]. Sense of relatedness, comprising perceptions of support and social skills, is anticipated to correlate positively with resilience, as it aligns with sense of mastery; however, recent research suggests that this association may be weak or even adverse after controlling for the shared variance with sense of mastery [18]. The final aspect of resilience is emotional reactivity which refers to the threshold at which an individual regulates both external and internal stimuli, encompassing factors such as the level of emotional response, its intensity, and impulsiveness, which collectively reflect one's emotional responsiveness. It encompasses a person's self-perceived sensitivity and intensity of reaction, the duration required for emotional recovery following a triggering event, and the extent to which this affects daily functioning [16].

1.2.3 Dispositional Forgiveness as a Predictor of Psychological Resilience

Forgiveness is essential for personal growth and resilience, rather than merely an option. It enables individuals to move forward in life unburdened by emotional weight, fostering a sense of freedom [19]. By embracing forgiveness as a process centered on understanding and releasing negative feelings towards perceived wrongs, individuals can effectively reduce their distressing reactions to adverse experiences. Findings of a research propose that forgiveness is closely linked to resilience, indicating that the ability to forgive is rooted in recognizing the potential for positive outcomes to emerge from challenging circumstances [7]. This suggests that by acknowledging and accepting the possibility of positive change, individuals can cultivate resilience through their capacity to forgive. Another finding reinforces evidence of the substantial influence of forgiveness on psychological resilience [19], which also aligns with another findings [20] which observed that forgiveness acts as a protective mechanism, bolstering individuals'

capacity to cope with mental stressors effectively. A study [21] further indicates a robust correlation between forgiveness and mental well-being, emphasizing forgiveness as a pivotal element of human resilience crucial for sustaining overall health.

METHODS

2.1 Participants

In this study, the participants were 388 university students in the University of the Cordilleras aging 18-25 years old in Baguio City, Philippines. The study focused on young adults as participants as research shows that emotional intelligence and resilience have a positive correlation with young adults. This means that a higher level of emotional intelligence, and resilience can be manifested. Young adults are exposed to unrealistic standards which diminish happiness. Young adults also manifest a high level of maladaptive perfectionism and are also seen to be pessimists when faced with failure [22].

2.2 Measurements

In this study, a single questionnaire comprising two measures was administered: Heartland Forgiveness Scale (HFS: 18 questions) and Resiliency Scale for Young Adults (RSYA: 50 questions).

2.2.1. Heartland Forgiveness Scale (HFS)

The HFS has a validity of 0.89 and a reliability of 0.82 [23] and consists of three subscales and 18 items. These subscales collectively measure the level of forgiveness with regard to self, others, and situations. Participants were asked to respond to questions using a four-point scale, with “1” meaning “strongly disagree” and “4” meaning “strongly agree.” The score indicated the degree of agreement of participants with the statements.

2.2.2. Resiliency Scale for Young Adults (RSYA)

The second scale was used to evaluate the resilience of young adults with 50 items. The RSYA has a validity of 0.89 and a reliability of 0.84 [24] and consists of three subscales and 18 items. These subscales collectively measure the level of resilience with regard sense of mastery, sense of relatedness, and emotional regulation. Participants were asked to respond to questions using a four-point scale, with “1” meaning “strongly disagree” and “4” meaning “strongly agree.” The score indicated the degree of agreement of participants with the statements.

2.3 Procedure

The research study received approval from the ethics review committee of the University of the Cordilleras and institutional authorities, ensuring compliance with ethical standards. Necessary revisions were made following feedback. Permission was obtained to gather student data, and stratified sampling was used for fair representation of the population. Participants received clear information about the study, emphasizing voluntary participation and the right to withdraw without any repercussions. Written informed consent was secured, and questions were addressed. No personal, identifiable information was collected, protecting participant anonymity. Data were handled confidentially, analyzed using statistical software, and securely disposed of following the Data Privacy Act.

RESULTS

3.1 Demographics

Table 1 Profile of the Respondents

College Departments	f	%
Arts and Sciences	32	8%
Business Administration	23	6%

College Departments	f	%
Criminal Justice Education	63	16%
Engineering and Architecture	78	20%
Hotel Tourism and Management	30	8%
Information Technology Computer Science	42	11%
Nursing	31	8%
Accountancy	76	19%
Teacher Education	15	4%
Total	388	100

Table 1 represents the sample size which was determined using the Slovin formula to ensure a proportionate representation of each college. The focus on young adults in studies related to resilience, mental health, and emotional intelligence is driven by their vulnerability to mental health challenges, influenced by factors such as self-discrepancy, maladaptive perfectionism, and exposure to unrealistic standards [22][25].

