

A CLARIFICATION OF FORGIVENESS AMONGST AFRICAN STUDENTS

by

Marlé Booyesen

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Supervisor: S. Niemand

Co-Supervisor: Q.M. Temane

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to clarify the nature of forgiveness amongst African students. The study employed a cross-sectional survey research design. A convenience sample of 218 participants was drawn amongst students at the Mafikeng Campus of North-West University. Forgiveness instruments were used within a positive psychology framework to measure forgiveness. The results indicated that most of the measures were reliable. In terms of construct validity, the Affectometer, the personality factors, satisfaction with life and willingness to forgive gave a clear indication of validity. The findings indicate that forgiveness is characterised by a cognitive appraisal to avoid conflict and a willingness to forgive. Some forgiveness scales correlated positively with the Satisfaction with Life Scale which gives an indication of forgiveness as a measure of optimal functioning. Forgiveness is characterised as a cognitive evaluation of willingness to reduce resentment. It is recommended that research can be conducted within an individualistic social environment, considering more socio - demographic variables.

SUMMARY

A Clarification of forgiveness amongst African Students

Keywords: forgiveness, psychological well-being, positive psychology, positivism, optimal functioning, African context.

Forgiveness has been conceptualized differently in various studies (cf. McCullough, 2001; Karreman, van Lange, Ouwerkerk & Kluwer, 2003; Lawler, Younger, Piferi, Billington, Jobe, Edmondson & Edmondson, 2003; Macaskill, Maltby & Day, 2002; Mc Brien, 2004; Watkins & Regimi, 2004)) largely within a Western and individualistic context. Few if any studies have indicated the nature of forgiveness within a collectivistic social context. There are various measures used for forgiveness and there is no clear indication what nature of forgiveness would be within some social contexts, therefore the aim of this study was to clarify forgiveness in an African context, amongst students. The study employed a cross-sectional survey research design. A convenience sample of 218 participants was drawn amongst students at the Mafikeng Campus of the North-West University. Forgiveness measures were used within the framework of positive psychology.

Except for the Mullet Scale and the Satisfaction with Life Scale, all the scales' reliability analysis was acceptable (Smit, 1991). The Affectometer, personality factors (measured by NEO), Satisfaction with Life Scale and the Willingness to Forgive Scale appeared valid and were confirmed in terms of the criteria set by Hu and Bentler (1995). There was a high correlation between most scales and the forgiveness measures (TRIM, WTF and MST), which measures positive aspects of functioning, and thus measure psychological well-being. A principal components analysis was performed on the forgiveness measures. The computation yielded two factors; one factor was characterized by avoidance of further conflict arising from transgression, and the other by a willingness to forgive a transgression. In this group forgiveness can be characterized by avoidance of further conflict and willingness leave a transgression in the past.

The findings are interesting in the background of positive psychology in the sense that individuals seem to want positivism to surround their lives as they give up the negativity on an unforgiving nature. In terms of the definition of psychological well-being by Wissing et al. (1999)

forgiveness can also possibly enhance feelings of happiness, coherence, pain avoidance and thus optimal functioning. In this context, sharp relief can also be drawn to Erikson's theory of psychosocial development to establish whether an individual would rather forgive during a certain age than another

It is recommended that more research of a cross-sectional be conducted within an individualistic social environment. This recommendation should also take into account more socio-demographic variables, such as gender, spirituality, emotional intelligence and so forth.

