

Volunteerism and Forgiveness As a Predictor of Well Being

Darolia, M.K. Pragyendu** Kala, I.*** Sneha*****

Abstract

Volunteerism has positive effects on adolescents' psychological and social development. There are enough pointers suggesting rise in volunteerism in India. The various channels promoting voluntary work are many such as colleges, schools, voluntary organizations, various governmental and nongovernmental programmes engaging volunteers in furthering their goals, etc. The activity is being increasingly seen as a must to widen an individual's spectrum of knowledge and understanding of the affairs of the society. Volunteerism and forgiveness are two such important variables which go hands in hands. The present study was designed to test the relation between volunteerism and forgiveness and the effect of it on our well being. Purposive sampling of 100 college students completes measures of volunteering, forgiveness and well being. Results of regression showed that with the increasing volunteerism in the present generation, the rate of forgiveness is going high which in turn affects our well being in a positive manner.

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About Authors : **Associate professor, Dept. of Psychology, Sri Aurobindo College, University of Delhi, New Delhi*

***Assistant professor, Dept. of Psychology, Sri Aurobindo College, University of Delhi, New Delhi*

****Student, B. Tech Psychological Sciences, Sri Aurobindo College, University of Delhi, New Delhi*

*****Student, B.A. (Hons.) Applied Psychology, Sri Aurobindo College, University of Delhi, New Delhi*

Introduction

Volunteering makes substantial social and economic contributions to society. Although volunteer work is widely believed to be beneficial not only for the community but for all the individuals who perform it, surprisingly little attention has been paid to actual consequences of volunteer service for individual's physical and psychological well-being. Forgiveness and volunteerism are two such positive psychological characteristics that are connected to well-being.

Volunteerism is one form of civic participation which includes long-term, planned, and non-obligatory prosocial activities that benefit another person, cause or group (Penner, 2004). Volunteerism has positive effects for both the society and the volunteering individual. Engaging in prosocial tasks, building social relationships and acquiring new knowledge and skills empower volunteers, and

result in various psychological and social gains (Wilson, 2000).

Voluntary social work can be defined as a contribution of individuals in the work of care and social development, both the opinion or work or funding or other forms. One of the characteristics of social work that is based on the cooperation of individuals with each other in order to meet the needs of their community, and this leads to the essential point that social work was based on an understanding of the needs of the community.

It should be noted that the contribution of individuals in social work comes either as employees or volunteers. The volunteer effort is being done by the individual chosen to provide a service to the community without expectation of material reward in return for this effort. In spite of the "free" voluntary social work, but there is a system of privileges and incentives and rewards enjoyed by workers in this sector and in

general can be that half of the volunteer as a person believes in a particular case, a realistic and living with the conditions of his community, his ability to integrate and interact with members of his community and is ready to provide a helping hand to care for and development of society.

The spirit of volunteerism is at the heart of cultural and religious practices in India. Besides these, various disciplines of philosophy, which were directly or indirectly intertwined with the religious practices, also underscored the importance of the need to work for the welfare of the society as a whole. The principle of 'Nishkama karma' (working without the expectation of getting any reward) is one of the core values reflected in the Hindu philosophy.

Forgiveness is such variable in the history of psychology which keeps on getting new definitions. Every time social psychologists try, it is found that they add a new term in the definition. But it is vital to understand the meaning of the word forgiveness. Forgiveness is not only an art but a science (Worthington, 2004). Forgiveness has been defined from different aspects by different social psychologists. From one perspective forgiveness occurs when a person lets go of emotionally backed judgments, grievances, attack thoughts and belief toward themselves and others so that they can perceive the goodness, worth, magnificence, innocence, love and peace in both themselves and other person simultaneously. This point of view clearly shows that forgiveness starts when a person makes a conscious decision to forgive.

It is true that in most of the religious groups there is a similar emphasis on God's grace. The Hindu teaching about grace sees no need for atonement for sin, but simply offers forgiveness without any satisfaction of the judgment on sin required by a holy God. Other religions also have such characteristics imbibed in their religious philosophy.

In life, everyone goes through hurtful events caused by significant others: a deceiving friend, a betraying partner, or an unjustly blaming parent. In response to painful emotions, individuals may react with anger, hostility, and the desire for revenge. As an alternative, they may decide to forgive the wrongdoer and relinquish resentment. These negative feelings also have adverse effects on the wellbeing of an individual. People always hope that expressions of forgiveness are effective in making the world a slightly better place to live. But does forgiveness effects our well-being?

