

# FORGIVENESS AS A PREDICTOR OF GRATITUDE: ANALYSING RELATIONSHIPS AMONG SELF-COMPASSION, FORGIVENESS, AND GRATITUDE IN DELHI NCR

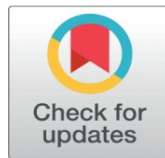
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## ABSTRACT

The present study examines the relationships between gratitude, forgiveness, and self-compassion among individuals residing in Delhi NCR. Settings and Design: A correlational research design was employed, with data collected from 156 participants using standardized psychological measures. Material and Methods: The study utilized the Gratitude Questionnaire (GQ-6), Rye's Forgiveness Scale, and Neff's Self-Compassion Scale to assess these constructs. Pearson's correlation analysis and regression analysis were conducted using IBM SPSS 26. Results: Pearson's correlation analysis revealed a significant positive relationship between forgiveness and gratitude ( $r = 0.280$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), suggesting that individuals with higher levels of forgiveness also experience greater gratitude. Self-compassion demonstrated weak negative correlations with both gratitude ( $r = -0.093$ ,  $p = 0.250$ ) and forgiveness ( $r = -0.118$ ,  $p = 0.141$ ), though these relationships were not statistically significant. Regression analysis indicated that forgiveness significantly predicts gratitude, accounting for 7.8% of its variance ( $R^2 = 0.078$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Conclusion: The findings emphasize the crucial role of forgiveness in nurturing gratitude, while the relationship between self-compassion and these constructs requires further exploration. This study contributes to the understanding of emotional well-being by highlighting the consistent nature of forgiveness and gratitude, highlighting their significance in promoting positive interpersonal relationships and psychological resilience.

**Keywords:** Forgiveness, Gratitude, Self-Compassion

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The term "forgiveness" originates from the Old English word "forgiefan" meaning "to grant pardon" or "to give up", deriving from the Proto-Germanic term "forgiban" and ultimately and interestingly, the Proto-Indo-European root "gabh" meaning "to reveive." Forgiveness is a motivational shift in which an individual doesn't seek revenge the offender and instead pursues acceptance and reconciliation out of compassion and not obligation. (Enright et al, 1998; McCullough, 2001, Vladimir Jankélévitch, 2005). In relational context, it has been defined as a process that involves exoneration where one acknowledges their fault and involve in behavioral restoration by open communication (Hargrave, 1994). Similarly, Kaufman (1989) defined it as that courage to accept and overcome interpersonal restrictions. Todd (1985) defined it as an archetypal process with Jungian theory and integrating one's shadow. Whilst Charles Griswold had a conditional approach outlines six steps for the offender—taking responsibility, repudiating wrongdoing, expressing regret,

committing to self-transformation, understanding the harm caused, and providing an account. In this research paper, forgiveness has been defined as acceptance one's/other's wrongdoing and reconciling/engaging in behavioral restoration i.e. compensation/reconciling. (Enright et al, 1993)

## 2. IMPACT

### 2.1. PHYSICAL HEALTH

Forgiveness has been linked with a range of positive physical health outcomes. Studies have found that forgiving individuals experience reduced psychophysiological reactivity, including lower heart rate, blood pressure, and stress responses (Lawler et al., 2003; Witvliet et al., 2001). This reduction in physiological stress, often induced by unresolved anger or resentment, can result in long-term health benefits such as better cardiovascular health and overall well-being. Furthermore, individuals who engage in forgiveness often exhibit healthier behaviors, such as reduced alcohol and tobacco use, which are correlated with better physical health indicators (Seybold et al., 2001). Forgiveness may also decrease the allostatic load, reducing the strain on the body caused by chronic stress.

Other studies highlight the indirect impact of forgiveness on physical health. For instance, forgiveness can promote healthier coping mechanisms and social connections, reducing the likelihood of experiencing chronic stress, which is a known risk factor for many physical health problems (Thoresen et al., 2000).