OPSOMMING

’n VERHELDERING VAN VERGIFNIS ONDER AFRIKA STUDENTE

Sleutelwoorde: vergifnis, welstand, positiewe psigologie, positivisme, optimale funksionering

Vergifnis is al verskillend gekonseptualiseer in verskeie studies (cf. McCullough, 2001; Karreman, van Lange, Ouwerkerk & Kluwer, 2003; Lawler, Younger, Piferi, Billington, Jobe, Edmondson & Edmondson, 2003; Macaskill, Maltby & Day, 2002; Mc Brien, 2004; Watkins & Regimi, 2004), grootliks binne ’n Westerse en individualistiese konteks. Min, indien enige studies het al ’n indikatie van die aard van vergifnis gegee binne ’n kollektivistiese sosiale konteks. Daar word verskeie metings gebruik vir vergifnis en daar is geen duidelike indikatie wat die aard van vergifnis sal wees binne sekere sosiale kontekste nie, daarom is die doel van hierdie studie om vergifnis te verhelder binne ’n Afrika konteks, onder studente. Die studie, het ’n dwarsdeursnit-opname- navorsingsontwerp geïmplimenteer. ’n Beschikbaarheidssteekproef van 218 deelnemers was getrek onder studente te Mafikeng Kampus van die Noord-Wes Universiteit. Vergifnis metings was gebruik binne die raamwerk van positiewe psigologie.

Behalwe vir die Mullet Scale en die Satisfaction with Life Scale, was al die skale se betroubaarheids - analise aanvaarbaar (Smit, 1991). Die Affectometer, persoonlikheidsfaktore (gemeet deur NEO), Satisfaction with Life Scale en die Willingness to Forgive Scale het geldig voorgekom en ook bevestig in terme van die kriteria gestel deur Hu en Bentler (1995). Daar was ’n betekenisvolle korrelasie tussen die meeste skale en die vergifnismetings (TRIM, WTF en MST), wat positiewe aspekte van funksionering meet, en dus psigologiese welstand meet. Die berekening het twee faktore voorgestel; een faktor was gekenmerk deur vermyding van verdere konflik as gevolg van ’n oortreding en die ander deur ’n bereidwilligheid om ’n oortreding te vergewe. In hierdie groep kan vergifnis gekenmerk word deur vermyding van verdere konflik en die bereidwilligheid om ’n oortreding in die verlede te laat.

Die bevindinge is interessant teen die agtergrond van positiewe psigologie in die sin dat individue blyk om positiwiteit te verkies om hulle lewe te omsluit soos wat hulle negatiwiteit op gee van ’n nie-vergewende aard tersyde stel. In terme van die definisie van psigologiese welstand deur Wissing et al (1999) kan vergifnis ook moontlik gevoelens van geluk, kohesie en pyn vermyding

verhoog, dus optimale funksionering. Binne hierdie konteks, kan verligting ook getrek word na Erikson se teorie van psigososiale ontwikkeling om te bepaal of 'n individu eerder tydens 'n sekere ouderdom sekere voorvalle sal vergewe as 'n ander ouderdom.

Die voorstelling is dat meer navorsing van 'n dwarsdeursnit opname gedoen word binne 'n individualistiese sosiale omgewing. Hierdie voorstel moet ook meer sosio-demografiese veranderlikes binne rekening hou, soos geslag, spiritualiteit, emosionele intelligensie ensovoorts.

PREFACE

Article format

The article format, as described in the General Regulation of the North-West University, was chosen for purposes of this mini-dissertation as part of the requirements for a professional Masters degree.

Selected journal

The target journal for submission of the current manuscript is the *South African Journal of Psychology*.

Letter of consent

Please see the letter of consent from co-authors on the page 10 by which co-authors provide permission that the manuscript *A clarification of forgiveness amongst African students* may be submitted for purposes of a mini-dissertation by the first author, Marlé Booysen.

Page numbering

For purposes of this mini-dissertation page numbers run through for the whole document. For submission of the manuscript numbering is according to requirements and starting on the title page of the manuscript.

Tables

Tables are included in the text for ease of reference. On submission to a journal they will be printed in terms of the suggestions of the SAJP as they appear on page 10.

Letter of consent

We, the undersigned, hereby give consent that Marlé Booysen may submit the manuscript A clarification of forgiveness amongst African students, for purposes of a mini-dissertation as part of a master's degree.

