

## Forgiveness as a moderator for the relationship between suicidal behavior and anger expression among University students

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### ABSTRACT

Anger is an expression, ranging from calm to compelling, and often manifests itself when people's destinations or needs are blocked. Most of the time the main reason behind poor physical and mental health like suicidal ideation and negative thoughts relates to anger. according to the World Health Organization (2005), about 2% of the world's death is due to suicide. People's healthy relationship is forgiveness. In the Expression of anger in a fruitful and less harming way, forgiveness plays a vital role as it reduces negative outcomes of anger and makes people express their feelings in a positive way Several studies promote that forgiveness reduces the anger outcome that may further lead to suicidal ideation.

The present study investigates the moderating role of forgiveness for the link of anger expression and suicidal behavior among students. The current study determined to discover the connection between suicidal behavior and anger expression and check the moderating effect of forgiveness. A total of 250 students which included 120 male and 130 female students were taken from Bahaudin Zakariya University Multan by using a convenient sampling technique as participants for the study. Their age range was between 19-26 years old. Suicidal behavior questionnaire- revised developed by (Osman A, Bagge CL 2001), Heartland forgiveness scale developed by (Yamhure Thompson, Laura; Snyder, C. R. (Rick); and Hoffman, Lesa 2005) and Novaco anger scale and provocation inventory (Novaco, 2003) was used to measure suicidal ideation, forgiveness attitude, and anger expression respectively. Results show an insignificant difference between males and females scores on suicide, forgiveness, and anger with a p-value of .483, .401, and .415 at the alpha level of 0.05 respectively. The present study concludes that Males are often more aggressive than females and age have a significant impact on expressing anger. Present studies show that forgiveness act as a moderator for the relationship of anger and suicidal ideation as ( $t=-2.123$ .  $p<0.05$ ).

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### KEYWORDS

Forgiveness, anger expression, suicidal behavior

## INTRODUCTION

Due to the numerous stressors that exist in our society today, anger is a common experience for many people. Anger is defined as an emotion that is somehow natural and alternate. Basically, anger is a response to a negative stimulus like pain through the different forms (physical and emotional). When people feel unwell or do not feel fine, when they are discouraged, demotivated, disallowed, or had some loss, all factors can lead to anger (Smith & Lazarus, 1993). It works as a linkage between physical and verbal aggression and sometimes also with hostility (Cherniss, 2010). Every individual expresses his/her emotions in different ways and there are different reasons behind anger.

Anger can be expressed through different ways mostly in two, inward-directed anger and outward-directed anger which play an autonomous role in the physical, mental, psychological, and social functioning of individuals (Martin et al., 1999). Inward expression of anger is defined as the blockage of personal negative and angry thoughts and unable to express them, it is characterized as experience distress and avoiding a social situation that is unusual called behavioral inhibition (Deffenbacher, Oetting, Lynch, & Morris, 1996; Smits & Kuppens, 2005) unlike inward anger, externalized anger is linked with physical or verbal kind of aggression, direct or indirect expression related to people, objects and situations. It is associated with more behavioral activation rather than suppression (Bridewell & Chang, 1997; Kuppens, Van Mechelen, & Meulders, 2004; Spielberger, 1999).

Conceptually and empirically, both internalized and externalized expression of anger mostly leads to self-harming conduct, such as suicide (Conner, Duberstein, Conwell, & Caine, 2003).

WHO (2005) reported that the reason behind the 2% world's death is suicide. All around the world, according to a 2005 study by the World Health Organization, suicide is the leading cause of death among 15-34 years old, and an estimated one million people worldwide commit suicide each year. They go to the mouth of death.

When a person intentionally takes her/his own life through self-harming behaviors and dies as a result is called suicide. (Jacobs et al, 2003; Kaplan & Sadock, 1998; Andreason & Black, 1995). All around the world it is the most serious reason for mortality especially in youth and it is impossible to define it in a single definition.

Besides this, suicide is only considered a psychiatric emergency in our society and most people are unaware of its main reason and preventions. Schneidman explains it as "the self-induced eradication

which is a result of a situation when an individual fail to avail a solution of issues and perceived suicide as the best understood and last option.” (Kaplan & Sadock, 1998).