### 2.2. PSYCHOLOGICAL HEALTH

Forgiveness has a profound effect on psychological well-being, helping to alleviate negative emotional states such as anger, anxiety, and depression. When individuals forgive, they release negative emotions tied to past hurts, which can lead to an overall improvement in mood and emotional balance. Research has shown that forgiveness is associated with reduced levels of anxiety and depression, promoting mental peace and emotional stability (Freedman & Enright, 1996; Toussaint & Williams, 2008). Forgiveness also fosters positive emotions such as happiness, self-esteem, and hope, contributing to better mental health and a more optimistic outlook on life. This emotional shift supports psychological recovery and personal growth.

Additionally, forgiveness can improve psychological health by reducing the frequency and intensity of negative emotions, which have been linked to poor mental health outcomes. When individuals forgive, they experience less hostility and greater emotional regulation, which promotes healthier coping strategies (McCullough, 2000). Also, a study found that forgiveness can foster a greater sense of spiritual or existential well-being, which is linked to better mental and physical health outcomes (Seybold et al., 2001).

### 2.3. GRATITUDE

The term "gratitude" comes from the Latin word *gratus*, which means "pleasing" or "thankful." Gratitude is essentially a sense of thankfulness for anything/any person/happening or simply, life in general.

Essentially, it is a multifaceted concept with multiple descriptions including an emotion, a virtue, a moral sentiment, a motive, a coping response, a skill, and an attitude generally viewed as an interpersonal emotion but can be extended to abstract figures. This multifaceted nature highlights its complexity (Emmons & Crumpler, 2000). Surveys exploring public perceptions of gratitude have similarly uncovered diverse experiences and interpretations of the concept (Lambert, Graham, & Fincham, 2009; Hlava & Elfers, 2013; Elfers & Hlava, 2016).

A definition that fits our research part is viewing gratitude as a two-step cognitive process: first, acknowledging that one has received a positive outcome, and second, attributing this outcome to an external source (Emmons & McCullough, 2003).

#### Factors Affecting

#### Impact

##### 1) Physical Health.

Gratitude significantly promotes beneficial physiological changes. Regular expressions of gratitude are linked to reduced blood pressure and healthier heart rhythms, directly contributing to cardiovascular health (Emmons & McCullough, 2003). The very act of emphasis on positives of one's life reduces cortisol levels & indirectly prevents

chronic illnesses associated (Fredrickson et al., 2003). Moreover, it improves sleep quality, as it minimizes pre-sleep anxiety and fosters calmness which results in more restful nights (Wood et al., 2008). Another research found, enhanced immune responses, attributes to a reduction in stress-induced inflammation (Wood et al., 2010).

## **2) Psychological Health.**

The presence of gratitude fosters profound improvements in mental well-being. It nurtures a sense of optimism, happiness, and overall life satisfaction (Lyubomirsky et al., 2005). By helping individuals focus on positive experiences, gratitude mitigates feelings of anxiety and depression (Ramírez et al., 2014). Furthermore, gratitude strengthens social bonds and interpersonal connections (Algoe et al., 2010). These psychological benefits positively impact one's self-esteem (Watkins et al., 2003). It encourages a reflective mindset which enables one to find meaning in challenging situations and fosters resilience (Fredrickson et al., 2003).

Gratitude also has ripple effects that go beyond the individual. People who express gratitude are more likely to engage in prosocial behaviors (McCullough et al., 2002). Additionally, gratitude cultivates a positive work environment that includes improved productivity and team cohesion (Lambert et al., 2010).

## **3) Self-Compassion**

The etymology of the term "self-compassion" combines "self" from Old English meaning "one's own person" and "compassion" from Latin *compassio*, meaning "to suffer with".

The facets of self-compassion include self-kindness, common humanity and mindfulness which are interrelated components especially in moments of inadequacy, uncontrollable situations and failure. (Neff, 2003b)

### **Facets**

#### **1) Self-kindness.**

It emphasizes being accepting, understanding and supporting to oneself, particularly in moments of failure or difficulty and not engaging in criticizing oneself. (Blatt, 1995). It involves recognition of perfection as un-attainable and dealing with one's shortcomings with warmth and sweetness, instead of ignoring one's suffering or being fixated on solving the issue in hand. (Austenfeld & Stanton, 2004). It is essentially a kind internal dialogue.