Ms. S. Niemand

Date:

Mr. Q.M. Temane

Date:

Plagiarism Form

I, the author, hereby declare that this mini-dissertation is my own work, and the sources used are acknowledged.

Ms. M. Booysen

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MANUSCRIPT

A CLARIFICATION OF FORGIVENESS AMONGST AFRICAN STUDENTS

A clarification of forgiveness amongst African students

Marlé Booysen, S. Niemand and Q.M. Temane

North-West University (Mafikeng Campus)

Correspondence to:

Ms. M. Booysen

Ms. S. Niemand

Faculty of Human and Social Sciences (Ipelegeng Child and Family Centre)

North-West University (Mafikeng Campus)

Private Bag X 2046

Mafikeng

2735

niemand@uniwest.ac.za

A clarification of forgiveness amongst African Students

The present study is an attempt to clarify forgiveness in the African context. It is reasonably acknowledged that context is important in understanding human experience and manifestations of emotion and well-being (Ryff & Singer, 1998). Forgiveness is a complex of affective, cognitive, and behavioural phenomena in which negative affect and judgement toward the offender are reduced, not by denying one's right to such affect and judgement, but by viewing the offender with compassion, benevolence and love (McCullough & Worthington, 1995). According to McCullough (2001), forgiveness is a composition of pro-social (e.g., empathy, willingness to sacrifice, etc.) motivational (e.g., motivation to avoid, motivation to seek revenge, etc.) changes. Forgiveness is defined as such because pro-social changes occur in a victim's thoughts, emotions, and behaviour toward a blameworthy transgressor (McCullough & VanOyen Witvliet, 2001). McCullough (2001) also concludes that these changes occur after a person has incurred a transgression (cf. Friesen, Fletcher & Overall, 2005; Karreman & van Lange, 2005). Studies on forgiveness have been primarily conducted in a Euro-American culture (cf. Friesen, Fletcher & Overall, 2005; Karreman & van Lange, 2003; Lawler et al, 2003; Macaskill, Maltby & Day, 2002; Mc Brien, 2004; Watkins & Regimi, 2004) and few if any studies have been conducted in an African Culture. There is a need to understand how forgiveness can be conceptualized in the African context and its place among some positive psychology measures.

Some current literature indicates that forgiveness is related to psychological well-being (cf. Peterson & Park, 2003). McCullough and Worthington (1995) cite a number of benefits that arise as a result of forgiveness for psychological well-being, e.g., reduction of anger, depression and anxiety, restoration of one's power and self-esteem, physical health, and improved relationships. In a study by VanOyen Witvliet (2001), it was shown that forgiveness correlated with indicators of mental health, and that forgiveness has psychological benefits. VanOyen Witvliet's (2001) research also suggests that forgiving has long term effects on health. Failure to forgive is accompanied by induced psychological stress and reduced psychological well-being (Maltby, Macaskill & Day, 2001; Krause & Ellison, 2003; Karreman & van Lange, 2003; Worthington, VanOyen Witvliet, Lerner & Scherer, 2005; Potchenko, Lawson & Joyce 2003; Konstam, Marx, Schurer, Harrington, Lombardo & Deveney, 2000). According to Wissing et al (1999) a person who is psychologically well can experience life as satisfying, hopeful, and meaningful, have meaningful relationships and also have the capacity to

maintain a level of affective well-being in challenging times and accept support from others. Facets such as sense of coherence, satisfaction with life, and a preponderance of positive over negative affect are important. Thus, based on the definition of forgiveness, forgiveness can be regarded as an integral part of psychological well-being. Peterson and Park (2003) think of forgiveness as a psychological strength. Strength is a disposition to act, desire and a feeling that involves the exercise of judgement and leads to a recognizable human excellence or instance of human flourishing (Yearley, 1990).