The term suicidal behavior is not as simple as it considered because it embodied several factors. By taking information about the previous history of unusual behavior (suicidal attempts, medical sign and symptoms, demographics and family support) one can describe the future behavior and risky aspects (Apter & Wassermann, 2003; Barraclough & Pallis, 1975; Beck, Steer, Kovacs et al., 1985).

Menninger’s theory of suicide is based on Freud’s view of aggression. According to him the main and important reason for suicide in the inward expression of anger as a person using it as a self-punishment and dies at the end. (Kaplan & Sadock, 1998; Andreason & Black, 1995)

Good interpersonal relationship with others foster the positive traits (Fredrickson, 2002) like self-reliance, pleasure, cheerfulness, and congruence (Shiota et al., 2004; Fredrickson, 2002) as well as may diminish some destructive traits of helplessness, indignation, rage, and solitude (Sarason and Duck, 2001; Sariçam and Akin, 2013).

One of the healthy interpersonal relations is to forgive others (Elliott, 2010). According to Luskin and Thoresen (1997), forgiveness tends to keep these relationships with the risks of being a human. Thus, “Forgiveness has been well-defined in many means, but more accepted and recognized definition is; an acceptance to neglect and abandon negative feelings and emotions towards other people who did wrong while encouraging the positive qualities of love big-heartedness and compassion without taking revenge. It is considered that for reducing anger and guilty feeling, one must know the healthy way of expression of anger. This is only possible through the act of forgiveness (Fitzgibbons,1986).

So, it is characterized that act of forgiveness entitles cognitive, emotional, and behavioral features that lead to very essential mental health consequences (Harris et al., 2006; Worthington,2005); like, the negative form of such element is depression (Brown, 2003).

## **THE RATIONALE OF THE STUDY**

Every person expresses their feelings alternately. The feeling of inferiority can lead to irregularities. Proper expression of feelings is very important for mental health.

In the development of distress, hopelessness, irrational thoughts that lead suicidal behavior is the contribution of anger that is an intense negative feeling of any type. (Konick & Gutierrez, 2005).

Although every person wants to avoid any type of anger it is impossible most of the times so regulation and expression of intense emotions in an adaptive way is the key point of psychological wellbeing. (Gross et al., 1997; Phillips, Henry, Hosie, & Milne, 2006).

Some human variables like life satisfaction, hope and religiousness are strongly and positively connected with bodily as well as mental health (; Toussaint, Webb, & Keltner, 2010), and these variables may also abandon the influence of negative emotions on suicidal ideation (Connor, Davidson, & Lee, 2003;).The rationale of the existing research was to conclude the moderating role of forgiveness between anger and suicidal behavior. In this study, we will examine how these three behaviors are interrelated and how can we control and change these attitudes. We will study what is the causes behind people's behavior and in which circumstances they behave in different ways. Suicide is a major issue in today's world. The increasing ratio of suicide is very much disturbing and difficult to control.

### **1.1 Objectives**

This study was aimed at achieving the following objectives:

- 1 To calculate the association between forgiveness, anger, and suicidal behavior among university students.
- 2 To scrutinize the moderating role of forgiveness for the relationship of anger expression and suicidal behavior among university students.

### **1.2 Hypothesis**

The hypothesis of the current study was the following:

- 3 There will be a strong connection between forgiveness, anger, and suicidal behavior among university students.
- 4 Forgiveness will have a moderating effect on anger and suicidal behavior among university students.
- 5 There will be a significant difference between forgiveness, anger, and suicidal behavior concerning gender among university students.

### 1.3 Operational Definition of Variables

1.3.1 Suicide: Suicide is an attempt or acts to harm their self or finishing one's own life

1.3.2 Forgiveness: Forgiveness is an attribute which involves forgetting and forgive others for their mistakes and forgive one's self also for mistakes or wrongdoings in hope for the better.

1.3.3 Anger: Anger is the state in which the intensity of emotions is very high .in this state physical and psychological changes occur and a person tries to hit or harm others.