Well-being The conceptualization of the state of well-being is closer to the concept of mental health and happiness, life satisfaction and actualization of one's full potential. Verma and Verma (1989) have defined general well-being as the subjective feeling of contentment, happiness, satisfaction with life's experiences and of one's role in the world of work.

According to wright and Cropanzano (2004), "psychological well-being maybe defined as the overall effectiveness of an individual's psychological functioning". Wright and Cropanzano (2004) argued that psychological well-being has at least three characteristics. First, it is a subjective experience. It means that people are high in psychological well-being to the extent that they believe themselves to be. Second, that psychological well-being includes both the relative presence of positive emotions and the relative absence of negative emotions. Third, psychological well-being is a global judgement and has been shown to exhibit consistency over time. It refers to one's life as a whole. Past researches have also shown that volunteerism and well being has a great connection between them and the correlation is of a positive kind.

The main aim of this study is to find out the possible explanations that can state the relation that volunteerism and forgiveness share.

Our second aim is to examine the same connection which links volunteerism and forgiveness to well-being. People volunteer to in order to satisfy one or more needs or motives. Volunteering serves an understanding function when the individual seeks to acquire new learning experiences and exercise skills that might otherwise go unused.

Method

The purpose of the study was to examine the relationship between Volunteerism, Wellbeing and Forgiveness. Past researches reveal that volunteering activities for any community, organization, religions increases the pro social cognitions, feelings and thereby feelings towards the offender. The present research extends this research trying to establish a relationship between the three variables. The media and empirical research have focused attention on the impact of volunteering on the well-being of people. This research tries to find out whether volunteering activities leads to forgiveness attitude and its impact on wellbeing.

Sample

Quantitative research was done where data was collected for 150 people (80 volunteers and 70 non volunteers) selected by purposive sampling to assess the relationship. Questionnaires were filled on volunteerism, forgiveness and wellbeing scale. Participants were undergraduates at a metro Politian university in Delhi. The mean age of the sample participants was 18 years. Volunteers and non-volunteers in the sample came from the same region and constituted mainly, children belonging from middle class in terms of their family background.

Participants completed the questionnaires, an introductory paragraph explained that the purpose of the study was to learn the type of relationship between volunteerism and forgiveness and its effect on

our well-being. They were assured there were no right or wrong responses to the given questions, and they could withdraw at any particular time without penalty.

Measures

Volunteerism is assessed by a standardized scale of 30-items, developed by clary et al (1998). Responses were given on a 7-point scale with higher scores indicating greater volunteering activities. Responses possibilities ranging from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 7 (Strongly agree). The scale has 6 dimensions namely social, value expression, career, enhancement, protective, understanding (alpha ranges from 0.75 to 0.89).

Forgiveness is assessed with a 15-item, using a likert-type format with response possibilities ranging from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree). Respondents are instructed to think about how they have responded to the person who wronged or mistreated them. Higher scores on this scale reflect greater forgiveness toward an offender. The scale has two dimensions namely Absence of negative and Presence of positive. Test-Retest reliability, computed with an average of 15.2 days between administrations (range = 9 to 30, SD = 4.28) was 0.80 for the entire scale.

Well-being is assessed with a 5-item standardized scale developed by Diener, Emmons and Griffin (1985). Response possibilities ranging from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 7 (Strongly agree). The scale consists of no dimension.

Results

The data was analyzed by using regression analysis and the tables are given below.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Well-Being	23.2400	5.49518	150
AoN	29.6400	5.93056	150
PoP	15.1800	3.75074	150
Values	18.7800	4.55668	150
Social	20.4333	5.00391	150
Career	21.5867	6.31626	150
Protection	23.8667	7.72225	150
Self-enhancement	21.9333	6.14661	150
Understanding	22.0267	5.45260	150

Table 2: Correlation table

	Well-being	AoN	PoP	Values	Social	Career	Protection	Self-enhancement	Understanding
Well-being	1.000	-0.147	0.157	0.002	0.031	0.027	0.153	0.183	0.145
AoN		1.000	0.296	-0.271	-0.205	-0.232	-0.265	-0.290	-0.298
PoP			1.000	-0.097	0.016	0.192	0.035	0.214	0.167
Values				1.000	0.480	0.325	0.357	0.338	0.298
Social					1.000	0.543	0.554	0.624	0.629
Career						1.000	0.554	0.709	0.679
Protection							1.000	0.647	0.629
Self-enhancement								1.000	0.749
Understanding									1.000

The above correlation table shows that Well-being is negatively significant with Absence of negative ($r = -0.14$, $p < 0.037$). However, relation of well-being with Presence of Positive is positively significant ($r = 0.157$, $p < 0.027$).