Forgiveness is regarded by some authors as a personality factor (Ross, Kendall, Matters, Wrobel & Rey, 2004). Recent evidence indicates that personality plays a strong role in the study of forgiveness (Leach & Lark, 2004; Lawler, Younger et al, 2003; Watkins & Regimi, 2004). McCullough (2001) described what he calls the forgiving personality. He concludes that people who are more agreeable and emotionally stable are also more likely to forgive (cf. Ross, Kendall, Matters, Wrobel & Rye, 2004). Agreeableness incorporates altruism, empathy, care, and generosity (McCullough, 2001). People high in agreeableness thrive in interpersonal situations low in conflict and are regarded as having low vulnerability to experiences of negative emotion. Forgivers also tend to endorse socially desirable attitudes and behaviour (McCullough & VanOyen Witvliet, 2001).

Forgiveness is also regarded as a cognitive process. When we think about reacting to an offender in a begrudging, empathic or forgiving manner, we find ourselves busy with a cognitive process. Forgiveness predicts pro-relationship responses. It is motivated by a willingness to set aside personal well-being to enhance the well-being of the partner or relationship (Karreman & Van Lange, 2004). These cognitive acts are also inherently emotional (VanOyen Witvliet, 2001). In some way, forgiveness must also relate to emotional intelligence (Schutte et al, 1998). Emotional intelligence has to do with appraisal and expression of emotion, regulation of emotion, and utilization of emotions in solving problems; forgiveness in the same way applies to the use of such capabilities. Individuals with high emotional intelligence scores believe that they are in touch with their emotions and that they can regulate them in a way that promotes well-being (Furnam & Petrides, 2003).

According to McCullough et al (1998), forgiving is the forgoing of vengeful behaviour; an explicit expression of the self-worth of the victim. Severity of the offence, intentionality and motives are variables of social-cognitive nature that can explain people's willingness to forgive an offender. When a partner has not forgiven a close-relationship partner, destructive levels of emotional states appear; high motivation to avoid contact with the offending partner, and high motivation to seek revenge. When the offended partner in fact forgave the offender, his/her perceptions of the offence and

offender does not create motivations to avoid the offender and seek revenge (McCullough, Rachal, Sandage, Worthington, Brown & Hight, 1998). McCullough, Bellah, Kilpatric and Johnson (2001) view reductions in the motivation to seek revenge as a central component of forgiveness. Vengeance is cited as a motive and attempt to redress an interpersonal offence by voluntarily committing a destructive and aggressive action against the perceived offender. Vengefulness has correlation with the following: less forgiving, greater rumination about the offence, higher negative affectivity and lower life-satisfaction. However, McCullough and Hoyt (2002) contend that when people forgive, they experience (i) reduced motivations to seek revenge, (ii) reduced motivations to avoid the transgressors, and (iii) increase benevolence or goodwill for their transgressors. McCullough, Rachal, Sandage Worthington, Brown and Hight (1998) opine that these motivations to forgive correlate highly with people's self-reports, to the extent of which they have forgiven a transgression.

Forgiveness can be a conflicting situation for the 'forgiver' (VanOyen Witvliet, 2001) where the injured victim finds himself in a situation of conflict whether to forgive or not (Eisikovits, 2004). It is the process of overcoming attitudes of resentment and anger that may persist when one has been injured by wrongdoing. Sometimes it may be harder to intra - personally forgive another person to whom there is strong feelings of commitment than others to whom we feel weaker commitments (Karreman & Van Lange, 2003). This conflicting situation that the 'forgiver' finds himself in is related to a person's psychological mindedness (PM). PM is a willingness to try to understand self and others, a belief in the benefits of discussing one's problems, openness to new ideas, and access to one's feelings and to understand the meaning of the behaviours of others (Beitel, Ferrer & Cecero, 2004). According to Shill and Lumley (2002), PM bespeaks a capacity to tolerate psychological conflict and stress intra - physically (c.f. Trudeau & Reich, 1995). It is possible that people high in PM would be forgiving.