#### **2) Common Humanity.**

This facet underscores the universality of human imperfection and suffering. Instead of isolating oneself during struggles, common humanity reminds individuals that such experiences are part of being human (Makransky, 2012). It helps counter the irrational belief that one's pain is unique or abnormal, which can often result in feelings of disconnection (Lapsley et al., 1989). It roots us in the broader context and therefore, reducing isolation and fostering connection.

#### **3) Mindfulness.**

Mindfulness involves maintaining balanced awareness of one's thoughts and emotions without becoming overwhelmed or suppressing them. It allows individuals to observe painful feelings with clarity and equanimity, facilitating a measured response to adversity (Hayes, 1984). Mindfulness prevents over-identification with negative experiences and gives a sense of shared humanity to take root.

### **Impact**

#### **1) Physical Health.**

Self-compassion has been linked to better health outcomes in various studies. For instance, self-compassion has been associated with lower physiological stress responses, including reduced sympathetic nervous system activation and inflammation after exposure to stressors (Breines et al., 2014). It also appears to support better health behaviors, such as regular exercise and healthy eating (Dunne et al., 2016). Self-compassionate individuals tend to be less reactive to stress, which can mitigate the long-term negative effects of chronic stress on the body, such as weakened immune function and higher vulnerability to illness. Additionally, research shows that self-compassionate people have greater heart rate variability, indicating better stress recovery and overall cardiovascular health (Svendsen et al., 2016).

#### **2) Psychological Health.**

In terms of psychological health, self-compassion plays a crucial role in reducing negative emotions such as anxiety and depression. People who practice self-compassion tend to be kinder to themselves during times of failure, which decreases the tendency to ruminate on negative experiences (Neff et al., 2007a). This reduction in rumination helps to

break the cycle of negative thinking that often exacerbates mental health issues. Self-compassion also fosters greater emotional resilience, allowing individuals to better cope with stress and setbacks without becoming overwhelmed (Sirois, 2015). This emotional balance contributes to improved overall well-being, leading to increased happiness and reduced levels of self-criticism. Furthermore, self-compassionate individuals have a greater ability to accept their imperfections, which supports mental clarity and emotional stability in the face of challenges.

Indirectly, self-compassion influences physical health through its effect on stress and health behaviors. By reducing perceived stress, self-compassion encourages healthier coping mechanisms and behaviors, such as maintaining regular exercise and balanced nutrition. These behaviors contribute to better long-term health outcomes, including improved physical symptom scores and a reduction in health complaints (Dunne et al., 2016). On the psychological side, lower stress levels associated with self-compassion enhance mental well-being by reducing negative affect, which is often linked to poor psychological health outcomes. In this way, self-compassion helps promote healthier choices and better emotional regulation, further reinforcing its positive impact on both physical and psychological health.

### 3) Rationale

Gratitude, forgiveness, and self-compassion constitute the strong base pillars that influence a lot of aspects of our emotional well-being and to some extent shape the nature of our relationship with our own selves as well as others. The core of embracing gratitude is the way it gives us more room to appreciate the plethora of bright sides of our lives and develop our sense of attachment to each other for our overall life satisfaction. Forgiveness often acts as a strong catalyst for healing, allowing people to release the burdens of harsh resentment and convert conflicts into opportunities for potential growth, carving a way for more meaningful interpersonal relationships. Simultaneously, self-compassion plays a crucial role in one's life as it shapes emotional resilience through the practice of kindness and compassion in times of adversity, thus enhancing a better response to hardship and helps in building healthy coping mechanisms. This is generally because it equips the individual to treat themselves with kindness and understanding during difficult times rather than with self-criticism and judgement. By practicing this approach the individual feels less burdened by the myriad of emotions s/he is experiencing, providing clarity of thoughts leading to better judgement.

Despite the theoretical connections between gratitude, forgiveness, and self-compassion, existing research primarily studies these constructs in isolation rather than looking into their interrelations. As a result, this approach has led to a partial understanding of how these emotional processes interact or connect with each other. Despite the established links between several psychological constructs and different aspects of mental well-being, such as life satisfaction and resilience, there is a major gap in the literature that studies the potential predictive effect of forgiveness on gratitude or self-compassion, especially among populations placed in the Indian context. Hence, this study intends to study the psychological constructs of gratitude, forgiveness, and self-compassion by determining the relationships between them. Through this, we will be able to understand better how these constructs interact and influence each other and their overall contribution to emotional well-being.