3.2 Dimensions of Forgiveness in Young Adults

Table 2 Weighted Mean of Dimensions of Forgiveness

Dimension	Mean	Qualitative Interpretation	Rank
Forgiveness of Self	2.77	High	1
Forgiveness of Others	2.72	High	3
Forgiveness of Situations	2.76	High	2
Overall Weighted Mean	2.75	High	

Table 2 represents the weighted mean of the dimensions of forgiveness. Forgiving self has generated the highest mean (2.77) followed by forgiving of situations (2.76) and forgiving of others (2.72) with verbal description equivalent to “agree.” The overall mean is 2.75, indicating that the respondents can forgive mistakes of their wrongdoing, of others, and the circumstances. The level of self-forgiveness is high ($\bar{x}=2.77$). This means that the participants have the capacity for forgiveness and tend to engage in accepting apologies to regain balance [26]. Forgiveness of the situation also have a qualitative interpretation of “high” ($\bar{x}=2.76$). “With time I can be understanding of bad circumstances in my life”. The process of forgiving a situation often takes time, as understanding and interpreting what is happening allows us to anticipate and comprehend future events. In the context of a pandemic outbreak, people's interpretations of the crisis at one moment are influenced by a domain of generalized meanings already active from previous times [27]. Forgiveness ranked last where respondents agreed that they can forgive and understand others for the mistakes they had committed in due time ($\bar{x}=2.72$). This implies that the respondents' forgiveness is gradual rather than instantaneous. This reaction is supported by [28] who stated that people immediately experience negative feelings like hurt, anger, or frustration when they feel violated.

3.3 Dimensions of Resilience in Young Adults

Table 3 Weighted Mean of Dimensions of Resilience

Dimension	Mean	Level	Rank
Sense of Mastery	2.80	High	3

Sense of Relatedness	2.82	High	2
Emotional Reactivity	2.86	High	1
Overall Weighted Mean	2.83	High	

Table 3 represents the weighted mean of the dimensions of resilience. Emotional reactivity has generated the highest mean (2.86) followed by sense of relatedness (2.82) and sense of mastery (2.80) with verbal description equivalent to “agree.” The calculated mean of 2.83 in this study suggests a commendable level of resilience among young adults. This indicates that young adults have access to external resilience factors, including supportive relationships, organizational skills, and community resources, which serve as vital sources of strength and assistance in navigating challenges. These interpersonal resources, such as parental guidance and involvement in community organizations, play a crucial role in fostering their growth and well-being during difficult circumstances [29].

3.4. Correlation of Forgiveness and Resilience

Table 4 Correlation of the different dimensions of Forgiveness and Level of Resilience in three areas

Dimensions of Resilience			
Dimensions of Forgiveness	Mastery r (Sig.)	Relatedness r (Sig.)	Emotional Reactivity r (Sig.)
Self	.056	.201** (low)	.064
Others	.059	.320** (low)	.058
Situations	-.061	.185** (low)	-.066
Overall Correlation: .22** (Low/Weak Positive Correlation)			

Based on the computation of the Pearson R, the value of 0.22 was found to be significantly positive since the p-value is <0.05 which suggests that as forgiveness levels increase, there is a slight tendency for resilience to also increase. This means that the null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between forgiveness and resilience is rejected. However, it is to be noted that this correlation is weak, emphasizing that forgiveness and resilience, while positively related, do not demonstrate a strong linear connection. The subtle positive connection between forgiveness and resilience may have implications for the psychological well-being of individuals.

DISCUSSION

The study investigated the levels of resilience and forgiveness among young adults and explored the relationship between these variables. Findings indicate that young adults at the University of the Cordilleras tend to exhibit self-forgiveness more frequently than forgiveness of others or external circumstances. This form of forgiveness involves replacing negative self-perceptions with self-compassion, aligning with theories that emphasize letting go of self-resentment for greater inner peace [30][31]. In contrast, Generation Z shows lower levels of forgiveness towards others, potentially due to a pragmatic focus on career and social status, rather than emotional well-being [2]. Digital communication, particularly through low social presence media, undermines social connectedness by limiting face-to-face interactions and hindering the development of interpersonal skills due to prolonged reliance on virtual interactions [32]. Additionally, the rise of cancel culture on social media platforms like Twitter may further reduce forgiveness, as individuals are often judged harshly by public opinion rather than through traditional legal avenues by the masses even if not through traditional legal channels [33].