In this study, forgiveness is conceptualised in terms of McCullough's transgressions-related interpersonal motivations. Psychological well-being is often conceptualised eudemonistically or hedonistically (cf. Ryan & Deci, 2001). The hedonistic perspective defines psychological well-being in terms of happiness, pleasure and pain avoidance. The eudemonistic perspective focuses on meaning and self-realization and defines well-being in terms of optimal functioning. In this study, psychological well-being will be conceptualized and measured as a multidimensional, general psychological well-being factor that includes both eudemonic and hedonic perspectives as identified by Wissing et al (1999). In order to understand the concept of forgiveness in the African context it is

important to find out how existing measures of forgiveness correlate with extant measures of positive psychology, personality and emotional intelligence. [Therefore, scale means, reliabilities, factor analyses and correlations will be investigated to clarify the construct in an African context].

METHODS

Design

This study employed a cross-sectional survey research design. According to Babbie (2001) a survey involves observations at one point in time only and thus the selected methods will be based on this.

Sample

A convenience sample of 218 participants was drawn amongst students at the Mafikeng Campus of North-West University. The students at this Campus are predominantly African and largely from what could be perceived as a collectivistic culture. The table on page 17 represents the demographic characteristics of the participants.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of participants

<u>Age</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
15-18	17	8.14
19-22	203	91.86
Totaal	221	100.00

<u>Parent's residence</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Rural	114	51.58
Urban	66	29.86
Peri- Urban	41	18.55
Totaal	221	100.00

<u>Parent's income</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Less than R 60 000.00	166	75.11
R61 000.00 – R 99 000.00	40	18.10
R 100 000.00	15	6.79
Totaal	221	100.00

<u>Parents' level of education</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Primary School	62	28.05
High School	85	38.46
Tertiary education	74	33.48
Totaal	221	100.00

Measuring instruments

This was a questionnaire-based survey and the following 5 constructs were measured: forgiveness, psychological well-being, general health, personality and emotional intelligence, as indicated below:

Forgiveness

Two scales were used to measure forgiveness, namely, the Transgressions-Related Interpersonal Motivations Inventory (TRIM) by McCullough, Rachal, Sandage, Worthington, Brown & Hight (1998) and the Willingness to forgive Scale (De Shea, 2003).

The TRIM is a 12-item scale used to indicate the extent to which a person experiences two negative motivational stakes that purportedly underlie forgiving. It comprises of 5 items measuring the desire to seek revenge and 7 items measuring avoidance. Items are rated on a 5-point scale. McCullough, Rachal, Sandage, Worthington, Brown & Hight (1998) report internal consistency reliabilities of 0.85 and 0.93. The willingness to forgive Scale presents scenarios describing a variety of transgressions and kinds of relationships that are presented to participants in an attempt to allow them to imagine themselves in multiple situations for possible forgiving of another person (De Shea, 2003). De Shea (2003) reports a Cronbach alpha of 0.91.

Psychological well-being: The following scale was used to define psychological well-being:

Sense of Coherence Scale (SOC) (Antonovsky, 1987, 1993). The SOC-29 measures the individual's way of experiencing the world and living in it. Comprehensibility, manageability and meaningfulness are the core components. Antonovsky (1993) reports good content and criterion validity, he also indicated that the Scale manifested internal reliability indices of .78 to .93.

Affectometer 2 (AFM) (Kanman & Flett, 1983). This Scale (AFM) measures a general sense of well-being or general happiness. The balance between positive and negative affect determines psychological well-being on affective level (Kammann & Flett, 1983). Positive affect (PA) (10 items), negative affect (NA) (10 items), and Positive-Negative-affect-Balance (PNB) ($PA-NA=PNB$) is measured by the sub-scales in the AFM. The more positive affect, the higher the overall level of well-being (Kanmann & Flett, 1983).

Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) (Diener, Emmons, Larsen & Griffen, 1985). The SWLS (a 5-item scale) indicates a person's general satisfaction with life on a cognitive-judgemental level. This gives an indication of the individual's quality of life according to criteria set by the individual. A Cronbach alpha-reliability index of 0.87 is reported by Diener, Emmons, Larsen & Griffin (1985). The Scale indicates good psychometric properties (Pavot & Diener, 1993). For use in African context, Wissing et al. (1999) found the SWLS reliable and valid.

Personality factors

The Revised NEO Personality Inventory (NEO) measures five major domains of personal functioning (Extraversion, Agreeableness, Neuroticism, Openness, and Conscientiousness (Costa & McCrae, 1992). Each domain consists of 48 items and each reflects six specific facets. According to Costa and McCrae (1992), the NEO has excellent psychometric properties. Only 2 sub-scales are used in this study, namely extraversion and agreeable.

Emotional Intelligence (EI)

Schutte et al (1998) based their 33-item EI Scale on the Mayer and Salovey Scale which had 62 items. They describe emotional intelligence as the potential for intelligence and emotional growth. The scale consists of the following aspects: appraisal and expression of emotions, regulation of emotions and/did utilization of emotion. Schutte et al (1998) report a Cronbach Alpha of 0.90 and conclude that the scale requires the reading capability of at least fifth graders.

Procedure

The identified scales to be used in the study were bound into a booklet. Each participant was given a consent form prior to the commencement of the research. The study was also explained to the participants. After consent was given, each participant was given a booklet. The data collection took place in a group situation. The Departmental Board of the Psychology Department also gave ethical approval for the study.

Data analysis

Descriptive statistics and Cronbach alpha reliability indices were calculated for each scale. Product-moment correlations of forgiveness and other positive psychology measures were also calculated. Factor analyses were used to determine the nature of forgiveness among the respondents. Confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to determine the validity of each scale. In this case Goodness of fit criteria as conceptualized by Hu and Bentler (1999) were used. The RMSEA was used for this purpose. RMSEA: a fit index is an overall summary statistic that evaluates how well a particular covariance structure model explains the sample data. Thus, a fit index summarizes the degree of correspondence between the implied and observed covariance matrices. The RMSEA is used

as a measure of fit in this study and it gives an indication of the overall amount of error in the hypothesized model-data fit relative to the number of estimated parameters or the complexity of the model. It computes average lack of fit per degree of freedom and it is possible to have near-zero lack of fit in both a complex and in a simple model. The SEPATH programme in Statistica (Ver 9.0) was used for the latter. Differences in the terms of sex were assessed with the Student's t-test.

Results

Generally, the respondents characterised themselves largely as being both group people (collectivistic) and as individualistic (74.2%) as compared to being solely a group person (11.8%) or individualistic (14%). The atmosphere in their families was characterized as largely supportive (83.7%) as compared to being distant (8.1%) and individualistic (8.1%). The means, standard deviations as well as Cronbach reliability indices for the total group on all measuring instruments are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Descriptive and reliability analysis of scales

Scale	Mean	SD	Cronbach Alpha
SWLS	22.43	4.698	0.559
SOC	138.22	21.734	0.726
AFM_PNB	16.75	11.36	-----*
AFM_PA	38.00	6.36	0.763
AFM_NA	21.26	6.45	0.733
GHQ	47.27	9.89	0.881
NEO_A	113.19	12.92	0.733
NEO_E	104.68	12.92	0.528
FS	37.29	9.86	0.578
WTF	31.47	13.09	0.748
MS	99.58	32.42	0.639
EI	123.91	13.84	0.827

* Cronbach Alpha cannot be computed for a single item as affect balance (AFM_PNB) is defined as positive affect minus negative affect.

Table 2 indicates that reliability analyses of all scales are acceptable except for the Satisfaction with life Scale and the Mullet Scale according to the guidelines set by Nunally and Bernstein (1994). However, Smit (1991) says that in the case of group compensations, a Cronbach alpha of 0.50 is acceptable.