## 3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- 1) To examine the relationships between gratitude, forgiveness, and self-compassion among the people of Delhi NCR.
- 2) To investigate whether forgiveness significantly predicts gratitude in the population of Delhi NCR.
- 3) To examine if there exist any differences in gratitude, forgiveness and self-compassion between men and women.

### 3.1. HYPOTHESES

H1: There are significant relationships between gratitude, forgiveness and self-compassion among the people of Delhi NCR.

H2: Forgiveness significantly predicts gratitude among the people of Delhi NCR.

H3: There are significant differences between men and women in gratitude, forgiveness and self-compassion.

## 4. METHOD

### 1) Research Design

Correlational research design : This study employed a correlational research design to examine the relationships between gratitude, forgiveness, and self-compassion among individuals residing in the Delhi NCR region. The research aimed to determine how these psychological constructs relate to one another and to explore whether forgiveness significantly predicts gratitude within this population.

### 2) Participants

The participants in this study were selected from the Delhi NCR region, representing a diverse demographic. The total sample consisted of 156 individuals, including 90 males and 66 females. Convenience sampling is a non-probability sampling method in which participants are chosen based on their accessibility and readiness to participate. In this study, this approach was utilized to effectively collect data from a varied group of individuals in the Delhi NCR region.

### 3) Measures

The level of Gratitude was measured using the Gratitude Questionnaire (GQ-6) by McCullough, Emmons, and Tsang. Gratitude Questionnaire (2002) employs a Likert scale with six items to assess daily gratitude. It demonstrates high reliability, with a composite reliability of 0.881 and an Omega value of 0.84. In an Indian study, it achieved an average variance extracted (AVE) of 0.554, surpassing the threshold for effective measurement. These metrics affirm its utility as a robust tool for cross-cultural assessment of gratitude. Internal consistency indicators support its validity, highlighting its effectiveness in measuring gratitude reliably within diverse populations. The concept of forgiveness was measured through Mark S. Rye's Forgiveness Scale (2001) utilizes a 15-item Likert scale to measure forgiveness across two subscales: Absence of Negative (AN) and Presence of Positive (PP). It shows strong reliability, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients of 0.86 (AN) and 0.85 (PP). Test-retest reliability coefficients are also high, with values of 0.76 for both subscales and 0.80 for the entire scale over a 15.2-day interval. Validity is supported by significant correlations ( $r \geq 0.40$ ,  $p < .001$ ) with satisfaction, meaning in life, happiness, and hope, emphasizing its relevance in assessing forgiveness constructs across diverse populations. Norm tables provide standardized scores, enhancing its utility for comparative analysis. The system self-compassion was made through Kristin Neff's Self-Compassion Scale (SCS), introduced in 2003, employs a 12-item Likert scale to measure self-compassion across six subscales. It demonstrates strong internal reliability, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.92 for the total score and 0.75 to 0.81 for subscales. Test-retest reliability over three weeks yielded a Cronbach's alpha of 0.93 for the total score and 0.80 to 0.88 for subscale scores, indicating its stability over time. The scale shows good convergent validity, correlating strongly with therapist, partner-reported (0.70), and coder (0.77) assessments of self-compassion behaviors.

Procedure: Participants were fully briefed on the study's objectives and methodologies. They were assured that their responses would remain confidential and informed that their participation was entirely voluntary. Crucially, they were made aware of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without facing any negative consequences. Data was collected via an online survey, which took participants an average of 15-20 minutes to complete.