## METHOD

### 1.4 Participants

The sample has included 250 students from Bahauddin Zakariya University Multan. the Participants were from different departments of Bahauddin Zakariya University Multan. The sample was randomly selected using a simple sampling technique. was selected randomly through a Convenient sampling technique. Samples were considered according to the following criteria.

- Students of running semesters
- Age range was 19-26 years
- Students of BS, M.sc, BBA, MBA, M.phil were chosen

### 1.5 Instrument

Three instruments were used in this recent research.

1: Suicidal Behaviors Questionnaire-Revised (SBQ-R):

2: Heartland Forgiveness Scale (HFS):

3: NOVACO anger scale (NAS)

#### **Suicidal Behaviors Questionnaire-Revised (SBQ-R):**

This questionnaire (Osman A, Bagge CL 2001) was created to measure suicidal ideation or suicidal behavior. It can be used for both normal and psychotic people.

It has 4-item, each explores a different dimension of suicidality

- ❖ Item 1 indicate lifetime suicide ideation
- ❖ Item 2 evaluates the occurrence of suicidal ideation over the past twelve months
- ❖ Item 3 judge the danger of suicide attempt.
- ❖ Item 4 predict the chance of attempting suicide in the future

SBQ cutoff score in the general adult population is  $\geq 7$ . In each item, the responses are labeled with some numbers that make it easy to calculate the results.

### ***Heartland Forgiveness Scale (HFS):***

It was developed by Yamhure Thompson, Laura; Snyder, C. R. (Rick); and Hoffman, Lesa 2005. It consists of 18 items. This scale was used to measure an individual's forgiving attitude toward others, themselves, and expect to be forgiven by God. This scale has reverse scoring for some items (2,4,6,7,9,11,13,15 and 17). This scale scored on a 7-point Likert scale which best describes how you typically respond to negative situations described

### **NOVACO anger scale and provocation inventory (NAS –PI 2003):**

This scale (Novaco, 1994) was once designed to estimate the experience of anger. The NAS-PI is a two-section, self-report form that six scores. There are 25 items of The Provocation Inventory (PI). It focuses on a variety of situations that cause anger to lead five substances --- abuse, injustice, dissatisfaction, disturbing characteristics of others, and resentment to become lonely total PI score. Respondents rate the entire anger, ranging from “not in from “no way” to a four-point response scale.

## **1.6 Procedure**

The study population was Bahuadin Zakriya university students. A total of 250 students from different departments were contacted in this study. Each student was required to sign a consent form to participate in the study. Furthermore, for the treatment to be successful, trustworthiness and direct expression of truth were essential. However, participation in the study was deliberate and they may withdraw from the study at any stage of the research if they wish. 120 women and 130 men participated in this study.

The questionnaire contained three scales, that was used to measure suicidal, forgiveness, and anger attitude in students. All scales were in the English language. The population of this study includes students of BBA, MBA, M.SC, BS, M.PHIL. Sufficient time was given to students for filling a questionnaire. Statistical analysis correlation regression, ANOVA, and independent-sample t-test were completed through SPSS 16 version.

## **Results**

In the current research T-test utilized to see the significant differences in the level of anger, suicidal behavior, and forgiveness concerning demographics (gender). Moreover, independent linear regression was done to monitor the moderating role of forgiveness with anger and suicidal behavior.

Table 1. Means, standard deviation t-value among male and female students on suicidal behavior.

Variable	gender	N	Mean	SD	T	P
	Male	130	1.60	.485		
Suicide behavior					-2.053	.483
	Female	120	1.73	.496		

Note. N=250, \*\*p<0.01

Table 1 above shows that there is no significant difference in suicide behavior on male students (M=1.60, SD=.485) and female students (M=1.73, SD=.496). Not statistically significant because the value of the p-value is greater than 0.05.

Table 2. Means, standard deviation t-value among male and female students on forgiveness

Variable	gender	N	Mean	SD	T	P
	Male	130	4.05	.436		
Forgiveness					-.883	.401
	Female	120	4.10	.422		

Note. N=250, \*\*p<0.01

Table 2 above shows that there is no significant difference in forgiveness for male students (M=4.05, SD=.436) and female students (M=4.10, SD=.422). The results are over in the p-value is greater than 0.05.