Similarly, Well-being shares a positive correlating significance with the three dimensions of volunteerism namely protection ($r = 0.153$, $p < 0.31$), self-enhancement ($r = 0.183$, $p < 0.12$) and Understanding ($r = 0.145$, $p < 0.38$).

Table 3: Regression table

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	F	Significance
1	0.339a	0.115	0.064	2.281	0.025b

a. Predictors: (Constant) understanding, Presence of positive, Value expression, Absence of negative, Protection, Career, Social, Self-enhancement.

Table 4 : Beta table

Model 1	Standardized coefficients: Beta	t	Significance
(Constant)		6.020	0.000
	-0.179	-1.939	0.055
AoN	0.196	2.170	0.032
PoP	-0.034	-0.368	0.714
Values	-0.098	-0.838	0.403
Social	-0.251	-2.088	0.039
Career	0.129	1.150	0.252
Protection	0.209	1.463	0.146
Self-enhancement	0.064	0.474	0.636
Understanding			

a. Dependent variable: Well-being

Beta table shows that Presence of positive is a positive and significant predictor of well-being (Beta = 0.196, $p < 0.032$). However, career is a negatively significant predictor of well-being. (Beta = -0.25, $p < 0.039$).

Discussion

Volunteerism, forgiveness and well-being

This research examined the impact of volunteerism and forgiveness on well-being. This study linked the different aspects of volunteerism and forgiveness. The result of the present study clearly shows that there is a significant correlation between dimensions of forgiveness and volunteerism with well-being. As the volunteering activities increases the forgiving nature of an individual also increases with a significant amount of increase in our well-being. Forgiveness and volunteerism has its own impact on well-being with different dimensions, also used in the standardized scale for volunteerism and forgiveness.

Other research has supported the notion that there are positive outcomes of volunteer activity for the individual. Volunteerism can

increase satisfaction in life, improve physical health, lower depression and stress, as well as provide enjoyment, social contact, and recognition (Unger, 1991; Thoits & Hewitt, 2001). Volunteerism and well-being has been an arena for social psychologists to dig more and more deeper. Spontaneous volunteering facilitated meaningful therapeutic recovery from feelings of victimization following any disastrous event. In addition to the apparent long term impact on personal healing and well-being, the opportunity to volunteer has lasting impacts on self-concept that translated to significant changes in life choices (Seana Lowe Steffen & Alice Fothergill, 2009). Not only in adolescents, in fact the impact of volunteerism on well-being was seen in every age group. Older adults who volunteer and who engage in more hours of volunteering report higher levels of well-being. This positive effect was not moderated by social integration, race, or gender. There was no effect of the number of organizations for which the older adult volunteered the type of organization, or the perceived benefit of the work to others.

Researches which show that forgiveness and well-being are linked to each other have also been studied. Forgiveness and gratitude are positive psychological characteristics that are connected to well-being. Forgiveness and gratitude may have an important place in the positive psychologist's repertoire of well-being enhancing techniques and exercises in general, and may be particularly powerful with a clinical psychotherapy population. (Loren Toussaint & Philip Friedman, 2008). However, there have been studies which also oppose and associate forgiveness and well-being with a less robust. Studies by Sastre et al. (2003) and Maltby et al. (2005) show a different picture of the relation of forgiveness and well-being. McCullough et al. (2001) also documented the absence of a connection between forgiveness motives and satisfaction with life. However, the findings in the present study paint a different picture. Association between forgiveness and well-being were statistically significant.

Limitations/future directions

That our sample consists solely of college students limits the generalization of the findings. Sample size was also short which might as well come up as a negative point for the study. Because of the small sample size, some statistically significant correlation was not recognized, but they were uniformly consistent with our theoretical framework. Future work is planned to further test and refine that framework.

Adding some more variables can make the study more deep and studying the significant relation of well-being and the added variable with a large sample size.

Conclusion

Examined that some of the dimensions of volunteerism and forgiveness lay its impact on our well-being. And the three variable share a

positive relation with each other. If volunteering and forgiveness is increased with a significant amount then there is a significant amount of increment in our well-being.

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