The study highlights a strong capacity for resilience among young adults, influenced by access to external factors such as supportive relationships, organizational skills, and community resources, which provide crucial assistance during challenging times [29]. High levels of emotional reactivity were observed, characterized by heightened sensitivity to internal and external stimuli, intense emotional responses, and impulsiveness. This sensitivity impacts daily functioning and suggests that emotional control significantly influences resilience as a stable trait [16]. During

adolescence to young adulthood, increased affective and social sensitivity, along with prolonged neuroplasticity, may result in greater social responsiveness, while gradual neurological maturation and social learning processes help individuals gain better impulse control [34]. Emotional reactivity tends to peak during mid-adolescence and can contribute to resilience, as individuals adapt to frequent stressors despite emotional fluctuations [35]. Environmental support during heightened emotional reactivity, such as during the COVID-19 pandemic, may enhance prosocial behavior and resilience [35].

Exploring the relationship between the variables, it was found out that as forgiveness levels increase, there is a slight tendency for resilience to also increase, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. However, this weak correlation indicates that while forgiveness and resilience are positively linked, the connection is not strong. The modest association may be influenced by participants' prior exposure to adversity, suggesting that forgiveness may not be the primary factor driving resilience. The Deloitte Millennial Survey [36] supports this view, noting the resilience of Generation Z and millennials despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, implying that factors beyond forgiveness play a role in their ability to adapt. The findings align another study [37], which found only a slight positive link between forgiveness and resilience, suggesting the influence of other factors such as self-efficacy, hope, and coping strategies. A weak correlation between these variables was observed among teacher candidates, with potential gender differences and the influence of external factors beyond forgiveness noted [38]. In contrast, [39] study found a stronger relationship, suggesting that higher psychological resilience is linked to greater forgiveness, driven by attributes like stress tolerance, personal growth, and emotional balance. This discrepancy highlights the need for further exploration into the dynamics of forgiveness and resilience. The observed weak correlation suggests the presence of moderating factors, such as coping mechanisms, social support, and cultural influences, highlighting the protective role of self-esteem and social factors in mental health [40]. Future research should focus on these potential moderators to provide a deeper understanding of the complex relationship between forgiveness and resilience.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the study has revealed significant insights into the relationship between forgiveness and resilience among young adults. Firstly, it is evident that young adults possess a notable capacity for forgiveness, particularly in the context of self-forgiveness, which is characterized by self-compassion and the ability to overcome self-resentments. Secondly, resilience is prominently displayed through the effective regulation of emotions among young adults. Lastly, while forgiveness plays a role in shaping resilience, its influence is relatively minor. These findings contribute to our understanding of how forgiveness and resilience interact in young adults, highlighting the importance of self-compassion and emotional regulation in fostering resilience.

Based on the findings, several actionable recommendations can be derived. Educational institutions should consider implementing restorative justice programs that provide structured opportunities for young adults to engage in dialogue and reconciliation, thereby fostering forgiveness and interpersonal healing. There is also a need for ongoing research to track evolving trends in programs that support young adults in developing resilience during challenging life transitions and the evolution of the understanding of forgiveness. Lastly, initiatives that focus on building emotional connections, such as family-oriented activities or communication workshops, are suggested, leveraging the respondents' demonstrated readiness to forgive family members. These recommendations aim to create environments that nurture forgiveness, resilience, and emotional well-being among young adults

Scope and Limitation:

The study faces several limitations that may impact its findings. Self-report bias is a concern, as participants may not provide entirely honest or accurate answers, potentially affecting the validity of the results. Additionally, the study's sample is limited to university students in Baguio City, Philippines, which restricts the generalizability of the findings to other populations, age groups, or cultural settings. The cross-sectional design is another limitation, as it captures data at a single point in time and thus cannot establish causation or examine changes over time. Furthermore, with a total of 68 questions, participants may have experienced response fatigue, which could impact the accuracy of answers, particularly toward the end of the questionnaire. The presence of maladaptive perfectionism and pessimism

among young adults could also skew responses related to forgiveness and resilience. Lastly, social desirability bias may have influenced participants to respond in ways they believe are socially acceptable, especially on sensitive topics like forgiveness, which may affect the authenticity of the data collected.

Declaration of Generative AI in Scientific Writing:

During the preparation of this work the authors used Chat GPT, Solab.Ai, and Consensus to improve the language and readability of the manuscript. After using this tool/service, the authors reviewed and edited the content as needed and take full responsibility for the content of the publication. The authors declare no use of AI for scientific writing of this manuscript.

Funding:

There was no funding associated with this project.

Ethics Approval:

Ethical approval was obtained from the Research Ethics Board at the University of the Cordilleras. Informed consent was obtained from all participants in this study.

Data availability Statement:

Data is made available with submission.

Supplemental Material:

There is no supplemental material for this study.

Declaration of Competing Interest:

The author declares no conflicts of interest for this study

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