Table 3. Means, standard deviation t-value among male and female students on forgiveness.

Variable	Gender	N	Mean	SD	t	P
	Male	130	2.74	.280		
Anger					2.996	.415

	<b>Female</b>	120	2.63	.296		
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Note. N=250, \*\*p<0.01

Table 3 above shows that there is no significant difference in anger on male students (M=2.74, SD=.280) and female students (M=2.63, SD=.296). The results are not statistically significant, but the p-value is more than 0.05.

Table 4. *Independent linear regressions –the relationship between anger expression and suicidal behavior- Forgiveness as a moderator.*

Model		T	Sig	B	Std error
<b>1</b>	Constant	53.28	.000	1.665	.031
	Anger	-.639	.523	-.020	.031
<b>2</b>	Constant	53.19	.000	1.665	.031
	Anger	-.543	.588	-.018	.032
	Forgiveness	.312	.755	.010	.032
<b>3</b>	Constant	51.473	.000	1.649	.032
	Anger	-1.072	.285	-.036	.033
	Forgiveness	.515	.607	.017	.032
	Anger * Forgiveness	-2.123	.035	-.068	.032

Note. N=250, \*p<0.05

The table above shows that anger and suicidal behavior have an insignificant relationship as p> 0.05(.523). we found that anger was positively associated with increased suicidal ideation and behavior as well as that forgiveness of others was a significant moderator of this relationship, as t=-2.123, p<0.05. people who are good to understand and express their anger have a low risk for suicidal ideation if they forgive.



## DISCUSSION

The present study was determined the moderating role of forgiveness for the relationship between anger and suicidal behavior. The findings of the current study revealed that forgiveness moderates the association of anger and suicidal behavior. Indeed, it is supported by preliminary research that if a person who thinks that it is hard to forgiven by others and by God, he/she has a greater risk for suicide than others. (Exline, Yali, & Sanderson, 2000).

The feeling of guilt shame that is the result of inappropriate expression of anger may contribute to suicidal ideation as an individual unable to forgive oneself (Ross et al., 2004), in contrast, more intense externalized anger expression does not result in remorse (Harris & Thoresen, 2005). Volitional and outward-directed anger promote satisfactory feeling and discouraged the self-harming thought (Van Kleef et al., 2008).

The next hypothesis was there will be a significant difference between forgiveness, anger, and suicidal behavior concerning gender among university students. Even though our data don't permit us to estimate this opportunity, these results – which are dependable with prior research based on clinical and non-clinical samples (Hagan and Foster 2003; Newman 2006; Picardi et al. 2004) – recommend that the general adult population and sexual differences have the etiological significance for the development of depression in therein.

Additional interactional analysis (available) indicate that the associations between intense and persistent anger and depression are no different for women and men. The results show that if women's anger is less permanent and more sexual differences in depressed people.

## CONCLUSION

From the perspective of all the research findings, it is concluded that the connection between anger forgiveness and suicidal behavior was examined. And it was also explored that forgiveness play as a moderator for the association between anger and suicidal behavior among students. It's concluded that if students control their negative emotions (anger) and healthily express them. By using forgiveness principle, they can avoid suicidal ideation and behavior. The present study also concludes that forgiveness act as a moderator for the linkage of anger and suicidal behavior among students. students who have religious thinking and show forgiving behavior are less prone to anger and suicidal behavior. Male and females have an equal tendency.

## **LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

This study examines some of the limitations that should be considered when evaluating research results. These limitations are as follows:

1. The sample is taken from Multan only, so the results of the study may not be common in the other cities.
2. The sample taken for this research is limited, which limits the research to the general population.
3. Semi-structured and qualitative methods of data collection need to be used to gain in-depth knowledge of the subject.

## **SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

Some suggestions are there for future research:

- The most important piece of advice for future research is longitudinal research design. This design should be followed for better results in future research.
- Significant results of the research experimental method should be used. The next study will have to identify the comfortable relationship between anger and suicidal behavior.
- This study has to be copied with a large population.
- The most important advice for further research is a single variable nationwide study.
- The most important element of random sampling that is lost in current research should be considered in future studies.

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