## 5. RESULTS

**Table 1**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
<b>Self-Compassion Sum</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>39.81</b>	<b>6.628</b>
<b>Forgiveness Sum</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>48.92</b>	<b>8.628</b>
<b>Gratitude Sum</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>31.88</b>	<b>6.961</b>
<b>Valid N (listwise)</b>	<b>156</b>				

### Sample Size, Mean and Standard Deviation

Descriptive statistics were carried out on the psychological constructs of Self-Compassion, Forgiveness, and Gratitude for a sample of 156 participants. The mean score for Self-Compassion was 39.81 (SD = 6.628), for Forgiveness it was 48.92 (SD = 8.628), and for Gratitude it was 31.88 (SD = 6.961).



**Table 2**

		Self-Compassion Sum	Forgiveness Sum	Gratitude Sum
<b>Self-Compassion Sum</b>	<b>Pearson Correlation</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>-.118</b>	<b>-.093</b>
	<b>Sig. (2-tailed)</b>		<b>.141</b>	<b>.250</b>
	<b>N</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>156</b>
<b>Forgiveness Sum</b>	<b>Pearson Correlation</b>	<b>-.118</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>.280**</b>
	<b>Sig. (2-tailed)</b>	<b>.141</b>		<b>.000</b>
	<b>N</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>156</b>
<b>Gratitude Sum</b>	<b>Pearson Correlation</b>	<b>-.093</b>	<b>.280**</b>	<b>1</b>
	<b>Sig. (2-tailed)</b>	<b>.250</b>	<b>.000</b>	
	<b>N</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>156</b>
<b>** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).</b>				

### Correlation between Self-compassion, Forgiveness and Gratitude

To explore the relationships between Self-Compassion, Forgiveness, and Gratitude, Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficients were calculated. As shown in Table 2, the analysis revealed a weak negative correlation between Self-Compassion and Forgiveness ( $r = -0.118$ ,  $p = 0.141$ ) and between Self-Compassion and Gratitude ( $r = -0.093$ ,  $p = 0.250$ ), though neither was statistically significant. However, a significant positive correlation was observed between Forgiveness and Gratitude ( $r = 0.280$ ,  $p \leq 0.01$ ), suggesting that individuals who reported higher levels of Forgiveness also tended to report higher levels of Gratitude.

**Table 3**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.280 <sup>a</sup>	.078	.072	6.705
a. Predictors: (Constant), Forgiveness				

### Regression

An examination of the results in Table 3 indicates that the regression analysis allowed Forgiveness to be used as a predictor variable. The findings suggest that Forgiveness accounts for 7.8% of the variance in the dependent variable (R Square = 0.078). The model yielded an R value of 0.280 and an adjusted R Square of 0.072, with a standard error of the estimate of 6.705, indicating a modest predictive relationship.

**Table 4**

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	587.431	1	587.431	13.067	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	6923.255	154	44.956		
	Total	7510.686	155			
a. Dependent Variable: Gratitude Sum						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Forgiveness Sum						

### ANOVA Table for Regression Analysis Predicting Gratitude from Forgiveness

Table 4 presents the results of the ANOVA for the regression model, examining Forgiveness as a predictor of Gratitude. The model shows that the regression sum of squares is 587.431 with 1 degree of freedom (df), indicating the variability explained by Forgiveness. The residual sum of squares is 6923.255 with 154 degrees of freedom, representing the unexplained variance in Gratitude. The mean square for the regression is 587.431, while the mean square for the residual is 44.956. The F value of 13.067 indicates that the model is a significant fit, with a p-value of 0.000, demonstrating that Forgiveness significantly predicts Gratitude.

**Table 5**

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Self-Compassion	male	90	39.72	7.219	.761
	female	66	39.92	5.779	.711
Forgiveness	male	90	48.49	8.214	.866
	female	66	49.52	9.194	1.132

Gratitude	male	90	31.39	6.960	.734
	female	66	32.55	6.960	.857

### Descriptive Statistics by Gender for Self-Compassion, Forgiveness, and Gratitude

Table 5 presents the descriptive statistics comparing male and female participants on the psychological constructs of Self-Compassion, Forgiveness, and Gratitude. For Self-Compassion, males (N = 90) had a mean score of 39.72 (SD = 7.219), while females (N = 66) had a similar mean score of 39.92 (SD = 5.779). In terms of Forgiveness, males reported a mean of 48.49 (SD = 8.214), whereas females had a slightly higher mean score of 49.52 (SD = 9.194). Regarding Gratitude, male participants had a mean score of 31.39 (SD = 6.960), while female participants reported a higher mean of 32.55 (SD = 6.960).