To attest to the construct validity of the scales, the confirmatory factor analysis function in SPSS was used in addition to the principal components analysis. This validation was necessary

because all the scales used were developed in a typically individualistic and Western context. Construct validity was determined using confirmatory factor analysis in the SEPATH programme of Statistica (ver. 9.0) employing the maximum likelihood estimation. The table below summarizes the observations made in this regard. In terms of the table it would appear that the Affectometer, personality factors as measured by the NEO, Satisfaction with Life Scale and the Willingness to Forgive Scale seem to be valid. Table 3 below summarizes these observations. The RMSEA and the Goodness of fit indices confirm these observations in terms of the criteria set by Hu and Bentler (1999).

Table 3: Construct validity of all the scales

Scale*	RMSEA	GFI	Chisquare	p
GHQ	0.105	0.721	997.885	0.00
SOC	0.09	0.736	862.992	0.00
A.FM	0.05	0.886	269.02	0.00
NEO	0.05	0.586	7066.74	0.00
SWLS	0.03	0.985	6.64	0.24
FS	0.192	0.729	364	0.00
WTF	0.06	0.928	103.39	0.00
MS	0.135	0.814	289.60	0.00
EI				

GFI maximum likelihood estimation

* Explanation of abbreviations relating to scales on p. 18 and p. 19

A correlation of all the scales in the study was performed and Table 4 on page 23, displays these correlations. In line with the nature of the scales, there was a high correlation amongst scales measuring positive aspects of functioning. For example, there was a relatively high correlation between affect balance and satisfaction with life, and a high correlation between sense of coherence and affect balance. These measures, according to Wissing et al (1999), measure psychological well-being. Overall, there was a high correlation between most scales and the forgiveness measures such as the TRIM, WFT and the MST confirming the latter as positive psychology measures.

Table 4: Criterion-related validity of all scales

	SWLS	GHQ	SOC	PNB	NEO_E	NEO_A	FST	WST	MS	EI
SWLS	1.00									
GHQ	-0.450*	1.00								
SOC	0.466**	-0.508	1.00							
PNB	0.518**	-0.573*	0.610	1.00						
NEO_E	0.149*	0.052	-0.086	0.08	1.00					
NEO_A	0.245**	0.053	-0.015	0.057	0.671**	1.00				
FST	-0.025	0.328**	-0.230**	-0.235*	0.213**	0.105	1.00			
WFT	0.168*	-0.080	0.092	0.121	0.105	0.125	0.029	1.00		
MST	0.018	0.026	-0.094	-0.035	0.192*	0.233**	0.214**	0.085	1.00	
EI	0.340**	-0.174*	0.305**	0.380**	0.345**	0.395**	0.300*	0.109	0.010	1.00

**p>0.05

*p<0.01

The relationship between self description, in terms of being collectivistic and forgiveness was computed. The results show that there is a distinctive relationship between these two variables. A positive relationship was yielded as the table below shows between Mullet scale of forgiveness and self-description.

Table 5: Relationship between self description and forgiveness scales

Correlations

		FST	mst	wtft	Self
FST	Pearson Correlation	1	.215**	.250	.038
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001	.712	.569
	N		219	220	220
mst	Pearson Correlation	.215	1	.084	.159*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001		.213	.018
	N	219	220	.220	220
Wtft	Pearson Correlation	.025	.084	1	.056
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.712	.213		.410
	N	220	220	221	221
Self	Pearson Correlation	.039	.159	.056	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.569	.018	.410	
	N	220	220	221	221

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Finally a principle component analysis was performed on the forgiveness measures with varimax notation. Two distinct factors were yielded by this computation, the first factor was characterized by avoidance of further transgression. Thus a cognitive appraisal of the situation as something that could potentially harm well-being. The second factor was characterized by a willingness to forgive a transgression. Generally these two factors are typical of collectivistic social situations where the group is primary to the individual. Therefore, the forgiveness of a transgression would keep the group whole. Forgiveness then in terms of this group can be characterized as avoidance of further conflict and a willingness to let "bygones be bygones". The table on page 26



summarizes these observations. Overall, a Kaiser- Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was yielded by the principal components analysis (KMO=0.793).