### Table 6 Presenting Gender Differences in Self-Compassion, Forgiveness, and Gratitude Using Independent Samples t-Test

Construct	Variance Assumption	Levene's F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper
<b>Self-Compassion Sum</b>	Equal variances assumed	3.461	.065	-0.187	154	.852	-0.202	1.078	-2.331	1.927
<b>Forgiveness Sum</b>	Equal variances assumed	1.259	.264	-0.733	154	.465	-1.026	1.400	-3.793	1.740
<b>Gratitude Sum</b>	Equal variances assumed	0.001	.978	-1.157	154	.307	-1.157	1.128	-3.385	1.072

For **Self-Compassion**, Levene's Test for Equality of Variances was not significant ( $p = .065$ ), indicating that the assumption of homogeneity of variance was met. The independent samples t-test revealed no significant difference between males and females,  $t(154) = -0.187$ ,  $p = .852$ , suggesting comparable levels of self-compassion across genders.

For **Forgiveness**, the assumption of equal variances was also satisfied ( $p = .264$ ). The t-test yielded no significant gender difference,  $t(154) = -0.733$ ,  $p = .465$ , indicating that male and female participants reported similar levels of forgiveness.

Likewise, for **Gratitude**, Levene's Test indicated homogeneity of variance ( $p = .978$ ). The independent samples t-test showed no statistically significant difference between genders,  $t(154) = -1.025$ ,  $p = .307$ .

Overall, the results indicate that there were no statistically significant gender differences in Self-Compassion, Forgiveness, or Gratitude among participants in the current study.

## 6. DISCUSSION

Gratitude, forgiveness, and self-compassion are the core foundations that affect emotional well-being and the way one interacts with themselves and others. Combination of these facilitate positive relationships and makes them more fulfilling characterized by harmonious relationships and meaningful connections. Gratitude can be practiced by being mindful of the small yet meaningful aspects of life, such as a sunny day, a warm cup of coffee, or a kind gesture from someone. Forgiveness can be practiced by intentionally letting go of minor frustrations and approaching conflicts with open communication and empathy. Similarly, self-compassion is extending the same understanding and kindness to oneself as it is to others. Just a little more involvement in life and you find yourself at ease, appreciating of what you got. The results indicated that there is a positive correlation between gratitude and forgiveness. Further, it was found that both these psychological constructs are negatively correlated with self-compassion, hence H1 is partially accepted.

Gratitude can be defined as one's ability to recognize the dispositional characteristics that one finds congruent to one's liking and behavior that was sweet towards them or simply for one's existence. Forgiveness involves an initial perception of one's behavior as hurtful/inappropriate and because of overpowering positives/larger value of the relationship letting it go and moving on from it mentally.

This seems like a logical consequence. Both gratitude and forgiveness are predictors to sharing positive relationships with others. There have been multiple studies supporting both these characteristics as facilitators of deep,

satisfying relationships. Hudaab Harmaen and Zainab Hussain Butto (2020) found that gratitude and forgiveness enhance positive relationships, which in turn contribute to well-being. Forgiveness emerged as a stronger predictor, reinforcing the idea that letting go of resentment strengthens social bonds. While gratitude fosters positive emotions and appreciation, forgiveness actively restores and maintains relationships, making it essential for long-term well-being. Another study supports this statement by showing that gratitude and forgiveness foster social bonding and emotional resilience. (Bani Narula, 2015; Austin et al., 2021).

Taking an individual's take on a fight can help clarify this. It is only someone who can recognize the good in the person they have fought with because of a perceived negative/inappropriate behavior they have engaged in can forgive them for what they did. Your likelihood to forgiving increases if you can see the good in someone, are thankful for it and vice-versa.

There have been many research studies in varied cultural contexts that have shown similar results. A study in 2009 at the United States of America revealed that gratitude was strongly correlated to all measures of well-being. They also emphasized on the importance of self-forgiveness, with self-forgiveness having the strongest connection with well-being than any other form of forgiveness. (Toussaint & Friedman, 2009) The study suggested that gratitude and forgiveness play a crucial role in contributing to emotional well-being, however it lacked a direct correlation between the two constructs. Another study in India emphasized that gratitude, forgiveness and resilience are interconnected constructs. Gratitude and forgiveness were strongly correlated, congruent with the findings of the present study. (Kumar & Dixit, 2014). Another study investigated the impact of gratitude and forgiveness on quality of life among students. The findings showed that both gratitude and forgiveness significantly influenced quality of life, explaining 23.3% of the variance (Ningsih, 2021). Gratitude had a stronger effect on quality of life ( $\beta = 0.402$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ) compared to forgiveness ( $\beta = 0.181$ ,  $p = 0.045$ ), gratitude being relatively more influential. While there can be multiple reasons for these differences in intensity with which these variables impact one's life, there is a clear pattern that shows a positive impact. (Ningsih, 2021) Self-compassion can be defined as an unconditional acceptance towards oneself and constant engagement or movement towards growth.

If we look at the items, they seem to be in support of our point, "I try to be understanding and patient towards those aspects of my personality I don't like", ". I try to see my failings as part of the human condition.", ". When I feel inadequate in some way, I try to remind myself that feelings of inadequacy are shared by most people." An individual highly agreeing to these items is likely to feel a bit at ease mentally but without inadequate effects to deal with maladaptive or depressive traits, there is no movement and the same agreement can show defensiveness and prioritization of mental comfort. In the first item mentioned, if something matters to oneself, there needs to be an urgency to get it. We shall not confuse urgency with anxiety. Life is essentially "limited time and energy" and having this sense of urgency is adaptive. So, the same individual who is agreeing to the first item mentioned here can be that of a person who has a superficial recognition and accountability in the name of acceptance knowingly/unknowingly is making the decision of staying the way they are or of someone who is patient as they are growing out of it. As Stoic Philosopher, Epictetus would argue that understanding one's flaws is necessary, but patience without action is meaningless. As Jean Paul Sartre would argue that labeling failures as part of the "human condition" is an act of bad faith (*mauvaise foi*), a way of avoiding responsibility by attributing one's limitations to external, universal forces.

The second example again can be of someone who recognizes that we are bound to fail and it is through failures we recognize where things went wrong and move to achievements. On one hand someone agreeing to it can be one who seeks comfort in failure being a normative experience and doesn't work upon it and another who sees failure in a positive, adaptive light.

The third example also seems to be seeking comfort from a maladaptive feeling just because it is shared by most of the population or simply is normative. Just because most of the population experience negative emotions like jealousy, envy or distresses doesn't makes them adaptive. Seeking comfort in them because they are normative seems to be a defense. Nietzsche struck us the moment we came across the third item. It somewhat promotes herd mentality (*die Herde*), where individuals seek comfort in the collective experience rather than striving for excellence, a form of complacency.

In congruence to this idea and reflection on our analysis, it made sense for the individual to have "compassion" towards oneself (to those who couldn't grasp, this isn't compassion) and not have the same compassion for others because one is being defensive rather. For someone who is superficial in their accountability is likely to have internal locus of control for other's "wrong doings" and even the idea of forgiveness comes from "criminalization" of one's acts.



Being grateful also requires going beyond preoccupation with oneself and recognizing zillions of needs one has and the egregiously a whole lot of them being met without us even asking, every day. As you can expect, there are a plethora of studies that contrast with our results. (Oral & Arslan, 2017), (Sakiz & Sariçam, 2015) There has been a new light that we came across post data collection and analysis, bewildered by the results and there have been multiple philosophers who question the idea of “self-compassion” and when we saw this framework, we could see its functioning even in our items. Not always, but the idea of self-compassion can be a sign of ignorance, defensiveness and prioritization of one’s comfort and ease as I have tried to incorporate them with respect to our items. As we mention philosophers and their ideologies, we are intending to open a new perspective towards this construct and possibly re-modify as the lamp of accountability in the dark room of defensiveness on the night of mistakes would.