Table 6: Principal components analysis of forgiveness

	Factor 1	Factor 2
Item 1	0.863	0.686
Item 2	0.846	0.678
Item 3	0.832	0.653
Item 4	0.772	0.642
Item 5	0.741	0.634
Item 6	0.739	0.550
Item 7	0.644	0.508
Eigenvalues	17%	9.9%
KMO= 0.793		

In conclusion, the results show that the reliability analyses of all the scales were acceptable, except for the Satisfaction with life Scale. It appears that the Affectometer, personality factors (Measured by NEO), Satisfaction with Life Scale and Willingness to forgive Scale are valid. This computation yielded to distinct factors; avoidance of further conflict from the transgression and a willingness to forgive a transgression. Overall, there was a high correlation between most scales and the forgiveness measures.

Discussion

The aim of the study was to clarify the nature of forgiveness amongst African students. Firstly the reliability and validity of measures was examined. The results indicated that most of the measures were reliable to use based on the criteria set by Smit (1991). Secondly, in terms of the construct validity, only the Affectometer, the personality factors, satisfaction with life and willingness to forgive gave a clear indication of validity based on the Goodness of fit indices. Thirdly, the findings indicate that forgiveness is characterized appraisal to avoid conflict and a willingness to forgive.

The findings also indicated that the Willingness to Forgive Scale correlated positively with the Satisfaction with Life scale. The Willingness to Forgive Scale did not significantly correlate with the other measures of forgiveness used in this study. This in a sense gives an indication of forgiveness as a measure of optimal functioning. Beck (1992) observed that a lack of deeply held resentment is an implicit component of positive mental health. As could be observed from the results, McCullough's et al (1998) forgiveness scale, known as TRIM, correlated positively with the General Health Questionnaire which measures the absence of positive mental health. In a sense, the indication given by the present results, albeit on a small scale, is that forgiveness has to do with a cognitive evaluation of willingness to reduce resentment.

Most scales correlated positively except in the case of GHQ which measures pathology. Therefore, it can be concluded that these scales measure optimal functioning. In terms of construct validity the following scales elicited goodness to fit: affect balance, personality factors, willingness to forgive and satisfaction with life. Taken together it would appear that forgiveness is best measured by the following scales: WTF, personality factors, affect balance and satisfaction with life. Changes occur in a victim's thoughts, emotions, and behaviour toward a blameworthy transgressor (McCullough & VanOyen Witvliet, 2001).

There are benefits for an individual's psychological well-being and long term positive effects on health, as result of forgiveness (McCullough & Worthington, 1995; VanOyen Witvliet, 2001). According to Wissing et al (1999) a person who is psychologically well can experience life as satisfying and the capacity to maintain a level of affective well-being. Personality plays a strong role in forgiveness (Leach & Lark, 2004; Watkins & Regimi, 2004). People who are more agreeable and emotionally stable are also more likely to forgive (Watkins & Regimi, 2004). Agreeableness incorporates altruism, empathy, care and generosity (McCullough, 2001). People high in agreeableness thrive in interpersonal situations low in conflict and are regarded as having low vulnerability to experiences of negative emotion. Forgivers usually have desirable social behaviour (McCullough, VanOyen Witvliet, 2001). Therefore, forgiveness can be made up of a sense of well-being and personality.

Based on the results forgiveness can be characterised as a mechanism that also can enhance psychological well-being. It can thus be concluded that forgiveness is a strength that should not only be encouraged but enhanced.

It is recommended to do more of a cross-sectional study and an individualistic study. Also recommended is to take into account more socio-demographic variables, for example, gender. Studies can be implemented to establish whether an individual would rather forgive during a certain age than another, as according to Erikson's crises theory.

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