Also, if we look at recent studies, research in India also reported no significant relationship between gratitude and self-compassion, i.e. they do not predict each other in the sample of volleyball players and there were no gender differences. (Amritha et al., 2024). A qualitative exploration further into these constructs can really help grasp the relationships better.

In the present findings, no gender differences, were noted with respect to forgiveness, self-compassion, and gratitude. Numerous factors may explain these findings. One explanation may lay in the erosion of traditional gender differences owing to more fused and undifferentiated styles of parenting, irrespective of gender. The shift to shared parenting may result in the suppressing of gendered emotional development, reducing psychological differences along traits like compassion or forgiveness. Another explanation relies on the difference between the expression and the experience of an emotion. Some researchers have proposed that while there is often found to be a gender gap in the expression of emotions, the gap in the experience of emotions is far less pronounced or significant. As described above, expression is highly influenced by social and cultural standards, while experience is more likely to be consistent across groups. Supporting this idea is Buck’s dual-channel hypothesis (1977, 1984). Emotion is communicated, according to Buck, through two channels: the spontaneous channel, which women tend to use more, and the symbolic (controlled, verbal) channel, which men tend to use more. Thus even when a man and a woman feel emotions of comparable intensity, the manner in which they display those emotions is likely to differ, which may provide

Bradley’s (2001) study on reflexive emotional reactions confirmed the findings of Gohier et al. (2013), which revealed that women are more susceptible to negative emotional stimuli. More recent studies, however, have progressively found no discernible variations in emotional experience. For instance, there was no discernible difference in emotional sensitivity between genders, according to Hillman et al. (2004) and Carvalho (2012). In a similar vein, Deng et al. (2016) used heart rate monitoring while participants watched video clips that evoked a range of emotions (such as amusement, pleasure, anger, and sadness). Their findings showed no discernible gender differences in expressivity or emotional experience.

The homogeneity of the study’s sample may be another contributing element. The majority of participants were educated and from urban areas, where gender roles are more flexible and conventional boundaries may be further blurred. In these situations, there may be less difference in how men and women report or experience traits like self-compassion, forgiveness, and thankfulness as a result of a cultural trend toward emotional neutrality and equality.

## 7. LIMITATIONS

The sample is restricted to the Delhi NCR region, which may not represent individuals from other cultural, socio-economic, or regional backgrounds in India. The study relied on convenience sampling, meaning participants were selected based on accessibility rather than random selection. This can introduce selection bias, reducing the representativeness of the sample and limiting the ability to generalize results to a broader population. The study relies on self-report measures (questionnaires), which may introduce biases such as social desirability bias (participants responding in a way they believe is socially acceptable) and subjective interpretation of questions. This could impact the accuracy of responses. Qualitative method in addition to this could have helped grasp if their self-compassion was patience with/without efforts to move towards being more adaptive and grow.

## 8. IMPLICATIONS

From a constructivist viewpoint, just because a set of attitudes and behaviors are labeled as "self-compassion" does not mean they actually promote well-being. Our study serves as a critical example for future researchers to question predefined psychological constructs and reflect beyond surface-level definitions. Instead of accepting self-compassion as inherently positive, researchers should analyze whether it fosters genuine self-growth or acts as a defense mechanism. The study underscores the need for cautious application of psychological constructs in personal development programs, workplace wellness initiatives, and clinical settings. Promoting self-compassion without a deeper evaluation of its effects may lead to unintended consequences, such as decreased accountability or entitlement. Self-help programs and workshops could focus on balancing self-compassion with accountability and interpersonal connectedness. Tailoring interventions to differentiate between adaptive and maladaptive self-compassion can improve therapeutic outcomes.

**Future Suggestions:** Future research could explore cases where self-compassion is mistaken for avoidance or self-justification. Through narrative analysis of personal stories, researchers could investigate whether individuals use self-compassion to genuinely support themselves or as a rationalization for inaction or irresponsibility. A longitudinal approach can help determine whether self-compassion, forgiveness, and gratitude evolve over time and how they interact in different life stages. Examining variables such as emotional regulation, personality traits can provide deeper insight into how these constructs influence one another as mediators and moderators to the variables under interest.

## CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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